


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
ANANTAPUR | TUESDAY | 17 NOVEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 33.0°C
Min: 18°C
RH: 71%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min
temp. 33/18 °C

COVID-19
COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+29,977)	(+476)
88,73,375	1,30,066

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 502)	(+3)
TS: 2,57,876	1,407
(+753)	(+13)
AP: 8,54,764	6,881

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

5,50,57,812

DEATHS

13,27,967

COUNTRIES WITH CASES

217

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Shuddha Tadiya till
1.20 am (Wednesday)
Star: Jyeshtha till 12.25 pm
Varjyam: Nil
Durmuhurtam: 8.40 am to 9.25
am; 10.44 pm to 11.35 pm
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

HLJRI CALENDAR


Rabbi-ul Akhir 26, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5:31 am
Zohar: 12:26 pm
Asar: 4:28 pm
Maghrib: 6:05 pm
Isha: 7:21 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6:17 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5:49 PM
MOONSET 7:12 PM
MOONRISE

COUNTER POINT



Our leader is swearing...
at their ceremony!

SHORT TAKE

Oil majors skip
BPCL stake sale

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

Sabari trek starts
amid Covid

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

INSIDE

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AP records high levels of
air pollution on Diwali day

STATE... PAGE 3

AP records dip in daily
Covid-19 cases with 753

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Winter, budget sessions
likely to be clubbed

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Boris self-isolates
after MP tests +ve

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Dustin Johnson wins
Augusta Masters golf

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Vol. 22 No. 68 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Temples reopen in Maharashtra

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

— PTI

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

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

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

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

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

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, NOV. 16

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

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

■ Report on Page 2

to protect as many people
around the world as possi-
ble. All along, we have
known that each day mat-
ters," said Stephane
Bancel, CEO of Moderna.
"This positive interim

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

— PTI

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

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

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

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

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

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

TTD MEMO ON SUIT AGAINST DEEKSHITHULU

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 16

Tirumala Tirupati Deva-
sthanams (TTD) on Mon-
day filed a memo in con-
nection with the defama-
tion suits filed against Dr
A.V. Ramana Deekshit-
ulu and others at the X
additional district judge
court here.

In the memo, TTD ap-
pealed to the court not to
press the I.A. 158/2020,
filed in September to wit-
hdraw defamation suits,
in connection with the
case — O.S. No. 264/2018.
TTD prayed the court to
dismiss the I.A. 158/2020
without costs as not
pressed and pass neces-
sary orders as the court
may deem fit and proper
in the circumstances, the
memo read.

In 2018, Dr Ramana
Deekshithulu made start-
ling allegations against
the then TTD trust
board, which was
appointed by the previ-
ous state government.

■ Page 2: Deekshithulu
says no disrespect for TTD

Sea invades Gangapatnam

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE / TIRUPATI, NOV. 3

Gangapatnam village on
the sea coast has become
the second fishermen vil-
lage to be invaded by the
Bay of Bengal late on Sun-
day night after the fisher-
men colony at Pallipalem
earlier met the same fate.
Water entered homes of
people living close to the

coast at Gangapatnam fol-
lowing which Nellore
RDO SK Hussein Saheb
rushed to the village.
Mandal development offi-
cer Rafi Khan said the vil-
lage is surrounded by sea
from three sides. Follow-
ing the sea encroaching
into their homes, officials
have distributed water
and food to the affected
people. Several low-lying

colonies in of Nellore dis-
trict, including Bujabuja
Nellore located close to
Nellore City were inundat-
ed on Monday following
incessant rain since
Sunday night. Streams
and canals close to
Kandaluru and Somsila
projects are also in spate.

■ Page 3: Rain batters
life in Tirupati

WOMAN | POWER

Paddy output plummets in East Godavari due to floods and heavy rains

Floods wash away bumper harvest hopes

VADREVVU SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, NOV. 16

Yield of paddy in the east-
ern delta has fallen com-
pared to last year due to
floods and rains. Farmers
are on an average getting
27 to 28 bags per acre
against 31 to 33 bags during
last year's Kharif season.

Overall, paddy yield is
expected to be 11.40 lakh
tonnes this year against
13.09 lakh tonnes last year.
In addition, farmers are

worried about paddy get-
ting discoloured.

Another reason for
decrease in yield is farm-
ers of central delta and
Yeleru canal ayacut trans-
planting nurseries only
twice. When transplanting
started for the third time,
weather conditions deterio-
rated and did not favour
the crop.

Agriculture Department
officials said paddy had
been cultivated over
2,19,214 hectares in East

The government will
help farmers by provid-
ing input subsidy. Efforts
are also on to provide zero
percent interest loans to farm-
ers. The state is seeking help
from the Centre over the
issue of discoloured paddy.

— K. KANNABABU,
Agriculture minister

Godavari as against
2,20,037 hectares last year.
They observe that though

rains and floods damaged
the crop in eastern delta,
farmers could still get a
yielding of 27-28 bags per
acre. However, the central
delta got badly hit by rains
and floods. Under the ay-
cuts of Yeleru and Pampa
reservoirs, paddy fields
laid remained underwater
for more than 10-15 and
were thus completely dam-
aged.

N. Venkateswara Rao of
Karapa mandal said weath-
er had had hit them badly

dashing their hopes of a
good crop this year. He
insisted that the govern-
ment should come to the
aid of farmers at this stage.

Agriculture joint director
K.V.S. Prasad said of 3,500
cuttings, over 2,400 have
been taken. The crop yield
is 27-28 bags per acre. But
they cannot make the final
projections without assess-
ing the remaining cuttings.
However, he did concede
that the yield will be lesser
compared to last year. He

further pointed out that
only 25 percent of the har-
vest has been completed so
far in East Godavari dis-
trict.

Agriculture minister
Kurasala Kannababu said
the government will help
farmers by providing input
subsidy. Efforts are also on
to provide zero percent
interest loans to farmers.
He said the state is seeking
help from the central gov-
ernment over the issue of
discoloured paddy.

16 face cases for defaming courts

CBI takes over defamation case from CID

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

The Central Bureau of
Investigation has regis-
tered a case against 16
individuals and other
unidentified persons for
allegedly making defama-
tory comments against
judiciary on different
social media platforms.

The CBI, following the
directions of the Andhra
Pradesh High Court, took
over the case from the
state Crime Investigation
Department which had
already registered 12 cases
and clubbed them into a
single case. Significantly,
none of the serving and
former public representa-
tives who figured promi-
nently in the HC hearings
for their outburst against
the High Court and apex
court judges have been
made accused by the CBI.

