

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | THURSDAY | 26 NOVEMBER 2020



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New Zealand's Greg Barclay elected ICC chairman



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WEATHER

Max: 28.0°C
Min: 21.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Overcast.
Max/Min temp.
28/21 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+44,117)	(+518)
92,64,820	1,35,245
<i>covid19india.org</i>	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+993)	(+4)
TS: 2,66,042	1,441
(+831)	(+6)
AP: 8,64,674	6,962

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

6,04,74,214
DEATHS
14,22,172
218
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Shuddha Dwadasi full day
Star: Revati till 9.20 pm
Variyam: 7.50 am to 9.38 am
Durmuhurtam: 10.12 am to 10.57 am; 2.38 pm to 3.22 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhir 10, 1442 AH
PRAVERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)
Fajar: 5.00 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.15 pm
Maghrib: 5.38 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.13 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.27 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 2.59 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 3.32 AM

COUNTER POINT



What is the landline, dad?

SHORT TAKE

Jallikattu India's Oscar nomination

New Delhi: Malayalam feature *Jallikattu*, directed by Lijo Jose Pellissery, has been selected as India's official entry for the International Feature Film category at the 93rd Academy Awards, the Film Federation of India announced on Wednesday. *Jallikattu*, which was unanimously chosen from 27 entries across Hindi, Marathi and other languages, is about a tribe of men coming together to stop a bull that has run amok in their village. The film, which derives its name from the controversial bull-taming event from the south, is based on a short story by Hareesh.

Trade unions on strike today

New Delhi: Central trade unions will go on a nationwide strike on Thursday and expects participation of over 25 crore workers to protest against various policies of the Central government. In a statement, a joint platform of ten central unions said preparations have been done as more than 25 crore workers are expected to participate in the strike across the country. Various independent federations and associations are also part of the joint platform. The BJP-aligned Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh will not participate in the strike.

SC vacates HC gag order on Amaravati land deals

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 25

The Supreme Court on Wednesday vacated the Andhra Pradesh High Court's order gagging the media from reporting an FIR filed in Amaravati land case allegedly involving the state's former advocate-general Dammalapati Srinivas.

While lifting the High Court order restraining the media from reporting the FIR registered on September 15, 2020, Justice Ashok Bhushan, heading a bench also comprising Justice R. Subhash Reddy and Justice M.R.Shah, however, did not interfere with the High Court order against any coercive action against the former law officer of the State and stalling the investigation into the FIR.

The High Court by its September 15, 2020 order had said, "It is further directed that the news about registration of FIR or in the context of the said FIR shall not be made public in any electronic, print or social media, to foist the office of a former Advocate General and also with respect to the other alleged accused persons." The top court asked the High Court not to finally

● **THE SUPREME COURT** did not interfere with the High Court order against any coercive action against the former law officer of the State and stalling the investigation into the FIR.

● **THE TOP COURT** issued notice to the head of the state police, Director General, Anti-Corruption Bureau and the head of the state intelligence department. Dammalapati Srinivas, who had filed a caveat, was represented by senior counsels Harish Salve and Mukul Rohatgi.

decide the petition filed by Dammalapati Srinivas against the registration of the FIR as it directed the listing of the matter in the week commencing from January 25, 2021.

While not issuing a notice to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy as the High Court too had not issued a notice to him, the top court issued notice to the head of the state police, Director General, Anti-Corruption Bureau and the head of the state intelligence department. Dammalapati Srinivas,

who had filed a caveat, was represented by senior counsels Harish Salve and Mukul Rohatgi.

Assailing the interim order of the High Court directing no coercive action against former advocate-general Srinivas stalling of the investigation into the FIR and gagging media from reporting the FIR, senior counsel Rajeev Dhawan told the court that investigation into the FIR could not have been blocked.

On the gag order, Dhavan cited the top court's constitution bench judgment in the Sahara case where it was held that reporting of the proceedings in criminal matters could only be postponed and not barred. He said that the petition by Srinivas was filed on September 15 and that very day at 5.30 pm, the High Court heard the matter and passed the interim order.

Describing as unprecedented "the manner in which the High Court had passed the order", Dhavan said that the High Court could not have passed such an interim order at all.

■ **Page 2: Counsel Salve blames regime revenge**

Cong strategist Ahmed no more

ASHHAR KHAN | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, NOV. 25

Senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel, who was the chief troubleshooter of Congress president Sonia Gandhi, passed away in the early hours of Wednesday at a private hospital in Gurgaon, Haryana. "AP" or "Ahmed Bhai", as he was known in political circles, had contracted coronavirus in early October. He died due to complications arising out of the infection. He was 71.

His son Faisal Patel tweeted at 4 am, announcing the passing away of the Congress veteran. "With profound grief and sorrow, I regret to announce the sad and untimely demise of my father, Mr Ahmed Patel at 25/11/2020, 03:30 am. After testing positive for Covid-19 around a month back, his health worsened further due to multiple organ failures. May Allah grant him Jannatul firdaus, inshallah," he said in his tweet.

Ahmed Patel's death stunned the entire Congress with tributes pouring in from all quarters. Mrs Sonia Gandhi called him a "faithful colleague" and "friend"

Describing him as a



leader dedicated to the party and one whose assets of faithfulness, dedication, commitment to duty, willingness to help and generosity distinguished him from others, Mrs Gandhi said, "I have lost an irreplaceable comrade, a faithful colleague and a friend."

Just three months ago, in August, Patel stepped in to quell a rebellion. His firm rejection of the public stand taken by 23 party leaders against Mrs Gandhi helped the CWC snub the demand for replacement of a Gandhi as party chief.

Rahul Gandhi said Ahmed Patel was an asset to the party and will be missed. Former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh called him a "great friend" and added that the passing away of Mr Patel is an "irreparable loss" to the Congress.

Cyclone Nivar batters Nellore with rain, wind

One person dies; 3-day holiday for schools in Nellore

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 25

Under the influence of the Cyclone Nivar, heavy rain associated with gale winds battered several parts of Chittoor and SPSR Nellore districts on Wednesday and left one person dead.

S.K. Razak, a resident of Venkateswarapuram in Nellore, was electrocuted when he stepped on a snapped power cable while trying to escape from a falling tree at Magunta Layout in Nellore.

Rainfall ranging from 5.2 mm to 159.4 mm was recorded in most parts of Nellore district with Sullurpeta recording the highest of 159.4 mm. The average rainfall was 69.2 mm during the last 24 hours ending at 9 pm on Wednesday.

The highest rainfall was reported at Sullurpeta, where 159.4 mm (15.9 cm) rain was recorded and the lowest rainfall of 5.2 mm was recorded at Udayagiri mandal from 6 am to 9 pm on Wednesday. The coastal mandals recorded rainfall ranging from 5 cm to 16 cm.

Nellore district collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu said a three-day holiday had been declared for all education institutes, starting from Wednesday because of forecast about heavy rains even after the landfall. He appealed to the people to remain at home to protect themselves from the fury of the cyclone.

He said people could contact toll-free number 1077, which has been installed at the Control Room in District Emergency Operations Centre in Nellore.

Authorities identified 100 cyclone relief shelters to accommodate 2,000 families living in the vulnerable areas, which are closer to the coast.

According to officials, 1,850 people have already been shifted to the shelters. Essential commodities, including milk pack-



People are rushing to their destinations in a heavy downpour in Nellore on Wednesday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

Heavy rain forecast for today

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM/NELLORE, NOV. 25

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast a widespread rainfall or thunderstorm associated with gale winds to the extent of 70 km per hour over in the areas adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal in Nellore district and the Rayalaseema region after the landfall of Cyclone 'Nivar'.

The landfall of Cyclone Nivar is likely to be along

Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coasts between Karaikal and Mamallapuram during the early hours of Thursday. Rainfall is also predicted for southeastern parts of Telangana on Thursday.

As per an IMD bulletin, gale wind speed reaching 65-75 km per hour, gusting to 85 km per hour, is very likely over adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal and along and off south Andhra Pradesh (Nellore and Chittoor districts). To deal with the impending

situation, 1,200 National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel have been deployed in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Andhra Pradesh.

Seven teams are in Andhra Pradesh, 12 teams are in Tamil Nadu (six in Cuddalore district and two in Chennai) and three in Puducherry. An additional 20 teams will be on standby in Odisha's Cuttack, Vijaywada in Andhra Pradesh and Thrissur in Kerala.

ets, are being provided to every division for distribution to people living in low lying areas.

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) teams have been deputed to eight coastal mandals, apart from Atmakur, to launch rescue and relief operations as and when necessary.

According to the Collector, 3,650 fishing

boats belonging to fishermen of the district returned to the coast, and 120 boats belonging to the fishermen of Tamil Nadu reached safely to Krishnapatnam Port.

The Nellore district administration sought the help of Satish Dhawan Space Centre officials to rescue 29 fishermen at Thettu Island located close to Shar in Sriharikota. Most of the fishermen, who

went to the sea four days back, belong to Irakkam island in Sullurpeta mandal.

Nellore Municipal Corporation arranged a command control centre at its office for round-the-clock services.

People affected by the cyclone can contact toll-free number 1800 425 1113, or helpline 0861-2355350, said Nellore commissioner Dinesh Kumar.

9L small traders get Jagan loans

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday launched the Jagananna Thodu scheme by depositing ₹905-crore worth interest-free loans to nine lakh small traders.

"From now on, small and petty vendors and artisans needn't approach private parties for loans and burden their lives by paying heavy interest, as they can take loans from banks under the Jagananna Thodu scheme for their

working capital needs," said the Chief Minister, after launching the scheme.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said he had witnessed the plight of small vendors and artisans during his 3,648-km padayatra, where the vendors cater to the needs of the public irrespective of adverse weather conditions by selling vegetables, flowers in the streets.

As the vendors come under the unorganised sector, the Chief Minister said the banks don't pro-

vide loans, which force them to approach private parties to take loans at high-interest rates to run their businesses, and they often fall into debt-trap.

"Through this scheme, about ₹1,000 crore is being lent to nearly 10 lakh people, where the government will be paying interest of ₹60 crore to ₹100 crore annually, and if it is taken for 10 years, it will be ₹1,000 crore," he said.

The Chief Minister further said, "The government is implementing the scheme in collaboration

with bankers to better the lives of small traders and vendors. The banks will credit the loan amount of ₹10,000 to the beneficiaries' accounts within a week or 10 days. The beneficiaries will also be provided with QR-based smart ID cards and if they repay the loan amount in the given timeline, the government will reimburse interest once in every three months to the beneficiaries' accounts."

■ **Page 2: Call 1902 to add new trades for loans: CM**

GOLDEN ERA ENDS Argentine soccer legend, 60, dies of heart attack after brain surgery 2 weeks ago

‘Hand of God’ Diego Maradona no more



Legendary football player Diego Maradona

Buenos Aires, Nov. 25: Diego Maradona, one of the greatest footballers of all time, died on Wednesday at the age of 60, plunging his sport and his native Argentina into mourning. Renowned along with Pele as one of the greatest players ever to play the game, the Argentine World Cup-winning captain died of a heart attack, having undergone brain surgery earlier this month, a member of his entourage said.

Maradona will forever be known for his "Hand of God" goal against England in the 1986 World Cup quarter-final in Mexico, when he appeared to use his hand to push the ball into the net before later swerving through the English defenders for a memorable second goal that sealed victory. Pele said Maradona had been a "dear friend" and said he hoped they would "play together in the sky" one day.

Gary Lineker, who was in the England team defeated in 1986, tweeted that Maradona was "arguably the greatest of all time" but made a reference to that infamous goal by adding: "After a blessed but troubled life, hopefully he'll

finally find some comfort in the hands of God.

#RipDiego"Lionel Messi, the Argentine considered one of the world's greatest modern-day players, said Maradona was "eternal".

Argentine President Alberto Fernandez immediately announced three days of national mourning in the South American country.

Shortly before the announcement that shocked the world, Argentine media reported Maradona had suffered a serious health setback on Wednesday and was being treated at his home north of Buenos Aires.

"There are four ambulances at the door of the residence. They have summoned family members to come. It is serious," the TyC Sports channel reported. The life of the divine footballing talent that was Diego Armando Maradona was marked by wild highs and lows, with Argentina and with club sides Boca Juniors, Barcelona and Napoli.

The former player underwent surgery earlier this month to remove a clot lodged between his brain and skull.

■ **More reports on Page 8**

CAPITAL ISSUE

ULS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE TO HELP STUDENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

The uLab Systems of the USA is going to start its development centre at Dhanekula Institute of Engineering and Technology (DIET) in Vijayawada and help the students to hone their skills to grab good employment. The ULS and DIET have entered into a MoU here on Wednesday.

