


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
NELLORE | WEDNESDAY | 28 OCTOBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 33.5°C
Min: 26.6°C
RH: 80%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: clear.
Max/Min temp. 33/26 °C

COVID-19 COUNT


CASES	DEATHS
(+43,603)	(+532)
79,87,731	1,20,023

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+837)	(+4)
TS: 2,33,671	1,315
(+2,901)	(+19)
AP: 8,11,825	6,625

CASES AROUND THE WORLD



44,071,979

DEATHS

11,68,562

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana

Tithi: Nija Ashwayuja Shuddha Dwadasi till 12.55 pm

Star: Poorvabhadra till 9.11 am

Varjyam: 7.54 pm to 9.41 pm

Durmuhurtam: 11.37 am to 12.22 pm

Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Rabbi-ul Awwal 10, 1442 AH

PRAYERS(SHAHI MASJID)

Fajar: 4.53 am

Zohar: 11.54 pm

Asar: 4.07 pm

Maghrib: 5.44 pm

Isha: 6.56 pm

SUNSET TODAY 5.43 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.04 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 3.57 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 4.10 AM

COUNTER POINT



HYDERABAD GETS A PHARMA BOOST

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 27

Pharmaceutical companies Granules India and Laurus Labs announced their decision to make major investments in Genome Valley in the city. Granules India, a Hyderabad-based company, said it will be investing ₹400 crore to set up a manufacturing facility. Laurus Labs, a leading research driven pharma company, said it will be setting up a formulation facility by invest ₹300 crores in two phases of ₹150 crore each.

VIOLENT | TRADITION

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, OCT. 27

Banni, the traditional stick fight, that leaves scores of people injured, was held at Devaragutta village despite the ban imposed upon it by the district administration.

Despite heavy police bandobast, the festival was held with least regard to Covid-19 restrictions. A total of 1,200 policemen, seven DSPs and four drones, 30 checkpoints, and 50 closed-circuit cameras were in place but to no avail. “We were successful in controlling the visitors from Karnataka and other



places,” said Kurnool SP Kaginellin Fakkeerappa. Banni, popularly known as karrala samaram organised at midnight during the Dasara festival at Sri Mala Malleswara Swamy temple

at Devaragattu hills in Holagunda mandal had been cancelled for the first time in its history which dates back to a few centuries. The district administra-

tion had taken this decision in view of the prevalence of the virus, said Holagunda mandal tahsildar Mohammad Rafi. But all events of the nine-day utsavams were organised traditionally without gathering of people, following Covid-19 guidelines, Fakkeerappa added.

On the other hand, though the officials had decided to cancel the event, the people demanded the kerala samaram be held with the involvement of Neraniki, Neraniki tanda and Kothapeta village, leading to a tense situation. The event did take place eventually.

Fakkeerappa said, “Injuries have come down drastically compared to 100 plus every year to 48 this year with no serious injuries or casualties.” He said no outsiders, that is from outside the district and state, participated. Only neighbouring villagers participated. However, Fakeerappa said the police were successful in reducing the intensity of the scale of participation in this hair-raising stick fight that leaves people bruised and bloody.

■ Page 2: Groups fight with sticks but don't complain



NATION | 4

Khushbu Sundar detained over Manusmriti row



WORLD | 5

Don pick Barrett sworn in as SC justice

SPORTS | 8

Gavaskar curious about Rohit's injury



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy releases the second phase of YSR Rythu Bharosa financial assistance to farmers at the camp office on Tuesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

AP to compensate for crop damage in time, says Jagan

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 27

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy announced that the government is taking measures to pay compensation in November for the crops damaged by the incessant rains this month.

Releasing the second instalment of the YSR Rythu Bharosa scheme on Tuesday benefiting nearly 50.47 lakh farmers that is usable for the Rabi season, the CM said that the earlier (Telugu Desam) government did not help farmers when they crop losses. It paid compensation for crops losses of 2014 till January 2017, the CM said.

The compensation for 2015 Kharif crop loss was not given till November 2016, and it always ran into the next year. For the year 2018 kharif, the previous TD government had defaulted. The CM announced that YSRC government will pay compensation in the same season.

He said that crop damages due to floods in June, July, August and September amount to ₹135.73 lakh and will be paid to 1.66 lakh farmers who lost their crops.

The Chief Minister announced that the enumeration of crop loss in October is ongoing and the amount will be paid in November.

“We have procured paddy worth ₹15,000

crore in 2019-20. The previous government has left dues of ₹8,655 crore toward 14-month free power dues which we have cleared along with ₹960 crore for paddy procurement, ₹384 crore for subsidy on seeds, ₹₹1,046 crore towards zero interest loans from 2014 which we have cleared,” the Chief Minister said.

“We will increase the capacity of feeders for uninterrupted free power to farmers, pay crop insurance, set up 147 integrated labs at constituency level. The state will stand by the farmers from sowing of seeds till the marketing as more than 70 per cent of farmers have small land holdings and the amount will be useful for

starting agricultural operations,” Jagan Mohan Reddy said.

“Before elections, we have promised to give Rs 12,500 for four years but have increased it Rs 13,500 and for five years, which works out to Rs 67,500. The benefit is given to farmers, tenant farmers, tribals cultivating land under RoFR and those tilling assigned lands,” he added.

Some of the beneficiaries who participated in the video conference hailed the Chief Minister for his welfare schemes and listed the benefits they have attained under various schemes. Ministers K. Kannababu, M. Sucharita and other officials were present at the event.

KONA SAYS AP WILL HAVE 26 DISTRICTS IN 2021

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 27

The number of districts in Andhra Pradesh will increase to 26 from the present 13 in New Year 2021, announced Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly deputy speaker Kona Raghupathi. A formal announcement on reorganisation of the districts is likely to be made on January 26, 2021.

The deputy speaker clarified that although the plan was to have as many districts as the 25 Parliament constituencies, the 26th district will come about due to the complexity of Araku Lok Sabha constituency.

■ Full report on Page 2

SEC to elicit views on local polls, YSRC to stay away

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 27

N. Ramesh Kumar, AP State Election Commissioner, will elicit views from all political parties on conducting polls to local bodies which were earlier postponed by the SEC following the outbreak of the Corona-virus pandemic, on Wednesday.

The SEC has decided to call the representatives of political parties individually and obtain their views in writing. The exercise gains significance in the backdrop of the state government opposing the holding the polls at this juncture and the AP High Court taking up a batch of writ petitions that have

pressed for conducting the elections on November 2. The government has already informed the High Court of its view to not hold the polls as the prevalence of Covid-19 is still high.

Sources told *Deccan Chronicle* that the SEC, while conveying the views of all parties, would also express its preparedness to conduct the polls. The ruling YSR Congress has decided to boycott the meeting with the SEC. Party general secretary and MLA Ambati Rambabu in a statement questioned the very exercise as the Supreme Court had given clear instructions to the SEC to resume the poll process only after consulting the

state government.

Further, Rambabu said, the motives of Ramesh Kumar were doubtful as he had unilaterally postponed the elections when there were just three Covid-19 cases in the state but was now initiating the process when more than 3,000 cases are being reported every day.

The state witnessed an ugly war between the government and the SEC following a series of incidents that started with Ramesh Kumar's decision to put off the polls and the government removing him from the post.

■ Page 2: Jagan not keen on holding polls till Ramesh demits office

All Indians can buy land in Jammu and Kashmir

Centre omits the phrase ‘permanent resident of the state’ in tweaked J&K Development Act

● Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha told reporters that the amendments do not allow transfer of agricultural land to non-agriculturists.

The Centre on Tuesday cleared the decks for people from across the country to buy land in Jammu and Kashmir by amending several laws, a move which mainstream political parties in the Union Territory said was akin to putting the erstwhile state up “for sale”.

The BJP, however, said the amendments, which came over a year after the Centre nullified Article 370 and Article 35A of the Constitution, will open the “floodgates of development” and mark the beginning of a new era of progress and prosperity in the union territory.

In a 111-page notification in Hindi and English, the ministry of home affairs made several changes to the land laws, including one that allows use of agricultural land for setting up facilities of public purpose.

The most important amendment has been made in the Jammu and Kashmir Development Act that deals with disposal of land with

the Centre omitting the phrase “permanent resident of the state” from Section 17 of the law.

Before the repeal of Article 370 and Article 35-A in August last year, non-residents could not buy any immovable property in J&K. The latest changes have paved the way for non-residents to buy land in the union territory.

J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha told reporters that the amendments do not allow transfer of agricultural land to non-agriculturists.

However, there are several exemptions given in the Act which enable transfer of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes, including setting up of educational and healthcare facilities. Former J&K

Advocate General Mohammad Ishaq Qadri said the amendments have opened the floodgates for people from outside Noting that even basic requirements of domicile have been removed with the obvious intention of “altering the character of” the region, he said the “Centre has completely put JK for sale”. to buy land. “Now there is no legal bar on purchase of land here by outsiders,” he said.

Soon after the notification was placed in public domain, angry reactions started pouring in from mainstream political parties in Jammu and Kashmir who termed the move an attempt by the Centre to “put JK up for sale”.

National Conference vice president and former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah said this was “unacceptable” as not even basic protections that are available in other states have been granted to the people of the union territory. —PTI

SC notices to AP, TD on party office

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, OCT. 27

The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued notice to the Andhra Pradesh government and Telugu Desam on a plea challenging allotment of land in Amaravati for construction of TD office.

The plea has been filed by YSR Congress lawmaker in state Assembly Alla Ramakrishna Reddy. He challenged the government order issued by the previous Chandrababu Naidu govern-

ment allotting land for TD office. Ramakrishna Reddy is a member of the state assembly from Mangalagiri Assembly constituency.

A Supreme Court bench of Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman, Justice Navin Sinha and Justice Vineet Saran issued the notice as lawyer Prashant Bhushan told the court that the land has been allotted in an area having a water body. The allotment is, hence, not permissible. The said allotment was made vide a govern-

ment order on June 22, 2017. Bhushan was assisted in the matter by advocate Aruna Gupta. Further hearing will be on November 23.

Ramakrishna Reddy had approached the SC on the issue against a July 23 order of AP High Court order declining his PIL, challenging the GO allotting land for TD office in Amravati.

The High Court had declined the PIL by Reddy noting that a writ petition on the same issue was already before it.

Festive Fervour



Security personnel on their way to a polling booth on the eve of first phase of Bihar Assembly elections. In Gaya district on Tuesday. Seventy one seats will go to the polls on Wednesday. Of the 2.14 crore voters who will exercise their franchise, 1.01 crore are women and 599 belong to the third gender. — PTI

Cops on lookout for traffic violators failed to pay up

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, OCT. 27

If you have been a traffic violator and haven't bothered to pay an e-challans, beware! Traffic police are in pursuit of errant motorists roaming freely without paying fines in spite of receiving e-challans from the department.

Traffic police are advising that this is the time to pay the penalties or be prepared to be stopped right in the middle of the road where your vehicle may be seized. There are also chances of your license being cancelled until you pay or even a charge sheet being filed against you. The Andhra Pradesh traf-

fic police department have more than valid reasons to do so as majority of errant motorists have failed to pay fines though police have been issuing e-challans for various traffic violations.

For instance, in Tirupati Urban limits alone, only 36 per cent of the total challans generated till date have been paid.

Data shows that traffic police have issued over 3.02 lakh traffic violation slips amounting to over ₹15.33 crore since the e-challan was introduced here in 2018. However, till date only 1.09 lakh e-challans, amounting to around ₹5.34 crore have been paid, while over 1.93 lakh e-challans for ₹9.98 crore are unpaid. The data clearly shows that the recov-

ery of dues has remained low despite various efforts by the police.

Tirupati Urban traffic DSP Bandi Mallikarjun said, “More than the revenue, we want the penalties to act as a discouragement, curbing traffic violations and ensuring road discipline among vehicle users.

Hence, we have launched a special drive to identify violators who are roaming freely without paying fines.”

In case of defaulters with several e-challans pending, a charge sheet might well be filed against them and in the cases of motorists repeatedly caught violating traffic rules, police may approach courts seeking arrest warrants against them.

IN BRIEF

NEET UG
COUNSELLING 2020
PUT OFF TO TODAYDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 27

The NEET UG Counselling 2020 for admission into the first-year medical/dental courses for candidates who secured All India Rank, has been postponed to October 28, due to some technical reasons.

The Medical Counselling Committee on its official website announced that the NEET UG Counselling 2020 had been postponed to October 28, due to some technical reasons and all the candidates are advised to stay in touch with the MCC website for latest updates.

Earlier, the MCC released NEET UG Counselling 2020, schedule stating that the first round of counselling would begin from October 27. Students who secured All India Rank started to look for the commencement of counselling on Tuesday. However, they could not manage to access the website until evening. However, the MCC announced on its official website late in the evening stating that the counselling was put off to October 28 following some technical reasons.

INDIAN UNION
MUSLIMS BACK
AMARAVATI STIRDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 27

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) AP demanded Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to cancel three capitals decision by continuing Amaravati as solo capital of the state and said it will raise Amaravati issue in Parliament session. The combined team of IUMLAP and Jaibheem Access Justice visited Amaravati protest camps on Tuesday in Velagapudi and other areas and expressed solidarity with pro-Amaravati protestors.

IUMLAP president Basheer Ahmed said that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy gave various promises under Navaratnalu but never spoke about the three capitals during his election campaign. The three capitals issue was not there in the YSR election manifesto also, he said.

He said the IUMLAP had challenged Jagan to seek a fresh mandate on Amaravati issue, but he has not accepted the challenge.

Basheer Ahmed said the IUML would raise the issue of Amaravati in the Parliament session through their party MPs and announced IUML's support to Amaravati agitation.

MORE ARJITHA
SEVAS LILEKY ON
VIRTUAL PLATFORMDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, OCT. 27

In a major devotee friendly move, the TTD has decided to resume a few more Srivari Arjita Sevas through a virtual platform in November on an experimental basis on the lines of virtual Kalyanotsava Seva which is already in vogue since August 7.

