


# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | TUESDAY | 17 NOVEMBER 2020

## WEATHER

 **Max:** 30.0°C  
**Min:** 21.6°C  
**RH:** 55%  
**Rainfall:** Nil  
**Forecast:** Cloudy sky.  
Haze, mist likely.  
Max/Min temp. 31/20 °C

## NATION | 4

**Winter, budget sessions likely to be clubbed**

## WORLD | 5

**Boris self-isolates after MP tests +ve**

## SPORTS | 8

**Dustin Johnson wins Augusta Masters golf**






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## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+29,977)	(+476)
88,73,375	1,30,066
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+ 502)	(+3)
TS: 2,57,876	1,407
(+753)	(+13)
AP: 8,54,764	6,881

### CASES AROUND THE WORLD

	5,50,57,812
	DEATHS 13,27,967
	COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 217

worldometers.info/coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Karika Shuddha Tadiya till 1.20 am (Wednesday)  
**Star:** Jyeshtha till 12.25 pm  
**Variyam:** Nil  
**Durmuhurtam:** 8.40 am to 9.25 am; 10.44 pm to 11.35 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
**Rabbi-ul Akhir** 26, 1442 AH  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.19 am  
**Zohar:** 12.11 pm  
**Asar:** 4.04 pm  
**Maghrib:** 5.46 pm  
**Isha:** 6.56 pm  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.22 AM**  
**SUNSET TODAY 5.39 PM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 7.48 PM**  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW 8.25 PM**

## COUNTER POINT



Our leader is swearing... at their ceremony!

## SHORT TAKE

### Oil majors skip BPCL stake sale

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

### Sabari trek starts amid Covid

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

## INSIDE

■ **STATE... PAGE 2**  
9,999 viruses likely to hit humans globally

■ **STATE... PAGE 3**  
Dalits seek pottas for agri land in Agency areas

## Temples reopen in Maharashtra



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

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

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

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

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

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

**KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, NOV. 16**

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

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

■ **Report on Page 2**

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

"This positive interim

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

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

**PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, NOV. 16**

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

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

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

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

## TTD junks case withdrawal plea

**DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, NOV. 16**

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on Monday filed a memo in connection with the defamation suits filed against Dr A.V. Ramana Deekshithulu and others at the tenth additional district judge court here.

In the memo, TTD appealed to the court not to press the I.A. 158/2020, filed in September to withdraw defamation suits, in connection with the case — O.S. No. 264/2018. TTD prayed the court to dismiss the I.A. 158/2020 without costs as not pressed and pass necessary orders as the court

may deem fit and proper in the circumstances, the memo read.

In 2018, Dr Ramana Deekshithulu made startling allegations against the then TTD trust board, which was appointed by the previous state government.

He alleged that a pink diamond from the temple

treasury had gone missing and there was an attempt to excavate the temple for hidden treasures.

YSRC MP Vijaya Sai Reddy also accused former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu of taking away the pink diamond from the temple and demanded a search of his house.

## EDU | POOL

### Indians make 20% of global students: Report

## 2L Indian students opt for US

**New Delhi, Nov. 16:** Nearly two lakh Indian students chose the United States as their destination to pursue higher education in the 2019-20 academic year, according to the Open Doors Report released by the United States embassy on Monday.

Indian students comprised nearly 20 per cent of the over one million students from around the world, and the US has seen a steady rise in the number of undergraduate students from India, the report

released by the embassy stated.

"Over the last 10 years, the number of Indians studying in the United States has roughly doubled, and we know why the US is the gold standard for higher education, providing practical application and experience that gives our graduates an advantage in the global economy," said minister Counsellor for public affairs David Kennedy.


To assist Indian students, the US Department of State

Over the last 10 years, the number of Indians studying in the United States has roughly doubled, and we know why the US is the gold standard for higher education, providing practical application and experience

— **DAVID KENNEDY,** Minister counsellor

offers advising services to prospective students through seven EducationUSA advising centres throughout India

in New Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Mumbai. "Early next year, a second EducationUSA Center is opening in Hyderabad hosted by Y-Axis Foundation. All centres are staffed by EducationUSA advisors who offer accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date information about opportunities to study in the United States" an official statement by the Embassy said. — PTI

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

— **SUPREME COURT BENCH**

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

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

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

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

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

Jethmalani said that Thakkar has been arrested

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

Meanwhile, a local court in Mumbai on Monday, granted bail to Sameer Thakkar.

Thakkar was granted bail after the Maharashtra government earlier in the day assured the Supreme Court that it will not oppose Thakkar's bail application.

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

## SC ISSUES NOTICE ON PLEA AGAINST SCRIBE'S ARREST

**New Delhi, Nov. 16:** The Supreme Court on Monday sought a response from the Uttar Pradesh government on a plea challenging the arrest of Kerala-based journalist Siddique Kappan on his way to Hathras where a young Dalit woman had died after allegedly being gang-raped.

The top court, which has now posted the plea of Kerala Union of Working Journalists seeking bail for Kappan on November 20, asked the union as to why it did not approach the Allahabad High Court seeking the same relief.

We are trying to discourage (Article) 32 petition (Writ petitions under Article 32 are directly filed before the top court). This is not a comment on the merits at all, said a bench of Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian.

Issue notice returnable on November 20. In the meantime, as prayed for, the petitioner (KUWJ) is allowed to serve the Standing Counsel for the respondents/State (Uttar Pradesh), the bench said in the order.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the journalists' body, sought bail for the scribe. — PTI





## SHORT TAKES

BURGLAR LOOTS  
₹7 LAKH FROM  
ATM MACHINEDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

A burglar broke open an ATM cash chest and decamped with approximately ₹7 lakh in Vanasthalipuram before dawn on Monday. Investigating officials said that a gas cutter was used to break open the chest. The burglar reportedly took less than 45 minutes to complete the operation.

It looked like a one-man job, police said after checking CCTV footage from nearby cameras. The burglar entered the ATM kiosk at about 2.30 am on Monday and closed the shutter.

“The accused also took away the hard disk connected to the CCTV camera, which was kept inside the kiosk. He was seen on roadside CCTV cameras coming out of the kiosk and entering a car. The visual is not clear. We are working on the leads,” said Vanasthalipuram inspector Murali Mohan, adding that the suspect had his face covered.

The lack of security guard and the late hour gave the offender time to steal the cash and leave without any alarm being raised.

The police were called by locals who noticed the damaged machine on Monday morning.

BJP TO FOCUS  
ON TRS  
FAILURES

From Page 1

The BJP has four seats, the Congress two and the TD won a lone seat. The elections will also bring a woman mayor for Hyderabad, who will replace the incumbent Bonthu Rammoohan.

The BJP's Nizamabad member of Parliament D. Arvind said, “The BJP will sweep the elections. We will highlight the failure of the TRS in handling the Covid and cyclones, the domination of the MIM in running all affairs of the city and the state and the massive development and re-imagining of the city. Lakes have been occupied. Land grabbing is rampant. Hyderabadis know that only the BJP can end this mafia raj.”

TRS leaders were confident of retaining 75 seats out of the 99 they hold. “The Congress is hardly a problem. We only expected the BJP to win in some pockets,” a TRS leader confided. “Our surveys show that Brand KTR trumps all factors in Hyderabad.”

The TRS is expected to highlight the Metro Rail, development of roads, flyovers and bridges, women safety, basthi dawakhana, dignity housing, welfare schemes for poorer sections, investments brought into the city and the rising power of Brand Hyderabad in their bid to win the confidence of the urban voters.

The TRS, which is ahead in the preparations, is likely to nominate most corporators whose performance is satisfactory or above.

The BJP is expected to put together a high-powered team of senior leaders and the party's efforts are being looked at closely by the Central leadership, which wants to use the elections to declare their intent of winning Telangana as their second state in south India.

“The TRS has money and official machinery on their side. We have the support of the people,” said Arvind.

The battle, if Dubbak was a precursor, will be tense and nail-biting, feel most observers.

APOLLO  
HEALTH CITY  
PIONEERSDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

A first-of-its-kind ‘fast track total knee replacement’ in south India was performed at Apollo Health City here.

The procedure is such that the hospital stay of a patient is cut to less than a day, as compared to the traditional total knee replacements surgeries that see patients stay in post-operative care for three to four days.

The new surgical procedure was performed on a 65-year-old diabetic woman by a team of Apollo Hospitals’ doctors, led by Dr K.J. Reddy, senior consultant and orthopaedic surgeon, on November 2.

The patient was discharged after a few hours of post-surgery observation, and she has fully recovered, according to the hospital.

## Kartika Masam begins



A large number of devotees perform Satyanarayana Vratam on the occasion of Kartika Masam at the Ganapathi temple in Secunderabad on Monday.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

9,999 viruses likely to  
hit humans globally

## Big task to restrict infections, experts at ISB meet opine

KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

Another 9,999 different viruses are expected to strike humans and SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19, is only an example of what can happen, experts said at the Deccan Dialogue organised by the Indian School of Business (ISB) here on Monday. The topic was, “Crisis and Cooperation: Imperative in times of Pandemic”.