The CBI had mentioned
in the FIR that these cases
were initially registered
by the CID based on the
complaints of the Regis-
trar General on the allega-
tion that key personnel
who are occupying posts
of prominence in AP gave
interviews and issued sta-
tements targeting judges
and posted abusive and
intimidating comments
against judges over the
recent orders of the HC.

The HC on October 12
directed the CBI to probe
the case and submit a

SC judge recuses from case on Jagan

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

Supreme Court Justice
Uday Umesh Lalit, who
was to hear a PIL seeking
the removal of Y.S. Jagan
Mohan Reddy from the
post of Andhra Pradesh
Chief Minister over his
"scandalising" remarks
against a senior judge of
the top court, on Monday
recused himself from the
case saying, "I have diffi-
culties. As a lawyer I had
represented one of the par-
ties. Place the matter
before the Chief Justice
for listing before an appro-
priate bench of which I am
not a member."

Justice Lalit had, as
senior Supreme Court law-

yer in 2011-12, appeared
before the Andhra
Pradesh High Court on
behalf of Reddy.

The Chief Minister had,
in a letter written to Chief
Justice of India S.A. Bob-
de, alleged that a sitting
judge of the SC was trying
to "destabilise and topple
my democratically elected
government."

In an open letter
addressed to CJI Bobde on
October 6, the Chief
Minister had alleged that
the senior judge had been
influencing the sittings of
the Andhra Pradesh High
Court, including the roster
of a few judges.

■ Page 2: Plea seeks bar on
comments against courts

report to it in a sealed
cover within eight weeks.
The next hearing of the
case is on December 14.
The HC expressed displea-
sure over the CID investi-
gation before handing
over the case to the central
agency. CBI office in Visa-
khapatnam registered the
case under various sec-
tions. A division bench
comprising Justices

Rakesh Kumar and J. Uma
Devi observed that "The
postings were made to
bring hatred, contempt,
incite disaffection and ill-
will against the HC and
Hon'ble judges."

It had noted that the
Speaker and the Deputy
CM had not restrained
themselves from making
"scathing remarks"
against the judiciary.

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

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

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

A bench of Chief Justice
S.A. Bobde and Justices
A.S. Bopanna and V. Ram-
asubramanian asked the
counsel for Sameer Thak-
kar to approach the Bom-
bay HC with the plea say-
ing that it can also uphold
his fundamental rights.

"The High Court can
also uphold your funda-
mental rights. It can also
transfer the case and
grant you bail. Then why
are you coming under 32
(under Article 32 of the
Constitution, writ pleas
are filed in the Supreme
Court). You please go to
the High Court," the
bench told senior advo-
cate Mahesh Jethmalani

"We are quite immune from
shock. We see it everyday.
Nothing shocks us," the
Supreme Court bench
observed and asked him to
approach the High Court.

who was appearing for
Thakkar.

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

Meanwhile, a local court
in Mumbai on Monday,
granted bail to Sameer
Thakkar. Thakkar was
granted bail after the
Maharashtra government
earlier in the day assured
the Supreme Court that it
will not oppose Thakkar's
bail application.

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

SC TO AP: SEEK EC'S APPROVAL FOR SCHEMES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

The Supreme Court on
Monday asked the state
government to approach
the State Election
Commission for permis-
sion to execute develop-
ment works and
schemes.

A three-member bench
headed by Chief Justice
S.A. Bobde was hearing
an interim application
filed by the state govern-
ment seeking modifica-
tion of an earlier order in
which the apex court
while defending the
SEC's decision to post-
pone elections to local
bodies in February,
directed the state to
implement development
works and schemes after
obtaining the election
body approval.

Senior counsel Mukul
Rohtagi, appearing for
the state government,
argued that prior permis-
sion is not required as
there is no code of con-
duct. The bench sought
to know from the counsel
if the state made any
attempt to approach the
SEC. Following this,
Rohtagi sought the SC
permission to apply to
the SEC for carrying out
specific works.

SHORT TAKES NO DISRESPECT FOR TTD, SAYS DEEKSHITHULU

From Page 1

He alleged that a pink diamond from the temple treasury had gone missing and there was an attempt to excavate the temple for hidden treasures.

YSRC MP Vijaya Sai Reddy also accused former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu of taking away the pink diamond and demanded a search of his house. In this regard, the then trust board led by its chairman Putta Sudhakar Yadav, passed a resolution (Res. No. 109, 05-06-2018) to issue notices to Deekshithulu and others and to file a suit against them for damages.

In a counter filed by the TTD recently, it was stated that Deekshithulu and Vijay Sai Reddy have given written statements, saying that they did not make any statement to cause defame or disrespect either to Lord Venkateshwara Swami or to TTD.

Taking into consideration the pleadings of the defendants and also to save money and time in further proceeding the matter, the present trust board passed a resolution (Res. No. 227, 29-02-2020) seeking withdrawal of the suit.

The board's decision, however, came in for widespread criticism from opposition parties and also from several Hindu outfits and organisations. Also, a Hindu outfit, Hindu Janasakthi Welfare Association filed a petition before the court, seeking to include it as a plaintiff. The TTD, however, recently filed a counter to this petition. Now, TTD has filed a memo in connection with the defamation suits, before the X additional district judge and the case has been posted to November 23.

PLEA SEEKS BAR ON COMMENTS AGAINST COURTS

From Page 1

The Chief Minister cited instances of how cases important to the Opposition Telugu Desam (TD) were "allocated to a few judges".

Justice Lalit was heading a three-judge bench, also comprising Justice Vineet Saran and Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, before which three separate petitions by advocates G.S. Mani, Sunil Kumar Singh and Anti-Corruption Council of India Trust, seeking action against the Chief Minister for his allegations.

They have alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy didn't just write a letter to Chief Justice Bobde levelling allegations against the senior judge, but he also made his aide hold a press conference to release the letter, with false statements.

Singh has urged the Supreme Court to issue an order to bar the Chief Minister from making public statements that lower the image of the judiciary in the eyes of the public.

UMA SEEKS FACTS ON POLAVARAM DAM'S HEIGHT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

Telugu Desam senior leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao demanded that the YSRC government to come out with facts on Polavaram irrigation project's dam height in the wake of apprehensions on its reduction.

Speaking to the media on Monday, the former minister stated that there were conflicting reports on Polavaram dam's height from various quarters and asked the state government to clear the apprehensions on the issue among the political parties and the farmers.

He also asked the state government to clarify as to when it was going to complete the execution of the whole project and alleged the inordinate delay in its execution resulted in cost escalation.

He turned critical on the state government for failing to mount pressure upon the Centre to get the assured special category status and also funds for Polavaram project and other schemes and works.

