


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
VIJAYAWADA | SUNDAY | 22 NOVEMBER 2020



WEATHER

 **Max:** 35.0°C
Min: 20.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: 1.8mm
Forecast: Partly cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
35/24 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+42,735)	(+470)
90,92,344	1,33,220
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+925)	(+3)
TS: 2,62,653	1,426
(+1,160)	(+7)
AP: 8,61,092	6,927

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

 **5,82,60,146**
DEATHS
13,83,349
 **COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES**
217
worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Titthi: Kartika Shudda Astami till 10.54 pm
Star: Dhanistha till 11.11 am
Variyam: 6.58 pm to 8.41 pm
Durmuhurtam: 4.06 pm to 4.51 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
MUJRI CALENDAR
Rabbi-ul Akhir 6, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.40 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.30 pm
Maghrib: 5.45 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.14 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.32 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 12.41 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 12.27 PM

COUNTER POINT



Leave 6 ft between seats and rows, have disinfectant tunnels at all entrances...

SHORT TAKE

Min temp below normal in N. India

New Delhi: Minimum temperatures in most parts of northern India remained below normal on Saturday with the meteorological department predicting a rise in night temperatures on Monday due to a western disturbance approaching the northwest part of the country. Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 8.5 degrees Celsius on Saturday, a day after it witnessed its coldest November morning in 14 years. The national capital recorded a maximum of 24.6 °C on Saturday, the lowest this season so far.

G-20 calls for united Covid fight

Dubai: Saudi Arabia's King Salman opened on Saturday the Group of 20 summit as the Coronavirus pandemic overshadows this year's gathering of heads of state, transforming it from an in-person two-day meeting of the world's most powerful leaders to a virtual gathering of speeches and declarations. The G-20's member-countries represent around 85 per cent of the world's economic output and three-quarters of international trade. "We have a duty to rise to the challenge together during this summit and give a strong message of hope and reassurance," King Salman said in his opening remarks.

NATION | 7

Comedian Bharti Singh arrested in drug case



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

WORLD | 8

Warangal doc finds likely cure for Covid issues



SPORTS | 8

Chelsea jump to English table top



Freeze frame



Tourists visit a water stream frozen due to drop in the temperature, at Nursery near Sissu in Lahaul-Spiti district on Saturday. The minimum temperature in Manali of Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh was recorded at -19C. Tribal district Lahaul and Spiti's administrative centre Keylong recorded -3.89C.

— PTI

India tells Pak to rein in JeM

MEA summons Pak charge d'affaires after Nagrota crackdown

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 21

The ministry of external affairs on Saturday summoned Pakistan's charge d'affaires to convey India's strong concern on the terror attack planned by the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) in Jammu & Kashmir and demanded that Pakistan desist from its policy of supporting terrorists and terror groups operating from its territory. India also asked Pakistan to dismantle the terror infrastructure operated by terrorists in its territory.

A major terror attack was foiled by the Indian security forces in Nagrota on Thursday. Initial reports indicate the attackers were members

of the JeM, a terrorist organisation proscribed by the UN and many countries.

"The Government of India expressed its serious concerns at continued terror attacks by JeM against India. JeM has been part of several attacks in India in the past, including the Pulwama attack in February 2019. The huge cache of arms, ammunition and explosive material indicate detailed planning for a major attack to destabilise the peace and security in the UT of Jammu & Kashmir, in particular, to derail the ongoing democratic exercise of conduct of local District Development Council elections," the MEA said in a statement.

SOLDIER KILLED AS PAK VIOLATES CEASEFIRE ALONG LINE OF CONTROL

Jammu, Nov. 21: A havaldar in the Indian Army was killed and three others, including two women, were injured on Saturday as Pakistani troops resorted to unprovoked firing on forward posts and villages in different sectors along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

The casualties came barely a week after multiple ceasefire violations by Pakistani troops along the LoC in north Kashmir left 11 people, including five



Havaldar Patil Sangram Shivaji

security personnel, dead on November 13. Havaldar Patil Sangram Shivaji, who was manning a forward post, was critically injured in the Pakistani firing. — PTI

BJP to reach out to Bengalis in all states

YOJNA GUSAI | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 21

With a ramped up organisational base and support base in West Bengal, the BJP has now asked its state units in other states to constitute a 'Bengali prakoshth (cell)' to reach out to Bengali intellectuals and influencers in various fields to drum up support for it in the upcoming electoral battle in Mamata Banerjee-led TMC ruled state.

While its 'Save Bengal' campaign has already made "massive inroads" among 'probabsi Bengalis,' who played a

AIADMK, BJP continue TN ties

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 21

The AIADMK's alliance with the BJP will continue in the 2021 Assembly elections, Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and deputy chief minister O. Panneerselvam declared on Saturday in the presence of Union home minis-

ter Amit Shah at a function in Chennai organised to launch projects worth ₹67.758 crore.

Dedicating the Kannankottai-Thervoy Kandigai reservoir to the nation, besides laying the foundation for a slew of high-profile projects, including the Chennai metro rail phase 2, Mr Shah took a swipe at the

counter the TMC's allegation of being a "non-Bengali party" at the national level by roping in

Congress-DMK alliance, saying that they had no right to speak about corruption.

Mr Shah, who addressed the crowd in Hindi, praised Tamil Nadu for its antiquity and culture and regretted that he could not speak in the ancient language. His speech was translated in Tamil by a BJP leader.