The jump of viruses from different animal species to humans is to be expected, they said. There are various reasons across the globe for viruses are seeking human bodies as hosts to survive. Hence, outbreaks across the world are to be expected. To be alert to the infections and confine them to one place will be a huge task for the international community.

Dr Krishna Ella, chairman and managing director at Bharat Biotech International Limited, said, “We need to have accurate models in place to predict the manner in which these outbreaks could spread. The government needs to have an epidemiologist in the ministry of external affairs who will be able to identify hotspots where there are small disease outbreaks. This can help in protecting the country and guarding them.”

The outbreak of chikungunya, yellow fever, Zika and dengue were the first indications but these were not taken seriously.

Jaishankar: India made world  
aware of cross-border terrorDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

Cross border terrorism faced by India in 2020 has made the world aware of the nature of international terrorism. Relentless efforts helped in easing tensions, said external affairs minister Dr S. Jaishankar at the Deccan Dialogue organised online by Indian School of Business.

By keeping the spotlight and attention on cross-border terror and clearly marking out those who indulged in it, India has been able to make the world aware of its dangers. Jaishankar said, “We have been able to bring out the related aspects of terror like finance, radicalisation and cyber recruitments.”

On the one side India has

The ministry of external affairs (MEA) has for the first time in its history prioritised health security which has been a very different work mode. To adapt to this development required a change in the mindset both in terms of thinking and execution. Ambassador Rahul Chhabra, secretary, economic relations, MEA, said, “Health security was not a main table agenda in international discussions

but, post-pandemic, it has become a top agenda. It has now been realised that nobody is safe until all are safe. We are seriously going to look into having an epidemiologist on board to understand how it will help us look at health security in a better form.”

The health aspect is now deep-rooted with medicines like hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and paracetamol supplied to 150 countries in the world by India.

He said that the lessons from the pandemic will reflect in the coming times and there will be deeper strategic implications in context of Atmanirbhar Bharat. This is a very critical perspective for India.

Hardeep Singh Puri, minister for housing and urban affairs, said, “Atmanirbhar Bharat is not an inward-looking trade policy but a thought-after strategy that would enable a stronger self-reliant India. Technology will play an important role and its boost during pandemic and post-pandemic will play a crucial role.”

The focus of the government is now towards reviving the economy by accelerating growth and creating better conditions for production. World business practices will change and the more self-centred views of world politics will have to come to terms with the needs of the day, stated Dr Jaishankar without naming any country.

There was also technology collaboration in terms of programs where healthcare workers in SARCC and African countries were trained in e-counselling. Telemedicine is another avenue where Indian companies are providing technology support to these countries. Pandemic has now opened India's technological and healthcare expertise to the world.

On Monday, Kandala Upender Reddy arrived at Bodulabanda. The family members of the deceased couple sought his help in getting their remaining compensation. Divya too reached the spot and explained her problem.

She suddenly consumed some portion of pesticide from a bottle that she had brought along with her. She was stopped by others

from consuming the rest. Divya informed the MLA too that as she is unable to pay the amount, there is no other go for her.

The MLA asked party workers to save Divya first, and the other issue could be resolved later. She was then shifted to a hospital in Nelakondapalli and later to Khammam, where she is stated to be recovering.

Sources said that the

No Covid containment  
zones in 26 districtsBALU PULIPAKA | DC  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

As many as 26 of the state's 33 districts no longer have Covid-19 containment zones, according to the state health department.

These districts between them reported 4,691 fresh infections of the Coronavirus in the week ending November 15 as per Monday's edition of the daily Covid-19 bulletin issued by the health department.

Rajanna-Sircilla district had the most containment zones – 66 – followed by 63 in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area with 63 as on 8 pm on Sunday, the bulletin said. The only other districts with containment zones are Jagtial, Mahbubnagar, Nirmal, Ranga Reddy and Wanaparthy.

In the GHMC limits, Charminar zone had 16 containment zones, Khairatabad 20, Serilingampally 16, Kukatpally 11 and Secunderabad zone had one.

Data provided in the bulletin showed that Sangareddy topped list of containment zone-free districts with 593 cases for the week ending November 15, followed by Medchal-Malkajigiri with 560.

Bhadrachari-Kothagudem had 410 cases, Nalgonda 380, Karimnagar 316, Khammam 293, Warangal Urban 251, Siddipet 170 and Suryapet had 161 cases.

Mancherial had 154 cases, Nizamabad 143, Nagarkurnool 142, Peddapalli 126, Mahbubnagar 111, Kamareddy 101, Jayashankar Bhupala-

State reports only  
502 new infectionsDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

New Covid-19 cases witnessed a further drop on Sunday, with the state health department reporting 502 fresh Coronavirus infections, and three deaths. With these, the total cases rose to 2,57,876 and deaths from Covid-19 to 1,407 so far.

The steep fall in cases, nearly a half or more of those reported on weekdays over the past couple of weeks, correspond with an equally steep reduction in the number of tests. For Sunday, the health department said, only 17,296 tests were done compared to the around 40,000 a day during normal weekdays.

palli 100 among such districts.

The districts reporting fewer than 100 cases where containment zones were removed included: Mulugu with 99 cases, Vikarabad 95, Yadadri-Bhongir 88, Warangal Rural 87, Medak 79, Jangaon 77, Adilabad 64, Jogulamba-Gadwal 49, Komaram Bheem-Asifabad 25 and Narayanpet had 17 cases for the week ending November 15.

Containment zones restrict the movement of people confirmed to have contracted Covid-19 outside of their homes or localities who can act as potential spreaders of the

There were 14,385 active cases of Covid-19 as on Sunday 8 pm, and 11,948 infected persons were in isolation. As many as 1,539 persons were declared to have recovered from the disease on Sunday taking the total recovered cases to 2,42,084 thus far.

The Greater Hyderabad area, as it has been doing ever since the disease took hold in Telangana state, continued to have the most cases, even on a day when far fewer tests were done. According to the Covid-19 bulletin issued by the department, the GHMC area reported 141 new cases, followed by 72 in Ranga Reddy, and 33 in Medchal-Malkajigiri districts.

All commercial and other activities are prohibited in containment zones, while, in areas that do not fall in this category, life can go on as normal as long as people follow Covid-19 guidelines such as wearing a face mask properly and maintain physical distance of two metres from each other, as per the state health department norms.

The establishment of a containment zone or its removal is decided by the civic authorities who, with information provided by the health department on Covid-19 patients in such zones, take a call.

HUMAN PHASE  
3 TRIALS OF  
COVAXIN  
BEGIN AT NIMSDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

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

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

The volunteers will be randomly attached to either of the two groups: One will be given a placebo, where no vaccine is administered, and the other will receive the vaccine dose. The volunteers will not be aware who got what, that data will be known only to the researchers and the company.

Volunteers will be given two intramuscular injections approximately 28 days apart. Both the groups will be tracked for the next year.

The placebo group will be given injections without Covaxin; those who get the vaccine will be administered 6 microgram of Covaxin.

The trials will be carried out in two sites each in New Delhi and Mumbai and one site in all other states.

The outcome of Phase 1 and Phase 2 clinical trials and evaluation for safety and immunogenicity data on 1,000 subjects was said to be promising following which Bharat Biotech was allowed to proceed with largescale human trials.

The vaccine if approved will be manufactured at Bharat Biotech's Bio-Safety Level 3 high containment facility. It will be a highly purified and inactivated vaccine, manufactured in a vero cell manufacturing platform with an excellent safety track record of more than 300 million doses supplied.

## NEW | DEVELOPMENT

## Plans to upgrade tech in the police department suffered for many years

## TS to get new wireless communication system

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

Lack of funds with the government has put the grand plans of the police to revamp their decades-old wireless communication system in cold storage.

Taking a cue from the police of the United States, who use APCO 25 — a digital trunked radio system developed by the US-based Association of Public Safety Communications (APCO) — the TS police had finalised a deal to replace the existing wireless communication

system.

Informed sources told *Deccan Chronicle* that a group of officers had visited the US to study the functioning of APCO 25 and met several officials in the US police last year. After several rounds of meetings, a decision was taken to go ahead with the purchase which would have given the state police seamless communication. As per the plan, the new system should have been in place by February this year.

Post September 11, 2001, when passenger airlines crashed into the World

● AFTER SEVERAL rounds of meetings, a decision was taken to go ahead with the purchase which would have given the state police seamless communication.