It may be mentioned that the TTD has been observing all Arjita Sevas in Ekantam (solitude) following the state and central government's Covid-19 guidelines for the safety of the devotees during the pandemic.

Following the devotees' request, the TTD has now decided to perform the Arjita Sevas like Arjita Brahmotsavam, Dolotsavam, and Sahasra Deepalakshara Seva through a virtual platform. The devotees who book the online tickets for Arjita Sevas will have to purchase ₹300 special darshan tickets separately online to have darshan which they could avail within 90 days from their seva date.

As the Covid impact was now showing signs of a gradual reduction in the state and as well in Tirumala, the TTD has decided to conduct the Sahasra Deepalakshara Seva at the Sahasra Deepalakshara Seva Mandapam outside the Srivari temple on an experimental basis upon the request of devotees on a trial basis. After the seva, the utsava idols will be paraded on the four main streets before they are brought back inside the Srivari temple.

All the virtual arjita sevas will be telecasted live on the SVBC. The devotees who book the virtual Arjita Seva tickets online should watch the live telecast in traditional dress only. The list of the names of Grihashtha devotees will also be placed at the divine feet of Lord Venkateswara.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy releases Village/Ward Secretariat exam results at the CM's Camp Office in Tadepalli on Tuesday. Minister Peddireddy Ramachandradev and other officials are also seen.

7.68 lakh candidates qualify exam

CM releases results of Village/Ward secretariat exams; Results can be check on websites

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 27

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy released results of village and ward secretariat exams at the CM's Camp Office in Tadepalli on Tuesday. The exams were held to fill 16,208 posts in village and ward secretariats for which 7.68 lakh candidates qualified.

The examinations were conducted from September 20 to September 26 to

fill the remaining 16,208 posts in 13 branches. In all 14 different tests were conducted for 19 various posts.

In a record time, the results of the Village/Ward Secretariat exam results are being released. For announcing the results of the exams, the officials scanned the OMR answer sheets from September 21 to September 27.

The results were re-examined by a team of experts in the field (statistics), and the final results were released on Tuesday by the CM.

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Minister for Panchayat Raj Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy said that the innovative village

and ward secretariats system was the brainchild of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. He said that through the Village/Ward secretariats, the governance was at the doorstep of the people across the state. He said that many states lauded the village/ward secretariats system as all the welfare schemes initiated by the state government are available to the beneficiaries at their doorsteps.

Mr Ramachandra Reddy

said that there were about 16,208 vacancies when the notification was issued. However, the number increased to 18,048. He said that candidates were selected based on the category from the merit list. He mentioned that as many as 7.68 lakh candidates were qualified in the examination and there is no cut-off this year and as per merit selection will be made. The tests were conducted very transparently, said the minister.

JAGAN NOT KEEN
ON HOLDING POLLS
TILL RAMESH
DEMITS OFFICE

From Page 1

The government was forced to reinstate him as SEC after losing a legal battle both in the High Court and the Supreme Court.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy who openly accused Ramesh Kumar of being biased towards the Telugu Desam is said to be keen to not hold polls till the latter demits office in March 2021. Apart from the pandemic, the YSRC is likely to express its lack of faith in that SEC that it will conduct free and fair polls.

The ruling dispensation, however, is not sure if the CM will have his way in dragging the poll process. "The Election Commission of India is conducting Assembly polls in Bihar and bypolls in several states. How far the court will be convinced about postponement of local body polls in the state is the question," a minister said.

In two recent cases, a bench of the Supreme Court headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar had upheld the supremacy of the Election Commissions, both at Central and state levels, in deciding the conduct of elections and the manner in which they would be held, he added.

GROUPS FIGHT
WITH STICKS BUT
DON'T COMPLAIN

From Page 1

According to folklore, Siva took the form of Bhairava to kill two rakshasas — Mani and Mallasura. He killed the two with sticks and ensured that there was no problem for humanity. People consider that severe injuries leading to discharge of blood, during a fight with sticks, are good omens.

In accordance with the belief, the villagers of Neraniiki, Neranikita, Kothapeta, representing the followers of Siva, take the idols of Mala Malleswara Swamy from Devaragattu to their respective villages when villagers of Ellariti, Arikera, Maddigeri, Nitranatta, Sulavai and Hebbetam representing the followers of demons, obstruct them.

In this process, both groups fight ferociously with sticks. However, none of the groups file cases against the other, despite severe injuries.

Bhavanis conclude Deeksha



Bhavani devotees come out of the Kanakadurga temple after having a darshan of the Goddess, to conclude their deeksha after Dasara in Vijayawada on Tuesday. — DC

Districts in AP to
rise to 26 in 2021DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 27

The number of districts in Andhra Pradesh will increase to 26 from the present 13 in New Year 2021, announced AP Legislative Assembly deputy speaker Kona Raghu-pathi.

A formal announcement on reorganisation of the districts is likely to be made on January 26, 2021.

The deputy speaker clarified that although the plan was to have as many districts as the 25 Parliament constituencies, the 26th district will come about due to the complexity of Araku Lok Sabha constituency.

Addressing media at Guntur on Tuesday, Raghu-pathi said the state government is planning to complete the process of forming new districts before commencement of

census in the country in 2021.

This is because it will not be possible to reorganise districts once the census begins.

He pointed out that AP government has constituted a committee headed by chief secretary Nilam Sawhney to prepare a detailed report on the proposal to create new districts and finalise boundaries of the respective districts.

The deputy speaker objected to farmers cultivating Vapnic lands. He underlined that farmers have already been compensated and lands handed over to Vapnic. He alleged that some people are trying to create confusion in the matter.

He asserted that the state government is determined to develop Nizampatnam Port from all aspects.

ATCHANNAIDU
BLAMES YSRC FOR
POLAVARAM DELAYDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 27

Telugu Desam's AP president, K. Atchannaaidu on Tuesday asserted that future generations of AP would have bright opportunities only if the prestigious projects like Polavaram lifeline irrigation project and Amaravati capital city are completed successfully.

He lamented that both these landmark projects were being destroyed because of the irresponsible and thoughtless policies of the YSRC government.

He said the YSRC regime was responsible for the present crisis.

Atchannaaidu alleged that it was because of the CM's inefficiency that the Polavaram project has hit a roadblock now.

Naidu demands
TD cadres releaseDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 27

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu claimed that Article 19(1) (b) of Constitution provides the right to peaceful gatherings and objected to the house arrests of his party leaders. He wrote a letter to the SP of Chittoor demanding release of arrested leaders and activists.

"Water is a right to life under Article 21 and the TD leaders were only protesting for this right for the people," Naidu said. The Handri Neeva Sujala Sravanthi (HNSS) along with Galeru Nagari Sujala Sravanthi (GNSS) have been envisaged as the salvations of the Ray-

alseema, he pointed out. He said that in order to ensure water supply to every village, the TD government planned the Kuppam branch canal of HNSS and accordingly about 90 per cent of the work had been completed.

He further said that people in and around the Kuppam region have been waiting for the completion of the Kuppam branch canal and release of water and people in and around Kuppam are trying to draw the attention of the government through peaceful protest, following Covid-19 norms. The TD chief demanded that police release the persons who were arrested fighting for the right to water.

Lokesh cannot run
TD party, says NaniDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 27

Minister for civil supplies Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao alias Nani swooped on TD national general-secretary Nara Lokesh, saying, "This half-knowledge fellow tried to cause harm to the lives of many people by driving a tractor without knowing minimum driving skills. He cannot run the tractor nor can he run the party."

The minister questioned Lokesh's timing of the visit to flood-affected areas for consoling farmers. He criticised Lokesh for visiting the districts after 15 days of floods. He stated that TD national president N. Chandrababu Naidu is sending his son Lokesh for meeting

the people in order to promote him as the true heir of the TD. The minister advised the existing TD leaders to quit the party as Lokesh is incapable to handle the party affairs.

Nani said that Lokesh's over-action by trying to run a tractor and narrowly escaping from being drowned in a canal at Siddhapuram in West Godavari district on Monday has not brought him any sympathy; instead, he was ridiculed.

He said, "None with brains will tour Kolleru now as it has been more than 10 days since there were floods in the area. Where is the need to visit those areas now? It is like dogs barking six months after dacoits loot a house".

AP is best in
ease of doing
businessAVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, OCT. 27

Minister of industries Mekapati Goutham Reddy said that Andhra Pradesh is number one among Indian states in implementing the Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP), which indicates ease of doing business, for the third time in a row.

At a digital conference held on 'Destination Andhra Pradesh', organised by the Vizag Industrial Scan (Viscan) on Tuesday, Reddy said that the new industrial policy focuses on providing best-in-class infrastructure, zero-hassle set-up, skilled labour and end-to-end hand-holding support to investors, creating an industry-friendly environment at par with international standards.

"The government's strategy and initiatives to promote the state as an investment destination has a transformational impact on industrial growth. We are setting up world-class industrial estates in different districts and they all will be developed on par with Sri City," Reddy added.

Thanking the government for embarking on a new journey of sustainable development with focus on infrastructure-led growth, the industries minister said "AP will continue to be the most sought-after investment destination in the country. Some steps initiated by the government speak of its proactive approach for industrial development in the state and send positive vibes to the industrial community."

Aditya Sabharwal, director, Viscan, mentioned the intent behind convening the conference and called upon the participants to deliberate on how AP can become a preferred investment destination.

SAJJALA CLAIMS
CREDIT TO GOVT FOR
PROCURING PADDYDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 27

Adviser to the state government Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy claimed credit to the AP government for collecting three lakh tonnes of paddy during late Kharif unlike before.

He said the administration even collected paddy damaged because of the rains indicating the commitment of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and his government to rescue farmers during any calamity.

The senior YSRC leader was reacting to the outcry from the Opposition over severe irregularities in the procurement of paddy during the current harvest season while speaking to media persons after an interaction with party legislators of the Nellore district on Tuesday.

He rebuked TD for mudslinging on the government at a time when the government was helping the farmers affected by crop loss due to heavy rains.

STRANDED | WOES

Visitors suggesting that the vessel is converted into a hotel or entertainment centre

Vizagites wish Bangla ship is made a tourist spot

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 27

Hundreds of people are still visiting Tenneti Park on the Beach Road, where a Bangladesh merchant vessel has ran aground close to the shore.

Around 100 police personnel have been deployed to prevent people from going near the vessel, as furnace oil and diesel are being drained out of the stranded ship.

The vessel getting stuck has also led to closure of Tenneti Park, one of the most visited tourist spots.

Many visitors are suggesting that authorities convert the vessel into a hotel or entertainment centre, as the cost involved would

not be much. People are already upset after the proposal to bring aircraft carrier *INS Viraat* to the beachside was dropped.

"Hundreds of people have told me that it will be ideal if the vessel is converted into a tourist centre," said Surender Singh Gill, managing director of Gill Marine, the agency entrusted the job of draining the fuel and cleaning the vessel.

After cleaning, another agency Resolve Marine will take up salvaging measures to set the vessel afloat again.

Youngsters at the Tenneti Park are craving to take pictures atop the vessel. "Though we are living in



Earth movers deployed around the Bangladesh Merchant Vessel M.V. MAA to retrieve the fuel on Tuesday, after it drifted aground on the beach near Tenneti Park recently in Visakhapatnam.

Visakhapatnam, we never got an opportunity to sail in a ship. It will be exciting if the vessel is turned into

a tourist spot," said Manisha, who works for a private bank in Visakhapatnam.

● **SHIPPING SOURCES** said it would cost around ₹3 crore for salvage operations.

● **IF THE cost increases**, the ship's management may abandon salvage and sell the ship as scrap.

Shipping sources said it would cost around ₹3 crore for salvage operations. If the cost increases, the ship's management may abandon salvage and sell the ship as scrap. It may be recalled that four vessels had run aground between Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam. None of them could set sail again. A new ship of

Bangladesh vessel's size would cost around ₹12 crore, sources said.

A senior official of AP Tourism Development Corporation said his department is not in a position to take up any new project now.

He clarified that there is no proposal to convert the stranded vessel into a tourist spot from any public or private organisation. Dheeraj Prah, vice-president of Tours and Travel Agents Association of Andhra Pradesh, said his association will send a proposal to the APTDC to explore the possibility of making the vessel a tourist spot if its management decides to sell the ship as scrap.

SHORT TAKES

VIGILANCE WEEK CELEBRATIONS AT TIRUMALA

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, OCT. 27

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Executive officer Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy, on Tuesday, inaugurated the TTD vigilance week celebrations.

It may be mentioned here that the birth anniversary of iron man of India Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is observed as the vigilance week across the country. The vigilance week is celebrated at the behest of the central vigilance commission to highlight the campaign for promoting national integrity, vigilance awareness and against corruption in public life.

As part of the celebrations and under the leadership of CVSO Gopinath Jatti, a pledge was sworn by all TTD staff and officers to adhere to moral practices of fighting corruption, transparency and service orientation, national integrity and vigilance awareness in public life.

GGH TO TREAT NON-COVID PATIENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 27:

Given the considerable drop in Covid-19 positive cases and admissions into the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Nellore, district authorities decided to open the hospital for non-Covid patients, beginning from October 29.

The decision was taken during a meeting conducted by the Joint Collector N. Prabhakar Reddy with hospital officials on Tuesday.

Referring to the first place the GGH bagged in the treatment of Covid patients at the state level, Mr Prabhakar Reddy said they intend to develop the institution as a model hospital in the state on par with Corporate Hospitals.

He said they are dividing the doctors, paramedical staff apart from sanitary and security staff to man the Covid and non-Covid wards to prevent any link between the two departments to avoid the spread of the virus.

The first two floors in GGH will be used for non-Covid patients, and the top two floors for Covid-19 patients and separate lifts are earmarked to these floors.

