

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | THURSDAY | 29 OCTOBER 2020



NATION | 4

No budgetary constraints, says Rajnath



WORLD | 5

Don slams media for Joe graft case 'block'

SPORTS | 8

Barca prez resigns after tiff with Messi



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Vol. 25 No. 182 Established 1940 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

WEATHER

Max: 32.0°C
Min: 23.0°C
RH: 79%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Humid and Partly Cloudy.
Max/Min temp. 32/23 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+43,860)	(+473)
80,31,591	1,20,496
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+1,481)	(+4)
TS: 2,35,152	1,319
(+2,949)	(+18)
AP: 8,14,774	6,643

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

445,92,439

DEATHS

11,76,540

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES

215

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Nija Ashwavyuja Suddha Trayodasi till 3.16 pm
Star: Uttarabhadra till 11.59 am
Variyam: 1.28 am to 3.16 am (Friday)
Durmuhurtam: 10.05 am to 10.51 am, 2.39 pm to 3.25 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Awwal 11, 1442 AH
PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)
Fajar: 5.00 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.00 pm
Maghrib: 6.35 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.00 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.33 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 4.24 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.49 AM

COUNTER POINT



New range, tough and costs less... to throw at candidates!

SHORT TAKES

Aarogya Setu app by NIC, volunteers

New Delhi: The government on Wednesday said the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in collaboration with volunteers from industry and academia developed the Aarogya Setu app. The statement from the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) came amid reports referring to a show cause notice issued by the Central Information Commission (CIC) to Chief Public Information Officers (CPIOs) of the MeitY, NIC and National e-Governance Division (NeGD) for their failure to explain who created the app.

India to release onion buffer stock

Indore: Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar said in view of the soaring prices of onion, various steps are being taken to release 1 lakh tonnes of the buffer stock of the staple. He told this to reporters after taking part in a rally in Dharampuri town in Indore district ahead of the November 3 bypolls to 28 assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh. "The government has already taken cognisance of the issue of rising prices of onions and its one lakh tonnes of buffer stock is being released through NAFED," Tomar said.

4,147 street kids rescued in state

Operation Muskaan finds 644 girls among them

DC CORRESPONDENTS
VIJAYAWADA/VISAKHAPATNAM/TIRUPATI/NELLORE/A NANTAPUR, OCT. 28

As part of a special coordinated "Operation Muskaan", 4,147 street children and child labourers were rescued from throughout Andhra Pradesh and are being restored to their parents. Those rescued, comprising kids from Odisha and Bihar, include 644 girls.

The rescue operation was carried out by police all over the state on Wednesday in coordination with other departments including labour, women welfare and child development, apart from other stakeholders involved in rescuing street children and child labourers.

The number of children rescued district-wise are:

Srikakulam – 100, Vizianagaram – 33, Visakhapatnam Rural – 101, Visakhapatnam Commissionerate – 101, East Godavari – 179, Rajahmundry Urban – 37, West Godavari – 270, Krishna – 246, Vijayawada – 60, Guntur Urban – 121, Guntur Rural – 272, Prakasam – 739, Nellore – 237, Kurnool – 640, Kadapa – 223, Anantapur – 417, Chittoor – 290, Tirupati Urban – 79, Vijayawada – 14 and superintendent of railway police, Guntakal – 11.

In Visakhapatnam, city and rural police rescued 179 child labourers from different parts of the district.

In the city, 201 police personnel under the leadership of a DCP-rank official formed 66 teams to identify children working in different businesses and

commercial centres. 367 children have been rescued from Chittoor and Tirupati Urban districts limits.

Chittoor district SP S. Senthil Kumar has appealed to public that they pass on any information about child labour or harassment of children to toll free helpline numbers 1098, 181 or 100.

Police also counselled parents of children and explained to them the government schemes available for educating their children.

In Tirupati Urban limits, SP Avula Ramesh Reddy told media persons that Operation Muskaan was carried out at railway stations, bus stands, brick kilns, hotels, quarries and fields.

■ **Page 3: Rescued kids sent to orphanages**

Pay farmers in 10 days of purchase, CM tells officials

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 28

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy directed officials to make payments within 10 days of purchasing crops while also ensuring Minimum Supportive Price (MSP) leaving no room for complaints.

He held a review meeting on Comprehensive Monitoring Agriculture Price and Procurement (CMAPP) and e-marketing on Wednesday. He said that pre-processing units in villages are important and called for establishing those facilities on a war-footing.

The Chief Minister stressed that no farmer should incur any loss and instructed officials to take immediate action against complaints that farmers were selling their crops below the MSP and ensure that they get remunerative price. He stated that information about the MSP for crops should be made available at all 16,641 RBKs on a daily basis and wanted the officials to monitor the remunerative prices of crops and review them if there was any price fall.

Jagan told officials to take required measures in procuring paddy, groundnut and cotton that were damaged in the recent rains at a remunerative price and safeguard the interests of farmers. The officials informed that 5,812 crop purchase centres

were established across AP, as it was estimated that 1,09,24,524 metric tonnes of crops will be harvested this Kharif season. With regard to Multipurpose Facility Centres at RBKs, it was estimated that ₹9,093 crore will be required to set-up 13 such facilities.

They include warehouses, drying platforms, collection centres, cold rooms for storage, custom hiring centres, primary processing centers, assaying equipment, janata bazaars, bulk milk cooling units, cattle sheds and aqua infra in select villages, procurement centres and e-marketing.

The CM emphasised the need to provide infrastructure to strengthen RBKs and said pre-processing units and godowns are needed at the village level. He also stressed on strengthening the security and payment gateways along with delivery logistics and ensuring smooth transactions between the buyer and seller.

He said, "After placing an order, the crop should reach the buyer in 3-4 days without any hassles. The State has signed MoU with Amul and other companies to provide employment opportunities to women. Milk procurement should be carried out from those who benefited through Cheyutha and Aasara schemes and officials should assist those women in marketing."



Voters stand in queues to cast their votes for the first phase of Bihar Assembly Election, amid the coronavirus pandemic, at Bhabhua police station in Kaimur district on Wednesday. — PTI

Tejashwi yuvraj of jungle raj: PM

NAYEAR AZAD
with agency inputs
PATNA/DARBHANGA/MUZAFFARPUR, OCT 28

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday tore into the Opposition RJD in Bihar, calling its chief ministerial candidate Tejashwi Yadav the "yuvraj" (crown prince) of "jungle raj" and targeting him over his party's promise to provide 10 lakh government jobs if it came to power.

He warned people against the double whammy Bihar could face if those responsible for having turned the state "beemar" (sick) were voted to power amid the global Covid pandemic.



Addressing back to back rallies in Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur in north Bihar, besides in Patna, the PM also set the tone for the day with a dash of Hindutva as he mentioned of Ayodhya at his first election meeting. "Forget about government jobs. If they succeed (in winning), Bihar will

lose jobs even in the private sector. The party has copyright on kidnappings and firms will be forced to shut shop and flee as they will be under duress because of extortion calls," Mr Modi alleged.

The PM reiterated that the Opposition coalition was being led by leaders who had no roadmap or experience to run the state. In an attack on Tejashwi Yadav, Mr Modi said that the "people do not have any expectations from the 'yuvraj of jungle raj'. Everyone knows about his capabilities and track record".

"They are the ones (Opposition) responsible for jungle raj and made money through projects

which were allotted for the development of the state. They made job creation into (a) money-making industry for their development", Mr Modi said during his rallies in Bihar. "He has been brought up on a value system where public money is looted to help one's own family prosper. For such people, job creation becomes a tool to make crores of rupees."

The PM also invoked the Ayodhya issue at his meetings in Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur. He said: "While standing in the land of Goddess Sita, I congratulate you as the construction work of a grand Ram temple at Ayodhya has started."

AP cites Covid, opposes elections to local bodies

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 28

The Andhra Pradesh government on Wednesday opposed the holding of elections to local bodies citing the danger of the second wave of Covid-19.

Nilam Sawhney, chief secretary, met state election commissioner, N. Ramesh Kumar, on Wednesday and conveyed the government's stand on elections. Earlier, two senior bureaucrats handling health - Anil Kumar Singhal and K. Bhaskar - also called on the state election commission (SEC) and explained in detail the threat of the epidemic still looming large.

Sources said the SEC sought to know if the spread of virus came down as reflected in the number of positive cases coming down from 10,000 a day to 3,000. Officials said though the number of positive cases has come down,

OPPOSITION FOR DECLARING LOCAL BODY POLLS VOID

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT. 28

The ongoing controversy over the conduct of elections to local bodies in Andhra Pradesh took a curious turn on Wednesday with several Opposition parties urging the state election commission (SEC) to withdraw their previous notification and declare all those elections which went unopposed in several places as invalid.

■ **Full report on Page 2**

health experts across the globe have been warning about a second wave.

The SEC sought the opinion of the state govern-

ment in view of the earlier Supreme Court directions to resume the poll process in consultation with the state government. The ruling YSR Congress had already questioned the SEC move to elicit the views of political parties without consulting the state government, following the apex court directions.

Kumar, in a statement, said the SEC was saddened at YSRC leaders casting aspersions on a constitutional body, avoidable in the best democratic traditions. Defending the list of political parties invited to elicit views, the SEC said the commission had followed the best practices of the election commission of India in all matters. Recognised political parties with reserved symbols are necessarily called for consultation and the SEC did not wish to deviate from this practice.

TOP GEAR No other state could get double digit awards, Kerala stood second with nine awards

AP cops ace tech test, win 48 of 83 Skoch awards

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 28

Andhra Pradesh State Police Department has created a new record on Wednesday by bagging 48 of the 83 Skoch awards announced at the national level in use of technology.

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy congratulated the state police for their big achievement of standing first among all Indian states.

This is the second time in a row that AP police have won awards at the national level on use of technology. Interestingly, no other

state in the country reached double digits in Skoch awards. AP stood at top with 48 awards, followed by Kerala with the second highest nine awards. Maharashtra and West Bengal each won four awards, Himachal Pradesh three, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu two each, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Odisha, Punjab, Uttaranchal and neighbouring Telugu state Telangana won one award each.

Disha initiatives started by CM Jagan for protection

- **THIS IS** the second time in a row that AP police have won awards at the national level on use of technology
- **DISHA INITIATIVES** started by the Chief Minister for protection of women won five awards.
- **THREE OTHER** awards went for welfare initiatives, followed by technical services (13), CID (4), communication (3)

of women won five awards for its various services. AP Police Seva Application with 87 types of services also won an award. Three awards went for welfare initiatives, followed by Technical Services (13), CID (4), Communication (3), Vijayawada and Kurnool district police (3),

Prakasam, Vizianagaram, Anantapur and Kadapa (2 each), Chittoor, Tirupati, Nellore, Guntur (Urban), Guntur (Rural) and Krishna districts' police (1 each).

The Chief Minister appreciated all winners for providing speedy service with accountability and trans-

parency. Andhra Pradesh Police Department is the only government agency to have won record 85 awards within the span of a year, AP DGP Gautam Sawang pointed out. He underlined that these awards are a benchmark for best practices in the field of adopting technology and innovation for rendering effective and efficient public service, with accountability and transparency.

Guntur (Rural) SP Vishal Gunni got Skoch (Silver) National Award for policing and justice through innovative "RRR –

Renovate, Retrain and Reassure" programme. Kurnool SP Kaginelli Fakkeerappa won the Skoch (Silver) National Award for the Court Monitoring System he implemented in the district using real-time CMS dashboard, the first in the country. It provides record of instances like daily anticipatory bails, crime bails, important cases in trial stage, and investigation officers going to court for speeding up resolution of cases in courts.

Chittoor district police get Skoch for Covid-19 response

Underlining that there should be uniformity in the distribution of dry ration, Justice Nageswara Rao said, "It should not be uniform but also reasonable so that it serves the purpose."

The top court in its September 29, 2020, order had directed all States/UTs to provide dry ration to all the sex workers identified by the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) and the state and district legal authorities, without insisting on ration card or any other identity proof.

Amicus curiae Jayant Bhushan told the court Assam with over 11,000 sex workers has allocated just ₹32 lakh for the distribution of dry ration. Bhushan wondered on what basis the eastern state has allocated ₹32 lakh.

OTHER STORIES

PENDING TOURISM WORKS IN AGENCY AREAS REVIEWED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 28

Managing Director of AP Tourism Development Corporation and chief executive officer of AP Tourism Authority Pravin Kumar reviewed pending projects with the local officials in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

The important projects that came up for discussion include development of Borra Caves with an estimated cost of ₹2.5 crore, coffee shop at Ananthagiri and cottages at Lambasingi. The projects were stalled after the change of government and later due to lockdown conditions.

Lambasingi will have 16 cottages, restaurant and a bar. Initial budget was ₹5 crore but the new government has added ₹3 crore to complete the project.

Tenders were also called for a container restaurant at Bhimili Beach Road, Araku Ghat Road and Paravada. But tenders were received and shortlisted for container restaurant at Bhimili Beach and land for development of restaurant at Paravada. However, there were no takers for the Araku project, sources said.

Recent reports said footfall was increased at Araku Valley, Borra Caves and Ananthagiri on the eve of Dasara festival. Hotel owners are expecting that tourists would visit the valley from Christmas till the end of Sankranthi.

AU, STPI TO SET UP GEN NEXT START-UP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 28

Andhra University in association with Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) is planning to set up a next generation start-up and Innovation Centre on its premises in Visakhapatnam city. This aims at turning the passing graduate student entrepreneurs rather than looking for only jobs.

The innovation centre will create the start-up ecosystem, hunt good talents and help them build their ideas into product.

A training centre would be developed by reputed IT companies in the same premises to train the Andhra University engineering students.

STPI, joint director, M.P. Dubey, said the start-ups will be mentored by the industry stalwarts and get the right exposure.

"You can see how Israel is turning its graduates into entrepreneurs with such innovation centres. We also need to emulate those styles. Andhra University is one of the best institutes in the country. So, the varsity and STPI have planned this innovation centre," he said.

AU vice-chancellor Prof. P.V.G.D. Prasad Reddy said it was still in conceptual stage and needed approval from the government as well.

"This is going to be a mega project by Andhra University project and we have selected STPI as a partner to develop it," said Prof. Reddy.

An IoT centre of excellence is also in the pipeline of Andhra University. NASSCOM and MeitY will provide a grant of ₹22.5 crore and ₹9.5 crore. Innovation in health-tech, agri-tech, robotics, mobility will be promoted at the CoE.

The vice-chancellor said the foundation stone for the scientific laboratory built with ₹15 crore sanctioned under RUSA funds, would be laid next month. The laboratory will have facilities for testing food, pharma products and genetics.