He cautioned that in the event of a reduction in Polavaram dam's height, it would affect the water storage capacity and also upset the plans to the inter-link the Godavari with Krishna and Penna rivers.

● Telugu Desam senior leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao asked the state government to clarify as to when it was going to complete the execution of the whole project.

Differently abled protest



Differently abled persons state a protest in front of Guntur collector office with various demands under the aegis of AP Differently Abled Welfare Associations in Guntur city on Monday. Former minister N. Anand Babu, along with other TD leaders, took part in the protest.

— TEJO ROY ELETI

3 proposals submitted on restructuring Nellore dist

Panel requested to keep Sarvepalli segment in Nellore district

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR |
DC
NELLORE, NOV. 16

The 12-member District-Level Committee constituted for restructuring SPSR Nellore district has submitted three proposals to the state government for reorganisation of the district.

One is to keep the district intact, citing geographical and historical reasons. The committee justifies this recommendation pointing out that the district was formed based on area, population, geographical contiguity, physical features, historical associations, education, culture, common interests and problems, administrative convenience and economic growth.

Contrary to this is dividing the district on the basis of parliamentary constituencies, taking population and number of electors into considera-

● Despite have long history and possessing great heritage, Nellore district has become very small compared to other districts in Andhra Pradesh after it lost vast areas when Prakasam district was formed, a senior official pointed out.

tion. Sources in the administration said this would deprive the original Nellore district of major industrial centres including the Krishnapatnam Port, apart from special economic zones (SEZs) in Menakauru and Tada.

Despite have long history and possessing great heritage, Nellore district has become very small compared to other districts in Andhra Pradesh after it lost vast areas when Prakasam district was formed, a senior official pointed out.

Among the 10 existing assembly constituencies, Nellore City, Rural, Kovur, Atmakur, Udayagiri, Kavali and Kandukur assembly segments of Prakasam district are part of Nellore

Lok Sabha seat, whereas Sarvepalli, Gudur (SC), Sullurpetta (SC) and Venkatagiri in Nellore district are attached to Tirupati parliament seat.

In the second proposal of reorganising Nellore district, the committee wants to keep Sarvepalli constituency in Nellore district, along with Sarvepalli's vital installations, such as Krishnapatnam Port, Vikram Simhapuri University, Agriculture Rice Research Station, power projects, like APGENCO and SEMB Corp, NCERT, Fisheries Research Centre, and other big business establishments. There are also large chunks of lands available for establishing industries through APIIC in the Chennai-Bangalore

Industrial Corridor.

Incidentally, legislator of Sarvepalli, Kakani Govardhan Reddy of YSRC, has requested the committee to keep his segment in Nellore district, sources said.

As per the third proposal, the committee has underlined the need to keep Gudur assembly segment in Nellore district, as there will be no representation for SCs from Nellore district in the assembly if the district is bifurcated. This is because two SC seats, Gudur and Sullurpetta, will become part of Tirupati (or Balaji) district.

If the government agrees for second and third proposals, the restructured Nellore district will comprise nine assembly segments including Kandukur, Udyagiri, Kavali, Atmakur, Kovur, Nellore City and Rural, Sarvepalli and Gudur, sources in the administration said.

Telugu compulsory, 97% parents prefer Eng medium

VADREVI SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, NOV. 16

Andhra Pradesh Official Language Commission chairman Yarl-agadda Lakshmi Prasad on Monday said that the state government would make Telugu language compulsory from Class I to X in Andhra Pradesh and one Telugu medium school would be set up in each mandal in the state.

He along with the commission members Modugula Papireddy, Profs. Shaik Mastan, Chandu Subba Rao and Sarat Jyotsna Rani reviewed with officials the implementation of Telugu language in the state administration.

Prasad said that when Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was undertaking the Praja Sankalpa Yatra as an Opposition leader, many belonging to the downtrodden sections appealed to him to introduce English medium in government schools. He said that when a study was done among 47 lakhs parents of the government school students, 97 per cent of the parents preferred English medium. But, some of the peo-

● Lakshmi Prasad said that a Telugu dictionary would be published soon for making use of the employees to clear doubts in implementing the Telugu language in the administration.

ple were carrying out a bad propaganda against the government that AP would become 'Angla Pradesh' (English Pradesh). But people should not believe such talk as many of the students in private schools are preferring Sanskrit, French or other languages instead of Telugu with an intention of getting highest marks.

Stating that Jagan was setting right the lacuna and preferred Telugu language in English medium schools, he said that the Chief Minister had promised that free transport facility would be provided to Telugu medium students. He said that Godavari districts have given good preference to the Telugu literature, but for the past eight years, there was no official language commission or its office, but Jagan appointed a commission for Telugu language within

three months after assuming charge as Chief Minister.

Prasad said that the commission has full powers and the it can inspect any government office and give suggestions to the departments in implementing Telugu language. He also said that a Telugu dictionary would be published soon for making use of the employees to clear doubts in implementing the Telugu language in the administration.

Prasad also expressed satisfaction over the implementation of Telugu language in East Godavari district. He said Kunavaram tahasildar office was implementing Telugu language cent per cent, district insurance office (98 per cent), Gangavaram tahsildar Office (96 per cent), Rampachodavaram tahasildar office (96 per cent), Kakinada Municipal Corporation (93 per cent) and implemented Telugu language.

Joint collector G. Lakshminisha said that continuation supervision is being made in implementation of the Telugu language under the leadership of the district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy.

AP records high levels of air pollution on Diwali day

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

Parts of Andhra Pradesh witnessed high air pollution levels when firecrackers were burst on Diwali day.

Based on direction from the Central Pollution Control Board, AP Pollution Control Board authorities monitored Air Quality Index (AQI) in real time for 24 hours on the day through their monitoring stations located at Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Amaravati and Tirumala. The authorities have taken AQI values recorded on November 9 as base values to compare them with those recorded on Saturday.

Accordingly, in Visakhapatnam, the maximum AQI of 425 was recorded at 8 pm, indicating high levels of air pollution after people started fireworks. The average AQI for the day was recorded at 117. On November 9, the city had recorded the maximum AQI of 290 at 3 pm, also indicating high levels of air pollution.

In Rajahmundry, the maximum AQI recorded was



People firing colorful crackers on the occasion of Diwali celebrations in Vijayawada on Saturday.

● Despite state government's direction based on NGT order permitting only bursting of green crackers from 8 to 10 pm on Saturday, people burst all varieties of crackers causing air pollution.

503 at 8 pm. The average AQI for 24 hours was 115 on Diwali day while it reached a maximum of 230 at 9 pm on November 9.

In Velagapudi, the maximum AQI recorded was 378 at 8 pm while the 24-hour average AQI was 113. On November 9, the maximum AQI recorded was 184 at 9 am.