Bengali intellectuals through such 'prakoshths' in its state units while seeking their support in

West Bengal to take on state government, who the BJP often accuses of playing appeasement politics and political killings of its workers and supporters.

The party is also hoping that such 'prakoshth' would help the organisation in grooming "future Bengali leaders," both for the central team and for the state. The idea of 'Bengali prakoshth' was suggested by BJP's national joint general secretary (organisation), Shiv Prakash, who is one of the key strategists for West Bengal. The 294-member West Bengal assembly will go to polls in April-May.

Assets of TD man's aide razed by GVMC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 21

Continuing its drive against allegedly "illegal" assets of TD leaders, Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) officials, with protection from police personnel, flattened the go-karting park at Mangamaripeta beach, about 20 km from Visakhapatnam in the early hours of Saturday.

The go-carting venue was being run by Kasi Associates represented by Kasi Viswanath, a close

aide of former TD minister Ganta Srinivasa Rao.

Demolition of the go-carting facility created on the beach over an acre of land violated norms of the Coastal Regulation Zone, said a senior official, who led the GVMC demolition team. They later put up signboards encroachers.

The GVMC also demolished the compound wall of a resort owned by former BJP MP Gokaraju Ganga Raju at IT Junction near Rushikonda.

■ **Page 3: Ex-BJP MP's resort violated CRZ norms**

GREEN | SHOOTS

■ PM confident India will be able to achieve its renewable energy targets ahead of 2022 deadline

India to slash carbon footprint by 35%: Modi

Gandhinagar, Nov. 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the country was moving forward with the goal of reducing its carbon footprint by 30 to 35 per cent.

He also said that efforts were on to increase the use of natural gas by four times in this decade and to double the oil refining capacity in the next five years. The Prime Minister said this while addressing the eighth convocation of Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University (PDPU) here via video conference.

"Today, the country is moving forward with the goal of reducing its carbon footprint by 30 to 35 per cent. When I told this to the world, it expressed surprise and wondered if India could achieve this," he said. "Our effort is to increase the share of natural gas in our energy needs by four times in this decade. Work is also on to nearly double the oil refining capacity in the coming five years," he added.

He also expressed confidence that the country will achieve its renewable ener-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the 8th convocation of Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University, Gandhinagar via video conferencing in New Delhi along with Reliance Industries CMD Mukesh Ambani.

gy generation target "before time". "Today, per unit cost (of solar power) has come down to less than ₹2 to ₹12-13 earlier. Today, solar power has become the country's pri-

ority. We have made a commitment to generate 175 gigawatt renewable energy and I am confident that we will achieve this before 2022," he said. "Also, our renewable energy target of

450 gigawatt by 2030, a big aim, will be achieved before time...I am confident of that," he said.

The PM said that despite the hardships caused by the Coronavirus, the graduating students should remember that their strength and capacities are much bigger than the challenges, and asked them not to lose confidence. "What is more important than problems is your purpose, preference and your commitment. It is not that you are facing a challenge for the first time in your life,

or that this is the last challenge. It is not the case that a successful person does not have problems. But those who accept the challenges and defeat them are the ones who succeed," he said.

He asked the students to recall the period of the country's Independence movement and how people sacrificed their lives for it. He asked them to similarly become a soldier for 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani said India needs disruptive

solutions in renewable, low carbon and carbon recycle technologies, as well as breakthroughs in renewable energy and innovations in energy storage and utilisation to achieve the twin goals of becoming an economic and a clean-and-green energy superpower. "By the middle of the century, the world will use twice as much energy as we use today. In the next two decades, India's own per capita energy needs will be more than twice as much as today," he said. — PTI

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IN BRIEF

VARUNASTRA
FLAGGED OFF
IN VIZAGDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 21

The first Varunastra, the heavyweight torpedo, being delivered to the Indian Navy, was flagged off by Dr G. Sathesh Reddy, Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman, DRDO, at a ceremony held at Bharat Dynamics Limited, Visakhapatnam Unit on Saturday.

Vice Admiral K. Srinivas project director, Ship Building Centre, Dr Samir V. Kamat, Distinguished Scientist and Director General, Naval Systems and Materials, DRDO, Dr O.R. Nandagopan, Outstanding Scientist and Director, Naval Science and Technological Laboratory, Visakhapatnam and other dignitaries from DRDO were present.

Commodore Siddharth Mishra (Retd), Chairman and Managing Director, BDL, N.P. Diwakar, Director (Technical), BDL and other senior officials from the company were also present.

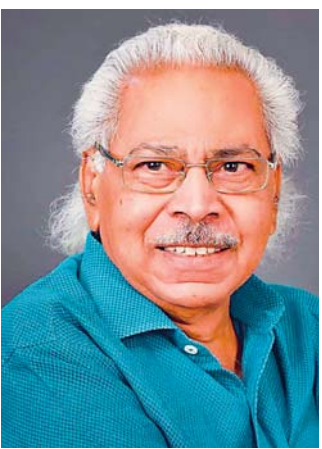
13,355 SUBMIT
APPLICATIONS
FOR MBBS, BDSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 21

As many as 13,355 candidates applied and uploaded their certificates online for admission into MBBS, BDS and other courses under Competent Authority Quota, in the colleges affiliated to Dr NTR university of health sciences and also for MBBS course in Sri Padmanavathi Medical College for Women, Tirupati for the 2020-21 academic year.