WOMAN ENDS LIFE OVER LOVE FAILURE

DC CORRESPONDENT
MAHBUBNAGAR, OCT. 27

A 20-year-old married woman committed suicide by jumping into Bhuthpur tank allegedly over love failure. The incident happened in Bhuthpur village in Makthal mandal of Narayanpet district.

The circle inspector of Makthal A. Ramulu said the body was seen floating on Tuesday morning, and upon receiving information, the police arrived at the scene of offence and did the panchnama, he said.

The Circle inspector said that a missing case was booked on the complaint of her mother, Bheemulamma. It appears that the parents of the deceased were not coming to terms with the tragedy and were still accusing and counter accusing over the suicide. The police officer said a case has been booked.

WOMAN PRAISED FOR DONATING PLASMA

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 27

Chairman of Indian Red Cross Society, Nellore Unit, P. Chandrasekhar Reddy has praised a woman V. Sindhu of Nellore for donating much sought-after AB Positive Plasma after conquering Covid at Nellore on Tuesday.

Thanking Ms Sindhu, who is a close relative of Joint Collector N. Prabhakar Reddy, Mr Chandrasekhar Reddy appealed to the recovered Covid patients with A and AB positive blood groups to donate the blood while pointing to the demand for rare blood groups.

Wife of JC Ms N. Lakshmi, Red Cross Committee member Bayya Prasad and Blood Bank convener Ajay Babu were present among others.

AP records 2,901 +ve cases

Out of 76,96,653 samples tested so far, 7,77,900 patients discharged

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 27

AP registered 2,901 new Covid-19 cases bringing the tally to 8,11,825 and 19 deaths taking the toll to 6,625 in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin on Tuesday reporting that out of 74,757 samples tested, 2,901 individuals were found infected with Covid-19. Out of a total 76,96,653 samples tested so far in the state, 7,77,900 patients were discharged from the hospitals after recovery while 27,300 patients are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Covid-19, West Godavari topped the state with 555 followed by 464 in East Godavari, 411 in Krishna, 385 in Guntur, 272 in

Chittoor, 153 each in Anantapur and Prakasam, 127 in Kadapa, 106 in Visakhapatnam, 76 in Nellore, 73 in Srikakulam, 71 in Vizianagaram and 55 in Kurnool.

Concerning the cumulative cases of Covid-19, East Godavari continued to top the state with the highest number of 1,14,137 followed by 83,779 in West Godavari, 77,121 in Chittoor, 65,731 in Guntur, 63,872 in Anantapur, 59,341 in Kurnool, 55,158 in Nellore, 58,816 in Prakasam, 55,315 in Visakhapatnam, 51,379 in Kadapa, 43,624 in Srikakulam, 39,024 in Vizianagaram, 37,633 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery among Covid-19 infected



patients has been high in East Godavari with 1,08,601 followed by 79,365 in West Godavari, 73,617 in Chittoor, 62,113 in Anantapur, 61,533 in Guntur, 58,411 in Nellore, 58,340 in Kurnool, 56,356 in Prakasam, 52,736 in Visakhapatnam, 49,511 in Kadapa, 42,204 in Srikakulam, 38,451 in Vizianagaram, 33,767 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

● East Godavari continued to top the state with the highest number of 1,14,137

● Kadapa recorded four Covid-19 deaths followed by three each in Chittoor and Krishna, two each in East Godavari and Prakasam

Among daily cases of death of Covid-19 infected patients, Kadapa recorded four followed by three each in Chittoor and Krishna, two each in East Godavari and Prakasam and one each in Anantapur, Guntur, Kurnool, Visakhapatnam and West Godavari.

Chittoor recorded the highest number of cumulative deaths of Covid-19 patients with 772 followed by 610 in Guntur, 605 in

East Godavari, 569 in Prakasam, 554 in Krishna, 552 in Anantapur, 503 in Visakhapatnam, 491 in West Godavari, 485 in Nellore, 482 in Kurnool, 435 in Kadapa, 339 in Srikakulam and 228 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 4,352 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery from several hospitals in the state in the last 24 hours.

The state conducted Covid-19 test on 1,44,132 samples per one million population and registered Covid-19 positive rate at 10.55, while Maharashtra tested 69,217 samples with the positive rate at 19.07 per cent and Telangana tested 1,04,184 samples with the positive rate at 5.66 per cent.



Chief priest of Pydithalli Ammavaru Temple, Bantupalli Venkata Rao sits on a Sirimanu (Wooden log) and being paraded in the streets of Vizianagaram during Sirimanotsav as part of Pydithallamma Jatara, the annual feast of the Temple in Vizianagaram town on Tuesday.

— DC

Private hospitals allege harassment by state govt

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 27

Several private hospitals which treated Covid-19 patients have alleged harassment from the state government as they are being asked to submit bills of treatment, accommodation and details of the qualifications of health workers.

Sleuths from vigilance and enforcement are seeking details from private doctors about the charges collected from the patients for providing treatment and accommodation in hotels, either for treatment or for isolation. They are also asking for details of professional qualifications of health personnel engaged by the hospitals to attend to Covid-19 patients.

● Vigilance seeking details about the charges collected from the patients for providing treatment.

The private doctors say that their hospitals which are not part of the Aarogyasri scheme are being targeted.

When the caseload of Covid-19 reached its peak, the government invited managements of private hospitals with requisite infrastructure and personpower to provide medical treatment for Covid-19 infected patients.

Though the government fixed charges for private hospitals being covered under the Aarogyasri scheme at ₹3,500 per patient in the general ward per day, ₹4,500-₹5,000 per patient

in ICU per day and ₹9,500 to ₹10,000 per patient put on ventilator support per day, no such charges were specified for private hospitals that were not under the scheme.

However, state health authorities advised such hospitals to charge patients reasonably as they were in desperate need for more hospitals with beds to admit Covid-19 infected patients and provide treatment.

Private doctors say that based on such advice, they reopened their hospitals and hired doctors and health workers with an assurance of higher wages given the risk of infection. Some hospitals even hired hotel rooms to accommodate patients to provide treatment.

Private doctors allege that they are now being questioned by vigilance

and enforcement officials as to why they charged more than prescribed by the state government to provide treatment and express fear that they are going to be booked on one pretext or the other.

AP Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association former president Dr D. Srihari Rao said, "It is unfair on the part of the state government to subject private doctors, who risked their lives to treat Covid-19 patents, to trouble as the prevalence of Covid-19 subsidies. We do admit that some hospitals over-charged patients. Let the government handle them as per norms."

Vigilance and enforcement officials are also checking private labs to find out how much they charged for a CT scan and for other services.

DIVITIPALLY IT CORRIDOR, A BOON: MINISTER

DC CORRESPONDENT
MAHBUBNAGAR, OCT. 27

Divitipally Multipur-pose IT corridor would be a boon to unemployed in Mahbubnagar district as it is going to provide ample job opportunities to drive away from the scourge of unemployment, said TS excise, sports, culture, tourism minister V. Srinivas Goud.

Speaking to the media after inspecting the works at the IT corridor, the minister said that gone are the days when the Mahbubnagar district has only one cotton mill that was seen as a job creator. Keeping the needs of the skilful unemployed, the IT corridor was designed for 400 acres. Even the uneducated and daily labour are also getting work here and sustaining themselves, the minister said. The facility is close to National Highway and Divitipally railway station, road infrastructure is developed.

Vigilance Week observed at AAI

DC CORRESPONDENT
RAJAHMUNDY, OCT. 27

Airports Authority of India (AAI) Madhurapudi Airport Director Mr Manoj Kumar Nayak called upon the people to make the country without corruption as a responsible citizen. The Vigilance Awareness Week (VAW) was observed at Airport at Madhurapudi near Rajahmundry) on Tuesday, under the supervision of its Director Mr Manoj Kumar Nayak. He said that the VAW is being observed from October 27 to November, which coincides with the Birthday of Sh. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He said that this year the theme of VAW 2020 is 'Vigilant India, Prosperous India' and the main aim of celebrating the VAW is the duty to be vigilant and prevent corruption of any form in the world

● Call to make the country without corruption

around us and in our nation. As a part of the programme, AAI, Rajahmundry observed the week at Airport lounge of Airport Terminal Building. He said that during this week-long observance of the vigilance awareness week -2020, various programmes have been organized like quiz competition for AAI staff, workshop for Stakeholders, awareness campaign in the educational institutions. He said that due to considering the Covid-19 pandemic guidelines the campaign is being organized maintaining social distance, through online mode using available networks and all the passengers and stakeholders have been encouraged to take e-pledge from cvc.gov.in.

NO EXTENSION OF BPS BEYOND OCTOBER 31

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 27

Building owners who applied for regularising the structures they built against the plan should process their applications before the end of October to avoid trouble.

As the government made it clear that they will not extend the scheme after October, Civic body officials hinted that they would be compelled to demolish the illegal structures if the applicants of the Building Penalisation Scheme fail to make use of the opportunity before October 31.

Commissioner of Nellore Municipal Corporation Kothamasu Dinesh Kumar appealed the 125-odd applicants to process their applications after paying required fees as there is no scope for extension of the scheme after October 31 going by various circulars received from the government.

Sirimanotsavam is a low-key affair this year

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VIZIANAGARAM, OCT. 27

The annual Sirimanotsavam of presiding deity of Vizianagaram Town, Sri Pydithalli Ammavaru, was celebrated without the usual congregation of devotees and in a low-key affair on Tuesday.

Under normal conditions, over three lakh devotees from various districts of North Andhra Pradesh such as Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam and parts of South Odisha visit the festival in Vizianagaram to seek the blessings of the presiding deity. However, this year the festival was held with less than 5,000 devotees due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As per schedule, the procession of Sirimanu started at around 3.35 pm at Chaduru Gudi of Pydithalli and moved slowly towards the fort. The chief priest of the temple, Bantupalli Venkata Rao, was perched on top of a 35-feet-high pole

(sirimanu) and paraded from the temple to the fort three times before returning to the temple.

Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly Speaker Tammineni Sitaram, minister Botsa Satyanarayana and several political leaders offered prayers to the goddess. In the morning, pujas were conducted at the Pydithallamma temple and devotees sought her blessings.

The Vizianagaram police chief B. Raja Kumari deployed over 3,000 police personnel at various locations in the Vizianagaram town to prevent the entry of devotees during the Sirimanotsavam. Buses were also not allowed to enter the town and checkpoints were put up at strategic points to prevent the vehicle flow.

All the related cultural programmes held in connection with the festival were also cancelled.

Girl accidentally slips into well, dies

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, OCT. 27

An 18-year-old girl died on her birthday after she accidentally slipped and fell into an agricultural well in Yetukuripalle village in Palasamudram mandal of Chittoor district on Tuesday.

According to Palasamudram SI Shekshavali, the deceased Nandini is a native of Yetukuripalle and was pursuing her degree second year at a private college in Chittoor. She turned 18 on Tuesday when she was moving around her family's agricultural farm and acci-

dently slipped and fell into a well.

On being informed, the police and fire personnel reached the spot and launched a rescue operation to save the girl. However, it took nearly six hours for the rescue personnel to locate and fish out the girl's body from the agricultural well.

Palasamudram police registered a case and shifted the body of the deceased to a government hospital for autopsy. Her mother Sasikala was inconsolable on seeing her daughter dead on her birthday, while her father had died some time ago.

ENQUIRY ON PADDY ISSUE DEMANDED

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 27

Farmers, owing allegiance to Congress, demand the Government of India to order a vigilance enquiry into the serious irregularities in the procurement of paddy in SPSR Nellore district.

During a protest near Congress Bhavan on Tuesday, they also demanded the state government to direct CID to inquire into the subject immediately and bring the culprits to book.

Alleging that the local officers and politicians took away ₹750 crore of money in paddy procurement, they demanded the return of the money to the farmers.



SHORT TAKES
ALLAHABAD HC TO MONITOR HATHRAS PROBE

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, OCT. 27

The Supreme Court on Tuesday left it to the Allahabad High Court to look after all aspects of Hathras Dalit girl's gangrape and death case including monitoring of investigation by the CBI, protection of the victim's family and that of the witnesses.

Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a bench also comprising Justice A. S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian, also left it to future a plea seeking the transfer of trial in the case from Uttar Pradesh to Delhi.

The court entrusted the security of the victim's family and that of the witnesses to the Central Reserve Police Force which will take over within one week.

Having noted that the incident has occurred within the jurisdiction of Allahabad High Court and Lucknow bench of the High Court has already taken the cognizance of the incident, the top court said that "in these circumstances it is not necessary to divest the High Court of the charge of the case and take upon itself the task of monitoring the proceedings investigations."

"It would be appropriate for the High Court to proceed to monitor the investigation in the manner in which it would desire", the top court said, entrusting it the monitoring of investigation by the CBI.

Referring to the affidavit filed by the Uttar Pradesh government detailing the steps taken to provide security to the victim's family and the witnesses, the court on Tuesday said, "We are convinced that steps have been taken by the State Government to make adequate arrangement for security to the victim's family and witnesses." Having expressed satisfaction over the security provided by the Uttar Pradesh government for protecting the family and the witnesses, the court, however, directed that the security be handed over to the Central Reserve Police Force. The court said it was "necessary" to address the "normal perception and pessimism" in a "matter of present nature" to allay all apprehensions and as a confidence building measure.

KHUSHBU SUNDAR DETAINED OVER MANUSMIRTI ROW

SINDHIYA SAMUEL & P.A JEBARAJ | DC
CHENNAI, OCT. 27

Actor-politician Khushbu Sundar, who recently joined the BJP, was detained along with a few cadres in Muttukadu on ECR, while they were on their way to Chidambaram on Tuesday morning to participate in a protest against Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi Chief, Thol Thirumavalavan.

The protest was organised by BJP's women's wing in Chidambaram, condemning the Lok Sabha MP's alleged statement on women quoting Manusmriti.