Trade Centre, communication failures were identified as the critical element that undermined the response to the deadly attacks. The first responders struggled to communicate with each other as their radios operated on different frequencies and so did the fire-fighters. Thereafter, the US govern-

ment went in for a revamp of the communication systems and opted for APCO 25. Closer home, glaring lapses in communication between different agencies hampered the response of the security forces when terrorists carried out multiple attacks in Mumbai on November 26, 2008.

The requirement for the entire state was projected at 20,000 wireless sets and equipment. In the first phase, 2,000 sets were to be procured besides walkie-talkie sets, repeaters and towers. The project costs several crores of rupees. Sources said that the

APCO 25 allows seamless communication over multiple channels. “A key feature is that the operator can listen to two frequencies instead of the existing system of switching to one frequency at a time. For instance, the user can listen to the updates from the West Zone of Hyderabad and another major event in Cyberabad.

The frequency channels will be divided by time slots depending on what information comes in first,” sources said.

The new system is stated to be interoperable. Also, it allows a separate chan-

nel to be kept for communication between senior police officers. The protocols also include security options in which voice and data traffic can be cryptographically protected from eavesdropping.

“The new system is compatible and can be integrated with systems being used by all other agencies like the GHMC, Fire, revenue department which will ensure that officers of multiple departments can talk to each other,” they said. The walkie talkies were to be purchased from either Motorola or Kenwood.



## OTHER STORIES

COPS ARRESTS  
859 PERSONS  
FOR GAMBLINGNARENDER PULLOOR | DC  
NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY,  
NOV.16

The Nizamabad commission-erate police arrested 859 persons in 161 gambling cases during the Diwali festivities and seized ₹15.23 lakh in cash from gambling points in Nizamabad district.

Nizamabad police commissioner Kartikeya constituted special teams to nab the gamblers. In Nizamabad police division, the highest number of 75 cases were registered and 407 persons arrested and ₹8.62 lakh seized from the gamblers.

In Bodhan division 314 persons were arrested in 57 cases and ₹3.62 lakhs seized. In Armour police division, ₹3.62 lakh was seized from 138 gamblers in 29 cases. Kartikeya directed police officers to be vigilant on gambling and arrest the accused. The gambling point organisers and gamblers were arrested.

In Kamareddy district, police arrested 322 gamblers in 61 cases and ₹7.55 lakh seized. In Banswada police sub division, the highest number of 41 cases registered and 54 persons caught while playing gambling. Superintendent of police N. Swetha directed Kamareddy, Banswada and Yellareddy sub division police officers to initiate action against gamblers.

HC SEEKS  
EXPLANATION  
FROM RGV ON FILMVUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

The Telangana High Court on Monday sought an explanation from the Censor Board, film director Ram Gopal Varma and others on the release of a film titled 'Disha Encounter', which is reportedly based on the rape and murder of an city veterinarian and the subsequent killing of the accused in a police encounter.

Disha's father filed the appeal challenging the single judge order, which did not restrain the film-maker from releasing the film. According to reports, the film is scheduled for release on November 26. A trailer has been launched on social media platforms.

The petitioner sought directions from the court that the film should not be released and the trailer should be removed.

HC ACCUSES WAKF  
BOARD CEO OF  
BEING CORRUPTVUJJINI  
VAMSHIDHARA | DC  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

The Telangana High Court on Monday denounced the Wakf Board and charged that its Chief Executive Officer Md. Kasim was involved in rampant encroachments of Wakf properties by conniving with land grabbers. The court asked the government to replace the officer with an individual who could save the properties dedicated to Allah.

While dealing with three PILs related to encroachments of Wakf properties and the imperious attitude of some mutavallis (caretakers), a division bench, comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Bollam Vijayen Reddy came down heavily against the CEO for not protecting huge swathes of Wakf properties from the clutches of land sharks.

The bench said that the CEO had failed in protecting the properties, ostensibly on the ground that he was unaware of the basic Criminal Procedure Code, under which he could have approached a jurisdictional magistrate and filed a private complaint against the encroachers.

Md. Kasim, who appeared before the High Court on being summoned, failed to explain why he could not take criminal action against the encroachers. He said that the station house officers of the police stations concerned refused to file FIRs stating that these were civil matters. The court termed the explanation as being vague.

"This court is of the opinion that the Telangana state government will take serious action against the CEO because, prima-facie, this court feels that the CEO has failed to perform his legitimate duty in protecting Wakf properties and the state is bound to protect Wakf properties," observed the Chief Justice.

Nizamabad turning out  
to be a beautiful city

Around ₹25 crore was spent for beautification works

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, NOV. 16

Beautification of Nizamabad city gets applauds from people of different sections. Roads, streetlights, dividers and traffic islands are being developed in the city. Around 25 crore was spent on the beautification works. After a long gap, beautification works are taken up in large scale. Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, minister for municipal administration and urban development K. Taraka Rama Rao sanctioned special funds for Nizamabad Municipal Corporation. Nizamabad urban MLA Bigala Ganesh Gupta coordinated with the municipal council and officials to take up the works across the city. Widening and repairs of the main roads completed in the city. Central lighting inaugurated on the occasion of Deepavali. LED lights set up for poles at Kanteswar, Railway under the bridge,



The Hyderabad Road in Nizamabad decorated with LED lights.

— DC

Collectorate crossroads, and other areas. Road divider works are also under progress. MLA Ganesh Gupta met Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao recently and explained about beautification works in Nizamabad city. CM expressed satisfaction

with the works. MLA also urged him to sanction funds for pending works. It is believed that the works will be completed soon. Speaking to this correspondent, municipal deputy executive engineer Rasheed said that circuits would be developed at Rajeev

Gandhi statue, Rajarajendra crossroads, Nehru park, Kanteswar bypass road and Railway station. ₹25 lakh spent on LED lights in the city, he added. Beautification works will be taken up in other areas of Nizamabad city, he explained.

HYDERABAD TO  
REMAIN WARM  
FOR 48 HOURS

Hyderabad: The city would continue to remain warm and humid for 48 hours, the Indian Meteorological Department said. On Monday, the minimum temperature rose by 4° Celsius and stood at 21.6°. "The wind pattern over the state has changed. We are now getting humid winds from the eastern direction. It would continue this way for the next two-days," Dr K Nagaratna, director, IMD-Hyderabad, told Deccan Chronicle.



Minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy inspecting the arrangements for Rythu Vedita inauguration in Velpur in Nizamabad district on Monday. Agriculture minister Singireddy Niranjana Reddy will inaugurate the Rythu Vedita at Velpur mandal headquarters on Tuesday. Mr Prashanth Reddy built the Rythu Vedita in memory of his late father Vemula Surender Reddy. Rythu Bandhu seva samiti president Pall Rajeshwar Reddy, MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha, MLAs and MLCs of undivided Nizamabad district will participate in the programme.

— DC



The overturned tractor.

Farmer dies as  
tractor overturnsDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, NOV. 16

A farmer was killed when his tractor overturned while he was working in his farm along with his son in Nallabelli village of Wardhanapeta mandal on Monday.

The deceased has been identified as Banoth Veeranna, aged 49 years. He was tilling his land when he lost control of the vehicle.

The tractor turned turtle and Veeranna got struck under the engine.

● **THE DECEASED'S** son tried to rescue him with the help of an earth mover but by the time he was pulled out, he was dead.

His son tried to rescue him with the help of an earth mover but by the time he was pulled out, he was dead.

Police have registered a case and are investigating, based on a complaint lodged by the deceased's wife Bhadramma.

## NATURE | FRIENDLY

Tribals consider tiger as 'Pedda Devudu', never harm them  
Adivasis promote tiger conservationDC CORRESPONDENT  
CHICHDHARI (ADILABAD),  
NOV. 16

Adivasis celebrated Diwali with the cultural event Gussadi-Dandari, which promotes tiger and forest conservation. They performed "Tiger dances" on the occasion wearing tiger masks made of wood.

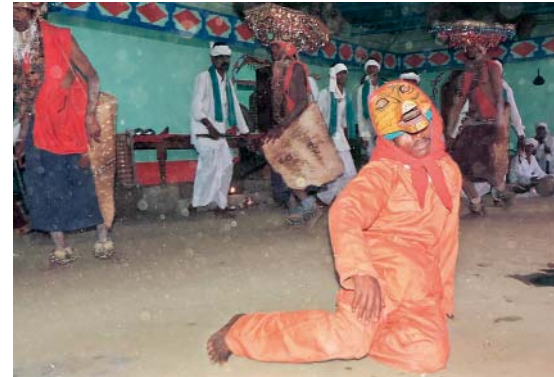
The tribes also marked the Diwali day with paintings of tigers on the drums they beat as also walls of their houses. Adivasis also played "Khe! (games) on wild animals and forest.

Gussadi-Dandari celebration is reflection of the bond the Adivasis have with nature, especially forests and wild animals. Thodasam Dinesh of

Chichdhari in Adilabad Rural mandal said tiger is a "Pedda Devudu (Big God) for them. That is the reason why they never harm a tiger but worship them. "Adivasis strongly believe that tiger protects the forests on which they fully depend for their livelihoods. Highlighting the role of tigers during Gussadi-Dandari is only to create awareness about them within the new generation," remarked.