The university issued notification inviting single online application and uploading scanned original certificates from 4 pm on Nov 13 to 4 pm on Nov. 21. By the time the process of registration for submission of online application was closed at 4 pm on Saturday, 13,355 candidates applied.

The university authorities in a release said here on Saturday that the verification of uploaded certificates of candidates was in process and added that after completion of verification, merit list of eligible candidates would be placed on the university website.

Several candidates submitted applications claiming reservation under special categories and accordingly, under PH-50, NCC-438, Sports and Games-249, CAP-297, PMC-1 and Anglo Indian-1.

NOTED POET DEVI
PRIYA PASSES
AWAY AT 70DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 21

Noted Telugu poet, journalist, scriptwriter, and Kendra Sahitya Academi Award winner Shaik Khaja Hussain, 70, popularly known as Devi Priya, passed away Saturday morning following brief illness in Hyderabad.

Born in Tadikonda in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, Devi Priya bagged the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2017 for his book Gaali Rangu. His "Running Commentary" on contemporary politics in Udayam Telugu daily was thought-provoking and very popular. Later, he continued his Running Commentary for a couple of vernacular news channels.

Devi Priya is known for his satirical political cartoons and poetry. Poetic precision was his primary strength. But he drew a thin line between direct and ornamental poetry. He attributed his poetic evolution to his love for mythological epics. Apart from penning poetry, he has also written lyrics for several Telugu movies.

His song Jambhal Bhari Bhai penned for Maa Bhoomi was very popular among all.

State records only 7 Covid
deaths in the last 24 hours

1,160 persons were found infected with Covid-19 out of 68,307 samples tested

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 21

The Covid-19 deaths have down in the state as only seven of the Covid-19 infected patients died in AP in the last 24 hours as against more than 10 on an average, indicating that the efforts of the state government to contain fatalities by providing proper medical care are yielding good results.

The state health authorities released Covid-19 bulletin here on Saturday reporting that out of 68,307 samples tested, 1,160 persons were found infected with Covid-19.

With this, the total number of Covid-19 cases rose to 8,61,092. The health authorities also tested a total of 95,43,177 samples so far in the state and out of them,

8,39,395 patients were recovered while 14,770 patients are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Covid-19, Krishna topped the state with 189 followed by 165 in East Godavari, 148 in Chittoor, 121 in Guntur, 120 in West Godavari, 70 in Kadapa, 67 in Visakhapatnam, 66 in Prakasam, 60 in Nellore, 46 in Srikakulam, 43 in Anantapur, 42 in Vizianagaram and 23 in Kurnool.

With regard to the total Covid-19 active cases, East Godavari continues to lead with 4,640 followed by 1,998 in Krishna, 1,694 in Guntur, 1,257 in Visakhapatnam, 1,237 in West Godavari, 1,023 in Nellore, 806 in Chittoor, 583 in Prakasam, 430 in Srikakulam, 402 in

Among daily cases of Covid-19, Krishna topped the state with 189 followed by 165 in East Godavari, 148 in Chittoor, 121 in Guntur, 120 in West Godavari, 70 in Kadapa, 67 in Visakhapatnam, 66 in Prakasam, 60 in Nellore, 46 in Srikakulam, 43 in Anantapur, 42 in Vizianagaram and 23 in Kurnool.

Chittoor recorded two deaths followed by one each in Anantapur, East Godavari, Guntur, Kadapa and Krishna.

The state health authorities discharged 1,765 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery. AP conducted Covid-19 tests on 1,78,711 samples per one million population and recorded Covid-19 positive rate at 9.02

Anantapur, 282 in Kadapa, 215 in Vizianagaram and 203 in Kurnool. The rate of recovery among Covid-19 patients has been good in East Godavari with 1,16,219 followed by 89,679 in West Godavari, 81,338 in Chittoor, 69,560 in Guntur, 65,441 in

Anantapur, 60,041 in Prakasam, 59,599 in Nellore, 59,367 in Kurnool, 55,841 in Visakhapatnam, 53,257 in Kadapa, 44,464 in Srikakulam, 41,692 in Krishna, 40,002 in Vizianagaram, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Among the daily Covid-19 deaths, Chittoor recorded two followed by one each in Anantapur, East Godavari, Guntur, Kadapa and Krishna.

The cumulative cases of Covid-19 deaths are high in Chittoor with 820 followed by 643 in Guntur, 631 in East Godavari, 620 in Krishna, 585 in Anantapur, 577 in Prakasam, 531 in Visakhapatnam, 517 in West Godavari, 493 in Nellore, 484 in Kurnool, 447 in Kadapa, 346 in Srikakulam and 233 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 1,765 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery. AP conducted Covid-19 tests on 1,78,711 samples per one million population and recorded Covid-19 positive rate at 9.02

Ex-BJP MP's resort violated CRZ norms

FROM PAGE 1

GVMC officials said the resort had violated coastal regulation zone (CRZ) norms and built a permanent compound wall. Ganga Raju has not been seen taking part in BJP activities after the elections. His brother and other family members joined the YSRC in December last year.

Viswanath told this correspondent that the land belonged to a private company - Vizag

Profiles. He had signed a lease agreement with the company for a period of 10 years in 2010. He had invested ₹4.5 crore and developed go-karting and other entertainment centres on the beach, which attracted a large number of tourists.

"The lease period was about to end next month and I would have anyway vacated the land voluntarily. There was no need for demolition of these temporary structures. In the process, they dam-

aged all the furniture without giving me any prior notice," Kasi maintained.