She was released in the evening. According to police sources, the arrest was made as Khushbu had violated prohibitory orders to conduct unlawful assembly, owing to lockdown rules prevailing in the state.

The police had denied permission for the agitation at Chidambaram on Monday night. However, Khushbu, former Rajya Sabha MP Sasikala Pushpa and other BJP cadres were planning to attend the protest even after restrictions.

On Tuesday morning, Khushbu and her supporters were on their way to Chidambaram via the East Coast Road (ECR) when a team of police from Chengalpet district stopped their vehicles and took them into preventive custody.

The preventive detention by the special police team ended a 12-hour inspection on East Coast Road.

Just after the arrest of Khushbu, BJP state general secretary K.T. Raghavan was arrested near Melmaruvathur. They were taken to a resort in Kelambakkam, police sources said. Just after her arrest, Khushbu tweeted: "Arrested.. been taken in a police van. we will fight till our last breath for the dignity of women. Hon'ble PM @narendramodi Ji has always spoken about the safety of women and we walk on his path. We will never bow down to the atrocities of a few elements out there. BHARAT MATA KI JAI! (sic)

Amidst China crisis, US stands with India

In blunt criticism of China, Pompeo cited killing of 20 Indian Army personnel in the Galwan Valley

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, OCT. 27

China's military belligerence in eastern Ladakh and Indo-Pacific region figured prominently during the third edition of the 2+2 strategic dialogue between India and the US with Washington strongly affirming that it stands firmly with New Delhi in its efforts to defend sovereignty as the two sides vowed to ramp up their security ties, and inked the strategic defence pact, BECA.

In a strong message to Beijing at the conclusion of the third edition of the 2+2 dialogue between both countries at the Foreign and Defence Ministerial level in New Delhi on Tuesday, United States Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo said his country and India are taking steps to address all manner of security threats including those posed by China, adding that the US "would stand with India".

The two nations "shared assessment of the security situation across the Indo Pacific" and decided to boost bilateral cooperation between their navies and strengthening overall defence ties as part of their existing Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership during the 2+2 talks on Tuesday.

Hinting at China, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also made it clear that the basis for a multipolar world has to be a "multipolar Asia", adding in his statement that "the Indo-Pacific region was a particular focus of our talks".

Speaking later in the presence of the other three participants of the dialogue, Mr. Pompeo, Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, at a post-dialogue briefing, US Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper pointed to the "aggression and destabilising activities by China" in Asia and the Indo-Pacific region.

Mr. Pompeo promptly added that the ruling Chinese Communist Party in China is "no friend to democracy and the rule of law".

The US Secretary of State also paid tributes to the memory of the 20 Indian troops killed in a clash with the Chinese PLA at the Galwan valley in the Ladakh sector in mid-June.

Pakistan also came in for criticism. Calling for the need for concerted action against all terrorist networks, including Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, an Indo-US joint statement issued said the four Ministers "called on Pakistan to take immediate, sustained and irreversible action to ensure that no territory under its control is used for terrorist attacks, and to expeditiously bring to justice the perpetrators and planners of all such attacks, including 26/11 Mumbai, Uri, and Pathankot".

Jaishankar said, "We reiterated the importance of peace, stability and prosperity for all countries in this region. As Raksha Mantri stated, this is possible only by upholding the rules based international order, ensuring the freedom of navigation in the international seas, promoting open connectivity and respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states. A

multi-polar world must have a multi-polar Asia as its basis." Earlier, in his opening statement, Jaishankar said, "At a time when it is particularly important to uphold a rules-based international order, the ability of India and the US to work closely in defence and foreign policy has a larger resonance. Together, we can make a real difference when it comes to regional and global challenges, whether it is in respecting territorial integrity, promoting maritime domain awareness, countering terrorism or ensuring prosperity."

The joint statement issued after the dialogue said, "The ministers reiterated their commitment to maintaining a free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific built on a rules-based international order ... Highlighting the importance of securing the economic and security interests of all stakeholders having a legitimate interest in the region, the Ministers welcomed the growing understanding on the Indo-Pacific among like-minded countries.

On the Indo-US defence partnership, it said, "The ministers commended what has become a comprehensive, resilient, and multi-faceted Major Defense Partnership (MDP) between India and the United States."



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, second right, gestures towards U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, second left, and Secretary of Defence Mark T. Esper, left, with Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar, right, standing beside him, ahead of their meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday.

RAMPING UP DEFENCE AND SECURITY TIES

The Indo-US defence ties have been on an upswing in the last few years.

MAJOR DEFENCE PARTNER

In June 2016, the US had designated India a "Major Defence Partner" intending to elevate defence trade and technology sharing to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.

LEMOA

The two countries inked the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016 that allows their militaries use each other's bases for repair and replenishment of supplies as well as provide for deeper cooperation.

COMCASA

The two countries signed another pact called COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement) in 2018 that provides for interoperability between the two militaries and provides for sale of high end technology from the US to India.

TIMING CRUCIAL

This year, the in-person talks are taking place at a time when India is locked in a tense standoff with China in eastern Ladakh and the Trump administration's growing friction with Beijing over a host of issues including trade tariff and the Chinese military's offensive manoeuvres in the South China Sea.

2+2 DIALOGUE

The first edition of the 2+2 dialogue was held in New Delhi in September 2018 after the mechanism was approved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump. The second edition of the dialogue took place in Washington in December last year. The new framework of the ministerial dialogue was initiated in order to provide a forward-looking vision for the strategic partnership between the two countries.

SHAKEEL, 17 OTHERS NAMED TERRORISTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 27

The Union Home Ministry on Tuesday declared 18 more Pakistan-based individuals as designated terrorists under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

The list includes the names of militants like Sajid Mir, one of the key conspirators in the Mumbai 26/11 attack, and a top commander of Lashkar-e-Tayyeba. The list also includes names of Dawood Ibrahim's close associate Chhota Shakeel, and the Bhatkal brothers of the Indian Mujahideen.

The others include Sajid Iris, the top LeT commander and one of the main planners of the 26/11 attack and Yusuf Muzammil, the commander of LeT operations in Jammu & Kashmir and an accused in the 26/11 terror attack.

Similarly, Abdur Rehman, the brother-in-law of Hafiz Saeed, chief LeT commander and head of LeT political affairs, also figures on the home ministry list.

Beijing says stop sowing discord between China, regional countries

Beijing, Oct. 27: China on Tuesday urged US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to stop sowing discord between Beijing and countries in the region, undermining the regional peace and stability, amidst his visit to India for a high-level dialogue aimed at further ramping up their overall defence and security ties, and boost strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Pompeo arrived in India on Monday along with Defence Secretary Mark T. Esper for the third edition of the US-India 2+2 dialogue with their counterparts, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

After his India visit, Pompeo is due to visit Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Asked about Pompeo's visit to India and other South Asian countries during which the top US diplomat's focus would be on China's threats, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing here that Pompeo's attacks and accusations against China are nothing new.

These are groundless

● **CHINESE FOREIGN Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said that Pompeo's allegations against China are groundless accusations which reflect that he is clinging to the Cold War mentality and ideological biases. "We urge him to abandon the Cold War and the zero-sum game mentality and stop sowing discord between China and regional countries as well as undermining the regional peace and stability," Wang said.**

accusations which reflect that he is clinging to the Cold War mentality and ideological biases. We urge him to abandon the Cold War and the zero-sum game mentality and stop sowing discord between China and regional countries as well as undermining the regional peace and stability, Wang said.

In August, Pompeo said that China poses a threat to the West that is in some

ways worse than that posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

What's happening now isn't Cold War 2.0. The challenge of resisting the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) threat is in some ways worse. The CCP is already enmeshed in our economies, in our politics, in our societies in ways the Soviet Union never was, he had said in a speech to the Czech Senate.

In July, Pompeo criticised China for its aggressive moves against its neighbours, including "instigating" a deadly confrontation with India in eastern Ladakh, saying Beijing cannot threaten countries and bully them in the Himalayas.

The recent clashes initiated by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) are just the latest examples of the Chinese Communist Party's unacceptable behaviour. It's important that democracies like ours work together, especially as we see more clear than ever the true scope of the challenge posed by the Chinese Communist Party, he said.

— *PTI*

NOW BECA WILL ALLOW INDIA TO BUY ARMED DRONES FROM U.S.

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, OCT. 27

With the country involved in a six month military stand-off with China, Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday told the US that India is "challenged by reckless aggression on our northern borders." "In the area of defense we are challenged by reckless aggression on our northern borders," Mr Singh said in his opening remarks during the 2+2 dialogue with the US, as per the transcript released by the US State department.

Mr Singh along with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper held the 2+2 dialogue.

India and the US on Tuesday signed the Basic Exchange and Co-operation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA) which takes the military cooperation between the two countries to the next level.

The BECA will allow sharing of military grade geo-spatial data in real time with India by the US which will help Indian military to launch precise missiles and drone strikes.

The signing of the agreement is also a strategic signal to China.

As per the experts, the BECA will also allow India to buy armed drones from US which will be fed with the data. The current conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has underlined the importance of armed drones during a war.

Later on during a joint press conference, Mr Singh said that India and US military-to-military cooperation is progressing well.

Mr Singh said that signing of BECA by India and US is a significant achievement.

He said that during the meeting both sides shared assessment of the security situation across the Indo Pacific.

"In that process, we reaffirmed our commitment to peace, stability and prosperity of all countries in this region. We also agreed that upholding the rules based international order, respecting the rule of law and freedom of navigation in the international seas and upholding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states are essential," said Mr Singh.

He said India and US defence cooperation is intended to further these objectives. Mr Singh said that both sides welcomed Australia joining the forthcoming trilateral (India, US, and Japan) naval exercise Malabar.

"During the meeting, we have had comprehensive discussions on key aspects of our bilateral and multilateral cooperation," said Mr Singh. He said that liaison officers at each other's establishments could be leveraged to enhance our information sharing architecture.

"We also explored probable capacity building and other joint cooperation activities in third countries, including our neighbourhood and beyond," said Mr Singh.

TV ACTRESS STABBED IN MUMBAI

SAURABH JOSHI | DC
MUMBAI, OCT. 27

A man stabbed a television actress in Andheri over her discontinuing talking with him. The accused stopped the actress, Tanvi Malhotra, and after confronting her, stabbed her and fled from the spot.

The actress is undergoing treatment and told police that she turned down his marriage proposal. The attack took place on Monday when Malhotra was returning home from a café.

LAW OF THE LAND

J&K is now up for sale, small land holding owners will suffer, says Omar

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
with agency input
SRINAGAR, OCT. 27

The Centre has paved the way for people from outside Jammu and Kashmir to buy land in the Union Territory by amending several laws, drawing sharp reaction from various political parties and leaders in J&K barring the BJP. The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) — an amalgam of seven mainstream parties in Jammu & Kashmir — termed the move as a deliberate attempt to

usurp the rights of the people of the erstwhile state.

More than a year after the nullification of Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution, the Union ministry of home affairs on Monday evening in a gazette notification in Hindi and English announced that several changes have been made to land laws, including allowing use of agricultural land for setting up facilities of public purpose.

The most important tweak has been made in the Jammu and Kashmir

Development Act that deals with disposal of land in the Union Territory as the Centre has omitted the phrase "permanent resident of the state" from Section 17 of the law.

The PAGD condemned the repeal of J&K Land Laws saying that it strips the permanent residents of J&K and Ladakh of their exclusive right to acquire and hold immovable property and vowed to fight these on all fronts.

"Unacceptable amendments to the land ownership laws of J&K. Even the tokenism of domicile has

been done away with when purchasing non-agricultural land and transfer of agricultural land has been made easier. J&K is now up for sale and the poorer small land holding owners will suffer," National Conference leader Omar Abdullah tweeted.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said it was a step to "disenfranchise" the people of Jammu and Kashmir. "Yet another step that's part of GOI's nefarious designs to disempower & disenfranchise people of J&K. From the unconstitutional scrap-

ping of Article 370 to facilitating loot of our natural resources and finally putting land in J&K up for sale," she tweeted.

"After failing on all fronts to provide roti & rozgar to people, BJP is creating such laws to whet the appetite of a gullible electorate. Such brazen measures reinforce the need of people of all three provinces of J&K to fight unitedly," she alleged.

Before the repeal of Article 370 and Article 35-A in August last year, non-residents could not buy any immovable property

in Jammu and Kashmir. However, the fresh changes have paved the way for any citizen to buy land in the Union Territory.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha told reporters that the amendments did not allow transfer of agricultural land to non-agriculturists. However, there are several exemptions in the Act which enable transfer of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes, including setting up of educational or health care facilities.

IN BRIEF

2 hurt as vessels collide near port

Athens: Two crew members of a Greek minesweeper were slightly hurt Tuesday after it collided with a Portuguese container ship off Piraeus, the port next to Athens, the navy said. There were 27 sailors on board the naval vessel, who were rescued by coastguard patrol boats. The two injured were taken to hospital for treatment. The minesweeper suffered serious damage to the stern and was towed back to the naval base on the nearby island of Salamina, the merchant navy ministry said. Piraeus port authorities opened an inquiry into the incident and confined to port the container ship Maerck Launceston, which flies a Portuguese flag.

Afghan attack kills three

Kabul: At least three people were killed Tuesday when Taliban militants launched a co-ordinated attack against a police base in eastern Khost province, Afghan officials said. Habib Shah Ansari, provincial health director in Khost said that so far three bodies and around 30 wounded, both military and civilian, were brought to hospital. The attack in Khost comes as the Afghan government continues to fight Taliban militants even as peace talks in Qatar between the two sides take place for the first time. Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Aran said that earlier Tuesday morning a vehicle full of explosives detonated near a base belonging to a police special force. He added that so far at least four attackers were killed and Afghan forces are fighting two others who are still resisting with forces. Aran said that a gun battle is underway between the attackers and the Afghan forces, which may increase casualties. The violence comes amid an uptick of attacks. Afghanistan claimed Sunday it killed a top al-Qaida propagandist on an FBI most-wanted list during an operation in the country's east.

