

SHORT TAKES

PRESIDENT OF INDIA TO VISIT TIRUMALA SHRINE

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 18

President Ram Nath Kovind is scheduled to pay a one-day visit to Tirumala and Tiruchanoor to offer prayers at the abodes of Lord Venkateswara and Goddess Padmavathi on November 24.

According to a press release, the President along with his entourage will arrive at Tirupati Airport by a special IAF aircraft at 10.45 am on November 24 and will motor up to Sri Padmavathi guesthouse in Tirumala, where he would have a brief stay.

The President is scheduled to visit the temple at 12.20 pm to have darshan of Lord Venkateswara and will return to the guesthouse. Thereafter, he would visit Tiruchanoor to have darshan of Goddess Padmavathi and would return to Tirupati Airport by road and fly to Ahmedabad at around 4.10 pm.

AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan would receive the President on his arrival at the Tirupati airport.

GOVT EMPLOYEES' BODY GETS PLACE IN EHS PANELS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 18

The AP government gave representation to AP Government Employees Association (APGEA) into the Employees Health Scheme sub-committee and further EHS managing committee. APGEA president K.R. Suryanarayana and general-secretary G. Askara Rao here on Wednesday said that AP government issued GO 704 appointing APGEA in the EHS sub-committee. They said that further the government has issued another GO 1179 providing representation in the EHS managing committee.

Askara Rao and Suryanarayana thanked Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for giving recognition to the APGEA in both the committees. They further thanked medical and health department chief secretary Ashok Singhal for identifying the APGEA services. They said that no other employees union got this opportunity.

VIJAYASAI REDDY SEEKS CENTRE'S AID FOR MED COLLEGES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 18

Senior party functionary and YSRC parliamentary party leader V Vijayasai Reddy sought the central funding for the development and revamping of 16 medical colleges in the state.

In a letter to the Union minister for health and family welfare Dr Harsh Vardhan, Vijayasai Reddy said the AP government was planning to develop new medical colleges across the state and also upgrade the existing colleges for which it required central financial assistance. He said the total cost for the new colleges and revamping the existing colleges would be around Rs 13,500 crore. The Central fund was needed for the 13 new medical colleges, he said.

He told the minister that after bifurcation, Andhra Pradesh was left with tier-2 and tier-3 cities and the absence of tier-1 cities hindered the private healthcare sector from offering super speciality services in the state. The situation arisen due to the Covid-19 pandemic has only furthered the need of the state for a stronger healthcare infrastructure. Though the number of districts in Andhra Pradesh is fewer in comparison to other states like Tamil Nadu and Telangana, the average size of these districts is almost three times larger than the districts in these two states, Vijayasai Reddy said.

He said Andhra Pradesh thereby has been put in a disadvantaged position where it is losing out on the necessary financial support from the central government in view of the current scheme guidelines of developing healthcare infrastructure in the states.

Vijayasai Reddy also reminded the minister that AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy in his letter addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 17 this year addressed the same issue. Prior to this, the Chief Minister also requested the same during a video conference with the prime minister on August 11.

Faith matters



Devotees offer prayers and pour milk to snake idol on the occasion of Nagula Chavithi at Control Room junction in Vijayawada on Wednesday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Welfare scheme for petty vendors to start on Nov 25

Interest on the loan amount will be paid to banks by government

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 18

Jagananna Thodu scheme, wherein small and petty wayside vendors will be provided ID cards and interest-free loans up to ₹10,000, will be launched on November 25. Presiding over a Spandana review meeting here on Wednesday, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy pointed out that interest on the loan amount will be paid to banks by the government. The CM mentioned that 6.29 lakh applications have been linked with banks under Jagananna Thodu scheme till now. The remaining applications need to be processed. He directed district collectors to complete linking of bank accounts of beneficiaries with banks by November 24.

Reviewing NREGS works, Jagan Mohan Reddy said ₹150-crore worth projects are being implemented in the state every week. Thus, only ₹150 crore of arrears are pending with



CM Jagan directed officials to ensure there is no shortage of quality seeds, fertilisers and pesticides at RBK, mandal and district level for Rabi cultivation.

The Chief Minister said as Polavaram coffer dam works are underway, water supply in both the Godavari districts will be cut off after April 1. So, the preparatory works of Rabi cultivation should be completed by December 31, he underlined.

the government. He was critical of a section of the media for launching false propaganda that NREGS bills were pending since long.

The Chief Minister directed officials to expedite works and complete construction of village and ward secretariats, Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs), bulk milk cooling units (BMCUs), YSR health clinics, anganwadi centers and compound walls of schools by March 31, 2021. He insisted that BMCUs must be construct-

ed adjacent to RBKs for better coordination.

CM Jagan said no farmer should incur any loss. He directed officials to focus on procurement of crops that are not being sold.

He pointed out that government has set up 5,812 procurement centres at RBK level and 4,29,481 farmers have already registered for sale of various crops like paddy, maize and cotton.

The Chief Minister said e-procurement must be made compulsory. Crop

should be procured within 15 days of registration at RBKs and payments should be made within 15 days of procurement of the crop. The Chief Minister said to help farmers, a graded MSP of ₹4,000 has been announced for groundnut crop, which did not meet the average quality norms. This matter should be widely publicised at RBK centres.

CM Jagan directed officials to ensure there is no shortage of quality seeds, fertilisers and pesticides at RBK, mandal and district level for Rabi cultivation. District collectors and joint collectors should visit village secretariats and RBK centres and ensure that all farm inputs are available in the village as per the e-crop data.

The Chief Minister said as Polavaram coffer dam works are underway, water supply in both the Godavari districts will be cut off after April 1. So, the preparatory works of Rabi cultivation should be completed by December 31, he underlined.

Political parties accused of neglecting Seema

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, NOV. 18

Rayalaseema-based organisations are not happy with political parties for ignoring their woes but were concentrating on development of other regions, including Vizag and Amaravati.

They demanded political parties and leaders from Rayalaseema to fight for the welfare of the region as per the Sribagh Pact that assured justice to the region akin to the coastal region.

Rayalaseema Samskruthika Vedika celebrated Rayalaseema Namakaranaa Dinotsavam (day of naming Rayalaseema) on Wednesday.

Several intellectuals participating in the programme lauded the rich cultural heritage of the region that was ruled by many emperors. They demanded the governments to step in and work on long pending proposals, including Sribagh Pact.

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● Former archaeology official Vijaya Kumar stressed the need to involve students and youth to bring to the fore Rayalaseema's rich history.

The meeting was headed by Vedika convenor Dr A. Harinath Reddy. He recalled that daatha mandalams were named as Rayalaseema during a meeting at Nandyal on November 18, 1928. Chilakuri Narayana Rao

initiated the process of naming it Rayalaseema, he said.

Former archaeology official Vijaya Kumar stressed the need to involve students and youth from every village to bring to the fore Rayalaseema's rich history. "Many forts and historic spots are in dilapidated conditions because of utter disregard by successive policy-makers", he observed and added that the region boasted of great historic sites from various ages.

Katta Narisimhulu from Kadapa recalled the scriptures of various ages helped in identifying rulers and their kingdoms. "We could get clarity about Vontimitta only after studying scriptures", he said.

Umamaheswar suggested developing cultural wings to highlight Rayalaseema culture similar to the Telangana movement. Tavva Obula Reddy spoke about structures and scriptures in a dilapidated state.

TUNGABHADRA | PREPARATIONS

Money was spent equitably at places where Pushkarams will be held

Pushkar infra permanent in Kurnool: Buggana

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, NOV. 18

Andhra Pradesh finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy said on Wednesday that Pushkar infrastructure developed in Kurnool district is of a permanent nature and would lift up river front beauty, deriving the benefit of investment over a long period of time.

Unlike the Telugu Desam government, this time funds were evenly spread in five constituencies where river Tungabhadra flows, Rajendranath Reddy said in an exclusive interaction with Deccan

Chronicle on Wednesday. Drawing a comparison between the Telugu Desam rule and the YSRC regime, Rajendranath Reddy said,

"The Telugu Desamspend money on temporary ostentatious things during Pushkarams earlier but we have taken a conscious decision to spend every single rupee so that its benefit is directly derived for citizens for a longer period of time. 90 per cent of the works under the present government are of permanent nature", Rajendranath Reddy said.

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The finance minister said even though there are directions that no activity should be carried out during Corona pandemic, the state government has taken a conscious decision "to do all that is required" to conduct Tungabhadra Pushkarams.

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SEC tells Gov he is ready to hold panchayat polls

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 18

State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar met Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan at Raj Bhavan for around 30 minutes and briefed him about the readiness for conduct of gram panchayat polls in February in AP.

In the wake of stiff resistance from the state government for conduct of gram panchayat polls following threat of Covid-19 and the preoccupation of the officials in handling Covid-19 and also difficulty in arranging security with the police personnel, the meeting of State Election Commissioner with the Governor gains significance. Though there is no any official communication either from Raj Bhavan or from State Election Commission on what transpired between both the Governor and the State Election Commissioner, sources say that the Ramesh Kumar might have complained to the Governor about how some ministers were targeting him openly undermining the sanctity of the office of State Election Commission.

Meanwhile, though the State Election Commissioner was supposed to hold a video conference with all the collectors and other officials concerned in the districts to discuss about the arrangements to be made for conduct of gram panchayat polls, it was suspended following a letter from Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney stating that the state was not prepared to conduct polls in the wake of prevalence of Covid-19 and advised the Election Commissioner not to hold video conference as there was no need for it.

YSRC afraid to face local body elections, says Yanamala

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 18

Leader of Opposition in AP Legislative Council Yanamala Ramakrishnudu on Wednesday asserted that the ruling YSRC and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy were scared of facing the oppressed sections of voters in the forthcoming local body elections. He claimed that it was only out of sheer fear of defeat and rejection by all the harassed weaker sections that the ruling party was afraid and unwilling to face the local body polls in February.

He claimed that while the Central government and the other state Governments were freely holding different elections for both Assembly and local body polls, the AP government was trying to avoid the democratic process on unacceptable pretexts.

Ramakrishnudu objected to the interference the Chief Secretary when the local body polls are in the middle of the process. He demanded that the YSRC Government honour the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments and the

SEC likely to move court

From Page 1

On SEC's claim about various states conducting elections, the chief secretary noted, "Various states have followed different strategies to deal with the pandemic. Coronavirus has affected them differently. A comparison among states in this regard may not present a correct picture. Hence, we must not let our guard down, particularly when the government of India has warned states to be wary of the virus during the cold/winter months. We have already lost 6,890 human lives and cannot afford another surge."

Sawhney, however, affirmed that as and when the situation becomes conducive for the conduct of elections to local bodies, the state government will immediately inform the State Election Commission regarding its readiness in resuming the adjourned elections.

Ramesh Kumar is learnt to have objected saying the letter of chief secretary questions the SEC's autonomy.

According to sources, the SEC is considering knocking the doors of court over non-cooperation from government towards conducting local body elections.

Pawan predicts early elections

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 18

Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyna predicted that AP may go for early polls.

Addressing the party leaders at a meeting held on Wednesday, the Jana Sena president said the country might witness early polls and added that AP might also go for polls before 2024. He called upon the party active members to strengthen themselves to influence about 50 to 100 voters to support the party in the ensuing polls.

He asserted that though the party was having the strength of the people, lack of local leadership was affecting the political prospects of the party and laid stress for strong leaders to strengthen the party.

With regard to those who from other political parties expressing intent to join Jana Sena, pawan Kalyan felt the need to accord priority to the opinion on party cadre on such issues and advised those who were not happy with the party ideology to quit the party.

