


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | FRIDAY | 20 NOVEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 33.0°C
Min: 20.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
33/20 °C

COVID-19 CUNT

CASES
(+46,140)
90,04,045

DEATHS
(+584)
1,32,201


covid19india.org


STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS


(+ 1,058)
TS: 2,60,834
(+1,316)
AP: 8,58,711

(+4)
1,419
(+11)
6,910

CASES AROUND THE WORLD


5,69,15,293


DEATHS
13,60,685


COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
217

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana

Tithi: Kartika Suddha Shasthi till 9.35 pm

Star: Uttarashadha till 9.24 am

Variyam: 1.30 pm to 3.08 pm

Durmuhurtam: 8.41 am to 9.25 am; 12.23 pm to 1.08 pm

Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

HILIRI CALENDAR

Rabbi-ul Akhir 4, 1442 AH

PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.00 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 5.00 pm

Maghrib: 6.35 pm

Isha: 8.30 pm


SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.10 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5.27 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 11.07 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 11.29 AM

COUNTER POINT



Covid Cabinet?
You have to wait!

SHORT TAKE

US to hit back on India's digital tax

Washington: The United States will soon issue the results of probes into Austria, Italy and India's decisions to tax local revenue of internet companies such as Facebook Inc., which could pave the way for retaliatory tariffs, people familiar with the situation said. The three countries were short-listed because they had instituted digital services tax or levies on local sales of companies like Google this year, said the people who were familiar with the development.

Tungabhadra Pushkar to be launched by CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, NOV. 19

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will declare open Tungabhadra Pushkarams at 1:21 pm at Sankalbagh ghat on the banks of river Tungabhadra here on Friday.

The Chief Minister will offer Pushkar Harathi to the holy river invoking its blessings for the peace and prosperity of the State. The 12 day-event that concludes on December 1 is expected to attract three to four million

pilgrims. Though Pushkarams are synonymous with the holy dip in the river, Covid-19 is taking away most of the pushkar fervour as pilgrims would only be permitted to have a sprinkle shower instead of a holy dip. Ironically, the Telangana state government has permitted the holy dip on its side of the river, notably at Alampur, provided the pilgrims furnish a corona negative report.

■ Page 2: FM urges people to keep celebration simple

NATION | 4

Gupkar declation a conspiracy: Naqvi

deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

WORLD | 5

Transition delay is affecting vaccine: Biden

SPORTS | 8

Djokovic loses at ATP Tour Finals

Vol. 25 No. 203 Established 1940 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Four Jaish terrorists gunned down

Security personnel inspect the site of an encounter at Nagrota Ban toll plaza in Jammu on Thursday. A gunfight broke out between terrorists and security forces early on Thursday in which four militants were killed.

■ Report on Page 4

— PT7

Covid hits 50,000 pvt teachers

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

The Coronavirus pandemic has pushed teachers working in private sector schools into a huge financial crises, after several such schools closed down during the past eight months, asserted reports made by the Private Teachers and Lecturers Union AP (PTLUAP), United Teachers' Front (UTF) and other teachers organisations.

The unions prepared these reports about the conditions and travails of

teachers working in private educational institutions on various occasions during the last several months.

According to one such report, over 50,000 teachers working in private schools across the state had their lives turned upside down after the lockdown came into effect. The teachers complained that school managements were unwilling to pay even half the salaries due to closure of schools.

The private teachers sought ₹10,000 financial assistance from the gov-

ernment besides other measures towards payment of the eight months of salaries due to them.

The lockdown was imposed on March 24 owing to Covid, after which the educational institutions were closed. The state government allowed the reopening of schools for students of ninth and tenth classes on November 2, but only to clear their doubts. Regular classes were not allowed.

The government decided to restart educational institutions in a phased manner, under which

classes for VI, VII and VIII standards would be restarted on November 23. Classes for students of standard I to V would be restarted on December 14.

According to these reports, nearly 16,000 private schools operated in the state, in which nearly 80 per cent were "budget schools". Hence, these schools failed to pay salaries to teachers due to absence of regular income for the institutions themselves.

■ Page 2: Teachers allege norms remained on paper

VIZAG IN FINAL OF RACE FOR WORLD SMART CITY PRIZE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 19

In a rare achievement, Visakhapatnam has figured in the finals of the World Smart City Awards 2020, organised as part of the Smart City Expo World Congress in Barcelona in Spain.

Visakhapatnam is the only city from India to make it to the final list of the awards, where cities from 46 countries competed with each other.

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation Limited (GVMC) and the Greater Visakhapatnam Smart City Corporation Limited sent the 'Park for children with all abilities' on the Vizag RK beach road as their entry under the 'social integration through the creation of 'all abilities' public spaces' category.

■ Page 3: GVMC park for disabled cost ₹3.5 crore

Revamped 108 saved 4,021 critically ill Covid patients

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

The revamped 108 emergency response service ambulances saved lives of 4,021 critically ill, Coronavirus-infected patients by shifting them to Covid hospitals on time between April 1 and November 17.

The Aurobindo Emergency Medical Services, which started to operate 108 ambulance services, used to receive more than 2,000 calls per day when the spread of Covid-19 peaked between May and August.

The calls in many instances were from family members of critically ill patients, who were often senior citizens, who used to complain about severe breathing problems, indicating a probable Covid infection.

With 315 dedicated ambulances equipped

● THE CALLS in many cases were from family members of critically ill patients who were often senior citizens

with oxygen support and other medical requirements, authorities rushed to shift patients by providing oxygen support during transit to closest Covid hospitals. Several family members said that timely shifting of patients helped save life of their dear ones. Many even expressed gratitude to them, government claimed.

However, after the numbers of Covid cases began reducing, they are now getting between nearly 175-180 calls per day.

AEMS head of operations Kamle Suresh said, "It was a tough time for us. We used to take over 2,000 calls per day, especially from seriously infected Covid patients suffering from severe breathlessness. Since response time

is crucial, we used to give oxygen support during transit. Handling Covid patients meant we also had to take extra care to ensure safety of our staff."

The 108 ambulance service authorities transported 2.07 lakh Covid patients between April 1 and November 17, he said. They also attended to 9,381 patients suffering with cardiac problems. Victims of 41,375 road accident cases were also shifted to hospitals. On an average, 150 to 170 road accidents are being reported in the state per day.

The ambulances also rescued pregnant women in an advanced stage of labour, covering a total of 76,250 pregnancies. They also attended to 10,231 cases of consumption of poison like pesticide or phenol, apparently suicide bids. About 5,308 cases pertaining to animal bite or snake bite were also attended to.

BIHAR MINISTER OUT IN 3 DAYS ON GRAFT CHARGES

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, NOV. 19

Three days after he became Bihar's chief minister for the fourth straight term, the Nitish Kumar-led government faced its first political humiliation on Thursday when the state education minister Mewal Chaudhary had to resign from the post after being slammed for corruption charges.

Mr Chaudhary, who maintains that all charges against him are baseless, put in his resignation within hours of resuming office on Thursday after Mr Kumar intervened.

Mr Chaudhary has been facing flak from the Opposition parties, especially the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), ever since he took oath as the Cabinet minister along with the chief minister on November 16.

Speaking about his resignation, Mr Chaudhary said, "Accusations can only be proved either after a chargesheet is filed or the court passes an order."

SEC denied meet with collectors

Ramesh complains to Gov, to take legal recourse

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

The Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission (SEC) is planning to take legal recourse to protect its Constitutional authority and sanctity from the onslaught of criticism from the ruling YSRC party legislators and members, following its decision to hold gram panchayat elections in February next year.

Sources in the SEC revealed that State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar took a serious view of the objectionable comments made by minister for civil supplies Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao, alias Kodali Nani, and others. The minister and other YSRC leaders spoke in an extremely unparliamentary and uncouth language about the SEC decision to conduct gram panchayat polls, after consultation with the state government, in February.

The SEC reportedly complained to Governor V i s w a b h u s a n Harichandan in person and sought action against those who made such unacceptable remarks against the Commissioner.

Sources say that the Commissioner may move either the AP High Court or the Supreme Court, seeking an order to

MINISTER NANI ABUSES SEC RAMESH KUMAR

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

Minister for civil supplies Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao alias Kodali Nani launched a scathing criticism against SEC N. Ramesh Kumar for his decision to hold gram panchayat polls, and even challenged him to contest in polls after retiring from the service to prove his mettle.

The minister abused the SEC on Wednesday for "following diktats" of TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu. Nani flayed both Kumar and Naidu for "sitting in Hyderabad" and holding virtual meetings to take key decisions, without knowing ground realities.

■ Full report on Page 2

restrain ruling party legislators and leaders for making unsavoury remarks, undermining the sanctity of the Election Commission and for targeting the Commissioner directly.

It could be learnt from sources that the Commissioner was currently collating evidences

Mining scam: CBI raids ex-TD MLA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) raided the premises of former Telugu Desam MLA of Gurazala, Yarapathineni Srinivas Rao, and others, in connection with investigations into the illegal mining in Guntur district, in which valuable documents and unaccounted cash were found.

The CBI teams conducted searches in 25 places, including in Guntur district and Hyderabad at the premises of Srinivas Rao, his associates Ghattamaneni Nageswara Rao, N. Srinivasulu, N. Ramakotaiah, V. Venkateswarlu, M. Venkateswarlu and others, including private persons in the ongoing investigations.

During these searches, several incriminating documents, mobile phones, material objects and cash have been recovered.

Four years ago, former MLC T.G.V. Krishna Reddy had filed a petition in the AP High Court about large-scale illegal mining by the-then TD

MLA of Srinivas Rao. The YSR Congress, then the Opposition, agitated against the illegal mining in Konanki, Kesanupalli and Nadiakudi villages.

The then TD government ordered a CID probe, which later found illegal mining and involvement of Srinivas Rao and others. After coming into power, the YSRC handed over the illegal mining probe to the CBI, which conducted these raids on Thursday.

The CBI officials said that in pursuance of the notification issued by the government of AP, and a further notification issued by DoPT, Central government, the CBI has taken over 17 cases of illegal limestone mining from the AP CB-CID and registered a case on August 26 against 17 accused. It was alleged that the accused had fraudulently conducted illegal and unauthorised mining, quarrying and transportation of limestone in Konanki village.

■ Page 2: Illegal mining went on for years

INFORMATION | INNOVATION Urges industry to make conscious bid to scale up product-level innovations

PM: Time for world to use Indian tech solutions

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, NOV. 19

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will declare open Tungabhadra Pushkarams at 1:21 pm at Sankalbagh ghat on the banks of river Tungabhadra here on Friday.

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pilgrims. Though Pushkarams are synonymous with the holy dip in the river, Covid-19 is taking away most of the pushkar fervour as pilgrims would only be permitted to have a sprinkle shower instead of a holy dip. Ironically, the Telangana state government has permitted the holy dip on its side of the river, notably at Alampur, provided the pilgrims furnish a corona negative report.

■ Page 2: FM urges people to keep celebration simple

Bengaluru, Nov. 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said it is time for tech solutions that are designed in India but deployed for the world, and declared that the country is uniquely positioned to leap ahead in the information era.

He also called on the industry to make a conscious attempt to take product-level innovations to the next level.

"India as a country is uniquely positioned to leap ahead in the information

era. We have the best minds as well as the biggest market. Our local tech solutions have the potential to go global. India is at a sweet spot. It is time for tech-solutions that are designed in India but deployed for the world," Modi said.

Addressing the Bengaluru Tech Summit, 2020 (BTS2020) virtually, Karnataka's flagship technology event, he said, his government's policy decisions are always aimed at liberalising the tech and

innovations industry. Recently the government has eased the compliance burden on the IT industry in various ways. Besides, it has always tried to engage with stakeholders in the tech industry and chart out future-proof policy frameworks for India, Modi noted. "You all are the drivers of this industry. Can we make a conscious attempt to take our product-level innovations to the next level? A framework-level mindset has the potential to build an eco-

system of multiple successful products," he said at the inaugural of the summit attended among others by the Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa. Union IT and communications minister Ravi Shankar Prasad attended the event virtually.

Organised by the government of Karnataka along with Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society, Karnataka government's Vision Group on Information Technology, Biotechnology & StartUp,

and Software Technology Parks of India, the summit is scheduled to take place from November 19 to 21.

More than 25 nations are participating in the 23rd edition of the event along with thought leaders, industry captains, technocrats, researchers, innovators, investors, policymakers and educators from India and different parts of the world, officials said. Pointing out that technology is setting the pace for the defence sector to evolve, Modi said, earli-

er wars were determined by who had better horses and elephants, then came the era of fire-power, now technology is playing a very important role in global conflicts. From software to drones to UAVs, technology is redefining the defence sector. Also highlighting that with the rapid increase of tech use, data protection as well as cyber security has become very important, he said, our youth can play a big role in devising cyber security solutions. —PTI

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CAPITAL ISSUE

LIQUOR SHOPS: AP SAVES ₹108CR BY REVERSE TENDERING

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

The state government has saved ₹108.84 crore by opting for reverse tendering of rentals of shops accommodating liquor retail outlets in the state. Deputy chief minister and minister for excise K. Narayana Swamy told the media here on Thursday that as the state government was committed to implement prohibition of liquor in the state, it had taken up sale of liquor and set up government liquor retail outlets by taking private accommodation on lease basis. He said that after finding the rentals fixed for liquor shops were a bit high, the state government opted for reverse tendering of rentals of shops and it helped save ₹108.84 crore to the state exchequer.

The Deputy CM said that as part of efforts to implement prohibition of liquor in the state, their government had shut down 43,000 unauthorised liquor outlets popularly known as belt shops and added that they were taking all steps to curb smuggling of liquor from other states even by reducing the prices of liquor in the state.

He cautioned that in case anyone found smuggling liquor into the state, those responsible for it were being booked under the provisions of PD Act to serve as a deterrent.

With regard to commercial taxes, the Deputy CM said that out of targeted collection of commercial tax arrears of ₹961.09 crore, they have collected ₹513.89 crore so far.

GODAVARI DISTRICTS SELECTED FOR PM'S AWARD

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, NOV. 19

The East and West Godavari districts were selected for Prime Minister's Award under People's Participation in Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural) from Andhra Pradesh. Union Minister for Water Resources Mr Gajendra Shekavat announced the awards in a meeting held through video conference with the district collectors on Thursday.

WILL BUILD 15 LAKH HOUSES IN FIRST PHASE: MINISTER

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

Minister for housing C.S. Ranganatha Raju said that the YSRC government would construct 15 lakh houses under Navaratnalu flagship YSR Jagananna Pedalandariki Illu scheme. He conducted a review meeting with the officials here on Thursday in view of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's decision to distribute house sites on December 25. The minister announced that house pattas would be distributed to the beneficiaries on December 25 along with house sanctioned (for construction) letters.