The laboratory will come up opposite HSBC where staff quarters were demolished recently.

CPM OPPOSES AU PROJECT, DHARNA TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 28

The city committee of CPM has strongly opposed the joint project of Andhra University and STPI which is proposed to come up in the university campus.

City Secretary of CPM Dr B. Ganga Rao said the university authorities are planning to hand over 50 acres of prime land to private companies in the name of developing start-up companies and innovation centres.

He said a dharna opposing the project would be held at the AU Engineering College gate at Maddilapalem on Thursday along with the students of the university.

Oppn wants cancellation of earlier poll notification

SEC to consult legal experts on issue of fresh notification

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 28

The ongoing controversy over the conduct of elections to local bodies in Andhra Pradesh took a curious turn on Wednesday with several Opposition parties urging the state election commission (SEC) to withdraw their previous notification and declare all those elections which went unopposed in several places as invalid.

State election commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar will also be in a fix over the demand of opposition parties as he sent a detailed letter to the Centre explaining the large-scale violence and coercion by the ruling YSR Congress party leaders to secure the withdrawal of the rival candidates.

As there is no precedent of suspending the poll process, the SEC is learnt to have decided to consult legal experts on issue of fresh notification withdrawing the previous ones. "The unanimous election of candidates will automatically become invalid if the poll notification is withdrawn," sources in the SEC pointed out.

Interestingly, the ruling party found an ally in the Congress which demanded that the SEC not hold elections till the pandemic is over. In a letter sent to the SEC, S. Sailajanath, PCC president, said that the lives of people were of paramount importance and polls which would invariably lead to congregations of people should be deferred.

Adopting a cautious approach, CPM senior leader, Y.V. Rao wanted the SEC to take into consideration various factors like the pandemic, agricultural operations and re-opening of schools before announcing the schedule.

It suggested that the SEC not leave any room for controversies and take an appropriate decision in coordination with the state government. The CPM and Jana Sena did not seek withdrawal of

SEC conduct is biased, says YSRC

MD. ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 28

Reiterating that they will win local body polls hands down, YSRC Congress has said the State Election Commission (SEC) conduct has been biased. Speaking to reporters here on Wednesday, party spokesman and MLA Ambati Rambabu said that the Supreme Court has ruled that the SEC should consult the state government while taking decisions but the incumbent Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar is not adhering to it and his bias is in the open.

Mr Rambabu asked if the SEC wanted to hold one-to-one talks with parties instead of an all-party meet just because of Covid-19, why was the SEC so keen on holding the local body elections under such a situation.

Mr Rambabu said, "The SEC wants to hold meetings with political parties separately to elicit their views on the local body elections, as he is politically motivated and siding with the Telugu Desam. While the SEC postponed the elections in March when there were hardly three cases of Covid-19, why was he planning to hold the elections now when at least 3,000 cases are showing up per day. It was evident that the SEC was acting on the dictates of opposition leader N. Chandrababu Naidu and

the earlier notification.

Telugu Desam president, K. Atchannaidu, apart from seeking a fresh notification and inquiry into malpractices and violations of the poll code, suggested allowing the filing of nominations online.

State BJP president,

that he was showing his benevolence to Naidu."

Mr Rambabu said the YSRC has made it clear that it was boycotting the meeting called by the SEC about the local body elections as there was no logic in holding the meet separately with even parties having little or no presence.

He recalled that the Apex Court had mentioned that the SEC has to consult the ruling party regarding holding elections. He said it was clear from the stance of the SEC that he was politically motivated and biased. He scoffed at the TD leaders for saying that the YSRC was afraid of elections and is seeking postponement. He said with an absolute mandate, the YSRC was confident of romping home all the local body elections and it was only because of Covid-19 that the State wants to put off the polls.

Mr Rambabu stated that the SEC has eschewed the constitutional provision of a independent body to the Election Commission and made it subjugated to a political party.

He asked why the SEC could not apply the same policy of calling all the parties in March last when he had postponed the elections.

The YSRC MLA said when the SEC had outrightly sided with Chandrababu Naidu how would the people believe that he would hold the elections impartially.

Somu Veeraju, accused the ruling dispensation of making a mockery of democracy by forcing unanimous election of its candidates. He also alleged that some bureaucrats joined hands with the ruling party and contributed to the poll violations.

TD SOUGHT POLLS CLAIMING DROP IN COVID-19 CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 28

Telugu Desam AP president K. Atchannaidu on Wednesday demanded State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar to issue a fresh notification for local body elections in Andhra Pradesh. He alleged that massive irregularities and offences took place in the first phase polls held in March as the ruling YSRC has attacked and humiliated even the SEC himself.

He claimed casteist allegations were made against Mr Ramesh Kumar only to create a fear psychosis and hijack the election process altogether.

Mr Atchannaidu alleged that when the virus infections were at their peak in the state, the Chief Minister stuck to his demand adamantly for conducting the elections by picking up a confrontation with the SEC.

He claimed that now the virus cases were showing a drop but the Chief Minister and YSRC leaders were against conducting the elections.

He alleged that it was only because of the fear of defeat that the YSRC was not ready to face the elections now.

Mr Atchannaidu asserted that in the past 17 months, the Jagan Reddy regime has earned considerable wrath of the people because of its atrocities like the sand mafia, liquor mafia and atrocities against the Dalits, BCs and all sections of society.

He claimed that the people were ready to teach a strong lesson to the ruling party if they were given a chance right at this moment which is shaking the Chief Minister and YSRC leaders at the thought of confronting the elections.



Amaravati protection JAC with the support of TD, CPI and CPM leaders and activists stage a protest at the Guntur district sub-jail against the illegal arrests of farmers on Wednesday.

— DC

SP suspends 6 policemen who handcuffed farmers

TD: YSRC govt defaming state

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 28

Guntur Rural superintendent of police Vishal Gunni has suspended six policemen for handcuffing farmers while shifting them to jail. The farmers were among the 43 remand prisoners who were being shifted from one jail to another in the district.

Following orders of Narasaraopet Special Mobile Court, police had shifted the 43 remand prisoners from Narasaraopet sub-jail to district jail in Guntur. During shifting in a bus, police put handcuffs on all those being shifted. Seven of the 43 remand prisoners being shifted were farmers.

On coming to know about the incident, SP Vishal Gunni suspended six policemen, holding them responsible for the act. The prisoners had been taken to the government hospital for Coronavirus tests before being jailed. Police prisoners escorting the prisoners put handcuffs on the prisoners while shifting them to Guntur from Narasaraopet on Tuesday.

The seven farmers among the remand prison-

ers had been accused of obstructing activists who were going to participate in the pro-three capitals' programme. Further, the SP said, charge memos have been issued to RSI and RI escorting the prisoners. A detailed inquiry will be conducted by additional SP (Armed

prevent repetition of such atrocious incidents. In his complaint, TD politburo member Varla Ramaiah provided video clippings of how handcuffed farmers had been shifted to jail.

Telugu Desam national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Wednesday visited Krishnayapalem village in Amaravati and called on family members of farmers who had been arrested and jailed.

Dalit women of Krishnayapalem lamented that though they had voted for ruling YSRC in 2019 elections, ruling party leaders had taught them a bitter lesson.

Reserve), who will be submitting his report and recommending the further action to be initiated.

SP Vishal Gunni said handcuffing was an unfortunate incident. Instructions have been issued to additional SP (AR) and DSP (AR) to refrain from this type of incidents.

'No privatisation of power companies'

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 28

Minister for energy Balineni Srinivas Reddy said the state government has no intention to privatise/franchise state's transmission and distribution companies.

Addressing the media here on Wednesday, the minister said the distribution and transmission companies would continue as public sector units. He asserted that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is committed to solve all the issues of the Electricity Department and there is no need for the employees to worry as all the issues will be cleared soon.

The minister clarified that the state government is not going to privatise RTPP and also the state government is opposing Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020 and has already sent a letter to the Central government regarding the same.

He also assured the employees of the department that their problems regarding pension, conversion of EPF to GPF and problems of outsourcing and contractual

● AP government has recruited 7,000 linemen and 172 assistant engineers in the Electricity Department to ensure better services to the consumers

employees would be resolved soon.

Mr Srinivas Reddy said that the fixing of meters to motors of farm pumpsets is to ensure free nine-hour, uninterrupted quality power supply to the farmers during daytime. He further said that the government has been preparing plans for effective implementation of the scheme for next 30 years. He said that the government is setting up 10,000 MW solar power plant to meet the power requirements of the farm sector and also sanctioned ₹1,700 crore to upgrade infrastructure of agriculture feeders.

Mr Reddy said the state government has recruited 7,000 linemen and 172 assistant engineers in the department to ensure better services to the consumers. He assured employees that their arrears would be released soon.

TD SPREADING LIES ABOUT RYTHU BHAROSA: MINISTER

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 28

Minister for agriculture Kurasala Kannababu came down heavily on Opposition leader Chandrababu Naidu for creating unnecessary controversies on Rythu Bharosa scheme and making false allegations against the state by showing false data.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, minister Kannababu said that Mr Naidu is a failed administrator who was rejected by the people and instead of reviewing their drawbacks, he has been using his 40 years experience for making false propaganda on the state government.

He stated that the amount ₹77,500, which is being claimed as a loss to the farmers by the Opposition leader, is indeed one of the false promises of Chandrababu Naidu.

JAGAN URGES COURT TO HEAR CBI CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT. 28

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday urged the CBI special court in Hyderabad to first hear cases filed by CBI against him for charges of disproportionate assets case and alleged quid pro quo investments in Jagathi Group of Companies.

The CM's counsel S. Niranjan Reddy, referring to disposal of cases filed by ED in 2G scam after cases filed by CBI had failed to prove the scam, reminded the court that the ED filed cases only based on CBI charges against his client.

CM seeks ban on online gaming, writes to Centre

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 28

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy wrote a letter to Union minister for communications, law and justice Ravi Shankar Prasad seeking ban on online gaming, gambling and betting websites and applications from access in Andhra Pradesh. Mr Reddy further attached a list of 132 websites identified to be involved in online gaming, gambling, betting in his letter.

He said, "online gaming and online betting is fast catching up as a severe social evil. It has led to youth getting involved in vices like gambling and betting from the comfort of their home through their mobile phones and computers. While gambling or betting can easily be identified in terms of gambling dens, betting groups, etc., online gaming and betting remains elusive."

The CM lamented that it has led to widespread despair amongst the pub-

● AP government has amended the AP Gaming Act, 1974 to include online gaming, online gambling and online betting as an offence through Andhra Pradesh (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 which was notified on 25th September, 2020.

lic. Suicides due to losing money, severe addiction and consequent violent behaviour in case of any restriction, general aloofness amongst the youth and indifference to society and world in and around, are some of the significant damaging consequences.

The CM stated that AP government has amended the AP Gaming Act, 1974 to include online gaming, online gambling and online betting as an offence through Andhra Pradesh (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 which was notified on 25th

September, 2020.

He explained that the main objectives of the amendment to the Act is to ban online gaming, online betting and online gambling. He further explained that it is made a cognizable offence punishable under the Act and moreover, the managing directors of all the online gaming companies and those involved in running of the company are liable for punishment under the Act.

Mr Reddy mentioned that one of the main features of the Act is that even those 'assisting' the operation of online games are liable for punishment.

He said that the role of Internet Service Providers can be termed as assisting in case they do not take steps to block access of these websites to areas where this is illegal.

The CM requested the Union minister to direct all the Internet Service Providers to block all the online gaming, gambling and betting websites and apps from access in AP.

TAMPERING | DATA

5 gangs busted, 30 persons arrested in Kurnool district

Fake Aadhaar cards rain money for common

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, OCT. 28

Five gangs involved in Aadhaar data tampering with a view to exploit benefits from government schemes like Aasara, YSR pensions, Nethanna Nestam and a host of other schemes were busted and 30 persons were arrested by Kurnool police on Wednesday. A thorough probe is launched into this operation where beneficiaries run into thousands

of people, said SP Kagineelli Fakkeerappa.

The operation is well entrenched and the beneficiaries of tampered Aadhaar card run into thousands across the Kurnool district, the SP said.

On the surface level, when 10 village secretaries were raided, more than 200 applicants were found to have applied for benefits under various schemes offered by the AP government, he said.

The *modus operandi* of

the Aadhaar tampering gang is changing the date of birth based on the PAN card. The PAN cards were fraudulently obtained, he said. They collect ₹6,000 from prospective beneficiaries and help them change their Aadhaar card data with fake details to make them eligible to apply for the government schemes meant for the real needy and poor.

Even in Dommaranadhyala village of Jammalamadugu division, large-

scale Aadhaar data fudging was reported where farmers having substantial land holdings also applied for Nethanna Nestam, a scheme which Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy launched to help handloom weavers. The beneficiaries got ₹24,000 from the government in two instalments.

In Dommaranadhyala village, at least ₹5 crore have been illegally received by the ineligible beneficiaries who were

selected based on the fake Aadhaar cards supplied by them, said an official. Henchmen of Jammalamadugu MLA Sudheer Reddy in connivance with revenue officials were found minting money in Kadapa district, it is said.

The Kurnool police arrested 14 persons in Pathikonda rural, four in Adoni III town area, another four in Adoni II town police station limits and six persons from Banaganapalle police limits.

IN BRIEF EX-MLA APPOINTED SVBC CHAIRMAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, OCT. 28

The state government on Wednesday appointed Dr Velugoti Bhaskara Saikrishna Yachendra, a former MLA and a descendant of Velugoti kingdom, Venkatagiri as the chairman of Sri Venkateshwara Bhakti Channel (SVBC), the official channel of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

It's been more than nine months the chairman post is lying vacant after the resignation of film actor Pruthvi Raj, who was mired into controversy after an audio clip of his alleged intimate conversation with a woman employee went viral.

Yachendra is an eminent scholar and did research in music. He is a spiritual singer who mastered the art of musical avadhanam and has been giving performances across the country in the name of Sangeetha Geya Dhara, in which he uses songs, lyrics and music all together to form the avadhanam.

He also been into politics for a brief stint. Upon N.T. Ramarao's call, he stepped into politics and won the Assembly elections from Venkatagiri constituency and served as a member of AP legislative Assembly from 1985-89. He is likely to occupy the SVBC chairman post in a couple of days.

TIRUCHANOOR FETE TO BE HELD IN EKANTHAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, OCT. 28

TTD has decided to conduct the annual *brahmotsavam* of Sri Padmavathi Ammavari temple in Tiruchanoor in *Ekantham* (Solitude) from November 11 to 19, in view of Covid-19 restrictions.