HC TO CBI: SUBMIT FINAL REPORT ON DOC BY NOV. 26

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 18

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has directed the CBI to submit its final status report by November 26 on inquiry being held on Dr Sudhakar on police excesses while taking him into custody in Visakhapatnam earlier.

A Division Bench comprising Justice Rakesh Kumar and Justice J. Uma Devi while hearing the case on Dr Sudhakar, who was suspended from Narsipatnam area hospital when he spoke against the state government for failing to supply N95 masks to attend to Covid-19 patients, asked the CBI about the progress of CBI probe.

On May 17, the police in Visakhapatnam beat him up and dragged him into an autorickshaw in order to take him into custody as he was creating ruckus on the national highway under the influence of liquor.

However, the CBI sought two weeks time to submit the final status report. But the court directed it to submit the final report by November 26 and posted the next hearing in the case on the same day.

to conduct Tungabhadra Pushkarams.

He added that while at the same time abiding directions of Medical Council of India and Union government of India.

The The finance minister said, "The Telugu Desam leaders used to squander money on public works and made them non-performing after their use during Pushkarams where as we have focussed on deriving long term benefits."

Rajendranath Reddy said he did not take up single activity in his Dhone constituency where as money was spent equitably on

Kurnool, Kodumur, Mantralayam, Yemmiganur and Adoni constituencies where Pushkarams will be held.

The finance minister said the sewage infrastructure developed in Kurnool Municipal Corporation would be used as a permanent component in future works.

The cameras installed in the city are also of permanent nature and are linked up to police infrastructure, he said.

Roads and Buildings, Panchayat Raj, Irrigation and MAUD wings were all geared up to scale up activities in future, Rajendranath Reddy said.

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Shuddha Panchami
 till 10.04 pm
Star: Poorvashada till 9.41 am
Varjyam: 5.35 pm to 7.10 pm
Durmuhurtam: 10.10 am to 10.55 am; 2.38 pm to 3.22 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhir 3, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.50 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.45 pm
Maghrib: 6.15 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.20 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.04 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 9.28 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 10.09 PM

COUNTER POINT



We know why we lost...
 but don't know why
 we won in some seats!

SHORT TAKES

MAIZE RAKE FOR BANGLADESH WITH 32 WAGONS

DC CORRESPONDENT
 VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 18

With the consistent efforts by the Waltair Division of East Coast Railway, the first maize rake was loaded and left for Benapole in Bangladesh with 42 wagons weighing around 2,424 tonnes on Wednesday. This is the first train of the season. Transportation of agricultural products by train is economically beneficial to consignors, besides transporting these essential products in a safest and fastest manner to the neighbouring country, a release said.

Divisional Railway Manager, Chetan Kumar Shrivastava appreciated the efforts of officers and staff of the division in capturing the traffic to the new destinations which is a long lead traffic. He said that Railways is always proactive in rendering support and encouragement to freight customers.

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CHANGE OF NAME
 I, Karni Arunakshi W/o No.15735093X Signalman Karni Shannukarao Vill - Uddanam Gopinadhapuram, Post - PM Puram, Teh - Vajrapukotturu, Dist. - Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh - 532218. Declare that in my husband's Army Records my name was mentioned as **Tamada Arunakshi** instead of **Karni Arunakshi**. This my please be noted for all future correspondence.

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Huge number of people throng AU Engineering College road near Maddilapalem to offer special prayers marking Nagula Chavithi festival at artificial snake pits in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

— DC

Be alert with 2nd Covid wave: CM

Jagan directs officials to take effective steps for containing Covid

DC CORRESPONDENT
 VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 18

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed officials to take effective steps for containing the spread of Covid-19 in wake of reports that there is a second wave of virus in Delhi, apart from in other countries.

He said that though the virus positive rate has come down in AP even while the number of tests has gone up, district administrations should remain alert as educational institutions are being opened. He stated there are chances of resurgence in Coronavirus in Andhra Pradesh. Hence district collectors should implement strict measures to contain the virus.

The Chief Minister said awareness about 104 emergency number must be increased so that new Covid-19 cases are immediately reported. He maintained that a patient should be admitted within 30 minutes of making a call. As of date,

91,54,263 Covid tests have been conducted and 8.54 lakh of them have turned out positive with a positivity rate of 9.33 per cent. On average, 1,71,428 tests are being done on every one million population, amounting to 75,000 tests every day.

Mr Jagan stressed on setting up of help desks along with CC cameras at all hospitals, including government and private, by December 10. Aarogya Mitras must be appointed to run these help desks. Special training must be given to Aarogya Mitras about their role. The Chief Minister asked offi-

cial to prepare standard operating procedures in educating Aarogya Mitras.

So far, 5,797 of the total 9,800 posts have been filled at the district level and rest of the appointments too must be made. The Chief Minister said the first phase works of

Nadu Nedu schools should be completed by December 31. About 78 per cent of works in the first phase comprising 15,715 schools have been completed so far. He told joint collectors to take an active part without leaving everything to parents' committees. He said the material in Vidya Kanuka kits should serve the intended purpose. If there are any issues in shoe size or bag quality, these should be sorted out at the school level.

Mr Jagan said that 22,630 sites have been identified for construction of Anganwadi centres while 27,543 Anganwadis are housed in private buildings. He said YSR health clinics will bring about revolutionary changes in rural health services.

He maintained that the rural landscape should have a pleasant look with village secretariat, YSR clinic, RBK centre, primary schools and the like. Collectors must work in this direction, he added.

On Wednesday, 604 in Prakasam, 559 in Anantapur, 461 in Srikakulam, 325 in Kadapa, 244 in Vizianagaram and 240 in Kurnool.

The rate of recovery among the patients from Covid-19 has been good in East Godavari with 1,15,169 followed by 89,068 in West Godavari, 80,491 in Chittoor, 68,917 in Guntur, 65,142 in Anantapur, 59,862 in Prakasam, 59,469 in Nellore, 59,275 in Kurnool, 55,614 in Visakhapatnam, 53,022 in Kadapa.

Among daily cases of Covid-19, West Godavari recorded the highest number of 220 followed by 194 in Krishna, 181 in Guntur, 157 in Chittoor, 155 in East Godavari, 60 in Kadapa, 53 in Visakhapatnam, 51 in Srikakulam, 49 in Anantapur, 38 in Nellore, 28 in Vizianagaram, 26 in Kurnool and 24 in Prakasam.

With regard to Covid-19 active cases, East Godavari topped the state for having the highest number of 5,143 followed by 2,263 in Krishna, 1,869 in Guntur, 1,357 in West Godavari, 1,305 in

AP records 1,236 Covid-19 cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
 VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 18

Andhra Pradesh registered 1,236 new Covid-19 cases taking tally to 8,57,395 and nine deaths raising toll to 6,899 in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities Covid-19 bulletin here on Wednesday reporting that out of 69,618 samples tested, 1,236 persons were found infected with Covid-19. Out of a total 93,33,703 samples tested so far in the state, 8,33,980 patients were recovered while 16,516 patients are still active with the virus.

Mr Jagan stressed on setting up of help desks along with CC cameras at all hospitals, including government and private, by December 10. Aarogya Mitras must be appointed to run these help desks. Special training must be given to Aarogya Mitras about their role. The Chief Minister asked offi-

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Nadu Nedu schools should be completed by December 31. About 78 per cent of works in the first phase comprising 15,715 schools have been completed so far. He told joint collectors to take an active part without leaving everything to parents' committees. He said the material in Vidya Kanuka kits should serve the intended purpose. If there are any issues in shoe size or bag quality, these should be sorted out at the school level.

Mr Jagan said that 22,630 sites have been identified for construction of Anganwadi centres while 27,543 Anganwadis are housed in private buildings. He said YSR health clinics will bring about revolutionary changes in rural health services.

He maintained that the rural landscape should have a pleasant look with village secretariat, YSR clinic, RBK centre, primary schools and the like. Collectors must work in this direction, he added.

On Wednesday, 604 in Prakasam, 559 in Anantapur, 461 in Srikakulam, 325 in Kadapa, 244 in Vizianagaram and 240 in Kurnool.

The rate of recovery among the patients from Covid-19 has been good in East Godavari with 1,15,169 followed by 89,068 in West Godavari, 80,491 in Chittoor, 68,917 in Guntur, 65,142 in Anantapur, 59,862 in Prakasam, 59,469 in Nellore, 59,275 in Kurnool, 55,614 in Visakhapatnam, 53,022 in Kadapa.

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No Covid-19 patients in Agency hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT
 VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 18

The Covid positive cases are coming down in Visakhapatnam agency and of the 957 tests conducted on Wednesday only three positive cases reported. In all, 59,654 tests were conducted since the outbreak of the pandemic and 2,701 positive cases were registered. Of them 2,223 were discharged and 10 persons succumbed to the virus so far. The first positive case was reported on June 22 when a woman sanitary worker from Chintapalle tested positive.

Additional district medical and health officer Dr P. Leela Prasad said only 80 active cases are in the agency and of them 33 are in Covid Care centres and 47 in home isolation.

"There are no patients in any of the two hospitals in Paderu and Araku Valley.

Both these hospitals are now treating regular patients," Dr Leela Prasad said.

Vizag district has 11 tribal mandals with a population of over 6.5 lakh and four tribal mandals in the agency share border with Odisha and also neighbouring East Godavari district.

District medical and health officer Dr P.S. Suryanarayana said there was a general decline in the positive cases in the district. He said last month a massive campaign has been launched and Covid awareness hoardings have been put all over the agency removing the commercial boards.

He advised that people should maintain social distance that will bring down the cases further. He suggested avoiding crowds that were witnessed during Dasara, Diwali and Nagulachavithi.

LORD MALAYAPPA RIDES ALONG FOUR MADA STREETS AFTER EIGHT MONTHS

DC CORRESPONDENT
 TIRUPATI, NOV. 18

The processional deity of Lord Malayappa Swamy took his maiden ride along the four mada streets encircling the Tirumala temple on Wednesday evening, after a gap of nearly eight months on the occasion of Nagula Chavithi.

After the Covid-19 induced lockdown came into effect in March this year, TTD has been observing all the festivities and arjitha sevass inside the temple premises,

where they were being held in Ekhantham (Solitude), following the state and central government Covid-19 guidelines. Even the annual Brahmotsavams had been observed in solitude.

However, following the phased-manner unlock measures announced by the centre, Lord Malayappa Swamy flanked by his two consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi paraded along four mada streets on Pedda Sesha vahanam. The vahanam Seva lasted for an hour.

VAHANA SEVAS AT TEMPLE CONCLUDE

DC CORRESPONDENT
 TIRUPATI, NOV. 18

On the penultimate day of annual Karthika Brahmotsavams at Tiruchanoor on Wednesday, Goddess Padmavathi Devi blessed devotees in her 'Nija Swarupa' (Real form) on Theru (Wooden Chariot).

In view of Covid, in the place of Maha Ratham, the Goddess draped in Muttangi Alankaram was seated on

Brahma Theru

SHORT TAKES

'LADAKH IN CHINA' ERROR: TWITTER APOLOGISES

New Delhi, Nov. 18: Social media giant Twitter has apologised in writing to a key parliamentary panel for wrongly showing Ladakh in China and has promised to correct the error by the month-end, the committee's chairperson Meenakshi Lekhi said on Wednesday.

Twitter's deposition has come in form of an affidavit signed by Damien Kariem, Chief Privacy Officer of Twitter Inc, for wrong geo-tagging of India's map, Lekhi said.