He said that the government had already identified 30 lakhs beneficiaries and 15 lakhs houses will be constructed in the first phase.

FM TELLS PEOPLE TO KEEP CELEBRATIONS SIMPLE

From page 1

Finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy appealed to people to participate in a simple manner. He said the ghats will be open from 6 am to 6 pm on all days. People must produce E-ticket to enter and perform pinda pradhan and other pujas. 350 purohiths will be available at 23 ghats. Purohiths above 60 are not allowed to perform. District collector G Veeta Pandia said that the E-ticket website is an easy to use app and can be accessed on mobile phones.

Kurnool city has been enveloped with a festive atmosphere as dazzling electrical colorful lightings, illuminations, wall paintings and other decorations have come to life at all key circles in the city.

Meanwhile, 23 pushkar ghats have been set up in Mantralayam temple town, Naguladinne in Nandavaram mandal, Gundrevula in Kodumuri mandal, Sunkesusla and Panchchaligala in Kurnool mandal, various parts of Kurnool city, Nandikotkur rural, and Sangameswararam in Kothapalli mandal.

A huge Yagasala has been set up at Sankalbhag for yagnas.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy holds a review meeting with ministers and officials on YSR Cheyutha scheme at his Camp Office on Thursday. Ministers Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy is also seen.

Milch cattle distribution to be held on Nov. 26

7.50 lakh women would be benefited in the first phase, says CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy announced the mega launch of a dairy development programme covering 400 villages on November 26.

He conducted a review meeting on YSR Cheyutha and YSR Aasara schemes at his camp office on Thursday.

The Chief Minister said that nearly 7.50 lakh women would be benefited in the first phase of the virtual distribution of milch cattle spread over 400 villages in Prakasam, Chittoor and Kadapa districts.

The Chief Minister said that care should be taken in selection of breed before purchasing to be assured of good returns. He said that the cattle purchase committee should include people with technical expertise, insurance company representatives and bankers. He stated that veterinary services should also be strengthened by filling up vacant posts in the Animal

● **CHIEF MINISTER Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said that animal feed should be free of chemicals and should be prepared with natural ingredients. Diseases like cancer are on the rise due to food contaminated with chemicals, he said and added that focus should be on organic food.**

● **HE DIRECTED the officials to give priority to organic milk and meat and to promote organic milk brands by creating awareness among women on organic methods in order to get more returns.**

Husbandry department.

Jagan Mohan Reddy told the officials that dairy cattle should be treated at the Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBK) level for any veterinary issues. He said that video conferencing facilities being set up under RBKs should be utilised to provide treatment to cattle and focus should be on setting up call centres to provide veterinary services to animals.

The Chief Minister said that animal feed should be free of chemicals and should be prepared with natural ingredients. Diseases like cancer are

on the rise due to food contaminated with chemicals, he said and added that focus should be on organic food. He directed the officials to give priority to organic milk and meat and to promote organic milk brands by creating awareness among women on organic methods in order to get more returns.

The officials said that 4.68 lakh women have opted for cows and buffaloes and 2.49 lakh for sheep and goats. The unit cost is ₹75,000 and the project cost is around ₹5,386 crore. The government has planned to dis-

tribute 2,11,780 cow (units), 2,57,211 buffaloes (units), 1,51,671 sheep (units) and 97,480 goats (units) across the state.

Animal husbandry department officials will conduct physical verification of every animal being given to the beneficiary and register the list of beneficiaries under RBKs. The health card of cattle will carry veterinary details and output measures.

With regard to retail stores, started by women beneficiaries of YSR Cheyutha and YSR Aasara schemes, the officials said that 78,000 shops have been opened in urban and rural areas till date.

The Chief Minister directed the officials to take options from 2.78 lakh new beneficiaries identified in the second phase of YSR Cheyutha scheme.

Panchayat raj minister Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy, fisheries and animal husbandry minister Sidiri Appalaraju and other officials attended the meeting.

TD DEMANDS WHITE PAPER ON ATTACKS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

Telugu Desam demanded that the YSRC government release a White Paper on the murders, suicides and suicide attempts which were going on unabated among the Muslim minorities, Dalits, BCs, farmers, construction workers and all sections of the society.

TD general secretary Panchumarthi Anuradha has alleged that attacks on all sections of the society, mainly suppressed classes, are continuing since the YSRC came to power.

Anuradha lamented that the people, who gave a landslide victory, were now stuck in deepening life and death problems under the oppressive rule of the YSRC government.

The TD general secretary said Chandrababu Naidu strove hard and moulded the state into a 'Sunrise AP' during his five year regime. But now, Jagan Mohan Reddy followed all sorts of retrogressive and reverse policies only to reduce the 'Sunrise AP' into a 'Suicide AP'.

TD gears up for Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 19

The TD is gearing up to activate its cadres and leaders all over Tirupati Parliament segment for the ensuing byelection to the seat. The byelection became necessary following the death of sitting member Balli Durga Prasad, who succumbed to Coronavirus.

Even as the YSRC and the BJP are debating over the candidate, the TD had decided to field former Union minister Panabaka Lakshmi and activating party cadres and leaders in the Parliament constituency.

Incidentally, Lakshmi contested for the seat against Durga Prasad and lost to him with more than 2 lakh votes.

Tirupati Lok Sabha seat consists of 7 Assembly segments including Sarvepalli, Guduru, Sullurpeta and Venkatagiri in Nellore district and Sathya-vedu, Srikalahasti and Tirupati in Chittoor district. The YSRC is in a comfortable position having bagged all the 7 seats, five of them with sizeable margins.

The TD leaders have been banking on unrest among the farmers in the SPSR Nellore district over serious irregularities in procurement of paddy, growing rowdism, increase in the cost of essential commodities and caste-based politics.

TD politburo member and former minister S o m i r e d d y Chandramohan Reddy said that people are vexed with the high-handed behaviour of the YSRC

CM to finalise YSRC candidate for bypoll

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday held a meeting with party leaders and took their opinion to finalise the candidate for Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll.

The party leaders have left the decision of selecting the candidate to the CM. Tirupati Lok Sabha seat fell vacant following the demise of YSRC MP B. Durga Prasad.

Deputy Chief Minister K. Narayana Swamy, min-

legislators as well as the government interference in the functioning of the TTD. "We are entering the fray in a hostile atmosphere where rowdy elements are ruling the roost and police and revenue authorities are following the footsteps of YSRC legislators unlike during the TD regime. People are certain to see the difference and teach a lesson to the YSRC," Chandramohan Reddy asserted.

TD national general secretary and party district unit president and MLC Beeda Ravichandra said that people of the state voted for the YSRC to give it one opportunity but they have been realising the difference between the words and works of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy now.

He said they are entering the fray with a hope

isters Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Balineni Srinivas Reddy, Kodali Nani, Anil Kumar Yadav and Botsa Satyanarayana, MPs M. Venkata Ramana and Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy, MLAs Kakani Govardhan Reddy, Varaprasad, B. Madusudan Reddy, K. Adimulam and Kiliveti Sanjeevaiah, Council chief whip Ummareddy Venkateshwarlu, party general secretary and government adviser (Public Affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy were present at the meeting.

that people will give a chance to the TD because of its welfare programmes and good governance.

To a question on initial decision of the TD to not to contest if ticket is given to any family member of Balli Durga Prasad, Ravichandra said they would have considered it if there was any appeal either from the family or the government but there was none.

Sources in the YSRC said the Chief Minister has to decide about the candidate while hinting that either Balli Durga Prasad's wife Saralamma or son Kalyan will be picked for the seat. The CM is in favour of fielding Saralamma but she is recommending her son's name, a YSRC leader said while adding that a decision will be taken shortly.

Minister Nani abuses SEC Ramesh Kumar

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

Minister for civil supplies Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao alias Nani launched a scathing criticism against State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar for his decision to hold gram panchayat polls, and even challenged him to contest in polls after retiring from the service to prove his mettle.

The minister abused the SEC on Wednesday for "following diktats" of Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu. Nani flayed both Kumar and Naidu for "sitting in Hyderabad" and holding virtual meetings to take important decisions, without knowing the ground realities.

Nani said, "I wonder how SEC Ramesh Kumar could plan to hold gram panchayat polls in February when the state was witnessing thousands of Covid cases besides facing a threat of a second wave. He deferred local body polls in March on pretext of Covid, at a time when only a few cases were being reported daily."

The minister argued that because Chandrababu Naidu had appointed Ramesh Kumar to the post after retirement, he was repaying his gratitude and surpassing limits to show loyalty, and even comprising constitutional norms in the process. He "advised" Ramesh Kumar to join politics after retirement and contest elections, representing the Telugu Desam so it could be settled who had the support of people.

Nani demanded that Ramesh Kumar quit his position if he did not have trust on rules. He said the state government was not ready to allow conduct of gram panchayat polls as a large number of police personnel, revenue officials and teachers were infected with Covid.

Some of them, who recovered from the infection, were facing other health issues, he said, adding that the government was not going to risk lives of officials and people by holding elections.

The minister warned that if the Commission intended to go ahead with conduct of gram panchayat polls, the government would approach the courts.

ILLEGAL MINING WENT ON FOR YEARS

from page 1

For several years, illegal mining continued in Piduguralla mandal, Kesanupalli and Nadikudi villages of Dacheppalli mandal in Guntur district causing revenue losses to the government and other licensed lease holders. It was further alleged that illegal mining of several

lakh of tones of limestone was conducted by the accused from 2014 to 2018, as a result of which, natural resources worth several crore of rupees have been plundered.

CBI officials informed the media that in order to ascertain the quantum of unauthorized and illegal mining, CBI was conducting volumetric analysis, using satellite imagery.

non-officials who are beneficiaries of such tampering of land records.

The SIT will have to submit a comprehensive report within three months from the day of taking charge.

The Vizag land scam created a flutter in political circles during the previous TD regime. The previous government set up SIT in June 2017 headed by Vineet Briljal and it submitted its report in January 2018.

RECORDS | TAMPERING

Team has to submit a report within 3 months from the day of taking charge

SIT seeks public suggestions on land scam

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 19

The Special Investigation Team, formed by the YSRC-led government to inquire into the over 1,000 acres of land scam, sought suggestions and recommendations from the members of civil society and general public to ensure a citizen-friendly governance. In turn, the SIT will submit the suggestions to the state government.

However, it will not receive any complaint it has already done soon after the formation of the committee. The individual grievances have already been obtained and addressed by way of petitions received in VMRDA auditorium in November, 2019.

The suggestions should be precise and to the point. They should be sent to sit19suggest@gmail.com from November 21.

The newly-constituted SIT is conducting a com-

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prehensive inquiry into the allegations of tampering of land records in Visakhapatnam and surrounding mandals involving over 1,000 acres of land

in the areas of Madhurawada and Kommadi.

Retired IAS officer Vijay Kumar heads the SIT, with retired IAS officer Y.V. Anuradha, retired district

OTHER STORIES

Italian award for Vizag doctor

Visakhapatnam: An abstract on advancement in assisted reproduction submitted by director of Krishna IVF Clinic Dr GA Rama Raju for the World Virtual Conference at Italy has been awarded as the best by the Medical Education Academy of Italy, which is organising The Luteinizing Hormone World Conference-2020. Dr Rama Raju is also member of Board of Studies in Human Genetics of Andhra University. Dr. Rama Raju has been contributing to the research and development in the areas of assisted reproductive technologies for the last three decades.

MITS' PROF SECURES PLACE IN MOST-CITED SCIENTISTS' LIST

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 19

A senior assistant professor from the department of mechanical engineering, Madanapalle Institute of Technology & Science (MITS), secured a place in a list that represents the top 2 per cent of the most-cited scientists across the world.

Researchers at the Stanford University, USA, have recently published a list that represents the top 2 per cent of the most-cited scientists in various disciplines. This large database was created by a team of experts, led by Dr John Ioannidis of the Stanford University, based on the data from Scopus that ranks journals and gives citation indices.

MITS principal Dr. C. Yuvaraj said that the exhaustive list has 1,59,683 scientists working in different fields and nearly 1,594 Indians, mostly faculty from eminent institutions like IITs, are featured in it. "Among the scholars featured in the list – prepared by the researchers of Stanford University, the name of our senior assistant professor Dr Devarajan Yuvarajan has appeared. Based on the analysis of the citations, publications, H-index patent records etc., he got this recognition", he added.

LOUD BLAST CREATES PANIC IN BANAGANAPALLE

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI
KURNOOL, NOV. 19

Banaganapalle town witnessed a loud and deafening explosive sound on Thursday morning and the people were shuddered and nonplussed as to what had triggered the explosion. The explosion also created panic among police a day before Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is scheduled to visit Kurnool district.

The impact of explosion was such that it created tremors on the ground and was felt at a few miles away from the site of blast, said a source. Rampant use of gelatin sticks in blasting of hills and hillocks by businessmen belonging to the YSR Congress party and the complicity of mining officials has become a grave cause of concern to public safety in the district, said an official.

However the police identified cause of the sound to explosive material stored in a mining quarry and crushing unit near Ravvalakonda village located at outskirts of Banaganapalle B. Suresh Kumar Reddy said that there was no damage of property or human loss due to this sudden incident but huge sound created panic among the people.

DEVELOP KOPPARTHI INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, SAYS COLLECTOR

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, NOV. 19

APIIC Special Chief Secretary Karikal Valaven directed concerned authorities to complete infrastructure works in the industrial areas within the stipulated time. On Thursday, he inspected the Kopparthi industrial estate on the outskirts of Kadapa along with district collector Chevuri Harikiran.

Speaking on the occasion he said that, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is paying special attention to the development of industries in the district and to that end, Kopparthi Industrial Estate would be made a model industrial park in the state. As part of this, steps are being taken to set up a 'YSR Electronic Manufacturing Cluster'. For the industrial park in Pulivendula, the lay-outs for the newly set up Autonagar were examined. The space required for the newly established 'Apache' leather industry was being explored.

Covid strategies start showing results in AP

+ve rate in educational institutions stands at 0.3%

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

The positivity rate pertaining to educational institutions (schools and higher education institutions) in Andhra Pradesh stands at just 0.3 per cent. Only 1,491 individuals (students and teachers) tested positive out of the 5,12,890 who were tested across institutions.

The officials stating that the administration's strategy has worked, maintained that it is now translating into actual numbers.