In Tirumala where there was no permission for bursting of fireworks, the maximum AQI was

recorded at 61 which is very low. However, the 24 hours average AQI was recorded at 103 and on November 9, the town recorded AQI of 115 at 11 pm.

APPCB junior scientific officer, Dr B.V. Prasad said, "The AQI values have gone up for three to four hours when people started bursting firecrackers. It indicated high levels of air pollution following the release of chemicals and metals. However, average AQI in all the four places was found to be ranging from satisfactory to moderate. Meanwhile, when compared with last year's Diwali, AQI values are relatively down this year, indicating less pollution levels in the air."

JAGAN TO RELEASE ₹510.32 CRORE TO BENEFIT 14.58 LAKH FARMERS TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to release ₹510.32 crore as interest waiver on farm loans to benefit 14.58 lakh farmers on Tuesday.

As the Chief Minister announced YSR Sunna Vaddi Panta Runalu scheme (zero interest on crop loans) earlier, he will release ₹510.32 crore as interest waiver under the scheme by pressing a button so that the amount would be remitted into

the bank accounts of the farmers directly. The interest waiver was meant for crops raised during Kharif season by the farmers in 2019.

Similarly, the CM will also release input subsidy worth of ₹132 crore for the benefit of farmers who suffered crop loss during the Kharif season in October, as they lost both agriculture and horticulture crops.

The amount will be remitted into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers.

₹16,000 crore for new med colleges, hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHIMAVARAM/UNDI,
NOV. 16

Deputy Chief Minister and Medical and Health Minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas (Nani) said that 48 institutions, including 16 medical colleges, 16 for nursing and 16 super-speciality hospitals would be set up in Andhra Pradesh to provide better medical facilities to the people of the state.

He along with Women and Child Welfare Minister Taneti Vanitha and Bhimavaram MLA Grandhi Srinivas laid the foundation stone for construction of an upgraded community health centre from 50 beds to 100 beds at Gollavanitippa village in Bhimavaram constituency on Monday.

Nani said that the state government would spend ₹16,000 crore for creating infrastructure facilities in medical and health education out of which ₹1,200 crore has been allocated to West Godavari district. He said that new medical colleges would be set up in Narasapuram and Eluru. He also said that the tribal people in the agency area are suffering due to non-availability of proper medical services and the government plans to set up a super-speciality hospital to address the problem of people in Krishna and West Godavari districts. He said that ₹10.15 crore

● Deputy CM and Medical and Health Minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas (Nani) said that new medical colleges would be set up in Narasapuram and Eluru.

have been sanctioned for constructing the hospital. He said that the government has cleared ₹680 crore arrears under Arogyasri scheme. He greeted Grandhi Srinivas for donating four acres of land worth ₹12 crore for the hospital.

Later, Nani toured Undi and Kolamuru villages and laid stones for development works. He said that when Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was trying to provide houses to all poor in the state, his predecessor N. Chandrababu Naidu was creating obstacles by filling cases in courts and stopping development and welfare activities. Nani called upon the people to oppose Naidu as he was making hectic efforts to stop the housing activity.

MLAs M. Prasada Raju (YSRC), Nimmala Rama Naidu and Manthana Ramaraju (both TD), the district joint-collector Himanshu Sukla, Narasapuram sub-collector K.S. Viswanathan, DCCB chairman K. Srinivas, DCMS Chairman Yedla Tataji, former MLA P. Sarraju, YSRC Undi Assembly convener P.V.L. Narasimha Raju and others were present.

JAGAN, NAIDU DOING VOTE BANK POLITICS: SOMU

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

State BJP president Somu Veerajulu said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and TD supreme N. Chandrababu Naidu were playing vote bank politics to promote themselves while handling sensitive issues.

Speaking to media persons here on Monday, the BJP senior leader raised doubts in handling the case of Abdul Salam family suicide at Nandyal recently. He said that though the circle inspector and the constable involved in the case were arrested and sent to the jail, he asked as to what to do with the chief ministers when farmers were committing suicide. He asked the state government whether it was right to arrest the police personnel when they discharged their duty.

Turning his attention on the leader of the Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu, the BJP chief flayed him for provoking the Muslims on the family suicide issue.

The BJP leader alleged that smuggling of red sanders was rampant in the state and asked the state government as to why it was unable to control it.

Referring to the implementation of Vidya Deevana earlier during the Telugu Desam regime for the benefit of students, he asked the YSRC government to provide such benefit even for the meritorious students in the state.

AVINASH SAYS JAGAN WILL RULE AP FOR 30 YEARS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

YSRC Vijayawada East Assembly segment in-charge Devineni Avinash sounded confident that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy would continue to rule the state for 30 more years given a series of welfare schemes being initiated to benefit every section of the community in the state.

The YSRC leader was taking part in the culmination of a 10-day-long programme taken up to mark Praja Sankalpa Yatra here on Monday. He said that their government was implementing the manifesto announced at the time of elections in addition to a series of welfare programmes including Navaratnalu and others providing benefit to the people and slammed the previous Telugu Desam regime for failing to take up any developmental works in the segment.

ISRO | PROGRAMME GSLV MkIII is a three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle

Human rating of GSLV MkIII gets underway

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 16

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) GSLV MkIII rocket has been identified as the vehicle to launch the Gaganyaan Mission and the process for its human rating is in progress.

GSLV MkIII is a three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle developed by ISRO. It has two solid strap-ons, a core liquid booster and a cryogenic upper stage. It is designed to carry four-

tonne class of satellites into geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO) or about 10 tonnes to low earth orbit (LEO), which is about twice the capability of the GSLV Mk II.

The two strap-on motors of GSLV Mk III are located on either side of its core liquid booster. Designated 'S200', the high-thrust solid propellant strap-on boosters play an important role in the human-rated GSLV Mk III.

Each S200 booster carries 205 tonnes of compos-

● GSLV MkIII is designed to carry four-tonne class of satellites into geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO) or about 10 tonnes to low earth orbit (LEO), which is about twice the capability of the GSLV Mk II.

ite solid propellant and their ignition results in vehicle lift-off.

S200s function for 140 seconds. During strap-ons functioning phase, the two clustered Vikas liquid Engines of L110 liquid

core booster will ignite 114 sec after lift-off to further augment the thrust of the vehicle. These two engines continue to function after the separation of the strap-ons at about 140 seconds after lift-off.

According to an ISRO statement on Monday, many new design features have been introduced in the hardware in order to human rate the S200 booster.

In a fruitful industry collaboration, the first critical booster segment of the

motor case with a diameter of 3.2 metre, 8.5 metre in length and weighing 5.5 tonnes has been indigenously developed and delivered by L&T.