DIET principal Dr Ravi Kadiyala said that DIET director D.K.R.K. Raviprasadh has recently visited uLab Systems in the US and explained about strengths of the institution in detail. He said that ULS expressed satisfaction over the product innovation centre, special software development facilities, digital classrooms and other facilities of the institution and expressed willingness to start ULS development centre in Vijayawada. He said that this development centre will provide employment opportunities for students through exposure to real time industry environment.

TD DEMANDS ₹27,500 CRORE TO EVACUEES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

Telugu Desam MLA Yeluri Sambasiva Rao on Wednesday alleged that the YSRC government was pushing the Polavaram irrigation project into a big crisis by frequently changing its designs and works without any commitment to the project completion. He demanded that the YSRC government compulsorily pay ₹27,500 crore compensation towards land acquisition and resettlement of the project evacuees.

Mr Sambasiva Rao strongly objected to the proposal to reduce the dam height by over 15 ft, saying that this would cause serious injustice to the project evacuees.

FREE MARKET WILL DO MORE HARM TO FARMERS: APCC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

APCC coordination committee member Sunkara Padmasree expressed fear that the free market law introduced by the Central government would do a great harm to the farming community.

She lamented that the new law would certainly increase the profits of the middlemen, traders and the corporate companies, forget about profits to the farmers.

She alleged that the central government had opened the flood gates of the agriculture to the corporate sector, as it had been doing in every other sector, which were already given to the corporate companies.

Padmasree said that these laws are not progressive and revolutionary as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is claiming and they don't intend to bring richness to the farmers as Union home minister Amit Shah claims.

PROPERTY TAX HIKED MINIMALLY, SAYS BOTSA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

Municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana has clarified that only ₹50 is the tax for property below an area of 375 square feet. Rest of the houses will have a property tax ranging from only 0.10 per cent to 0.50 per cent.

Refuting charges of opposition parties that there has been an abnormal hike in property taxes, he underlined that, in fact, AP has increased property tax on instructions of the central government. But in AP, tax hikes have been kept low owing to Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's direction not to burden people.

Speaking to media here on Wednesday, the minister maintained that the changed system of levying property tax will strengthen urban local bodies (ULBs) and enable them to provide better services to people. He explained that property tax, till now, has been levied on annual rental value (ARV) basis, where three months rent is levied as tax per annum. But under the revised method, tax will be charged based on capital value (CV) of the property. He underlined that the new taxation system is already being implemented in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

Chittoor farmers worry about crops

About 7,500 acres of paddy fields are yet to be harvested; 95 per cent of tomatoto crop is yet to be harvested

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 25

The first spell of rainfall due to cyclone Nivar in the Chittoor district was recorded on Wednesday, leaving farmers to worry about their crops sown in this Kharif season. With cyclone Nivar likely to bring more rains soon after it makes landfall by Thursday, thousands of paddy farmers in the western part of the district have suspended harvesting. Also, tomato growers are in depression about their crop, which have just crossed the fruit growth stage.

According to officials, the standing paddy crop in several mandals in the western part of the district would be affected due to winds rather than rains. It is learnt that about 7,500 acres of paddy fields are yet to be harvested in these mandals. Of the nearly 35,000 acres of tomato crop sown in the district at least 95 per cent of the crop is yet to be harvested.

Meanwhile, the Chittoor district administration is gearing up to deal with any eventuality arising out of cyclone 'Nivar'. Chittoor district collector Dr Narayan Bharat Gupta said that about 57 mandals have been identified as vulnerable. Beside deploying special officers at the vulnerable mandals and setting up control rooms at the district headquarters, schools and colleges were suspended till further notice.

Chittoor SP S. Senthil Kumar on Wednesday inspected Krishnapuram project near Karveti Nagaram and held on-the-spot discussions with the project officials on the precautions they took in view of the cyclone. About 32 NDRF and 21 SDRF teams have already been placed on standby at Tirupati to undertake relief and rescue operations during the cyclone.

COUNSEL SALVE BLAMES REGIME REVENGE

FROM PAGE 1

Meeting the arguments, senior counsel Harish Salve contended that the entire action of the Andhra Pradesh government against the former advocate general Srinivas was mala fide and was a case of "regime revenge" as the former advocate general had appeared against Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy in a number of criminal matters. The apex court was informed that Jagan Mohan Reddy is facing 25 cases.

Rohatgi too said that the action of the state government reeks of mala fide and the former law officer with over three decades standing at the bar could not have been targeted in such a manner.

Dhavan described as "rhetorical" Salve's argument of "regime revenge" which he (Dhavan) had earlier used in a case against late Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalitha and wondered whether former law officers couldn't commit a crime.

HEARING ON TTD PROPERTIES AUCTION DEC. 4

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

The AP High Court held a hearing on Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams' decision to auction its properties. A two-judge division bench comprising Justice Rakesh Kumar and justice D. Ramesh heard the arguments here on Wednesday and posted the next hearing in the case to December 4. Earlier, TTD standing committee member Dr Suribabu informed the court that the TTD issued orders in May stopping its previous decision to auction its properties.



Paddy fields are seen under a sheet of water near Nellore following heavy rain on Wednesday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

SCR cancels 5, diverts 8 long-distance trains

DC CORRESPONDENTS
NELLORE/TIRUPATI, NOV. 25

In view of cyclonic weather conditions prevailing in the South Coastal region of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu due to the impending cyclonic storm 'Nivar', South Central Railways cancelled five trains and diverted eight long-distance trains on November 26.

In addition to this, all passenger trains operating towards Chennai, Tirupati, Renigunta and Pakala from different destinations are also likely to be cancelled either totally or partially in view of the cyclone.

The cancelled trains include Train numbers 2760 & 2759 Charminar Express operating between Hyderabad and Tambaram and vice versa on November 26. The other cancelled trains are, Train numbers 6053 and 6054 operating between Madurai and Bikaner and



Water resources minister Dr P. Anilkumar Yadav inspects rain affected areas along with officials and party men in Nellore City on Wednesday.

— DC

Train No. 2808 running between Chennai Central and Santragachi

The Railways has also diverted eight long-distance trains through Jolarpettai, Renigunta and Gudur to avoid them passing through Chennai, which is their regular route.

According to a press release of SCR, Train No. 02295 from Bengaluru to Danapur and Train No.

03210 Yesvantapur – Danapur were diverted on November 26.

Similarly, Train No. 2509 from Bengaluru Cantonment to Guwahati and Train No. 02512 from Thiruvananthapuram to Gorakhpur were diverted on November 25.

In addition to this, Train No. 02296 from Danapur to Bengaluru, Train No. 02510 from Guwahati to Bengaluru Cantonment,

ACB books 13 for using official position for gain

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has booked former advocate general (AG) Dammalapati Srinivas and 12 others on charges of abusing their official position for gaining pecuniary advantage for themselves as well as their kin. The anti-graft bureau filed a First Information Report (FIR) against the 13, including the ex-AG, under various sections of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, as well as IPC, following a complaint by Ongole-based advocate K. Srinivasa Swamy Reddy on September 15.

During preliminary investigations by Guntur ACB DSP T.V.V. Pratap Kumar, it had been allegedly found that Dammalapati Srinivas had abused his official position by providing pecuniary advantage in the form of landed properties to his father-in-law, brother-in-law and his associates/acquaintances from June to December 2014. Later, he did the same for himself and his wife by buying properties in 2015 and 2016. All these properties are located either in the Core Capital Area (CCA) of Amaravati

or within the limits of CRDA abutting the CCA.

The complainant lawyer alleged that some public servants in high positions had fixed the exact location of Core Capital Area and purchased lands for themselves and their close associates to enrich themselves. One such high-ranking public servant was Dammalapati Srinivas.

The complainant mentioned that the father-in-law of Dammalapati, Nannapaneni Lakshminarayana, and others purchased a total 14.02 acres of land in Tadikonda, Amaravati and Krosuru mandals that were going to be included in the Amaravati CCA and its surroundings. The former AG's brother-in-law Nannapaneni Sitharama Raju purchased five immovable properties spread over 12.47 acres in Thullur, Mangalagiri and Tadikonda mandals of Guntur district and Kanchikacherala village in Krishna district. All these properties purchased were to fall within Capital Region Development Authority limits.

Dammalapati's another relative Nannapaneni Krishna Murthy acquired 16 immovable properties

over 13.75 acres between July 22, 2014 and December 24, 2014 in Thullur mandal of Guntur district and in other areas falling within the Core Capital Area.

All these people had clear knowledge that these lands will fetch high value after declaration of Core Capital Area and CRDA limits by the then Telugu Desam government. The total area purchased by Lakshminarayana, Sitharama Raju and Krishna Murthy came to 40.25 acres.

The complainant disclosed that later Sitharama Raju sold to Dammalapati Srinivas two acres of land in Markapuram village of Thullur mandal. Likewise, Krishna Murthy sold to him 1.59 acres in Thullur village to Dammalapati Srinivas, 0.97 acres in Ananthavaram village of Thullur mandal to Dammalapati Naga Rani, wife of Srinivas. This had resulted in huge pecuniary gains for the former AG.

The inquiry revealed that though it was the duty of then additional advocate general not to disclose official secrets, Dammalapati used such information.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy interacts with the hawkers, petty vendors before launching the Jagananna Thodu scheme at the camp office on Wednesday.

KIA DELEGATION MEETS CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

Representatives of KIA Motors have called on Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at his camp office here on Wednesday. The delegation consist-

ing of KIA Motors (India) MD Kookhyun Shim, KIA Motors Legal HOD Jude Lee and principal adviser Dr Somashekar Reddy met the Chief Minister and thanked him for all the support the AP government has been extending to the company.

MINISTER HAILS APEX COURT ORDER

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

Satyanarayana defended the state government's stand on AP High Court's gag order.

He expected the Supreme Court order will be in favour of AP state.

"The only intention of the government is to have a clean and transparent investigation in the Amaravati land scam. The state government has challenged the gag order issued by High Court only for this reason," he maintained.

CALL 1902 TO ADD NEW TRADES FOR LOANS: CM

FROM PAGE 1

He said vegetable vendors, fruit vendors, small shopkeepers, pushcart vendors, and traditional artisans are eligible to apply for the scheme. "If any eligible person was not covered in this scheme, they can still apply through volunteers, and upon verification, they will be provided with the scheme benefits in a month or two. They can call on the 1902 toll-free number to get enrolled," the CM said.

GHMC | POLLS

With 14 corporators, TRS tops list of leaders having pending cases, followed by TD, Cong

Parties field 72 candidates with criminal records

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 25

As many as 64 men and eight women corporators contesting for the upcoming Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Council polls have criminal records, sources from police revealed.

Political parties including the TRS, TD, Congress, BJP, AIMIM, MBT and others have fielded 72 corporator aspirants with criminal

backgrounds in 51 divisions of total 150, said the police.

"While the TRS has fielded 14 corporators with pending cases, TD has 13, Congress 13, AIMIM has 11, BJP has 4, MBT has 2, and independents 11," they revealed.

The city is witnessing its second municipal elections after the formation of Telangana state, scheduled to be held on December 1. A total of 1,122 candidates are in the fray.

The Hyderabad-based NGO, Forum for Good Governance (FGG), released an analysed report stating that there are 49 candidates with pending police cases contesting from the four major political parties in the upcoming elections, including that of cheating, theft, criminal intimidation, forgery and fraud.

According to their analysis, half of the 150 wards are reserved for women corporators and six

women candidates contesting the polls have criminal history. The candidates with pending cases booked for offences like trespassing, damaging public property and land encroachment are campaigning for the elections, says FGG secretary M. Padmanabha Reddy.

The NGO has done an independent analysis which revealed that the BJP has the highest number of contesting candidates with criminal

antecedents, followed by the ruling TRS with 17 and 13 contestants respectively. While the Congress party has 13 candidates with a criminal history, Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM has given tickets to seven persons who were previously booked for a crime.

Forty-one wards have candidates with criminal records fielded by political parties. For example, all candidates fielded by major parties in

Malkajgiri ward have a criminal record, their release said.

Speaking about the elections, Reddy said that Hyderabad should set an example by reject criminals. "I appeal to the voters to judge judiciously before they cast their votes to a candidate or a party. We need to rejuvenate the city and we are in dire need of a good Council in the GHMC represented by good corporators," he said.

IN BRIEF

GEAR UP FOR PATIENTS INFLUX: KMC CHIEF

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, NOV. 25

Following the directions from the state government on seasonal diseases, additional director for medical education and Kurnool government general hospital superintendent Dr P.N. Zikki directed the heads of the departments at Kurnool GGH to be ready to give medical services to rush the patients in the coming days.

Addressing all the HoDs and super specialist doctors at Dhanwantari hall in the hospital, she said that there will be a high probability in this backdrop to increase admissions and outpatients in the coming days with seasonal diseases.

She told them to be focussed on arrangements of bed facilities and other medical equipment to the expecting rush. The HoDs were also advised to send proposals of medical requirements at their units.