This resident of Chichdhari is also a traditional painter. He paints tigers at various places including on wall of homes and public places.

He pointed out that Adivasis considered a tiger



Adivasis perform 'tiger dance' as part of Gussadi Dandari celebrations at Potamloddi in Adilabad Rural mandal on Monday. Right: An Adivasi youth beats drums painted with Tiger at Chichdhari in Adilabad rural mandal on Monday. —DC

as God Vagoba or Duvval. Dinesh regretted that though governments and some non-tribals blame

Adivasis for degradation of forests, the reality is that most of Adivasis don't have doors to their houses

BJP DEMANDS  
PAYMENT OF TS's  
SHARE OF CROP  
INSURANCEDC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, NOV. 16

BJP district president Payal Shankar on Monday criticised the state government for failing to come to the rescue of the farmers who suffered losses in the state.

Payal Shankar said the state government has failed to pay its share ₹350 crore towards Pradhanmantri Fasal Bheema Yojana for the 2018-19, 2019-20 (for last two years) and this caused inconvenience to the farmers.

He said, the farmers have suffered a loss due to crop damage after sowing the paddy seed that was advised by the state government, but it did not come to the rescue of the distressed farmers.

Payal Shankar alleged that TRS leaders and MLAs are hoodwinking the farmers by false promises.

Payal Shankar demanded the TRS MLAs to ensure the payment of the state government's due to sharing for the insurance.

BJP district general secretary Venugopal and senior leader Ankath Ramesh, Loka Praveen Reddy, Jogu Ravi, Soma Ravi and Dayakar, Sunanda Reddy and Krishna Yadav and Srinivas and Mahender were present.

● **PAYAL SHANKAR** said the state government has failed to pay its share ₹350 crore towards Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bheema Yojana for the 2018-19, 2019-20 (for last two years) and this caused inconvenience to the farmers and it failed to rescue farmers.

SR varsity takes steps to  
create industry-ready enggsDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, NOV. 16

Warangal-based SR University announced its collaboration with Infrastructure company Divyasree NSL Infrastructure, with an intent to create 600 industry ready civil engineers in the next five years.

This collaboration is part of SR University's strategy to partner with the industry to provide an industry-relevant curriculum and exposure which in turn will make their students industry-ready professionals.

Earlier this year SRU partnered with Microsoft, Gramener, and Cyient.

According to Dr G.R.C. Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, SR University, "Augmented reality, 3D scanning and printing, Building Information Modelling (BIM), autonomous equipment, and advanced building materials knowledge to create innovative and sustainable solutions to protect the environment, improve productivity, enhance quality, and safety are imperative today. To bring these innovative technologies to the classroom, SR University has joined hands with Divyasree NSL Infrastructure."

C.N. Rao, CFO of Divyasree NSL Infrastructure said they intend to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical



C.N. Rao, CFO of Divyasree NSL Infrastructure and Sreedevi Devireddy, CEO, SRIx exchange MoU.

knowledge of the students through this collaboration.

Expressing happiness over the collaboration, Sreedevi Devireddy, Governing board member of SR University and CEO, SRIx opined that the Infrastructure industry is steadily growing owing to the surge in need and demand due to rapid urbanisation, yet skilled professionals are scarce.

Expressing happiness over the collaboration, Sreedevi Devireddy, Governing board member of SR University and CEO, SRIx opined that the Infrastructure industry is steadily growing owing to the surge in need and demand due to rapid urbanisation, yet skilled professionals are scarce.

Dalits demand  
pattas for agri land  
in Agency areasDC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, NOV. 16

Leaders of Agency Area, Scheduled Castes Ikya Samiti of Adilabad district on Monday, demanded that the state government should issue pattas to the agriculture lands they had in Agency area and register their lands in Dharani portal run by the Revenue Department.

Speaking to the media persons in Uttoor, Samiti district president Somure Nagorao and general secretary More Narsingh regretted that the state government is denying their rights though they have been living in Agency area for decades along with tribals and cultivating agriculture lands.

The Samiti leaders said they are going to launch Padayatra from Mediguda village of Gadeguda mandal demanding the state government to concede their long-pending demands on November 23.

The leaders said their padayatra will cover all the

● **THE LEADERS** of Agency Area, Scheduled Castes Ikya Samiti said they are going to launch Padayatra from Mediguda village of Gadeguda mandal (covering all the 18 mandals in the district) demanding the state government to concede their long-pending demands on November 23.

18 mandals in the district and will submit memorandums to revenue officials and top district officials.

The Samiti leaders regretted over forest officials issuing notices recently to 15 Dalit farmers asking them not to cultivate forest lands since the lands belonged to Forest Department in Bursanpata village in Indravelli mandal. Samiti leaders said they will launch Padayatra to Hyderabad after completing their tour in Adilabad district.

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## SHORT TAKES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FREE PRESS SOUL  
OF DEMOCRACY,  
SAY LEADERS

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

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

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

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

Daggers drawn in Congress  
over Bihar election debacle

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

SREEPARNA  
CHAKRABARTY | DC  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nitish Kumar: Masterful  
craftsman of realpolitik

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bhupendra Gupta said here.

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

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

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

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

Winter, budget  
sessions likely  
to be clubbed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## BJP asks Congress to clarify its stand on Article 370

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Article 370.

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

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

EVICTION OF GUJJAR-BAKERWAL  
COMMUNITY 'ILLEGAL': MEHBOOBA

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

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

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

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



## IN BRIEF EXTREMIST GOES ON TRIAL IN FRANCE

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

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

## JETLINER HITS BROWN BEAR IN ALASKA

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

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

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

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

## SPACEX SENDS 4 ASTRONAUTS TO SPACE STATION

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

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

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

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

## Clinical trial to involve 6,000 volunteers across the country

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

## Merkel, govts to assess lockdown

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

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

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

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

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

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

## PERU PRESIDENT RESIGNS, CRISIS GRIPS NATION

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

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

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

## MALL | MOVE

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

# Here comes Santa with mask, plexiglass

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



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

faux gift boxes and other decorations in front of

Saint Nick to block kids from charging toward

him. Other safety measures include online reser-

# China: RCEP is a milestone of great significance

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

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

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

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

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

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

efforts against common challenges," he said.

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

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

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

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

— PTI

# Macron sees Donald's envoy

## TIME FOR TRUMP TO CONCEDE, SAYS OBAMA

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

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

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

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

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

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

the election," Obama said.

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

shoring up the priorities of Trump's outgoing administration.

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

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

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





# DECCAN Chronicle

17 NOVEMBER 2020

## As RCEP is born, India must tread cautiously

The world's largest trade bloc emerged on Sunday after 15 countries in East and Southeast Asia, and Australia signed a deal to open up their economies further to foster free trade. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which has been anchored by China, accounts for 29 per cent of the global economy in terms of its size, overshadowing similar arrangements in Europe and North America. However, India, the third-largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity, is conspicuous by its absence as it walked out of negotiations in 2019.

Prime concerns expressed by India were the fear of Chinese goods flooding the country, misuse of simplified country of origin rules, lack of mechanism to prevent dumping of industrial products by China and agricultural and dairy products by Australia and New Zealand. There was no mechanism to address a potential trade deficit arising out of lower tariffs mandated under the RCEP. The deal expected the member-countries to offer similar treatment to co-members as they offer to any of their strategic-partner countries. The member-countries expected India to adhere to these conditions without an assurance on opening up services sector, where Indian companies are far ahead, and allowing easy movement of labour under this deal, making the RCEP tilted heavily towards China.

**Nevertheless, staying away from the RCEP is also not a smart move because India would be an attractive investment destination for export-focused companies**

After the signing of the deal, several member-countries of the RCEP wished India too joined the deal, which seeks to promote free trade in Asia. The interests of the current member-countries do not align any further. While it is a fact that India would lose out of accessing the largest market in the world, one must also try to understand if India - with the current level of industrialisation - can cash in on the RCEP. Currently, RCEP is nothing but ASEAN plus-5, which means China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia and 10 countries of the ASEAN. Southeast Asian countries already have a free-trade agreement. But now three leaders in manufacturing - China, Japan and South Korea - and two agricultural and dairy majors - Australia and New Zealand - have joined the ASEAN's free trade zone. It is a win-win for all of them. While companies can choose to set up factories in smaller countries to access the world's largest market, China, Japan, and South Korea can compete to sell products. The Indian industry, however, does not have the inherent strength to compete with bigger players and may end up being a dumping ground.