He recalled that the one of its kind entertainment centre drew attention of former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. "Chandrababu Naidu was so impressed with the park that he asked me to develop a similar one in Amaravati," Kasi stated.

The close aide of Ganta Srinivasa Rao denied

there was any violation of CRZ norms. He maintained that he had permission from VUDA (now VMRDA - Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority), as he had constructed only temporary structures.

A senior GVMC official defended the action saying the corporation had launched a special drive on the beach road to demolish all structures, which are violating the CRZ norms.

ONE HELD, 18
TOLAS GOLD
RECOVEREDDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 21

The crime police arrested a 28-year-old man and recovered gold and silver ornaments from him on Saturday afternoon. The accused was identified as Mallareddy Venkatesh of Gajuwaka in Visakhapatnam, the police said. The police said Venkatesh, a resident of Gajuwaka.

Compound wall
of resort razedDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 21

The town planning department of Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation demolished the compound wall of a resort owned by former BJP MP Gokaraju Ganga Raju at IT Junction

near Rushikonda on the beach road on Saturday, a few hours after demolishing a go-karting park belonging to a close associate of a TD leader at Mangamaripeta.

GVMC officials said the resort violated had coastal regulation zone (CRZ) norms.

₹8 cr fraud in gold
bullion marketDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 21

The city-based zonal unit of the director general of GST Intelligence busted a major fake input tax credit racket in the gold bullion market and arrested one person on Saturday. He has been remanded to judicial custody.

Joint director Mayank Sharma said here in a release that various dummy and non-operating firms were created with fictitious addresses in and around Guntur. They

were identified and simultaneous searches were carried out at various places in Andhra Pradesh. These searches revealed that the racketeers behind these fake have passed on fake credit of around ₹8 crore to various bullion trading in the State. The kingpin, a 25-year-old from Guntur, was traced after sustained investigation and arrested.

The officials also attached gold and silver worth ₹1.8 crore to protect the government revenue. Further investigation was on, the release said.

Dewatering of
spillway channels

FROM PAGE 1

Crest gates will be erected on piers at a height of 55 metres.

At present, the authorities are dewatering the spill channel as a huge quantum of floodwater is still there.

Water level in the spill channel is at 20 metres height against the water level in the river at 15.6 metres.

The authorities plan to complete the dewatering by using high capacity pumps by the end of December. Nearly 2.5 lakh cubic metres of concrete works are pending at the spill channel and the authorities are planning to complete the works by April. Issues related to land

acquisition and resettlement and rehabilitation (R and R) of the evacuees will be done in a phased manner by the end of 2021. By March 21, the authorities intend to settle land acquisition and R and R issues at 41.5 metres height at an estimated cost of ₹4,000 crore.

Polavaram project chief engineer B. Sudhakar Babu said, "As we are able to complete all major components of the project in a phased manner, we will be executing ECRF dam in a year beginning from January so that we will be able to complete the whole project, include settlement of land acquisition and R and R issues by the end of next year."

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PROPERTY

COMMERCIAL

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FLATS

✓3 BEDROOM 2400 sqft duplex flat with 2 car parking and servant quarters for sale in sri nikanetan apartments ,palace colony, basheer bagh . contact 8143144154, 9885536329. (W/2021/AT000681)

KONDAPUR BESIDE vijetha super market & cyber meadows after chirech public school ready to move in West facing- 4bhk 2600 sqft, east facing- 2bhk 1350 sqft, delux standalone apartment Rs: 5800/- per sq ft ph:7995889398 9866267476 (HYMM/2021/C03486)

MANIKONDA, ALKAPURI TOWNSHIP Highrise super luxury 2 & 3 BHK Flats with all amenities. Prelaunch offer Rs 3300 Loan amount Rs 4500/ sqft 9866549820 (HYMM/2021/C03549)

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FLATS

1950 SFT 3- bedrooms pooja& store room modular kitchen & modern false ceiling design for hall,living, bedrooms. Bandlaguda Jagir municipal besides Glendale Academy International School. Contact:9344660119 (W/2021/AT000652)

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SITUATION VACANT

MULTIPLE VACANCIES

WALK-IN INTERVIEW. Corporate Group Conducts **JOB MELA** on 22nd & 23rd Nov 2020. (Qua: Graduation Pass) **Fail) A.U CAMPUS (Near Out Gate) Vizag.** Ph:9133347758. (HYCL/2021/C01675)

TECHNICAL

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Gaiety and devotional fervour marked the Puspa Yaga Mahtosavam held at the holy shrine in Tirumala on the occasion of Sravana Nakshathram, the birth star of the Lord of Seven Hills on Saturday.

₹85 lakh stolen from
SBI Nadikudi branchDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 21

Unknown miscreants robbed ₹85 lakh cash from State Bank of India (SBI) in Nadikudi of Dacheppalli Mandal in Guntur district on Saturday.

According to the police, the bank manager and other staff found the breaking of the safe locker and missing of ₹85 lakh cash when they came to the bank on Saturday morning. The bank staff immediately lodged a complaint with the police about the robbery.

Guntur rural SP Vishal Gunni rushed to the bank with the police team and primarily checked the bank premises and adjacent areas. Mr Vishal Gunni said that the police are suspecting the involvement of professional gangs in this robbery. He said that the culprits might have conducted a recce and removed the CCTV connection wires before committing the crime. He added that

● Guntur rural SP Vishal Gunni rushed to the bank with the police team and primarily checked the bank premises and adjacent areas. Mr Vishal Gunni said that the police are suspecting the involvement of professional gangs in this robbery.

culprits sprinkled chilli powder to mislead the police sniffer dog tracking.