This is the first step towards the unmanned space mission and was flagged-off by ISRO Chairman Dr K. Sivan, who is also secretary, department of space, and Jayant Damodar Patil, director and senior executive vice president, defence & smart technologies, L&T, on November 13.

SHORT TAKES

WATER LEVELS ON THE RISE IN SOMASILA

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 16

Following inflow to the extent of 10.216 cusecs from Penna river upstream, Somasila Project is almost full with 76,280 tmc ft as against the full level of 77,888 tmc ft as on Monday morning. The outflow was 4,900 cusecs, according to Project officials.

Kandaleru dam has received 3984 cusecs from the catchment area following rains during the last two days in addition to 2619 cusecs through Somasila Kandaleru Flood Flow Canal taking the storage level to 68.416 tmc ft.

LEGAL ACTION FOR NOT PAYING E-CHALLAN DUES

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 16

Prakasam District SP Siddharth Kaushal has advised the motorists, who received e-challans for violation of rules, to pay the penalty within next two days either at the relevant Mee-Seva Centre or at the AP Online Center to save themselves from legal action for non-payment of the fines.

According to the SP e-challans have been issued to 1,51,775 motorists imposing a fine of ₹4,62,10,984 across the Prakasam district so far in 2020.

However, only 82,832 motorists have paid the fines through online and 68,943 motorists are yet to pay the fine totalling to ₹2,48,53,798.

The SP said that the Andhra Pradesh government had introduced a new law to curb the rising number of road accidents, which will result in higher fines for motorists violating traffic rules.

Realising this, all motorists are required to keep all documents of their vehicles and the bikers are required to wear a helmet and strictly abide by the rules to save from excessive fines.

"Legal action will be taken against the illegal drivers of sites adjoining the main roads in Ongole if they fail to remove the encroachments immediately in Ongole town," the SP added.

TOP AWARD FOR EAST COAST RAILWAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 16

East Coast Railway has bagged Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant Best Zonal Railway Award 2020 for all-round performance among all the zones in Indian Railways, a release said here on Monday. This is a very prestigious honour for any Zonal Railway, which the East Coast Railway will receive this shield for the third time.

Earlier, the East Coast Railway had bagged this shield in 2008-09 and 2015-16.

This shield instituted in the memory of Late Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, the freedom fighter and Union Minister, is given every year to the Zonal Railway, whose performance is adjudged to be best amongst all.

In a release, the SCR stated that the reservation for the daily special trains would open on Tuesday.

The train No. 06057 MGR Chennai Central Tirupati Daily special train will depart Chennai Central at 6:25 am from November 19 and arrive Tirupati at 9:40 am on the same day.

In the return direction, train No. 06008 Tirupati MGR Chennai Central daily special train will depart Tirupati at 10:15 am from November 19 and arrive Chennai Central at 1:40 pm on the same day.

Enroute, this special train will stop at Renigunta, Puttur, Ekmbarakuppam, Tiruttani, Arakonam, Tiruvallur and Perambur stations.

The special train will have AC chair cars, second class chair cars and reserved general seating class coaches.

● The train No. 06057 MGR Chennai Central Tirupati Daily special train will depart Chennai Central at 6:25 am from November 19 and arrive Tirupati at 9:40 am on the same day. The special train will have AC chair cars, second class chair cars and reserved general seating class



Devotees lit 365 wicks at Sivalayam on the occasion of Karthiaka Masam in Vijayawada on Monday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Olive Ridley turtles nesting increasing

Last season 64,030 baby turtles walked into sea

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 16

Protective nesting of endangered species Olive Ridley sea turtles on the Visakhapatnam shore are showing positive results. The 2019-2020 season had 811 nestings in which the turtles laid 74,932 eggs and 64,030 were of them hatched successfully and the babies walked back to sea towards their home. The season began during Sankranti this year and ended in mid-May.

"We achieved 85.40 per

cent success rate by using the ex-situ method and the increasing trend shows a growth of 20 per cent," said founder-director of Visakha Society for Care and Protection of Animals Pradeep Nath. Talking to this correspondent here on Monday, he said the Society began conservation of Olive Ridley Turtles way back in 1996 with 25 nests, and now it has gone up to 811 nests.

Mr Nath attributed the rising trend due to the imprint technology that the female turtle possess-

es who returns to the place where she was born and walked through to the ocean. It takes 20 years for the female turtle to attain reproductive stage.

He said the nesting period starts from January and ends in May and asked the government agencies to protect the beaches and make it convenient for the turtles to lay eggs and hatch them.

Mr Nath said by increasing protection for the endangered Olive Ridley the nesting

ground could gradually cover the entire 133 km Visakhapatnam district beach grounds to lay these species to nest anywhere along the coastline for nesting, egg-laying, food and safety.

He also appealed to the fisheries department to insist on the mechanised boats to use turtle excluding devices to prevent butchering the turtles.

"Dead turtles are already seen at different parts of the Visakhapatnam beach indicating the arrival of the nesting season," Mr Nath added.

Rain batters life in Tirupati

FROM PAGE 1

Irrigation officials have deputed field staff to keep a tab on tanks and canals to prevent breaches.

In the same time, normal life across several parts of Chittoor district, especially in Tirumala and Tirupati city, has been disrupted on Monday following intermittent rains throughout the day under the influence of the northeast monsoon.

Temperature dropped due to strong surface wind, however, especially senior citizens, to remain indoors. Several low-lying areas in the district have been further surged recording 58.6 mm and 50.2 mm of rainfall in urban and rural limits respectively during later hours on Monday.

City roads in Tirupati are overflowing and manholes have broken at a few places, posing a

threat to motorists and pedestrians. Rainwater has inundated houses in a few low-lying areas. Situation at Tirumala too turned worst when a city village authorities on the hill, posing difficulties for devotees. Tirumala hills have been receiving intermittent rains since Sunday.

Pilgrims were forced to take shelter in shops, Nandanarajaram open auditorium and various eateries.

TIRUPATI-CHENNAI DAILY SPECIALS FROM NOVEMBER 19

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, NOV. 16

The South Central Railways (SCR) will operate fully reserved daily special trains between Tirupati and Chennai from November 19, as part of the phased resumption of train services to facilitate the passengers.

In a release, the SCR stated that the reservation for the daily special trains would open on Tuesday.

The train No. 06057 MGR Chennai Central Tirupati Daily special train will depart Chennai Central at 6:25 am from November 19 and arrive Tirupati at 9:40 am on the same day.

In the return direction, train No. 06008 Tirupati MGR Chennai Central daily special train will depart Tirupati at 10:15 am from November 19 and arrive Chennai Central at 1:40 pm on the same day.