Nevertheless, staying away from the RCEP is also not a smart move because India would be an attractive investment destination for export-focused companies. The government, therefore, should begin consultations on the reforms required to make the Indian industry as competitive and efficient as South Korea and Japan. If the government intends to double farmers' income, it should become more productive. It doesn't reflect well on India to be fearful of New Zealand's dairy products. It is high time the government nudges its industry and farming truly world-class and does whatever is required for that to happen.

## Farewell to a legend

What does it take to become the best loved man of Bengali cinema? A formidable supply of talent, love for one's craft, a vast body of work, association with legends? Matinee idol looks that would floor a generation of college-goers? Or is it the fact that he represented the last of the bhadralok, a way of being rendered obsolete by the changing mores and aesthetic of the people of a nonetheless-declining state? Mentored by theatre actor Ahindra Choudhury and the icon, Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, the boy from Kolkata's Surya Sen Street got his big break when selected by Satyajit Ray for the titular role in *Apur Sansar*, the concluding part of Apu Trilogy based on Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay's *Pather Panchali*. Soumitra Chatterjee would go on to collaborate with Ray on some of his best acclaimed projects. He would play the ebullient Amal in Tagorean *Charulata* and the inscrutable Feluda of Ray's own detective series with equal ease. Straddling the world of arthouse and popular cinema with aplomb, a director's actor, he could be versatile, as the hardy Punjabi cab-driver of *Abhijana*, the attractive imposter of Mrinal Sen's *Akash Kusum* or the swashbuckling villain in Tapan Sinha's history thriller *Jhinder Bandi*, setting the screen alight with the chemistry he shared with Sharmila Tagore. Aparna Sen and Madhabi Mukherjee. His ability to fit into the role in a way that offered his audiences identification at extraordinarily intimate levels was the quality that defined him. He also famously refused the Padma Shri on account of there being no safety net for film industry daily wagers. But recognition, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Padma Bhushan, Dadasaheb Phalke Award, Chevalier of Legion d'Honneur, would follow this gracious soul who confidently stuck to his genre, refusing offers from Bollywood, and choosing to return to the stage and poetry. A lifelong pursuit of the arts thus ended on Sunday. All around there is the sound of hearts shattering. The world of Bengali, nay international, cinema is poorer. Travel well, Apu.

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Subhani



## RCEP shifts Indo-Pacific dynamics, blow to Delhi



K.C. Singh

While the entire world was focused on the American presidential election, the signing on November 15 of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) has significantly altered the Indo-Pacific strategic environment. With all 10 Asean members joining China and Japan, besides South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, a huge free trade bloc is born. With a combined \$26.2 trillion of GDP, one-third of the world's total, it will facilitate commerce among members by eliminating 90 per cent of tariffs.

Therefore, while US President-elect Joe Biden's path to office is now clear, despite the Trumpian Twitter tantrums, he faces a more complex scenario in the Indo-Pacific region. There is still some time before the RCEP is fully implemented as a certain number of Asean and non-Asean signatories must ratify it first. But any analysis of the implications of the Biden presidency simply cannot ignore this new development.

Multiple challenges await the next US President, at home and abroad. Overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic, with cases spiking due to the onset of winter and the lax observance of precautions, looms above all else, as indeed do its economic consequences. The American economy has shrunk, compared to a year earlier, by slightly over minus four per cent, as Britain's figure tops minus 10 per cent and the Eurozone at minus eight per cent. Canada and Japan fall in between those figures and that of the US. The Economist magazine writes that while the pandemic will fade by the end of 2012, the "tech surge will outlive

Mr Biden's presidency". These deeper changes are pitted against the desire of the liberal faction of the Democrats to favour manufacturing jobs and social goals. The US markets did not drop on the Biden-Harris victory as control of the Senate remains with the Republicans, seen as blocking the Democratic socio-economic agenda. This balance hinges on the fate of two Senate run-off contests in Georgia on January 5. If the Democrats win both, they will seize control of the Senate, the strength of both parties being tied at 50 each, giving the vice-president the casting vote. That could rile the US and even the Indian markets.

As regards the pandemic, Mr Biden's approach has emerged, despite Mr Trump not cooperating with his transition team. A group of experts has been formed to suggest a plan, including for vaccination of the populace, based on science and medical expertise rather than Trumpian evasion and half-truths. Mr Biden realises control of the pandemic is critical to reviving the economy and jobs. The Democrats want to hit the ground running after Mr Biden's inauguration on January 20.

As a global power, the US cannot ignore the foreign policy challenges. On China, Mr Trump's forthright criticism of predatory trade practices, theft of intellectual property and state capitalism led to trade sanctions to coerce Beijing to accept a more transparent rules-based system. The Covid-19 pandemic emanating from China and its delay in alerting the world has merely crystallised concerns into open hostility, now percolating down to the popular level. Thus, there is bipartisan consensus for maintaining the pressure on China. The Biden administration

**Multiple challenges await the next US President, at home and abroad**

may substitute open confrontation, which Henry Kissinger calls the two nations at the foothills of a new Cold War, with smarter containment strategies. The difficulty is that if the sanctions are rolled back, what does China offer as concessions to address America's economic and security concerns? Michele Flournoy, a frontrunner for the defence secretary's job, has advocated US defence readiness to have the capacity to sink the entire Chinese naval fleet in 72 hours!

There is also the technology competition symbolised by the US barring Huawei's access to top US semiconductors. Taiwan is a key component in US advances in cutting-edge semiconductor design and production. The continuing Chinese threats to Taiwan and the US dithering over defending it, in case China tries to annex it militarily, has created strategic vacuum. Some Chinese analysts argued that if China occupies Taiwan, as it has Hong Kong, Taiwan's famed chip producer TSMC would be a bonus.

The RCEP's signing by two components of the "Quad" - Australia and Japan - queers the US and Indian approach to the Indo-Pacific. Only weeks back this group was being projected as the skeleton of a new security architecture to contain China. It was hoped the Biden administration may review US withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which Japan had championed to balance Chinese trade influence in the Indo-Pacific. It exists in a modified form, minus the US, as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). It is possible the US and Japan may yet re-engage to discuss America's re-entry, but with the RCEP finalised China has first-mover advantage. In one swoop China has negated the hype over the de-coupling

from China. It also leaves India stranded, strategically and trade-wise, between its Quad partners and a China-dominated group, which has drawn away two of the Quad's four members. Moreover, for the new US administration, the Indo-Pacific may be a lower priority than rebuilding alliances ignored or abandoned by Mr Trump and healing rifts with nations like Germany and France.

The *Global Times*, the largely reliable English voice of Beijing, headlined an editorial: "Indo-Pacific strategy upholder India misses the bus of RCEP and long-term growth". India still has paths open to both joining the RCEP, albeit with diminished negotiating weight, or playing along with the US if its interest in CPTTP emerges. But in any case, all the bluster over Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI), that the Quad members were to create as an alternative to Chinese dominance of supply chains, now appears a non-starter.

Besides the fear of RCEP affecting Indian industry and farmers, including those in the dairy sector, Chinese obduracy in accepting full de-escalation at the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh has heightened Indian suspicions. Is it a coincidence that the Chinese intrusions followed India's unwillingness to join the RCEP in November 2019, and sponsoring alternative approaches like Quad Plus? With India's options now conditioned by the initiatives of others, New Delhi needs peace at home with farmers and in the region with neighbours. In any case, its majoritarian proclivities, with the West Bengal election approaching, can become an irritant in US-India ties just as China has outplayed it in the Indo-Pacific. In chess terms, it is not checkmate yet. But China controls the board with the better pieces.

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

### LETTERS

#### ATTACK PAK

How long India will play a defensive role against China-propped Pakistan? India must attack this hostile nation militarily to an irrecoverable stage. Otherwise India will keep losing its soldiers in sporadic incidents.

**N.S.R. Murthy**  
Secunderabad

#### FLOOD RELIEF

This is an era of elections purely based on politics instead of people's issues (*BJP sends its top team to GHMC, DC, Nov. 16*). On floods, the MoS for home said the TS government did not submit a detailed report for the Centre to give a relief package. But why can't the Centre give at least ad-hoc relief? After winning more than 100 seats in the last GHMC elections the TS government announced 100 days plan to improve living conditions in the GHMC area. The recent misery proves how best the living conditions have improved.

**B. Raghunadha Rao**  
Hyderabad

#### PROPERTY TAX

The recent rains have damaged roads which require funds for repair and for increasing the capacity of storm water drainage system to prevent flooding. Sanitation is poor due to lack of funds. The government has given 50 per cent rebate on property tax to owners in the city whose tax is ₹15,000. When both the GHMC and the state are starving for funds, it is not advisable to give any rebate.

**Dr O. Prasada Rao**  
Hyderabad

### 50 YEARS AGO IN

## DECCAN Chronicle

### Excavation at Golconda begins

By a staff reporter  
HYDERABAD, Nov. 16. Excavation work near the enclosure wall of Qutub Shahi tombs at the historic Golconda on the outskirts of the city, was commenced by the State Archaeological Department, today.