Mr Vishal Gunni said that five special teams were formed to trace the culprits. He appealed to people to give information to the police on 8866268899 WhatsApp number or in the police station if they found any persons wandering in suspicious conditions in their areas and if they found persons from the outside area. The SP also announced a reward for such information and mentioned that their names would maintain secret.

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OTHER STORIES

CM PAYS HOMAGE TO NANI'S MOM, CONSOLES FAMILY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 21

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has called on the Information and Public Relations minister Perni Venkatramaniah (Nani), whose mother passed away on November 19, and consoled the family members. The CM came to Machilipatnam on Saturday and went to the house of Nani. The Chief Minister paid homage to the portrait of Nageswaramma, mother of the minister and consoled minister Nani and his family members.

Endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas, Machilipatnam MP Vallbhaneni Balashowri, MLAs Meka Venkata Pratap Appa Rao, Simhadri Ramesh and Jogi Ramesh and other leaders were present on the occasion.

SEEMA FARMERS SEEK AGRI VARSITY IN KURNOOL

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, NOV. 21

Drmanding implementation of AP Reorganisation Act 2014 which envisaged setting up of a national-level Agriculture University in Kurnool district, Rayalaseema Aikya Vedika convenor Bojja Dasarath Reddy urged Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to rescue Seema farmers from scourge of drought and floods.

He said a one-day Satyagraha was held in Nandyal to create awareness among public about the need to implement Sri Bagh Pact. The Vedika toured around Nandyal division in the past 10 days and enlisted support of people for securing legally guaranteed rights to Rayalaseema, he said. An appeal is being sent to Chief Minister's office with the demands, he said.

YSRC REFUTES ALLEGATIONS OF OPPOSITION

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 21

Reiterating that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has been working for the welfare of the weaker sections by implementing various welfare schemes and winning laurels from all sections, YSRC MLA Ambati Rambabu said Chandrababu Naidu has neglected all sections of people during his tenure and he was a big failed leader. He refuted allegations of Telugu Desam about absence of development in the past 17 months in YSRC government and claimed that development and welfare have been registered under YSRC rule in AP.

Speaking to the media here on Saturday, Mr Rambabu said the Chief Minister witnessed the dire conditions of fishermen across the state and laid special focus on their welfare by developing infrastructure and marketing facilities for aqua farmers.

TD CLAIMS YSRC GOVT TURNED ADAMANT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 21

Telugu Desam politburo member Bonda Umamaheswara Rao on Saturday slammed the YSRC government for acting 'defiantly' and 'adamantly' even though the courts have passed serious comments against its decisions many times. He said that the Jagan Mohan Reddy regime was not changing its behaviour despite the court's comments on its 'mindless' acts that he said were destroying the future of the AP ndhra people.

Addressing a press conference here, the TD leader said that in no other state in the country, the courts were passing such rare and serious remarks like 'mindless' acts. He commented that even then, the YSRC government was sticking to its dangerous path which would lead to the collapse of both Andhra Pradesh as well as the party eventually. Mr Umamaheswara Rao asserted that no section of the society would accept such thoughtless and mindless acts of the AP government. He stated that the court had clearly commented against the disastrous impact of the Amaravati Capital City shifting. He lamented that thousands of crores rupees were spent on Capital buildings but all that public money was being wasted because of the Chief Minister's adamant attitude.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy inaugurates four fishing harbours and 25 aqua hubs on the occasion of World Fisheries Day from his Camp Office on Friday. Ministers S. Appalaraju, Botsa Satyanarayana, MP V. Balasouri, Mopidevi Venkataramana, Special chief secretary Poonam Malakondaiah are also seen.

Hitech harbour boon to fishermen

3,000 fishermen will be benefitted through the fishing harbour at Ameenabada, says Kakinada MP

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, NOV. 21

Backward classes welfare minister Chelluboyina Srinivasa Venugopalakrishna asserted that a sophisticated fishing harbour will be built near Ameenabada village in U. Kothapalli mandal of East Godavari district. It will be a boon for fishermen of East Godavari district.

The minister was speaking after Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy laid the foundation stone for the fishing harbour along with other harbours at Juvvaladinne, Nizampatnam, and Machilipatnam in the state through virtual conferencing on Saturday from his Tadepalli camp office.

On the occasion, Venugopalakrishna said the previous government neglected fishermen welfare. The CM is undoing the same by taking up several beneficial schemes to improve the livelihoods of fishermen.

A sophisticated fishing harbour at Ameenabada village at a cost of ₹422 crore is part of such effort by the CM.

The minister regretted that fishermen had to migrate to Gujarat, West Bengal and other states for livelihood. But they will not have to venture out now as a sophisticated fishing port is coming up for all of them. Their catch will be sold through Janata Bazaars.

Kakinada MP Vanga Gita said 3,000 fishermen will be benefitted through the fishing harbour at Ameenabada. Mummidivaram



The fishermen stage a 'semi-nude' protest in sea waters in Kakinada demanding that government construct a bridge at Maha Kumbhabhishekam and restore mangroves, which had been axed near the shore, on the occasion of fisheries day on Saturday.