DIG OPENS MODEL POLICE STATION AT TP GUDUR

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 25

Guntur range DIG C.M. Trivikram Varma, along with Nellore SP D. Bhushan and YSRC district convener and Sarvepalle MLA Kakani Govardhan Reddy, inaugurated Model Police Station at Thotapalli Gudur mandal in Nellore district on Wednesday.

Speaking at the meeting, Mr Trivikrama Varma said that the upgradation as Model Police Station would contribute to speedy detection of crime using the technology besides helping them to achieve their aim of friendly policing.

He said one of their objectives in establishing model police stations was to provide access to modern technology apart from a pleasant work environment to police personnel.

According to the DIG, the Model Police Station was constructed with the support of SembCorp India, a thermal power generation company.

MAN KILLS LOVER FOR AGREEING TO MARRY ANOTHER

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, NOV. 25

Kalyanadurgam police busted murder case of a girl who was killed by her lover and threw the body into Tungabhadra High Level Canal in Kanekal mandal. According to Kalyanadurgam DSP N. Ramya, parents of Shahid Begum of Chapiri village reported that their daughter was missing since November 17 and also suspected her lover Raghu of the same village.

After police teams gilled Raghu, he confessed that he killed his girlfriend and threw the body into HL Canal for refusing to commit suicide and was ready to marry another person. Sources said Shahida Begam and Raghu of Chapiri village had a love affair but parents from both sides rejected the marriage proposal.

Shahida's parents fixed marriage with another person while Raghu forced her to commit suicide. But the girl ignored the idea of suicide.

Angered over refusing proposal to commit suicide, Raghu planned to eliminate her. He bluffed seeking for a discussion and took her towards HLC canal.

5-YEAR-OLD GIRL ABDUCTED, RAPED IN KAKINADA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

A five-year-old girl was abducted and allegedly raped by an unidentified man at Kakinada in East Godavari on Wednesday.

According to police, the girl's father works as a daily wage worker while her mother works in Hyderabad to support the family. The girl was staying with her grandparents.

On Tuesday night, as the girl was sleeping along with her grandparents while her father was sleeping outside, she was abducted and taken to a cemetery at Goleelapeta and was allegedly raped and abandoned with severe wounds on her body.

Toy boats



Children release the catamaran boat toys into the water near Pedajalaripeta beach while the city experienced strong winds in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

SDRF teams deployed at all Pushkar ghats

Three state officials were tested Covid +ve

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, NOV. 25

In view of Nivar cyclone, the disaster management department was put on high alert at all pushkar ghats at Tungabhadra riverbed areas. Special teams have been formed with 31 state disaster rescue force personnel.

Speaking to the media, SDRF sub-inspector J. Lakshmi Narayana said that as per the directions of the state officials their staff was immediately alerted and deployed needed forces at pushkar ghats particularly at heavy rush places like Rambotla temple,

● There is no option to dip in the river to the visitors.

● Disaster management teams are ready with boats, equipment to rescue

● Rush continued at all pushkar ghats

Sankalp Bagh in the city and Sunkesula reservoir and Mantralayam temple pushkar ghat. Protection and safety of pilgrims, who visit the riverbed areas to have pushkar bath during T u n g a b h a d r a Pushkaralu, is their

main activity and will be rescued at any time if any pilgrim will be at risk, he added.

Though there is no option to dip in the River to visitors, they are ready with boats, equipment and staff to rescue the needy if the situation demands, he added.

District collector G. Veera Pandian has also ordered the officials concerned to alert the people of river-bank villagers, especially Tungabhadra River, where the 12-day Pushkar fete is being organised.

On the other hand, rush of the pilgrims at all pushkar ghats continued

on Wednesday also. Over 12,000 people visited pushkar ghats on the sixth day of the 12-day fete and took shower baths with holy water of River Tungabhadra as per Covid-19 protocol. In view of Covid-19, none of the pilgrims were allowed to have a dip in the River, but a row of showers have been installed at all pushkar ghats.

Visitors to Pushkar ghats were screened for Covid-19 and the staff on duty was also subjected to it. So far, three state officials were tested positive since Pushkaralu began.



Devotees light earthen lamps at a temple during the Karthika Ekadasi special prayers at Lord Shiva temple in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

— DC

Bhavani Deeksha begins

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

The conferment of Bhavani Deeksha started at 8 am in Sri Durga Malleswara Swam-yvarla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri at Vijayawada on Wednesday. Durga tem-

ple trust board chairman Pyla Somi Naidu couple and temple executive officer M.V. Suresh Babu couple conducted pujas for starting of Bhavani Deeksha.

The 40 days Deeksha conferment will continue till December 12. Artha Mandala Deeksha

(for 21 days) conferment will start on December 15 and continue up to December 19.

The Bhavani Kalasa Jyothi will be organised on December 29. The procession starts at the Sivaramakshetram at Satyanaryanapuram at 6 pm.

AP RECORDS 831 COVID CASES, SIX DEATHS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

Andhra Pradesh has registered dip in both daily cases of Covid-19 and deaths in the last 24 hours.

Accordingly, 831 new Covid-19 cases were reported raising tally to 8,64,674 and six deaths taking toll to 6,962.

The state health authorities released Covid-19 bulletin here on Wednesday reporting that out of 60,726 samples tested, 831 persons were found infected with Coronavirus. Out of a total of 97,88,047 samples tested so far in the state, 8,45,039 patients were recovered while 12,673 patients are still active with the virus.

Among daily Covid-19 cases, Krishna reported the highest with 145 followed by 135 in West Godavari, 126 in East Godavari, 90 in Guntur, 74 in Chittoor, 58 in Visakhapatnam, 51 in Nellore, 37 in Kadapa, 34 in Anantapur, 28 in Kurnool, 23 in Srikakulam, 18 in Vizianagaram and 12 in Prakasam.

With regard to total Covid-19 active cases, East Godavari continues to lead the state with 4,171 followed by 1,649 in Krishna, 1,496 in Guntur, 1,085 in Visakhapatnam.

JAN ANDOLAN FOR COVID-19 BEHAVIOUR

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 25

Waltair Railway Division organised Jan Andolan campaign to spread the message of Covid-19. Appropriate Behaviour on Wednesday.

Campaigns were conducted at all the stations, sub-divisional offices, loco sheds with mounting of posters and banners spreading the message of awareness.

The Division is also playing jingles and making public announcements through the public address system at all the stations. Distribution of awareness building leaflets, educating the passengers at stations and in trains is also part of the campaign.

SIKHS INVITE JAGAN FOR GURUPURUB

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

Sri Guru Singh Saha Dharma Prachar Committee has called on Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and invited him to be part of the Gurupurab (Guru Nanak Jayanti) celebrations to be held on November 30.

The delegation met the CM at his camp office on Wednesday and invited him to take part in the celebrations.

Coast Guard seizes Pak arms, drugs

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 25

The Indian Coast Guard on Wednesday seized 100 kg of heroin and small arms from a Sri Lankan boat at high seas, south of Thoothukudi, in a nine-day operation that started on November 17. Officials involved with the seizure informed that six crew members have been apprehended, who have identified themselves as Sri Lankan nationals, and are currently undergoing interrogation.

During their initial questioning, it has been revealed by the crew that the drugs were exchanged at high seas from Pakistani dhow coming from Karachi. The

drugs were meant to be sent to western countries and Australia. The Coast Guard seized 99 packets of heroin, 20 small boxes of synthetic drugs, five 9mm pistols and a Thuraya satellite phone set. The drugs were found hidden in an empty fuel tank on board the Sri Lankan vessel.

According to the crew members, the boat is allegedly owned by Alensu Kuttige Sinha Deeptha Sani Fernando from Negombo, a city on the west coast of Sri Lanka. All six apprehended crew along with the boat have been brought to Tuticorin port for further interrogation, a Coast Guard release in Visakhapatnam said.

YSRC MLA opposes petrochemical units

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 25

The ruling party MLA from Paykaraopeta Golla Babu Rao strongly opposed the setting up of petrochemical industries in the Vizag-Chennai Industrial Corridor for which a public hearing was organised by the AP Pollution Control Board at Nakkapalle in Visakhapatnam district on Wednesday.

"I am not opposed to the industries in the corridor but oppose the chemical industries which will pollute the region," Mr Babu Rao said. He, however, did not oppose the pharmaceutical industries.

Talking to DC after the meeting, Mr Babu Rao said he was specific about setting right the anomalies in the payment of compensation to the farmers whose lands were acquired for the industrial corridor.

He said the previous TD government had compromised the interests of the farmers in 2016 during the acquisition of the lands. As per the 2013 Land Acquisition Act, the compensation should be equally paid to private landowners, D Patta holders and encroachers of assigned lands. ₹18 lakh was given to the private lands and ₹12 lakh to the D Patta land owners. Not a rupee was

paid to the farmers who were farming in assigned lands. As per the 2013 Act, each farmer was entitled to ₹5,000 per coconut tree but only ₹1,000 was paid, the MLA said.

"I told the joint-collector to rectify all these issues and do justice to the farmers," Mr Babu Rao said and added that the farmers never opposed industrialisation in the region.

Former MLA and TD state Mahila president Vangalapudi Anitha said she also opposed the setting up of the chemical industries in the corridor. She said there was no clarity on the employment though the YSRC government promised 75 per cent of the jobs to the local people. She insisted that skill development centres should be immediately set up in the Nakkapalle region.

She also strongly objected to conducting the public hearing during Covid-19 threat. Around 700 people attended the meeting, she said.

CPM state committee member Ch. Narsinga Rao said majority of the people opposed setting up of chemical industries in the corridor.

"The government made a false promise of providing jobs to 30,000 unemployed and took away their lands," Mr Narsinga Rao said.

USE MLA FUNDS TO DEVELOP KHABARISTAN: MUSLIM BODIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 25

The Muslim United Front and Muslim Welfare Joint Action Committee demanded development of Anjuman-e-Islamia Muslim Khabarasthan (burial ground) at Sangadigunta at Guntur. The leaders lamented that the Muslim Khabarasthan was neglected for years which is creating problems during burial processes. They demanded local MLA Md Mustafa to take the issue to the notice of the government and to start the development process with MLA funds.

Elephants destroy crops

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 25

Marauding tuskers went on a rampage and destroyed crops in a large extent of farmlands at Dayamvaripalli village and surrounding areas in Gudipala mandal of Chittoor district on Wednesday, causing panic among the farmers and locals.

According to the reports reaching here, about 10 elephants which have moved into AP's reserve forests from the Tamil Nadu-Karnataka border, have

been camping at the forest area abutting the bordering villages in this mandal since Tuesday.

Villagers said that the wild elephants had ventured into their farmlands in the early hours on Wednesday and had destroyed a large extent of crop including paddy and vegetables.

After being informed about the movement of wild tuskers, the local forest department officials have roped in drum-beaters and used fire-crackers to drive away the elephants back into the forest.

LOVE | FAILURE Family demands probe into causes abetting his suicide

Body of techie arrives in Anantapur

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, NOV. 25

Heart-rending scenes were witnessed at the residence of 29-year-old Pranay, a software engineer who committed suicide in Canada after he was cheated by his girlfriend.

There was gloom in the entire Kovur Nagar here on Wednesday when his body was brought to his residence 11 days after his demise.

Pranay, who hails from Gaddam Nagepalli of Dharmavaram area and was settled in Anantapur, was working as a software engineer in Ottawa for the past few years.

The techie had committed suicide by inhaling Nitrogen gas after releasing a video where he speaks about love break-

Man kills lover over marriage proposal

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, NOV. 25

Kalyanadurgam police busted murder case of a girl who was killed by her lover and threw the body into Tungabhadra High Level Canal in Kanekal

up after he was cheated by his girlfriend, who is from Hyderabad, who the video went viral. They had a live-in relationship few days prior his suicide.

She reportedly left Canada and went to the United States after she got a H1 Visa without informing Pranay, whose all social media communications she blocked.

mandal. According to Kalyanadurgam DSP N. Ramya, parents of Shahid Begum of Chapiri village reported that their daughter was missing since November 17 and also suspected her lover Raghu of the same

Further, she had affairs with others. Hurt over the entire episode, Pranay released a selfie video about his feelings and committed suicide. Though he requested that his body organs be donated, doctors found them damaged due to nitrogen gas.

Telugu people from Canada took the initiative to send his body. A

village. After police teams gilled Raghu, he confessed that he killed his girlfriend and threw the body into HL Canal for refusing to commit suicide and was ready to marry another person.

big number of people-relatives and friends rushed to his residence and paid tributes.

Parents and relatives broke down and lamented that Pranay had committed suicide even after they had asked him to keep memories of his girlfriend away from his mind.