Russia strikes kill 78 rebels in Syria

Beirut: Air strikes by Damascus regime ally Russia killed 78 Turkey-backed rebels in northwest Syria on Monday, a monitor said, in the bloodiest surge in violence since a truce almost eight months ago. More than 90 others were wounded when Russian warplanes targeted a training camp of the Faylaq al-Sham faction in the Jabal Duwayli area in Idlib province, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. In early March, a truce brokered between Moscow and Ankara stemmed a Russia-backed regime military offensive on the country's last major rebel stronghold in Idlib. That onslaught from December had killed more than 500 civilians and displaced almost a million people from their homes in one of the worst humanitarian crises of the nine-year civil war. Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman described Monday's strikes near the Turkish border as the "deadliest since the ceasefire came into force". He also said they were the bloodiest Russian air raids against rebels in a single day since Moscow's military intervention in Syria in 2015.

\$2.4 BN U.S. ARMS SALE TO TAIWAN

Taipei, Oct. 27: Taiwan said Tuesday that proposed US sales of missiles and other arms systems will boost the island's ability to credibly defend itself, amid rising threats from China. The comments from defence ministry spokesperson Shih Shun-wen came a day after China said it would exact unspecified retaliation against companies that make the weapons systems, including Lockheed Martin Corp., Raytheon Technologies Corp. and Boeing Co.'s defence division, the lead contractor on a \$2.37 billion sale of Harpoon missile systems to Taiwan. Facing a potential Chinese foe with overwhelming superiority in missiles, soldiers, ships and planes, Taiwan has struggle to assure its own people and key ally the US that it is capable of and willing to see to its own defence.

The sides split amid a civil war in 1949 and China considers Taiwan its own territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary. The purchase of these weapons will enhance Taiwan's credible combat capabilities.

Don pick Barrett sworn in as SC justice

Republican-controlled Senate confirms her nomination, handing Prez a win a week before election

SC: No Wisconsin mail-in voting deadline extension

Washington, Oct. 27: Conservative jurist Amy Coney Barrett was sworn in as a justice of the US Supreme Court, an hour after the Republican-controlled Senate confirmed her controversial nomination, handing President Donald Trump a major victory just a week before the election. The deeply-divided Senate confirmed the nomination of Barrett as the 115th Supreme Court Judge by 52-48 votes on Monday, pushing the top court in a more conservative direction for generations to come.

Barrett, a 48-year-old religious conservative, was administered the official constitutional oath by Justice Clarence Thomas on the South Lawn of the White House alongside President Trump. "I stand here tonight, truly honoured and humbled," she said shortly after she took the constitutional oath. "This is a momentous day for America, for the United States Constitution and for the fair and impartial rule of law," said Trump in his remarks on the occasion. "She is one of our nation's most brilliant legal scholars, and she will make an outstanding justice on the highest court in our land," he said about

Washington, Oct. 27: A divided Supreme Court said Monday that mail-in ballots in Wisconsin could be counted only if they are received by Election Day.

Democrats in the state had asked the court to allow the counting of ballots that arrive up to six days after Election Day if they were postmarked by November 3. The ruling was 5-3, coming just before the Senate voted to add Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. Justice Elena Kagan, joined by her liberal colleagues, Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Stephen Breyer, dissented from the court's order. Last week, the court had

upheld a ruling by a state court in Pennsylvania extending the mail-in ballot deadline there.

Early voting began in Wisconsin last week, and the court's decision could impact the tally in a key battleground. Wisconsin was one of three Rust Belt states that gave President Donald Trump the White House in 2016, and he and Democratic nominee Joe Biden have made the state a frequent campaign stop.

Like other states, Wisconsin has seen a major influx of absentee ballots returned: As of October 19, Wisconsin voters had returned more than 863,000 absentee ballots, according to data from the state Ele-

ctions Commission.

Monday's order is the latest sign that the justices do not want federal courts to change voting rules too close to the election.

Unlike the Pennsylvania order last week, the Wisconsin order Monday concerned a ruling from a lower federal court, not a state court, and Chief Justice John Roberts said that made a difference.

A federal district court in Wisconsin had sided with the Democrats to allow mail-in ballots to be received up to six days after Election Day, but an appeals court blocked that order and the Supreme Court upheld the block.

— Agencies

his nominee.

Out of nine Supreme Court Justices, Trump, so far, has nominated three of them. In the US a Supreme Court justice is appointed for life and does not have a retirement age. Barrett is likely to serve on the court

for decades and will give conservatives a 6-3 majority on the Supreme Court, a shift in its makeup that could have dramatic implications for a range of issues that could come before it, including the future of the Affordable Care Act

and any potential disputes regarding the 2020 election. "It is highly fitting that Justice Barrett fills the seat of a true pioneer for women: Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Tonight, Justice Barrett becomes not only the fifth woman to



Security officials examine the site of a blast at a religious school in Peshawar on Tuesday. At least four students were killed and dozens more wounded when a bomb exploded during a class at their religious school. — AFP

Bomb blast in Pak religious seminary kills 8, injures 120

Peshawar, Oct. 27: A powerful blast ripped through a religious seminary in northwest Pakistan's Peshawar city on Tuesday, killing at least eight people, mostly students, and wounding over 120 others, senior police officials said.

The blast occurred around 8:30 am at a local mosque, which also serves as a religious school in Dir Colony in interior Peshawar, while students were reading the Quran, Peshawar police chief Muhammad Ali Khan told reporters.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister's Advisor on Information Kamran Bangash and Spokesman of the LRH Hospital Asim Khan confirmed that eight persons have died and 124 others injured in the blast.

"Those who spread terror will never succeed in their mission," Bangash said, adding that the incident would be fully probed and the perpetrators will be brought to book. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast in the city, bordering war-torn Afghanistan.

A bag filled with explosive materials was kept close to wall of the seminary by some unknown person which went off, superintendent of police in Peshawar city Waqar Azeem said. He said the bag is believed to have had an IED device that went off.

An official from the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) said 4 to 5 kilogramme explosives were used in the blast. Most of the students who died and were injured in the blast

were aged between 7 and 11 years, the official said, adding that many of them were from Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Imran Khan condemned the deadly blast and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured. "Deeply saddened by terrorist attack on madrasah in Peshawar: My condolences go to the victims families & prayers for early recovery of the injured. I want to assure my nation we will ensure the terrorists responsible for this cowardly barbaric attack are brought to justice asap," he tweeted.

There was a general threat alert in the Peshawar district, said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police chief Sanaullah Abbasi, who also confirmed the death toll.

According to police, around 40-50 students were

present inside the seminary when the bomb went off. The seminary's administration said around 1,100 students study at the institution.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mehmod Khan condemned the attack on children. He has convened a meeting to take stock of the security situation in the province.

The area has been cordoned off and police teams are collecting evidence. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Minister Taimur Saleem Jhagra visited the site of the blast. Speaking to reporters, he said that the focus was on providing the injured the best possible treatment to increase their chances of recovery.

Vice President Maryam Nawaz termed it a "heart-rending" incident. — PTI

Trump leads Biden by 5 points in Texas

Houston, Oct. 27: US President Donald Trump is ahead of his rival and Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden by more than five points among the likely voters in the state of Texas, according to a poll conducted to understand the popularity of the two leaders.

The poll released on Monday by the Hobby School for Public Affairs at the University of Houston found that 50 per cent of the voters said they already have or will vote for President Trump while 44.7 per cent said they have or will vote for Biden. "The poll conducted between October 13 and October 20 found 50 per cent of the voters saying they already have or will vote for Trump, while 44.7 per cent said they have or will vote for Biden," said the poll outcome released after taking the opinions of over 1,000 registered voters.

Trump, a Republican is being challenged by Biden in the November 3 US presidential election. "Record

turnout in early voting clearly shows the state's Democrats are energised, but at least at the top of the ticket, that enthusiasm appears unlikely to overcome the Republican advantage among men, Anglos and older voters," said Renée Cross, senior director of the Hobby School.

"In fact, we found the Republican candidate leading by wider margins in statewide races farther down the ballot," Cross added. There are more than 257 million people in the US who are 18 or older, and nearly 240 million citizens are eligible to vote this year, according to the American daily USA Today. More than 58.7 million Americans have voted in the 2020 presidential election so far, surpassing all early ballots cast in the 2016 polls, but an unprecedented number of mail-in ballots has given rise to the possibility that the result could be delayed as counting of votes may stretch beyond November 3. — PTI

Oxford: Vaccine's strong immunity in all adult groups

London, Oct. 27: One of the frontrunners in the race for a vaccine against Covid-19 has been found to produce a strong immune response in all adult groups, Oxford University said on Tuesday in reference to the ongoing clinical trials of its vaccine candidate with British pharma giant AstraZeneca. While the results from these early trials are yet to be officially released, Professor Andrew Pollard from the university discussed the promising findings at a research conference recently.

The ChAdOx1 nCov-2019 vaccine, called AZD1222 by AstraZeneca, is currently undergoing worldwide trials with some reports raising hopes for a rollout within months. The latest findings, submitted for a peer-reviewed journal to be considered for publication in the coming weeks, will further boost these hopes.

"Professor Pollard discussed the early findings of the Phase II safety and immunogenicity trial of the ChAdOx1 nCov-2019 Oxford Coronavirus vac-

STUDY: COVID-19 ANTIBODIES ARE FALLING RAPIDLY

London, Oct. 27: The hope for long-term immunity from Covid-19 was thrown into doubt on Tuesday as a large UK study concluded that protective antibodies in people fall "quite rapidly" after a Coronavirus infection. Imperial College London's research, which tested more than 365,000 people in England, found that antibody response to the Coronavirus that causes Covid-19 wanes over time. — PTI

cine at a research conference," an Oxford University statement said. "These early results covering trial volunteers from the UK in the 56-69 and 70+ age groups have been submitted to a peer-review journal, and we hope to see their publication in the coming weeks. — PTI

India: Don't back terrorist forces

United Nations, Oct. 27: India has called on all concerned parties to completely stop supporting terrorist forces, like the ISIL, while urging all stakeholders in the Middle East to work constructively for peace, stability and development. India underscored that it has invested considerably in the peace and stability of the region by deploying its personnel as part of UN peacekeeping forces, through humanitarian assistance, development cooperation, capacity building, and will continue contributing towards peace-building in the Middle East. "India calls on concerned parties to completely stop support to terrorist forces, like ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) and others. India also urges all parties in the region to work constructively and in good faith to promote peace, stability and development for the benefit of all people in the Middle East," India said in a written statement on Monday on the Security Council's open debate on 'The Situation in the Middle East'.

India said the truce between Israel and the Hamas has eased the humanitarian situation in Gaza

and expressed hope that the temporary truce is converted into a permanent ceasefire, which can save precious human lives on both sides and create a conducive environment for talks.

"It is an unfortunate reality that the interlinked and mutually reinforcing challenges faced by the people of the Middle East have not yet been resolved. Political instability, long-festering conflicts, sectarian divides, issue of refugees and terrorism continue to plague the region. The Covid-pandemic has only exacerbated the threats posed by these challenges," India said.

The statement made India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti, will go as part of the official record of the Council. India said it appreciates the agreement between Fatah and Hamas for holding Parliamentary and Presidential elections and also elections for the Palestinian National Council, which will help fulfill the democratic aspirations of the Palestinian people. India also welcomed the agreements for normalisation of relations between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain. — PTI

FLASH | FLOOD Hurricane Delta ravaged the Yucatan region earlier this month

Zeta winds pound Mexico, head for US

TYPHOON: VIETNAM CANCELS FLIGHTS, CLOSES SCHOOLS

Hanoi, Oct. 27: Vietnam was rushing to ensure more than half a million people were out of harm's way on Tuesday, ahead of the arrival of a powerful typhoon set to dump more heavy rain on a central region devastated by weeks of intense weather.

Hundreds of flights were cancelled and schools closed in affected areas as Typhoon Molave approached over the South China Sea, packing wind speed of up to 165 kilometres (103 miles) per hour and expected to make landfall early on Wednesday.

Molave will be the fourth storm to hit the Southeast Asian country this month that has seen 130 people killed in floods and landslides. Military was helping the elderly on to buses and directing boats to come ashore. — Reuters

coast of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula with winds of 80 miles (129 km) per hour late on Monday. Hurricane

conditions and a dangerous storm surge were expected to persist in the area, NHC said.

"Heavy rainfall is expected across the Yucatan Peninsula, the Cayman Islands, and western Cuba thro-

ugh Tuesday, which could lead to flash flooding in urban areas," NHC warned. A hurricane watch is in effect from Morgan City Louisiana to the Mississippi Alabama border, NHC said. Zeta is expected to affect oil production in the Gulf Coast.

Oil producer BP BPL on Monday said it has begun to shut in production at its Gulf of Mexico platforms and assets ahead of Zeta's arrival, after starting a staff evacuation on Sunday. — Reuters

DECCAN Chronicle

28 OCTOBER 2020

Bihar polls may have a wider impact on nation

No Assembly election in Bihar can be said to be imbued with deeper political meaning, especially considering the sharp political cleavage which is on view in our national politics, than the three-stage poll for which the first votes are to be cast today. Also, in no other election in recent memory in the state are the challengers being billed to be in with a chance.

This was considered quite inconceivable only a few weeks ago. It was widely believed that opponents of the NDA government of JD(U)-BJP helmed by chief minister Nitish Kumar, try as hard as they might, had no one to project who could even remotely match the CM in leadership qualities.