Andhra Pradesh has topped the test/million charts for over six months now and continues to test on a war-footing. This has led to the cases rising to as many as 10,000 a day when the state hit its peak. It is important to acknowledge that this did not

RESTRICTIONS FOR KIDS, ELDERLY TO CONTINUE: TTD

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 19

TTD on Thursday said that news making the rounds in social media regarding the opening of darshan for senior citizens is false.

The TTD clarified that due to Covid-19 restrictions, it is not allowing darshan, for children below 10 years and those above 65 years.

This is as per the guidelines of Central and state governments.

The TTD appealed to devotees not to believe such rumours and false news.

It may be recalled that TTD EO Dr. K.S. Jawahar Reddy earlier had said that a decision on providing darshan for senior citizens at Tirumala temple will be taken after Unlock 6.0 guidelines.

"However, restrictions are still in vogue and TTD has not decided to provide darshan for the above age groups," he said.

ALANKARA FETE AT CENTURIES OLD RAMA TEMPLE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 19

Elaborate arrangements are being made for the nine days long Alankara Brahmotsavams at the 200-years-old Sri Kodandarama Swamy shrine at Buchireddypalem starting from November 22.

The temple administration, which could not conduct annual Brahmotsavams in April due to Covid, holding the festivals as per the guidance of TTD Agama Pundit N.V. Mohana Rangacharyulu.

According to temple administration, the Brahmotsavams will commence with Ankurarpana at 7 pm on November 22, Sunday. The important events include Sesha Vahanam on November 23, Hanumantha Seva on November 27, and Garuda Seva on November 28.

TESTING TIMES	
Total no. of school visits	39,111.
No. of teachers tested	1,29,276.
No. of teachers tested positive	1,023.
No. of students tested	2,08,796.
No. of students tested positive	458.
No of colleges tested	5515.
No. of college students tested	1,40,762.
No. of college students tested positive	8.
No. of lectures tested	34,056.
No. of lectures tested positive	2.
Positivity rate	0.3 %

deter the vigour with which the state was testing. Multiple functionaries reiterated time and time again that the state will stick to its strategy of large-scale testing despite the increasing numbers.

The persistence shown

by the authorities, led by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has delivered for the state and the numbers prove it. The recovery rate stands at a mammoth 97.27 per cent with the mortality at 0.80 per cent.

State records 1,316 Covid cases, 11 deaths

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

AP registered 1,316 Covid-19 cases rising the tally to 8,58,711 and 11 deaths taking the toll to 6,910.

The state health authorities released the Covid-19 bulletin on Thursday reporting that out of 75,165 samples tested, 1,316 persons were found infected with Covid-19. Out of a total number of 94,08,868 samples tested so far in the state, 8,58,711 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,35,810 were recovered while 16,000 are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Covid-19, WG recorded 227 followed by 206 in Guntur, 198 in Chittoor, 196 in Krishna, 183 in Eluru, 60 in Anantapur, 58 in Kadapa, 45 in Visakhapatnam, 43 in Prakasam, 40 in Nellore, 28

APSRTC first to use DEF

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 19

APSRTC is the first to use Diesel Exhaust Fluid (DEF) to reduce the amount of air pollution created by diesel engines of the buses for the protection of the environment.

APSRTC executive director G. Koteswara Rao, who launched the usage of DEF on the bus stand premises of Vijayawada on Thursday, said that APSRTC is the first among Road Transport Corporations of all states to use DEF. He said that Intermediate Bulk Containers in 19 locations would be established for the usage of DEF in the APSRTC.

He explained that DEF is a liquid used to reduce the amount of air pollution created by

SENSOR-BASED COVID KIT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 19

Continuing with its innovative projects, Diesel Loco Shed of Waltair Division developed sensor-based operation of hand wash, thermal scanning and hand sanitisers. The project has been completed and kept at the DRM office, Donaparathi for the usage of staff and visitors.

in Srikakulam, 18 in Vizianagaram and 14 in Kurnool.

With regard to the total Covid-19 active cases, East Godavari recorded 4,934 followed by 2,192 in Krishna, 1,810 in Guntur, 1,410 in West Godavari, 1,284 in Visakhapatnam, 1,050 in Chittoor, 1,015 in

ACB NABS PANCHAYAT SECY TAKING BRIBE

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 19

Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) caught the panchayat secretary of Donakonda Sk. Mahboob Basha for demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹25,000 from a person for doing an official favour, at the panchayat office in Donakonda village and mandal in Prakasam district on Thursday.

According to the ACB, the panchayat secretary demanded a bribe of ₹25,000 from the complainant Dasari Chinna Koteswara Rao to issue a house plan.

Koteswara Rao complained to the ACB officials on the errant officer and as per their instructions, he held consultations with the officer and agreed to give the said amount.

He mentioned that 2,000 litres capacity DEF has been set up with a metering unit and a pump at Vijayawada.

He said that when the fluid is nearing completion order will be placed and the tanks would be filled through refill vehicles.

Javadimalai forest area of Tamil Nadu. Workers from the villages near the Javadimalai forest area are being engaged to cut down red sandalwood trees in Seshachalam, Lankamala and Nallamala forest areas in Kadapa district. They smuggle them into Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and sell them to international red sandalwood smugglers.

Both have also been convicted for house burglary and chain snatching in the past. They were booked in various police stations in Kadapa district.

Following the orders of

Active cases down to a mere 16,516 despite the state reporting 8,57,395 positive cases and this was made possible by the strategies adopted.

Commissioner, Health and Family Welfare, Katamneni Bhaskar, said, "We stuck to our strategy of large-scale testing, early detection and early treatment. The reason why you see such low positivity rates in educational institutions is because we have tested as many as 93,33,703 people, detected 8,57,395 people, and have successfully treated 8,33,980 people. We will continue to work towards winning the war against the virus.

● Andhra Pradesh has topped the test/million charts for over six months now and continues to test on a war-footing.



Tourists enjoy a train ride around in the Kailasagiri Hill Park in Visakhapatnam overlooking the city on Thursday. Visakhapatnam Smart City project is the only project from India in the finalist list of the Smart City Expo being conducted by the World Congress Barcelona. — DC

GVMC park for disabled cost ₹3.5 cr

From page 1

The GVMC developed the 'Park for children with all abilities' under the Vizag Smart City project on beach road at a cost of ₹3.5 crore. Under the Smart Cities Mission, the GVMC retrofitted the children's park on beach road, where previously the park was not accessi-

ble to differently abled children, and lacked a dedicated play area for them in the park.

Vizag's entry for the awards was among the top three list under the particular category, but the award was won by the state of Alagoas, Brazil for their project on evidence-based slum improvement and urban development.

GVMC Commissioner Dr G. Srijana said she felt very happy to see Vizag reaching the final stage of the awards, which received entries from 46 countries.

"It gives us more encouragement to take up such projects and win awards at the international-level. We will do better next year," she added.

Karthika ends with Panchami theertham

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 19

On the last day of ongoing annual Karthika brahmotsavam of Goddess Padmavati Devi, Panchami theertham (Chakrasnanam) was observed at the Tiruchanoor temple here on Thursday morning.

The holy event was conducted at the special water tank set up inside the tem-

ple during the kumbha lagna at 11.52 am. Later, as a traditional practice, the Sare - presentation from Tirumala temple reached the Tiruchanoor temple in a formal procession. Also, as part of tradition 112-gram gold medal, 249-gram platinum Lakshmi medal and a platinum chain with Dasavatara medals were also brought in a procession for decorating the goddesses.

SPEAKING BOOKS IN HANUMAN CHALISA, BHAGAVAD GITA RELEASED

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 19

The first of its kind Speaking Books, in Sampoorna Hanuman Chalisa and Bhagavad Gita, have been released by TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy in his camp office at Tirumala on Thursday. The innovative speaking books by the Hoyoma company of New Delhi are being marketed by the Safe Shop. These books help the visionless, uneducated and elderly to go through the spiritual texts easily.

According to the makers

and marketers, the book consists of a mobile shape electronic reader which when flashed on any page, emits shlokas and narratives in audio format. As of now, the Bhagavad Gita audio is available in Hindi, English and Sanskrit voice.

The Hanuman Chalisa is available in Telugu, Hindi, English, Assam, Nepali, Tamil, and Malayalam languages. Readers can choose the language of their choice in the electronic reader.

Safe shop representatives Murali, Rakesh, Lahari and Sai Kumar were present.

All party members picket collector's room

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, NOV. 19

The members of All Party Committee staged picketing near the Collector's chamber on Thursday, in protest against the Collector's refusal to take a petition regarding 15.76 acres belonging to Government Industrial Training Institute (ITI) from them.

According to All Party Committee members, the government has decided to hand over the land of ITI to Rangaraya Medical College for expansion and the state government has also issued a GO.

The All Party Committee, Students' Organisations and others strongly opposed the move and they conducted a round table meeting and took a resolution demanding the government to cancel the GO and ITI land should not be acquired by RMC.

As a part of the decision, the committee members and agitators staged a dharna in front of the Collector's

office. They went to the Collector's chamber to meet the East Godavari district Collector D. Muralidhar Reddy. However, the officials allowed only one leader to meet the collector.

CPM city secretary Ch. Ajay Kumar said that the collector told him that already a decision has been taken and that the proposals were already sent to the government and that he would not take any representation regarding the ITI site.

Mr Ajay Kumar said that he made repeated appeals to the collector, which have gone in vain. Expressing concern, the All Party men staged picketing near the collector's chamber and said that as a public servant, he should take their representation and send it to the government. They raised slogans of "Save Kakinada" and "Save ITI".

However, the District Revenue Officer Ch. Sathibabu took the representation from them and sorted out the matter.

Rajamahendravaram MP proposes to set up RUDA

DC CORRESPONDENT
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM, NOV 19

Rajamahendravaram MP Margani Bharat said that there is a proposal of setting up of Rajamahendravaram Urban Development Authority (RUDA), after the formation of the Lok Sabha Constituency as a separate district.

Mr Bharat along with Rajamahendravaram Municipal Commissioner M. Abhishiktha Kishore, toured the city on Thursday, and

inspected the works of developing the road between Lalacheruvu junction to Quarry Market Centre, Central Divider works, school development works in Ramadasu Pet, and Kambala tank development work.

He said that a cricket ground had been proposed at the Arts College, multi-level parking at Pushkar Ghat, Black Top Road works, modern slaughterhouse at KVK Nagulacheruvu stadium, road expansion works at RTC Complex, an outer ring road connecting Rajamahend-

ravaram, Kovvuru and Nidadavole towns.

Mr Bharat said that 15 types of development like cricket stadium, football court, Havelock bridge and others have been proposed and the city would be extended to 165 square kilometres from the present 46 square kilometres to be made into Greater Rajamahendravaram.

He said that he would appeal to the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to grant ₹200 crore to the development of the city.

SHORT TAKES

BJP, BPF TO GO SEPARATE WAYS IN ASSAM

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, NOV. 19

In what may lead to a major realignment of political forces, the ruling BJP is heading to breaking its partnership with Bodoland People's Front (BPF) that it had built more than four years ago to form its first government in Assam, along with the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP).

Differences between the two political parties have cropped after the decision of the BJP to go all out to take control of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) in elections which are going to take place in two phases on December 7 and 10. The council has been in the hands of BPF for the last 17 years at a stretch.

Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, while campaigning for elections to Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), an autonomous council, said, "The BJP will contest the 2021 Assembly elections on its own here, too. There will be no alliance with BPF this time."

The BJP made a seat-sharing arrangement with the BPF and AGP before the 2016 Assembly polls and formed the first coalition government in the state. The BPF had won 12 seats and joined hands with the BJP after dumping Congress, which had been its partner in government since 2011. The BJP had finished short of a simple majority in the 2016 polls and banked on BPF and AGP to form its government.

K'TAKA BJP STIRS TROUBLE WITH MARATHA BODY

VINAY MADHAV | DC BENGALURU, NOV. 19

The BJP strategy in Karnataka to win the byelections by promising sops to the dominant community in each constituency is becoming counter-productive for the government.

The government announced the formation of the Maratha People Development Authority, just on the eve of the byelections to the Basavakalyana constituency, which has a sizable Marathi population.

This move has irked pro-Karnada organisations as Karnataka has a long border as well as water sharing disputes with Maharashtra. It has given a platform for Maharashtra not only to reiterate its claim on Belagavi, but also to extend it till Karawar. Worse even the Maharashtra Ekikarana Samithi in Belagavi has opposed the move to form the Maratha Development Authority.

Basavakalyana has over 30,000 Marathi speaking voters and the bypoll for the constituency is in offing. Soon after announcing this, the Lingayat community, which is the dominant community in the state, demanded a similar body for them. The government immediately announced the Lingayat Development Corporation, as the constituency has more than 35,000 Lingayats.

MNS TO HOLD STIR AGAINST 'INFLATED' ELECTRICITY BILLS

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, NOV. 19

The issue of inflated electricity bills is likely to escalate further in Maharashtra with Raj Thackeray-led MNS has announced statewide protests across the state, if the bills are not waived off till Monday.

MNS leader Bala Nandgaonkar said on Thursday, "The state government had promised to provide waiver in electricity bills. We met several people including Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and NCP chief Sharad Pawar on this issue. But nothing has happened. In the race in the MVA government to take credit for the waiver, people of Maharashtra are made to suffer."

The MNS would hold protests at all district offices in the state on Monday, if the electricity bills are not waived off, he added.

Another MNS leader Sandeep Deshpande tweeted, "We have tried everything from statements, applications, meetings to pleas (to demand waiver in the electricity bills), but the government is not ready to move. Finally, to provide relief to people, we have to hit the streets to fight on this issue."

Raju Shetti, the chief of Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana, one of the supporters of MVA government, has also appealed people not to pay the electricity bills.

Malabar calling



An aerial view of ship refuelling during the second phase of the Malabar naval exercise in the Arabian sea. India, Australia, Japan and the United States started the second phase of a strategic navy drill on November 17 in the Northern Arabian sea. — Indian Navy

MP'S DEFEATED MINISTERS MAY GET PARTY POSTS

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, NOV. 19

Rajya Sabha member and senior BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia on Thursday indicated that state ministers who lost the November 3 Assembly byelections may be suitably accommodated.

Scindia, who arrived here in the afternoon from Delhi, told reporters that he had earlier held discussions with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on the fate of the defeated ministers.

Asked if the defeated ministers would be accommodated in corpora-tion bodies, he said, "The BJP has always promoted those who worked hard." He hastened to add that the party would take the final call on the matter.