Last month, the joint committee of parliament on data protection bill had come down heavily on Twitter for showing Ladakh as part of China, saying it amounted to treason and had sought an explanation by the US-based parent of the social media platform in form of an affidavit. Appearing before the panel, chaired by Lekhi, representatives of Twitter India had "begged apology", but they were told by the members that it was a criminal offence that questioned the sovereignty of the country and an affidavit must be submitted by Twitter Inc, not by its 'marketing arm' Twitter India.

"Twitter has now given us a written apology on an affidavit for Ladakh being shown in China," Lekhi said. "They have apologised for hurting Indian sentiments and have sworn to correct the error by November 30, 2020," she added.

POLICE ISSUE 3RD SUMMONS TO KANGANA, SISTER

SAURABH JOSHI | DC MUMBAI, NOV. 18

The Bandra police station in Mumbai issued third summons to actor Kangana Ranaut and her sister Rangoli asking them to appear before them on November 23-24, for questioning in connection with the spreading enmity case filed against them over their objectionable tweets. The police had first sent summons to the duo asking them to appear on October 26. The duo had sought time to appear stating they were busy with a family wedding till November 15.

The officials stated that this could be the last summons sent out to the duo and if they dodge again, further action would be taken against them. The second time they were asked to appear on November 9-10, however, they did not appear even then, officials said. The series of tweets by the two sisters led to enmity between communities, police claims.

"The duo needs to be questioned based on the complaint we had received, which is the basis of the FIR. They are yet to respond to the third summons we have sent them," said a police officer.

The case pertains to the complaint of fitness trainer Munawar Ali Sayyad in the Bandra court, seeking probe into the tweets and other statements given by the sisters.

MP'S 'GAU PANEL' TO TAKE STEPS TO PROTECT CATTLE

RAHINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, NOV. 18

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday announced that a Cabinet committee would be constituted to recommend measures for the conservation and promotion of cattle resources in the state. The committee will be christened 'Gau Cabinet'. This is the first of its kind initiative in the country.

Chouhan took to social media to announce his decision to set up the committee.

In his twitter post, he declared that the first meeting of the committee would be held on November 22.

A statement issued said a six-member committee headed by the Chief Minister has been set up. Other members of the committee are home minister Narottam Mishra, agriculture minister Kamal Patel, forest minister Vijay Shah, panchayat raj minister Mahendra Sisodia and animal husbandry minister Prem Singh Patel.

The first meeting of the committee will be held in Agar Malwa in Madhya Pradesh where Asia's biggest cow sanctuary has been established in 2017, on November 22.

Infrastructure has been laid in the 1,100 acre-sanctuary to provide shelter to 10,000 cattle.

'Cow dung' festival

People take part in 'Gorehabba' festival at Gumatapura village on the border of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu states. Laughing and cheering as they scoop up handfuls of cow dung to roll into balls, men and boys from a small village mark the 'Gorehabba' festival every year by flinging cow dung at each other.

— AFP

Adhir hints Sibal can leave Cong if he feels out of place

Suggests dissenting leaders may set up new party or join another party

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 18

The Congress' recent electoral debacle in Bihar has further brought out the discord within the party with leaders now publicly hitting out at each other and some even asking others to quit, "set up a new party or join any other party".

West Bengal unit chief of the Congress and Lok Sabha MP Adhir Ranjan Chaudhary on Wednesday, reacting to Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal's comments after the results of bypolls and Bihar Assembly elections, said, "If some leaders think that Congress is not the right party for them then

● **WEST BENGAL** unit chief of and Lok Sabha MP Adhir Ranjan Chaudhary said if some leaders think that Congress is not the right party for them then they may set up a new party or can join any other party which they think is progressive and according to their interest

● **FORMER UNION** finance minister P. Chidambaram also raised doubts over the party's organisational capacity in an interview to a local daily.

they may set up a new party or can join any other party which they think is progressive and according to their interest. But they should not indulge in such embarrassing activities since it can erode the credibility of the Congress.

"If such leaders are serious about revamping the Congress party, then they should try to prove their mettle on the ground. Did

they volunteer to work for the party during the recent Bihar elections?"

On Wednesday, former union finance minister P. Chidambaram also raised doubts over the party's organisational capacity.

In an interview to a daily he said, "I feel the Congress contested more seats than its organisational strength. The

Congress was given 25 seats where the BJP or its allies had been winning for 20 years. The Congress should have refused to contest from these seats. The party should have fielded only 45 candidates."

"I am more worried about the bypoll results in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. These results show that the party either has no organisational presence on the ground or has been weakened considerably," he said.

Interestingly, Chidambaram was not among the 23 leaders who wrote to the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, in August this year demanding

changes in the functioning of the party.

Earlier this week Sibal, who was signatory to the August letter, spoke about the inability of the party to change.

He said that it has been six long years now and the time for introspection is over, it's now time for action.

He further added that people do not see the Congress as an alternative and yet no action is being taken to correct this.

The disastrous election results have once again opened the Pandora's box on the functioning of the Congress and has aggravated the demand for a democratic change within the party.

ORDER ON BSF JAWAN'S POLL PLEA RESERVED

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, NOV. 18

The Supreme Court on Wednesday reserved its order on an election petition by a dismissed BSF jawan Tej Bahadur challenging election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency on the grounds that the rejection of his nomination papers by the returning officer was flawed.

Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading the bench also comprising Justice A.S.Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian said, "this is too important a matter to be adjourned so many times. The respondent is the Prime Minister of India".

Shah, Nadda to visit WB every month till polls end

Kolkata, Nov. 18: Firmly fixing its sights on West Bengal after victory in Bihar, the BJP in Bengal on Wednesday said Union home minister Amit Shah and Nadda for three days, party sources said.

After catapulting the NDA to power following stupendous performance by the BJP, the saffron party has made it clear that mission Bengal tops their next target.

Shah, who missed campaigning in Bihar, made a two-day trip to Bengal starting November 5 to oversee BJP's preparedness for the state polls.

BJP president J.P. Nadda was scheduled to accompany Shah to Bengal, but his visit was cancelled a night before.

During the visit, Shah

met the family members of a BJP worker Madan Ghorai allegedly killed in judicial custody last month in Patashpur in Purba Medinipur district and hit out at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over alleged minority appeasement and deteriorating law and order.

The Bengal BJP chief also lashed out at the Congress-CPI (M) alliance, saying both the parties have been rejected by the people of the state long back. "The people of WB have given chances to the Congress, the CPI(M) and the TMC. All the three parties have failed to live up to the expectations of the masses, which will now be fulfilled by the BJP," he said.

— PTI

TEMPORARY | SHELTER**Temperatures in forward bases already reached below zero degrees celsius****Army finishes work on winter habitats for troops**

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, NOV. 18

The Indian Army has completed establishing winter habitat facilities for all troops deployed in eastern Ladakh as the military standoff with China is in its seventh month, senior officials said on Wednesday.

This comes as temperatures in the forward bases in Ladakh have already reached below zero degrees Celsius.

India has deployed around 50,000 troops in the area to tackle any threat that may emerge from the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

● **INDIA HAS** deployed around 50,000 troops in the area to tackle any threat that may emerge from the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

● **THE TROOPS** in the front line are accommodated in heated tents as per the tactical considerations of their deployment.

The winter deployment in Ladakh is especially difficult due to the tough terrain, low temperatures and bone chilling winds, which make survival extremely difficult.

"In order to ensure operational efficiency of troops deployed in the winter, the Indian Army has completed establishment of habitat facilities for all troops deployed in the sector," the officials

said.

They added that apart from the "smart" camps with integrated facilities which have been built over the years, additional state of the art habitat with integrated arrangements for electricity, water, heating facilities, health and hygiene have been recently created in order to accommodate the troops.

The troops in the front line are accommodated in

heated tents as per the tactical considerations of their deployment.

Also, adequate civil infrastructure has been identified to cater for any sudden emergency requirements.

The Indian Army had already been storing essential supplies for the winter deployment on a war footing.

It has also received the first batch of winter clothing for its soldiers from the United States.

The altitudes in Ladakh range from the high to super high altitude and the area experiences up to 40 feet of snowfall, after the month of November.

Bihar Oppn slams Nitish over graft charges on mantri

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, NOV. 18

A day after allocating portfolios, the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government in Bihar has landed in a fresh controversy over the induction of controversial JD(U) MLA Mewalal Chaudhary as education minister.

Mewalal Chaudhary, a former vice-chancellor of an agriculture university and a first-time minister in Nitish Kumar's Cabinet, faces serious corruption charges and was even suspended once by the JD(U) over the issue.

On Wednesday while questioning Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's "zero-tolerance" policy on corruption, Opposition leader Tejashwi Yadav demanded the sacking of Mewalal Chaudhary. "Has he (Mewalal Chaudhary) been awarded the ministerial berth for his involvement in corruption and given him the freedom to loot? He faces serious corruption charges under Sections 409, 420, 467, 468, 471, and 120B of the Indian Penal Code", RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said in a tweet.

The JD(U) had suspended him in 2017 after an FIR was registered against him over alleged irregularities in appointments during his tenure as the vice-chancellor of the Bihar Agriculture University at Sabour in Bhagalpur district.

RJD leaders in Patna said the case was lodged against him on the basis

of reports that highlighted irregularities in the appointment of assistant professors and junior scientists.

As per Chaudhary's poll affidavit, the case is still pending against him in the court of the additional district and sessions judge (I) in Bhagalpur and the matter is being investigated by the state vigilance department.

"For the sake of saving his chair, Nitish Kumar keeps preaching about his zero tolerance on issues like crime, corruption and communalism. But the reality is there for everyone to see, he has appointed a fugitive accused as an education minister in his Cabinet. There is no minister from the minorities in his Cabinet this year. This government is protecting the corrupt and criminals", Tejashwi Yadav said.

Amid the controversy, Bihar election watch and the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) has come out with a report highlighting the criminal cases against several ministers who took the oath Monday along with the chief minister. The report says eight out of 14 ministers have declared criminal cases against them in their poll affidavits, including serious criminal offences. The report says that among those who have declared criminal cases against them two are from the BJP and two from the JD(U), and one each from Hindustani Awam Morcha and Vikasheel Insaan Party.

Modi, Biden talk to strengthen ties

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 18

The Indian government made its first formal contact with the new American dispensation late on Tuesday night when Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to the President-elect of the United States Joseph R. Biden and congratulated him on his election, describing it as a testament to the strength and resilience of democratic traditions in the US.

In his tweet message, PM Modi said he has reiterated India's commitment to its strategic partnership with the US. The Prime Minister also conveyed congratulations to Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, saying her success was a matter of pride for the Indian-American community.

"Spoke to US President-elect Joe Biden on the phone to congratulate him. We reiterated our firm commitment to the Indo-US strategic partnership and discussed our shared priorities and concerns — the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific Region," said PM Modi in a tweet.

"I also conveyed warm congratulations for Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. Her success is a matter of great pride and

inspiration for members of the vibrant Indian-American community, who are a tremendous source of strength for Indo-US relations," he added.

The ministry of external affairs (MEA) in a statement said the Prime Minister warmly recalled his earlier interactions with Biden, including during his official visits to the US in 2014 and in 2016 when Biden had chaired the Joint Session of the US Congress that was addressed by PM Modi during his 2016 visit.

"The leaders agreed to work closely to further advance the India-U.S. Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, built on shared values and common interests. The leaders also discussed their priorities, including containing the Covid-19 pandemic, promoting access to affordable vaccines, tackling climate change, and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific Region," the MEA statement said.

Biden's transition team issued a statement saying the President-elect thanked Prime Minister Modi for his congratulations and expressed his desire to strengthen and expand US-India Strategic partnership alongside the first Vice President of South Asian descent.