Governance failures — even on matters as grave as the ruling coalition's abject failure in dealing with the corona crisis, the return home of lakhs of migrant workers from cities, and the grim economic reality that was self-evident — would be quite simply be forgotten and washed away, it was thought. This derived from the faith showed in analysis that assumed that caste equations were rigid and immutable in Bihar and would favour the incumbents. An important readily accepted factor was that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had the capacity to weave magic at election time, surmounting regional aspects. It was widely assumed that the people had no agency and would be putty in the hands of the incumbents, succumbing with ease to the grand scheme of the electoral battle laid down by the ruling alliance. This was the fundamental consideration that appeared to lead to the decision that the Assembly election will be held when it became due.

The existence of the pandemic and the floods that hit many parts of Bihar were assigned no weight by decision-makers in fixing the election calendar, sweeping aside the objections advanced by the entire opposition. The Opposition camp seemed weak in every way. It appeared to lack cohesion, leadership and financial resources. This was the reason, it is widely believed, that pleas to defer the polls by a few months were dismissed out of hand.

Many of the assumptions made about the electoral landscape today appear less well grounded than before. The surging crowds that greet the campaign of the Mahagathbandhan — the platform of the RJD-Congress-Left parties, the ruling alliance's challengers — and in contrast the disarray in the ruling NDA's electoral effort is now presenting an altogether new aspect of the line-up Bihar that few had thought possible. The split in the NDA is out in the open. Chirag Paswan's LJP attacking JD(U) is widely thought to be a game plan in which BJP's decision-makers were complicit, loud denials notwithstanding. In the last stage of the campaign, BJP posters carry only the PM's image, not the CM's. The message is going out that BJP may aim to have its own CM in Bihar for the first time, dumping Mr Kumar. Mahagathbandhan CM candidate Tejashwi Yadav's focus on the promise of mass employment, and making no references to identity politics whatsoever, is enjoying a growing reception at the mass level.

The Amy factor in America

The Trump years have been ugly, so this may not raise eyebrows. But in confirming 48-year-old Amy Coney Barrett to the bench, after having previously declared that Presidents in their last year in office should not be able to nominate a new Justice to the United States Supreme Court, the Republican-controlled Senate has effectively reversed its own "Mitch McConnell rule" of 2016.

Yet had the "rule" not been in place, it would still have been highly presumptuous on the part of the outgoing President, who is supposed to be functioning largely in a care-taking role, to have actually chosen someone to fill the vacancy in the Supreme Court bench. In so doing, Donald Trump has, in fact, exposed his own fears of not making it to office a second time. The purpose of this last-minute nomination is clearly to rig all future decisions of the judiciary in favour of the Republican Party. It is what is referred to in common parlance as "packing the court". It goes against the spirit of democratic values.

Will Ms Barrett undo the feminist legacy of Ruth Bader Ginsburg whose seat she now occupies? For sure, her demurrals on critical issues during her recently concluded confirmation hearings have triggered misgivings. The long-term academic and appeals court judge is known to be a great follower of "superprecedents". Ms Barrett once clerked for Antonin Scalia and, as far as personal views go, is pronouncedly conservative. In 2006, Ms Barrett signed a newsletter criticising the 1973 landmark *Roe v Wade* judgment (it was no "superprecedent" by her definition). An appeal against stipulations for the purchase of abortion pills enforced during the coronavirus pandemic, along with 17 other restrictions, is expected to be among the first hearings to come up before the court. Ms Barrett also holds a narrow view of the commerce clause of the US Congress and embraces the non-delegation doctrine. These will prove to be challenges in the way of working out tough laws with the help of federal agencies to combat climate change. Democrats also have reason to fear that Ms Barrett's presence will impact the future of Obamacare, which the Trump Administration diluted through neglect and waivers.

Expanding the Supreme Court bench upwards of its current strength of nine judges may be a way out of this crisis but is not the ideal solution.

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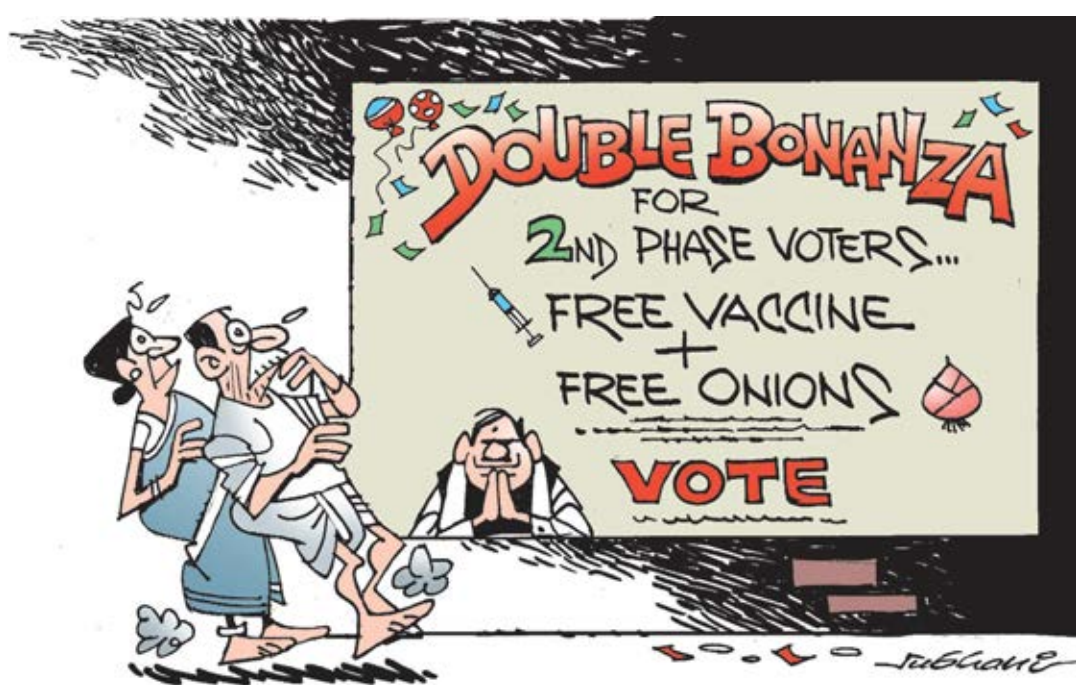
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Subhani



Biden or Trump: Who's win is better for India?



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections

When Joe Biden warned India in 2000 not to take advantage of the Afghan crisis because, as he put it, the whole world, not just the United States, was looking at the Kashmir problem, Jaswant Singh, then India's external affairs minister, promptly cancelled his appointment with the Democratic senator. The snub did not however prevent Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and President George W. Bush signing a defence cooperation agreement and one American visitor following another to New Delhi to flesh out the bones of the multi-faceted cooperation.

The episode is worth remembering for several reasons as India — like the rest of the world — awaits the outcome of America's 2020 presidential contest. The 2000 election was marked by bitter partisan squabbling followed by a flawed victory. Mr Biden, the Delaware Democrat and chairman of the powerful Senate foreign relations committee, was an established friend of India's. Eight months into the new administration, he had written to Mr Bush asking him to remove the sanctions on India that President Bill Clinton had imposed after the Pokharan-2 nuclear tests, but adding that there should be no easing up for Pakistan.

The feverish excitement of President Clinton's Indian tour in early 2000 had not sparked any reciprocal goodwill in America, where righteous proliferation fundamentalists among the Democrats did not forgive India for challenging what they regarded as God's word. Mr Clinton himself saw Pokharan-2

government can ignore the impact of its policy on Palestine's future.

Mature handling of foreign policy demands a certain balancing of objective moral judgment and national interest. The absence of this judicious mix prompts sellout allegations, as in some South American republics or Asian client states of the US like Syngman Rhee's South Korea or the Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos. That is not how Indians see their national future. Few Indians have any wish to live up to Sitaram Yechury's jibe about being the new Pakistan.

It's a different matter that Indian Americans, the second-largest immigrant group in the United States, mostly support Democratic candidates, although support for Mr Trump has reportedly grown in recent years. A YouGov poll found that 72 per cent of registered Indian American voters support Mr Biden. By comparison, 77 per cent voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016 and 84 per cent for Barack Obama in 2012. The poll also claims that the number of Trump-supporting Indian Americans has grown to 22 per cent, from 16 per cent in 2016.

The motivation of these people is not, however, the motivation of Indians in India. The latter are far less moved, for instance, by racism in the US, the damage done to American democratic institutions or the consequences of Mr Trump's eccentricities on climate change, Iran or the Covid-19 pandemic than US citizens, regardless of ethnic origin. Mr Trump's unsubstantiated allegation that as vice-president, Mr Biden, his son

and his brothers were "like a vacuum cleaner" getting rich, makes little difference to us. Indian Indians must look at next month's election only in terms of what matters to India.

Mr Biden's win in both Houses of Congress will mean "potentially more favourable US trade policies" for India, predicts UBS Global Research, boosting investors' sentiment and pushing up markets. A Biden victory may also replace the Fed's current chair Jerome Powell with someone more dovish in 2022.

If Mr Trump wins, they assume that an unorthodox chairman could be nominated who might even look at negative rates, which would be of tremendous help to Indian markets, resulting in the continued inflow of cheap capital into Indian stock as well as debt markets.

What the financial analyses overlook is the Democratic commitment to human rights, religious freedom and minority opportunities which successive Indian governments have found irksome. While these are not traditional Republican concerns, Mr Trump's harsh rhetoric on immigration probably explains his campaign's recent "Indian Voices for Trump", a coalition of Indian Americans in government and the private sector led by Donald Trump Jr. to "honour the comprehensive global strategic partnership with India" and "build on our US-India partnership".

The younger Mr Trump toured India some years ago on a mission to promote Trump Towers, strengthening the belief that the President puts his money where his mouth is. By that token alone, a Trump victory cannot be to India's disadvantage. A businessman like the US President never ignores the profit motive.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

Mr Biden's win in both Houses of Congress will mean 'potentially more favourable US trade policies' for India, predicts UBS Global Research

LETTERS

LOVE NATURE

It is truly good news for nature lovers as migratory birds started arriving at their winter homes Nelapattu Tank and Pulicat Lake bird sanctuaries little early (*Migratory birds arrive in Pulicat, Nelapattu, DC, Oct. 27*). Visiting sanctuaries gives much-needed relief and memorable pleasure for lifetime.

Panchakarla Govardhana Rao
Kankipadu

PAK IN GREY LIST

It's good that the Financial Action Task Force has put Pakistan in grey list again that leads to continuing of restrictions on financial support from other countries for consecutive third time as it failed to comply with the anti-terror norms to be implemented. It's a welcome development that except Turkey, no other country including its all-weather friend like China has come in support for Pakistan in this regard.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

KIDNAPPING

The news of a teenager kidnapping a child for ransom and killing the child is inhumane. This is yet another wake-up call for the authorities. Movies and TV serials are teaching teenagers how to kidnap in order to make easy money. Audiovisuals have a lot of impact on viewers. Let us show good things done by people so that viewers emulate.

K.L. Rao
Vizianagaram

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

PM sees change in China's stand

NEW DELHI, Oct. 27. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said here today she did not know whether an exchange of ambassadors between India and China would "solve anything".

Mrs. Gandhi, told newsmen at Delhi airport that the fact that Chinese ambassadors were meeting Indian ambassadors at certain receptions "is itself a change". "It is a good thing if they met", she added in reply to questions. Mrs. Gandhi, who returned from New York after attending the silver jubilee celebrations of the United Nations, said she had discussed the Soviet map issue with Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, whom she met on her way to New York.

Ashwani Kumar



Ensuring dignity for all, respect for the law, still a key challenge

As India joined the world in celebrating human dignity on Global Dignity Day earlier this month (Oct. 21), regrettably, over seven decades after Independence, we face a legitimate interrogation about our faltering record in the advancement of a defining national aspiration. India stands at number 94 out of 107 countries evaluated on the Global Hunger Index, with over 140 million undernourished children. Unabated cases of rape, encounter deaths, custodial torture, abuse of elders and children, loss of human rights and loss of dignity of the marginalised multitude, the suborning of fundamental freedoms by a muscular State and a fraying democracy mock the constitutional promise of fraternity, with individual dignity as its principal constituent. Even though the Supreme Court, as our Constitution's designated guardian, has declared that the right to life under Article 21, without dignity, is like "a sound that is not heard", a continuing loss of dignity is a painful reality.

Recent events of far-reaching importance involving the executive and judiciary have raised concerns about the institutional role and failure in advancing the Constitution's promise of digni-

ty. An unprecedented letter by the Andhra Pradesh chief minister to the Chief Justice of India, in which he complained about interference by a senior Supreme Court judge in the administration of justice by certain Andhra Pradesh high court judges, has compromised the institutional integrity and dignity of the higher judiciary. Making public his letter, on a sensitive subject under the Chief Justice's consideration, the state's chief executive hasn't done justice to his office either. While judges must defend their dignity and vindicate their oath of office, the chief minister also cannot escape the burden of constitutional discipline and the high standards of rectitude expected of him.

Whether a criminal contempt action against the CM can alone redeem the prestige and dignity of the higher judiciary is debatable. Judging from the public response to the contempt proceedings in Prashant Bhusan's case, only an unanswerable case of criminal contempt founded on clear mala fide by the CM would invest the punitive judicial remedy with credibility and a moral appeal. A credible resolution of a complex situation will indeed test the wisdom of the wise and the inter-institutional capacity to advance constitu-

tional justice. A restrained and sparing use adds to the legitimacy of the contempt jurisdiction, and till recently this was the court's preferred approach. This is because the authority and dignity of the higher judiciary as custodian of the constitutional principle rests not on the "coercive power of the judges but the deference and respect which is paid to them and their acts". Judicial dignity is clearly anchored in its moral rightness rather than a colonial heritage of enforced dignity in a republic of free men. The courts' majesty lies in the objectivity, consistency and intellectual integrity of their judgments, which must remain open to public scrutiny and fair comment. Judicial dignity, in the final analysis, is a function of the community's responsive chord to its pronouncements based upon a shared sense of justice. Judicial excess or abdication are both fatal to judicial prestige.