Fishermen stage 'semi-nude' protest in sea at Kakinada

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, NOV. 21

The fishermen in Kakinada staged a semi-nude protest demanding that government construct a bridge at Maha Kumbhabhishekam and restore mangroves, which had been axed near the shore.

MLA Ponnada Satish Kumar said that CM Jagan took initiative in bringing AP fishermen from Pakistan and gave a compensation of ₹78 crore from GSPC for the purpose. He said fishermen will never forget the help rendered by Jagan Mohan Reddy.

MLC Pandula Ravindra-

babu, Pithapuram MLA Pendum Dorababu, Kakinada MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekhara Reddy, Agnikula Kshatriya Corporation chairman Bandana Hari, district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy, joint collector G. Lakshminisha, Fisheries additional director P. Koteswara Rao, joint

director P. V. Satyanarayana and others were present. In West Godavari, collector Revu Muthyala Raju said the district has stood second in the state in fish production. A catch of 13.21 lakhs tonnes of fish is being targeted during the current financial year.

₹102 cr credited to fishermen accounts directly, says Jagan

From page 1

Jagan Mohan Reddy stated that the government has enhanced Matsakara Bharosa from ₹4,000 to ₹10,000 and directly credited ₹102 crore into the accounts of 1.02 lakh fishermen in 2019 to compensate the annual fishing ban period.

Extending support to them during the Covid, ₹110 crore was disbursed in May, six months before the actual dateline, benefiting 1.10 lakh fishermen. He further stated that the government had increased the fuel subsidy from ₹6 to ₹9 per litre, which can be redeemed instantly at 87 recognised petrol bunks and also provided power at ₹1.50 per unit and the total subsidy of ₹720 crore is borne by the government. In case of accidental death, the State has doubled the ex gratia to ₹10 lakh. Jagan Mohan Reddy

pointed out that the previous government had completely neglected fishermen and aquaculture. He said that the lives of aqua farmers will be completely changed in the coming one year. He stated that in order to create more opportunities for fishermen, three more ports would be undertaken at Machilipatnam, Ramayapatnam, and Bhavanapadu.

The Chief Minister said the state government has recruited 794 people as fisheries assistants in Village Secretariats to assist fishermen and aqua farmers.

Ministers S. Appalaraju, Botsa Satyanarayana, Agri Mission Vice-chairman MVS Nagi Reddy, Fisheries Department Special Chief Secretary Poonam Malakondaiah, Commissioner Kannababu and other officials attended the event.

KRISHNA NAMED AS BEST MARINE DISTRICT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 21

Krishna district has been selected as the best marine district by the Union government. District collector A. Md. Imtiaz said the initiative taken by the Chief

Minister in supporting families of fishermen during Corona pandemic is commendable. He said that setting up of a fishing harbour with an estimated cost of ₹550 crore at Machilipatnam will be highly beneficial for the families of fishermen.

State to use 90 lakh women to curb liquor consumption

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, NOV. 21

Alcohol Prohibition Awareness Committee (APAC) chairman Vallamreddy Lakshmana Reddy has said the state government is going to use services of 90 lakh women belonging to nine lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs) to control and reduce liquor consumption in the society.

He said the YSRC government will in no way compromise on gradual "prohibition of liquor" in the state and steps have already started in that direction.

Speaking to reporters here on Saturday, Lakshmana Reddy said the SHG groups will identify persons addicted to liquor and send them to de-addiction centres at the district level government hospitals in the state. He said ward volunteers and village secretariat members will help SHGs in identifying persons who are consuming liquor on a regular basis.

He maintained that sale of liquor has drastically decreased compared to last year. Awareness is being created among students about the adverse impact of liquor through elocution, drawing and other competitions from high school to university levels. He said "Prohibition on Liquor"

● 70 per cent reduction among people in consuming alcohol.

cannot be achieved only through laws. People will play a major responsibility in this. He declared that people's participation against liquor has led to liquor consumption dropping by 70 per cent in the state during the past one year.

The APAC chairman said that Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) is doing lot of work in curbing illegal transportation of illicit liquor from other states. About 100 additional posts have been allotted to SEB to strengthen it. He said the special task force has so far booked 50,000 cases, arrested 61,000 persons, and seized 17,000 vehicles, ₹3.7 lakh illegal liquor and ₹3 lakh worth illicit liquor.

Lakshmana Reddy said due to reverse tenders called for liquor shops, the state government has saved ₹108.84 crore for the exchequer.

He said the number of liquor shops has been reduced to 16.22 per cent compared to the previous government. He said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was taking all steps to prohibit liquor.

He said 43,000 belt-shops have been closed down in the state so far.

People defy state orders, take dip in river

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, NOV. 21

Tense situation prevailed at a few Pushkar ghats along the Tungabhadra River when defying state government's orders, some pilgrims took dip in the river, instead of wetting themselves under showers on Saturday.

In particular, with least regard to Covid-19 norms, BJP leader Budda Srinikanth Reddy and his followers took the holy dip in Tungabhadra River near Sangameswaram. When police objected, he retorted, "Why was YSRC MLA not prevented when he took out padayatra recently with thousands of supporters. If Covid cannot affect them," he told police, "no Covid will affect Hindu pilgrims having pushkar bath."

Following Srinikanth Reddy having a dip along with his followers, other pilgrims too took the holy dip.

Pilgrims continued to throng the bathing ghats of Tungabhadra Pushkaralu in their thousands on the second day of the 12-day mega festival. Over 25,000 pilgrims took bath by using showers installed at all 23 pushkar ghats in Kurnool district by Saturday late evening. However, compared to previous pushkaralu, the crowds were not much at the ghats due to the fear of Covid-19 pandemic.