Mr. N. Ramesan, Finance Secretary and Mr. S.R. Ramamurthy, Education Secretary, inaugurated the work at two different points adjacent to the area where a summer house and a palace were unearthed during excavations last year.

Dr. Abdul Waheed Khan, Director of Archaeology and Museums, told newsmen that the chance discovery of the summer house and the palace, buried three metres below a mound, had encouraged them to probe further into the depths.

Aakar Patel



## Everything is looking bleak: Can Modi still bring change?

The BJP has won yet another election, and victory is attributed to the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He is in the seventh year of his term and appears to have lost none of his attractiveness for the voter. There is no data available on this, of course, and elections across the subcontinent are won on the back of tribalism, organisation and money.

But let us assume that it is the personal attractiveness and credibility of the Prime Minister that has yet again taken the BJP through in Bihar. The question is — to what end does he want to keep winning? Power is held for a purpose — to be able to effect change. What change has Mr Modi used his power for?

On the economy, the numbers cannot be kept hidden. The rate of GDP growth has gone from eight to seven to six to five to four to three per cent over the last 12 quarters. Something sabotaged the economy just before January 2018 and today

is not the time to go again into it. The fact is that without Covid-19 and long before the lockdown, the Indian economy was wrecked. Hours after the Bihar election results were out, the RBI announced that in the second quarter, meaning July to September, India's economy would again contract, and we were in recession.

The government did not acknowledge this or respond to it. The Prime Minister muttered some more things about development, but his heart is not in it. Do you remember the last time he spoke about his world beating economic performance? It is because there is nothing to say. Bangladesh has overtaken India's per capita GDP. What more can be added to that?

As I am writing this, there is news that we have lost at least 11 more lives on the Line of Control in Kashmir. The media's response to this in India has been to claim that Pakistan has also lost 11 lives. It has become like a game, and if we are able to get enough of the other

side out then it is fine for us to suffer the losses we have. This is lunacy but it is the product of the way that Mr Modi has characterised relations with neighbours, as being a zero sum game. Meaning that their loss is our gain. But this is bogus. We gain nothing material by killing their people. We lose when our people are killed.

On the LAC, we are preparing to formalise the surrender that we have already effected on the ground. We have permanently been stopped from patrolling till Finger 8 in Ladakh and heaven alone knows what else has been given up amid the secrecy.

Mr Modi's refusal to acknowledge that the Chinese had intruded into and were holding ground that India had been previously patrolling was a clear signal to the other side. He has since stopped speaking on this subject. What is there to say? India has not even been given an explanation for why our leader thinks his friend Xi Jinping had launched his aggression. Our constitutional

recklessness in Jammu and Kashmir happened without any understanding of the international ramifications.

As one defence analyst has said, Mr Modi changed the status of Ladakh on the map, while Mr Xi changed it on the ground. So much for the 56 inches. Our clinging to Donald Trump has not paid off. His secretary of defence, who was promising an eternal military alliance, was fired this week.

What else is there? We could talk about Covid-19. We carry the second highest number of infected people in the world, the third highest number of dead. What role if any the government has had in controlling it or mitigating it is unknown. The lockdown appears to have had exactly the opposite effect that we were told it would have. We are still clocking over 40,000 cases a day and have no real control over the epidemic. Two-thirds of India's working women lost their jobs because of the lockdown. Reports have shown that the work participation

rate for women fell from an already low 9.15 per cent in December 2019 to just 5.8 per cent in August this year. For men, it is down from 67 per cent to 47 per cent. Most of India is not working. Have you heard Mr Modi talk about this? No. What is there to say?

The good thing is that we are in Year 7 of his reign. His words do not mean anything at this point. It is the numbers we must look at and the numbers are clear. If there is still support for Mr Modi among the population, it must be for something else, not his performance. There the record is quite clear.

Power is held to effect change. Mr Modi has shown himself incapable of effecting it in the positive sense. On the economy, on the border, on employment, on the epidemic. One wonders to what end he not only holds on to it but seeks to acquire more.

*The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist*



quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	43,637.98 0.45
Nifty 50	12,780.25 0.47
S&P 500*	3,621.33 1.01
Dollar (₹)	74.61 0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.19 0.21
Euro (₹)	88.11 0.04
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,425.241 0.47
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.39 1.61
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.878 -0.024
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.918 0.025

Power use grows 7.8% in first half of Nov.

Power consumption grew 7.8 per cent to 50.15 billion units (BU) in the first half of November this year, showing a rise in economic activities. Power consumption was recorded at 46.52 BU during Nov. 1-15 last year, shows power ministry data. For a full month in November last year, power consumption was 93.94 BU. After a gap of six months, power consumption had grown 4.4 per cent in September.

Munot to leave SBI Mutual Fund to head HDFC MF



HDFC Mutual Fund said its board has approved the appointment of Navneet Munot as its next managing director and chief executive officer. Munot, who was the chief investment officer of SBI Funds Management, will succeed the present MD Milind Barve, HDFC Mutual Fund said. In a separate statement, SBI Funds Management said Munot has decided to leave the organisation to pursue other opportunities.

Registration of start-ups at GeM doubles

The number of startups registered at public procurement portal GeM has more than doubled to 7,438 in the last one year and they are receiving government and PSU orders. The Government e-Marketplace was launched in August 2016 for online purchase of goods and services by central departments. "We now have 48,038 buyers, 7.42 lakh sellers with 2.42 lakh MSEs and 7,438 startups," GeM CEO Talleen Kumar said.

Equitas Bank offers 7% on women's SB a/c

Equitas Small Finance Bank (ESFB) has launched 'Eva' savings account for women offering 7 per cent interest. Eva tries to address the well-being of Indian women in every aspect such as health, wealth and prosperity. "Along with 7 per cent interest in savings account, it also offers free health check-up and unlimited tele-consultation with women doctors, gynaecologists and mental health experts," the bank said.



RIL, Aramco, BP, Total all stay away Biggies keep off BPCL stake sale

New Delhi, Nov. 16: The government on Monday received 'multiple' bids for buying out its stake in India's second-biggest fuel retailer BPCL but Reliance Industries as well as supermajors Saudi Aramco, BP and Total did not make a bid. Tuhin Kanta Pandey, secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam), which is handling the strategic sale, tweeted that the transaction advisors (TAs) for the sale of government's 52.98 per cent stake in Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) have reported receiving "multiple expressions of interest." "The transaction will move to the second stage after scrutiny by TA," he said. "Strategic disinvestment of BPCL progresses: Now moves to the second stage after multiple expressions of interest have been received," finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman also tweeted. Neither of them gave the number of bids received or the names of the bidders. Separately, four industry officials said three-four bids have been put in. Reliance Industries, which was considered a potential bidder as BPCL would have added a 22 per cent fuel market share to its fledgling retail business and made it the nation's number one oil refiner, did not put in an expression of interest



(EoI) at the close of the deadline on Monday. Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco), which had been keen to enter the world's fastest-growing fuel market, too did not put in an EoI. UK's BP plc and Total of France—which have plans to foray into the Indian fuel market—had previously ruled themselves out of the BPCL race as they did not want to add oil refining assets when the world was moving away from liquid fuels. A clutch of private equity funds and/or pension funds are said to have put in an EoI. Russian energy giant Rosneft-led Nayara Energy, which operates a 20 million tonne oil refinery at Vadinar in Gujarat and also has 5,822 petrol pumps, was considered a potential bidder for BPCL but reports last month had indicated it was no longer keen. Abu Dhabi National Oil Co (Adnoc), which has ambitions for Indian mar-

M&M plans to revive BSA bike

SIDDHARTH PHILIP NOV. 16

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd is crafting plans to build a UK factory to resurrect the BSA motorbike brand in a test case for whether Britain can attract companies post-Brexit. Mahindra, which bought the defunct marque in 2016, is scouting for a site to assemble the motorcycle, chairman Anand Mahindra said in an interview. Whether it goes ahead partly hinges on talks over government grants and a trade deal with the European Union, he said. "With Brexit, the UK government is going out of its way to give benefits, which actually goes toward filling that difference in viability," said Anupam Thareja, a managing partner at Phi Capital and co-founder of Mahindra's Classic Legends subsidiary. The classic-bike brand owner is adopting a wait-and-see approach to Brexit negotiations before giving the green light to BSA. The factory project would depend on tariff levels and the ease of moving both workers and products across borders, Thareja said. Making the bikes in the UK is key for the brand to maintain authenticity, says Mahindra. BSA started as a bicycle maker before crafting its first motorcycle over a century ago. It featured in the World War-II, when used by the British Army, but went bust in the 1970s. —Bloomberg