TTD JEO P. Basant Kumar on Wednesday held detailed consultations with the *agama* advisors, representatives of Tirumala pontiffs, and officials on the conduction of *vahana sevas* and *panchami teethra utsavam*, which usually attracts lakhs of devotees from across the country.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Basant Kumar said, as the state and Central governments extended the Covid-19 guidelines and restrictions up to November end, the Ammavari *brahmotsavam* will be conducted inside the temple in ekantham as per the agama traditions.

SUNDARAKANDA PARAYANAM FROM NOV. 3

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, OCT. 28

TTD is launching the sixth edition of *Sundarakanda akhanda parayanam* - the spiritual campaign started by the temple body to protect the global humanity from pandemic Covid-19, from November 3 at the Nada Niranjanam platform in Tirumala.

On the first day, the *Veda Parayanadars* will recite 185 *shlokas* of 20-24 *Sargas* of *Sundarakanda* from 7 am in the morning on November 3 and it will be telecast live on the SVBC channel. About 200 *Veda Parayanadars* of the Dharmagiri Veda Vignana Peetham, S.V. Vedic University and Rashtriya Sanskrit University will participate.

TTD appealed to the devotees to participate in the *parayanams* from their homes by watching the live telecast on the SVBC channel. It may be mentioned that the TTD has conducted the five editions of the *Sundarakanda Akhanda parayanams* since June this year.

TTD EXTENDS ONLINE TICKETS REFUND FACILITY

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, OCT. 28

TTD has extended the refund facility to pilgrims having *arjitha sevas*, accommodation and darshan tickets booked online during the lockdown period, up to December 31.

Devotees who booked accommodation, *darshan* and *arjitha seva* tickets in advance from March 13 for lockdown periods either online in TTD official website or in offline by means of the post office or e-darshan and AP online, have the option to get a refund up to December 31.

AP records 2,949 Covid cases

Authorities discharge 3,609 Covid patients after recovery

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 28

AP registered 2,949 new Covid-19 cases scaling up the tally to 8,14,774 and 18 deaths taking the toll to 6,643 in the last 24 hours.

State health authorities released the Covid-19 bulletin here on Wednesday reporting that out of 77,028 samples tested, 2,949 individuals were found infected with the virus. Of a total of 77,73,681 samples tested so far, 7,81,509 patients were discharged after recovery while 26,622 are undergoing treatment.

Among daily cases of Covid-19, West Godavari topped the state with 492 followed by 457 in

Krishna, 421 in Guntur, 417 in East Godavari, 315 in Chittoor, 193 in Kadapa, 192 in Anantapur, 11 in Visakhapatnam, 99 in Prakasam, 76 in Nellore, 74 in Srikakulam, 67 in Vizianagaram and 32 in Kurnool.

With regard to the cumulative confirmed Coronavirus cases, East Godavari continued to lead the state with 1,14,554 followed by 84,271 in West Godavari, 77,436 in Chittoor, 66,152 in Guntur, 64,064 in Anantapur, 59,373 in Kurnool, 59,234 in Nellore, 58,915 in Prakasam, 55,429 in Visakhapatnam, 51,572 in Kadapa, 43,688 in Srikakulam, 39,091 in

● Of a total of 77,73,681 samples tested so far, 7,81,509 patients were discharged after recovery while 26,622 are undergoing treatment.

● Chittoor topped the state with 774 cumulative cases of death of Covid-19 patients

58,406 in Kurnool, 56,640 in Prakasam, 52,877 in Visakhapatnam, 49,733 in Kadapa, 42,372 in Srikakulam, 38,494 in Vizianagaram, 34,451 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

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

Chittoor topped the state with 774 cumulative cases of death of Covid-19 patients followed by 613 in Guntur, 607 in East Godavari, 570 in Prakasam, 557 in

Krishna, 555 in Anantapur, 504 in Visakhapatnam, 494 in West Godavari, 485 in Nellore, 482 in Kurnool, 435 in Kadapa, 339 in Srikakulam and 228 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 3,609 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery from various hospitals in the last 24 hours in the state.

AP conducted Covid-19 test on 1,45,575 samples per one million population and registered Covid-19 positive rate at 10.48 while Maharashtra tested 69,656 samples with positive rate at 19.01 and Telangana tested 1,04,721 with positive rate at 6.56.

ALL SIX FELL IN WATER ALL OF A SUDDEN

FROM PAGE 1

In just a few minutes, all the six teenagers fell in the water body and drowned. Sadly, none of them knew how to swim.

Though the family members tried to come to their rescue, it was too late. As the local villagers alerted the police about the mishap, they plunged into action and took up a search operation involving swimmers and fished out all the six bodies by noon.

The deceased were identified as Gangadhara Venkata Rao, 16, Karnataka Renjith, 15, Gottiparthi Manoj, 16, Kunarpu Radha Krishna, 15, Kolla Bhuvan, 16 and Sriramula Sivaji, 16. Some were studying in Class X, others had completed it and the remaining were school dropouts.

West Godavari SP K. Narayan Naik, said "The villagers arranged the vanamahotsav as part of their tradition to bring good tidings to the village near the water body. The deaths brought a tragic end to the festivities. We have handed the bodies over to their family members after completion of the inquest."

The state government announced an ex gratia of ₹3 lakh each for the families of all the six deceased youth.

Deputy chief minister, Alla K. Krishna Srinivas, said that the Chief Minister, Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was informed about the tragic deaths of the six youths. He assured all help to the bereaved family members and instructed the district administration to take all necessary steps to avoid recurrence of such mishaps.

The family members of the deceased were inconsolable.

AP'S HEALTH WING GETS SKOCH AWARD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 28

AP's department of health, medical and family welfare bagged the SKOCH Group award 2020 in 'Covid-19 - Digital Handling'.

The SKOCH Group announced conferring of the award on the health department. The department has come up with a series of mobile apps.

Covid test



Medical staff collects swab from the people for Covid-19 testing at Sanjeevini Bus which was set up at Government ENT Hospital in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

Compensation as per new Act to displaced: Official

NAGESWARA RAO
BALLEDA I DC
KADAPA, OCT. 28

District in-charge collector Middle Gowthami said the Mangampeta Barites project displaced would get compensation and resettlement (R&R) as per the new Land Acquisition Act, 30/2013.

A gram sabha was set up at Kapupalle in Obulavaripalle mandal on Wednesday to provide rehabilitation and compensation to the displaced villagers of Kapupalli, Arundathiwada, and Harijanwada in connection with the expansion of the APMDC Mangampeta barite mining project.

The APMDC said it would provide compensation to the affected villagers in addition to the compensation previously given to them and also, rehabilitate them. In addition to the amount of compensation to the victims, they will build resettlement colonies to live in and provide all kinds of infrastructure to transform them into a complete village. Otherwise those who want to move to other areas and settle down can choose any option.

There is also a possibility of paying ₹7 lakh as compensation through a one-time settlement, she said. State government whip and Railway Koduru MLA

Koramutla Srinivasu said locals were aware of the many problems faced as part of the development of the Mangampeta Barites project over the last 10 years.

At present, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is paying special attention to build resettlement colonies for all villagers in the areas affected by the Mangampeta project. Rajampeta sub-collector Ketan Garg, local tahsildar, R&B department, PR, engineering officers, APMDC, revenue officers, Kapupalli, Arundathiwada, and Harijanwada villagers of Mangampeta gram panchayat were present.

₹2,340 crore allotted to dig 2 lakh borewells, says minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 28

Industries and IT minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy has appealed to the farmers to make use of Jalakala vehicles for digging borewells or to replace defunct borewells while launching the vehicle at his Atmakur constituency on Wednesday.

He said that the government has allotted

₹2,340 crore to dig 2 lakh borewells at free of cost to benefit 3 lakh farmers apart from providing motors for small and marginal farmers.

He took part in several development programmes in the segment.

Earlier he inspected the land earmarked for a shopping complex proposed by Atmakur civic body. He said that they have sent proposals for

ring road, parks and drains apart from a cement road at an estimated cost of ₹40 crore in Atmakur.

Mr Goutham Reddy called on the family members of noted physician Dr B o m m i r e d d y Ravindranadh Reddy, who passed away recently, at Atmakur and expressed his grief over the sudden demise of the popular doctor.

Row over copter landing in school

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, OCT. 28

A helicopter owner and passengers who travelled in the copter apart from a headmaster facing trouble after the chopper landed in a high school ground at a remote village, Revuru in Anantasagaram mandal of SPSR Nellore district on Tuesday.

Police have booked a case on Wednesday against the owners of a helicopter for landing without proper permission in a high school ground at Revuru village on Tuesday.

They have also booked criminal cases against the headmaster of the school for giving permission to land apart from six persons who travelled and landed at Revuru.

According to locals, a former Airforce official Dr V.R.K. Rao and his family used the chopper to attend a marriage function in the house of their relative and an NRI B. Janardhan Reddy at Revuru. Mr Rao also heads a noted security agency in Telugu states.

The helicopter went to

Kadapa airport after dropping the passengers and it is expected to return on October 30 to fly them back to their destination.

Taking a serious view over the incident, Nellore SP Bhaskar Bhushan said that it is mandatory for the helicopter owners to obtain permission from authorities of Police and Revenue to land while pointing to protocols in vogue.

Referring to the criminal cases booked against the helicopter owners, passengers and the HM at Anantasagaram police station, he said he is also writing to the Director General of Civil Aviation about the incident and violation of rules.

Locals said that the headmaster Ch. Srinivasulu gave permission for landing ignoring the consequences because the land for the school was donated by the family performing the marriage.

In-charge SI of Anantasagaram police station, Mr Subba Rao said, "I came to know that the helicopter belongs to a sugar factory in Karnataka."

TAHSILDAR SUSPENDED FOR LAND ACQUISITION IRREGULARITIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, OCT. 28

Collector Gandham Chandrudu suspended N.P. Kunta tahsildar for irregularities in land acquisition

for solar park in NP Kunta area. Land owners represented to collector who visited Kadiri as part of Palles Nidra. The collector directed Kadiri RDO to clear pending issues.

60-YEAR-OLD DEBT-RIDDEN TENANT FARMER ENDS LIFE IN KADAPA DIST

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, OCT. 28

A tenant farmer from Yerraguntal mandal allegedly committed suicide on Wednesday.

Sixty year old Timmaiah

from Kadirivandlapalle village consumed pesticide due to huge debts. Jammalamadugu legislator Dr Sudheer Reddy consoled the family members. Police registered a case and investigating

RESCUED KIDS SENT TO ORPHANAGES

FROM PAGE 1

Kurnool range DIG P. Venkatrami Reddy, along with district SP K. Fakerappa, sent the rescued children to orphan homes.

The SP said the kids will be sent to their native places after conducting an inquiry.

In Nellore district, all the rescued children are being

tested for Coronavirus. Those found positive will be admitted to government hospitals for treatment.

Prakasam SP Siddharth Kaushal said children without any guardians will be handed over to NGO homes and government agencies. Anantapur district SP Satya Esubabu said 502 children, including 55 girls, were rescued during Operation Muskaan in the district.

Career Chronicle

Walk-in Interviews
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IN BRIEF

2 JEM MILITANTS
KILLED IN
ENCOUNTERDC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, OCT. 28

Two Jaish-e-Muhammad militants were killed in a gunfight with security forces in Mochu area on the outskirts of Srinagar overnight, the officials said on Wednesday.

The slain militants have been identified as Javid Ahmad Ganaie, a resident of southern Pulwama district and his Pakistani associate Khalid alias Ilyas. The J&K police in a statement said that the duo was given the opportunity to surrender. "However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter," it said.

IGP (Kashmir) Vijay Kumar told reporters here that, so far, this year eight militants have surrendered during "live encounters" across the Valley of which five surrenders took place in the October alone.

Meanwhile, one soldier each from the Army and the BSF were injured in a mine blast at a forward area along Line of Control in Balakote sector in J&K's Poonch district on Wednesday afternoon.

The officials said that two jawans — Inayat Hussain of BSF's 59th Battalion attached with Army's 14 Punjab and Sahil Kumar of Army's 14 Punjab - were injured in a mine blast in Manjakote area of the Balakote sector.

KERALA CM'S
EX-AIDE TAKEN
INTO ED CUSTODYGILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT. 28

The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday took Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan's former principal secretary M. Sivasankar into custody.

The ED officials took the officer into custody from Ayurveda hospital in Thiruvananthapuram where he was undergoing treatment. The ED team which was camping in the capital, swung into action soon after the Kerala High Court rejected Sivasankar's anticipatory bail plea. The ED officials then took the official to Kochi by road to Kochi.

Sivasankar's alleged links with the accused in the gold smuggling case are under the scanner.

The officer's WhatsApp chats with his chartered accountant Venugopal which came out in the public domain recently, had given some hints that he was overseeing the financial transaction of Swapna, a key accused in the gold smuggling case. However, there is no concrete evidence yet to connect Sivasankar with the gold smuggling case.

The National Investigation Agency, Customs, Enforcement Directorate are conducting separate probes into the seizure of 30 kg of gold worth ₹15 crore which was smuggled in using "diplomatic baggage" at the Thiruvananthapuram international airport on July 5.

SMRITI IRANI
TESTS POSITIVE
FOR COVID-19

New Delhi, Oct. 28: Union minister Smriti Irani on Wednesday said she has tested positive for Covid-19.

The women and child development and textiles minister asked the people who came in contact with her to get themselves tested for the disease at the earliest.

"It is rare for me to search for words while making an announcement; hence here's me keeping it simple — I've tested positive for #COVID and would request those who came in contact with me to get themselves tested at the earliest," she said in a tweet.

Irani campaigned for the BJP on Tuesday for the Bihar Assembly polls. Soon after the minister made the announcement, wishes poured in for her on Twitter. Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri said she will emerge stronger from this fight against Covid.

"You have always displayed resolute determination in fighting for the people of the nation, @SmritiIrani ji. I am sure you will use the same determination to fight against Covid-19 and recover soon. My best wishes," Railway Minister Piyush Goyal tweeted. Ministers Prahlad Joshi and Jitendra Singh, BJP leaders Tejastvi Surya and Poonam Mahajan were among those who wished her a speedy recovery.



RJD leader Tejashwi Prasad Yadav during an election campaign rally ahead of the second phase of Bihar assembly polls at Hajipur in Vaishali district on Wednesday. — PTI

Over 53% vote in 1st
phase of Bihar polls

Highest turnout recorded in Jamui district at 57.41%

NAYEER AZAD | DC
PATNA, OCT. 28

Around 53.53 per cent of voting was recorded during the first phase of Bihar Assembly elections on Wednesday.