"He visited India last month and helped pro-



SHORT TAKES

HC ALLOWS REPUBLIC TV TO AMEND THEIR PLEA

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, NOV. 25

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday allowed ARG Outlier (parent company of Republic TV) to amend their plea to challenge the charge sheet filed by the Mumbai Police on Tuesday in an allegedly fake TRP scam uncovered by the Mumbai Police. The original plea only sought quashing of the First Information Report (FIR) against Republic and its employees including Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami and an order transferring the investigation proceedings from the Crime Branch Mumbai Police to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

On Wednesday, Republic TV counsellor Abad Ponda urged the court to amend the petition because a charge sheet has been filed in this case and he also wants to quash the charge sheet.

Subsequently, the Bombay High Court has refused to pass any orders to restrain reporting on ongoing Television Rating Points rigging scam. Court refusal has come when the Maharashtra government urged the Bombay High Court to issue orders directing news channels especially Republic TV from running a parallel investigation and trial into the scam.

SENA MLA GOES IN QUARANTINE, WILL NOT JOIN ED PROBE

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, NOV. 25

Following summons from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to appear for questioning in connection with the raids carried out by the agency, Shiv Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik quarantined himself informing the officials that he will appear before them after the 14-day period.

The sources said that Sarnaik was in Goa when the ED raided his residence and office. He has also informed the probe agency that his daughter-in-law has been hospitalised due to hypertension after Tuesday's ED raids and therefore he and his son Vihang cannot appear before the ED before next week.

"The summons were sent to both of them to appear for questioning and we were informed about the reason why they would not be available for questioning," said an officer.

The ED officials, meanwhile, are scanning through the seized documents in connection with the alleged laundering of funds pertaining to the security agency run by them. On Tuesday, the ED raided 10 locations in Mumbai and Thane, including premises of a security agency. The searches also included premises of promoters of a security company, some of whom are politicians.

IMARTI DEVI WHO LOST MP POLLS QUITS AS MANTRI

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, NOV. 25

Three non-MLA ministers in the Shivraj cabinet who have lost the recent by-elections in their respective Assembly constituencies, have finally resigned.

While state women and child development minister Imarti Devi resigned on Wednesday, 2 other defeated ministers, Giriraj Dandotia and Anand Singh Kansana, resigned from the ministry over the last couple of days.

"I have tendered my resignation. It is up to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to accept or reject it", Devi who had made former chief minister Kamal Nath her sole target during her campaigning in the by-elections in her Assembly constituency of Dabra for calling her an 'item', told reporters on Wednesday.

Devi lost to her Congress rival Suresh Raj by over 7,000 votes. Devi had earlier sought to continue in the ministry till January 2 when her 6-month-period, a non-MLA minister is allowed to continue in ministry before being elected to the house, ended.

However, all the three defeated ministers were under pressure to resign from the ministry to enable the Chief Minister to expand his ministry as soon as possible.

"The CM may go for expansion of his ministry shortly following the development", a senior BJP leader said.

Farm Bills stir reaches Delhi



Police stop members of various farmer organisations during a protest march against the farm reform bills in Hisar district on Wednesday. The farmers, who are protesting against the Centre's three new farm laws, will reach Delhi on Nov. 26 through five highways connecting the national capital as part of the 'Delhi Chalo' march call.

States can take call on lockdown, says MHA

New guidelines give states a free hand to curb Coronavirus

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 25

With large parts of North and East India facing a third wave of Coronavirus, the central government on Wednesday issued new guidelines that suggest stringent measures for containment and prevention of the deadly virus along with stricter surveillance.

The guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) which will be effective from December 1 and will remain in force till December 31, give a free hand to the states and UT to impose lockdowns and movement restrictions if needed to contain the spread of the virus. However, state/ UT governments cannot impose any local lockdown (at state/ district/ sub-division/ city level), outside the containment zones, without the prior consultation with the Central government.

Also, there shall be no restriction on inter-state and intra-state movement of persons and goods including those for cross land-border trade under treaties with neighbouring countries.

No separate permission/ approval/ e-permit will be required for such movements.

India till Wednesday had over 92.22 lakh cases out of which 44,376 are new detections.

In a single day, 481 deaths have been reported taking the total fatalities to close to 1.35 lakh.

The MHA said that the main focus of the guidelines is "to consolidate the substantial gains that have been achieved against the spread of Covid-19 which is visible in the steady decline in the number of active cases in the country."

"Further, keeping in view the recent spike in new cases in few states/ UTs, ongoing festival season and onset of winter, it is emphasised that to fully overcome the pandemic, there is need to maintain caution and to strictly follow the prescribed containment strategy, focussed on surveillance, containment and strict observance of the guidelines/ SOPs issued by MHA and ministry of health and family welfare," officials said.

Local district, police and municipal authorities shall be responsible to ensure that the prescribed containment measures are strictly followed and states and UTs, based on their assessment of the situation, are free to impose local restrictions, with a view to contain the spread of Covid-19.

The list of containment zones will be notified on the websites by the respective district collectors and by the states/ UTs.

Within the demarcated containment zones, only essential activities shall be allowed and there shall be strict perimeter control to ensure that there is no movement of people in or out of these zones, except for medical emergencies and for maintaining supply of essential goods and

services.

There shall be intensive house-to-house surveillance by surveillance teams and testing shall be carried out as per prescribed protocol.

Listing of contacts shall be carried out in respect of all persons found positive, along with their tracking, identification, quarantine and follow up of contacts for 14 days (80 per cent of contacts to be traced in 72 hours).

Quick isolation of Covid-19 patients shall be ensured in treatment facilities/ home (subject to fulfilling the home isolation guidelines). Clinical interventions, as prescribed, shall be administered.

Surveillance for ILI/ SARI cases shall be carried out in health facilities or outreach mobile units or through fever clinics in buffer zones.

Awareness shall be created in communities on Covid-19 appropriate behaviour and local district, police and municipal authorities shall be responsible to ensure that the prescribed containment measures are strictly followed and state/ UT governments shall ensure the accountability of the officers concerned in this regard.

In order to enforce the core requirement of wearing of face masks, states and UTs may consider administrative actions, including imposition of appropriate fines, on persons not wearing face masks in public and work spaces.

For observance of social

distancing in crowded places, especially in markets, weekly bazaars and public transport, MoHFW will issue SOP, which shall be strictly enforced by the states and UTs.

All activities have been permitted outside containment zones though some have been permitted with certain restrictions.

These include international air travel of passengers, running of cinema halls and theatres with up to 50 per cent capacity, opening of swimming pools only for training of sports persons, exhibition halls only for business to business (B2B) purposes, social/ religious/ sports/ entertainment/ educational/ cultural/ religious gatherings, with up to a maximum of 50 per cent of the hall capacity, with a ceiling of 200 persons in closed spaces; and keeping of the size of the ground/ space in view, in open spaces.

However, based on their assessment of the situation, state/ UT governments may reduce the ceiling to 100 persons or less, in closed spaces.

states and UTs also need to enforce social distancing in offices.

In cities, where the weekly case positivity rate is in more than 10 per cent, states and UTs concerned shall consider implementing staggered office timings and other suitable measures, with a view to reduce the number of employees attending office at the same time, thereby ensuring social distancing.

DIDI DARES BJP TO ARREST HER, VOWS TO WIN FROM JAIL

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, NOV. 25

Dubbing the BJP as a "garbage of lies" and "biggest curse to the nation", Trinamul Congress supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday challenged the saffron party that she, even if arrested, would ensure her party's victory from jail in the Assembly elections.

"BJP is a garbage of lies. It is the biggest curse to the nation. Ahead of election, they threaten the TMC so that some of its leaders defect to them. They are asking all either to live in fear or stay in jail. If you (BJP) have the guts, arrest me and put me behind bars. Staying in jail, I will ensure our victory in Bengal. This is my challenge," Banerjee told a party rally in Bankura while kick-starting her poll campaign from the Jangalmahal district, visited by Union home minister Amit Shah earlier this month.

Mocking senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders, visiting the state, as "Dilli Ka Laddu," she said, "They abuse TMC so much daily as if TMC has become their eyesore. In future, only TMC will remain in power, uprooting BJP, CPI(M) and Congress from the state."

The Trinamul Congress chief also belittled the Bharatiya Janata Party's success in the recently concluded Bihar Assembly elections.

He said that he was "extremely happy" that his movie has been selected for 2021 Oscars.

"Extremely happy to know that *Jallikattu* gained entry in the Oscar. This is a moment of happiness for all those who 'raced' for the film," the filmmaker said.

The film, which derives its name from the popular-yet-controversial bull-taming event from the South, is based on a short story by Hareesh. It features actors Antony Varghese, Chemban Vinod Jose, Sabumon Abdusamad and Santhya Balachandran.

Asked if the film was a "unanimous choice", filmmaker Rahul Rawail, Chairman, Jury Board, The Film Federation of India (FFI) said *Jallikattu* was a favourite. "It is a film that really brings out the raw problems which are there in human beings, that is we are worse than animals," Rawail told reporters in an online press conference.

— PTI

PDP leader held for links with accused cop

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, NOV. 25

After two days of grilling by National Investigation Agency (NIA), People's Democratic Party (PDP) youth leader Waheed Ur Rehman Parra was on Wednesday formally arrested by the premier anti-terror agency for his alleged links with tainted J&K police officer Davinder Singh.

Singh who last served as Deputy Superintendent of Police at the Anti-Hijacking Squad at the Srinagar International Airport is facing charges under various anti terror laws for helping separatist militants back home. The case is being investigated by the NIA which had in July filed a chargesheet against him and five others for their alleged terror activities in the country.

A spokesman of the NIA said that Parra was arrested "in connection with the Naveed Babu Davinder Singh case for supporting Hizb-ul-Mujahideen in conspiracy with the other accused persons."

Reacting to Parra's arrest, PDP president and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti tweeted "Waheed has no connection whatsoever with this man (Davinder Singh) & is being falsely charged. All just to blackmail & intimidate PDP & other mainstream political parties in J&K".

In another tweet, she said, "I can personally vouch for Waheed's integrity, honesty & character. It is up to the judiciary now to dispense justice & ensure @parawahid is released at the earliest". She alleged that the reason behind Parra's arrest apparently was his contesting the upcoming District Development Council (DDC) elections in J&K.

"No coincidence that he filed his nomination for DDC on 20th Nov. & received NIA summons next day itself", Mufti said.

‘Jallikattu’ is India’s official Oscar entry

New Delhi/Kochi, Nov. 25: Malayalam film feature *Jallikattu*, directed by Lijo Jose Pellissery, has been selected as India's official entry for the International Feature Film category at the 93rd Academy Awards, the Film Federation of India (FFI) announced on Wednesday.

Jallikattu, which was unanimously chosen from 27 entries across Hindi, Marathi and other languages, is about a tribe of men coming together to stop a bull that has run amok in their village.

Pellissery, who has previously made critically-acclaimed features like *Angamaly Diaries* and *Ea Ma Yau*, said he is "extremely happy" that his movie has been selected for 2021 Oscars.

"Extremely happy to know that *Jallikattu*

Parra had appeared before the NIA at its headquarters in New Delhi on Monday and Tuesday for questioning.

He had said on Monday evening that he was asked about his political career and PDP's soft politics during the questioning. An earlier report had said that Parra's name had surfaced during the NIA's probe into the Davinder Singh case but he had publicly expressed ignorance about the same.

Singh was arrested along with Syed Naveed Mushtaq alias Naveed Babu, one of the most wanted Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militants, and his associate Asif Ahmed Rather by the J&K police in southern Kulgam district on January 11 this year. Subsequently, Kashmiri lawyer Irfan Shafi Mir and Naveed Babu's brother Syed Irfan Ahmed were also taken into custody after accused of being the Hizb's Over Ground Workers (OWGs).

The police officer who was soon placed under suspension and the militant duo were travelling in a Hyundai i20 car along the highway connecting J&K's twin capitals — Srinagar and Jammu — and were reportedly on their way to Chandigarh.

The investigations done by the J&K police had reportedly revealed that Singh had accompanied militants or helped them in relocating to various parts of the country on different occasions in lieu of money and other considerations. However, the Centre later asked the NIA to probe the case.

Special Cell of Delhi Police which also probed the police officer's alleged terror links and subsequently filed a case in a Delhi court, told that Naveed Babu and others were planning to execute terror attacks in Delhi and other parts of the country.

BIG LOSS Patel could be creative in solving problems and was combative in defence of his party's interest

A trusted aide, but political force in his own right also

ANAND K. SAHAY

Ahmed Patel, who died at the relatively early age of 71 in the small hours of Wednesday, was much of the time a creative political force in his own right, although all his actions were in the name of Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, currently her party's interim president.

He was no apparatchik - an expression of Russian Communist Party lineage given a derogatory connotation in English usage to denote a faceless, nameless, mindless, party bureaucrat. Patel was none of those things, although in careless hands

and in careless speech he has sometimes been spoken of in those inaccurate - and regrettable - terms.