Indian Army sets up upgraded living facilities for soldiers in eastern Ladakh.

This, coupled with the windchill factor, is when temperatures dip down to minus 30-40 degrees. In addition, access by road also gets affected for a brief period, when taking any supplies to the forward areas is a logistical nightmare.

IN BRIEF INDIAN JAILED IN PAK HANDED OVER TO BSF

Lahore, Nov. 18: An Indian national, who had illegally crossed over to Pakistan in 2016 and underwent four years of imprisonment here, was on Wednesday handed over to the Border Security Force (BSF) personnel at the Wagah Border. According to officials, Panwasi Lal, son of Kundan Lal, arrived at the Lahore railway station in August 2016 by Samjhauta Express without travel documents and was arrested. Initially, he told the police that his name was Mohammad Aslam and he was a Pakistani. A sum of Rs 500 was recovered from him. During interrogation, it was revealed that his real name was Panwasi Lal and he was not mentally stable, officials said. The matter was taken up with the Indian authorities as to how he reached the Lahore railway station without travel documents. He was later imprisoned in the Central Jail Lahore on charges of illegal border crossing.

'74 BIRMINGHAM BOMBINGS: COPS ARREST MAN

London, Nov. 18: UK police arrested a man on Wednesday in Northern Ireland in connection with the 1974 bombings of two pubs that killed 21 people and injured more than 200 in Birmingham, England.

Officers from the West Midlands counter-terrorism unit, working with colleagues from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, arrested a 65-year-old man at his home in Belfast, West Midlands Police said.

The man was arrested under the UK's Terrorism Act, and his home was being searched, authorities said.

The arrest came days before the 46th anniversary of the two November 21, 1974 blasts that ripped apart the Mulberry Bush and Tavern in the Town pubs in the city of Birmingham.

The blasts were one of the worst attacks committed by the Irish Republican Army during its armed campaign to get Britain out of Northern Ireland.

1995 DIANA INTERVIEW TO BE PROBED

London, Nov. 18: The BBC's board of directors has approved the appointment of a retired senior judge to lead an independent investigation into the circumstances around a controversial 1995 TV interview with Princess Diana.

Wednesday's announcement came after Diana's brother, Charles Spencer, made renewed claims this month that BBC journalist Martin Bashir used forged statements and false claims to convince the late royal to agree to the interview.

The broadcaster's director general, Tim Davis, said the BBC "is determined to get to the truth about these events." Charles Spencer alleged that Bashir, 57, made false and defamatory claims about senior royals in order to gain his trust and access to his sister 25 years ago. The claims included that Diana's phone was bugged and that her bodyguard was plotting against her. Charles Spencer has demanded an inquiry and an apology.

NOBEL CEREMONY WON'T BE HELD IN PERSON IN OSLO

Copenhagen, Nov. 18: The winner of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize — the World Food Program — and the Norwegian Nobel Committee said Wednesday they have jointly agreed to postpone the in-person award ceremony in Oslo next month because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"With the current restrictions in Oslo, it would not be possible to carry out the ceremony or other parts of the laureate's traditional program in a good and worthy manner," the Nobel Committee said in a statement.

WFP head David Beasley was expected to travel to the Norwegian capital "to receive the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the organization" that won the prestigious award for efforts to combat hunger.

But he will now accept the award during a virtual ceremony on Dec. 10.

The Nobel Peace Prize ceremony usually is held at Oslo City Hall. However, organizers said the event would be a scaled-down affair held at the city's university because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Cop hurt, Florida slaying suspect killed in Maryland encounter

Maryland, Nov. 18: A suspect in a Florida slaying was killed in an encounter with Maryland law enforcement that left a police officer shot and wounded, authorities said. Montgomery County Police were attempting to arrest a suspect wanted in connection with a killing in Jacksonville, Florida, when the shooting incident happened.

It occurred in Prince George's County on Tuesday afternoon, the agency stated in a message posted to Twitter.

Montgomery County and

Prince George's County are Maryland suburbs of the nation's capital. One officer was shot by the suspect, officials said. That officer's condition was not immediately known, according to police.

The suspect was killed, the department said. Authorities did not give additional information on how the suspect died.

The wounded officer and suspect were not immediately identified. The agency said it would provide updates as more information is confirmed.

— AP

Milwaukee officer who killed 3 resigns

Wauwatosa, Nov. 18: A suburban Milwaukee police officer who has fatally shot three people in the line of duty since 2015, including a Black teenager outside a mall in February, is resigning from the department.

The Wauwatosa Commission Council approved a separation agreement with Joseph Mensah on Tuesday night, effective Nov. 30, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported. The Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office has

ruled all three shootings by Mensah, who also is Black, were justified self-defense. Protests followed the most recent shooting outside Mayfair Mall.

Alvin Cole, 17, was shot five times by Mensah after he fled from police following a disturbance inside the mall. Mensah said Cole pointed a gun at him, so he shot him. Protesters marched for months, calling for Mensah to be fired. They protested outside the mall and Wauwatosa City Hall. Mensah was suspended by the Wauwatosa Police.

— AP



A water cannon is used to disperse unmasked protesters during a protest against measures imposed by the German government to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus, on Wednesday near the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.

— AFP

Pfizer, BioNTech say Phase 3 virus vaccine candidate is 95% effective

New York, Nov. 18: Global drugmakers Pfizer and BioNTech said on Wednesday that their Covid-19 vaccine was found 95 per cent effective in the final analysis of the Phase 3 trial, including in people aged over 65 years, paving the way for the companies to apply for emergency authorisation from US regulators within days. American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech said they have concluded phase 3 study of their mRNA-based Covid-19 vaccine candidate BNT162b2, meeting all primary efficacy end points. Based on current projections, the companies expect to produce globally up to 50 million vaccine doses in 2020 and up to 1.3 billion doses by the end of 2021.

The major announcement comes just two days after leading biotechnology company Moderna said on Monday its virus vaccine had an efficacy rate of 94.5 per cent. Earlier this month, Pfizer and BioNTech had said their Covid-19 vaccine candidate was

found to be more than 90 per cent effective in preventing Covid-19 in participants. Analysis of the data indicates a vaccine efficacy rate of 95 per cent in participants without prior SARS-CoV-2 infection (first primary objective) and also in participants with and without prior SARS-CoV-2 infection (second primary objective), in each case measured from seven days after the second dose.

The companies said the first primary objective analysis is based on 170 cases of Covid-19, of which 162 cases of Coronavirus were observed in the placebo group while 8 cases in the BNT162b2 group. Vaccine efficacy was consistent across age, gender, race and ethnicity demographics. The observed efficacy in adults over 65 years of age was over 94 per cent, they said. There were 10 severe cases of Covid-19 observed in the trial, with nine of the cases occurring in the placebo group and one in the BNT162b2 vaccinated group.

"The study results mark

an important step in this historic eight-month journey to bring forward a vaccine capable of helping to end this devastating pandemic. We continue to move at the speed of science to compile all the data collected thus far and share with regulators around the world," said Dr Albert Bourla, Pfizer Chairman and CEO.

"With hundreds of thousands of people around the globe infected every day, we urgently need to get a safe and effective vaccine to the world," Bourla said. The announcements about the vaccines and their potential availability for use among the general population in the coming weeks and months has offered hope to millions around the world in a year that has seen the Covid-19 pandemic devastate lives and economies and still showing no signs of abating.

So far, the Coronavirus pandemic has infected more than 55 million people around the world and killed more than 1.3 million people.

— PTI

TOILET PAPER LIMITS, EMPTY SHELVES BACK

New York, Nov. 18: Looking for toilet paper? Good luck. A surge of new Coronavirus cases in the US is sending people back to stores to stockpile again, leaving shelves bare and forcing retailers to put limits on purchases. Walmart said Tuesday it's having trouble keeping up with demand for cleaning supplies in some stores. Supermarket chains Kroger and Publix are limiting how much toilet paper and paper towels shoppers can buy after demand spiked recently.

And Amazon is sold out of most disinfectant wipes and paper towels. Geoff Freeman, president and CEO of the Consumer Brands Association said he doesn't expect things to be as bad this go-around since lockdowns are being handled on a regional basis.

— AP

Trump fires top Homeland official

Power transfer will be orderly

Washington, Nov. 18:

The transfer of power from Donald Trump to Joe Biden's administration would be "orderly" and happen "right on time," according to a top Republican leader and Senator Mitch McConnell.

Last week, the mainstream media declared Biden as the winner of the Nov. 3 presidential election after the 77-year-old former vice president crossed the mandatory 270 electoral votes out of the 538-member Electoral College. Trump, 74, however, has refused to concede the election, asserting that he has won.

Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell has said that there would be a smooth transition of power to the next administration. "We are going to have an orderly transfer

from this administration to the next one," he told reporters at the US Capitol when asked about the fact that the incumbent Republican President Trump has refused to concede the election to President-elect Biden and has filed multiple lawsuits challenging the results of the election.

"What we all say about it is frankly irrelevant. All of this will happen right on time, and we will swear in the next administration on January 20," McConnell said. In all the presidential polls the country goes through this process, he said, adding that there's a way to deal with disputes, it's called the courts. "And the courts in the various states are dealing with whatever disputes there are," he said.

— PTI

MURTHY AND MAJUMDAR MAY BE IN CABINET

Washington, Nov. 18:

Two eminent India-Americans, including former US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, are among the potential Cabinet picks in the next Biden-Harris Administration, according to media reports. Murthy, who currently is the top Indian-American advisor to President-elect Joe Biden on Covid-19, is a potential pick for the post of Secretary of Health and Human Services and Stanford University Professor Arun Majumdar for the post of Secretary of Energy. *The Washington Post* and *Politico* said in their reports on Tuesday that mentions a list of potential picks for various Cabinet-level positions in the Biden administration. Murthy, 43, is currently one of the co-chairs of the Covid-19 advisory board of the transition. He has been a close associate of Biden on Covid issues.

— PTI

PELOSI MOVES TO LEAD HOUSE FOR 2 MORE YEARS

House Democrats seem certain to nominate Nancy Pelosi for two more years as speaker, but she'll be leading a smaller majority divided along ideological lines as it tries shepherding President-elect Joe Biden's agenda toward enactment. Pelosi, D-Calif., faced no announced rivals for the post on Wednesday as the chamber's Democrats planned their first-ever virtual leadership elections in response to the pandemic.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., and No. 3 party leader Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., were also on track to retain their positions. "Let us all be advocates for unity in the Democratic party, where our values are opportunity and community," Pelosi wrote to Democrats this week. The first female speaker, Pelosi has won wide acclaim among Democrats.

— AP

US DICTATING CONTENT: FB, TWITTER ANGRY

Washington, Nov. 18:

The CEOs of Facebook and Twitter have vehemently opposed any changes that would allow the US government to dictate content moderation, saying these platforms are a new industry and should have a different regulatory model. While Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, along with the lawmakers, have agreed on the need to make necessary changes in the controversial Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996, the two social media heads said they opposed any changes that would allow the government to dictate content moderation.

— PTI

US to withdraw troops from Afghanistan

Washington, Nov. 18: The US has announced to reduce the number of American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq to 2,500 each by January 15 next year, which drew sharp reaction from influential lawmakers across the aisle. The decision announced by Acting US Defence Secretary Christopher C. Miller on Tuesday is in line with incumbent President Donald Trump's campaign promise to bring the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to a successful and responsible conclusion and to bring service members home.