Three out of 14 non-MLA ministers in the Shivraj Singh government who sought re-election lost the recent Assembly byelections. While two of them, Imarti Devi and Giriraj Dandotia, are yet to resign from their posts, the other minister, An-del Singh Kansana, has put in his papers.

Rajasthan to ease mining rules for new Ram temple

Jaipur/Ayodhya, Nov. 19: The district administration in Rajasthan's Bharatpur is seeking the denotification of part of a wildlife sanctuary to allow the mining of a special sandstone, much sought after by builders including those constructing the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Thousands of tonnes of the pink sandstone mined in Bharatpur's Bansri Paharpur have been sourced for the temple over the years, but much more is needed.

There were concerns in Ayodhya that supplies of this stone with a unique pink hue would dry up. Since blocks of this sandstone had already been carved — ready to be put in place as the temple comes up — switching over to a lesser grade of stone would have caused problems. The Dholpur variant is said to be no match to the Bansri Paharpur stone.

Authorities in Congress-run Rajasthan denied that the move to denotify Bansri Paharpur block in Bharatpur's Band Baretha wildlife sanctuary has anything specific to do with the Ram temple. But a Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader approved of reports that this "technical problem" is now being sorted out.

"The Rajasthan government never created hurdles in the supply of the stone. However, there was some technical problem regarding Forest and Wildlife Act at Bansri

Paharpur in Bharatpur district, which the Rajasthan government is taking steps to denotify," senior VHP leader Triloki Nath Pandey said in Ayodhya.

He said there has been cooperation from all past governments — including those of Mayawati, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav in Uttar Pradesh — for uninterrupted supply of building material for the Ram temple.

Anubhai Sompura, an architect associated with the temple project, said one lakh cubic feet of the stone has already been stockpiled, adding that two lakh cubic feet is still needed. According to Bharatpur district collector Nathmal Didel, initial steps have now been taken for the denotification of Bansri Paharpur block — a move which will remove its status as forestland and allow legal mining.

A preliminary survey is being done by a team of revenue, forest and mining department officials, he said.

"After the initial survey, a report will be sent to the chief wildlife warden of the forest department," he said, adding that the recommendations will go to the Centre for approval.

He said the stone is in high demand across the country and the process has not begun because it is required for the Ram Temple.

— PTI

4 Jaish militants heading to Kashmir Valley gunned down

Weapons haul included 11 AK-47 assault rifles, 3 pistols, 29 hand grenades

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, NOV. 19

Four suspected Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) militants on their way to Kashmir Valley with a huge weapons cache were gunned down by the security forces during an encounter at a toll plaza along the Jammu-Srinagar highway on Thursday.

The weapons haul included 11 AK-47 assault rifles, three pistols, 29 hand grenades, satellite and mobile phones and compass. "It is for the first time in past few years that such a huge recovery has been made from slain terrorists after an encounter. Apparently they were planning something very big in the Valley," said inspector general of police (Jammu range) Mukesh Singh.

He said it apparently was "a newly infiltrated group" of militants which was travelling in a goods lorry to the Valley from

Jammu. "But when the truck was stopped at the police check-point at Ban Toll Plaza in Nagrota (22.4 km north of Jammu city) at around 5 am and the policemen began searching it, the driver stepped out and fled. Then the terrorists on board opened a heavy volume of fire, triggering an encounter which lasted for about three hours," he told reporters.

The IGP said that all the four militants were killed and two policemen were injured in the gunfight. "The injured policemen were immediately evacuated to the hospital and both of them are stable," he said. The truck was damaged in the operation in which the Army and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) also took part.

The police sources said that during routine checking of vehicles, the driver of the Valley-bound truck hesitated in answering the policemen's queries, got

off the vehicle and ran away. A group of policemen then quickly started searching the truck while others took up positions as a precautionary measure.

In January this year, three JeM militants were killed in an encounter with the police after a similar situation had emerged at the same place. The police said a manhunt has been launched for the truck driver.

The police also said that the identities of the slain militants are being ascertained but as per intelligence inputs the group belonged to JeM which sneaked in Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan through some porous section of the 198-km stretch of the International Border (IB), most probably in Kathua district.

Asked where the militants infiltrated, the IGP, however, said: "This is a matter of investigation. We are looking into it. We are trying to find out." Replying to another ques-

Parl panel grills Twitter for Kamra anti-SC, CJI tweets

New Delhi, Nov. 19: A parliamentary committee questioned representatives of social media giant Twitter on stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra's recent "obscene" tweets targeting the Supreme Court and the chief justice of India and sought a reply within seven days, the panel's chairperson Meenakshi Lekhi said on Thursday.

This came close on the heels of Twitter apologising in writing to the same parliamentary panel for wrongly showing Ladakh in China and promising to correct the error by the month-end.

Twitter India representatives deposed before the Joint Committee of Parliament on Data Protection Bill on Thursday.

"It is shameful that Twitter is allowing its platform for obscene remarks like the one by stand-up comedian Kunal

● **THIS COMES** close on the heels of Twitter apologising in writing to the same parliamentary panel for wrongly showing Ladakh in China and promising to correct the error by the month-end.

● **KAMRA HAS** refused to retract his controversial tweets against the Supreme Court or apologise for them, saying he believes they 'speak for themselves'.

● **MEENAKSHI LEKHI** said members of the committee across political spectrum grilled Twitter.

Kamra against the Supreme Court and the chief justice of India," Lekhi told reporters here.

"Twitter is allowing its platform to be misused for abusing top constitutional authorities, such as Supreme Court and chief

justice of India," she said.

She said members of the committee across political spectrum, including Congress MP Vivek Tankha, BSP MP Ritesh Pandey and BJD MP Bhatruhari Mahtab, grilled Twitter representatives on this issue. Lekhi also said that explanation of Twitter about banning handles and tweets was found to be inadequate.

Meanwhile, Kamra has refused to retract his controversial tweets against the Supreme Court or apologise for them, saying he believes they "speak for themselves".

Earlier, Attorney General K.K. Venugopal consented to the initiation of criminal contempt proceedings against him for a series of tweets following the Supreme Court giving interim bail to Republic TV Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami.

— PTI



GUPKAR DECLATION A CONSPIRACY, SAYS NAQVI

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, NOV. 19

Union minister for minority affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi has termed the 'People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration' (PAGD) formed by Jammu and Kashmir's regional opposition parties and their allies from national left parties to seek restoration of its special status as a "conspiracy" and asserted that the abrogation of Article 370 in August last year was the "death of destructive dynastic politics" in the erstwhile state.

He said that likewise the PAGD will prove but a "dying declaration" for "dynastic and destructive politics" of the Congress and other alliance partners in the erstwhile state.

"It (the formation of PAGD) was the conspiracy of political parties against the people of the Union Territory. The amalgam will try to keep J&K away from development and prosperity," he said while speaking at a rally of BJP workers in the frontier town of Kupwara. He claimed that the people of J&K were deprived of their political rights only because of Articles 370 and 35A "as the dynasty rule in J&K had kept them away from the mainstream and unaware of constitutional rights."

He said that the maiden District Development Council polls in J&K are being contested by all the parties including those which had claimed that they won't contest any polls until the August 5, 2019 decision is reversed. "These elections," he said, "will send a clear message that the people of J&K are now part of dignity, development, rights and all this will be fulfilled by BJP"

DMK MLA Aruna hospitalised after overdose of sleeping pills

ARULOLI M. | DC TENKASI, NOV. 19

Factional fight in the local DMK unit here has allegedly pushed former minister and sitting Alangulam MLA and DMK state doctors' wing secretary, Poongothai Aladi Aruna, to attempt suicide.

She was found unconscious at her residence in Alangulam on Thursday morning and was rushed to a private hospital (Shifa hospital) in Tirunelveli, where she is under treatment.

The hospital director, Dr Mohammed Arafath, in a statement issued on Thursday noon said, "She is being evaluated. At present, she is conscious, responsive and her vital

● **A DOCTOR** herself, Poongothai Aladi Aruna, took the extreme step allegedly hurt by insult meted out to her at a party meeting organised on Wednesday night at Kadayam union in Tenkasi district.

parameters are satisfactory."

The statement also added that her clinical condition warranted stay in the intensive care unit, and she is continuously monitored by a team of doctors.

Former Assembly speaker R. Avudaiyappan, former Radhapuram MLA Appavu, and sitting Tirunelveli MP Gnanadhiraviam, visited Poongothai Aladi Aruna in the hospital.

A doctor herself, Poongothai Aladi Aruna, daughter of veteran Dravidian ideologist late

Aladi Aruna, consumed an overdose of sleeping pills, allegedly hurt by insult meted out to her at a party meeting organised on Wednesday night at Kadayam union in Tenkasi district, said party functionaries.

Sources said in the meeting, the MLA was allegedly abused by supporters of Kadayam union secretary, Kumar, who claimed that Poongothai was not respecting office-bearers of the district unit.

Following an altercation, Poongothai walked out in the middle of the meeting as some functionaries

raised their voices against her, but was later called inside.

Supporters of Kumar had further tried to prevent her from delivering her speech on the stage by switching off the mike, said party sources.

Poongothai Aladi Aruna was former minister for social welfare in the Karunanidhi ministry since 2004, and is said to be a staunch supporter of party's women's wing secretary and Thoothukudi MP, Kanimozhi.

It is to be noted that Alangulam MLA's younger brother, Ezhilvanan, is also an aspirant for the party ticket to contest in the Alangulam Assembly constituency in the 2021 Assembly election.

DIGITAL | ECONOMY IT minister says India producing huge data in digital ecosystem

Govt keen to finalise data protection law

Bengaluru, Nov. 19: Union IT and communications minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Thursday said the government was very keen to promote India as a very big centre of the data economy and would finalise a data protection law very soon.

"I'm very keen to promote India as a very big centre of the data economy. Data is going to drive the digital economy. It is also going to drive international commerce," he said.

Addressing the Bengaluru Tech Summit, 2020 (BTS2020) virtually,

he said India produces huge data and the digital ecosystem, like mobile phones and Aadhaar, is producing data.

"We are going to finalise a data protection law very soon. India is waiting for its movement for data economy, data innovation, data refinery. I would urge the Chief Minister (of Karnataka) to ensure that the state becomes a great centre of India's data economy," he added.

Organised by the Karnataka government, along with Karnataka Innovation and

Technology Society, the state government's vision group on information technology, biotechnology & startup and software technology parks of India, the summit, that saw the inaugural address by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is scheduled to take place from November 19 to 21.

Prasad said even during the pandemic the communications sector witnessed a growth of over seven per cent and also received significant investments from major global companies.

"It is a challenging time

and we decided to convert it into an opportunity. The global manufacturing world was looking towards alternative destinations. In view of India's enormous success in mobile manufacturing, we came up with a big idea of production linked incentive," he said. Prasad said major global companies, including from India, have committed to invest close to ₹11 lakh crore in the next five years and proposed to manufacture mobiles and components, out of which ₹7 lakh crore would be only for exports.

Addressing Chief

Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, Prasad said he wanted to give him some very good information, which was that during the Covid-19 pandemic, the government has got Apple to shift nine of their operating units, along with components, from China to India.

"In your city of Bengaluru, the Apple company has started production to manufacture its quality phones for India and also for abroad for exports," he said. Prasad noted that the summit was taking place in very challenging times.

— PTI

IN BRIEF

HOUSTON: 5 SHOT AT IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, 2 DEAD

Houston, Nov. 19: Five people were shot Wednesday, two fatally, in what investigators say was a case of domestic violence in western Houston, police said.

Officers went to a house in response to a report of an "active shooter" about 2:45 pm Wednesday and arrived to find the body of a man in the driveway of the house he's believed to have owned, Assistant Police Chief Larry Satterwhite said.

Upon entry, they found a wounded man with a gun beside him, whom police suspect was the gunman, and a wounded woman believed to have been the complainant, Satterwhite said. Upstairs, they found two women, one dead and the other wounded.

A 3-month-old child appeared unharmed. All involved appeared to have been related to one another, Satterwhite said, but no motive was immediately determined.

IRAN LAUNCHES CRAFT-CARRYING HEAVY WARSHIP

Tehran, Nov. 19: Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said it launched a heavy warship Thursday capable of carrying helicopters, drones and missile launchers amid ongoing tensions with the US.

Photographs of the ship, named after slain Guard naval commander Abdollah Roudaki, showed it carrying truck-launched surface-to-surface missiles and anti-aircraft missiles. It also carried four small fast boats, the kind the Guard routinely uses in the Persian Gulf. Sailors manned deck-mounted machine guns.

The Guard said the ship has a length of 150 metres (492 feet). By comparison, a US Nimitz-class aircraft carrier has a length of 332 metres (1,092 feet). The Guard's ship does not have a runway, but includes a landing pad for a helicopter.

The commander of the Guard's navy, Adm Ali Reza Tangsiri, suggested his forces wanted to move beyond the waters of the Gulf into deep-water patrolling.

US HOUSE PASSES TIBET BIPARTISAN RESOLUTION

Washington, Nov. 19: A bipartisan resolution recognising the cultural and religious significance of an autonomous Tibet and seeking peaceful solutions to the conflict has been passed by the US House of Representatives. The resolution recognised the significance of the genuine autonomy of Tibet and the Tibetan people, and the work done by 14th Dalai Lama to promote global peace, harmony and understanding.

Passed by a voice vote, the resolution determined that it would be beneficial to convene a bipartisan, bicameral forum, either through a Joint Meeting of Congress, a teleconference broadcast at the Capitol Visitor Center, or roundtable, between Members of Congress and His Holiness the Dalai Lama to discuss peaceful solutions to international conflicts.

It also noted that there is overwhelming bipartisan Congressional support for the Tibetan people's aspirations for internationally recognised human rights.

ETHIOPIA: WHO CHIEF BACKING TIGRAY REGION

Nairobi, Nov. 19: Ethiopia's government is accusing the head of the World Health Organisation, a fellow Ethiopian, of lobbying neighbouring countries to come to the aid of the country's rebellious Tigray regional government with arms and other support.

Ethiopia's army chief, Gen Birhanu Julia, asserted to reporters on Wednesday that Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus had urged unnamed neighbours to "oppose the war and for (the Tigray People's Liberation Front) to get arms."

The army chief did not provide any evidence to support his claims. The TPLF has been clashing with Ethiopian federal forces for two weeks after the country's prime minister accused the heavily armed regional government of attacking a military base.

Each government regards the other as illegal after a months-long falling-out amid political reforms. The army chief accused Tedros, a former Ethiopian foreign minister when the TPLF dominated Ethiopia's ruling coalition, of being a member of the TPLF.