Kondapuram murder was political assassination: Ravi

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, NOV. 16

State TD spokesperson and MLC Mareddy Ravindra Reddy, popular as B. Tech Ravi, has charged that the murder of Gurupratap Reddy at P. Anantapuram village in Kondapuram mandal was a political assassination.

He took objection that attempt to term the incident as factional killing. "The murder was actually carried out as per a plan, so as not to expose the corruption of the local MLA," Mr Ravi maintained. He demanded a probe under supervision of a sitting judge to punish the real culprits behind the killing.

● B.Tech Ravi took objection that attempts are being made to term Guru Pratap Reddy murder as factional killing

Providing his version of the incident, the TD MLC recounted that while the state planning was plain, the court directed officials to identify the real beneficiaries. That is why village authorities set up a gram sabha. Gurupratap Reddy was exposing the corruption in front of the gram sabha when he was brutally killed, Mr Ravi stated.

He alleged that Gurupratap Reddy was killed so that no one would sue any of the complaints in the future.

Officials were trying to compensate 750 people by including ineligible people in the list. In the process, Guru Pratap Reddy alleged, ₹25 crore of public money would be misappropriated by the MLA and officials.

Responding to this, the court directed officials to identify the real beneficiaries. That is why village authorities set up a gram sabha. Gurupratap Reddy was exposing the corruption in front of the gram sabha when he was brutally killed, Mr Ravi stated.

He alleged that Gurupratap Reddy was killed so that no one would sue any of the complaints in the future.

AP records dip in daily Covid-19 cases with 753

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 16

AP has registered a record dip in daily Covid-19 positive cases with 753 unlike as opposed to the daily cases over 1,000 giving until now, in a much-needed relief to the state government.

The state health authorities released the Covid-19 bulletin on Monday reporting that out of 43,044 samples tested, only 753 persons were found infected with Covid-19. With this, the total number of Covid-19 positive cases recorded in the state so far reached 8,54,784.

Out of 91,97,307 samples tested for Covid-19 so far in the state, 8,29,591 infected patients discharged from the hospitals after recovery while 17,892 patients are still active with the virus and are undergoing treatment.

The state also recorded 13 deaths, taking the toll to 6,881.

Among the daily cases of Covid-19, West Godavari topped the state with 216 followed by 130 in East Godavari, 87 in Chittoor, 76 in Krishna, 66 in Prakasam, 25 each in Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam, 14 each in

LEGISLATOR TESTS COVID POSITIVE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 16

Kavali legislator Ramireddy Pratap Kumar Reddy and his close associate M. Sukumar Reddy were reportedly infected with Covid and admitted at Apollo Hospital in Chennai on Monday afternoon. Speaking to their followers over phone, Mr Sukumar Reddy allayed any fears over their health while expressing confidence in

returning home after conquering the dreaded virus. The MLA and Sukumar Reddy took part in Padayatra organised in every mandal of Kavali segment in the recent past. Along with the two infected leaders, fisheries minister Sidhri Appala Raju also participated in the Padayatra held at Dagadathi a couple of days back. They were tested positive when they took Corona tests on Sunday.

Nellore, 12 each in Kurnool and Vizianagaram and four in Anantapur.

Among the Covid-19 active cases, East Godavari is having the highest number of 3,366 followed by 2,500 in Krishna, 2,082 in Guntur, 1,532 in West Godavari, 1,402 in Visakhapatnam, 1,267 in Chittoor, 999 in Nellore, 675 in Prakasam, 596 in Anantapur, 592 in Srikakulam, 426 in Kadapa, 279 in Vizianagaram and 256 in Kurnool.

The rate of recovery among Covid-19 infected patients has been good in East Godavari with 1,14,639 followed by 88,428 in West

Godavari, 80,072 in Guntur, 68,345 in Guntur, 65,000 in Anantapur, 59,736 in Prakasam, 58,408 in Nellore, 59,215 in Kurnool, 55,391 in Visakhapatnam, 52,810 in Kadapa, 44,107 in Srikakulam, 40,162 in Krishna, 39,783 in Vizianagaram, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Among daily cases of death of Covid-19 infected patients, Chittoor, Krishna and Visakhapatnam recorded two each followed by one each in Anantapur, East Godavari, Guntur, Nellore, Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and West Godavari.

Police interrupted CPI stir on houses

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, NOV. 16

CPI Kadapa district secretary Gullu Eshwaraya on Monday along with the beneficiaries of the Tido houses near the industrial estate. The event was interrupted by police and arrested them. There have been agitations and protests across the state under the auspices of the CPI for the last month to hand over the Tido houses to the beneficiaries.

As part of this, the CPI announced that it would

occupy houses with the beneficiaries on November 16. CPI district secretary Eshwaraya said that even two years after Jagan came to power, he questioned why Tido houses were not distributed to the poor. The poor, who have made deposits of ₹25,000 to ₹1 lakh, have been waiting for houses for four years and they are paying interests for the debt.

He said that the fight would continue like this and the house entry efforts will continue till Sankranti next year.

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Scope of Work: Preventive / Breakdown maintenance of lighting equipment and cables connected with the same of cabling system of four units of GGSSTP Roopnagar, lighting and cabling of Stage-I, Micro Hydel Project including street, fencing / boundary Lighting and cleaning and up keeping of cabling system and preventive / Breakdown maintenance of 415V LD system its lighting equipment and cables connected with the same, cabling system of residential & non-residential buildings & street lights of the town Colony, Power Colony, Work Charge Colony, Sarsa Colony & along Nangal Hydel Channel of GGSSTP, Roopnagar.

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SHORT TAKES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FREE PRESS SOUL
OF DEMOCRACY,
SAY LEADERS

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

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

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

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

Daggers drawn in Congress
over Bihar election debacle

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

SREEPARNA
CHAKRABARTY | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Assembly polls. He, however, claimed that the high command was serious about introspection as well as a thorough analysis of the results.

Sources said that the issue was likely to be taken up at the AICC meeting which is likely to be

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

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

held in late January or early February and preparations for which have already begun.

In August, when the 23 senior leaders had raised issues critical to the party organisation, they were confronted and accused of being disloyal.

GRAND ALLIANCE
BOYCOTTS NITISH'S
OATH-TAKING

Patna, Nov. 16: The opposition Grand Alliance on Monday decided to boycott the oath-taking ceremony of Nitish Kumar, claiming the mandate in the elections was "against the NDA" which has been changed by a "fraud".

RJD, which is spearheading the five-party Mahagathbandhan, and its allies have decided to remain away from the swearing-in function of Kumar.