According to reports, the highest turnout was recorded in Jamui district at 57.41 per cent followed by Kaimur at 55.95 per cent and Lakhisarai at 55.44 per cent.

The NDA was locked in a tough fight with RJD led grand alliance on at least 41 of 71 seats that went to polls in the first phase.

The elections were held in 71 constituencies spread across 16 districts of Bihar amid tight security and Covid-19 guidelines. A total of 1,066 candidates were in the fray in the first phase of the elections.

As many as 33 constituencies were declared as "sensitive or hypersensitive" by the state administration.

istration.

Among the prominent political leaders who were in the fray during the first phase of polls were HAM chief Jitan Ram Manjhi and eight ministers of Nitish Kumar cabinet.

Another key candidate whose fate is at stake in the first phase is ace shooter Shreyasi Singh from Jamui seat. She is making her debut at the age of 27. She is contesting on BJP ticket and pitted against RJD sitting MLA Vijay Prakash, who is the brother of former Union Minister Jai Prakash Yadav, a close aide of Lalu Yadav.

Reports suggest that Chirag Paswan's party LJP has extended support to Miss Singh on Jamui seat.

Among the political parties, the ruling JD(U) had fielded 35 and its partner BJP 29 candidates. The opposition RJD and Congress had fielded 42

and 20 candidates during the first phase of polls.

Chirag Paswan's LJP which broke away from the NDA citing ideological differences with Nitish Kumar had fielded 41 candidates in the first phase.

In a statement after the first phase of polls, HAM spokesperson Danish Rizwan said, "Seeing the turnout of people our party is confident that Nitish Kumar led NDA is going to form a government in Bihar".

Most of the seats were declared as sensitive by the administrative officials and special security arrangements were made for the Naxal affected areas. Officials said that most of the state's Naxal-hit areas went to polls in the first phase.

Voting for the second and third phase is to be held on November 3 and 7. Results for 243 seats will be declared on November 10.

CONG COMPARES
NITISH WITH
GENERAL DYER

New Delhi, Oct. 28: Hitting out at the Bihar government over the Munger firing incident in which a devotee was killed, the Congress compared Chief minister Nitish Kumar with General Dyer on Wednesday and demanded that he should apologise.

Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said human beings were treated as animals and worms by the police in Munger, when they beat up devotees taking out Durga idols "cruelly and mercilessly".

One person was killed in firing and stone-pelting during the immersion of Durga idols in Munger, on Tuesday. — PTI

There are no budgetary
constraints, says RajnathPAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, OCT. 28

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday said that while troops are standing firm at the Northern borders with China, the ongoing talks for peaceful resolution of crisis will continue.

He was addressing the Army Commanders' Conference, an apex level biannual event, which is being held here from October 26 to 29.

The eight round of Corps Commanders level talks between India and China to resolve the six month military stand off in

Eastern Ladakh is expected soon. The minister said that there are no budgetary constraints for capability development and meeting other requirements of the Army.

With initial snowfall reported in Ladakh sector, he said best weapons and winter clothing will be provided to troops standing guard at the borders. "It is our responsibility to ensure availability of best weapons, equipment and clothing to our troops braving extreme weather and hostile forces to defend our territorial integrity," he said

Referring to the situation along the Western borders, he complimented the Indian Army's response to cross border terrorism and ceasefire violations. "I compliment the excellent synergy between the Central Armed Police Forces, police forces and the Army in tackling the menace of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. It is due to the synergy operations in the Valley that the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is moving to a stable and peaceful environment conducive for overall growth and development," said Mr Singh.

Delhi may be reeling
under 2nd Covid waveVINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, OCT. 28

The national capital Delhi seems to be reeling under a major second wave of coronavirus as substantially high number of cases were reported on Wednesday.

Delhi saw 5,673 fresh cases due to which Delhi government has decided to keep schools closed for some more time.

Delhi had on Tuesday recorded its all-time high cases when it detected 4,853 fresh cases. Last time the city had crossed 4,000-mark was on September 9 when 4,473 cases were detected in a single day.

Concerned over the sudden spurt in cases, Union Health Ministry

is expected to hold a meeting with top Delhi government officials on Thursday to re-strategise containment measures.

Among other states which are reporting a spurt in cases are Kerala, West Bengal, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

In fact, Kerala has overtaken Maharashtra with the highest number of fresh cases even though both states, however, are still contributing more than 5,000 new cases.

Union health ministry officials said 79 per cent of the new infections are still coming from 10 states and UTs.

Union Health Ministry officials said the festive

season, opening up of public places and the onset of winter has possibly led to the spurt in these states.

However, laxity on part of the people who are now shunning distancing and mask rules due to pandemic fatigue too is a contributing factor.

At the national level, the coronavirus cases on Wednesday were close to 80 lakh even though the detection of new cases have slowed down a bit. The new cases reported in India in a span of 24 hours were 43,893 even as the total number of cases were 79,90,322 as per early morning data of the Union Health Ministry. The death toll has climbed to 1,20,010 with 508 new fatalities.

Par panel raps Twitter for
showing Ladakh in China

New Delhi, Oct. 28: A parliamentary committee on Wednesday came down heavily on Twitter for showing Ladakh as part of China, saying it amounted to treason and an explanation must be tendered by the US-based parent of the social media platform in form of an affidavit, sources in the panel said.

Appearing before the joint committee of parliament on Data Protection Bill, chaired by BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi, representatives of Twitter India "begged apology", but they were told by the members that it was a criminal offence that questioned the sovereignty of the country and an affidavit must be submitted by Twitter Inc, not by its 'marketing arm' Twitter India, sources added.

They were questioned for more than two hours by the panel members, mainly on Ladakh being shown as part of China on the Twitter app.

"The committee was of the unanimous opinion that Twitter's explanation on showing Ladakh as part of China was inadequate," Lekhi said after the meeting.

The Twitter representatives told the panel that the social media company respects the sensitivities of India, she said.

"But, it is not only a question of the sensitivity of India or Indians. It is a question about national integrity and sovereignty of the country, and not respecting that is a criminal offence. And displaying Indian map improperly and incorrectly is an offence of treason and attracts imprisonment of seven years, she said.

Lekhi said Twitter was also asked about its banning policy.

"Shadow banning, banning policy there is no clarity about it. Such actions are very subjective... Twitter is becoming a law unto themselves and under these circumstances, they are violating Article 19 of the Constitution about the freedom of expression," she said.

Sources said some members also raised questions about Twitter's transparency policy and its actions during elections,

CHINA MAY USE
MILITANTS TO
FOMENT
TROUBLE IN N-EMANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, OCT. 28

Even after significant improvement in law and order scenario, the unified command of security forces has decided not to scale down counter-insurgency operations in Assam and adjoining states as there is apprehension of China trying to extend direct or indirect help to armed rebel groups of India to create unrest in the north-eastern states.

The apprehension about China instigating insurgent groups of northeast was based on a report of China's *Global Times* where it was stated that if India plays Taiwan card, China should also help militant groups of India to retaliate.

Admitting that Chinese agencies have been directly or indirectly helping the militant groups of north-east and under the present circumstances, the Chinese agencies would definitely like to provide help to revive insurgency in the region, security sources present in the unified command meeting, however, told this newspaper that GOC 4 Corps of Indian Army Lt. Gen. Shantanu Dayal who chaired the unified command, assured that there was no need to worry on China front. He asserted that Indian army in the north-east was fully prepared and capable of responding to any kind of threat emanating from across the border.

Asked for their comments, a Twitter spokesperson said in an emailed statement, "The recent geotagging issue was swiftly resolved by our teams. We are committed to openness, transparency around our work and will remain in regular touch with the

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heavy criticism and faced a backlash from social media users after its geotagging feature displayed "Jammu & Kashmir, the People's Republic of China" in a live broadcast from Leh's Hall of Fame, a war memorial for fallen soldiers in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

At that time, Twitter had called it a technical issue that had been swiftly resolved. — PTI

C'garh brings Bill
to shield farmers
from exploitationRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, OCT 28

Amid opposition to Centre's new farm laws, Bhupesh Baghel government has brought a agriculture amendment Bill providing to regulate market prices of farm produce to protect farmers from exploitation.

The Bill called Krishi Upaj Mandi (amendment) Bill, 2020 was passed in the Chhattisgarh assembly on Tuesday after a two-day-marathon debate on it in the House.

The Bill aims to protect the farmers from fluctuating market prices and payment risks, Chhattisgarh agriculture minister Ravindra Choubey said while tabling the Bill in the assembly.

The Bill did not violate any Central law, thereby avoiding confrontation with the Union government, he added. He said 80 percent of farmers in Chhattisgarh are small and marginal farmers who lacked capacity to store grains or bargain for fair prices.

"Hence, it was necessary to establish deemed mandis and electronic trading platforms for them", he added.

The Bill allows the government to establish deemed mandis (agriculture markets) or declare private markets as deemed mandis for regulation of marketing notified agriculture produce, he added.

Chhattisgarh Swabhimani Manch president Raj Kumar Gupta, however, criticized the government for not ensuring guarantee of minimum support price of farm produce in the Bill as was done by Punjab in its recently legislated agriculture Bill.

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Hurriyat calls
for shutdownYUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, OCT. 28

As vast sections of Jammu and Kashmir's populations are seething with anger over the Centre's amending its land laws to make all Indian citizens eligible to own immovable properties in the erstwhile state, separatist Hurriyat Conference has called for a one-day shutdown against it and other alleged anti J&K moves.

This is for the first time since August 5 last year when J&K was stripped of its special status and split up into two Union Territories that the amalgam faction led by Kashmir's chief Muslim cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has openly issued such a call.

Meanwhile, more political parties and leaders have in their statements resented the Union Home Ministry (MHA)'s making several changes to land laws paving the way for people from outside J&K to buy land in the Union Territory and even allowing use of agricultural land for setting up facilities of public purpose.

Hurriyat Conference leaders Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat, Bilal Ghani Lone and Masroor Abbas Ansari in a joint statement strongly denounced the "incessant anti people orders being issued by the government of India at frequent intervals to intimidate and psychologically torture the people of J&K". They said that this "imperial approach" is bound to fail and reiterated the amalgam's call for engagement and dialogue among stakeholders for resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

The statement said, "The people of J&K are not some dumb driven cattle who will yield to these imperial laws. People have proved by the

Government to share timely updates."

Multiple sources in the panel said Twitter officials "begged apology" for Ladakh being shown as part of China on its app, but they were told by members that whatever they wanted to say on the issue should be given in writing in form of an affidavit by Twitter Inc, the parent company of the social media platform.

They said Twitter India is "just a marketing arm" of US-based parent Twitter Inc, and therefore a written reply should come from them.

Twitter Asia, based in Singapore, mainly deals with advertisement revenues and takes all major decisions related to the region, some members opined.

Officials who deposed before the panel on behalf of Twitter India included Shagufta Kamran, senior manager, public policy; Ayushi Kapoor, legal counsel; Pallavi Walia, policy communications; and Manvinder Bali, corporate security.

Officials from the Ministry of Electronics, Information and Technology, and the Ministry of Law and Justice also deposed before the panel.

The Indian government on October 22 had warned Twitter about its location setting that showed Leh in China, saying any disrespect towards the country's sovereignty and integrity is totally unacceptable.

In a strongly-worded letter, Ajay Sawhney, Secretary in the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), asked Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey to respect the country's sensitivities, sources in the ministry had said.

Twitter also came under heavy criticism and faced a backlash from social media users after its geotagging feature displayed "Jammu & Kashmir, the People's Republic of China" in a live broadcast from Leh's Hall of Fame, a war memorial for fallen soldiers in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

At that time, Twitter had called it a technical issue that had been swiftly resolved. — PTI

strength of their unflinching will and their immense sacrifices, that they are not a dead but alive and determined nation which will not withstand such assaults upon them and their motherland".

It asked people to observe a peaceful strike on Saturday to register their strong resentment against these anti people laws and to demand their immediate withdrawal.

Earlier, JKPC chief Ghulam Ahmad Mir said the Congress party rejects the new land laws and vows to fight for protection of rights. He alleged, "Betrayal and politics of deceit are the hallmark of BJP, which is hell-bent upon snatching everything from the people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh by amending and bringing in different laws". He termed the new land laws as an assault on the rights of people saying Congress party would not accept such "anti-J&K decisions".

National Conference MPs Hasnain Masoodi and Muhammad Akbar Lone in a joint statement said that the MHA's order was "another step to alienate people of J&K and curb their constitutional rights."

They said, "The incumbent ruling dispensation has defaulted on the assurance of (Atal Bihari Vajpayee's) Kashmiriyat, Jamhooriyat and Insaniyat and the new notification is a case in point." They claimed that the MHA notification "abates the rights of the people of J&K and places them at lowest pedestal than other countrymen."

National Panthers Party leader, Bhim Singh, said he will knock at the doors of the International Court of Justice, if the Supreme Court turns down his plea against the new land laws.

IN BRIEF

Examination at airport: Probe on

Dubai: Qatar apologised Wednesday after authorities forcibly examined female passengers from a Qatar Airways flight to Australia to try to identify who might have given birth to a newborn baby found abandoned at the airport earlier this month. Under pressure after Australia condemned the searches, Qatar's government said it had begun an investigation into the treatment of the women who were taking Qatar Airways Flight 908 to Sydney on Oct. 2. Qatar offered no immediate explanation of how officials decided to perform invasive vaginal examinations on the women. HR activists describe such examinations as equivalent to sexual assault.

Guru gets 120 years in jail

New York: Disgraced self-improvement guru Keith Raniere, whose NXIVM followers included millionaires and Hollywood actors, was sentenced to 120 years for turning some adherents into sex slaves branded with his initials and sexually abusing a 15-year-old, US District Judge Nicholas Garaufis on Tuesday called Raniere "ruthless and unyielding" in crimes that were "particularly egregious" because he targeted girls and young women in the sex-trafficking conspiracy that resulted in Raniere's conviction last year. He handed down the unusually stiff sentence in Brooklyn federal court after hearing 15 victims call for a long prison term to reflect the nightmares and anguish they'll confront the rest of their lives. As he announced the sentence, Garaufis noted that Raniere labelled some of the victims' claims lies. The judge told a woman who Raniere ordered to be kept in a room for two years when she was 18: "What happened to you is not your fault." He said that went for the other victims too. Raniere, who looked at victims, maintained his defiant tone.