Anti-terror court sentences Hafiz Saeed to 10 yrs in jail

Mumbai terror attack mastermind was arrested on July 17 last year in Pak

Lahore, Nov. 19: Mumbai terror attack mastermind and Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed was on Thursday sentenced to 10 years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan in two more terror cases. Saeed, a UN designated terrorist whom the US has placed a \$10 million bounty on, was arrested on July 17 last year in the terror financing cases.

He was sentenced to 11 years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in February this year in two terror financing cases. He is lodged at the Lahore's high-security Kot Lakhpat jail. "The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) of Lahore on Thursday sentenced four leaders of Jamat-ud-Dawa, including its chief Hafiz Saeed, in two more cases," a court official told PTI.

Saeed and his two close aides — Zafar Iqbal and Yahya Mujahid — have been sentenced to 10 and a half years each, while JuD chief's brother-in-law Abdul Rehman Makki was sentenced to six months imprisonment. "Judge Arshad Hussain Bhutta of ATC Court No. 1 heard the case No. 16/19 and 25/19 filed by Counter Terrorism Department in which the verdict has been announced after the statements of witnesses were cross-examined by Naseeruddin Nayyar and Muhammad Imran Fazal Gul Advocate," the official said.

A total of 41 cases have been registered by the CTD against the JuD leaders, out of which 24 have been decided while the rest are pending in the ATC courts. Four cases have been decided against Saeed so far. — PTI



Pakistan's PM Imran Khan at a press conference with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani at the Presidential Palace in Kabul on Thursday. — AFP

Imran vows to do everything to decrease Afghan violence

● **KHAN SAID** Pakistan played a role in the peace deal signed between the Taliban and the US side and later on starting the intra-Afghan dialogue.

Islamabad, Nov. 19: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on his maiden visit to Kabul and vowed to "do everything" to reduce violence in Afghanistan as the two leaders explored ways to deepen the bilateral ties and discussed the reconciliation process, amidst an uptick in violence that could jeopardise the peace push in the war-torn country.

President Ghani who received Khan upon his arrival at ARG Presidential Palace, situated in the heart of Kabul, called his visit "historic" and said it was an "important message to help end violence". On his part, Khan assured Ghani that his government would do "everything possible" to help reduce violence in Afghanistan and bring a durable peace.

Oxford vaccine boosts adult 'immunity'

London, Nov. 19: The Coronavirus vaccine developed by teams at the University of Oxford has been shown to trigger a robust immune response in healthy adults aged 56-69 and those over 70 years of age. The findings published in *Lancet* on Thursday based on 560 healthy adult volunteers shows that the ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 vaccine is "safe and well tolerated" with a lower reactogenicity profile in older adults, meaning the older age groups could build immunity to the disease.

"These findings are encouraging because older individuals are at disproportionate risk of severe Covid-19 and so any vaccine adopted for use against SARS-CoV-2 must be effective in older adults," the researchers note.

The team is also testing whether the vaccine stops people developing Covid-19 in larger Phase 3 trials and early results from this crucial stage are expected in the coming weeks. "We were pleased to see that our vaccine was not only well tolerated in older adults, but also stimulated similar immune responses to those seen in younger volunteers," said Dr Maheshi Ramasamy, an investigator at the Oxford Vaccine Group.

"The next step will be to see if this translates into protection from the disease," she said. This means there are now four promising vaccines after Pfizer-BioNTech, Sputnik and Moderna already reporting. — PTI



The empty inner city of Vienna is pictured at Stephansplatz on Thursday, amid the Covid-19. — AFP

Biden: Transition delay hits vaccine

Washington, Nov. 19: US President-elect Joe Biden has warned that a delay in transition by the outgoing Trump administration will put behind the Covid-19 vaccination plan by "weeks or months".

In a virtual roundtable with healthcare workers on Covid-19, Biden alleged on Wednesday that his transition team has not been receiving any cooperation from the Trump administration. President Donald Trump has refused to concede the November 3

KIDNEY PAIN: AILING NAWAZ VISITS HOSPITAL

Islamabad, Nov. 19: Pakistan's ailing former prime minister Nawaz Sharif made a string of unscheduled hospital visits in London this week after he developed acute pain due to stones in his kidney, according to a media report on Thursday. Sharif, 70, who has been staying in London since November 2019 on medical grounds, during his visits to the hospital underwent several tests and scans to determine a course of treatment, the Dawn reported.

"He is very unwell and has serious pain in his kidney owing to deteriorating kidney function. Doctors are conducting tests and scans to determine a course of action. He has developed kidney stones," Dr Adnan Khan, the personal physician of Sharif, was quoted as saying by the paper.

Sharif, who in the past has undergone heart surgery, visited consultants on Harley Street on Tuesday and Wednesday and is scheduled for more scans on Thursday, the report said.

On Tuesday, Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz said in a tweet that her father was unable to participate in a meeting of the Pakistan Democratic Movement because of "severe kidney pain" and added that she would attend in his place. — PTI

Australian special forces unlawfully killed 39 Afghans

Melbourne, Nov. 19: There is "credible information" that at least 19 serving and former Australian special forces allegedly committed up to 39 unlawful murders during the conflict in Afghanistan, according to a long-awaited military report into war crimes released on Thursday.

Australia launched the inquiry in 2016, amid reports from whistle-blowers and in the local media of the alleged killing of unarmed men and children in Afghanistan. The four-year inquiry by NSW Court Of Appeal Justice Paul Brereton found there was "credible information" of 23 incidents where Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel were involved in the serious crimes, either carrying out the offences or at least being "accessories" to the incidents.

There was "credible information" that 39 Afghans were allegedly murdered by Australian special forces in 23 incidents. There were also two incidents could be classified as the war crime of "cruel treatment", the report said. According to the Australian media, the latest report has been based on over 400 interviews with soldiers and officers from the SAS, a special forces unit, and Commandos, Afghan villagers, special forces interpreters and support staff.

The inquiry found evidence some Australian troops in Afghanistan carried "throwdowns" such as weapons, radios and grenades not issued by the ADF but planted next to the bodies of Afghan civilians to suggest they were a "legitimate target"

● **AUSTRALIA LAUNCHED** the inquiry in 2016, amid reports from whistle-blowers and in the local media of the alleged killing of unarmed men and children in Afghanistan.

in any post-incident investigations. "This practice probably originated for the less egregious though still dishonest purpose of avoiding scrutiny where a person who was legitimately engaged turned out not to be armed," Brereton said. Issuing an apology to Afghanistan people while releasing the report in Canberra, Australia's Chief of Defence Force Angus Campbell said:

"These findings allege the most serious breaches of military conduct and professional values. The killing, the unlawful killing, of civilians and prisoners is never acceptable." Campbell also apologised to the Australian people, saying he was sincerely sorry for any wrongdoing by members of the Australian Defence Force. Campbell said the report discloses a "disgraceful and a profound betrayal of the Australian Defence Force's professional standards and expectations".

"Today the Australian Defence Force is rightly held to account for allegations of grave misconduct by some members of our special forces community on operations in Afghanistan," he said. The public summary of the inquiry found that Australian soldiers summarily executed non-combatants and prisoners. — PTI

US records more than 2.5L deaths

Washington, Nov. 19: The US has recorded over 250,000 deaths from Covid-19, a bleak milestone as cases soar once again across the country, worst-hit by the deadly infectious disease that has claimed over 1,349,000 lives across the world.

According to Johns Hopkins University, the US has now reported 250,537 deaths and over 11.5 million confirmed cases. It has more reported infections and a higher death toll than any other country worldwide. The Coronavirus is now killing at least one American every minute of the day, bringing the country to another horrific milestone on Wednesday.

At least 250,029 people in the country have died of Covid-19 since the first death on February 29 in Washington state, *CNN* reported. The situation is only going to get worse, warned Dr Jonathan Reiner, a professor at George Washington University School of Medicine, amidst the continued obstruction from the Trump administration for a smooth handover to the incoming administration of US President-elect Joe Biden.

"The horrible death count that we saw yesterday in the United States ... reflects the number of people who were being

INFECTIONS MAY BE 6 TIMES MORE THAN REPORTED

Melbourne, Nov. 19: The actual number of global infections in the Covid-19 pandemic could be up to six times higher than the reported number of cases, according to a modelling study. The researchers, including those from the Australian National University (ANU) and the University of Melbourne, found infection rates between March and August across 15 countries were on average 6.2 times greater than reported cases.

The data, published in the journal *Royal Society Open Science*, shows Covid-19 infection rates in the UK, France, Belgium and Italy are much higher than reported and in the case of Italy up to 17-times higher. It shows Australia had the best level of detection at the end of April, but the rate of infection may still have been five times higher than what has been reported. — PTI

infected three weeks ago -- to two three weeks ago, because that's the lag," Reiner said on Wednesday. — PTI

UNDER COVER

Criminals and extremists are exploiting deadly pandemic to build their support networks

Al-Qaeda, ISIS groups spread conspiracy theories

United Nations, Nov. 19: Groups associated with al-Qaeda and ISIS are exploiting the Covid-19 pandemic to spread conspiracy theories that the virus is "punishing the unbelievers", is "God's wrath upon the West" and incites terrorists to use it as a form of biological weapon, according to a UN report.

The report titled "Stop the virus of disinformation: The malicious use of social media by terrorist, violent extremist and criminal groups during the

Covid-19 pandemic' was released by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI). It said that criminals and violent extremists are exploiting the pandemic to build their support networks, undermine trust in government and even weaponise the virus.

The report added that terrorist, violent extremist and organised criminal groups have maliciously used social media to disseminate conspiracy theories about the origin of Covid-19.

"Groups associated with ISIL and Al-Qaeda have also spread conspiracy theories that assert that the virus is a 'soldier of Allah' that is punishing the unbelievers and the enemies that have damaged Muslims over the last years. For example, ISIL and Al-Qaeda claimed that the virus is God's wrath upon the West," the report said. Similarly, Al-Shabab declared that the coronavirus disease is spread

● **THE GLOBAL** Fatwa Index has identified Covid-19 related messages from groups associated with ISIS and al-Qaeda, including non-official fatwas that called on ISIS members who have contracted Covid-19 to act as "biological bombs".

by the "crusader forces who have invaded the country and the disbelieving countries that support

them", the report said. The Global Fatwa Index has identified Covid-19 related messages from groups associated with ISIS and al-Qaeda, including non-official fatwas that called on ISIS members who have contracted Covid-19 to act as "biological bombs" by "deliberately spreading the disease among the organisation's enemies," it said.

UNICRI Director Antonia Marie De Meo wrote in the introduction to the report that it is "alarming

that some terrorist and violent extremist groups have attempted to misuse social media to incite potential terrorists to intentionally spread Covid-19 and to use it as an improvised form of a biological weapon." "There are cases in which right-wing extremist groups... explicitly asked their followers to spread the virus by coughing on their local minority or by attending to specific places where religious or racial minorities gather. Other groups... advocate to

spread Covid in countries with large populations or high levels of pollution," it said. It also notes the case of "inspired terrorism" was that of Timothy Wilson, who plotted to detonate a bomb in a hospital caring for Coronavirus patients in Kansas City.

Researchers examined three groups of non-State actors: right-wing extremists; groups associated with the ISIS or Da'esh terrorist group and al-Qaeda; and organised crime groups. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

20 NOVEMBER 2020

Let Cong show humility, call for wider dialogue

After the Mahagathbandhan in Bihar, of which the Congress was the second largest component, was pipped to the post by NDA, the party's dissidents who had formed a group of 23 or G-23 last August have come to the surface with vigour.

The prominent lawyer and former Union cabinet minister Kapil Sibal, who has virtually emerged as the G-23 spokesman, asserted in a recent interview that the Congress was "in decline", that the way forward was in sight but the presumed leadership (meaning interim president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul) was not visible, and that experienced, senior folk weren't being consulted.

Much of this is valid, although Mr Gandhi has hardly been inactive. Indeed, it is hard to think of any leader of any party who has emerged as a harder or more frontal critic of this government, of PM Narendra Modi, and the RSS, especially from the liberal, secular perspective. But the former Congress chief does give the impression that he has gone solo. There is hardly any semblance of a functioning organisation that he built when he was formally at the helm. This is no way to run a party, especially one with an ambition to make its influence felt nationwide.

Mr Sibal has sought to rub his point in by pointing to the Congress' none too bright showing in the recent Bihar election and the byelections in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, UP and Karnataka. In fact, were it not for these reverses, it is unlikely he would have sprung to life the way he did.

However, the criticisms around the poll reverses do not appear well-grounded. In the byelections, the ruling parties did well everywhere, including Jharkhand where the Congress came good. As for Bihar, it is true that the bulk of the share of seats that fell in the Congress' share to fight were those that no Mahagathbandhan party had won in three decades. So, probably these would have fallen in NDA's kitty even if the resurgent RJD fought on them.

All these arguments are in the nature of garnishing, however. The core of the dissidents' argument pertains to the field of party organisation and these are not without merit, even if the G-23 are people who had thrived in a party built on nominations when the going was good and the Congress was in power.

Even if Mrs Gandhi has got into motion a process for AICC elections, a key requirement for organisation-building and daunting task at the best of times, no one really knows what's going on. Since the G-23 are experienced and senior folk, although none amongst them can claim to be a mass leader or ground-level politician, it would have been in the fitness of things if they too had been associated with this exercise and consulted routinely. Instead, it seems they have been cast aside.

It was singularly distasteful of Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury to suggest that Mr Sibal either float his own party or join another party instead of speaking out aloud. This is not the way of democratic parties. He — and others — should not forget that even P. Chidambaram has criticised the Congress' performance in Bihar and asked that experienced hands be consulted. The Congress would do well to summon some humility.

Give dads family time

Some old-timers feel that it's just not cricket. But Anil Kumble took it in 2004, followed by Gautam Gambhir and Rahul Dravid in 2009, Rohit Sharma in 2018 and Joe Root earlier this year. And now skipper Virat Kohli officially asked for it and got it! The Board of Control for Cricket in India's grant of paternity leave to Kohli during his team's upcoming Oz tour is a sure sign of changing times.

At present, fathers who are government servants are permitted 15 days of leave to be availed within six months of the birth of the child under Rule 43A of the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972. Similar provisions can be found in the leave rules of state governments. It is only about eight per cent of the 182 days allowed to mothers. But private companies like Zomato, Ikea, Amazon and Novartis as well as tech giants Facebook, Deloitte and Microsoft play a big role in defining workplace cultures and they allow longer leaves.