Just 5 mall projects see completion in 2020

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 16

As the business in malls has still not recouped to pre-Covid levels, mall development is moving at a snail's pace. The calendar year was supposed to see the launch of 54 new malls spanning over 22.2 million sq. ft, as per the pre-Covid estimates. However, just 5 malls covering 2.75 million sq. ft have been completed yet. These new malls have come up in Gurgaon, Delhi, Lucknow and Bengaluru, as per the data from Anarock Retail. The yet-to-recover business in malls has put the construction process on hold. Malls remained closed for a longer period even after the lock-down. As of August, malls were seeing 60 per cent sales of last year, though the footfalls were much lesser. However, malls are



expecting the festive season to take the sales to 80 per cent. "Since the shopping malls reopened across the country, the industry and mall developers noticed more serious buyers walking-in with a set agenda of what to buy. While the dwell time has decreased, however, the ticket size has increased drastically. During the Navratri and Diwali season, shopping malls across the country

reported an increase in footfalls on a week-on-week basis and witnessed a continued growth during the weekends. We are hoping to reach 80 per cent of sales on an average," said Amitabh Taneja, Chairman, Shopping Centres Association of India. Considering the slower pace at which mall development is taking place, many of the launches would be pushed to 2021. "Covid-19 added enormous pressure to the already delicately-poised Indian retail sector. The anticipated new mall supply was severely hit this year and most of it will spill over to 2021 and beyond. New completions have been deferred and leasing activity has been delayed," said Anuj Kejriwal, CEO and MD of Anarock Retail. However, even in 2021, only 14 new malls spread over 5.9 million sq ft are likely to get operational.

WPI inflation at 8-month high of 1.48%

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, NOV.16

Driven by rising prices of vegetables and manufactured items such as vegetable oils, steel and basic metals, the wholesale price-based inflation went up to an eight-month high of 1.48 per cent in October, the data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed on Monday. This was the highest

level for the Wholesale Price Index inflation after February, when it was 2.26 per cent. The WPI inflation was at 1.32 per cent in September and zero per cent in October last year. "Some food article prices softened in October, while manufactured items witnessed hardening of prices in the same month. Food inflation in October stood at 6.37 per cent against 8.17 per cent in the previous month," the

release said. Similarly, the price rise in vegetables and potato remained high at 25.23 per cent and 107.70 per cent, respectively. "Inflation in non-food articles and minerals was higher at 2.85 per cent and 9.11 per cent, respectively. While, in the manufactured products category, inflation stood at 2.12 per cent in October, compared to 1.61 per cent in September," the data showed.

Take on risk, trust recovery in 2021: Morgan Stanley

JOANNA OSSINGER NOV. 16

Morgan Stanley strategists said an expected "V-shaped" economic recovery, greater clarity on Covid-19 vaccines and continued policy support offer a favourable environment for stocks and credit next year. It has also cut its forecast for gold to \$1,825 an ounce on average for 2021 from a previous \$1,950 on the expected global economic recovery. In an outlook for 2021, a team including Andrew Sheets recommended investors overweight equities and corporate bonds against cash and government debt, and sell the US dollar. Volatility is set to decline, and investors should be "patient" in commodity markets, the strategists said. "This global recovery is sustainable, synchronous and supported by policy, following much of the 'normal' post-recession playbook," they wrote. "Keep the faith, trust the recovery." A gauge of global stocks headed toward a record on Monday amid optimism that the expected roll-out of vaccines and additional US fiscal stimulus will bolster the world economy. Still, sceptics argue the short-term out-

WORLD STOCKS HIT RECORD ON RECOVERY, VACCINE HOPES

CHUCK MIKOLAJCZAK NEW YORK, NOV. 16

A gauge of global stocks hit a record on Monday as the latest batch of positive data for a possible Covid-19 vaccine boosted sentiment, along with signs of economic recovery in Asia, while oil prices jumped. US stocks climbed, with the Dow Industrials nearing the 30,000 mark for the first time, thanks to news from pharma company Moderna saying its prospective vaccine was

94.5 per cent effective in preventing Covid-19. Cyclical names, which generally benefit the soonest as an economy recovers from a recession, led the way higher, with energy, industrial and financial sectors the top performing. The MSCI World Index of global shares, building on strong overnight gains in Asia's leading markets and a stronger open for most European bourses, extended gains after the Moderna announcement to hit a record.



look is challenging as nations resort to lockdowns to fight a resurgence in virus cases and lawmakers bicker over the size of US relief spending. Morgan Stanley joins JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Goldman Sachs Group Inc. in painting a

positive outlook for equities. JPMorgan strategist Marko Kolanovic said US election results create a bull case for markets, while David Kostin at Goldman Sachs expects society to normalise gradually next year. The Morgan Stanley team doesn't expect a

smooth path upwards and noted that significant challenges remain. Risks include a worse-than-expected Covid-19 winter wave, and a return to austerity in the longer term, according to the note. Investment calls in the report include: a base case for the S&P 500 to reach 3,900 by the end of 2021; 10-year US treasury yield at 1.45 per cent by the end of next year; the US Dollar Index to weaken about 4 per cent by the end of 2021; and preference for high-yield credit over investment grade and leveraged loans over high-yield bonds. —Bloomberg

Alrosa sees uncertain diamond market

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 16

Despite recording a year-on-year growth in October, diamond miner Alrosa is worried about an uncertainty in the market. Uncertainty puts pressure on Indian gems and jewellery exports, which has not even recovered in October. Alrosa had started seeing the first signs of recovery in the diamond market from mid-August when the Indian diamond polishing industry resumed imports after a four-month voluntary ban. The company saw growth in September and October. In October, the sales grew 3.6 per cent to \$310 million. The recovery was also led by end demand for jewelry as September demand in China and US grew 13 per cent and 14 per cent y-o-y respectively. However, Alrosa finds that it is "definitely too early to speak of the full recovery". The markets still face uncertainty caused by the pandemic's impact on the global economy and subsequent developments. The key indicator for the diamond industry will be upcoming Christmas and Chinese New Year retail sales," said



Jim Vimadalal, director, Indian Representative Office, Alrosa. While the festive goods are already on the way to the markets, any disruption due to the second wave of the pandemic can hit the Christmas and New Year sales. The second wave has already put Europe under restrictions and an uncertainty is looming large over the US. This uncertainty will put further pressure on the Indian gems and jewellery industry. Indian gems and jewellery exports were down even in September and October. While it recorded a dip of 27 per cent in September, the decline was 21 per cent in October. Cut and polished diamond sales were down 19.6 per cent in September and the category details are not yet out for October. According to trade circles, the October shipments were affected by the container availability issues as well.

DIGITAL STRATEGY HELPS MARUTI SELL OVER 200,000 CARS

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, NOV. 16

The digital revolution in selling cars is taking stronger root in India with social distancing becoming the new normal in a Covid-scarred world. Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, on Monday said it has sold over two lakh cars through the online channel. The company, which initiated its online sales platform around two years back, said the digital channel now covers nearly 1,000 dealerships across the country. "Since introducing this new digital channel in 2018, we have witnessed a three times increase in digital enquiries and recorded sales of over 2 lakh units since April 2019," Shashank Srivastava, executive director (marketing & sales) at Maruti Suzuki India, said. This digital channel has helped to generate over 21 lakh customer enquiries as well, he pointed out. Citing the 'Google Auto Gear Shift India 2020 Report', he said nearly 95 per cent of new car sales in India are digitally influenced as the customers first research online and then buy at dealerships.

Ratification of RCEP trade deal may take years

JAMES PEARSON HANOI, NOV. 16

Fifteen Asia-Pacific economies signed what could become the world's largest free trade agreement in Hanoi on Sunday, covering nearly a third of the global population and about 30 per cent of its global gross domestic product.

Who has signed? RCEP includes China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the 10 members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean): Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and

the Philippines. India was involved in early discussions but opted out last year over concerns related to cheap Chinese imports. Member states have said there is still room for India to join RCEP, however. Anyone can join RCEP 18 months after it comes into force but India, as one of the original negotiating partners, can join at any time once the deal comes into effect. What happens next? RCEP, signed on Sunday, must now be ratified before coming into effect, a process that will take months to start and years to complete.

According to copies of the 510-page, 20-chapter agreement uploaded to the foreign ministry websites of RCEP member states on Sunday, the deal must be ratified by at least six Asean countries and three non-Asean signatory countries before it can come into effect. East Asian rivalry Notably, RCEP marks the first time China, Japan and South Korea have been brought together under a single trade agreement—a process that has been otherwise marred by historical and diplomatic disputes. Last year, at the height of a trade dispute between

Japan and South Korea, which had its roots in a dispute stemming from Japan's wartime colonisation of the Korean peninsula, South Korean officials said Japanese trade restrictions violated the "spirit" of the RCEP. Japan may find significant benefits (with RCEP), as it now has preferential access to South Korea and China, which it did not have," said Deborah Elms of the Singapore-based Asian Trade Centre. When will it kick in?