The move was immediately opposed by the Opposition Democratic Party of the President-elect Joe Biden, whose lawmakers described it as a threat to national security. Several

Republican lawmakers too opposed the move. "I am formally announcing that we will implement President Trump's orders to continue our repositioning of forces from those two countries. By January 15, 2021, our forces, their size in Afghanistan will be 2,500 troops. Our force size in Iraq will also be 2,500 by that same date,"

Miller said during a press conference, adding that this is consistent with the Trump administration's established plans and strategic objectives. The US currently has a little over 4,500 troops in Afghanistan. Interacting with reporters, National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien said the remaining troops would be defending US diplomats and facilities.

— PTI

Famine fear: UN's \$100M to 7 nations

Nairobi, Nov. 18: The United Nations humanitarian office is releasing \$100 million in emergency funding to seven countries at risk of famine in Africa and the Middle East amid conflict and the Covid-19 pandemic, chief the humanitarian chief says returning to a world where famines are common would be "obscene."

A statement overnight said \$80 million of the money will go to Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen. Another \$20 million has been set aside for "anti-

THE MONEY breaks down as follows: \$15 million to Afghanistan, Burkina Faso \$6 million, Congo \$7 million, northeastern Nigeria \$15 million, South Sudan \$7 million and Yemen \$30 million.

patory action to fight hunger in Ethiopia," where deadly fighting erupted this month in its rebellious northern Tigray region.

"Without immediate action, famine could be a reality in the coming months in parts of Burkina Faso, northeast



Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen. This would be the first time famine has been declared since 2017

in parts of South Sudan," the statement said.

A return to a world where famines are com-

monplace would be "obscene in a world where there is more than enough food for everyone," UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock said. The UN said the money will target the most vulnerable, especially women, girls and people with disabilities. The money breaks down as follows: \$15 million to Afghanistan, Burkina Faso \$6 million, Congo \$7 million, northeastern Nigeria \$15 million, South Sudan \$7 million and Yemen \$30 million. All have been destabilised by conflict or extremist attacks.

— AP

Career Chronicle

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DECCAN Chronicle

19 NOVEMBER 2020

‘Love jihad’ laws are frivolous, will divide

Article 25 of the Indian Constitution provides for the right to practise religion: all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion, subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of Part III of the Constitution which deals with fundamental rights. Marriage is hardly a subject that comes in the way of a person practising the religion of his/her choice.

However, some of the state governments in India have of late been busy discovering marriage as one. It started with Uttar Pradesh where the chief minister, piggybacking on an order of a single bench of the Allahabad high court that ruled marriage for the purpose of conversion would not stand the scrutiny of the law, said the state government would be bringing in an anti-“love jihad” law. BJP governments in Haryana and Karnataka joined the bandwagon and said they, too, were contemplating introducing such laws.

Now, the Madhya Pradesh government takes the cake. The state home minister has announced that a “love jihad bill” will soon be introduced in the state Assembly making it mandatory for the people concerned to notify the district collector a month in advance before formalising an inter-faith marriage. According to the minister, marriages that take place forcibly, out of fraud or by tempting someone for religious conversion will be declared null and void. It will be a cognisable offence and non-bailable, attracting five years of rigorous imprisonment. Even those assisting such marriages will be considered a party to the crime.

Governments which lack in performance or in meeting the promises they had made to voters or in ensuring basic governance invent terminologies that offer them a covering fire while going to people. “Love jihad” is one such term. Every single authority in India, including Union ministers concerned, have said there is nothing in the law or statute which defines “love jihad”; it remains a derogatory term the right wing uses to denote the marriage of a Muslim man and a Hindu woman (and not vice-versa). In fact, the National Commission for Women has recently made it clear that no such thing exists though its chairperson holds a different view.

Those who advance such regressive ideas must bear in mind that no law that puts specific conditions on people based on their religion has a chance of survival as long as our Constitution lasts. And the Special Marriage Act, 1954, makes no distinction whether a marriage is interfaith or intra-religion. All that a couple has to do is to notify the official concerned a month before the marriage.

Governments and parties that seek to perpetuate themselves have the tough route of good governance to take. The alternative is to coin terminologies and fight an imaginary enemy. If they have the welfare of the people whom they claim to serve in mind, then they must invent ways of improving governance, not meddle with people’s private lives. The Union government must advise the states not to go ahead with such divisive and communal tools to protect themselves from the wrath of people.

Gupkar: Let Cong decide

Union home minister Amit Shah has raised the profile of the upcoming District Development Council elections in Kashmir by attacking the J&K mainstream parties as the “Gupkar gang”, and viciously and propagandistically describing them as being anti-national and pro-terrorist. He has also rhetorically asked the Congress leadership if it is a part of this “gang”.

The DDC polls for 280 seats in J&K, which kick off on November 28, will be the first proper electoral test of the popularity of the Centre’s move to do away with the former state’s autonomous status in August 2019. If the J&K parties, along with the Congress and the CPI(M) — the latter having limited influence in southern Kashmir — come together for the DDC polls, they are likely to be a formidable combine that could electorally embarrass the BJP.

Fruits of this unity could set up a united front spirit for the subsequent Assembly election also. This too will worry the BJP. The Centre’s promises of ushering a new era of development and ending terrorism with the annulment of Article 35-A and the reducing of Article 370 have proved hollow. Political reverse for the BJP in the DDC polls is apt to strengthen the public mood in favour of the Gupkar Declaration passed on August 4, 2019, by the National Conference, PDP, People’s Conference, Congress and CPI(M).

This declaration enjoins participants to unite to seek restoration of J&K’s special status and to retain the state’s identity, a perfectly legitimate demand in accordance with the spirit of federalism. The BJP is baiting the Congress and seeking to scare it with the so-called nationalist card. The Congress is being invited to take fright as it contests elections across the country, not just J&K. The idea is to detach the party from the Gupkar Alliance in the DDC polls.

Last year the Congress had participated in framing the Gupkar Declaration, but now seems defensive on account of stray utterances of PDP and NC leaders (which were later tempered). The party should think for itself and not under BJP’s pressure.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax : 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patnamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234
Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/5A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285
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Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemmudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580
Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325
Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255
 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. HSD-348/2006-08

Subhani



BJP’s hopes for its own CM in Patna get dashed



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

In Bihar, the BJP is the new regent to a tired, jaded, ruler — Nitish Kumar — whose authority after his Janata Dal (United)’s below-par performance in the recent Assembly election has dimmed to the level of inane formality. The saffron party is thus well placed now to advance its mentor RSS’ disintegrative social agendas in Bihar, with the chief minister being the rubber stamp, so besotted is he with the mere idea of being CM even at the cost of his self-esteem.

Whether the BJP is actually able to gain its ends in the foreseeable future will of course depend on many imponderables. But the current situation doesn’t bode well for Bihar. The state’s governance systems have long been a wreck. Its finances are in a pitiable state due to long-standing disregard by the Centre (despite the so-called “double-engine” government), and the state is a byword for deficient revenue-earning capacity.

Besides, as a party the BJP — the regent — typically takes the wrong turn on serious matters of governance at the Centre and in the states where its writ runs. It has been content, in the main, to play up social faultlines to score at the ballot box and then to politically persecute opponents in disregard of the law, common decencies and democratic culture.

It rules through sloganeering. When it puts its best foot forward, it comes up with “love jihad”, the CAA, triple talaq, and so on. What can Bihar gain from such a mindset?

India’s poorest state is truly in an unenviable position when a party like the BJP is to the fore and the CM is only too conscious that his best fate may lie in signing on the dotted line, quietly. For all the ear-shattering

din of “vikas” — or development — emanating from BJP’s most important leaders, Bihar’s economy and Bihar society appear poised to plunge, although there will be rallies declaring victory.

Bihar is the only state in north India, besides Jammu and Kashmir (now a Union territory) and Punjab, where the BJP has not had its own chief minister, either winning the state outright or having sufficient clout in a ruling alliance. In this quest it has been thwarted yet again. This must rattle the party’s leaders.

In the recent election, the BJP evidently worked to a plan which it thought would give the party its first CM in Bihar. It seemed clear to everyone that it set up the LJP’s Chirag Paswan, a NDA ally, to cut Mr Kumar’s votes so that the JD(U) leader was denued. That game has largely succeeded, although Mr Kumar was humiliated but not entirely defeated. What did not succeed, though, was the calculation that the main Opposition party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, led by jailed top politico Lalu Prasad Yadav’s greenhorn son Tejashwi, would be sent packing in the election. The opposite, in fact, happened.

Tejashwi played what is quite possibly the most spectacular innings in recent memory for an untested captain, taking the battle to the BJP, JD(U) and LJP, in the process

India’s poorest state is truly in an unenviable position when a party like the BJP is to the fore and the CM is only too conscious that his best fate may lie in signing on the dotted line, quietly

For now, the BJP must remain satisfied playing regent. But in the absence of a mandate, this is still an enviable position to be in. After all, the NDA has won state power, technicality or not.

reaching new heights of endeavour.

He refused to live in the past, he showed energy, and he marshalled his resources and his coalition partners with aplomb. In the end his party won more seats than any other party and bettered its polling percentage by as much as five per cent compared to the 2015 election, which the RJD had fought under his redoubtable but controversial father. The BJP came up next, having dropped five per cent of its vote share, although this time it fought in an alliance with Mr Kumar, rather than independently.

The difference between the ruling NDA’s campaign and the opposing Mahagathbandhan campaign was stark. Within the NDA, the BJP played the communal metaphor to the hilt and made promises of “development” that didn’t ring true in light of the NDA’s abysmal performance in the past five years. Mr Kumar pleaded plaintively with voters to give him one more chance.

Tejashwi Yadav, in sharp contrast, spoke to the most pressing need of the young voter — for jobs and a better deal. Some 20 seats were lost to his party or combine by a couple of hundred votes or less. The Election Commission could have been seen to be scrupulous, but remained satisfied with form, although the gap in votes between the winning and the losing side was only 12,000 in the state overall.

So, who won? This is apt to remain a debate and a source of deep contention in the days ahead in case the NDA’s opponents go on the warpath. They boycotted the swearing-in ceremony of the CM and his Cabinet colleagues. That means Bihar’s polity is on notice.

Following the appointment of Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha as Chief Information Commissioner, the CIC let the Central Secretariat withhold records of the resignation of former home secretary Anil Goswami

of former home secretary Anil Goswami. Sinha, a former IFS officer and high commissioner to the UK, was sworn in by President Ram Nath Advani. Bimal Julka retired from the post in August.

The panel has reportedly based its judgment on a Delhi high court order according to which file notes and deliberations of the Group of Officers or the authority cannot be disclosed. The CIC’s order came in response to an RTI application filed by IPS officer Anurag Thakur who had sought to know from the

Cabinet Secretariat the details of action taken on a complaint against Goswami, including communication exchanged between various authorities and file notings. Not getting a satisfactory response, Thakur appealed before the CIC. Goswami was forced to resign in February 2015 for allegedly trying to stall the arrest of a former Union minister in a case by the CBI.

MANIPUR INTRODUCES GOOD GOVERNANCE AWARD

Manipur chief minister N. Biren Singh has introduced an award for good governance as an incentive for babus to do innovative and extraordinary work at the grass-roots level. The initiative will reward government officials whose performance is of “a very high order” and whose work has benefited a large number of citizens and stakeholders.

Sources say that the award will be

LETTERS

NITISH’S RULE

Without a doubt, Nitish Kumar was a Hobson’s choice as CM for NDA’s continuance (*Nitish weakened, will his govt survive?*, DC, Nov. 18).