Blinkered to shifting realities, possibly due to an ivory tower consciousness, then woman and child development minister Maneka Gandhi in 2016 scoffed at the idea of legislating for paternity leave. She was convinced that "Indian men" would turn "it into a holiday". The truth is that even where rules are in place fathers are shamed into not availing it or otherwise subjected to pressures by the office management. We need more teeth in our labour laws for holding such employers accountable. Not only in high-profile jobs or for executives in general, paternity leave should be the norm for peons, clerks and blue-collar workers. But that can only happen if there is political will to honour the cultural change taking place. Although it was women who first argued for work-life balance, a term that originated in the UK during the Industrial Revolution, allowing moderate amounts of leave to employees has been seen to improve both quality of output and prevent burnouts. An egalitarian policy of parental leaves will direct social change — promote participation of women in the labour force, currently at 26 per cent, thus drawing in their diverse skills and vision, optimise our gross domestic product as well as create friendlier workplaces.

Not only single dads, others, too, have a right to love their child.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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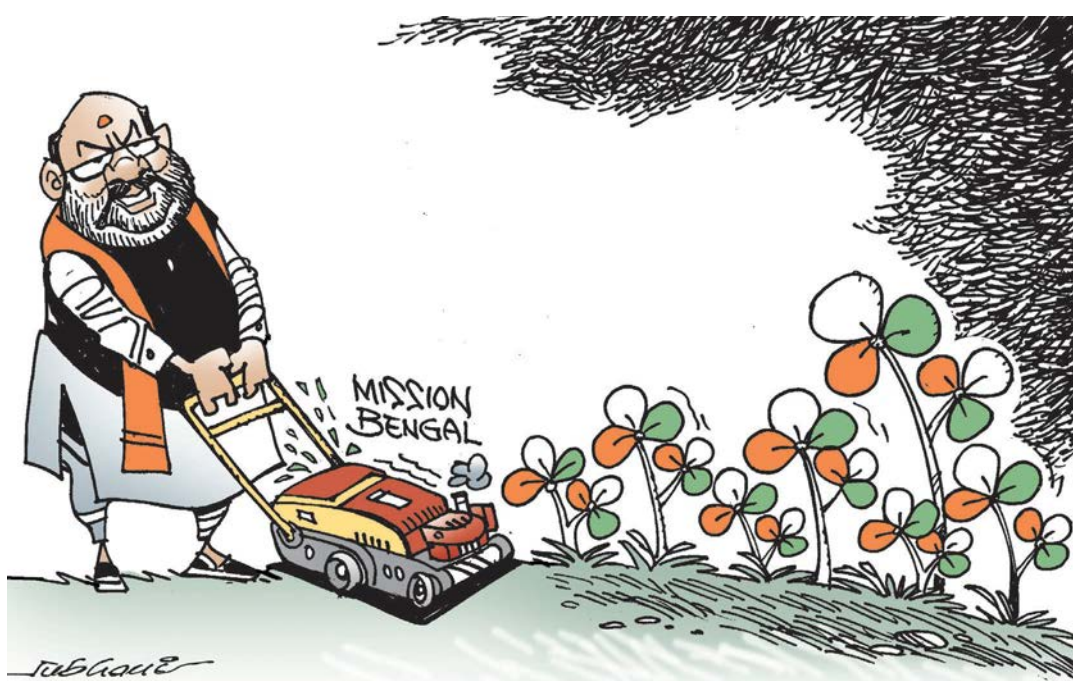
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Subhani



Can KCR's gameplan stop Modi juggernaut?

Sriram Karri

The municipal elections underway in Hyderabad might have a political significance nationally, if TRS chief and Telangana chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's (KCR) strategy helps his party trounce the newest challenger to power — the Bharatiya Janata Party. If KCR succeeds in nipping the saffron party's surge in the bud, he might reveal a perfect playbook to counter the seemingly unstoppable juggernaut of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

It is only of footnote value, not headline material, that the Congress, which ruled India for two terms based on the strength of members of Parliament Telugu people sent to Lok Sabha, and which enacted and implemented the formation of Telangana, is rapidly declining in the state. The interesting part is KCR himself pushed the weak Congress, the principal challenger to TRS as recently as the 2018 Assembly elections, from the general ward into the ICU.

In that election, which the TRS had foresight to schedule ahead of completion of term, and delink state elections from national elections to avoid having to face the Modi wave, the pink party retained power with a bigger majority, winning 88 out of 119 seats. The Congress returned as the principal Opposition party, with 19 seats, while the BJP secured a lone seat. The MIM, ever friendly to whoever is the ruling party, won seven seats.

Ignoring the mandate for over two months, without even declaring a cabinet, the TRS boss ensured defections from the Congress, till it was finally split by over two-thirds, and Congressman Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka lost the status as leader of the Opposition. The void left

by the Congress proved to be a signal to the BJP to make it an all-out direct battle with the TRS for the state.

The TRS lost two of its advantages in this possibly irreversible decline of the Congress and consequent rise of the BJP — a split in anti-incumbency votes will cease and a party with a more effective election machinery will have to be faced.

The BJP has shown it has the striking firepower. Debutant D. Arvind defeated sitting MP K. Kavitha, daughter of KCR, in Lok Sabha elections for Nizamabad, a hurt the TRS still nurses. The recent snatching of Dubbaka byelections by the BJP has consolidated a perception Telangana is now a predominantly two party state, notwithstanding the factor X that is Owaisi-led MIM.

The BJP has already pushed the TRS into a spot by making the elections to Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) about nationalist Hindutva, a template the TRS has not really been tested against. The BJP has declared that the GHMC elections are between them and the MIM, accusing the TRS of appeasing Muslims, especially Owaisi brothers, and being their sidekicks. The TRS could laugh off charges of nepotism, family rule and corruption when they were hurled by the Congress, but the same attack from the BJP could have a sharper bite. Above all, the TRS cannot twist the BJP the way it could do the Congress.

With the reputation and political future of TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao, son of KCR, heavily invested in the urbane electoral climes of hi-tech Hyderabad, CM Rao is taking nothing to chance because in Indian politics, like in many Indian families, the loss to a daughter is painful, but

immediately, it is perhaps wiser to reassure them that there is plenty of time to make a definite choice. In any case, people do not need to stick to any particular career line all through their working life. Examples may be given of the multifarious new occupations that have spawned in the recent past to demonstrate that there is no end to the opportunities that will be available to them. In the face of a possible job losses, resourceful young people have got hold of several digital assignments while working from home. Who knows, multiple careers can easily turn out to be the norm in future.

So far as their immediate anxiety of admission into reputed colleges is concerned, students must understand the need to be practical. Even a very good student may not get a seat in the college of his or her choice. This should not break the person. There are enough real-life examples to show that it is not necessary to attend a particular institution in order to make a success of life.

In the context of seeking "success", it is imperative that young people must understand that success does not have

forth become a win for the anti-Modi front, and thus a score.

KCR will likely pitch secular federalism, marked with good governance, high on welfare and development, with a strong stress on inclusivity as key ideological differentiators, with a stress on "true". KCR believes this will reduce the ability of the BJP to coerce Opposition leaders with other means, aka, use of Central agencies.

It is his calculation that the long-term incarceration of leaders in Kashmir would have become impossible, if leaders of all states had stood up with them, together. Drawing a leaf from Lincoln, KCR will now put his marketing skills to convince all state leaders to the mantra — let us hang together, lest we be banged separately.

The TRS has a great understanding of how to build a narrative and sustain it through innovative programmes and schemes. It is hardened in social media battles. It can come out with attractive slogans and put up a convincing counter narrative. It can lure, or coerce, the media. Above all, KCR can put Telangana's own success in input investments for farmers, water as a right for all Indians, jobs, infrastructure and universal healthcare as rival models — the Hyderabad model versus the Gujarat model.

His timing is perfect, too. The Congress is at its weakest and can be dictated to support the front at any later date. Most regional leaders are also too weak to resist; they will happily follow anyone giving them hope against Modi's BJP.

But will KCR emerge the Pied Piper or end up doing an encore of 2019, when his high vision was reduced to gallantry of Don Quixote class, will start becoming clear when Hyderabad votes for its 150 municipal wards on December 1, and its results are declared on December 4.

With a final caveat — it will be by paper ballot. Does a low-tech election in a hi-tech city finally hold the key to a different result in the next Lok Sabha? KCR will hope the answer is yes.

LETTERS

STAY VIGILANT

Seeing the downward trend in positive cases, people in AP should not be jubilant and become careless because the weather and schools reopening may prove to be spoilsports in the wake of resurgence of Covid-19 as witnessed in Delhi. The CM has also warned during his conference with Collectors to be alert about the second Covid wave. The police and volunteers should be very careful lest people take the situation for granted.

K. Nehru Patnaik

Visakhapatnam

PROACTIVE CM

It is appreciable that the Chief Minister has directed officials to take effective steps to contain Covid-19 (Be alert with the 2nd Covid wave :CM, DC, Nov. 19). The second wave in Delhi is alarming. In fact, it is worrying and frightening to observe how people have allowed festivity to perambulate right in the middle of the pandemic. Further, vaccines are still a long way off. Hence, it is better to stick to the trusted Covid protocols for now.

Dr C. Ghanshyam

Visakhapatnam

UNREALISTIC IDEA

It is hypothetical, wishful conjecture, to infer a BJP rule (*BJP's hopes for its own CM in Patna get dashed, DC, Nov. 19*). Nitish, 69, understands fully well the changed scenario and will be careful to row the boat with tact.

Parthasarathy Mandadi

Tirupati

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

C. V. Raman passes away

BANGLORE, November 21 Nobel laureate C.V. Raman died at his residence at 7.25 am today.

Dr Raman observed his 83rd birthday on November 7 in the local St. Martha Hospital where he was convalescing following a mild heart attack. Two days back he left the hospital almost fully recovered.

According to his family members the end came suddenly. His wife, and son Radhakrishnan were beside his bed when he breathed his last.

Dr. Raman woke up as usual at six this morning and took his morning coffee and relaxed for a while. The end came at 7.25 am.

Devi Kar



Prepare kids for future as worries rise amidst Covid

This time of the year is always fraught with anxieties for school-leaving students. First, there is the looming board examination, the results of which determine their entry into colleges and universities. Next, there is the constant brooding over the choice of career paths. But 2020 has been especially tense for them on account of the untold disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, it is such a difficult time for school-leavers that the past seems unnaturally alluring while the future looks pretty grim.

As yet, nobody knows when on-campus classes will be resumed. Nor can anybody predict when, how and where the board examinations will be held. It is no wonder that the future after leaving school seems so terrifying for high schoolers. Even in normal years, students have a tough time selecting their branch of higher studies while keeping an eye on possible career paths. This year they are totally at sea, knowing that the world of work is undergoing turbulent changes. Further, they know that they will probably have to settle for virtual classes and will not

experience college campus life, which they had been looking forward to for years.

At this time, we need to make a conscious effort to boost our students' morale. Professional career counsellors are probably doing their job of keeping abreast of changes that are taking place and of trends that are already perceptible. However, career counsellors alone can't be expected to allay the anxieties of students. Parents, mentors and teachers have an onerous responsibility too. They need to give students a sense of security and stability so that their education — irrespective of the timing and nature of the board and college entrance examinations — continues uninterrupted. Further, they must help them to face the world with a calm frame of mind and develop the adaptability to cope with the demands of new situations. Living examples may be cited, of enterprising people who have reinvented their lines of work successfully in these trying times. It would help them enormously, if teachers and mentors suggested concrete steps while their students go about trying to prepare for

an unnervingly uncertain future.

Here are a few thoughts that we can share with our students while engaging with them. I feel that such dialogues make them less anxious about their future. The first point to drive home is that they are not the only ones facing this predicament — everybody was in the same boat. Although quite obvious, somehow, they find solace in this realisation which needs to be reinforced from time to time. They must also be made aware that humans have overcome many perilous situations in the past; therefore, we can believe with reason that the present condition is only temporary. Students must make most of the time they have at their disposal and learn not only from their prescribed coursework but from the myriad resources that are available on the Internet. It has become already clear that the future demands a broad outlook and an interdisciplinary approach — narrow specialisation has become passé.

Many students, along with their parents, worry because they are undecided about their career path. Instead of trying to coax them to make a decision

immediately, it is perhaps wiser to reassure them that there is plenty of time to make a definite choice. In any case, people do not need to stick to any particular career line all through their working life. Examples may be given of the multifarious new occupations that have spawned in the recent past to demonstrate that there is no end to the opportunities that will be available to them. In the face of a possible job losses, resourceful young people have got hold of several digital assignments while working from home. Who knows, multiple careers can easily turn out to be the norm in future.

So far as their immediate anxiety of admission into reputed colleges is concerned, students must understand the need to be practical. Even a very good student may not get a seat in the college of his or her choice. This should not break the person. There are enough real-life examples to show that it is not necessary to attend a particular institution in order to make a success of life.

In the context of seeking "success", it is imperative that young people must understand that success does not have

a single definition — it comes in different forms. One way of defining success is the fulfilment of individual goals. Therefore, instead of chasing nebulous dreams, students should be encouraged to look inward and discover what they want out of life, where their interests lie and what their strengths are. To attain success, students must be resilient in the face of inevitable setbacks. In addition, they should possess certain skills and qualities which will always be in demand irrespective of place or circumstances. These include "people skills", the ability to communicate effectively and being a reliable team player. Above all, it is important to be able to manage one's own emotions competently and respond to other people's emotions sensitively.

Parents and teachers must make a conscious effort not to pass on their own worries to the young. It is easier said than done, but we must cultivate a robust outlook ourselves while holding up for them an optimistic, yet not unrealistic, picture of the future.

The writer is a veteran school educator based in Kolkata

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	43,599.96	-1.31
Nifty 50	12,771.70	-1.29
\$S&P 500*	3,566.72	-0.03
Dollar (₹)	74.27	-0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.10	0.51
Euro (₹)	87.85	0.40
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,714*248	0.40
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	43.97	-0.37
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.876	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.857	-0.025

* As of 8:30 PM IST

SpiceJet jumps 12% after Boeing 737 MAX gets nod

Shares of SpiceJet zoomed over 12 per cent after the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the US approved the return of Boeing 737 MAX aircraft to commercial service. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation on Wednesday said it will study FAA's decision and take "some time" before taking a call on allowing Boeing 737 MAX planes to fly again in the Indian skies. On the BSE, the stock closed at Rs 74.35, up 12.06 per cent.

Apollo, Tatas to launch Covid test 'TataMD Check'



Apollo Hospitals and Tata Medical and Diagnostics, the new health care venture of the Tata Group, has announced a collaboration to introduce TataMD Check, the first Crispr Cas-9 based diagnostic test, to increase testing for Covid-19 across the country. Apollo Hospitals, along with its subsidiary Apollo Diagnostics, will offer the Tata MD Check testing in the NCR from early December, followed by other metros.