To check spread of Coronavirus by way of water through the Tungabhadra River, officials arranged at least 20 showers at every



Veda pandits offer Pushkar Harathi at the Sankalbagh ghat on the Tungabhadra River on Saturday as part of the Pushkaralu.

pushkar ghat. They advised pilgrims to vacate the place quickly in order to protect themselves from the deadly virus. At some of the bathing ghats, authorities literally forced every pilgrim to leave the ghat immediately after taking the shower bath. Pilgrims were allowed almost round the clock at all pushkar ghats to ease the congestion.

Police and government officials monitored the situation and diverted pilgrims to different ghats for avoiding convergence of crowds at a single place, particularly Sankal Bagh in Kurnool city and Sri Raghavendra Swamy Mutt in Mantralayam.

Many pilgrims floated "pushkara deepams" in the holy waters of Tungabhadra River. Some pilgrims also performed pinda pradanam for their ancestors with the help of priests, paying a fixed fee as decided by state government.

ENDOWMENTS WING BLAMED FOR NOT ALLOWING HOLY BATH IN TUNGABHADRA

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, NOV. 21

Former corporator and TD leader Vuchchi Bhuvaneshwara Prasad demanded that the government allow people to take holy baths in Tungabhadra River on the occasion of Pushkaralu while taking objection over a ban on the traditional dip in the river. He also found fault with the endowments department for imposing conditions on remuneration for Purohitis to perform traditional rituals such as Pinda Pradanam to the demised relatives of pilgrims at the river bank.

Speaking to the media along with Brahmin Association members here on Saturday, Mr Bhuvaneshwara Prasad said endowments department has no

right to fix rates for rituals while pointing to the ordeals of Purohitis for livelihood because of Corona from the past 10 months.

Stressing that pilgrims offer money depending on their satisfaction over the rituals performed by Purohitis, he reminded the endowments wing that the event is not a temple under their management.

He questioned the rationale behind restrictions on taking bath in the river under the pretext of Corona while neighbouring Karnataka and Telangana allowed the same.

"It is a pilgrimage to Pushkarams not a holiday trip to see the river and return home. It is wrong on the part of the government to use the occasion for political gains," Mr Bhuvaneshwar said.

25.16L TRIBAL FAMILIES TO GET MOSQUITO NETS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 21

In an innovative move, the YSRC government has decided to distribute 25.16 lakh mosquito nets to tribal families for protection from mosquitoes this season.

Deputy Chief Minister P. Pushpa Srivani said that this decision was taken to protect them from seasonal diseases like malaria, chikungunya and dengue fever in seven ITDA areas of the state.

She lamented that several people were showing reluctance to use mosquito nets. To address this, officials from the tribal welfare department would spread awareness about the benefits of mosquito nets.

Srivani said that mosquito nets would be distributed to 4,06,200 families in Srikakulam district, 5,21,400 families in Vizianagaram, 7,69,650 families in Visakhapatnam, 4,93,350 families in East Godavari, 2,52,445 families in West Godavari, 57,900 families in Nellore and to 15,100 tribal families in Kurnool district.

NEW FOOD PROCESSING POLICY SOON

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, NOV. 21

The government will soon launch a new food processing policy to develop agriculture and allied industries, said minister for agriculture K. Kannababu while addressing the Industries meet held in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

Stating that agriculture and industries would be the main drivers for the development and employment, the minister said Visakhapatnam would be the brand for the AP industries.

He said the city has land, air and sea transportation facilities that would be crucial for the expansion of industrial activity to the entire north coastal Andhra Pradesh.

He said the Chief Minister had launched YSR Navodaya programme through which entrepreneurs from SC and ST would be encouraged in a big way.

The suggestions given by the industrialists would be discussed with the chief minister to make a forward step, he added.

NAIDU TELLS PEOPLE TO FOLLOW SAFETY MEASURES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 21

Telugu Desam chief and former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu appealed to the people to take health safety measures during Tungabhadra Pushkaralu in view of continuing spread of Coronavirus.

He has asserted that the inter-linking and optimisation of the rivers would help in fully meeting the future water requirements for irrigation, drinking and industrial needs of the people.

The TD supreme said that considering the significance of rivers in the growth of civilisation, festivals like 'Tungabhadra Pushkaralu' were being organised since ages.

Mr Naidu said that the inter-linking of rivers would be crucial for ushering in growth and prosperity for all sections of people.

He hoped that the Tungabhadra Pushkaralu mark the bright future and opportunities that lie ahead for the Telugu people everywhere.

Naidu asserted that it would be very important to respect the rivers by giving 'Jala Harathi' (invocation) and by taking up 'Jala Samrakshana' (protection) steps.

SHORT TAKES

NON-COVID-19 SERVICES RESUME AT GANDHI HOSP

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 21

Non-Covid-19 services were resumed at the Gandhi Hospital on Saturday, after an eight month break during which the facility was the designated a centre of excellence for Covid-19 treatment by the state government.

Junior doctors working at the hospital had been agitating for the past few months demanding that the hospital restart all healthcare services as they were missing out on learning and gaining the experience of treating patients with different ailments at the hospital, otherwise known for its super-specialty services.