However, he needs to play second fiddle to the ruling dispensation and is on a tightrope. Unfortunately, this power asymmetry in due course will leave the voters in the lurch and they will be the sufferers.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

SIGNING RCEP

With many questioning the rationale behind India quitting the largest trade agreement called RCEP and thinking it’s likely to put India at a disadvantageous position, we can’t deny the fact that the reason behind the pandemic is partly due to the interconnectedness of the world economies and a chain reaction. When one nation’s supplies got affected, it had a domino effect on dependent countries as in China.

Ratnaraj Jain
Rajamahendravaram

GUPKAR ALLIANCE

The likes of Farooq Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti, etc do not have anything concrete to contribute (*Gupkar Gang going Global: Shah, DC, Nov. 18*). These anti-national elements should be strictly dealt with and should be nipped in the bud before they can create any nuisance to Jammu and Kashmir.

Maruti Mulupuri
Rajamahendravaram

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

IRCs to be set up at Centre, States

NEW DELHI, November 18. Union Labour Minister D. Sanjayvayya told the Rajya Sabha today that the Government had decided to set up Industrial Relations Commissions, both at the Centre and in the States, to settle industrial disputes between workers and managements.

Replying to questions arising out of a calling attention notice by Mr. T.V. Anandam (Cong-O) and others on the recent strike by the harbour workers of the Madras port, Mr. Sanjayvayya said the Government took the decision on the recommendations of the Nation Commission on Labour. The Government proposed to take a decision on the commission’s other recommendations. These steps would substantially contribute to industrial peace in the country, he said.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



MHA hard put to find officers ready to serve in Ladakh, J&K

More than a year after the change in the status of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, there is an acute shortage of IAS, IPS and other all-India service officers in the Union Territories. The situation is dire enough for the ministry of home affairs to write to all cadre-controlling authorities to prepare a list of IAS, IPS and other officers who can be immediately sent on deputation to J&K and Ladakh.

And the ministry is trying to cast its net far and wide. According to sources, a missive from the MHA has been sent to the Railway Board chairman, Comptroller General of Accounts, Comptroller Auditor General of India, secretaries of the ministries of defence, external affairs, corporate affairs and I&B, chairpersons of the Central Board of Direct Taxes and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, and the departments of

commerce, telecom and posts!

As of now, sources say, two officers have shown willingness to serve in J&K on deputation. Both are Kashmiri-born officers, one an IAS officer from Assam-Meghalaya cadre and the other an IRS officer. Not very encouraging, it seems.

After all, J&K has a stipulated cadre strength of 137 IAS officers, out of whom only 58 are serving in the cadre, including nine who are on Central deputation. Similarly, the cadre strength of IPS officers is 147, but only 66 are currently serving in the cadre.

CIC PUTS A LID ON INFORMATION

Among the first things the Central Information Commission (CIC) has done after the appointment of Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha as Chief Information Commissioner is to allow the Central Secretariat to withhold records of the resignation

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quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	44,180.05	0.52
Nifty 50	12,938.25	0.50
S&P 500*	3,614.85	0.15
Dollar (₹)	74.19	0.35
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.61	0.14
Euro (₹)	88.20	0.16
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,253*357	0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.64	0.89
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.878	0.002
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.865	-0.007

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Smaller towns are 'heroes' of pandemic: Nestle

Smaller towns have emerged as 'heroes' for Nestle India during the pandemic, offsetting 'somewhat muted' performance in large metros, its CMD Suresh Narayanan said. "One of the themes I would be having for the future is our smaller towns—our tier II, III and IV towns, which are towns with population of up to 5 lakh, up to 1 lakh and below a lakh—have really become the heroes of this pandemic," he said.

Global container volumes rose in Q3: Top shipper



The world's biggest shipping company, Denmark's A.P. Moller-Maersk, said global container volumes rose increased by around 1 per cent in the third quarter, a faster rebound than expected earlier in the year. But global demand for containers is expected to contract by 4-5 per cent this year due to Covid-19. CEO Soeren Skou said disciplined execution led to solid earnings and cash flow growth for the firm in Q3.

FPIs stay bullish on equities; pump \$6.3 billion in Q2

Foreign investors have pumped in \$6.3 billion in the Indian equity market in three months ended September on attractive valuations, opening-up of the economy and resumption in business activities, says a Morningstar report. This comes after a net inflow of \$3.9 bn in the June quarter and a net withdrawal of \$6.38 billion in the March quarter. As of Sept, the value of FPI investments in equities stood at \$450 bn, up 31 per cent.

India's laptop, tablet mfg can reach \$100 bn

India has the potential to scale up its laptop and tablet manufacturing capacity to \$100 billion by 2025 through policy interventions, ICEA said. Scaling up laptop and tablet PC manufacturing can take share of India in global market to 26 per cent from 1 per cent now. India Cellular and Electronics Association chairman Pankaj Mohindroo said the country's electronic market has reached \$65 billion.



Depositors money, employees safe LVB shareholders to lose investment

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, NOV. 18

Public shareholders of Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) will lose their money as the entire amount of the paid-up share capital will be written off as per the scheme of amalgamation of LVB with DBS India proposed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). However, depositors need not worry as their deposits will be transferred to DBS and would be fully secured. Around 4,000 employees of LVB also can heave a sigh of relief as they will be moved to DBS at the same remuneration as in LVB for the next three years. However, Damocles sword hangs over key management personnel of LVB as they could be retrenched by DBS, if it feels so. The market is also waiting to see whether the RBI will take over troubled private lender Dhanlaxmi Bank, too, as it is being long mired in management issues, and impose a merger or a revival plan. As per the draft scheme of amalgamation of LVB with DBS Bank India, the entire amount of the paid-up share capital will be written off. "On and from the appointed date, the entire amount of the paid-up share capital and reserves and surplus, including the balances in the share/securities premium account of the transferor bank, shall stand written off," said the RBI in the draft scheme of amalgamation for LVB

HOPE AND DESPAIR

Deposits will be transferred to DBS Bank India and would be fully secured

Around 4,000 employees will be moved to DBS India at the current remuneration for 3 years

Key management personnel of LVB could be retrenched by DBS, if so required

Market is also waiting to see if similar action will follow in the case of Dhanlaxmi Bank

with DBS India announced by it on Tuesday. Anand Dama, analyst at Emkay Research, said, "As per the extant scheme, paid-up capital/reserves of LVB shall stand extinguished similar to write-off of AT-1 bonds in the case of Yes Bank. Deposits will be transferred to DBS and thus stand fully secured, while employees will be moved to the transferee bank at the same remuneration as in LVB for the next three years. However, key management personnel could be retrenched by DBS, if required." Speaking at a virtual press meet on Wednesday, the RBI-appointed administrator for LVB and former non-executive chairman of Canara Bank T.N. Manoharan said shareholders of LVB will not have a say in the amalgamation decision in their general body meeting under the Companies Act as the Banking Regulation Act—a special Act—will override the provisions of a general law. LVB depositors contin-

ued to panic since the announcement of the amalgamation scheme by the RBI on Tuesday evening, with the bank witnessing about Rs 10 crore of deposit withdrawals, according to Manoharan. He assured depositors that their money is safe and expressed confidence that the lender's merger with DBS Bank India will be completed within the December 16 deadline set by the regulator. Manoharan said all the employees of LVB will be absorbed in DBS after the merger. DBS Bank may also rope in more experienced professionals to carry out a digitisation drive at the troubled bank. The RBI administrator said that the troubled bank has enough liquidity to pay back depositors. Shares of LVB fell 19.94 per cent to Rs 12.40 on the BSE, hitting the lower circuit. Shares worth Rs 31.8 crore were traded on the NSE and Rs 3.65 crore, on the BSE. (With inputs from Ravi Ranjan Prasad)

VEDANTA BIDS FOR BPCL; FOREIGN PLAYER ALSO IN RACE

New Delhi, Nov. 18: Mining conglomerate Vedanta has put in a preliminary expression of interest (EoI) for buying the government's stake in Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL), for which a major foreign player too is said to be in the race. A special purpose vehicle floated by the BSE-listed Vedanta Ltd and its London-based parent Vedanta Resources submitted an EoI before the close of deadline on November 16. "Vedanta's EoI for BPCL is to evaluate potential synergies with our existing oil and gas business," the company said in a statement. "The EoI is at a preliminary stage and exploratory in nature." Sources in the department handling the sale said the EoI has been put in by a special purpose vehicle or SPV floated by Vedanta Ltd and Vedanta Resources. They also said a major foreign player was among the three-four entities whose EoIs were received by the close of the bidding on Monday. The other potential investors are foreign funds but their identity was not disclosed. Share price of BPCL has plunged by nearly a fourth since the time the strategic sale was approved in November last year. At Wednesday's closing price of Rs 383.20 on the BSE, the government's 52.98 per cent stake in BPCL is worth Rs 44,000 crore. —PTI

Apple to halve App Store fees to 15% from January

MARK GURMAN NOV. 18



Apple Inc is cutting by half the fees charged to most developers who sell software and services on the App Store, marking the biggest change to the store's revenue structure since the iPhone maker launched the service in 2008. The company is lowering the App Store fee to 15 per cent from 30 per cent for developers who produce as much as \$1 million in annual revenue from their apps and those who are new to the store. The change will go into effect January 1 as part of an App Store Small Business Program, Apple said on Wednesday in a statement. The company said the new structure will apply to the "vast majority" of developers who charge for apps and in-app purchases on Apple's devices. The programme won't affect some major apps such as those from Netflix Inc and Spotify Technology SA. The Cupertino, California-based technology giant said it's making the change to help small developers financially and to provide a way for them to invest in their businesses amid the economic struggles caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Apple has faced ongoing scrutiny from government regulators and criticism from developers about the percentage of revenue it takes for App Store purchases. The company also is engaged in a lawsuit with Epic Games Inc, the maker of the

video game Fortnite, over its App Store fees and payment rules. Alphabet Inc's Google also charges similar fees to developers on its Android app store. Income from app developers has been key to Apple's growing services business, which reached almost \$54 billion in revenue in fiscal 2020. The App Store is one of several products and offerings that make up the services unit, but is the biggest revenue driver, according to Toni Sacconaghi, an analyst at Sanford C Bernstein. He estimates the App Store alone will bring in \$18.7 billion in 2021, about a third of Apple's total services revenue next year. Apple has said there are 1.8 million apps in the App Store across all of the company's platforms and more than 28 million registered developers. The company said earlier this year the store has generated \$155 billion for developers since it started. Since the beginning of the App Store, Apple generally has charged developers a 30 per cent slice of revenue generated by their apps. In 2016, Apple lowered to 15 per cent the cut it takes from subscriptions purchased through the apps for more than a year. Earlier this year, Apple also loosened

restrictions on some cloud-gaming apps and email services, charging a fee to fewer developers. The latest change will take place across App Stores on the iPhone, iPad, Mac, Apple TV and Apple Watch. The company has said that 85 per cent of apps found on the App Store are free and aren't part of the revenue fee system. Small developers make up the majority of App Store sellers. Some major apps, such as those offered by Netflix and Spotify, don't let subscribers sign up through the App Store, avoiding the 30 per cent charge. Apple is betting that the fee change will result in developers creating more apps and sticking with the App Store, which will create enough new revenue to offset any potential financial negatives from the fee reductions. Apple's standard 30 per cent fee will remain for developers that generate more than \$1 million in a calendar year. Chief executive officer Tim Cook testified about the company's App Store practices at a July hearing before US lawmakers. In advance of Cook's appearance, Apple published a study that claimed its 30 per cent cut is normal for the industry or lower than some app stores. "We're launching this programme to help small business owners write the next chapter of creativity and prosperity on the App Store, and to build the kind of quality apps our customers love," Cook said. —Bloomberg