Unchecked media trials, especially on the electronic and social media, that repeatedly transgress constitutional boundaries with a devastating infraction of the right to privacy and reputation, mocks the promise of fair trials and judicial due process under Article 21. Despite several binding interdicts by the highest court against parallel media

trials at various stages, adversely impacting the course of justice, the brazen illegality continues unrestrained under the gaze of the highest court. The Sushant Singh Rajput and Kangana Ranaut episodes are jarring illustrations. Instances of such trials are still fresh in public memory, like Aarushi Talwar (2017), Nambi Nayaram (2018), 2G spectrum (2018) and P. Chidambaram (2019), as well as the ongoing Sunanda Pushkar and Tarun Tejpal cases, to name only a few. Relentless violation of the constitutional guarantee of a fair trial have left unanswered questions about the abuse of freedom of expression and the impossibility of a just recompense for loss of reputation and dignity of the accused. The profound and poetic pronouncements by the Supreme Court espousing human dignity as the foremost constitutional principle remains no more than a pious declaration of constitutional intent.

Questions about the Court's vacillation and seeming incapacity to enforce its judgments, without which the declaration of law is meaningless, have diminished judicial prestige. A seemingly resigned acceptance by the highest court of the routine and audacious

negation of the legal principles of proportionality, neutralisation, necessity and postponement of publication enunciated by it in relation to media coverage of cases under trial is inexplicable. The highest court needs no reminder of its own law that "the right to declare law carries with it the obligation of enforcing obedience to it". It is hoped that in the several petitions pending before the superior courts on the issue of media trials, an effective framework for enforcement of the law declared by the Court will be established.

Despite a robust dignitarian Constitution whose custody is entrusted to the joint endeavours of the three branches of government, the recent record of our liberal democracy suggests an institutional deficit in the advancement of constitutional goals. But we need not give in to despair as we know our dignity, like destiny, lies within ourselves. The failure of our representatives and democratic institutions to secure it cannot deter us from pursuing the dignitarian agenda as a purpose in perpetuity.

The writer is a former Union law minister. The views expressed here are personal.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	40522.10	0.94
Nifty 50	11889.40	1.03
S&P 500*	3,404.01	0.09
Dollar (₹)	73.71	0.20
Pound Sterling (₹)	95.88	0.26
Euro (₹)	87.00	0.31
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,853.77	0.15
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	41.24	0.78
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.846	0.012
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.788	-0.015

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Kinetic Green launches electric cargo three-wheeler

Pune-based Kinetic Green, the electric three-wheeler manufacturer, on Tuesday launched a high-performance electric cargo three-wheeler, the Kinetic Safar Jumbo. The company says the Safar Jumbo is a distinct Electric Vehicle, which is designed ground up at Kinetic's DSIR recognised Electric Vehicle Research and Development lab, packed with advanced technological features and boasts of 100 per cent indigenous parts.

Reconsider names for Lakshmi Vilas Bank MD, CEO: RBI



The Reserve Bank of India has asked Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB), which is in the midst of a merger process with Clix group, to reconsider the names proposed for the post of new MD & CEO, a senior official said on Tuesday. In September, shareholders of the cash-strapped private sector lender had voted out seven board members, including MD & CEO S Sundar, at the annual general meeting. Subsequently, RBI appointed a three-member Committee of Directors (CoD) comprising independent directors Meeta Mahan, Shakti Sinha and Satish Kumar Kalra.

Spinny to launch Spinny 360 for inside view of cars

Spinny, a full-stack used car platform, is gearing up to launch Spinny 360, a detailed, inside-out 360° view of each of its cars. Spinny360 allows the buyers to view the interior and exterior of each vehicle in the inventory online exactly as it is, giving them a clear idea about its condition and helping them make an informed decision.

FreshToHome raises \$121 m in Series C funding

FreshToHome, the online retailer of fish and meat products, has raised \$121 million in Series C funding led by Investment Corporation of Dubai (ICD), Investcorp, Ascent Capital, US Government's development finance institution DFC, the Allana Group and other investors. Iron Pillar, the lead investor from Series B participated in this round with an investment of \$19 million.



Future Retail sees liquidation if Reliance deal fails

New Delhi, Oct. 27: Future Retail Ltd (FRL) will go into liquidation if its deal to sell assets to Reliance Industries fails, the group told a Singapore arbitrator while arguing against Amazon Inc's bid to scupper the deal, a legal order seen by Reuters showed.

Amazon on Sunday won an injunction from a Singapore arbitrator to

halt FRL's deal to sell assets to Reliance. Amazon alleged FRL had breached certain contract provisions it entered into last year in a separate deal with the U.S. firm.

The dispute centres around FRL's decision in August to sell its retail, wholesale, logistics and some other businesses to Reliance for \$3.38 billion, including debt.

Amazon argues that a 2019 deal it had with a Future unit had clauses saying the Indian group couldn't sell its retail assets to anyone on a "restricted persons" list including any firms from Reliance chief Mukesh Ambani's group. The deal specified any disputes would be arbitrated under Singapore International Arbitration Centre rules.

Both companies reacted to the arbitrator's decision by saying they want to complete the deal "without any delay", setting the stage for a showdown between Reliance and Amazon.

An order by the arbitrator reveals how Jeff Bezos-led Amazon argued that Future breached agreements which barred it from selling retail assets to

entities including Reliance. It also shows the level of concern at Future if the deal breaks.

Future's retail unit will need to pack up if the transaction with Reliance doesn't go through, hitting the livelihoods of thousands of employees and workers at its vendor firms, the Indian group argued before the arbitrator, according to the order

which is not public.

"If the disputed transaction falls through, FRL will go into liquidation. That will mean that the livelihoods of more than 29,000 employees of FRL will be lost," the Indian group's representatives told the arbitrator V.K. Rajah.

COVID-19 pandemic has hit many Indian businesses, and the FRL-Reliance deal was aimed at protect-

ing the interests of all stakeholders through a large infusion of funds and the acquisition of liabilities, Future argued.

But Rajah ruled that "economic hardship alone is not a legal ground for disregarding legal obligations".

Amazon, FRL and Reliance didn't respond to a request for comment.

— Reuters

Growth begins to pick up, yet fiscal 2021 to remain wasted

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, OCT. 27

With certain positive economic indicators, suggesting several green shoots that have started emerging, the Narendra Modi-led government is hopeful that the GDP growth may be in either negative zone or near zero in the current fiscal. However, it further said that the growth would continue to remain in the negative category for the full year.

Speaking at the India Energy Forum of CERAWeek, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, on Tuesday, said, "There were visible signs of revival in the economy but the GDP growth may be in negative zone or near zero in the current fiscal. For the full year, the growth will continue to remain in the negative category."

This is the first statement that has been received from the finance minister talking about a proper number for the full

APPAREL SALES DOWN BY 45-55%

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 27

Sales of apparel retailers were 45 to 55 per cent down in the September quarter. But October has seen a recovery to 75 per cent of last year levels.

Apparel retail is far weaker than other sectors with September quarter average revenues down 45-55 per cent, according to a report by Motilal Oswal Financial Services. ICRA too finds that domestic retail sales were estimated to be at 40-50 per cent of last year's levels in the September quarter.

However, the segment is

witnessing month-on-month recovery and in October sales were around 75 per cent of the year ago month.

Neighborhood stores are performing better than high street stores and both are seeing better sales than the stores in malls. Record rains in some areas have disrupted supply chains and customer demand.

Customers are down-trading and purchasing low value products as most are staying at home.

Hence, value retailers like Zudio and Max among others are performing well. Further,

categories like footwear and athleisure have been selling much better. Men are purchasing more than women and kids as they are going out for work-related purposes.

As per the Festive Shopping Index, more than half of the responding customers are looking forward to buy apparels and fashion during the festivals.

However, there have been closures of stores that were unprofitable or which saw limited rental reduction. Malls have a higher proportion of store closures compared to stores in high streets.

year. In line with the government, the Reserve Bank of India Governor recently also stated how the full year's growth has showed signs of revival.

The finance minister further said that there was a very firm lockdown

imposed beginning March 25 as the government put lives before livelihood. This is primarily because of a huge 23.9 per cent contraction in the economy in the first quarter of current fiscal (April-June).

"The lockdown also gave

time to do preparatory work to deal with the pandemic. But now, macroeconomic indicators have shown signs of revival," she said, adding that festive season will further spur the Indian economy in the next quarters.

FDI inflows dropped 33% to \$17b: UN body

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 27

While the government had claimed that the country received \$35 billion Foreign Direct Investment in the first five months of the fiscal, United Conference of Trade and Development finds that India has received only \$17 billion in the first half of the calendar year.

As per UNCTAD's Global Investment Trends Monitor, FDI inflow into India dropped 33 per cent to \$17 billion in the first half of 2020 or between January and June this year, with the country struggling to contain Covid-19.

India being the largest recipient of FDI in South Asia, the contraction also pulled down the total inflow into the region by 31 per cent to \$20 billion.

However, investment growth in India's digital economy continued, especially through cross-border merger and acquisition sales, which doubled in value. Deals included the acquisition of stake in Jio Platforms by

● AS PER UNCTAD's Global Investment Trends Monitor, FDI inflow into India dropped 33 per cent to \$17 billion in the first half of 2020.

● ACCORDING to the government, it was the highest ever FDI for the first five months of a financial year.

● DEVELOPED ECONOMIES saw the biggest fall of 75 per cent, to an estimated \$98 billion.

Jaadhu, owned by Facebook, for \$5.6 billion. Several cross-border deals in infrastructure and energy also propped up M&A values in India, including the acquisition of Tower Infrastructure Trust and fuel business of Reliance Industries, found UNCTAD.

A few days back, the government had released data on FDI inflow. For the first five months of the fiscal or between April and August this

year, the country had received FDI of \$35.73 billion. According to the government, it was the highest ever FDI for the first five months of a financial year. The inflow in the first five months of this year was 13 per cent higher than \$31.60 billion invested in the same period last year.

Of this, FDI equity inflow accounted for \$27.10 billion. It was also the highest ever for the first five months of a financial year and 16 per cent more compared to \$23.35 billion in the first five months of 2019-20.

As per UNCTAD's report, global FDI flows fell 49 per cent in the first half of 2020 compared to the same period of 2019.

Developed economies saw the biggest fall of 75 per cent, to an estimated \$98 billion. Meanwhile, developing economies witnessed 16 per cent decrease in FDI flows mainly due to resilient investment in China. Flows decreased by just 12 per cent in Asia and developing countries in Asia accounted for half of the global FDI.

Harley's exit paves way for another US bike co



MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, OCT. 27

With the exit of American bike maker Harley-Davidson from India, it has opened up an opportunity of sorts for another iconic American motorcycle manufacturer Indian Motorcycle.

The company has announced its 2021 model line-up which includes all variants of the Scout, Chief, Chieftain, FTR

1200, Challenger, Roadmaster and Springfield for the Indian market.

Although the company has not given a concrete timeline for the launch of these motorcycles, it would start retailing the BS6 compliant models before December.

"We are excited to bring the new and improved lineup of Indian Motorcycle in India," Lalit Sharma, Country

Manager at Polaris India, said.

"Our 2021 line-up will incorporate several new additions and upgraded features which will definitely add the charm and get the attraction of the riders," he said.

Indian Motorcycle also said that it will open up the order books for the new model line-up shortly, which means one could expect bookings to begin during Diwali.

HIRING | POLICY

46 per cent of employers are keener to increase their apprentice pool

Firms look at hiring apprentice to offset staff shortage

New Delhi, Oct. 27: An increasing number of employers are looking at apprenticeship to offset the workforce scarcity that they have been facing following the coronavirus-induced reverse migration, says a report.

According to Team-Lease's Apprenticeship Outlook Report, 46 per cent of employers are keener to increase their apprentice pool in the period July to December 2020. The net apprenticeship outlook for this half year stands at 33 per cent.

The report contains insights on employer sentiment in relation to apprentice hiring for the period July 2020 to December 2020. Analysis is based on the historical data of apprentice hiring and findings from a survey of 600 employers across 18 sectors and 14 cities.

"One of the primary drivers for this positive momentum is



that more employers, about 32 per cent, have been looking at apprenticeship to offset the workforce scarcity that they have been facing due to reverse

migration that has happened because of Covid-19," the report said.

Additionally, about 25 per cent companies have also been hir-

ing apprentices to meet the increased demand for products and services due to the pandemic, it added.

"Despite the predicament that the current pandemic has brought, the overall sentiment amongst companies to hire apprentices has been very positive. While in the initial months of the lockdown, we witnessed a dip, the hiring intent has bounced back quite aggressively, especially since June/July," said Sumit Kumar, Vice President - NETAP, TeamLease Skill University.

Kumar further said that more employers are continuing to accept apprenticeship as a solution to create a skilled productive workforce. Nearly 78 per cent employers find their apprentices to be productive.

"... the current pandemic has made many realise the potential

of investing in apprentices and building a talent pool, especially local talent to mitigate workforce scarcity in such situations. Close to 24 per cent organisations have increased their apprentice hiring during the pandemic," Kumar added.

The top sectors where apprentices will be in demand are healthcare & pharmaceuticals (42 per cent), manufacturing & engineering (40 per cent), retail (38 per cent) and ecommerce (38 per cent).

The report analysed the gender parity in hiring apprentices. Around 34 per cent of the companies interviewed have expressed a gender neutral approach and openness to include even the LGBTQ+ community as well; 43 per cent companies prefer male candidates and 23 per cent prefer females.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Fifa prez Infantino positive for Covid

Lausanne: Fifa president Gianni Infantino has contracted coronavirus, the world's governing body announced on Tuesday. The 50-year-old has mild symptoms and will remain in isolation for a further 10 days. "All people who came into contact with the Fifa President during the last few days have been informed accordingly and they are being requested to take the necessary steps," the body said. "Fifa sincerely wishes President Infantino a speedy recovery," it added. Infantino's last public appearances was at Fifa's Compliance Summit which ended on October 16 when all attendees were present via video. Cases, hospitalisations and deaths from Covid-19 in the body's base, Switzerland, have doubled from one week to the next throughout October. — AFP

India call feels surreal: Varun

Sharjah: "It feels surreal," said the architect-turned-mystery spinner Varun Chakravathy after he got a maiden India call-up for the T20 series in Australia following his exploits for Kolkata Knight Riders in the ongoing IPL.