Dr Reddy's starts investigation into anonymous plaint

Dr Reddy's Laboratories said it has commenced a detailed investigation into an anonymous complaint regarding healthcare professionals in Ukraine and potentially in other countries being provided with improper benefits. DRL has a wholly owned subsidiary and a global office in Ukraine. The investigation is being carried out by a reputed independent US law firm, the company said in a regulatory filing.

Mphasis acquires UK's Datalytx for ₹130 crore

IT firm Mphasis said its subsidiary Mphasis Consulting Ltd has acquired UK-based Datalytx Ltd for up to 13.3 million pounds (about Rs 130.4 crore). The acquisition is expected to provide access to strengthen Mphasis next-generation Data GTM Strategy and provide higher value partnership status with Snowflake and Talend for cloud-based data services, the firm said in a regulatory filing.



■ Oxford Economics sees avg. 4.5% growth for 5 years
Analysts raise growth forecast for next year

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, NOV. 19

Ahead of the release of GDP data for the September quarter, rating agencies and investment banks are predicting a faster recovery India's economy for FY22. While some see lesser contraction for this fiscal than projected earlier, some are not that optimistic. Moody's Investors Service has lowered the contraction rate for India's GDP to 10.6 per cent for 2020-21 from its earlier forecast of 11.5 per cent. It has also revised upwards its expectation for GDP growth rate to 10.8 per cent for 2021-22 from 10.6 per cent earlier. However, in the medium term economic growth is likely to settle around 6 per cent, it said. Moody's says the stimulus measures announced last week by the finance minister were aimed at increasing manufacturing competitiveness and creating jobs while supporting infrastructure investment and credit availability to stressed sectors. "As such, they present potential upside to our current forecasts, a credit positive," the rating agency said. Better growth will also be supported by the falling of Covid-19 cases in the country, it said. British investment bank Barclays has raised its FY22 GDP growth forecast for India to 8.5 per cent from 7 per cent earlier, though it has revised FY21

CHANGING TUNES

- **MOODY'S:** Revises upwards growth rate to 10.8% for FY22 from 10.6% estimated earlier
- Contraction in FY21 GDP seen at -10.6% for FY21 against earlier forecast of -11.5%
- **BARCLAYS:** Raises FY22 GDP growth forecast for India to 8.5% from 7% earlier
- Revises FY21 GDP forecast downwards to -6.4% from -6% earlier
- **ICRA:** September quarter contraction narrowed to -9.5% from -23.9% in June quarter
- **OXFORD ECONOMICS:** India will be worst-affected among major economies with output 12% below pre-Covid levels till 2025

GDP forecast downwards to -6.4 per cent from -6.0 per cent earlier. Barclays expects the recent improvement in manufacturing to broaden to the services sector early next year. "We now see a better trajectory for the recovery of consumption as well as investment, given incrementally rising fiscal and monetary support," it said. The recent stability in the health crisis has been accompanied by a faster return of the economy to normal, beyond the agricultural sector. Indicators for a number of manufacturing segments are now above pre-Covid levels. Growth in GDP will resume in Q4 20, a quarter ahead of the RBI's projections, it said. However, Barclays has modestly revised its FY21 GDP forecast downwards to -6.4 per cent to reflect marginally weaker income

data. It expects Q2 FY21 GDP released next week to register a contraction of 8.5 per cent. Icrs says the September quarter contraction would have narrowed to 9.5 per cent from 23.9 per cent in the June quarter. It believes the economy has recovered from the lows of the pandemic-induced lockdown. "A substantial recovery in manufacturing and construction is likely to underpin the expected improvement in the performance of the industrial Gross Value Added in Q2 FY21. Various sectors of manufacturing recorded an improvement in demand and volumes in Q2 FY2021, although the performance was admittedly uneven," said Aditi Nayar, principal economist, Icrs. Nevertheless, the extent of the recovery in the informal sectors in Q2

FY21 remains unclear, and we caution that trends in the same may not get fully reflected in the GDP data, given the lack of adequate proxies to evaluate the less formal sectors, she said. Despite the predicted recovery India will be the worst-affected among the world's major economies even after the pandemic wanes, with output 12 per cent below pre-virus levels through the middle of the decade, according to Oxford Economics. Balance sheet stress that had been building before the coronavirus outbreak will probably worsen, says Priyanka Kishore, head of economics for South Asia and South-East Asia. She projects potential growth for India at 4.5 per cent over the next five years, lower than 6.5 per cent before the virus. "It's likely that headwinds which were already hampering growth prior to 2020—such as stressed corporate balance sheets, elevated non-performing assets of banks, the fallout in non-bank financial companies, and labor market weakness—will worsen," she said. "All supply-side factors feel the effect, with only human capital's contribution unchanged from the pre-virus baseline," she said. "Capital accumulation takes the biggest hit because we expect balance-sheet stresses to worsen following the crisis, lengthening the investment recovery cycle."

Voda Idea to get \$2 bn from Oaktree, Varde

BAIJU KALESH, ANTO ANTONY & P. R. SANJAI
NOV. 19

A consortium backed by Oaktree Capital has offered to provide at least \$2 billion of funding to Vodafone Group Plc's listed Indian arm, people with knowledge of the matter said. Oaktree teamed up with several other firms, including Varde Partners, for the potential deal with Vodafone Idea Ltd, according to the people. The investor group made a proposal to provide around \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion of capital to Vodafone Idea, the people said, asking not to be identified because the information is private. Vodafone Idea said in September it plans to raise as much as Rs 25,000 crore (\$3.4 billion) selling shares and debt to shore up its finances as competition heats up in the Indian wireless industry. It wasn't immediately clear how a potential deal with the Oaktree-backed consortium would be structured. The Indian carrier has also been speaking to other potential investors, and there's no certainty the negotiations will lead to an agreement, the people said. Representatives for Oaktree, Varde and Vodafone Idea declined to comment. —Bloomberg

Pandemic hits income of 65% urban residents



SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, NOV. 19

Nearly two-thirds of the urban population seems to have had a negative impact on their income due to the pandemic and the resultant lockdown. A whopping 65 per cent respondents of a survey by Paisabazaar.com said their incomes were hit by the pandemic. About 16 per cent of them claimed to have lost 100 per cent of their income, with another 28 per cent reporting income reduction of more than half. Over 8,500 respondents between the age of 24 and 57 years from over 35 cities with a debt of Rs 1 lakh or more took part in the survey. Almost 86 per cent of the self-employed customers said the pandemic has adversely impacted their income and 25 per cent claimed that their income has come down to zero. Among the salaried class, 56 per cent saw their income take a hit. Another 30 per cent said their salary has been

reduced by more than half from the pre-Covid levels and 12 per cent reported complete loss of salary due to job loss. Delhi and the NCR were the most impacted cities, with 70 per cent of their resident participants reporting a negative impact on income. Among these, 16 per cent of respondents from the NCR saw income coming down to zero. Mumbai was worst with 26 per cent Mumbaikars reporting income plummeting to nil. Mumbai also had the highest percentage of moratorium takers—65 per cent of the respondents. Further, 52 per cent respondents in the megapolis said they cannot afford to pay their EMIs in full, with 15 per cent of them saying they currently have zero payment capacity. Chennai was the least impacted city with 52 per cent seeing incomes coming down. Only 9 per cent of Chennai residents who participated in the survey suffered a 100 per cent income loss.

Adani Green has no firm customer for \$6 bn project

NEHA ARORA & SUDARSHAN VARADHAN
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI, NOV. 19

Adani Green Energy's record \$6 billion solar power project announced in June has no guaranteed customer, its deal with India's main solar-adoption agency shows, and may expose the company to higher financial risk. Shares in the firm, controlled by billionaire Gautam Adani, have soared three-fold since the signing of the 8 gigawatt (GW) multi-plant deal, which Adani hailed as the "largest of its type, ever" and a landmark for India. However, details of the agreement between Adani Green and Solar Energy Corp of India Ltd (SECI) reveal the agency has no "legal or financial obligation" to support the project if SECI fails to find buyers. This would be the first major SECI project without a state-guaranteed power purchase agreement (PPA), which analysts say has been key to building up the renewable energy sector. When SECI floated the tender for the project in



June 2019, it had said a PPA would be assured, but it withdrew the clause in the deal signed a year later. "There shall not be any legal or financial implication to SECI in relation to such (unsold) quantum including associated quantum of manufacturing facilities," the agreement, reviewed by Reuters, says. Adani Green has said 2 GW of generation capacity will come onstream by 2022, while the rest will be added in annual 2GW increments through 2025. There are no buyers lined up for the project yet and it is unclear when SECI will be able to find buyers, a process that typically takes months. Auctions by the SECI usually attract greater participation because of the assurance of power purchase and payments. But the lack of such a

guarantee could undermine investor and lender confidence, raising financing costs in a market like India where power demand and growth has repeatedly fallen short of expectations amid a broader economic slowdown. The quality of "federal government-guaranteed contracts with cashflow payment certainty provide investors the confidence to deploy tens of billions of dollars," said Tim Buckley, director at the Institute of Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. Adani Green has said it would receive interim funding for the project from a consortium of foreign banks, and later with money raised from the capital markets. It has reassured investors of its ability to tap markets citing its sovereign grade rating. It declined to comment on the project on Thursday. "We have full visibility and we would be in a position to inform the market shortly," the group's chief financial officer, Jugeshinder Singh, said earlier this month. —Reuters



LAMBORGHINI HURACAN STO UNVEILED

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, NOV. 19

Italian super sports car maker Lamborghini has introduced the new Huracan STO (Super Trofeo Omologata) which is a track focused racing car. Lamborghini plans to commence the deliveries of the Huracan STO next year but the price has not been revealed yet. Drawing inspiration and technical learnings from the Huracan Super

Trofeo Evo and successful GT3 racing models, the Huracan STO is effectively a road-homologated version of the racer that won the 24 Hours of Daytona three times. The new STO is powered by a naturally aspirated 5.2-litre V10 engine making 640hp and 565Nm. It sprints from 0-100km in an eye-blinking three seconds with a top speed of 310kmph. The firm is yet to reveal its India launch plans.

Market takes a breather after days of bull run

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, NOV. 19

Profit booking by domestic institutional investors and a fall in buying by foreign portfolio investors led to a more than one per cent fall in the benchmark stock indices on Thursday. Sensex and Nifty-50 gained for the fourth consecutive session and made new all time highs in early morning trade before profit booking set in. The Sensex closed 580 points down at 43,599.96 after climbing to a new all-time high of 44,230. The Nifty-50 also closed at 12,771.70, falling 166.55 points after reaching a new high of 12,963 and just 37 points short of the 13,000-mark. Domestic institutional investors were net sellers of equities worth Rs 2,854.94 crore while the foreign portfolio investors were net buyers by Rs 1,180.61 crore. The broader market outperformed the large caps as the BSE Midcap Index fell 0.65 per cent while the BSE Small-cap ended flat, gaining 0.03 per cent. Banks, which had a strong bull run in the last

few sessions, saw maximum profit taking as the Nifty Bank Index fell 2.85 per cent while the BSE Bankex fell 2.75 per cent. The Nifty Bank had climbed nearly 25 per cent this month. Only mass consumption sectors like BSE FMCG (0.46 per cent), Power (0.76 per cent) and Consumer Durables (0.76 per cent) fared well, with these sectoral indices closing with some gains. Siddhartha Khemka, head-retail research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services said, "Global cues were weak as concerns over rising coronavirus infections and new shutdowns in major US cities overshadowed vaccine progress. Optimism from news that Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine was 95 per cent effective and its plans to apply for emergency US authorisation failed to support markets. On the domestic side, markets hit a record high earlier in the session as investors bet on a faster return to economic growth following upbeat news on a Covid-19 vaccine. However, it fell sharply in the second half."

CORNERED CHINA TO FOCUS MORE ON DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION



K. J. M. VARMA
BEIJING, NOV. 19

Chinese president Xi Jinping said on Thursday that China is set to change its development model from next year, relying more on domestic consumption than export-reliant growth which propelled it to become the world's second largest economy next only to the United States. "From next year on, China will embark on new journey toward fully building a modern socialist country," 67-year-old Xi said while addressing the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEO Dialogues via video link. "We will foster a new development paradigm with domestic circulation as the mainstay and domestic and international circulations reinforcing each other," he said. "The new development paradigm is a strategic decision we have made based on the current stage and conditions of development in China and with full consideration given to economic globalisation and changes in the external environment," he said. Last month, a key conclave of the ruling Communist Party of China headed by Xi adopted his proposals for the formulation of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035. China's status as a world's factory has been affected by declining global markets and US President Donald Trump's trade war. —PTI



SHORT TAKES

Botham grandson for rugby debut

Cardiff, United Kingdom: England cricket legend Ian Botham's grandson, James, will make his debut for the Wales rugby team in Saturday's Autumn Nations Cup match against Georgia as coach Wayne Pivac picked an experimental side with an eye on the future. James Botham, a former Wales Under-20 international who plays for Cardiff Blues, is the son of Liam Botham, the son of Ian, and himself a former professional cricket, rugby union and rugby league player, who appeared for Cardiff in the 1990s. Botham is one of three uncapped players named by Pivac for the match. — *AFP*

Para cyclists to cut across country

Srinagar: Indian para cyclists, led by Limca Book of Records holder Aditya Mehta, on Thursday embarked on a journey from Kashmir to Kanyakumari as part of the Infinity Ride 2020 to raise awareness and scout para talent from across the country. The ride, a brain-child of the Aditya Mehta Foundation (AMF) and supported by Border Security Force (BSF), took off from Nishant Bagh, Srinagar on Thursday with Rakesh Asthana, Director General BSF flagging it off. Asian Para Cycling Championship bronze medallist Harinder Singh and Asian Games Track Cycling bronze medallist Gural Singh also joined the journey which will end at Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari on December 29 after covering 34 cities in 41 days. "India has no dearth of talent. My goal is to scout young talents and train them," Mehta said in a release. — *PTI*

Fifa rules for maternity rights

Geneva: Female soccer players should soon get their maternity rights protected under new employment rules announced Thursday by FIFA. The governing body of soccer is preparing to mandate clubs to allow at least 14 weeks of maternity leave paid at a minimum two-thirds of a player's full salary. National soccer bodies can insist on more generous terms. "Her club will be under an obligation to reintegrate her into football activity and provide adequate ongoing medical support," FIFA said. Any club that ended a player's contract for becoming pregnant faces having to pay compensation and a fine, and being banned from the transfer market for one year. "The idea is to protect female players before, during and after childbirth," FIFA chief legal officer Emilio Garcia said on a conference call. The move is seen as a key step in professionalising women's football. — *AP*

Aditi is tied 29th at Saudi golf

KAEC, Saudi Arabia: Indian golfer Aditi Ashok faltered on the back-nine and slipped to the Tied-29th position in the individual standings after the second round of the Saudi Ladies Team International here. Aditi, who shot one-under 71 in the first round, added a three-over 75 and was individually two-over 146 in the unique tournament that is also being played as a team event. As for the other Indians, Diksha Dagar added a 78 to her first-round 71 and lay T-50th, while Tvesha Malik (74-76) was T-64th. Astha Madan (80-81) was T-108. Aditi had two birdies against three bogeys, two of them on the back-nine, and a double bogey in her round. — *PTI*

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Kerala Blasters vs ATK Mohun Bagan from 7:15 pm on Star Sports 1, 2, 3

TENNIS

ATP Finals: Matches from 7:30 pm and 1:30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

WWE

SmackDown: Bouts from 6:30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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BELGIAN BOOST

Italy and Belgium barge into Nations League final

Paris, Nov. 19: Romelu Lukaku helped fire Belgium into the UEFA Nations League finals by scoring twice in a 4-2 win over Denmark on Wednesday, while Italy also secured a place in the last four with victory away to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The world's number one-ranked side, Belgium only required a draw from their last League 'A', Group 2 game at home to Denmark behind closed doors in Leuven and took an early lead through Youri Tielemans. Jonas Wind equalised for Denmark, but Lukaku got a second-half double and Kevin De Bruyne made sure of the victory for Roberto Martinez's side after Thibaut Courtois allowed a Nacer Chadli back-pass to squirm under his leg and in for an own goal.