He was instead an indispensable personal aide to the Congress president who could be creative in solving problems, unobtrusively combative in defence of his party's and leadership's interest, and was respected among politicians across the aisle though he held no high public office and was just one among many MPs.

Last year Patel camped in Mumbai to ensure that the Congress became a part of the three-party ruling coalition headed by Shiv Sena leader Udhav Thackeray to displace the



Ahmed Patel

BJP, to whose national power the state of Maharashtra contributed inordinately. Congress'

● In negotiations, he acted as the instrument and the principal since he commanded the implicit trust of Mrs Gandhi and didn't have to look over his shoulder or to await instructions at any stage. In her homage on the passing of an invaluable colleague, Mrs Gandhi has been respectful, calling her late colleague an "irreplaceable comrade".

inclusion was on terms that were acceptable to the top Congress leadership since the Sena had been seen as a communal party and Rahul Gandhi appeared to have reserva-

tions that were being sought to be exploited by the NCP. The Congress being inserted into the ruling scheme was achieved through skilful negotiations conducted by Patel. In these negotiations, he acted as the instrument and the principal since he commanded the implicit trust of Mrs Gandhi and didn't have to look over his shoulder or to await instructions at any stage. In her homage on the passing of an invaluable colleague, Mrs Gandhi has been respectful, calling her late colleague an "irreplaceable comrade" and "friend". Such expressions denote parity and trust. Patel was quiet. He didn't

discuss or run down the vilest political opponents even in private.

He seldom declined to see a journalist one on one and on those occasions could be frank in his assessment of a situation even if it was to his party's disadvantage.

His independent status was clear. He had first come to New Delhi, having won the Bharuch Lok Sabha seat in 1977 when the Congress was wiped out in upper India. Then in 2017, the way he won his Rajya Sabha seat is a saga on which a thrilling film can be made. He defeated every machination of the BJP which ran the state government and the

Centre and had the resources with which it made MLAs defect and back-stab their former colleagues. This famous win set the stage alight and became the precursor to the Congress nearly winning the Gujarat Assembly election the same year.

This writer had first met Ahmed Patel on the field of cricket in a journalist versus parliamentary cricket game in 1985, when he had just been made parliamentary secretary to former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. He was self-effacing then and also when he was congratulated after beating the BJP in the Rajya Sabha stakes in 2017 — smiling shyly.

IN BRIEF

KIWI SOLDIER
CHARGED WITH
SPYING

Wellington, Nov. 25: A New Zealand soldier has been charged with spying and will face up to 14 years in prison if found guilty. It is the first time somebody from the military has faced such a charge in New Zealand, at least in modern times, the New Zealand Defence Force said Wednesday.

The soldier faces a total of 17 charges and will be tried in a court martial. The military is releasing few other details about the case ahead of the trial, and the soldier's name is being kept secret by court order. The soldier was based at the Linton Military Camp with about 2,000 people near the city of Palmerston North. The website Newsroom said the soldier was first arrested in December and has close ties to far-right extremist groups.

CAR HITS GATE
OUTSIDE MERKEL
GERMAN OFFICE

Berlin, Nov. 25: A car crashed into the front gate of the building housing German Chancellor Angela Merkel's offices on Wednesday morning, but appeared to have caused little damage, Berlin police said.

Officers were on the scene investigating the crash at the German chancellery, police spokesman Hartmut Paeth said, but there were no immediate details about injuries or arrests. Rescue crews on the scene confirmed the man driving the car was being treated in an ambulance that remained in front of the chancellery.

The car, a Volkswagen sedan, had the slogan "You damned murderers of children and old people" scrawled in white paint on one side.

On the other it said "stop the globalisation policies."

It had licence plates from the North Rhine-Westphalia area of Lippe and was driven away by the Berlin fire department showing little sign of damage beyond a few scratches.

The metal gate to the chancellery appeared slightly bent.

The chancellery sits in downtown Berlin next to the Swiss Embassy and across from the capital's parliamentary offices.

AZERBAIJANI
ARMY OCCUPIES
EX-ARMENIA AREA

Baku, Nov. 25: The Azerbaijani army has entered the Kalbajar region, one more territory ceded by Armenian forces in a truce that ended deadly fighting over the separatist territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan's Defence Ministry said Wednesday.

The cease-fire, brokered by Russia two weeks ago, stipulated that Armenia hand over control to Azerbaijan of some areas its holds outside Nagorno-Karabakh's borders. The first one, Aghdam, was turned over last week. Kalbajar was expected to be handed over on November 15, but Azerbaijan agreed to delay the takeover after a request from Armenia.

Azerbaijani officials said worsening weather conditions made the withdrawal of Armenian forces and civilians difficult along the single road through mountainous territory that connects the region with Armenia. Footage showed Azerbaijani troops slowly moving through snowy terrain, looking for mines.

BOAT OVERTURNS
NEAR SPAIN, 7
MIGRANTS DIE

Madrid, Nov. 25: At least seven people died after a migrant boat carrying more than 30 people hit rocks close to a small port on the Canary Island of Lanzarote, Spanish rescue services said Wednesday. The boat was one of 12 intercepted in the islands' waters overnight.

Some 300 people were rescued in the other boats but one died later. The Canary Islands emergency service said the Lanzarote boat crashed into pier rocks and overturned in the Orzola area on the north of the island late Tuesday. Video images showed rescue workers pulling young men in T-shirts from the water in the dark and other migrants sitting on the rocks. The emergency service said seven bodies from the boat were found overnight.

It said search operations are continuing. In the other incidents, the national rescue service and Civil Guard rescued some 300 people, including women and children, arriving in 11 boats. One person died. The services said many of the migrants were from northwest African countries.



A man dressed as Ded Moroz (Santa Claus, or Father Frost) stands in a street in Moscow on Wednesday.

— AFP

First Coronavirus vaccinations
possible by Christmas, says EU

Brussels, Nov. 25: A top European Union official said Wednesday that the first citizens in the 27 nation bloc could be vaccinated against the coronavirus by Christmas, but she warned that member countries must urgently prepare their logistical chains for the rollout of hundreds of millions of doses of the vaccines.

Claiming that "there's finally light at the end of the tunnel," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told EU lawmakers that "the first European citizens might already be vaccinated before the end of December." The commission, the EU's executive arm, has agreements with six potential vaccine suppliers and is working on a seventh contract.

The deals allow it to purchase over 800 million doses, more than the population of the bloc, which stands at around 460 million people.

On Tuesday, Brussels said it would sign a contract for up to 160 million doses of the experimental coronavirus vaccine developed by Moderna, which the company says appears to be 94.5 per cent effective, according to its preliminary data.

But von der Leyen said that while vaccines are important, "what counts are vaccinations."

Christmas bubble:
Boris offers days
off from lockdown

London, Nov. 25: Prime Minister Boris Johnson has confirmed a time-limited one-off dispensation from Covid-19 lockdown rules agreed by all parts of the United Kingdom for families to get together to form a Christmas bubble between December 23 and 27. In a video message on Tuesday evening from Downing Street, where he continues to self-isolate after being in contact with a Covid-positive politician, Johnson said a family can get together with

two other households to form such a bubble in order to spend the festive period together.

"All four nations of the UK (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales) have agreed that from the 23rd of December to the 27th of December, you will be able to form a Christmas bubble with up to two other households," Johnson said. It would mean that up to three households will be able to come together from any part of the UK.

— PTI

CHINA STIRS ROW
SAYING FROZEN
FOODS INFECTED

Beijing, Nov. 25: China has stirred controversy with claims it has detected the Coronavirus on packages of imported frozen food.

Frozen shrimp imported from an Ecuadorian company was banned for one week on Tuesday in a continuing series of such temporary bans. While experts say the virus can survive for a time on cardboard and plastic containers, it remains unclear how serious a risk that poses. Like so many issues surrounding the pandemic, the matter has swiftly become politicised.

— AP

Russia sees record
virus deaths again

Moscow, Nov. 25: Russian authorities have registered a record number of Coronavirus deaths for a second straight day.

The government coronavirus task force reported 507 new deaths on Wednesday, the country's highest

daily toll. The previous record of 491 deaths was reported on Tuesday. A total of 37,538 people have died from the Coronavirus in Russia. Russia has been swept by a rapid resurgence of the outbreak this fall.

— AP

China opposes India's
ban on 43 more apps

Beijing, Nov. 25: China on Wednesday said it was firmly opposed to India's decision to block 43 more Chinese apps on national security grounds, claiming the move violated WTO rules. India on Tuesday blocked 43 more Chinese mobile apps, including Alibaba Group Holding's e-commerce app AliExpress, in a fresh wave of web sanctions amid its border standoff with China.

The banned applicatio-

ns, which include a few dating apps, were a threat to the "sovereignty and integrity of India", an official statement said in New Delhi.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT issued the order for blocking the access of these apps by users in India based on the comprehensive reports received from Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Center, Ministry of Home Affairs, the release said. Earlier on June 29 this

year, the government had blocked access to 59 mobile apps and on September 2, another 118 apps were banned under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act. The ban had come in the backdrop of border tensions with China in eastern Ladakh since May. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here China expresses serious concern over India's move.

— PTI

Raped, 28 Uruguay
women want justice

Montevideo, Nov. 25: When Ana Amoros fell prey to Uruguay's dictatorship, the first thing her torturers did was strip her naked and hit her with a riding crop. Then they raped her. Amoros is one of a group of 28 former political prisoners seeking justice for torture and sexual crimes committed by the military regime that ruled Uruguay between 1973 and 1985.

Nine years after first filing a criminal complaint before Uruguay's courts, the women will present their case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in March next year. The women's quest for justice is made more difficult by a law passed a year after the country's return to democracy in 1986 that blocked investigation of dictatorship-era crimes.

That allowed some a fresh start, but for others like Amoros, it meant suppressing the truth about regime-sponsored violence against women. "Women's bodies were, and still are, the spoils of war," said Amoros, now 72. Considered one of South America's most progressive countries, Uruguay remains conflicted about its military past. Torture, killings, enforced disappearances and other serious human rights violations were committed during the nearly 12-year dictatorship. "Women's stories are only recently emerging. There is a masculine narrative, a very masculine narrative," said former political prisoner Luz Menendez, 66. Menendez was arrested and held in La Tablada, an estate outside Montevideo used to torture leftist sus-

pects. She said her torturer had told her: "Girl, don't worry, you will leave here alive... but since you are a Communist, you will beg God to let you die, because we are going to drive you to the brink of madness."

Like other leftist opponents of the regime, Amoros, Menendez, Brenda Sosa, Ivonne Klingler and Anahit Aharonian were all in their 20s when they were imprisoned and tortured. AFP reporters have collected their testimonies since 2019. Amoros was a member of an armed anarchist group, the Popular Revolutionary Organisation-Orientales 33. She was arrested on one of the group's premises she was helping to guard. She was stripped naked as soon as she arrived at the barracks.

— AFP

Biden: US ready
to lead the world

Prez-elect: Country to sit at head of table

Washington, Nov. 25: Declaring "America is back," President-elect Joe Biden has introduced his key national security and foreign policy officials and said the incoming administration is ready to lead the world and once again sit at the head of the table. Signalling a sharp shift from outgoing Republican President Donald Trump's "America First" policy over the last four years, Biden said America is "ready to confront our adversaries, not reject our allies. And ready to stand up for our values."

Speaking from his transition center in his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware, Biden, a Democrat, introduced his six top officials and highlighted the need to rebuild alliances, as well as tackling the coronavirus pandemic and climate change.

World leaders, he said, were "looking forward to the United States reasserting its historic role as a global leader over the Pacific, as well as the Atlantic, all across the world."

Biden's nominees and appointees, including Antony Blinken for secretary of state and former secretary of state John Kerry to a new position as special presidential envoy for climate, spoke for the first time since being announced on Monday by the transition team, and many of them offered implicit rebukes of President Trump and his isolationist and "America First" worldview.

"The team meets this moment, this team behind

Harris: End hurdles
for global leadership

Washington, Nov. 25: Acknowledging that they would inherit a series of unprecedented challenges upon walking into the White House, United States Vice President-elect Kamala Harris said overcoming domestic challenges is a necessary foundation for restoring and advancing American leadership around the world.

"President-elect Biden and I have long known that when we were elected, we would inherit a series of unprecedented challenges upon walking into the White House," Harris, 56, told reporters on Tuesday at the transition headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware where President-elect Joe Biden announced his national security team.

"Addressing these challenges starts with getting this pandemic under control, opening our economy responsibly, and making sure it works for working people. And we also know

that overcoming our challenges here at home is a necessary foundation for restoring and advancing our leadership around the world," she said.