The 29-year-old, who only started taking his spin bowling seriously in 2018, said he was not expecting to be picked in the national team. He has played only 12 T20s and featured in a lone First-Class game. "After the match got over I got to know (of my selection into the Indian team). I keep using the same word again and again, it feels surreal," he told BCCI.tv after the game against Kings XI Punjab on Monday night.

"My basic goal was to play in the team regularly and perform and contribute to their wins. Hopefully I'll be able to do the same for India." — PTI

De Villiers set to miss Big Bash

Dubai: The versatile AB de Villiers has decided to skip the Big Bash League (BBL) this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the upcoming birth of his third child but is open to return in future due to "unfinished business" at Brisbane Heat.

The two factors prompted the former South African skipper to pull out of the T20 league. The 36-year-old is currently playing in the IPL in the UAE. "We are expecting our latest child very soon and with a young, growing family, and the uncertainty around travel and conditions due to Covid-19, we reluctantly decided it wasn't going to be this season," de Villiers said in a statement. "The Heat were great to us last season and I am very open to returning to the club in future." — PTI

Biggies pull out of Lanka league

Colombo: The inaugural Lankan Premier League (LPL) have been dealt a severe blow with five overseas players, including Faf du Plessis, Andre Russell and David Miller, pulling out of the T20 tournament less than a week after they were drafted into various franchises. While South African trio of Miller, du Plessis and Dawid Malan are unavailable because of the limited-overs series against England, West Indian Russell has pulled out due to a knee injury. Indian wicket-keeper batsman Manvinder Bisla, who played 35 IPL matches, is the fifth player to withdraw from the tournament, scheduled to be held from November 21 to December 13. "The franchises that had these players will have to negotiate with other players to take their place," LPL director Ravin Wickramaratne told ESPNcricinfo. — PTI

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Mumbai Indians vs Royal Challengers Bangalore from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL

Champions League: Krasnodar vs Chelsea from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Istanbul Basaksehir vs Paris Saint Germain from 11.25 pm on Sony Six; Sevilla vs Rennes from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 3; Dortmund vs Zenit from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Six; Juventus vs Barcelona from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; Manchester United vs Leipzig from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1

WWE NXT

Bouts from 5.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1

SHAKTIMAN SAHA!

Wriddhiman scores 45-ball 87 as Sunrisers stay in play-off race

SCORECARD

Sunrisers Hyderabad: D. Warner c Patel b Ashwin 66, W. Saha c Iyer b Nortje 87, M. Pandey (not out) 44, K. Williamson (not out) 11. Extras (lb-7, wd-4) 11. Total (for 2 wkts, in 20 overs) 219. FoW: 1-107, 2-170.

Bowling: A. Nortje 4-0-37-1, K. Rabada 4-0-54-0, R. Ashwin 3-0-35-1, A. Patel 4-0-36-0, T. Deshpande 3-0-35-0, M. Stoinis 2-0-15-0.

Delhi Capitals: A. Rahane lbw b Rashid Khan 26, S. Dhawan c Warner b Sandeep Sharma 0, M. Stoinis c Warner b Nadeem 5, S. Hetmyer b Rashid Khan 16, R. Pant c sub (S.P. Goswami) b Sandeep Sharma 36, S. Iyer c Williamson b Shankar 7, A. Patel c sub (PK Garg) b Rashid Khan 1, K. Rabada b Natarajan 3, R. Ashwin c Abdul Samad b Holder 7, T. Deshpande (not out) 20, A. Nortje c sub (PK Garg) b Natarajan 1. Extras (lb-4, w-5) 9. Total (in 19 overs) 151. FoW: 1-1, 2-14, 3-54, 4-55, 5-78, 6-83, 7-103, 8-103, 9-125, 10-131. **Bowling:** Sandeep Sharma 4-0-27-2, S. Nadeem 1-0-8-1, J. Holder 4-0-46-1, Rashid Khan 4-0-7-3, T. Natarajan 4-0-26-1, V. Shankar 1.5-0-11-1, D. Warner 0.1-0-2-0.

Jason Holder, collecting 22 runs in the sixth over as Delhi reached 54 for two at the end of the Powerplay overs.

However, Rashid dealt Delhi with twin blows, getting rid of both Rahane and Hetmyer in the seventh over. Skipper Shreyas Iyer (7) was next to depart as wickets continued to tumble at regular intervals. — PTI

IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Mumbai Indians	11	7	4	0	14	+1.252
Royal Challengers Bangalore	11	7	4	0	14	+0.092
Delhi Capitals	12	7	5	0	14	+0.030
Kings XI Punjab	12	6	6	0	12	-0.049
Kolkata Knight Riders	12	6	6	0	12	-0.479
Sunrisers Hyderabad	12	5	7	0	10	+0.396
Rajasthan Royals	12	5	7	0	10	-0.505
Chennai Super Kings	12	4	8	0	6	-0.602

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



Wriddhiman Saha of Sunrisers Hyderabad in action during his 87 against Delhi Capitals in an IPL match in Dubai on Tuesday. Hyderabad won by 88 runs. — BCCI

Rohit doubtful as MI run into RCB

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 27: Rohit Sharma is likely to miss his third game in a row when Mumbai Indians face Royal Challengers Bangalore here on Wednesday with both teams aiming to secure their spot in the IPL playoffs.

While Mumbai are sitting on top of the table despite their eight-wicket hammering by Rajasthan Royals with 14 points, Virat Kohli-led RCB too remain on 14 following their loss to Chennai Super Kings on Sunday.

A win for either side on Wednesday should be enough to take it to the play-offs.

Rohit's fitness has become a subject of unwanted attention ahead of the game. Having missed the last two games due to a hamstring injury, Mumbai Indians skipper returned to the nets on Monday, a day when he was not named in the India squad for the Australia series.

There is still no conclusive update on his fitness from either Mumbai Indians or the BCCI.

In Rohit's absence, Mumbai would persist with both Saurabh Tiwary and Ishan Kishan, who has



Rohit Sharma

played some scintillating knocks.

Quinton De Kock (374 runs) had a rare failure against Rajasthan and he would be keen to make an impact. Kishan (298 runs) and Suryakumar Yadav (283 runs) are among the leading run-scorers who can go on the offensive against any attack.

For RCB, Kohli (415 runs) would like to continue his splendid run in the tournament. Australian Aaron Finch (236 runs), young Devdutt Padikkal (343 runs) and AB de Villiers (324 runs) need to be more consistent and support their skipper.

De Villiers has shown time and again, why he is regarded as one of the best T20 batsmen by turning the clock back on few occasions. — PTI

NUMBERS GAME

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL: ● Matches: 26 ● Hyderabad: 16 ● Delhi: 9 ● Tied: 1 (Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Mumbai Indian in Super over after match ended in a tie)

MEETING IN 2019

- Mumbai Indians beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 6 runs in Bangalore.
- Mumbai Indians beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 5 wickets in Mumbai.

MEETING IN 2020

- Royal Challengers beat Mumbai Indian in Super over after match ended in a tie at Dubai.

FOR THE RECORD

- Virat Kohli, who has smashed 296 sixes in 277 innings of 292 matches, needs four sixes to become fourth Indian and 24th batsman overall to complete a triple century of sixes in Twenty-20 cricket.
- Hardik Pandya scored an unbeaten 60 off 21 balls with seven sixes and two fours in the previous match against Rajasthan Royals in Abu Dhabi.

— S. PERVEZ QAISAR

Mandeep mental skill impresses KL

SINGH RECALLS LATE FATHER'S WISH AFTER UNBEATEN FIFTY

Sharjah, Oct. 27: Mandeep Singh scored a match-winning 66 two days after losing his father, and Kings XI Punjab skipper K.L. Rahul feels the mental toughness shown by the opener has rubbed off on the entire squad.

Mandeep made an unbeaten 66 against Kolkata Knight Riders on Monday to help KXIP record five wins in a row.

The opening batsman, playing in the absence of injured Mayank Agarwal, lost his father last week and attended his funeral via a video call. "It's so hard when you are away from your family. With the bubble, you don't have the close ones. The kind of toughness he (Mandeep) has shown has rubbed off on other boys as well."

"The way he played today, it makes everyone emotional. He's gone through a rough time, just to put his hand up, be

there and finish the game for the team would make him proud and make his father proud," Rahul said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

With wrist-spinners Murugan Ashwin and Ravi Bishnoi bowling well in tandem, Rahul

said the credit for that goes to head coach Anil Kumble.

"When you have Anil Kumble as the coach, it's not surprising that we are playing with two leg-spinners. It's something that he had in his mind even before the IPL started."

"He always kept telling me that towards the second half or at some point that two leg-spinners is always an aggressive option," he said.

KXIP have won all their games since Chris Gayle returned to the side after sitting out in the first half of the tournament.

"It was a very hard decision not to play him (Chris) because he was batting really well. This is the hungriest I have ever seen him in the last 7-8 years that I have played with him. He is running his ones and twos, so that's refreshing. "He's always positive, always pushing the youngsters." — PTI

MANDEEP GOES GAGA OVER GAYLE

Sharjah, Oct. 27: Kings XI Punjab opener Mandeep Singh was in awe of Chris Gayle's power-hitting against Kolkata Knight Riders, and described the Jamaican as the "greatest T20 player" of the game.

Casing 150 on Monday night, Gayle, who was overlooked and was also ill in the first phase of the IPL, showed why he is called the 'Universe Boss' during his innings of 51 off 29 balls.

Gayle's and Mandeep shared 100 runs in 10.1 overs to help KXIP jump to the fourth spot by registering their fifth win on the trot. "Chris (Gayle) makes the game so easy and I told him that you should never retire. I've never seen him struggle, and he's probably the greatest T20 player ever," Mandeep said. — PTI

Gavaskar curious about Rohit's injury

Dubai, Oct. 27: Former India skipper Sunil Gavaskar has called for more transparency on the status of limited-overs vice-captain Rohit Sharma's hamstring injury after he was seen practising at the Mumbai Indians' nets within hours of being left out of the squad for an upcoming tour of Australia.

The BCCI did not throw much light on Rohit's fitness and just stated that it is monitoring his progress while announcing the three teams for the Australia tour on Monday. On the same day, Rohit was seen practicing at the Mumbai Indians nets.

"We are talking about the Test matches, which are a month and a half way. What actually is the problem with him will help everybody," he added. The tour of Australia comprises three T20 Internationals, as many ODIs and four Tests. The series is scheduled to start on November 27. — PTI



Sunil Gavaskar

kind of injury it is," Gavaskar told IPL broadcaster Star Sports after the game between Kings XI Punjab and Kolkata Knight Riders on Monday.

"I think a little bit of transparency, a little bit of openness about what actually is the problem with him will help everybody," he added.

The tour of Australia comprises three T20 Internationals, as many ODIs and four Tests. The series is scheduled to start on November 27. — PTI

Roma level 3 times in Milan stalemate

Milan, Oct. 27: Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored twice but AC Milan dropped their first points of the Serie A season as Roma came from behind to draw 3-3 at the San Siro on Monday.

Milan were without goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma and young Norwegian striker Jens Petter Hauge, who the club announced earlier on Monday had tested positive for Covid-19.

Veteran Romanian goalkeeper Ciprian Tatarusanu was twice caught on his line from corners and also spilled a shot in the build up to Roma's second-half penalty.

Ibrahimovic struck after just two minutes. Milan's problems at corners were not entirely the fault of Tatarusanu. Edin Dzeko was unmarked in front of goal when he headed his team's first equaliser after 13 minutes.

In the second half, Milan's Alexis Saelemaekers guided a shot in from 10 yards. French midfielder Jordan Veretout levelled from the penalty spot after 70 minutes. Ibrahimovic completed his third double in three league appearances with a penalty after 78 minutes, but had an unwitting assist as Roma levelled for a third time. — AFP

Son, Kane to the rescue for Spurs

Burnley, Oct. 27: Son Heung-min pounced to steal a 1-0 win for lacklustre Tottenham on Monday, linking up with Harry Kane yet again as Jose Mourinho's side climbed to fifth in the Premier League table.

All of the traditional "big six" clubs have dropped unlikely points in the early weeks of the season and Spurs looked set to leave Turf Moor frustrated.

But South Korea forward Son scored his eighth league goal of the season in the 76th minute, heading in from close range after a headed pass from Kane.

Spurs now have 11 points from six games, just two points behind leaders Everton after their third win of the season.

Mourinho hailed his attacking stars, who have now combined for 29 English Premier League goals — only Didier



Tottenham's Son Heung-min (on ground) scores against Burnley their English Premier League match at Turf Moor Stadium in Burnley on Monday. — AP

Drogba and Frank Lampard have managed more, with 36.

"It is an understanding that comes from Mauricio (Pochettino's) time," said

Mourinho, adding, "I don't want all the credit myself, let's share with Mauricio. They play together for a long time, probably a different way

because Harry is not always a nine now." "What pleases me more about them both is that they are two top players but close friends, no jeal-

THE RESULTS

Brighton (Liverpool 40-og)	1
West Brom (Grant 83)	1
Burnley	0
Tottenham (Son 76)	1

ousy, they both play for the team," he said.

RELIEF

The hard-earned three points will be a huge relief to Mourinho, whose side looked like world beaters earlier this month when they hammered Manchester United 6-1 before blowing a 3-0 lead against West Ham.

Tottenham's attacking momentum vanished at Turf Moor, where they struggled to make an impression against Sean Dyche's side, who remain in the relegation zone, without a win this season. — AFP