Local address of expats in passport

Dubai: Indian expats in the UAE and elsewhere can now provide their local address abroad in their passports, an official at the Indian Consulate in Dubai has said. The Indian government has decided to allow its overseas citizens to add their local address in their country of residence mainly to aid those who do not have permanent or valid addresses in India, Siddhartha Kumar Barailly, consul, Passport and Attestation, at the Indian Consulate in Dubai told the *Gulf News*. "We understand that many people who have been staying for a long time in the UAE don't have a valid address in India. They may add their local UAE address in their passports," he said. Change in address cannot be made in existing passports, the official clarified. Indian passport holders have to apply for a new passport in which the change in address can be made. The facility can be availed by Indian expats living in both rented or self-owned accommodations, the report said. Those wishing to give their UAE address should provide certain documents as proof of residence.

HEATHROW NOT BUSIEST IN EUROPE

London, Oct. 28: London's Heathrow Airport says it has lost its place as Europe's busiest air hub to Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris after the Covid-19 pandemic grounded flights and Britain failed to approve passenger testing that could scale back quarantine requirements. Heathrow said Wednesday that it expects passenger numbers to fall more than previously forecast this year and rebound more slowly in 2021.

The airport now expects to serve 22.6 million passengers this year and 37.1 million in 2021, down from a June forecast of 29.2 million and 62.8 million. The forecast for this year represents at 72% drop from 2019. Commercial aviation plunged this year as governments implemented travel restrictions and passengers cancelled flights amid efforts to control the spread of Covid-19. "The UK's hub airport is no longer the busiest airport in Europe, competitors such as Charles de Gaulle have exceeded us in terms of passenger numbers," Heathrow said in a statement.



President Donald Trump pumps his fist as he walks off stage after speaking during a campaign rally at MotorSports Management Company, in West Salem, Wisconsin on Tuesday. — AP

Don slams media for Joe graft case censor

Trump alleges that Biden got \$3.5 million from Russia

Milwaukee (US), Oct. 28: US President Donald Trump has slammed the mainstream American media and big tech companies for blocking the alleged corruption charges against his opponent Democratic challenger Joe Biden. They have accused each other of serious corruption charges during the election campaigning, with the president alleging that Biden got \$3.5 million from Russia and it came through Russian President Vladimir Putin because he was very friendly with the former mayor of Moscow. Biden has denied the allegations.

Trump, before leaving for a campaign trail on Tuesday, told reporters at the White House that the mainstream media was not showing corruption against Biden. "Nobody has ever seen anything like we're witnessing right now. I think it's a very sad time and it'll go down as a very sad era for the media and certainly for big tech (companies)." "I think what is going on with all of those companies — I think they've hurt themselves

Choice of super recovery or Biden depression: Prez

Milwaukee (US), Oct. 28: US President Donald Trump has said that the 2020 presidential election is a choice between a "super" economic recovery led by his administration or a "Biden depression" as he targeted his Democratic challenger Joe Biden. With just seven days left for the most crucial American presidential election in recent memory, Trump intensified his campaign by having as many as three rallies on Tuesday, with one of them being in rain

and freezing cold.

"Seven days from now, we are going to win this state and we are going for more incredible years in the White House," Trump said in identical speeches in three battleground states of Michigan, Wisconsin and Nebraska. "This election is a choice between a Trump super recovery or a Biden depression. That's what you are going to have with the raise of taxes, the biggest tax increase in our history. It's ridiculous. It's a choice between

a Trump boom or a Biden lockdown. Let's lock it all down and by the way speaking of lockdowns, let's get your governor to open it up. Let's get them to open it up," Trump said.

Seeking his second four-year term, Trump is currently trailing in latest polls against Biden. However, Trump looked confident of his electoral victory on November 3, asserting that he is experiencing a wave-like situation across the country. — PTI

very badly because they've been so restrictive... when they don't want to show corruption, like you have with Biden — that's totally corruption and everybody knows it — and they're trying to protect, because he can make them wealthier, whereas they

understand me," Trump said. "They understand where I'm coming from. It's very unfair. Nobody has ever seen anything like it. It's not freedom of the press... it's the opposite. And, of course, the media is in the same bag," said the president.

At a separate election rally in the battleground State of Wisconsin, his eldest son Donald Trump Jr alleged that the media and the big tech companies are now campaigning on behalf of Biden and the Democratic Party. — PTI

Tech giant CEOs grilled over bias

Washington, Oct. 28: The CEOs of Twitter, Facebook and Google are facing a grilling by Republican senators making unfounded allegations that the tech giants show anti-conservative bias. The Senate Commerce Committee has summoned Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg and Google's Sundar Pichai to testify for a hearing Wednesday.

The executives agreed to appear remotely after being threatened with subpoenas. With the presidential election looming, Republicans led by President Donald Trump have thrown a barrage of grievances at Big Tech's social media platforms, which they accuse without evidence of deliberately suppressing conservative, religious and anti-abortion views. The chorus of protest rose this month after Facebook and Twitter acted to limit dissemination of an unverified political story from the conservative-leaning *New York Post* about Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, an unprecedented action against a major media outlet.

The story, which was not confirmed by other publications, cited unverified emails from Biden's son Hunter that were reportedly disclosed by Trump allies. Beyond questioning the CEOs, senators are expected to examine proposals to revise long-held legal protections for online speech, an immunity that critics in both parties say enables the companies to abdicate

FOR TOO long, social media platforms have hidden behind Section 230 protections to censor content that deviates from their beliefs.

ROGER WICKER, Senate Commerce Committee chairman

their responsibility to impartially moderate content. The Justice Department has asked Congress to strip some of the bedrock protections that have generally shielded the tech companies from legal responsibility for what people post on their platforms. Trump signed an executive order challenging the protections from lawsuits under the 1996 telecommunications law.

"For too long, social media platforms have hidden behind Section 230 protections to censor content that deviates from their beliefs," Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., the Commerce Committee chairman, said. In their opening statements, Dorsey, Zuckerberg and Pichai addressed the proposals for changes to so-called Section 230, a provision of a 1996 law that has served as the foundation for unfettered speech on the internet.

Zuckerberg said Congress "should update the law to make sure it's working as intended." "We don't think tech companies should be making so many decisions about these important issues alone," he said. — AP

CONFRONT ISLAMOPHOBIA, SAYS IMRAN

Islamabad, Oct. 28: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday wrote a letter to the leaders of the Muslim states, asking them to make collective efforts to confront growing trend of Islamophobia.

"The recent statements at the leadership level and incidents of desecration of the Holy Quran are a reflection of this increasing Islamophobia that is spreading in European countries where sizeable Muslim populations reside," according to the letter posted on Khan's official Twitter account.

The letter came in the wake of publication of caricatures on the Prophet in France and comments made by French President Emmanuel Macron, who defended such depictions as protected under the right to free speech. "We won't renounce the caricatures," Macron said last week. Khan urged the leaders of the Muslim countries to "collectively take the lead in breaking this cycle of hate and extremism, which nurtures violence and even death". The prime minister said that blasphemy against any prophet, including those of Christianity and Judaism, was not acceptable to the Muslims. On Monday, Pakistan summoned French Ambassador Marc Barety to lodge a "strong protest" against the publication of caricatures and President Macron's comments. — PTI

Border stand-off bilateral issue with India: China

Beijing, Oct. 28: China on Wednesday said its border standoff with India in eastern Ladakh is a bilateral issue, and asked the US to "stop" its Indo-Pacific strategy, terming it as an attempt to impose American hegemony in the region. The remarks by the Chinese Foreign Ministry came a day after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo assured India that the US stands firmly with it to confront threats to its sovereignty.

Pompeo's remarks came after the third edition of the Indo-US dialogue in New Delhi during which the two sides deliberated prominently upon the Sino-India border row and situation in the Indo-Pacific region. Reacting to the US push for closer defence ties with India, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing here on Wednesday that "the border affairs between China and India are matters between the two countries". "Now the situation across the border is generally stable and the two sides are in resolving relevant issues through consultations and negotiations," he said, in apparent reference to the military and diplomatic level talks between India and China to resolve the standoff. In a blunt criticism of China, Pompeo cited the killing of 20 Indian Army personnel in the Galwan Valley in eastern

CHINESE FOREIGN Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin sharply criticised the US' Indo-Pacific concept, saying "the Indo-Pacific strategy proposed by the US is preaching outdated Cold War mentality and preaching confrontation and geopolitical game."

Ladakh in a clash with the Chinese military and said the US stands firmly with India in confronting threats to its sovereignty. "Our leaders and our citizens see with increasing clarity that the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) is no friend to democracy, the rule of law transparency...I am glad to say that the US and India are taking steps to strengthen our cooperation against all manner of threats and not just those posed by the Chinese communist party," Pompeo said.

Wang sharply criticised the US' Indo-Pacific concept, saying "the Indo-Pacific strategy proposed by the US is preaching outdated Cold War mentality and preaching confrontation and geopolitical game. It is aimed to uphold the hegemony of the US. This runs counter to the common interest for the region and we urge the US to stop this". — PTI

US' Lanka vision different: Pompeo

Colombo, Oct. 28: America's vision on Sri Lanka is "very different" from that of "predator" China, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said here on Tuesday as he met the leadership here and reaffirmed US commitment to the island nation's sovereignty and security. Addressing a joint press conference with his Sri Lankan counterpart Dinesh Gunawardena after bilateral talks, the top US diplomat said that the US and Sri Lanka shared a democratic vision.

"Indeed, a strong sovereign Sri Lanka is a positive partner on the world

THE US will open an embassy in Maldives, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced on Wednesday as he held extensive talks with leadership of the strategically located island nation in the Indian Ocean.

stage. It can be a beacon for a free Indo-Pacific. "The Chinese Communist Party is a predator. The US comes in a different way, we come as a friend," Pompeo said in response to a question. — PTI

TURKEY FLAYS CHARLIE HEBDO ERDOGAN TOON

Ankara, Oct. 28: Turkish officials on Wednesday railed against French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo over its coverage cartoon mocking Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and accused it of sowing "the seeds of hatred and animosity".

The cartoon could further heighten tensions between Turkey and France, which erupted over French President Emmanuel Macron's firm stance against Islamism following the beheading of a teacher who showed his class caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad for a free speech class. The Prophet cartoons upset many in the Muslim world. But it was Erdogan who led the charge against France and questioned Macron's mental state.

France then recalled its ambassador to Turkey for consultations, a first in French-Turkish diplomatic relations. "We strongly condemn the publication concerning our president of the French magazine, which has no respect to faith, the sacred and values," Erdogan's spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, wrote on Twitter. Kalin said: "The aim of these publications, that are devoid of morality and decency, is to sow seeds of hatred and animosity. To turn freedom of expression into hostility towards religion and belief can only be the product of a sick mentality."

"I condemn this incorrigible French rag's immoral publication concerning our president," Turkish VP Fuat Oktay wrote on Twitter. — AP

Expert: 1st vaccines imperfect

GERMANY, FRANCE GEAR UP FOR NEW LOCKDOWNS AS VIRUS SURGES

Berlin, Oct. 28: Germany and France were bracing for new lockdowns Wednesday, as governments sought to stop the fast-rising tide of Coronavirus cases that are beginning to fill European hospitals.

French markets opened lower on expectations that President Emmanuel Macron will announce tough measures during a televi-

sed evening address to the nation.

Doctors in France are calling on the government to impose a new nationwide lockdown, noting that more than half of the country's intensive care units are now occupied by Covid-19 patients and medical staff are under increasing strains. — AP

long," Bingham writes in an article for the medical journal *The Lancet* this week.

Highlighting that the United Kingdom is at the "forefront" of a huge international effort to develop clinically safe and effective vaccines, she also struck a note of caution

that there are no guarantees that a successful vaccine will be found at all.

"No vaccine in the history of medicine has been as eagerly anticipated as that to protect against severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2 or Covid-19). — PTI

GIANT | SIZE 20-foot wingspan birds evolved after extinction of dinosaurs

Fossil of 50-mn-year-old bird identified

Los Angeles, Oct. 28: Scientists have identified the fossil of a giant bird that lived about 50 million years ago, with wingspans of up to 21 feet that would dwarf today's largest bird, the wandering albatross.

The fossils recovered from Antarctica in the 1980s represent the oldest giant members of an extinct group of birds that patrolled the southern oceans. By comparison, today's largest bird, the wandering albatross has a wingspan of 11 and-a-half-foot.

Called pelagornithids,

the birds filled a niche much like that of today's albatrosses and travelled widely over Earth's oceans for at least 60 million years. Though a much smaller pelagornithid fossil dates from 62 million years ago, one of the newly described fossils — a 50 million-year-old portion of a bird's foot — shows that the larger pelagornithids arose just after life rebounded from the mass extinction 65 million years ago, when the relatives of birds, the dinosaurs, went extinct.

A second pelagornithid

fossil, part of a jaw bone, dates from about 40 million years ago, according to the study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*. "Our fossil discovery, with its estimate of a 5-to-6-metre wingspan — nearly 20 feet — shows that birds evolved to a truly gigantic size relatively quickly after the extinction of the dinosaurs and ruled over the oceans for millions of years," said Peter Kloess, a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley in the US.

The last known pelagornithid is from 2.5 million years ago, a time of changing climate as Earth cooled, and the ice ages began, they said. Pelagornithids are known as "bony-toothed" birds because of the bony projections, or struts, on their jaws that resemble sharp-pointed teeth, though they are not true teeth, like those of humans and other mammals. The bony protrusions were covered by a horny material, keratin, which is like our fingernails, the researchers said.

Called pseudoteeth, the struts helped the birds snag squid and fish from the sea as they soared for perhaps weeks at a time over much of Earth's oceans, they said. Large flying animals have periodically appeared on Earth, starting with the pterosaurs that flapped their leathery wings during the dinosaur era and reached wingspans of 33 feet, according to the researchers. The pelagornithids came along to claim the wingspan record in the Cenozoic, after the mass extinction. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

29 OCTOBER 2020

Why India must not put all eggs in the US basket

The third edition of the India-US dialogue in the “2+2” format — the annual event at which the foreign ministers and defence of the two countries take stock of the international security affairs — which was held in New Delhi last Tuesday had the obvious context of the Chinese aggression in Ladakh, and this enabled both sides to orchestrate extreme camaraderie.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh, in his opening remarks, spoke of China’s “reckless aggression”, perhaps implying that our northern neighbour’s military venture in eastern Ladakh was foredoomed. This is good for national morale, and apparently rests in no small measure on assurances of US support. As if to confirm this, US secretary of state Mike Pompeo, who likes to sound hawkish on China, noted in the joint press conference after the meeting that the US would do everything in support of India’s “sovereignty”.