"The RJD boycotts oath-taking ceremony of this puppet government. The mandate is for a change, and against the (ruling) NDA. The peoples verdict has been changed by the rulers order," the RJD alleged in a tweet. — PTI

At swearing-in,
Sushil looks forlorn

Patna, Nov. 16: Senior BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi, who has not been retained in the new Bihar dispensation after serving as the deputy chief minister for close to 15 years, attended the swearing-in ceremony of new NDA government on Monday but looked aloof in the crowd of new MLAs.

A 14-member council of ministers headed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was administered the oath of office at the Raj Bhawan here by Governor Phagu Chauhan.

Sushil Modi, who has been Nitish Kumar's deputy in all the NDA government he has led in Bihar, was not among the 14. He was invited for the swearing-in ceremony though, and he came, but did not look his usual self.

Otherwise a vibrant politician, Sushil Modi watched, not betraying much emotions, as Kumar and others were administered the oath of office.

The BJP has replaced Sushil Modi as the deputy

chief minister, bringing in two new faces for the post multiple-term BJP MLAs Tarkishore Prasad and Renu Devi.

At one point of time, Kumar spotted his long-term deputy and asked him to come near him. The two walked together for some distance, much to the glee of the paparazzi, but their paths were different this time and they separated.

Kumar and Sushil Modi's pair as CM and Deputy CM since 2005, barring a 20-month gap when Kumar was in alliance with the RJD, has been the hallmark of the ruling coalition in the state.

The smooth sail of the successive JD(U)-BJP governments in the state has, to a large extent, been attributed to the good chemistry the two leaders shared.

However, this rapport was resented by a section of his Sushil Modi's own partymen who would have otherwise confronted the JD(U) boss on some issues.

— PTI

Nitish Kumar: Masterful
craftsman of realpolitik

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bhupendra Gupta said here.

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

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

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

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

Winter, budget
sessions likely
to be clubbed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BJP asks Congress to clarify its stand on Article 370

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Article 370.

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

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

EVICTION OF GUJJAR-BAKERWAL
COMMUNITY 'ILLEGAL': MEHBOOBA

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

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

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

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

— PTI

IN BRIEF EXTREMIST GOES ON TRIAL IN FRANCE

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

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

JETLINER HITS BROWN BEAR IN ALASKA

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

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

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

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

SPACEX SENDS 4 ASTRONAUTS TO SPACE STATION

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

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

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

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

Clinical trial to involve 6,000 volunteers across the country

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Merkel, govts to assess lockdown

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

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

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

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

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

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

PERU PRESIDENT RESIGNS, CRISIS GRIPS NATION

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

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

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

Macron sees Donald's envoy

TIME FOR TRUMP TO CONCEDE, SAYS OBAMA

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

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

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

Pompeo's trip is aimed at

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

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

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

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

MALL | MOVE Kids will tell what they want for Christmas from six feet away

Here comes Santa with mask, plexiglass

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



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

faux gift boxes and other decorations in front of

Saint Nick to block kids from charging toward

him. Other safety measures include online reser-

ventions to cut down on lines, workers wiping down holiday-decorated sets, and hand sanitizer aplenty. Santa's hours are also getting cut to give him a break from crowds. Macy's cancelled its in-person visits this year, saying it couldn't provide a safe environment for the more than 250,000 people that show up to see Kriss Kringle at its New York flagship store. But malls, which have struggled to attract shoppers for years, are not willing to kill a holiday tradition. "You have to give them a reason to come or they'll stay home and shop online," says Michael Brown, who oversees the retail team at consulting firm Kearney.

DECCAN Chronicle

17 NOVEMBER 2020

As RCEP is born, India must tread cautiously

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

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

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

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

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

Farewell to a legend

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

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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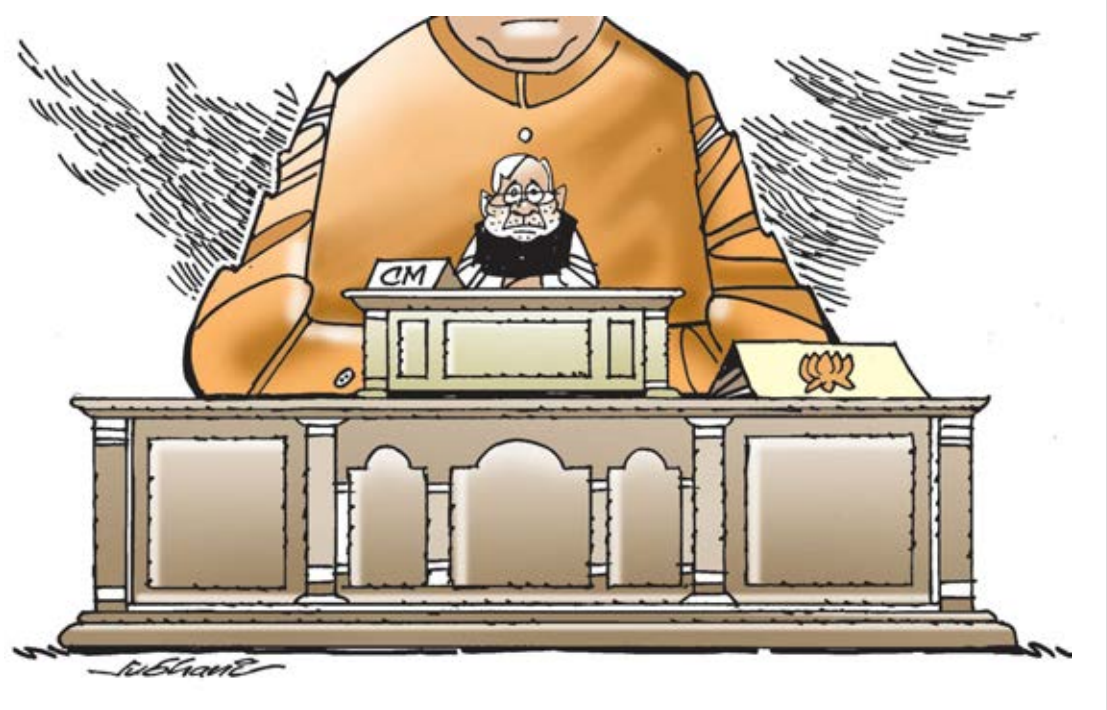
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Subhani



RCEP shifts Indo-Pacific dynamics, blow to Delhi



K.C. Singh

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

A-BETTING SUICIDES

Young people with a lot of life ahead are committing suicides unable to bear the emotional stress of losses after cricket betting is nothing but weeping over split milk. The penchant for betting increases with each loss to recover the lost gambit. While the upbringing constitutes one reason the real cause is to make a fast buck. Youngsters should be given general counselling through media that they are leaving behind a trail of misery not only to the parents but also to their dependents.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

TODAY'S PRINCES

Subsequent to the Independence of India the princely states in India were abolished with the result privy purses were too given up in 1950. However, even after more than 70 years, the present-day Chief Ministers of certain states are enjoying rights and privileges like princes. For example, a few Chief Ministers are acting according to their whims, e.g. creation of more than one state capital, demolition of university properties, etc. In place of privy purses these CMs are availing Central financial aids without submission of proper accounts. It appears there is no difference between princely states and existing states.