Italy secured first place in Group 1 with a 2-0 triumph in Sarajevo thanks to a goal in each half from Torino's Andrea Belotti and Domenico Berardi of Sassuolo.

That ensured they finished a point ahead of the Netherlands, who came from behind to beat Poland 2-1 away with captain Georginio Wijnaldum scoring the winner after Memphis Depay's penalty cancelled out Kamil Jozwiak's opener.

Italy and Belgium join Spain and World Cup holders France in a final tournament which is expected to be held in Italy in October next year.

Before the finals, European national teams will start their 2022 World Cup qualifying campaign in March and then the delayed Euro 2020 is set to go ahead next June and July.

England have more than one eye on that tournament, with the semi-finals and final scheduled for Wembley, and Gareth Southgate's team rounded out their Nations League campaign with a 4-0 win over Iceland.



Russian midfielder Aleksandr Erokhin (left) vies with Serbia's defender Nikola Milenkovic during their UEFA Nations League match at the Rajko Mitic Stadium in Belgrade on Wednesday. Serbia won 5-0. — *AFP*

Declan Rice and Mason Mount scored in the first half and Manchester City's Phil Foden got his first international goals with a late brace as England had three players aged 21 or younger score in the same match for the first time since 1883.

Wales move up, Scotland miss out

Wales won promotion to League 'A' with a 3-1 win over 10-man Finland in Cardiff that allowed them to top Group B4.

Despite manager Ryan Giggs being missing after his recent arrest on suspicion of assaulting his girlfriend, Wales came good with goals from Harry Wilson, Daniel James and Kieffer Moore.

Teemu Pukki netted for Finland, who had left-back Jere Uronen sent off after just 12 minutes.

Winning their group also improves Wales' chances of securing a place in the 2022 World Cup qualifying play-offs, as the two best group winners in the Nations League are guaranteed play-off places if they don't make it via the usual route.

While Wales go up, Scotland missed out on promotion from League B, Group 2 after losing 1-0 in Israel, their second consecutive loss since clinching qualification for Euro 2020.

Manor Solomon's first-half goal sunk the Scots. — *AFP*

THE RESULTS

Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	Austria	1
Italy	2	(Grbic 90+4)	
(Belotti 22, Berardi 68)		Norway	1
		(Zahid 61)	
Poland	1	Israel	1
(Jozwiak 6)		(Solomon 44)	
Netherlands	2	Scotland	0
(Depay 77-pen, Wijnaldum 82)			
England	4	Czech Republic	2
(Rice 20, Mount 24, Foden 80, 84)		(Tomas Soucek 17, Zdenek Ondrasek 55)	
Iceland	0	Slovakia	0
Belgium	4	Serbia	5
(Youn Tieleman 3, Romelu Lukaku 56, 69, Kevin De Bruyne 88)		(Radonic 10, Jovic 25, 45+1, Vlahovic 41, Mladenovic 64)	
Denmark	2	Russia	0
(Wind 17, Chadli 87-og)			
Northern Ireland	1	Hungary	2
(Boyce 56)		(Siger 57, Varga 90+5)	
Romania	1	Turkey	0
(Bicfalvi 81)			
		Republic of Ireland	0
		Bulgaria	0

IPL over, it's football now for India

Bambolim (Goa), Nov. 19: Behind closed doors and with a raft of health safety measures in place, football's Indian Super League (ISL) will kick off here on Friday and become the country's first major tournament to be organised since the enforcement of a Covid-19 lockdown eight months ago.

Former champions ATK Mohun Bagan and Kerala Blasters will start the pro-

ceedings with what is expected to be a blockbuster clash at the GMC Stadium here.

But the season's first big game will undoubtedly be the one between ATK Mohun Bagan and SC East Bengal in Fatorda on November 27, the two heavyweights renewing their more-than-a-century-old rivalry in a new avatar.

ATK Mohun Bagan, playing in their first tour-

nament after the merger of last season champion sides of ISL and I-League into one club, will start as the frontrunner for the title in the seventh edition of the lucrative franchise-based tournament.

They have roped in some quality players like star India defender Sandesh Jhingan while retaining the core of last season champions ATK side such as Fijian international Roy Krishna who was on

rampage against opposition defences.

Roy was last season's joint top-scorer with 15 goals from 21 matches while also providing six assists.

He was named captain in the final as ATK cruised to their third ISL title and will return as skipper alongside four other leaders of the newly-formed ATK Mohun Bagan outfit.

Chief coach Antonio Lopez Habas had recently

announced that five players will be given the captain's armband in rotation through the upcoming season.

Habas has named Fijian striker Roy Krishna and Spanish midfielder Edu Garcia among the captains. Indian players, Pritam Kotal, Arindam Bhattacharya and the seasoned Sandesh Jhingan, will also share the leadership responsibilities. — *PTI*

Lanka's Zoysa is proved corrupt

Dubai, Nov. 19: Already serving suspension on match-fixing charges, former Sri Lanka player and bowling coach Nuwan Zoysa has been found guilty of three offences under the ICC anti-corruption code by an independent tribunal, the global cricket body said on Thursday.

Zoysa was charged under the ICC anti-corruption code in November 2018 and has been found guilty on all charges after he exercised his right to a hearing before an independent anti-corruption tribunal.

The Sri Lankan remains suspended and sanctions will follow in due course, the International Cricket Council said in a release.

He was provisionally suspended in May 2019 on charges of indulging in corruption during a T20 league in the UAE.

ICC said Zoysa has been found guilty of:

Article 2.1.1 — for being party to an agreement or effort to fix or contrive or otherwise influence improperly the result, progress, conduct or other aspect(s) of a match.

Article 2.1.4 — Directly or indirectly soliciting, inducing, enticing,



Nuwan Zoysa

instructing, persuading, encouraging or intentionally facilitating any Participant to breach Code Article 2.1.

Article 2.4.4 — Failing to disclose to the ACU full details of any approaches or invitations received to engage in corrupt conduct under the Code.

"Zoysa has also been charged by the ICC on behalf of the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) for breaching four counts of the ECB anti-corruption code for participants for the T10 League and these proceedings are ongoing," the ICC said in the release. Zoysa, who played 30 Tests and 95 ODIs for Sri Lanka, was appointed Sri Lanka's bowling coach in September, 2015. — *PTI*

GAYLE AND MALINGA PULL OUT OF LPL

Colombo, Nov. 19: Chris Gayle and Lasith Malinga, two of T20 cricket's biggest draws, have pulled out of the inaugural Lanka Premier League (LPL) along with England pacer Liam Plunkett, dealing a huge blow to the tournament even before its take-off.

While Gayle and Plunkett's withdrawals were confirmed by their franchise Kandy Tuskers, Malinga pulled out citing "inadequate preparation time", according to a report in *ESPNCricinfo*.

"We are sad to announce that Chris Gayle will not be playing for us in this year's @LPLT20," Tuskers tweeted.

This was followed by another tweet, "We are also sad to announce that Liam Plunkett will also not be playing in this year's @LPLT20."

Gayle holds the record for hitting the most number of sixes in the T20 format. He was recently seen in the IPL.

Malinga, who was supposed to lead the Galle Gladiators, said he didn't have any training since March and it would be tough for him to play a high-level event without any practice. — *PTI*

Punjab firm up three-year plan

New Delhi, Nov. 19: Frequently changing captains and coaches has hurt Kings XI Punjab in the past and that is why the franchise has decided to work on a three-year plan under Anil Kumble and K. L. Rahul to take the side forward, co-owner Ness Wadia has said.

It was a roller-coaster ride for KXIP this IPL. They lost six out of their first seven games before winning five in a row to storm back into play-off contention. The Rahul-led side needed to win its last league game against Chennai Super Kings to reach the top-four but it couldn't.

"It is a new captain, new team with a lot of fresh faces, sometimes it clicks and sometimes it doesn't. The auction is coming up soon and we would be looking to plug the gaps in the middle-order and our bowling," Wadia said.

"The international players did not perform to the expected level," he said referring to the likes of Glenn Maxwell and Sheldon Cottrell, for whom KXIP paid big money at last year's auction.

He also said that Chris Gayle, who was surpris-

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— **NESS WADIA**
Kings XI Punjab co-owner

ingly not picked in the first half of the tournament, had done enough to be playing from game one next season.

Talking about the future under Kumble and Rahul, Wadia said: "We have a charted a three-year strategy with Anil. K. L. has been with us for three years and there was a reason why we went after him so aggressively. He has proved us right."

"It is tough for the top order when your middle order is not performing. The good thing is that we have an established core now (Rahul, Agarwal, Pooran, Gayle and Shami) and we need to plug the gaps which are quite apparent (middle-order and death bowling)," Wadia added. — *PTI*

Covid hits South Africa cricketers

Cape Town, Nov. 19: Three players of the South African men's cricket team have been placed under isolation after one of them tested positive for Covid-19 ahead of the white-ball series against England, the country's cricket board confirmed.

Cricket South Africa (CSA), though, did not disclose the names of the three players.

CSA said about 50 Covid-19 RTPCR tests on players and support staff were conducted prior to entering the bio-bubble here for the limited overs series, starting on November 27.

"One player has returned a positive test result and two players were considered close contacts based on the risk assessment undertaken by the medical team," a CSA statement said.

"All three players have been placed in immediate isolation in Cape Town as part of the Covid-19 protocols. While all players are asymptomatic, CSA's medical team will monitor them to ensure their health and well-being," it added.

No replacements have been named for the series, comprising three T20Is and as many ODIs, but the board said two new players will join the group to make up the numbers. "At this stage, none of these players will be replaced for the tour, but two replacement players will be included into the squad for the purposes of the inter-squad practice matches that will be played on Saturday, 21 November," it said. — *PTI*

LIVERPOOL'S SALAH TESTS +VE AGAIN

Cairo, Nov. 19: Liverpool striker Mohamed Salah will likely miss the club's next Premier League game after the Egyptian football association said that he had tested positive for the Coronavirus for a second time.

The 28-year-old Salah, who has mild symptoms, has been in self-isolation in Egypt's Red Sea resort of el-Gouna, where he arrived earlier this week. He had previously self-isolated in a Cairo hotel.

He first tested positive for the virus on Friday on the eve of Egypt's Africa Cup of Nations qualifier against Togo. The Pharaohs beat Togo 1-0 in Cairo, and 3-1 on Tuesday in Togo's capital, Lome.

The Egyptian association said Arsenal midfielder Mohamed Elneny also returned another positive test.

Elneny, 28, first tested positive Monday after the squad arrived in Togo.

Striker Ahmed Hassan Kouka of Olympiacos tested positive after his return to Cairo with the national team from Togo, the association said. — *AP*

Seven more cases in Uruguay camp

Montevideo (Uruguay), Nov. 19: Uruguay's football federation reported seven new cases of Covid-19 in the camp Wednesday, bringing the number of positive cases among its World Cup qualifying squad to 11.

Players Alexis Rolin, who plays for Uruguay club Rentistas, and Los Angeles FC's Diego Rossi — as well as five officials — tested positive for the coronavirus after Tuesday night's 2-0 defeat at home to Brazil.

"They are all fine and appropriate sanitary measures have been implemented," the federation said.

The seven new cases are in addition to four announced in the run-up to Tuesday's match — including star striker Luis Suarez, substitute goalkeeper Rodrigo Munoz and spokesman Matias Faral.

On Saturday, the federation announced that full-back Matias Vina, who plays for Brazilian club Palmeiras, had also tested positive. — *AFP*



Novak Djokovic of Serbia reacts during his loss to Daniil Medvedev of Russia at the ATP World Finals tennis tournament at the O2 arena in London on Wednesday. Djokovic lost in straight sets at 3-6, 3-6. — *AP*

Djoker loses big at Tour Finals

London, Nov. 19: Daniil Medvedev is enjoying the ATP Tour Finals a lot better in his second appearance. Medvedev secured a spot in the semifinals of the tournament by dominating five-time champion Novak Djokovic 6-3, 6-3 on Wednesday for his second straight win of the group stage.

Medvedev, who lost all three of his group matches last year in his tournament debut, has now beaten Djokovic in three of their last four meetings. The top-ranked Serb can still advance if he beats 2018 champion Alexander Zverev in a winner-takes-all match on Friday.

Zverev kept his tournament hopes alive with a 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 victory over Diego Schwartzman earlier Wednesday. Medvedev broke Djokovic three straight times to go from 3-3 in the first set to a 3-0 lead in the second. The first break came after a marathon game when the Russian finally converted his third break point when Djokovic missed a forehand after a long rally.

Djokovic then double-faulted on set point and never looked likely to stage a comeback in the second. Medvedev saved the only break point he faced at 2-0 and then secured the victory with a forehand winner on his first match point.

"He was just better, no question about it," Djokovic said. — *AP*