This sounds a shade condescending, and may suggest to some that in the US reckoning India may not be altogether prepared to defend its borders entirely on its own. However, the current Indian leadership will just have to pocket the superciliousness. It has just finished signing — also on Tuesday — the Basic Cooperation and Exchange Agreement (Beca), the last of the four “foundational agreements” on which the US insists when it enters into a deep partnership with a country involving close defence relationship. The external affairs minister, S. Jaishankar, pithily summed up the discussions when he informed the media that the conversations had a strong “political military” content.

An assertion of such a nature is unlikely to be tested in the severest of conditions any time soon in the event that the China’s “People’s Liberation Army” (threatening currently to ‘liberate’ Ladakh without solicitation) changes its mind in view of the growing international hostility it may sense to its militaristic designs over a large swathe of continental and maritime territory. But India will do well not to overlook history, although contexts may change from era to era. In 1962, Prime Minister Nehru had specifically sought “air support” from the Kennedy administration to ward off Chinese aggression in our northeast, but this was denied although Washington did extend support in other ways.

When President Donald Trump paid an official visit in February this year, India and the US had escalated their relationship to that of Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, the closest India can think of getting to “strategic ally” (of the Nato variety) in the age of multi-polarity, and in the just ended “2+2” conversation, it was decided, according to the joint statement that was issued, to expand this framework in order “to realise the full potential” of the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership. Perhaps it is a foregone conclusion that greater purchase of American military platforms and equipments will ensue and greater clarity lent to the “shared vision” of India and the US for the Indo-Pacific which was first introduced into the India-US relationship during the visit of President Barack Obama in PM Narendra Modi’s first term.

World must follow Macron

It has been a watershed moment in the over two-decade-old clash of civilisations of which the intelligentsia world over has now sat up and taken note. When a teenager beheaded a teacher about two weeks back for showing the provocative *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons to his students only as the best example of freedom of expression, all of France rallied for the country’s famous principle of *laïcité* (secularism) and celebrated culture of discourse wherein any opinion whatsoever is open to scrutiny and vigorous, non-violent debate. But what made the show of support different was the fact that during its course for the first time a head of state openly called upon immigrants rather than the existing population to integrate with French multiculturalism.

This newspaper unequivocally stands behind President Emmanuel Macron to uphold the democratic values of freedom of expression, an activity at the heart of knowledge, freedom of conscience, human dignity and equality between men and women. It also applauds Mr Macron’s plan weeks before to draft a law to fight “Islamist separatism” which will counter the favouring of personal laws over France’s republican values that adversely affect women’s rights. So far, these have been compromised by putative liberals and in the very name of multiculturalism. And that is ironical, as human rights are a universal declaration (Paris, 1948).

Mr Macron’s drawing of distinction between “French Islam” and other forms is also significant in the light of his country’s intensifying brushes with Islamism culminating in the Nice attack of 2016 killing 87. Close on the heels of that attack, families were beaten up in Toulon by Muslim youth purportedly offended at the sight of women cycling on a holiday wearing shorts. It was the inevitable fallout of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism as a reaction to insecurities caused by globalisation, a phenomenon first identified by Dutch sociologist-politician Pim Fortuyn in 1997. Fortuyn was assassinated in 2002.

As a politician himself, Mr Macron should know best how to keep his distance from far right forces. These forces have been trying to hijack this essentially humanitarian cause right since after the agnostic left first brought it to public domain. Nevertheless, it is imperative upon other nations in the world to confront this ever-growing global malaise and see through the power play of leaders like Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan whose aim it is to challenge Saudi Arabia’s leadership of the Sunni world and his supporters, Imran Khan among them. Few indeed spare a thought for the worst sufferers — women in regressive societies who risk torture and opprobrium for routine freedoms but lack a political voice.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Printer & Publisher

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Subhani

As US embrace deepens, watch for pitfalls ahead



K.C. Singh

The foreign and defence ministers of India and the United States met, in the “2+2” format, in New Delhi on October 26-27. They first engaged their counterparts and then met in the 2+2 format, progressively favoured by many countries as national security, defence and diplomacy are in today’s complex and interconnected world quite seamless.

Significantly, they were meeting just a week before Americans go to the polls to elect the President, one-third of the Senate and a new Congress on November 3, and against the backdrop of the six-month old India-China military standoff in Ladakh. In a choreographed press interaction, with only two journalists on either side allowed one question each, external affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar unconvincingly explained the event as normally due. Perhaps both sides had unrelated compulsions for the scheduling. Unlike recent US presidential elections, many traditionally pro-Republican states are now swing states, including Texas and Georgia. The former was last won by a Democratic candidate (Jimmy Carter) in 1976. In both states, non-white immigrants are tilting the demographic balance towards Democrats. Joe Biden is, in the last week of electioneering, swinging through them sensing change. Thus, was the meeting really sought to allow the projection of Mr Trump as pro-India and resurrect the “Howdy Modi” Houston rally’s euphoria for the diaspora vote?

India, on the other hand, would have weighed the advantage of signing the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (Beca) now. If Mr Biden were to win, he would only assume office in January. A new secretary of state may not have India on his to-do list till

well into 2021. With the India-China confrontation now likely to linger, India needs to optimise the use of American equipment like Apache helicopters, or new armed drones, if acquired, or other US transport and reconnaissance platforms already deployed. India’s access to the US geo-spatial network will have a multiplier effect on the targeting accuracy and lethality of these weapons, thus influencing the Chinese tactical calculus.

The joint statement expectedly details myriad themes such as the India-US relationship being raised to a Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership during the February 2020 visit of President Donald Trump. But the scope has been limited by the context. Covid-19 and its handling gets prominence as the Democrats are using it in the presidential election. Also related is the new Indo-Pacific alliance sought to be built around resilient supply chains. Trade, on the other hand, finds cursory mention in the statement despite it being Mr Trump’s principal preoccupation before the pandemic. The impending election has focused minds on the immediately relevant ideas. US secretary of state Mike Pompeo, in his remarks, recalled the New Age Vision finalised during his earlier visit. With a flourish, he announced that India and US stood against “all manner of threats”, not just from China. It is the language normally used among treaty allies. The US, he added, would stand with India to “protect its sovereignty and integrity”. His hyperbole hardly reflects the views of his government, as Mr Trump is by instinct an isolationist. Was he auditioning for a presidential run in 2024?

Two other important themes, although mentioned in the joint statement, are left undressed. One, Mr Trump’s tightened immi-

gration controls, in the mistaken belief that it would help ameliorate job losses due to Covid-19 lockdowns. Two, the traditional flow of Indian students to US universities. Again, there is a misguided move to cancel student visas if university courses have gone online. This has left many students stranded, both unable to repay borrowed money or complete their education and seek employment. The joint statement simply skips over these problems while restating past formulations on students as a people-to-people bridge.

The focus is basically on defence cooperation and sales as that plays well back home, particularly during an election. There is an interesting decision to exchange liaison officers, with an Indian officer to be embedded at Navent, Bahrain, which is the naval element of the US Central Command. Similarly, a US officer will be received by India’s Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR). The Quad is lauded, as too India’s invitation to the Australian Navy to join Japan, the US and India in the Malabar naval exercises.

Some of the benefits of the growing strategic clinch with the United States have been recounted above. What can be the pitfalls? Firstly, while the overall trajectory of India-US relations would not materially alter under a Joe Biden administration, some elements may. Mr Biden’s priority will be to rebuild US alliances, particularly with Nato, shore up the US economy and try reducing Trumpian unpredictability. He may cautiously attempt to reengage China. Mr Pompeo’s belligerence

may be replaced by a more nuanced containment strategy for China. A Biden administration may also bring greater focus on human rights, civil society protection and freedom of speech and media. All that may require a fresh rebalancing among the major powers, including in Asia.

Second, the *Wall Street Journal* correspondent’s query is important as he sought to know the status of India’s defence relationship with Russia after the signing of Beca now and the other three foundational agreements that were signed earlier. The defence minister parried it in Hindi, but the message was that India was unlikely to change its policy of buying weapons from multiple sources. But is this sustainable, with the closer integration of US communications, logistics and geo-spatial systems with Indian weapons systems?

India may acquire more US weapons systems to narrow the strategic gap with China during the coming months. M.K. Rasgotra, a former foreign secretary and doyen of Indian diplomacy, now in his late 90s like Henry Kissinger, recently wrote that the US needs to devise a concessional buy-lease programme for India to boost quickly its defence capability to deter China. Mr Trump has been too erratic and transactional to think that big. The next US President would inherit a destabilised West Asia, a fractious South Asia and a China-intimidated East Asia. He would require vision and leadership to peacefully contain China, curb the worst instincts of the Narendra Modi government and the BJP while helping India to rise and heal the fractures of the Islamic world? He can regain global leadership by reimagining a post-Covid world with new and flexible global alliances and reformed institutions of global governance. Covid-19 has created a historic inflexion point for change, which the brave and the wise must shape. Otherwise, rising revisionist powers like China will fill the vacuum.

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

If Mr Biden were to win, he would only assume office in January. A new secretary of state may not have India on his to-do list till well into 2021. India needs to optimise the use of American equipment like Apache helicopters...

trum, which will help them plan and allocate resources efficiently, optimise their networks and roll out new technologies.

TOO BUSY TO CLEAN AIR

It is that time of the year, Covid or not, when the air quality in north India deteriorates rapidly. Stubble burning by farmers in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi is a major contributor to this. Every year several steps are announced, media raises a big stink, but nothing much has happened.

This year, stubble burning has begun already and urgent steps would be required to prevent Delhi from turning into a gas chamber. The Supreme Court has now taken a serious note of the failure of these states to stop stubble burning which poses a serious threat to pub-

LETTERS

TEMPLE FESTIVAL

For the first time, the Sirimanotsavam of Pyditalli Ammavari temple in Vizianagaram was lackadaisical due to Covid (DC, Oct. 28). The local administration and police must be appreciated for conducting the event smoothly.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

LAND FOR INDIANS

Frustrated leaders of this new Union territory have already negated these laws ignoring the usurped land of Kashmiri Pandits (*All Indians can buy land in J&K, DC, Oct. 28*). A state that demands only privileges without responsibility can never be expected to be competitively successful.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

This will provide one more way for the government to reign in J&K leaders. As the NDA government could not win the hearts of parties it now wants to try the dubious way of going through general public’s support. Only time will prove if the NDA succeeds in its effort as there will be more trouble.

N.S. Sharma
Visakhapatnam

TIMELY VISIT

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s visit to India boosts the morale of our country when China shows its intransigence despite repeated meetings. Sharing geospatial technology is a key to acquire targets with accuracy. We must thank the US in this regard for its pursuit of peace in this region.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

More funds to States with less birth rate mooted

NEW DELHI, Oct. 28. The Union Cabinet today discussed the question of modification of the criteria of Plan assistance to the States in such a way that those States which did well in family planning and reduced the birth-rate could get more.

Union Health Minister K.K. Shah, who had raised the discussion, had proposed that the population in 1966 should be the basis for allotment of funds to States and any additional births should not be reckoned. At the Cabinet, Mr. Shah had argued that since the bulk of Plan assistance was being determined on the strength of population, under the present dispensation, States that lagged behind in family planning and had a higher birth-rate could get more funds.

lic health in the region. It directed the respective chief ministers of these states to remain present when the court takes up the matter of combating air pollution at the next hearing. Hopefully, some meaningful action will emerge from the apex court’s intervention.

Meanwhile, the state administration in Punjab and Haryana especially are busy dealing with angry farmers agitating against the Centre’s controversial farm bills, the chief secretaries have their hands full already. This year could see a repeat of our previous trysts with polluted air at the onset of winter with babus issuing the usual warnings and threats to fine farmers who are burning stubble.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@Twitter.com](#). Let’s multiply the effect.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Dhesi, Khattar’s favourite, gets a second innings

Politicians are sometimes loath to let a favourite babu go into retirement. They find ways to bring them back into the administration. In 2017, Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh had appointed retired chief secretary Suresh Kumar as his chief principal secretary, even though the state had a regular principal secretary, another IAS officer, because Mr Kumar enjoyed his full trust.

Now taking a cue from the neighbouring state, Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar has sprung a similar surprise on his administration, and one which is likely to alter power equations in the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO). He has appointed retired IAS officer D.S. Dhesi as the chief principal secretary in the CMO.

According to sources, Mr Dhesi

was Haryana’s chief secretary for four years and retired last year. He was then appointed chairman of the Haryana Electricity Regulatory Commission (HERC), which he has now left to join his new assignment. Though his duties have not been spelt out, it is quite likely that Mr Dhesi will become another power centre in the CMO, with all important files meant for Mr Khattar being routed through him.

THE ‘SPECTRUM SECRETARY’ Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba will head a panel of secretaries to streamline the spectrum allocation process. The other members of the panel are home secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla, defence secretary Ajay Kumar, telecom secretary Anshu Prakash, I&B secretary Amit Khare and secretary,

department of space, K. Sivan. Those in the know say that the committee’s ambit may eventually be widened to also include spectrum pricing issues, always contentious, as we have seen in the past.

According to sources, the high-powered panel will examine the possibility of drawing up an annual calendar for auction of the spectrum that will give telecom companies a clear road map of the quantum as well as the frequency of spectrum being offered for commercial use. It will also sort out the various spectrum-related issues between ministries — as seen in the composition of the panel.

This may meet a long-standing demand of telecom companies who have been asking the government to clear the air for auctioning spec-

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,922.46	-1.48
Nifty 50	11,729.60	-1.34
S&P 500*	3,283.56	-3.16
Dollar (₹)	73.86	-0.18
Pound Sterling (₹)	96.08	-0.20
Euro (₹)	86.81	0.21
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,279.682	1.34
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	38.95	-2.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.859	0.012
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.761	-0.017

* As of 9:30 PM IST

15th Finance Commission set to finalise report

The 15th Finance Commission is on course to finalise its report by October 30, an official statement said on Wednesday. The Commission's Chairman N.K. Singh along with its members on Wednesday held a virtual meeting with the Chairmen of two previous Finance Commissions respectively. "The Chairmen of the previous Finance Commissions appreciated the tough challenge faced by the 15th Finance Commission," the statement said.

HPE Covid Test Labs facilitate 1L patient visits



Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) today announced that its Covid-19 Test Labs and Outpatient Department (OPD) Centers have collectively facilitated over 100 thousand patient visits across India. These facilities provide additional authorised Covid-19 testing facilities and isolation beds, thereby assisting the government of India and state governments in their efforts to contain the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Micromax ties up with MediaTek for smartphones

Homegrown phone vendor Micromax on Wednesday said it has partnered with Taiwanese chipset maker MediaTek to design and develop smartphones for its new "in" brand. Earlier this month, Micromax announced its new "in" sub-brand and said it was looking at investing ₹500 crore over next 12-18 months towards R&D, marketing and sprucing up manufacturing as it looks to make a comeback in the Indian market.