"And we are ready for that work. We will need to reassemble and renew America's alliances; rebuild and strengthen the national security and foreign policy institutions that keep us safe and advance our nation's interests; and confront and combat the existential threat of climate change that endangers us all," Harris said.

Asserting that she takes these issues very seriously, Harris said her whole career has been about keeping people safe, from serving as District Attorney to California's Attorney General to the United States Senate, where she have served on the Intelligence and Homeland Security Committees.

— PTI

me," Biden said. "They embody my core belief that America is strongest when it works with its allies," he said.

"That's how we truly keep America safe without engaging in needless military conflicts, and our adversaries in check and terrorists at bay," he said.

— PTI

● Joe Biden has become the US first presidential candidate to win over 80 million votes. President-elect Biden won more than 80,011,000 votes as of Tuesday, while President Donald Trump had more than 73,800,000 votes.

Pak hosts UN banned ultras: India

United Nations, Nov. 25: India has reminded Pakistan, the "host to the world's largest number of UN proscribed terrorists and entities", of Abbottabad, the garrison city where al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden hid for years and was killed, in a hard-hitting response as Islamabad's UN envoy gave a "dossier of lies" to Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador T S Tirumurti on Tuesday tweeted that the "dossier of lies presented by Pakistan enjoys zero credibility".

"Concocting documents and peddling false narratives is not new to Pakistan, host to the world's largest number of UN proscribed terrorists and entities. Remember Abbott-

abad!" he said. The Indian Ambassador's tweet was in response to Islamabad's UN envoy Munir Akram meeting Guterres to hand over the dossier from the Pakistan government that alleged India was promoting terrorism in the country. Tirumurti made a reference to Abbottabad, where bin Laden was hiding for years and was killed.

— PTI

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Chronicle

26 NOVEMBER 2020

Biden signals US on way back to good governance

Having played truant for weeks while jousting with democratic principles like a Don Quixote engaging with windmills, Donald Trump finally gave in to allow the transition to begin of President-elect Joe Biden to the White House. Given that his political base began crumbling with Republicans too calling on him to cease his assault on the integrity of the presidential election and legal options disappearing as challenges on the premise of fraud in the polls were laughed out of court, Mr Trump may have altered his alternative reality view just a shade to accept Mr Biden was on the way to winning in the Electoral College while having dominated the popular vote.

It is, of course, far from certain that the outgoing President will not place further obstacles in the victor's path as he clings to the delusion the election was stolen from him and has set his lawyers on an incredulous path of conspiracy theories to undermine the sanctity of America's polls. If the US President's hesitant concession to the will of the people and the US electoral process is followed logically, as it must, by Mr Biden being sworn in on January 20, 2021, Mr Trump will become the laughing stock of the liberal world.

The eccentric nomination and firing policies of Mr Trump who let go of loyalists refusing to toe his line when in office may be a thing of the past

The damage Mr Trump has wrought by casting doubts freely in people's minds on the legitimacy of what has emerged as one of the cleanest elections in American history might have repercussions for the rest of the world. Authoritarian leaders in his mould would only be further encouraged to ignore the popular will even as the US election process and its presidential system of governance takes an image hit as a role model for democracies. The election is the very fount of democracy even if the US presidential poll hinges on the transfer of Electoral College votes and not on the popular vote as we saw also in Mr Trump's victory in 2016.

The path ahead of a Biden White House governing the US even with the obvious heft of its economy and the clout of its military might would be riddled with unprecedented health and economic challenges in a world still in the grip the coronavirus pandemic. The colourful hints to be seen in the incipient composition of the Biden Cabinet straightway convey how different the US is going to be after four years of Mr Trump and his predominantly white and male Cabinet.

It is not only a reflection of the diversity that is to be welcomed as in Mr Biden's black and Indian origin vice-president Kamala Harris or in the choice of treasury secretary, likely to be Janet Yellen, with her expertise as one who headed the Federal Reserve, and in Avril Haines as the first woman to be director of national intelligence. The eccentric nomination and firing policies of Mr Trump who let go of loyalists refusing to toe his line when in office may be a thing of the past. The one thing that America needs most now is a settled mode of governance far from the maddening whimsicality of a Donald Trump, a salesman who became an accidental President.

UP law violates basic rights

The right to life and the right to religious freedom are two fundamental rights of every Indian citizen, guaranteed by the Constitution. However, the Uttar Pradesh government has some other views on them and has come out with an ordinance that criminalises religious conversion even as the Allahabad high court affirmed the right of adults to decide on their choices.

The Uttar Pradesh Unlawful Religious Conversion Prohibition Ordinance, 2020, cleared by the state cabinet, makes religious conversion a cognisable offence inviting a jail term up to 10 years. It makes the onus on proving that a conversion was effected not for marriage or through misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or other fraudulent means on the person converting or those who facilitate it. The ordinance is condemnable as it shows how badly the state government seeks to intervene in the personal choices of people and score some propaganda points, violating the very fundamentals of the Constitution.

If someone has a doubt on the impact the new statute will have on interfaith marriages, they can look at the intervention the Allahabad high court was forced to make on Tuesday in a case. Holding that nobody, including the state, can have an objection to a relationship of two major individuals who out of their free will are living together, it quashed an FIR filed against a man, a Muslim, registered on the complaints of his father-in-law under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012, though both the man and his wife, a Hindu, were adults. If the POCSO Act can be misused against an adult in an interfaith marriage, then one can imagine how the new law will make the lives of interfaith couples miserable.

The Uttar Pradesh law is no accident; others on similar lines are in the works in many states. Unless they are stopped in their tracks, the great ideal of personal liberty in this country will suffer a serious setback.

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Abhijit
Bhattacharyya



RECP: Why India must be firm on staying out

The "real" world of trade, commerce and diplomacy fructify on the facts. Thus, the 15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), including the 10-nation Asean bloc from Southeast Asia, which came into being in mid-November, can also be evaluated only on the facts, not on any "regret", "shock" or "surprise". When a former Indian commerce minister and a former foreign secretary express anguish over New Delhi committing a "historical blunder", which they feel would negatively impact the nation's progress and prosperity and lead to "international isolation" diplomatically, one needs a scrutiny of the facts.

Why are we so hallucinating? India is a recurring, chronic laggard with the 15-member RCEP club -- except for Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and the Philippines, India's trade balance with the other 11 RCEP states is negative. And while India's total trade surplus with these four Asean countries is just \$1,589.26 billion, the bilateral trade loss from the other 11 RCEP states -- Australia, Brunei, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and New Zealand -- stands at a staggering

\$99,870.87 billion. How then, with which magic wand, can India be guided to the path of profit and prosperity in the Chinese-run RCEP? One wonders!

Can't we see how all these countries, which till recently had an independent identity and freedom of choice and action in the 10-nation Asean bloc, by one stroke of the pen on Sunday, November 15, in Hanoi, virtually lost all their panache, being subsumed by the RCEP -- subject to the overlordship of the Communist Party of China, operating from Beijing! All in the name of "free trade", "ease of doing business", "free flow of goods", "tariff-free", "common prosperity" and "shared (not shredded) goals"?

Contextually, however, the RCEP that was signed into existence in Hanoi on November 15 can't be seen in isolation as a one-time landmark wishlist for commerce, trade, investment or collective prosperity, etc. Far from it. It is born out of the acute inferiority-cum-insecurity complex of the overlord of Beijing, President-for-life Xi Jinping, who has been left badly shaken by the fate of America's outgoing President Donald Trump. But the maverick US leader is still in office till noon on January 20, 2021, and the autocrat that

he is, President Xi is not quite certain what steps his American counterpart may take against China in his few remaining weeks. That is the fear of the unknown. Therefore, he is searching for security, and the RCEP, he hopes, will fulfil that need.

The Communist Party of China's \$14 trillion economy needs a protective screen of allies urgently, thus the efforts in the past few years towards the Belt and Road Initiative and offshoots like the CPEC. The Chinese-sponsored banks have for long been trying to convince its partners and client states to replace the use of the US dollar with the Chinese yuan (renminbi), which has found few takers. Will it have better luck with the "RCEP Common Market"? If its members agree to use the Chinese currency for its trade, Beijing's road to numero uno status would get easier. No one would miss the symbolism.

After afflicting the entire world with the Chinese virus and killing millions, while it has mysteriously caused the least damage within the People's Republic where it had originated, the Chinese Communists know well it is time to build an image of credibility and trustworthiness. Otherwise there

is the very real danger of the West mobilising to strike back and maybe inflict damage -- reminiscent of nineteenth and twentieth century Chinese history. It knows well that the existing world order faces its existential threat, as aptly shown in the IMF's latest annual report.

"Governments and central banks around the world might spend \$19.5 trillion just to put 'a floor under' the world economy -- which has been reeling under the catastrophic impact of the pandemic". Governments, as of September 2020, have "announced nearly \$12 trillion in stimulus measures and central banks across world have already spent \$7.5 trillion" to soften the impact of the Chinese-origin virus on economics. Yet, the fact is that today "the state of the world economy is worse... than the Great Depression of the 1930s".

What India has done about the RCEP is perfect. It couldn't be otherwise.

Giving preference to imports rather than exporting indigenous goods, India's ruling class had made monumental blunders in the two decades since 2000, which led to New Delhi's capitulation before the CPC, with the Chinese brutally romping deep inside

India's hinterland and taking control of some sensitive and strategic sectors, thus endangering the security of India from within. Just contrast democratic India's behaviour with the way Beijing deals with non-Chinese entities operating in that country. India's decision on RCEP was also partly a damage-control exercise.

Our horrendous 2019-20 total trade deficit (despite the downturn due to the Chinese virus) still stands at \$1,61,348.24 billion, though down from the 2018-19 figure of minus \$1,84,000.33 billion.

India shouldn't be branded a "loser" for not joining the 15-nation RCEP as long as the supreme national interest of its 1.3 billion people is unaddressed by the RCEP's shadow of the CPC-created Chinese virus. Just wait and see: the octopus-like dragon will destroy economics, monopolise trade, break banks, create a debt trap, organise political sabotage, destroy indigenous industry, corner and usurp the dollar from all sources and replace it with the Chinese currency.

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College



Subhani

Use Tibet links, counter China in the Himalayas



Claude Arpi

For millennia, the Himalayas have been an active bridge between the Indic and Tibetan civilisations. The great physical barrier has been a place of intense contacts between two worlds which shared their search for infinity.

After the arrival of a newcomer (Mao's People's Liberation Army) on the plateau in 1950-51, the ancient relations became more and more strained, ending with being completely severed in 1962.

Beijing could not tolerate India's special relations with Tibet.

Today, while Beijing promotes its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), or the new Silk Roads, it has made sure that the ancient kinship between Tibet and the Himalayas is not revived; all the borders have been closed for almost 60 years now, with the exception of three land ports opened for petty trade at Nathu-la, Shipkila and Lipulekh-la; far from the flourishing business that took place over many centuries. Beijing has conveniently set aside these traditional trade routes to sponsor new ones (with Pakistan).

The situation turned for the worse in March 1959, when the Dalai Lama reached Khenzimane, north of Tawang, and was given asylum by the Indian government; and relations between India and Tibet, as well as the trade and pilgrimage, reached a point of no return.

Soon after the Indo-Tibet frontier became the "disputed" Sino-Indian boundary, intrusions took place in Longju in the then North East Frontier Agency (Nepa) and Kongka-la/Hot Springs in Ladakh in the summer of 1959, making New Delhi suddenly realise India had a new neighbour and that

the boundary had not been settled, as the idealist Indian government had wanted to believe.

After 1962, an ancient world disappeared and India (and the Himalayas) lost a friend, a kind neighbour and a peaceful border.

But the kinship of shared values and common history between India and Tibet have remained; unfortunately, this never translated into a coherent policy for Tibetan refugees as well as the populations of the border areas.

Though the Indian government never wanted to be politically involved with Tibet, the age-old ties between the Land of Snows and India's Himalayas has remained alive (as we have seen since the start of the present crisis in Ladakh); but now it needs to be revitalised by the government.

While the People's Republic of China was able to annex Tibet by force of arms, Beijing has been unable to assimilate Tibetans into their system. Can Beijing succeed in the future? It is a moot question, the answer to which the future alone holds.

Some argue the past should be forgotten, as the world has changed; further, China has become a powerful state; and the fact that the Communist regime is today dreaming of leading the world and imposing the "Chinese Dream" on the planet is worrying for the Tibetan and the Himalayan population. In view of this situation on India's borders, we must think of a new approach towards the Himalayas.

At the outset, instead of a new policy for Tibet alone, it would be better to have a common policy for the Himalayan belt and Tibet, which have shared countless cultural, spiritual, strategic and economic similarities. I would there-

fore suggest a new "Himalayan and Tibetan Affairs' Policy".

Some general principles should dictate this new policy.