Rising metal prices, freight charges hurt many sectors

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 18

Rising metal prices and higher freight charges on imports are posing a new challenge for manufacturers and exporters. Base metal prices as well as steel prices have seen significant upside of late in the commodity market. Copper prices have moved up 64 per cent from their March levels, zinc has gone up by 67 per cent, nickel by 50 per cent, aluminium by 30 per cent and lead by 24 per cent from their March levels, said Ajay Kedia, MD, Kedia Commodities. "Stimulus packages announced in major economies, the restriction on production in China ahead of the winter due to environmental concerns and weakness in dollar are some of the key factors

supporting base metals. Further, zinc has low levels of inventory, nickel prices are supported by steel demand, lead by recovery in the automobile sector and aluminium by demand from the packaging industry," he said. While the raw material price is hurting the manufacturers, the recent jump in freight charges on imported goods due to limited availability of containers has worsened the situation. "The price of hot rolled coil, an essential raw material for the engineering industry, has increased from Rs 35,000 a tonne to Rs 42,000 a tonne in the past six months," says the Engineering Export Promotion Council of India. "Zinc prices too have shot up from Rs 170 a kg to Rs 220 per kg and freight charges have almost doubled," said EEPC India

chairman Mahesh Desai. "Prices of other essential metals have also been rising disproportionately to the end-product prices... Engineering exporters face severe headwind and this is impacting their exports. Exporters also face scarcity of steel," he said. The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers Association said, "The increasing steel prices, used extensively in manufacturing of vehicles, puts pressure on the cost of vehicles. This, coupled with the rising international freight charges, could impact the competitiveness of Indian manufacturers." The exporters want the Centre to intervene and prod the large steel makers to keep prices in check. The real estate sector is also concerned about the rising steel prices.

SENSEX ENDS ABOVE 44000 FOR FIRST TIME

Mumbai, Nov. 18: Equity benchmarks scaled record highs for the third straight session on Wednesday as investors accumulated banking, auto and engineering stocks amid firm global cues and unabated foreign fund inflows. The BSE SENSEX vaulted 227.34 points to close above the 44000-level for the first time at 44,180.05. Intra-day, it touched its lifetime high of 44,215.49. The NSE Nifty advanced 64.05 points to end at its all-time high of 12,938.25, after making an intra-day record of 12,948.85. M&M was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, soaring 10.76 per cent, followed by L&T. According to traders, largely positive cues from global markets and persistent foreign fund inflows buoyed market sentiment. —PTI

Renault names new compact SUV Kiger

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, NOV. 18



French auto major Renault on Wednesday said it will launch its all-new compact SUV Kiger in the Indian market in the first quarter of next year to boost sales in Asia's third biggest and fiercely competitive car market. The concept or show car is a joint effort between the corporate design teams in France and Renault India, and the company says it took a lot of input and feedback from Indian customers. The sub-compact SUV segment in India has grown by leaps and bounds in recent times with multiple options for prospective buyers and it is this rapidly expanding increase that Renault Kiger is looking at tapping. "After Kwid and Triber, Renault Kiger is the third global car from Groupe Renault to be launched in India first, followed by other markets,"

Venkatram Mamillapalle, Country CEO and MD at Renault India, said. The concept or show car is a joint effort between the corporate design teams in France and Renault India, and the company says it took a lot of input and feedback from Indian customers. The sub-compact SUV segment in India has grown by leaps and bounds in recent times with multiple options for prospective buyers and it is this rapidly expanding increase that Renault Kiger is looking at tapping. "After Kwid and Triber, Renault Kiger is the third global car from Groupe Renault to be launched in India first, followed by other markets,"

Why India's financial sector keeps blowing up

JEANETTE RODRIGUES NOV. 18

Explainer

What's up with India's \$1.7 trillion financial system? In the space of a couple of years, four major finance companies have been seized by authorities and the central bank has had to reassure the public multiple times. It's a stark turnaround since the country emerged largely unscathed from the 2008 global financial crisis. Policy makers are grappling with a chicken-and-egg situation: Should they spur credit to boost economic growth or focus instead on cleaning up a banking system with the world's worst bad-loan ratio?

How did it come to this? The seeds were sown in a debt-fuelled economic boom between 2007 and 2012, when banks increased loans by 400 per cent. When the economy began slowing, many companies struggled to repay, making banks reluctant to lend more. That crimped

the availability of credit and added a further drag on the economy, heaping pressure on indebted businesses. Some of the slack was picked up by non-bank lenders, or shadow banks, but one of the most prominent, IL&FS, became the first major blowup in 2018 in what became known as India's mini-Lehman moment.

What's happened? The collapse of IL&FS triggered something of a credit crunch and the Reserve Bank of India stepped in to take control of another shadow lender, Dewan Housing Finance Corp, to contain the fallout. A smaller lender also failed in 2019 after allegedly duping investors about its exposure to a property developer. Then, in March 2020, the central bank seized Yes Bank in India's biggest bank rescue, and this month it orchestrated the takeover of struggling



Lakshmi Vilas Bank Ltd by Singapore's DBS Group Holdings Ltd, the first such move involving a foreign bank.

What went wrong? Yes Bank's troubles were rooted in the rapid expansion under its former CEO and co-founder Rana Kapoor. Credit Suisse had noted in a 2019 report the company had the biggest proportion of outstanding loans to large stressed borrowers. Lakshmi Vilas suffered numerous setbacks in the recent past, including the ouster of its CEO by stakeholders. In 2019, the bank had planned to merge with shadow lender Indiabulls

Housing Finance Ltd, only for the regulator to veto the move. The RBI had placed Lakshmi Vilas under watch in September of that year, months after the breach of key thresholds.

So it's not just the economy? No. India's bad-loan problem has multiple roots, including government policies. Some borrowers found life harder when authorities suddenly tightened regulations; the courts cancelled coal-mining licences or ordered payment of telecom fees; natural gas supplies dwindled; real-estate prices fell and interest rates rose.

The demonetisation in 2016 devastated supply chains and created dangerous imbalances in the financial system. Also, regulators allege that some bank chiefs handed out to their cronies many loans that ended up in default.

What are authorities doing and is it working? The central bank in 2015 began assessing the bad loans, bringing to light the full scope of the problem. Gross non-performing assets across the banking sector surged from about 3 per cent to more than 9 per cent, then breached 10 per cent—the highest in the world. The government has created a new bankruptcy law to aid loan-recoveries but, as the economic growth slows, authorities are taking steps to spur fresh credit and show more lenience toward certain borrowers and small businesses. The central bank warned in July that India's bad-loan clean-up is set to reverse, with soured debt forecast at 12.5 per cent of total credit by March 2021, the

highest level in more than two decades.

Are there more difficulties ahead? Almost certainly. Fitch Ratings warned in July that capital fund-raising plans by state-owned banks from private sources won't be sufficient to mitigate anticipated risks without additional support from the state. But the government is struggling to find cash to support the lenders and to spur credit. India entered an unprecedented technical recession in 2020 and the central bank said risks are piling up on household and corporate balance sheets that could spill into the financial sector.

Any silver lining? The health of India's NBFC sector has improved. The RBI had been concerned about 10 companies on a list of 50, but is now just focused on four. Healthier shadow lenders could revive credit for consumers, potentially giving a shot in the arm to the economy. —Bloomberg

NSE ASKED TO RAISE CORPUS OF INVESTOR PROTECTION FUND TO ₹1,500 CRORE

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, NOV. 18

Regulator Sebi has asked the NSE to increase the size of its investor protection fund (IPF) corpus to Rs 1,500 crore in order to protect the interests of investors in light of the recent broker defaults. The exchange currently maintains about Rs 550 crore in IPF corpus, NSE said when enquired by Financial Chronicle. "The adequacy of the IPF corpus will be reviewed on a half-yearly basis and incremental contributions will be made to the IPF, if required," the NSE said. "Sebi has advised NSE to increase the size of its IPF corpus to Rs 1,500 crore in order to protect the interests of investors in light of the recent broker defaults," the NSE said in a statement on Wednesday. "NSE is focused and committed to further strengthening investor protection through a variety of measures including focused investor education, enhanced broker supervision and surveillance in view of the recent defaults of Trading Members," it said.

APPAREL EXPORTERS SEEK DEAL WITH UK

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 18

Apparel exporters want the government to strike a pre-FTA preferential trade deal with the United Kingdom ahead of Brexit. The apparel industry is at a disadvantage against some of its competitors which have FTA with the UK, it is felt. "It has been learnt that after the implementation of Brexit in January 2021, 47 Least Developed Countries, including Bangladesh, will continue to enjoy preferential trade benefits. This will be a continuation of the disadvantage to Indian apparels in the important and potential market of the UK," said Apparel Export Promotion Council chairman A Sakthivel.

SHORT TAKES

Youngster Leon earns GM norm

Chennai: Young Indian International master Leon Luke Mendonca won a GM tournament in Hungary with a round to spare to close in on the coveted Grandmaster title. The 14-year-old player from Goa won the First Saturday GM November 2020 event in Budapest late on Monday to earn his second Grandmaster norm in the space of 21 days. He needs one more norm to earn the GM title. Mendonca (Elo 2516) finished with 7.5 points and won the title with a round to spare. He remained unbeaten in the event and scored wins over two Grandmasters. He posted six wins and three draws in the nine-round championship. In the opening round, he drew against higher rated GM Plat Vojtech of the Czech Republic. He had in late October won the RigoChess International Chess Festival Grandmaster tournament in Hungary where he gained his maiden GM norm. — PTI

Dalmiya grandson is football official

Kolkata: Keeping up the family legacy, Aditya Dalmiya, grandson of former BCCI and ICC president late Jagmohan Dalmiya, on Wednesday made a foray into sports administration. Aditya is the son of Dalmiya's daughter Baishali, who happens to be a Trinamool Congress MLA from Bally constituency. The 21-year-old, who is pursuing masters in sports management, was appointed as the chairman of Indian Football Association 'School Committee' representing Rajasthan Club. "He is a young man with the right mindset. We made the 'School Committee' with much care and made him the chairman. My nephew Anirban Dutta, who is in the same committee, will work under him," IFA chairman Subrata Dutta said. Recollecting his father Biswanath Dutta's role in Dalmiya's rise, he said: "My father had spotted Jagmohan Dalmiya in the early 1970s as the administrator of the football unit of Rajasthan Club." — PTI

Aditi and Diksha start well in Saudi

King Abdullah Economic City, Saudi Arabia: Aditi Ashok and Diksha Dagar began with a round of one-under 71 respectively as the Saudi Ladies Team International got underway at the Royal Greens Golf and Country Club on Wednesday. They were both Tied-14th as Finnish golfer Sanna Nuutinen shot 66 to take the lead after the first round. Other Indians in the field were further down. Tvesa Malik (74) was T-41 and Astha Madan (80) was T-103rd. The tournament has an innovative team format, though the individual pros will also be vying for substantial purse. It is being played over 54-holes with \$500,000 up for grabs — \$300,000 for the team and \$200,000 for the individual. The players and amateurs make up 37 teams. The teams were selected in an NFL-style draft system and they compete in a team of four pro-am format with the best two scores to count. — PTI

CWG all set for women's cricket

Dubai: Six highest-placed teams in the ICC rankings as on April 1 next year along with hosts England will get direct qualification to the 2022 Commonwealth Games women's T20 competition, which will make its debut at the quadrennial showpiece in Birmingham. Women's cricket will be a part of the Commonwealth Games for the first time ever when the 2022 edition gets underway in Birmingham from July 28 to August 8. It will only be the second time that cricket will feature in the event after a men's competition was part of the Games in Kuala Lumpur in 1998. — PTI

Live on TV

TENNIS

ATP Finals: Round robin matches from 7.30 pm and 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2018-20

Printed and Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Plot No. 9 Alwal Village, Vaidh Nagar Taluk, Medchal Malkajgiri Dist. Telangana and Published at 36, S.D. Road, Secunderabad-3. RNI Registration No. 3081/1957. Editor: Kaushik Mitter

GERMANY'S PAIN

Spaniards shame heavyweights with humiliating defeat

Paris, Nov. 18: Ferran Torres grabbed a hat-trick as Spain condemned Germany to their worst defeat in 89 years on Tuesday, winning 6-0 in Seville to qualify for the UEFA Nations League finals and join France, who came from behind to beat Sweden 4-2.