Bharti Airtel's shares jump by nearly 13 per cent

Shares of Bharti Airtel jumped nearly 13 per cent on Wednesday after the company reported its highest-ever quarterly consolidated revenue on the back of a rise in data usage and higher realisations. The stock gained 12.65 per cent to ₹487.80 on the BSE. On the NSE, it zoomed 12.61 per cent to Rs 488. The telecom operator has reported its highest-ever quarterly consolidated revenue on the back of a rise in data usage and higher realisations.



Gold loans double as Covid-hit people pledge family jewellery

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, OCT. 28

Gold loan disbursements by NBFCs have more than doubled in September quarter over the previous quarter. They are expected to clock 15 to 18 per cent growth this year on increased demand and higher gold price.

Preliminary estimates indicate that gold loan disbursements, including repledge with NBFCs, have more than doubled sequentially in the second quarter of this fiscal, finds Crisil.

Growth was flat in the first quarter of this fiscal because of low disbursements in April and May due to the country-wide lock down. Manappuram Finance saw its gold loan portfolio growing by 2 to 3 per cent in April-May as customers have been availing gold loan using online products. Muthoot Finance too had seen a flatish growth during the



lock down.

With the Covid-19 pandemic-driven lockdowns being lifted slowly and economic activity clawing back, demand for gold loans has risen, especially from individuals meeting urgent personal requirements and from micro enterprises for working to restart businesses. Gold loans would be preferred also because non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and banks have tightened their underwriting norms for other loans, leading to cautious lending

to micro and small enterprises, traders and the self-employed.

Crisil expects assets under management of NBFCs to grow 15-18 per cent this fiscal. Motilal Oswal too expects gold loan NBFCs to deliver 15 per cent CAGR over FY20-23.

"In the current scenario, we believe gold financiers would benefit as customers would look to raise cash by leveraging their gold holdings and increase in gold prices would give a modest impetus

to growth. Inability of customers to get personal loans due to lack of formal documentation, higher share of rural business and flexi-lending terms will support gold loan business," finds Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

"Unlike other asset classes, gold loan has not faced major issues in collection and disbursement, or re-pledge of loans, barring in the stringent lock down phase in April and May," said Krishnan Sitaraman, Senior Director, CRISIL Ratings.

In order to provide a smooth re-pledging process in times of pandemic, larger NBFCs are offering online renewal since the underlying collateral is already in their possession. Large gold-loan financiers have also consistently raised funds through bonds, under the targeted long-term repo operations and partial credit guarantee schemes at a competitive cost.

Hospitality sector sees signs of revival

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 28

Hospitality has started seeing early signs of month-on-month recovery in occupancy with gradual revival in domestic leisure travel. However, occupancies are still down 60 per cent compared to last year levels.

Average occupancies in hotels across India moved up 10 to 12 per cent from the August levels to 24 to

26 per cent in September. Average daily rates too have improved 2 to 4 per cent to ₹3400- ₹3600 per night. Revenue per available rooms grew 12 to 14 per cent month-on-month to ₹815 - ₹935, as per HVS and Anarock.

Leisure destinations such as Goa and Jaipur have been witnessing a noticeable improvement in occupancy as people have started travelling for a change of pace, albeit to

destinations closer to their cities. Domestic air passenger traffic also has improved by 39 per cent in September compared to August. However, corporate travel continues to remain subdued.

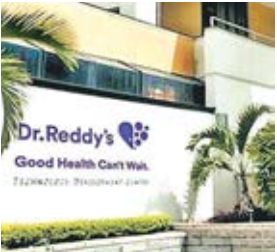
On a year-on-year basis, hospitality remains one of the worst affected by Covid-19. Occupancies were down 60 per cent last month compared to September 2019. Revenue per available rooms was

down 72 per cent and average daily rates by 30 per cent.

Going ahead, festive season is likely to boost demand for travel and hotel stay. Long vacations and international trips are off the table for the rest of 2020.

Booking.com finds that almost 62 per cent Indian travelers favour a trip they could afford in the short-term rather than saving for a dream trip.

Dr Reddy's Q2 profit falls 30% at ₹762 crore



New Delhi, Oct 28: Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Wednesday reported 30.22 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹762.3 crore for September quarter 2020-21. The company had posted a profit of ₹1,092.5 crore for the year-ago period, Dr Reddy's said in a filing to BSE.

Revenue stood at ₹4,896.7 crore in the quarter under review. It was Rs 4,800.9 crore in the same period a year ago, it added.

"We are pleased to report continued growth across all the markets and improved productivity which is reflected in the healthy EBITDA margin and return on capital employed (RoCE). Our research teams are working on several potential remedies for COVID-19 in addition to the already launched products," Dr Reddy's Laboratories Co-chairman & MD G.V. Prasad said.

Giving an update on the cyber attack, the company said: "As of date, our investigation has not ascertained if any data breaches in the incident pertain to personally identifiable information stored in the company's systems".

Recovery and restoration of all applications and data are underway. All critical operations are being enabled in a controlled manner, it added.

On October 22, the company experienced an information security incident and consequently isolated the impacted IT services.

"We promptly engaged leading outside cybersecurity experts, launched a comprehensive containment and remediation effort and investigation to address the incident," it added.

— PTI

Lockdown changed consumer buying behaviour: Report

New Delhi, Oct 28: Coronavirus-induced lockdowns across the country have transformed consumers' buying behaviour and hyper-local distribution model, and distribution alliances and an omni-channel strategy will be key to business growth, according to a joint report by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India and FICCI.

As per the report, called REBOOT, while the pandemic brought massive disruptions across the value chain of the consumer sector, most companies adapted by building agile business models and innovative marketing strategies, along with expanding their presence through the online platforms to reach their consumers.

"The prolonged lockdowns have also dramatically transformed consumer buying behaviour while making them more health and socially conscious," Deloitte India Partner Rajat Wahi said.

He added that this has created new opportunities for businesses to develop hyperlocal delivery models, use conversational AI (artificial intelligence) and build omni-channel retail to acquire and serve customers.

"As brands adapt to the 'new normal', the key to sustenance and growth is likely to be an agile business model that minimises disruptions in the future," Wahi said.

The report said demand for consumer goods in rural markets has increased due to the return of the migrant workers to their states due to the pandemic.

"Covid-19 has led to massive reverse migration, which in turn has driven up rural demand, favouring companies with strong rural distribution," it said.

The report also said health concerns and the need to build immunity have led consumers to buy home sanitation and immunity-boosting products.

— PTI

Bankers barred from sharing bidding data sharing: Sebi

New Delhi, Oct. 28: Merchant bankers will not share bidding details of initial share sales and rights issues with investors during the bidding period as it may create information asymmetry, markets regulator Sebi said.

The clarifications have been given as part of an informal guidance sought by Citigroup Global Markets India Pvt Ltd regarding provisions of Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements Regulations, et al.

Citigroup had sought informal guidance whether a book running lead manager can share standalone or aggregate bidding data available on the websites of stock exchanges for initial public offer, follow-on public offer and rights issue of specified securities and units with investors during the bidding process.

Responding to this, Sebi said standalone and aggregate bidding data is displayed on the websites of stock exchanges in the standard form specified by the regulator and is publicly available information.

FOOD MINISTRY WORRIED OVER LESS IN-TAKE OF SWEETNER

New Delhi, Oct. 28: The government on Wednesday said there is a need to address "myths and misgivings" about sugar consumption in India, as the per capita consumption of the sweetener has remained stagnant for the last three years at 19 kilogram.

Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey, after launching industry body ISMA's portal 'http://meetha.org' said India is one of the world's largest consumers of sugar but per capita consumption has remained stagnant at 19 kg, much lower than the world's average per capita consumption of 23.50 kg.

The country's annual sugar consumption stood at 25-26 million tonnes, while production reached 27.5 million tonnes in the 2019-20 season ending September.

"There are a lot of myths going around about sugar and sugar consumption without scientific basis. This misinformation multiplies much faster than the truth multiplies," the official said.

"Therefore, it is very important to come up with scientific information so that people can make very informed decisions," Pandey said.

Food secretary Sudhanshu Pandey also said that there is also "misunderstanding" about Indian sugar abroad.

— PTI

Covid rebound in US, Europe turns markets volatile

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, OCT. 28

Weak global cues led to a fresh round of selling in the Indian market as the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic in Europe and the United States, uncertainty over who would be the next US President worried investors.

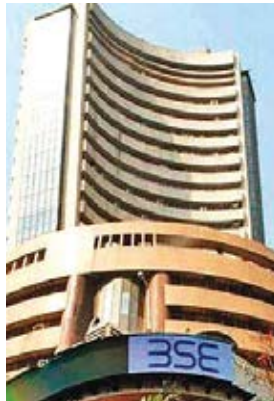
Sensex fell 600 points or 1.48 per cent to close at 39,922.46 while Nifty-50 settled at 11,729.60 down 159.80 points or 1.34 per cent.

Rising Covid-19 cases globally specifically in Europe and the United States are worrying investors as strict lockdown could be imposed and the economy's recovery, which is still at a nascent stage could once again get hit, said analysts.

Among the global peers United Kingdom's FTSE 100 index fell to its lowest level in six months on Wednesday on investors' worries of more virus curbs and uncertainty over a coronavirus vaccine.

Volatility in the domestic market arose ahead of equity derivative contracts expiry on Thursday as the Sensex fell 778 points intra-day taking the index to day's low of 39,774.60 before the final close at 39,922.46. Volatility index India VIX rose 4.88 per cent to 23.28.

Keshav Lahoti, equity analyst, Angel Broking said, "We expect volatility to continue in the market on the eve of key events of



the US election, ongoing result season and how coronavirus cases are being reported around the world."

Broader market suffered lesser damages with BSE Mid-cap index down 0.93 per cent and BSE Small-cap index down by 0.76 per cent.

All sectoral indices on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) barring telecom and capital goods closed in the red led by the financials. BSE Bankex index closed 2.28 per down cent and Nifty Bank fell 2.17 per cent.

The top losers in the Sensex basket included IndusInd Bank(-3.45 per cent), HDFC(-3.44), ICICI Bank(-3.34), HDFC Bank(-2.27), Bajaj Finance(-2.41) and Tech Mahindra(-3.00 per cent).

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) turned net sellers by ₹1130.98 crore on Wednesday after aggressive buying on Tuesday of equities worth ₹3,590 crore.

13% homes still have no grid power, says survey

New Delhi, Oct. 28: A majority of households (87 per cent) in India have access to grid-connect electricity, while the remaining 13 per cent are either using non-grid sources for power or "do not use any electricity at all", according to a survey.

The finding is part of the joint survey conducted by government think-tank NITI Aayog and the United States-based philanthropic organisation Rockefeller Foundation on "Electricity Access and Benchmarking of Distribution Utilities".

"Overall 87 per cent respondents said they have access to grid-based electricity. The remaining 13 per cent either use non-grid sources for electricity and lighting or don't use any electricity at all," the survey said.

The study further showed that of all customers using non-grid sources, the majority 62 per cent of them are agricultural customers. Only four per cent of households today do not have access to grid-based electricity.

The survey was released by Smart Power India (SPI), a subsidiary of Rockefeller Foundation, on Wednesday.

It was conducted across 10 states with a sample size of over 25,000 respondents consisting of different consumer categories such as households, agriculture, commercial enterprises and institutions both from rural and urban areas.

It mainly focused on key areas such as grid connectivity, electricity access, customer satisfaction, utilities' capacity to delivery and drivers of sustainability for utilities.

— PTI



West Bengal capital city beat Hyderabad city Kolkata is most affordable for house purchase in India

New Delhi, Oct. 28: Kolkata has emerged as the most affordable market this year for home purchase among India's seven major cities, according to property consultant JLL India.

As per JLL's annual Home Purchase Affordability Index (HPAI), the affordability has improved in 2020 across all seven major cities despite a fall in average household income. The consultant attributed this to decline in both housing prices as well as interest rates on home loans.

HPAI — the ratio of the average household income to the eligible household income — of Kolkata is highest at 203,



followed by Hyderabad at 195, Pune 188, Chennai 178, Bengaluru 175, Delhi-NCR 136 and Mumbai 95 during this calendar year.

"HPAI until 2019 indicates that Hyderabad had been the most affordable residential market. In 2020, Kolkata has overtaken Hyderabad to become the best market in terms

of home purchase affordability," the report said.

Eligible household income is defined as the minimum income that a household should earn to qualify for a home loan on a 1,000 sq ft flat at the prevailing market price.

A value of 100 means that a household has exactly enough income to

qualify for the loan. Below 100 implies that an average household does not have enough income to qualify for a home loan, while more than 100 means that an average household has more than enough income to qualify for the home loan.

According to the report, Mumbai is moving towards the affordability threshold.

"In 2020, Mumbai continues to be the only market below the affordability threshold of 100," it said.

However, the consultant said Mumbai is the fastest moving city, showing a significant improvement in HPAI in 2020.

"Our analysis suggests that despite a fall in

household income in 2020, home purchase affordability has increased in 2020 across all the markets under consideration," said Ramesh Nair, CEO, JLL India.

He projected home purchase affordability to either remain at similar levels or improve during 2021. Nair noted that the broader recovery of the housing market would depend largely upon the economic environment and the prevailing consumer sentiments.

JLL said that property values in a majority of India's prime residential markets have been stagnant over the past few years, forcing most of the developers to work on very low margins.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Djoker closer to Sampras record

Vienna: Novak Djokovic defeated Filip Krajinovic in the first round in Vienna on Tuesday to edge closer to Pete Sampras's all-time record of ending the year as world number one on six occasions.

Djokovic beat compatriot Krajinovic 7-6 (8/6), 6-3 and needs to win his next match in Austria against Borna Coric to ensure he equals the achievement of his childhood idol. The 33-year-old Serb has been the top-ranked player at the end of a season five times: in 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2018. He shares that mark with career rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. Sampras achieved the feat six years in succession between 1993 and 1998. "First set, I think he was the better player. He was serving for the first set and I was lucky. He missed a smash at 6/6 in the tie-break," said Djokovic. On Monday, Djokovic began his 292nd week in total as world number one. — *AFP*

Coleman banned for doping breach

Paris: World champion sprinter Christian Coleman is set to miss next year's Tokyo Olympics after being banned from athletics for two years for anti-doping violations, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) announced on Tuesday.