RCEP provides some flexibility for less-developed members to implement the practical and legislative changes it requires. Cambodia and Laos, for example, have three to five years to upgrade customs procedures. Specifically which areas are open to tariff reductions under RCEP is complex and changes from country to country. Some states have listed what RCEP includes while others have listed what it does not. For countries which already have free trade agreements with each other, an added benefit of RCEP is that it creates a common set of rules of

origin, which will facilitate easier movement of goods between the 15 members. How does RCEP compare with CPTPP? The idea of RCEP hatched in 2012, was seen as a way for China, the region's biggest importer and exporter, to counter growing US influence in the Asia-Pacific. It gained momentum when Trump withdrew the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2017. The TPP has since been renamed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for

Partnership (CPTPP) and it includes seven RCEP members, but not the United States. RCEP focuses heavily on cutting tariffs and increasing market access but is seen as less comprehensive than the CPTPP. It also requires fewer political or economic concessions and has less emphasis on labour rights, environmental and intellectual property protections and dispute resolution mechanisms. RCEP's market size is nearly five times greater than that of the CPTPP, with almost double its annual trade value and combined GDP. —Reuters

Explainer



## SHORT TAKES

## Kipruto charged with sex crime

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

## Five ISL clubs fail to secure licence

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

## Prajnesh loses US Challenger final

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

## Italy beat Poland, England bow out

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

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

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

## TENNIS

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

## FOOTBALL

**UEFA Nations League:** France vs Sweden from 1.15 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 3; Spain vs Germany from 1.15 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2; Croatia vs Portugal from 1.15 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1

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## Covid threat to Test

## Paine in self-isolation after Corona outbreak in Adelaide

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

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

"There is ongoing monitoring but that's the end of the story," a CA spokeswoman was quoted as saying by *Sydney Morning Herald* on the match which is still a day-nighter.

The number of cases had crept up from four on Sunday to 17 on Monday.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Birthday cheer



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

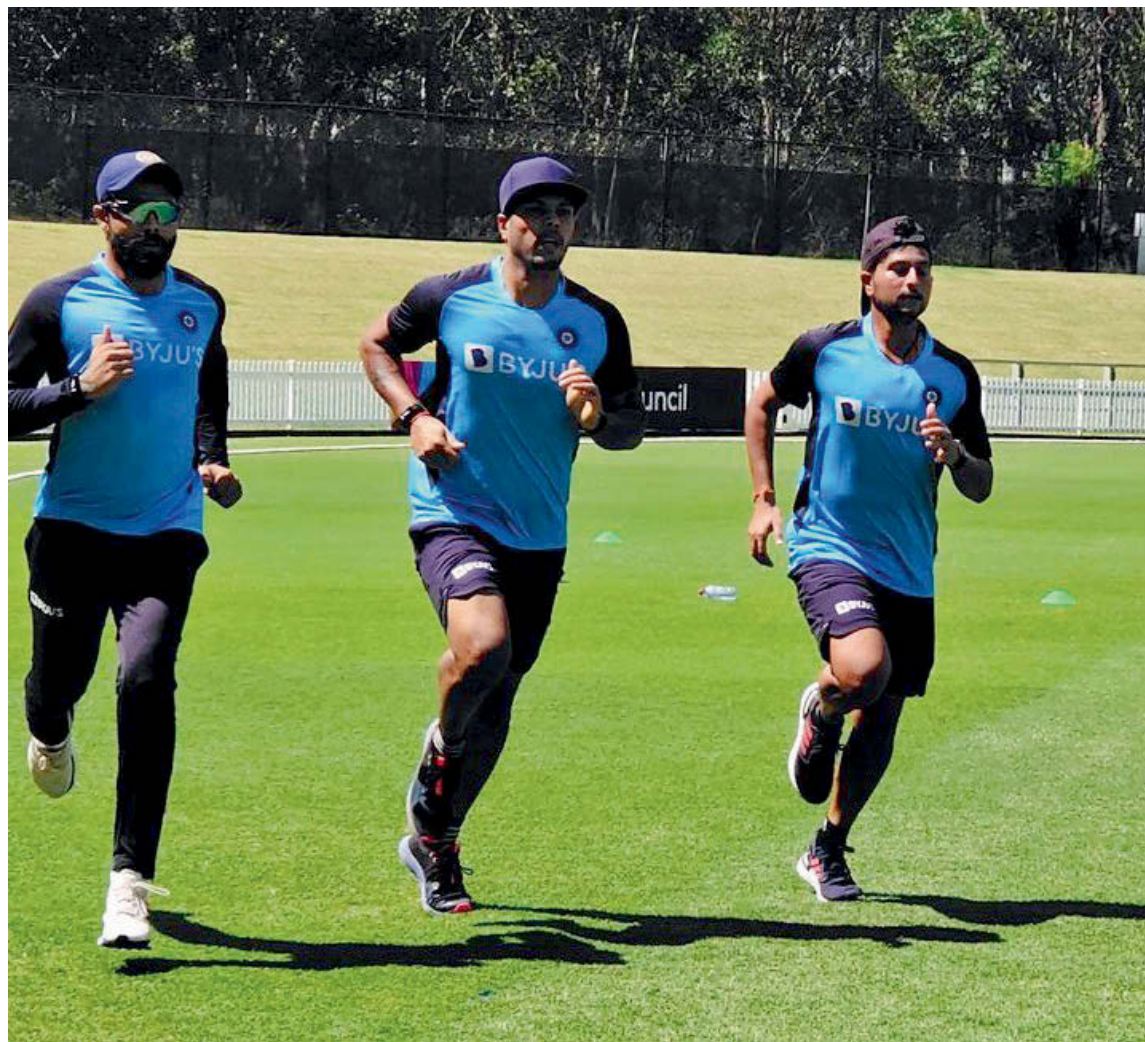


Hemant Kenkre  
Silly Point

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

the eve of the team's departure for Australia, isn't the best from the perspective of the team that's poised to take on one of the best in the game.

The first of the three One Day Internationals begins in a less than two weeks from now and the team has got a guarded welcome from the Aussies even as they practice in the bubble created in suburban Sydney. Former Aussie skipper Steve Smith, who missed the last Test series against India, has fired the first salvo, telling the



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

## Rahul pulls along with tennis ball

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore when the leather ball is used, any

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

batsman will get a fraction of a second more from the 22 yards.

During the '80s and '90s before a tour of Australia or West Indies, the specialist batsmen were known to bat against wet tennis balls from 16 or 18

yards on cement wickets to get adjusted to the bounce.

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

Team's senior speedster Mohammed Shami posted a video on his personal twitter handle, where he was seen bowling with the pink kookaburra ball.

Shami is a part of all three squads and it is a given that India will need his skills most during the four-Test series starting on December 17 with the day-night pink ball game in Adelaide. — PTI

## Dustin dazzles at the Masters

**Augusta (Georgia, USA), Nov. 16:** Nothing ever comes easily for Dustin Johnson in the majors, except for slipping into that Masters green jacket.

Johnson overcame a jittery start that conjured memories of past majors he failed to finish off. He turned that into a command performance, making sure this one-of-a-kind Masters with no fans also had no drama.

Not even close.

Johnson tapped in for par on the 18th for a 4-under 68 to finish at 20-under 268, breaking by two shots the record set by Tiger Woods in 1997 and matched by Jordan Spieth in 2015.

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

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

Two-time champion Bubba Watson was there to congratulate him.

"I always dreamed of having one of those,"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

## Nadal starts with comfortable win

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

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

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

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

Novak Djokovic produced a masterclass against Argentina's

Diego Schwartzman on Monday as he embarked on his campaign for a record-equalling sixth title.

The world number one wobbled at the start of the match against the diminutive eighth seed, making his debut at the elite eight-man event but recovered to win 6-3, 6-2.

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

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

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

A combination of injury and his preference for other surfaces has counted against him but his greater freshness as a result of a shorter season may boost his chances this year. — AFP

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



Hemant Kenkre  
Silly Point

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

the eve of the team's departure for Australia, isn't the best from the perspective of the team that's poised to take on one of the best in the game.

The first of the three One Day Internationals begins in a less than two weeks from now and the team has got a guarded welcome from the Aussies even as they practice in the bubble created in suburban Sydney. Former Aussie skipper Steve Smith, who missed the last Test series against India, has fired the first salvo, telling the

Indians that short pitch bowling does not bother him and his four failures to Kiwi left-arm pacer Neil Wagner were nothing but an aberration. The Aussie taste for the hook and pull shot is legend and one doubts whether the Indians will fall to this ruse.

Notwithstanding the ODI series and the three Twenty20 that follow, the home team is concentrating on the four-match Test series that kicks off mid-December. The Aussie distaste for losing is well documented and their loss in the last Test series to India will be at the back of their minds. Aussie head coach, Justin Langer, has reminded the Indians that his team is 'two-years better' and more experienced. Their focus on the Test

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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