N.S. Sharma
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Excavation at Golconda begins

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

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

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

Aakar Patel



Everything is looking bleak: Can Modi still bring change?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

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

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Power use grows 7.8% in first half of Nov.

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

Munot to leave SBI Mutual Fund to head HDFC MF



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

Registration of start-ups at GeM doubles

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

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

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



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

New Delhi, Nov. 16: The government on Monday received 'multiple' bids for buying out its stake in India's second-biggest fuel retailer BPCL but Reliance Industries as well as supermajors Saudi Aramco, BP and Total did not make a bid. Tuhin Kanta Pandey, secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam), which is handling the strategic sale, tweeted that the transaction advisors (TAs) for the sale of government's 52.98 per cent stake in Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) have reported receiving "multiple expressions of interest."

"The transaction will move to the second stage after scrutiny by TA," he said. "Strategic disinvestment of BPCL progresses: Now moves to the second stage after multiple expressions of interest have been received," finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman also tweeted. Neither of them gave the number of bids received or the names of the bidders. Separately, four industry officials said three-four bids have been put in. Reliance Industries, which was considered a potential bidder as BPCL would have added a 22 per cent fuel market share to its fledgling retail business and made it the nation's number one oil refiner, did not put in an expression of interest



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

M&M plans to revive BSA bike

SIDDHARTH PHILIP NOV. 16

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

Just 5 mall projects see completion in 2020

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 16



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

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

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

WPI inflation at 8-month high of 1.48%

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, NOV. 16

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

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

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

Take on risk, trust recovery in 2021: Morgan Stanley

JOANNA OSSINGER NOV. 16

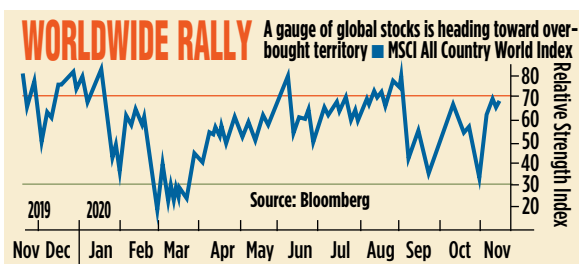
Morgan Stanley strategists said an expected "V-shaped" economic recovery, greater clarity on Covid-19 vaccines and continued policy support offer a favourable environment for stocks and credit next year. It has also cut its forecast for gold to \$1,825 an ounce on average for 2021 from a previous \$1,950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

WORLD STOCKS HIT RECORD ON RECOVERY, VACCINE HOPES

CHUCK MIKOLAJCZAK NEW YORK, NOV. 16

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

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



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

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

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

Alrosa sees uncertain diamond market

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 16



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

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

DIGITAL STRATEGY HELPS MARUTI SELL OVER 200,000 CARS

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, NOV. 16

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

Ratification of RCEP trade deal may take years

JAMES PEARSON HANOI, NOV. 16

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

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

the Philippines. India was involved in early discussions but opted out last year over concerns related to cheap Chinese imports. Member states have said there is still room for India to join RCEP, however. Anyone can join RCEP 18 months after it comes into force but India, as one of the original negotiating partners, can join at any time once the deal comes into effect.

What happens next? RCEP, signed on Sunday, must now be ratified before coming into effect, a process that will take months to start and years to complete.

According to copies of the 510-page, 20-chapter agreement uploaded to the foreign ministry websites of RCEP member states on Sunday, the deal must be ratified by at least six Asean countries and three non-Asean signatory countries before it can come into effect.

East Asian rivalry Notably, RCEP marks the first time China, Japan and South Korea have been brought together under a single trade agreement—a process that has been otherwise marred by historical and diplomatic disputes. Last year, at the height of a trade dispute between

Japan and South Korea, which had its roots in a dispute stemming from Japan's wartime colonisation of the Korean peninsula, South Korean officials said Japanese trade restrictions violated the

Explainer

"spirit" of the RCEP. Japan may find significant benefits (with RCEP), as it now has preferential access to South Korea and China, which it did not have," said Deborah Elms of the Singapore-based Asian Trade Centre.

When will it kick in?

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

origin, which will facilitate easier movement of goods between the 15 members.

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

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

SHORT TAKES

Kipruto charged with sex crime

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

Five ISL clubs fail to secure licence

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

Prajnesh loses US Challenger final

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

Italy beat Poland, England bow out

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

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

TENNIS

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

FOOTBALL

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

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2018-20
Printed and Published by **K. Sudhakar** on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Anantapur, Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904. RNI Registration No. 3081/1957. Editor: Kaushik Mitter

Covid threat to Test

Paine in self-isolation after Corona outbreak in Adelaide

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Rahul pulls along with tennis ball

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore when the leather ball is used, any

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

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

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

yards on cement wickets to get adjusted to the bounce.

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

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

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

Dustin dazzles at the Masters

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

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

Not even close.

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

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

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

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

"I always dreamed of having one of those,"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Nadal starts with comfortable win

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

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

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

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

Novak Djokovic produced a masterclass against Argentina's

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

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

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

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

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

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

Birthday cheer



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

Australians to form 'barefoot circle' to support anti-racism

Sydney, Nov. 16: Australian players will form a barefoot circle to acknowledge the culture of indigenous people before every series, starting with the ODI contest against India, said pacer Pat Cummins, who admitted that his team has not done enough to support anti-racism movement.

The Australian Test and ODI vice-captain said his team considered the move as the best way to begin addressing racism, both at home and around the world. "We've decided to do the Barefoot Circle. We're going to look at doing it at the start of each series and it's a pretty easy decision for us. Not only as a sport, but we as people are absolutely against racism," Cummins was quoted as saying by *ESPNCricinfo*.



In this file photo, West Indies players take a knee before the start of the third Test against England at Old Trafford in Manchester on July 24, 2020. — AP

"We can probably put our hands up and say we haven't done enough in the past and we want to get better, so this is one small thing we're going to introduce this summer," he added. Earlier this year,

West Indies legend Michael Holding has criticised the Australian team for not taking a knee in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, during the limited overs series in England. — PTI

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



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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