First, that India should look after its own interests, then after the interests of those who are ethically or culturally close to India, like the Tibetans. It seems obvious, but it has not always been the case.

India should adhere to its ideals of being a peaceful nation, of fighting against any form of imperialism and defending the rights of weaker people; further the government should certainly not take at face value declarations of peace by other nations, particularly China.

Another principle is that India's policies or actions should not be dictated by what others will think or say, particularly how China will react to a particular decision. This tendency has lasted too long with no tangible gain for this country (for example, the 2018 directive that no Indian officials should meet the Dalai Lama); retrospectively, it had counter-productive effects.

Unfortunately, India faces a country which still believes that power comes out of the barrel of a gun; without emulating China, India must quietly and forcefully look after its own interests and be honest, frank, straightforward about it.

Whatever overall policy is finally adopted, one element is crucial -- coordination. In view of the individualistic tendencies of India's bureaucracy, this is extremely crucial in order to achieve the targeted aim of a common policy for all stakeholders (external affairs, defence, home, education, culture, security agencies). That is why I propose the creation of a Department of Himalayan

and Tibetan Affairs (DHTA), to function under the Prime Minister's Office.

If any "coordinator" were to work under one of the above ministries, he/she will not be able to implement the holistic policy decided by the government.

A DHTA, headed by a secretary-rank officer, could be the central element for developing the border areas.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a post of SOFA (Special Officer of Frontiers Affairs) existed; the scope of the SOFA's responsibilities was limited due to the fact that it worked under the MEA alone; it was however manned by (excellent) officers; a few SOFAs could be professionally looking after border areas and Tibetan affairs.

Keeping in mind the welfare and customs of the local population and the Tibetan refugees, the DHTA could take measures to stop the migration of the local population towards the big cities; build infrastructure, work on closer ties between the defence forces and the local population, an eventual revival of border trade, trans-border pilgrimages, and promote Buddhism on a larger scale.

The DHTA could revive the Indian Frontier Administrative Service (IFAS); in the 1950s, IFAS officers did a great job on India's northern borders and in Tibet; most of them had sacrificed promising careers in the Army to join the service; all were remarkable personalities. Even though the cadre does not exist any longer, they are still a role model for young IAS/IPS officers posted at the borders.

The need of the hour is to revitalise the Himalayas and link it with the welfare of Tibetan refugees and the promotion of their unique culture. It is the only way to balance China's propaganda efforts in the border areas.

The writer is based in South India for the past 42 years. He writes on India, China, Tibet and Indo-French relations.

LETTERS

BANK INTEREST

Leading banks are reducing interest rates on loans. To protect their margins, the banks are reducing interest rates for deposits. The real sufferers are senior citizens who park their retirement funds into fixed deposit. With reduced earnings and spiralling prices, people are vulnerable to be exploited.

P. Ramakrishna
Rajahmundry

INDUSTRIAL CHECKS

Different industries may have different standards as all cannot be assessed uniformly in same manner (Multiple standards defeat factory inspection's purpose, DC, Nov. 25). However, the authorities should ensure impartial inspection so that organisations handling hazardous substances follow preventive maintenance procedures systematically without any exception so that incidents like styrene vapour leak from LG Polymers in Visakhapatnam does not occur.

Prof. K.V. Satya Prakash
Visakhapatnam

CORPORATE BANKING

The recommendation of an Internal working Group (IWG) on allowing big companies into the banking sector would likely stir up a hornet's nest. Lessons have not been learnt from the shadow banking sector. Recent setbacks of Yes Bank and LVB are a case in point. It is advisable to leave it.

Dr. C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Lok Sabha panel for lowering voting age

NEW DELHI, Nov. 25. The Committee of Petitions of the Lok Sabha has recommended the lowering of voting age in India from 21 to 18 years.

It says in its ninth report presented to the House today that although there are strong arguments against this proposal, such as immaturity of youth at that age and financial implications involved in handling a vastly increased electorate, it strongly feels that there are no valid reasons for denying the right of vote to persons above the age of 18 when, for all other purposes of law, they are treated as majors.

The Committee has, therefore, recommended that Article 326 of the Constitution should be amended for this purpose.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	43,828.10	-1.56
Nifty 50	12,858.40	-1.51
S&P 500*	3,625.96	-0.26
Dollar (₹)	73.92	0.10
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.60	0.27
Euro (₹)	87.96	-0.03
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,273.45	0.09
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	48.18	0.32
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.885	0.006
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.873	-0.009

* As of 8:30 PM IST

GST: Kerala, West Bengal accept Centre's option

Kerala and West Bengal have accepted the Centre's borrowing proposal and will get Rs 10,197 crore through the special window to meet GST revenue shortfall. These are among the states that had opposed the borrowing plan. "Governments of Kerala and West Bengal have communicated their acceptance of Option-1 to meet the revenue shortfall arising out of GST implementation," the finance ministry said.

IT & biz services market to reach \$13 bn by Dec.



India's IT and business services market is expected to grow 5.4 per cent annually to reach \$13 billion by December this year, research firm IDC said. The segment grew 5.3 per cent year-on-year in the January-June (H1) 2020 period as compared to 8.9 per cent growth in H1 2019. Of the IT and business services market, the IT services market contributed 77.4 per cent in H1 2020, growing 5.9 per cent YoY.

UP export policy aims at doubling farmer income

The UP Export Policy 2020-25 aims at doubling farmers' income and increasing farm sector exports. The policy seeks to encourage 'Make in UP' and 'Make in India' brands. Key focus areas include handicrafts, agriculture and processed food products, engineering goods, handloom and textile, leather products, carpets and rugs, glass and ceramic products, wood products, sports goods, defence products, etc.

Mahindra's new Thar gets 4-star safety rating

Mahindra & Mahindra said its all-new Thar SUV off-roader has received a four-star rating from vehicle safety group Global NCAP. The SUV underwent a front, side and ESC impact test. The Mahindra Thar was tested in its basic safety specification, two airbags, and got 4 stars safety rating for adult and child occupants, making Thar the safest off-roader. Global NCAP said the Thar also meets the side impact UN 95 regulation.



Govt okays merger; moratorium goes from Friday Lakshmi Vilas to reopen as DBS Bank from tomorrow

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, NOV. 25

Customers of Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) will be able to operate their accounts from DBS Bank India Ltd from Friday, the central bank announced on Wednesday. The announcement came within hours of the Union Cabinet clearing the Scheme of Amalgamation of LVB with DBS Bank India. Consequently, all branches of LVB will function as branches of DBS Bank India effective Friday and the moratorium imposed on the ailing bank would be lifted on the same day, the central bank said.

This will lead to removal of all restrictions placed on the lender earlier this month by the RBI, including the Rs 25,000 cap on withdrawal of deposits. "The amalgamation will come into force on the appointed date i.e. November 27, 2020. All the branches of the Lakshmi Vilas Bank Ltd will function as branches of DBS Bank India Ltd with effect from this date. Customers, including depositors of the LVB will be able to operate their accounts as customers of DBS Bank India Ltd. with effect from November 27, 2020. Consequently, the moratorium on the Lakshmi Vilas Bank Ltd will cease to be operative from that date. DBS Bank India Ltd is making necessary arrangements to ensure that service, as usual, is provided to the customers of the Lakshmi Vilas Bank Ltd," the Reserve Bank of India



The market wants to know as to why did the RBI refuse DBS proposal last year to buy 50 per cent stake in LVB and why is it giving the same bank for free to DBS now? Similarly, investors want to know why was IndiaBulls proposal to acquire LVB rejected?



— J.N. Gupta, former executive director, Sebi

(RBI) said in a statement.

While experts lauded the swift resolution by the apex bank and the government, they cited lack of transparency in the entire process.

J.N. Gupta, former executive director of Sebi, told *Financial Chronicle*, "The RBI has acted with extreme swiftness for a speedy resolution in the last 10 days, which is laudable. But the mess in LVB was going on for the last 18 months and so a question that comes to the mind is as to why did the RBI not take action then and

allowed things to deteriorate to such an extent?"

"Secondly, the RBI should issue a speaking order for every proposal that it rejects. The market wants to know as to why did the RBI refuse DBS proposal last year to buy 50 per cent stake in LVB and why is it giving the same bank for free to DBS now? Similarly, investors want to know why was IndiaBulls proposal to acquire LVB rejected?" added Gupta.

Union minister Prakash Javadekar, announcing the government approval for the bank's amalgamation

Import hurdles hit Apple, Xiaomi devices from China

SANKALP PHARTIYAL & ADITYA KALRA NEW DELHI, NOV. 25

India's tight control of quality clearances for electronic goods from China slowed the import of Apple's new iPhone model last month and held up other products made by companies like Xiaomi, according to two industry sources.

Applications to the quality control agency, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), typically used to be processed within 15 days, but some are now taking up to two months or longer.

BIS started delaying approvals in August for China-made imports of devices like smartphones, smartwatches and laptops, part of the fallout from deteriorating ties with China.

When Apple's new iPhone 12 was caught in the delays, Apple India executives called on BIS to speed its approval up, giving assurances that the company would continue to expand its assembly operations in India,



the two sources said.

It was not clear how long the iPhone 12 application was delayed, and Apple did not respond to a request for comment.

The company has assembly operations in India, but newer models and the iPhone 12 are imported from China, where contract manufacturers make the bulk of Apple's devices.

As of Wednesday, 1,080 applications to BIS for laptops, tablets and other devices were pending, with 669 of those waiting more than 20 days, according to the agency's website.

These included applications for devices from China-based factories of Wistron and Compal

Electronics, and from Hangzhou Hikvision, the data showed.

Some of the applications for approval have been pending since September.

"While the BIS is delaying approvals for products like smartwatches, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is pushing companies to make these devices in India," said one of the sources.

Under BIS's registration scheme, certain electronic goods—whether imported or locally made—need to meet certain standards. After companies get their products tested in a certified laboratory, BIS approves the applications.

The clearance delays are the latest headache for technology companies whose supply chains were hit by the Covid-19 curbs.

The BIS delays have also hit smartwatch imports for companies including Xiaomi and Oppo, the two sources said.

—Reuters

Market turns volatile ahead of F&O expiry

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, NOV. 25

After touching new record highs the Sensex fell over 1000 points intraday and the Nifty fell 300 points on Wednesday on profit taking after a big bull run and ahead of the scheduled derivative expiry on Thursday.

The foreign portfolio investors, for a change, remained on the sidelines after heavy buying in the previous session with just Rs 24.20 crore of net buying on Wednesday while domestic institutions continued booking profit with net selling worth Rs 1,840.33 crore.

The Sensex finally closed 694.92 points, or 1.56 per cent, lower at 43,828 while the Nifty-50 closed 196.75 points down at 12,858.40.

Tha sharp fall happened in the second half of trading, around 1.45 pm, after the Sensex touched a new all time high of 44,825.37 after opening. But it began to drift lower as the day progressed. There was some recovery after the Sensex touched an intra-day low of 43,757.97.

The Nifty-50, which also touched a new high of 13,145.85, plunged to a low of 12,833.65 before some recovery.

"The Nifty-50 Index lost its entire gains of the last two days ahead of tomorrow's futures and options expiry. The Nifty 50 Index fell by 1.5 per cent on the back of hefty profit booking after the recent rally that witnessed the Nifty hitting 13K. Globally too, we witnessed a similar type of trend. Monthly expiry has also mounted pressure on the market,"



STOCK RALLY TO CONTINUE IN 2021: POLL

INDRADIP GHOSH & RAHUL KARUNAKAR BENGALURU, NOV. 25

India's stock market rally is set to continue and hit new highs in 2021, according to a Reuters poll of equity strategists who overwhelmingly expected corporate earnings to return roughly to pre-pandemic levels within a year.

The Nov. 12-24 Reuters poll of over 35 equity strategists predicted the Sensex would set new all-time peaks in the next year. It was forecast to rise about 3 per cent from Tuesday's high to 45,750 by mid-2021.

It was then predicted to rise another 4 per cent by the end of 2021, with forecasts ranging from

36,000 to 54,400.

Those forecasts were based on recent progress in developing Covid-19 vaccines even as cases rise around the world, according to over three-quarters of strategists, or 26 of 34, who answered an additional question.

"Looking ahead, continued improvements in global risk appetite will further boost Indian equities, despite the weakness of the economy," said Shilan Shah, senior India economist at Capital Economics.

Asked when corporate earnings would return to pre-Covid-19 levels, 28 of 32 strategists said within a year, including 10 who said within six months.

—Reuters

Shrikant Chouhan, equity technical research analyst, Kotak Securities, said.

Volatility indicator NSE India VIX soared 10 per cent to close at 23.13, up 9.83 per cent.

Barring three stocks all other 30 Sensex constituents closed in the red.

The broader market too got caught in the profit booking as BSE Mid-cap index fell 1.76 per cent while the BSE Small-cap index fell 1.13 per cent.