The American, who won the men's 100 metres at last year's World Championships in Doha, was provisionally suspended for three 'whereabouts failures' in June. World Athletics' Disciplinary Tribunal upheld the charge and banned Coleman for two years, backdated to 14 May, 2020. The 24-year-old has 30 days to appeal against the decision at the Court of Arbitration for Sport. He is set to miss next year's Olympic Games in Japan. The AIU charged Coleman for missed tests in January and December 2019, as well as for a "filing failure" last April. — *AFP*

Sen pulls out as dad catches virus

Saarbrücken, Germany: Defending champion Lakshya Sen on Wednesday pulled out of the SaarLorLux Open Super 100 tournament after his father-cum-coach D K Sen tested positive for Covid-19 here. Lakshya was aiming to recover from an early exit in Denmark Open recently before his campaign in Germany came to an abrupt end. "We had gone for the mandatory Covid-19 test on Monday. The result came last evening. I tested positive. It is unfortunate that Lakshya had to withdraw. He had worked hard for the tournament," D. K. Sen said. Lakshya, who claimed five titles in the senior circuit last year including two BWF World Tour Super 100 top honours SaarLorLux Open and Dutch Open, received a bye in the opening round. — *PTI*

Jakhar on Asian volleyball board

Hyderabad: Volleyball Federation of India secretary general Ramavtar Singh Jakhar has been elected Zonal Executive Vice-president and Member, Board of Administration of the Asian Volleyball Confederation at their 23rd General Assembly held virtually on Monday. Mrs Rita Subowo of Indonesia was unanimously elected president. She is the first woman to lead the AVC. Other members from the Asian Central Zone who were elected to the AVC Board of Administration include Md Atiqul Islam from Bangladesh, Yermek Syrylbayev of Kazakhstan and Mohammed Reza Davarzani of Iran. The AVC General Assembly Meeting was attended by Federation Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) president Dr Ary S. Graca.



Ramavtar Singh Jakhar

Live on TV

CRICKET
IPL: Chennai Super Kings vs Kolkata Knight Riders from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL
Europe League: AEK vs Leicester from 11.25 pm on Sony Six; AC Milan vs Sparta Praha from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 1; Antwerp vs Tottenham from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Roma vs CSKA-Sofia from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1; Arsenal vs Dundalk from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2; Rangers vs Lech from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 3; Real Sociedad vs Napoli from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Six

Surya burns bright

Yadav turns on heat as Mumbai bust Bangalore

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 28: Mumbai Indians defeated Royal Challengers Bangalore by five wickets in an IPL game here on Wednesday to all but qualify for the playoffs.

Put in to bat, Royal Challengers Bangalore scored 164 for 6 in the allotted 20 overs.

In reply, MI chased down the target of 165 with five balls to spare. Suryakumar Yadav led the charge with an unbeaten 79 off 43 balls that included 10 fours and three sixes.

Earlier, young Devdutt Padikkal pummelled the Mumbai Indians attack into submission with a 45-ball 74 before Jasprit Bumrah stopped Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Put in to bat, Padikkal, who plundered 12 fours and a six, added 71 runs for the opening wicket with Josh Philippe (33).

However, the RCB then suffered a middle-order collapse as Mumbai roared back into the game with lead pacer Bumrah (3/14) doing the bulk of damage.

Padikkal began with a boundary over deep extra cover and then struck successive fours off Krunal Pandya, as RCB fetched 12 runs in the third over.

The two openers continued playing their shots, the highlight being Philippe's six over Trent Boult's head in the fifth over.

Padikkal then went on the offensive against James Pattinson. — *PTI*



Suryakumar Yadav of Mumbai Indians plays a shot against Royal Challengers Bangalore during their IPL match at Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday. — *BCCI*

SCORECARD

Royal Challengers Bangalore: Josh Philippe st de Kock b Chahar 33, Devdutt Padikkal c Boult b Bumrah 74, Virat Kohli c Tiwary b Bumrah 9, AB de Villiers c Chahar b Pollard 15, Shivam Dube c Yadav b Bumrah 2, Chris Morris c Pattinson b Boult 4, Gurkeerat Singh Mann not out 14, Washington Sundar not out 10. Extras (W-3) 3. **Total (for 6 wickets in 20 overs) 164.**
FoW: 1-71, 2-95, 3-131, 4-134, 5-134, 6-138.
Bowling: Trent Boult 4-0-40-1, Jasprit Bumrah 4-1-14-3, Krunal Pandya 4-0-27-0, James Pattinson 3-0-35-0, Rahul Chahar

4-0-43-1, Kieron Pollard 1-0-5-1.
Mumbai Indians: Q de Kock c Gurkeerat b Siraj 18, Ishan Kishan c Morris b Chahal 25, Suryakumar Yadav not out 79, S. Tiwary c Padikkal b Siraj 5, K. Pandya c Morris b Chahal 10, H. Pandya c Siraj b Morris 17, Pollard not out 4. Extras (LB-2, W-6) 8. **Total (for 5 wickets in 19.1 overs) 166.**
FoW: 1-37, 2-52, 3-72, 4-107, 5-158.
Bowling: Chris Morris 4-0-36-1, Dale Steyn 4-0-43-0, Washington Sundar 4-0-20-0, Mohammed Siraj 3-1-0-28-2, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-37-2.

IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Mumbai Indians	12	8	4	0	16	+1.186
Royal Challengers Bangalore	12	7	5	0	14	+0.048
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

Tendulkar, Shastri heap praises on Wriddhiman

New Delhi, Oct. 28: The legendary Sachin Tendulkar lauded Wriddhiman Saha's "under-rated" shot-making while the national team's head coach Ravi Shastri found his 45-ball-87 simply "outstanding" as they lavished praise on the Test specialist's IPL performance for Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Saha smashed 12 fours and two sixes for SRH in their 88-run victory over DC, showing his hitting skills which have largely gone unnoticed over the years.

"Very smart batting. I also feel that @Wriddhipops quick scoring ability is invariably underrated," Tendulkar tweeted.

He loved the manner in



Wriddhiman Saha

which Saha was able to improvise his shots.

"Improvvised his shots after picking the line and length of the ball. There was no slogging at all. Played a fantastic innings which I thoroughly enjoyed watch-

ing," he added.

Shastri, on his part, once again termed him as the world's best wicketkeeper and praised his Tuesday's batting effort. "To the best Glove Man in the world. Outstanding performance tonight," Shastri said.

Meanwhile, Wriddhiman Saha's groin injury is "not serious" but his IPL franchise SRH is expected to adopt a cautious approach after consultation with the BCCI's medical team as the senior wicketkeeper-batsman is Australia-bound after the T20 event.

Saha had picked up the niggles during his match-winning innings against DC on Tuesday. — *PTI*

Clear mind is my strength: Rashid

Dubai, Oct. 28: Sunrisers Hyderabad leg-spinner Rashid Khan says a clear mind is his biggest strength and he reaped the rewards for focussing on bowling more dot balls against DC in their IPL match here.

Going into Tuesday's do-or-die contest against DC, SRH registered a comfortable 88-run win to stay alive in the race for the play-offs. Rashid returned with incredible figures of 4-0-7-3 to make a significant contribution in Sunrisers' win.

"I just go with a clear mind, that's my biggest strength. I want to bowl a good line and length, no matter the situation. You have to mix up and play with the batsman's mind, and see the weak zone and strong zone...So I keep



Rashid Khan

those things in mind," Rashid said.

The Afghan bowled 17 dot balls in his four-over quota.

"Winning the game was the most important. The wicket was helping a lot. What I'm mainly focusing on is to bowl economical-ly," Rashid added. — *PTI*

Ousted CSK look to halt Knights

Dubai, Oct. 28: Already out of play-offs reckoning, a relaxed CSK are ready to play party-poopers with an aim to foil KKR's desperate bid for a victory in an IPL game on Thursday.

KKR with 12 points from 12 games would like to win the next two encounters to ensure a smooth passage while CSK, currently at the bottom of the eight-team table, are only playing for pride.

A possibility remains that multiple teams will end up on either 16 or 14 points and a comprehensive victory at this stage of the tournament, will bring the superior net run-rate into equation when the play-off spots are decided.

It won't get too easy for KKR against CSK, who handed an eight-wicket thrashing to RCB in their previous outing.

KKR's unsettled batting order is a point of concern for Eoin Morgan, who would hope that Dinesh Karthik produces his A game when it matters most. They need to be at the top of their game against the CSK batting unit that has been frustratingly inconsistent but is more than capable of being destructive on its day.

CSK will be aiming to build on the win over RCB and end the season on a high, apart from hurting the chances of play-off

NUMBERS GAME

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:

- Matches: 21
- Chennai: 13
- Kolkata: 8

MEETING IN 2019

- Chennai Super Kings beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 7 wickets at Chennai
- Chennai Super Kings defeated Kolkata Knight Riders by 5 wickets at Kolkata

MEETING IN 2020

- Kolkata Knight Riders beat Chennai Super Kings by 10 runs at Abu Dhabi

FOR THE RECORD

- Rahul Tripathi scored 81 off 51 balls with eighth fours and three sixes against Chennai Super Kings in the first meeting at Dubai.
- Faf du Plessis with 401 runs in 12 innings of as many matches, is the fifth highest run-getter in this IPL.

— *S. PERVEZ KAISER*

hopefuls.

The batting showed some spark with the young Ruturaj Gaikwad coming up with an enterprising knock and skipper Dhoni will be hoping he keeps the good form going.

The CSK bowlers choked a strong RCB batting unit with a performance that reminded CSK of yore and that should be a worry for the KKR batsmen short on consistency. — *PTI*

Another warm-up tie for India in Oz

Melbourne, Oct. 28: The Indian cricket team will get an additional Day/Night warm-up game in Sydney as a tune-up to the series-opening Pink Ball Test against Australia in Adelaide from December 17, the host board announced on Wednesday unveiling the full schedule of the 69-day engagement.

The tour will include a 14-day quarantine-cum-training period in Sydney starting November 12 for the Indians who will fly in after the IPL final on November 10.

The Border-Gavaskar Trophy will begin with a day-night encounter at the Adelaide Oval on December 17, followed by Tests at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (December 26), the Sydney Cricket Ground (January 7) and the Gabba (January 15).

As per BCCI's demands, there is a week's gap between the Boxing Day Test at the MCG and the New Year's Test at the SCG.

"India's squad will arrive in Sydney on November 12 subject to Australian Border Force travel authorisation and the appropriate departure-approvals. The team will quarantine in Sydney prior to the first match of the series on November 27," Cricket Australia stated in a media release.

According to the release, the three-match ODI Series will have matches at the Sydney Cricket Ground (November 27, 29) and Manuka Oval, Canberra (December 2).

That will be followed by the three-match T20 Series at Manuka Oval, Canberra (December 4) and the Sydney Cricket Ground (December 6, 8). — *PTI*

SAMUELS CRITICISED FOR APPALLING TRADE AT BEN

New Delhi, Oct. 28: West Indies cricketer Marlon Samuels has been criticised for aiming an expetive-laden tirade at old rival Ben Stokes after a seemingly innocuous comment from the England all-rounder.

Samuels made racial remarks and a derogatory comment about Stokes's wife in an *Instagram* post that former England captain Michael Vaughan called "appalling".

"This is appalling @marlonsamuels... we are trying to stamp out racism," Vaughan wrote on *Instagram*, calling Stokes's original comments "a bit of banter".

After Samuels' post, and others by him targeting Stokes, Stokes responded by adding more than a dozen pictures of Samuels to his *Instagram* story, without making any comment. Their rivalry dates back to 2015, when Samuels mocked Stokes with a send-off salute in a Test match in Grenada. — *AFP*

Barca president Bartomeu resigns

Madrid, Oct. 28: Barcelona president Josep Bartomeu resigned amid the fallout of his feud with Lionel Messi, and on his way out revealed the Spanish club wants to join a potential new super league of European teams.

After one of the club's worst seasons, Bartomeu announced that his entire board of directors also resigned, effectively avoiding a motion of censure vote. "We have to act responsibly. For that reason we cannot hold the vote of censure in the current

circumstances. It was necessary to do so in conditions that guaranteed everybody's health. For that reason we have taken the decision to not call the vote and resign forthwith," Bartomeu said.

Bartomeu added that the club had given its initial approval to a new competition. "I can announce that we approved the requirements to be part of a European Super League. The decision to play the competition now must be ratified by the next (club) assembly," he added. — *AP*

City trounce Marseille, Reds rock

Paris, Oct. 28: Holders Bayern Munich continued their perfect start to their Champions League title defence on Tuesday as Real Madrid had Casemiro's late goal to thank for scrambling a 2-2 draw away to Borussia Moenchengladbach.

Liverpool and Manchester City also made it six points out of a possible six in Europe this season, after Bayern needed a late Joshua Kimmich strike to claim a 2-1 win at Lokomotiv Moscow in Group A'.

Leon Goretzka put the Germans ahead early on in front of a limited crowd in the Russian capital, but Anton Miranchuk tucked in an equaliser for Lokomotiv in the second half — Miranchuk's twin brother Aleksei scored for Atalanta in the Champions League last



Mohamed Salah (right) of Liverpool in action against FC Midtjylland during their Champions League match at Anfield stadium in Liverpool on Tuesday. — *AFP*

week. But Bayern were not to be denied a record 13th straight win in the competition as Kimmich controlled a Javi Martinez pass and volleyed home low from outside the box 11 minutes from time.

Meanwhile, Pep Guardiola's City eased to a second straight win in Group C with Kevin De Bruyne setting up Ferran Torres for the early opener against Marseille after the hosts had carelessly

THE RESULTS			
Manchester City (Torres 18, Gundogan 76, Sterling 81)	3	Atletico Madrid (Marcos Llorente 29, Joao Felix 52, 85)	3
Marseille	0	Salzburg (Dominik Szoboszlai 40, Felipe 47-OG)	2
Liverpool (Jota 55, Salah 90+2-pen)	2	Bayern Munich (Leon Goretzka 13, Joshua Kimmich 79)	2
Midtjylland	0	Lokomotiv Moscow (Anton Miranchuk 70)	1
Real Madrid (Benzema 87, Casemiro 90+3)	2	Inter Milan	0
Borussia Moenchengladbach (Thuram 33, 58)	2	Shakhtar Donetsk	0

ceded possession.

Ilkay Gundogan and Raheem Sterling added late goals to make it 3-0, leaving Marseille without a point. In another match Liverpool defeated Danish champions Midtjylland 2-0

at Anfield in Group D.

Diogo Jota finished off a fine move to give Jurgen Klopp's team the lead early in the second half, before Mohamed Salah made sure of the points with a late penalty. — *AFP*