Manchester City forward Torres was the star for Spain, who were as brilliant as Germany were bad. The result raises further questions about Germany coach Joachim Loew, who was already under pressure coming into this game.

"This has been a black day for us," admitted Loew after Germany's heaviest defeat since losing 6-0 to Austria in 1931.

They came into their final game in League A, Group 4 on top, a point clear of Spain, and so only needed a draw at an empty La Cartuja to qualify for the finals in October next year.

But Alvaro Morata headed Spain in front in the 17th minute before Torres crashed in the second on 33 minutes after Dani Olmo's header hit the bar.

His City teammate Rodri headed in another to make it 3-0 for Spain before the end of a first half in which they lost Sergio Canales and skipper Sergio Ramos to injury.

Germany's defence was missing as Jose Gaya burst through and squared for Torres to get the fourth on 55 minutes, and Fabian Ruiz teed up the 20-year-old Torres to complete his hat-trick.

Germany now have several months to reflect on this loss before the start of 2022 World Cup qualifying in March and then the delayed Euro 2020 in June and July.

Spain, meanwhile, became the second side to qualify for the Nations League finals after France clinched their place by beating Portugal 4-2 at the weekend.

— AFP

THE RESULTS

Spain (Morata 17, Ferran Torres 33, 55, 71, Rodri 38, Oyarzabal 89)	6
Germany	0
Croatia (Kovacic 29, 65)	2
Portugal (Ruben Dias 52, 90, Joao Felix 60)	3
France (Giroud 16, 59, Pavard 36, Coman 90+5)	4
Sweden (Claesson 5, Quaison 88)	2
Luxembourg	0
Azerbaijan	0
Montenegro (Jovetic 14, Boljevic 25, 28, Mugosa 60)	4
Cyprus	0
Malta (Guillaumier 54)	1
Faroe Islands (Jonsson 70)	1



Spain players celebrate a goal against Germany during the UEFA Nations League football match at La Cartuja stadium in Seville, Spain, on Tuesday. Spain won 6-0, Germany's worst defeat since 1931. — AP

Brazil, Argentina 2 good

Montevideo (Uruguay), Nov. 18: Brazil continued their perfect start to the qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup with a 2-0 win over Uruguay while rivals Argentina stayed in touch with an easy win in Peru. First-half goals from Arthur and Richardson helped Brazil to a 2-0 win over Uruguay, who had Manchester United striker Edinson Cavani sent off.

Argentina, with Lionel Messi pulling the strings, brushed aside a limited Peru 2-0 in Lima, with goals from Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez and Nicholas Gonzalez in a game in which they were never troubled.

Ecuador, playing on their home turf in high-altitude Quito, hammered Colombia 6-1. Paraguay and Bolivia fought out a 2-2 draw while Venezuela picked up their first points in a 2-1 victory over Chile in Caracas.

Victory in Montevideo left Brazil on top of South America's qualifying standings on 12 points with four wins from four games. Argentina are second on 10 points after beating Peru, with surprise team Ecuador third on nine points.

— AFP



Brazil's Marquinhos (left) and Douglas Luiz vie for the ball with Darwin Nunez of Uruguay during their FIFA World Cup South American qualifier at the Centenario Stadium in Montevideo on Tuesday. Brazil won 2-0. — AFP

THE RESULTS

Uruguay (Arthur 33, Richardson 45)	2	Ecuador (Arboleda 7, Mena Delgado 9, Estrada Martinez 32, Arreaga 39, Plata 78, Estupinan 90+1)	6
Peru	0	Colombia (Rodriguez 45+1-pen)	1
Argentina (Gonzalez 17, Martinez 28)	2	Paraguay (Angel Romero 19-pen, Kaku 72)	2
Venezuela (Mago 9, Rondon 81)	2	Bolivia (Moreno 41, B. Cespedes 45)	2
Chile (Vidal 15)	1		

Nadal dances to Thiem music at ATP

London, Nov. 18: Rafael Nadal insisted he can still win the ATP Finals for the first time despite a damaging 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/4) defeat against Austria's Dominic Thiem on Tuesday.

Thiem overpowered Nadal behind closed doors at London's O2 Arena to put a dent in the Spanish star's bid to finally lift the one major prize missing from his packed trophy cabinet.

Thiem became the first player to qualify for the semifinals a few hours later when reigning champion Stefanos Tsitsipas beat Russian seventh seed Andrey Rublev 6-1, 4-6, 7-6 (8/6).

Tsitsipas saved a match point in the final set tie-break before the Greek sixth seed sealed his first win of the week.

Nadal had beaten Rublev in straight sets in his first match, but the 34-year-old was unable to cope with Thiem in a high-quality clash.

Now Nadal, who lost the 2010 and 2013 finals of the event, has to beat Tsitsipas in his last group match to keep alive his hopes of reaching the semifinals of the prestigious season-ending tournament.



Dominic Thiem of Austria celebrates defeating Rafael Nadal of Spain in their men's singles round robin match on Day Three of the ATP World Tour Finals at the O2 Arena in London on Tuesday. — AFP

Despite his perilous position, Nadal took heart from the way he competed against the inspired Thiem. He believes that will stand him in good stead in a showdown with Tsitsipas that decides the second semifinalist from the group. "He played I think an amazing match, and I

played well too. So my feeling is not negative. I lost, but I had plenty of chances in the first and then I had break up in the second set," Nadal said.

"I'm happy with the way I played. I think my chances are bigger to have a very good result now than five days ago because

the level of tennis, even if I lost today, for me is much higher," he added.

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.

The world number two has qualified for the ATP Finals for 16 years in a row, but his record at the eight-man elite event pales in comparison with Federer and Novak Djokovic after six injury withdrawals.

Potentially facing another disappointment in the Finals, Nadal said he couldn't explain his problems at the event. "I don't know. I think even if I never won here, I don't want to pretend to be arrogant at all, because I am not. But I really don't need to show even to myself or to no one that if I am playing my best tennis I think I can win in every surface and against any player," he said.

"I never won in the World Tour Finals. That's the real thing at the same time. So no problem about that. I know I have to play my best if I want to have chances," Nadal added. — AFP

English August for India in '21

London, Nov. 18: A five-match Test series against India will headline England's bumper home summer in 2021 as the country's cricket board on Wednesday unveiled a provisional fixture with plans to get crowds back into the stadiums.

The matches against India are scheduled for August-September.

Earlier this year, England hosted Pakistan and the West Indies in twin Test series behind closed doors due to the raging Covid-19 pandemic, before welcoming Australia for a series of limited overs matches.

However, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) now seems eager to stage the return of fans into the playing arena from the next season onwards depending on the Covid-19 situation.

"Next year we've got another big international programme to look forward to, with the thrill of a five-Test series against India as the centrepiece, compelling white ball series for our men and women, and an Ashes Series for our Visually Impaired team," ECB chief executive officer, Tom Harrison, said in a release issued by the board. Much to the delight of

● **England's Test series against India is due to get underway on August 4 at Trent Bridge, with following matches taking place at Lord's, Headingley and The Oval, before finishing up in Manchester on September 14.**

English cricket fans craving for live action, the CEO added, "It's an exciting prospect for England fans, and while Covid-19 means there's still a great deal of uncertainty, we really hope to be able to welcome fans back into the grounds safely next year to bring that unique atmosphere to stadia across the country."

The Test series against India is due to conclude the men's international summer, with matches at Trent Bridge, Lord's, Headingley, the Kia Oval and Old Trafford.

The series is due to get underway on August 4 at Trent Bridge, with following matches taking place at Lord's, Headingley and The Oval, before finishing up in Manchester on September 14. — PTI

NEW DAD RICHARDSON PULLS OUT OF OZ SIDE

Sydney, Nov. 18: Fast bowler Kane Richardson withdrew on Wednesday from Australia's limited-overs squad to face India to stay with his wife and newborn son in Adelaide, which is battling a coronavirus outbreak.

Richardson will be replaced by fellow quick Andrew Tye who was part of the squad on Australia's recent white-ball tour to England.

"It was a difficult decision for Kane to make but one which has the complete support of the selectors and the entire playing squad," national selector Trevor Hohns said.

Richardson informed selectors of his decision on Tuesday, hours before South Australia announced a six-day "cir-

cuit-breaker" lockdown to contain a sudden coronavirus cluster in the state capital Adelaide.

"Kane wanted to remain in Adelaide with Nyki and their newborn son. We will always support our players and their families, even more so given the challenging environment we are in," said Hohns.

Preparations for India's blockbuster cricket tour have been complicated by the outbreak in South Australia, with the first Test scheduled at the Adelaide Oval from December 17-21.

Before that there are three one-day internationals and three Twenty20 internationals to be played in Sydney and Canberra beginning on November 27. — AFP

Akhtar pitches for Rohit as ODI lead

New Delhi, Nov. 18: Former Pakistan pacer Shoaib Akhtar feels Rohit Sharma leading the Indian Test team against Australia in Virat Kohli's absence is a no brainer and the much awaited series will be his "best chance" to stake claim for captaincy in one of the limited-overs formats.

Calls have been growing for split captaincy in the Indian team since Rohit led Mumbai Indians to a fifth title in the IPL. Rohit has also led India to an Asia Cup title in Kohli's absence. Though Ajinkya Rahane is the vice-captain on paper, Akhtar sees Rohit taking over leadership duties from Kohli following the first Test at the Adelaide Oval. The India skipper will be returning home after the series-opener to attend the birth of his first child.

"My take on it is pretty simple. From what I know Virat is very keen to take the team forward. It all

depends on how fatigued he is feeling. He has been playing non-stop since 2010, has got 70 centuries and a mountain of runs under his belt," Akhtar said.

"If he is feeling fatigued, then he should think about giving the leadership role to Rohit in one of the formats (preferably T20s). I could see the boredom on his face during the IPL, may be it was because of the bio-bubble situation, he seemed a bit stressed out. It all depends on how he feels. Rohit has been ready for captaincy for a while," he added.

"Australia will be his best chance to prove himself as captain. He should grab it with both hands. He has the talent and ability to lead the team. The whole world would be looking at Rohit as captain and batsman. If he does well for himself and the team, then there should be a debate about split captaincy," Akhtar said. — PTI

PAK CHIEF IS SURE OF HOSTING MORE GAMES

Karachi, Nov. 18: Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ehsan Mani believes the successful and event-free conduct of Pakistan Super League-5 has enhanced the image of the country and exuded confidence of hosting more international teams next year.

Mani said he was happy to have fulfilled his commitment of hosting the entire PSL this year at home. "I reiterated this when the event was suspended prior to the play-off stage, and despite several challenges, uncertainties and doubts, I am delighted that the PCB has fulfilled another commitment and promise to the loyal and passionate Pakistan cricket fans and supporters," he said after the summit clash that was won by Karachi Kings on Tuesday night. — PTI