"In the short term, Indian market looks stretched," Pankaj Tibrewal of Kotak Mahindra AMC, said.

Model tenancy law soon: Secy

New Delhi, Nov. 25: Housing and urban affairs secretary Durga Shanker Mishra on Wednesday said the government will soon come out with the model tenancy law, giving a major boost to real estate sector, especially rental homes.

The ministry had in July 2019 floated the draft model tenancy law.

Addressing a webinar organised by realtors body Naredco, he said the government's Affordable Rental Housing Complex (ARHC) scheme for migrants, which was launched few months ago, has been progressing well and the programme has the potential to stop creation of slums in cities.

"Model Tenancy Law is ready. It has been translated into various languages as it has far reaching implications," Mishra said.

The deadline for feedback on the proposed model tenancy law ended on October 31 and now states have been asked to send those feedbacks after compiling it, he said.

The secretary said the model tenancy will come "very soon".

Mishra pointed out that 1.1 crore homes were

vacant as per the 2011 census as people fear to give their homes on rent.

The model tenancy law will eliminate anomalies and give a boost to the real estate sector, he said.

The Centre will send the Model Tenancy Law, after approval from the Union Cabinet, to states for its adoption. The draft model tenancy law proposes that landowners will have to give a notice in writing three months before revising rent. It advocated appointing a district collector as rent authority and heavy penalty on tenants for overstaying.

On the ARHC scheme, Mishra said the initial response has been very encouraging and the already completed units have been handed over in cities like Surat and Chandigarh.

"This scheme is the answer for ending slums in the country. No one wants to live in slums," he said.

Talking about the Rs 25,000-crore stress fund to complete stuck real estate projects, Mishra said around Rs 13,000 crore has been committed so far in 135 realty projects. —PTI

L'Oreal to train a million against street harassment



New Delhi, Nov. 25: French cosmetics major L'Oreal Paris on Wednesday said it has launched its bystander intervention training programme against street harassment in India.

The company has tied up with NGO Breakthrough to deliver on-ground training in the country as part of its 'Stand Up' initiative, which has already been launched in various countries like France, Spain, Italy and Mexico.

"We have set an ambitious target of training one million people in India under this initiative by 2022-end," L'Oreal Paris India general manager Pau Gruart told reporters.

Stand Up initiative aims to simultaneously discourage harassers, support victims and encourage bystanders to intervene in a safe manner.

"L'Oreal Paris stands for empowerment in every walk of a woman's life. By removing obstacles that prevent women from fulfilling their ambitions, we are committed to elevating their sense of self-worth," Gruart said.

With Breakthrough, the company invites women and men to stand up and safely respond when they witness or experience street harassment, he added.

Breakthrough India president and CEO Sohini Bhattacharya said the Stand Up initiative would enable women to reclaim public spaces.

—PTI

S.Korea unveils AI chip to keep semiconductor lead

SAM KIM NOV. 25

South Korea is adding a new artificial intelligence chip to its arsenal of semiconductors as the nation seeks a bigger slice of the global tech market and an upgrade of its industrial capabilities.

The Sapeon X220, unveiled on Wednesday by the largest local carrier SK Telecom Co, is designed to speed up servers that cater to a growing number of mobile devices—from drones to self-driving vehicles—that perform better with AI. It's the latest product of the nation's decade-long push to broaden its dominance beyond



memory chips, where Samsung Electronics Co and SK Hynix Inc control roughly two-thirds of the global market.

South Korea sees data-processing chips as a major engine for future economic growth, along with fifth-generation wireless networks. The government has provided

more than 600 billion won (\$542 million) in support to develop such chips and plans to invest another trillion won over the next decade, viewing them as crucial in automating factories and improving the competitiveness of the country's exports.

Semiconductors account for about one-fifth of South Korea's exports, most of them memory chips. The country is now turning to application-specific integrated circuits, or ASICs, such as the X220, which is tailored for AI operations. It follows a similar \$1 billion investment plan announced by the US this summer. —Bloomberg



“Football and the world of sports has lost one of its greatest players today. Rest in Peace Diego Maradona! You shall be missed.”

Sachin Tendulkar, batting great



“My hero no more..my mad genius rest in peace ..I watched football for you.”

Sourav Ganguly, former India captain and BCCI president who terms the Argentine as his first sporting hero.



“One of the greatest icons of the game — Diego Maradona passes away, a very sad day for World sports. Condolences to his family, friends and well-wishers.”

VVS Laxman, former India batsman



“Thank you for all the memories & madness... that genius left foot that was truly blessed by all the Gods above.”

Viren Rasquinha, former Indian hockey captain.



“Argentinian football legend Diego Maradona was like a magician with the ball at his feet. Football has lost an invaluable gem today. His glorious legacy will forever have a place in football history. Rest in peace.”

Praful Patel, All India Football Federation President



Diego takes hand of God

Argentine football legend Maradona dies of heart attack aged 60

Buenos Aires (Argentina), Nov. 25: Diego Maradona, the Argentine football great who was among the best players ever and who led his country to the 1986 World Cup title before later struggling with cocaine use and obesity, has died. He was 60.

The office of Argentina's president will decree three days of national mourning because of Maradona's death on Wednesday, and the Argentine football association expressed its sorrow on Twitter.

Maradona died two weeks after being released from a Buenos Aires hospital following brain surgery.

Famed for the “Hand of God” goal in which he punched the ball into England's net during the 1986 World Cup quarterfinals, Maradona captivated fans over a two-decade career with a bewitching style of play that was all his own.

Although his reputation was tarnished by his addictions and an ill-fated spell in charge of the national team, he remained idolised in football-mad Argentina as the “Pibe de Oro” or “Golden Boy.”

The No. 10 he wore on his jersey became synonymous with him, as it also had with Pele, the Brazilian great with whom Maradona was regularly paired as the best of all time.

Bold, fast and utterly unpredictable, Maradona was a master of attack, juggling the ball easily from one foot to the other as he raced upfield. Dodging and weaving with his low center of gravity, he shrugged off countless rivals and often scored with a devastating left foot, his most powerful weapon.

“Everything he was thinking in his head, he made it happen with his feet,” said Salvatore Bagni, who played with Maradona at Italian club Napoli.

A ballooning waistline slowed Maradona's explosive speed later in his career and by 1991 he was snared in his first doping scandal when he admitted to a cocaine habit that haunted him until he retired in 1997, at 37.

Hospitalised near death in 2000 and again in '04 for heart problems blamed on cocaine, he later said he overcame the drug problem. Cocaine, he once said famously, had proven to be his “toughest rival.”

But more health problems followed, despite a 2005 gastric bypass that greatly trimmed his weight. Maradona was hospitalised in early 2007 for acute hepatitis that his doctor blamed on excessive drinking and eating.

He made an unlikely return to the national team in 2008 when he was appointed Argentina coach, but after a quarterfinal exit at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, he was ousted — ultimately picking up another coaching job with the United Arab Emirates club Al Wasl.

Maradona was the fifth of eight children who grew up in a poor, gritty barrio on the Buenos Aires outskirts where he played a kind of dirt-patch football that launched many Argentines to international stardom.

None of them approached Maradona's fame. In 2001, FIFA named Maradona one of the two greatest in the sport's history, alongside Pele.

Maradona reaped titles at home and abroad, playing in the early 1980s for Argentinos Juniors and Boca Juniors before moving on to Spanish and Italian clubs. His crowning achievement came at the 1986 World Cup, captaining Argentina in its 3-2 win over West Germany in the final and decisive in a 2-1 victory against England in a feisty quarterfinal match.

Over the protests of England goalkeeper Peter Shilton, the referee let stand a goal by Maradona in which, as he admitted years later, he intentionally hit the ball with his hand in “a bit of mischief.”

But Maradona's impact wouldn't be confined to cheating. Four minutes later, he spectacularly weaved past four opponents from midfield to beat Shilton for what FIFA later declared the greatest goal in World Cup history.

Many Argentines saw the match as revenge for their country's loss to Britain in the 1982 war over the Falkland Islands, which Argentines still claim as “Las Malvinas.” — AP



ONE DAY, WE WILL PLAY TOGETHER IN THE SKY, SAYS PELE

Rio de Janeiro, Nov. 25: Brazilian soccer icon Pele hoped he would “some day play ball with Maradona in the sky” as he paid tribute to the Argentine maverick, who died after suffering a cardiac arrest on Wednesday.

The only player, whose name was taken in the same breath with the “King of Football,” the 60-year-old Maradona died two weeks after undergoing a surgery to remove a blood clot in his brain.

“What sad news. I lost a great friend and the world lost a legend. There is still much to be said, but for now, may God give strength to family members. One day, I hope we can play ball together in the sky,” Pele tweeted.

Pele and Maradona had tremendous mutual respect and admiration for each other's skills.

Despite a 20-year age difference, the two were good friends for decades and are widely regarded the most gifted to have played the beautiful game. — PTI

MARADONA IN HIS OWN WORDS

“To see the ball, to run after it, makes me the happiest man in the world.”

“I made mistakes, and I paid for them. But the ball is still pure.”

“I am Maradona, who makes goals, who makes mistakes. I can take it all, I have shoulders big enough to fight with everybody.”

“You can say a lot of things about me, but you can never say I don't take risks. I am black or white, I'll never be grey in my life.”

“When I wear the national team shirt, its sole contact with my skin makes it stand on an end.”

ON PELE

“There would be no debate about who was the best footballer the world had ever seen, me or Pele. Everyone would say me. Pele should go back to the museum.”

ON THE HAND OF GOD

“I was waiting for my teammates to embrace me and no one came... I told them, ‘Come hug me or the referee isn't going to allow it’. If I could apologise and go back and change history I would do. But the goal is still a goal, Argentina became world champions and I was the best player in the world.”

ON LIONEL MESSI

“Messi scores a goal and celebrates. Cristiano (Ronaldo) scores a goal and poses like he's in a shampoo commercial.”

The ‘Goal of the Century’

The solo goal against which all solo goals will be judged. Named the “Goal of the Century” by FIFA in 2002, his high-speed slalom in Mexico in 1986 ended England's World Cup and cemented Maradona's position as the world's best footballer.

The goal trumps others of its type not just because of its impact, the stage, the spectre of the Falklands War and the fact that it came just minutes after his notorious ‘Hand of God’ goal, but for the efficiency of its execution.

Maradona barely deviates from his path towards goal the moment he spins free in midfield, with a few drops of the shoulder enough to embarrass England for the second time in the space of five minutes. “Diego assures me that he meant to pass to me several times but there was always some

TOP THREE

obstacle that forced him to change plans. Just as well,” striker Jorge Valdano, who followed Maradona up the field, said later.

Free-kick that conquered Naples

Nicknamed the “divine free-kick” in Italy, Maradona's iconic winning goal for Napoli in the November 1985 home clash with Michel Platini's Juventus — reigning European champions — was the one that created the Argentine's legend in Naples.

Standing over an indirect free-kick well inside the penalty area, legend has it that Maradona

asked midfielder Eraldo Pecci to roll him the ball for a shot despite the closeness of the Juventus wall. A quick touch from Pecci was all he needed to flick a stupendous effort over a group of Juve players who were practically on his toes as he hit the ball and past a bamboozled Stefano Tacconi in the Juve goal.

‘El Pibe’ volleys Verona

There were more crucial goals among Maradona's 115 for Napoli, but few matched the sheer nonchalance of his outrageous lob in a 5-0 hammering of reigning Italian champions Hellas Verona in October 1985.

Collecting a long pass with his back to goal on the left flank, with the ball still bouncing, Maradona took a step and clipped a looping shot towards goal that gently faded off the left post.

Diego in the words of others

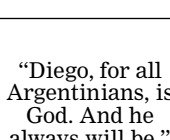
“Even if I played for a million years, I'd never come close to Maradona. Not that I'd want to anyway. He's the greatest there's ever been.”

— Lionel Messi.



“No ball ever had a better experience than when it was at his left foot.”

— Argentina teammate Jorge Valdano.



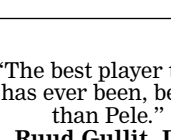
“Diego, for all Argentinians, is God. And he always will be.”

— Carlos Tevez.



“What (Zinedine) Zidane could do with a ball, Maradona could do with an orange.”

— Michel Platini, French great



“The best player there has ever been, better than Pele.”

— Ruud Gullit, Dutch legend



“Maradona is a God to the people of Naples. Maradona changed history. In 80 years, we had always suffered, fighting against relegation, yet in seven seasons with him we won two leagues, a UEFA Cup, two Italian Cups. I'm a fan too and to live those years with Maradona was incredible.”

— Naples native Fabio Cannavaro, who was in the youth ranks at Napoli when Maradona was there and later won the World Cup with Italy in 2006.