Gandhi Hospital superintendent Dr M. Raja Rao said 88 non-Covid-19 out-patients were attended to on Friday. He said till 4.30 pm, 15 persons were admitted as in-patients. Of these, eight were in the general medicine department, two each in the orthopaedics and obstetrics and gynaecology departments, and one each in surgery, neurosurgery and gastro departments.

He said that 13 patients were admitted to the Covid-19 wards in the hospital, which have been segregated from the general services wards.

BJP POLL PROMISES FUNNY: KTR

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 21

TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao on Saturday launched the party campaign for the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation election with a roadshow from Kukatpally.

Addressing the crowds amidst cheers, Rama Rao said that when the TRS government came to power six years back there were a lot of apprehensions and doubts. He recalled that there was uncertainty in some parts of Hyderabad as rumours were spread that the city would witness communal clashes as well as law and order issues if the TRS came to power.

“The TRS government proved them wrong. We focused on addressing people’s needs and allayed their apprehensions through strict maintenance of law and order. In the past six years, not even a single incident of violence has taken place in Hyderabad,” he said.

Rama Rao criticised the BJP leaders who were making funny poll promises. He stated that the BJP leaders were encouraging triple driving and giving false assurances that the GHMC will pay the challans. Adding that the same leaders were promising financial assistance of ₹25,000 to flood-affected families, he said, “These are the same leaders who condemned the distribution of ₹10,000 to flood-affected citizens.”

Rama Rao said that the TRS government had ensured all-around development of the capital spending by spending ₹67,000 crore over the last six years. He pointed to development works, including Basti Dawakhanas, laying of roads, flyovers, bringing in SHE Teams, among others.

He asked BJP leaders with what face they would go to the public and ask for votes. “What work have they done for Hyderabad? The Centre has not spent a penny on Hyderabad in six years. Moreover, they are trying to disturb law and order,” he said. Questioning BJP leaders, the minister said, “They went to the Bhagyalakshmi temple in the Old City. Are there no other temples in Hyderabad? They want to create unnecessary disturbances between different sections and that is the reason they went to the Old City.”

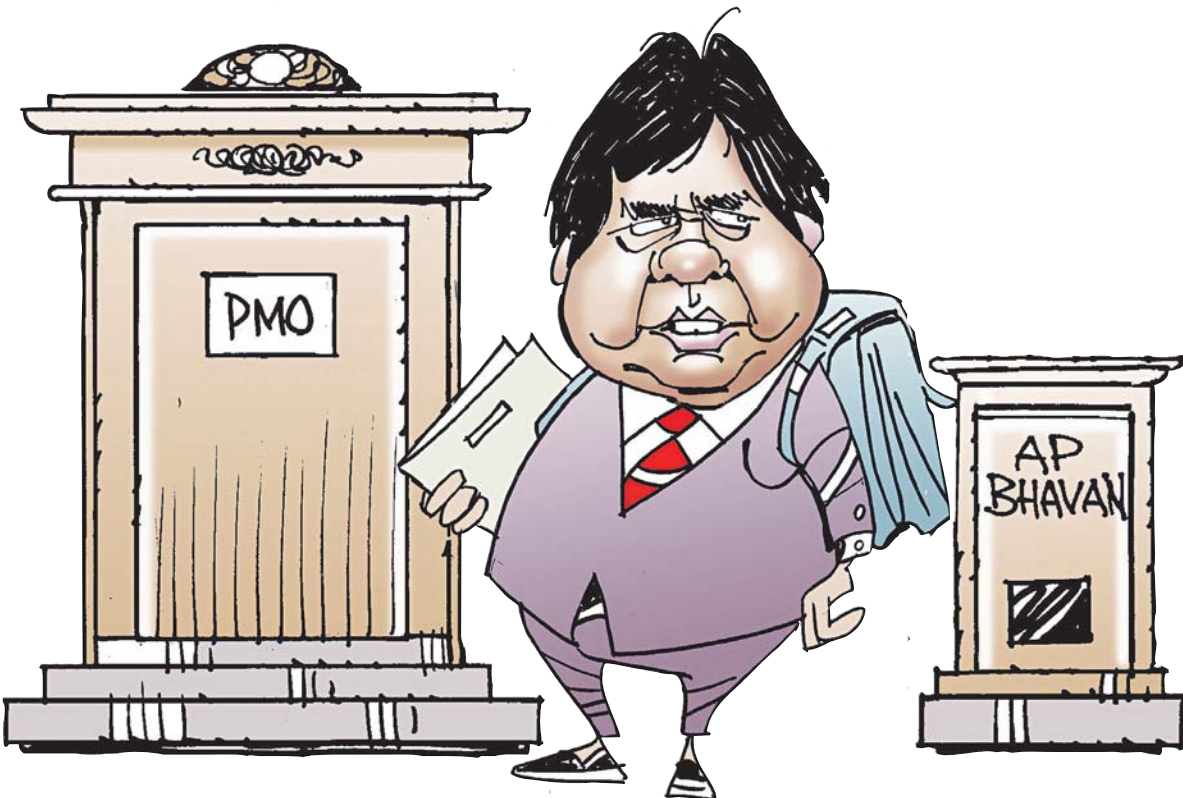
He said, “Today global companies like Apple, Google, Facebook, and Amazon are investing in Hyderabad because there is peace and harmony. If this is disturbed, no company will come forward and our youth will lose job opportunities.”

Rama Rao said that the BJP wants to divide people in the name of religion and create disturbances. “This is not Ahmedabad. This is Hyderabad and the people here are very wise,” he said.

He sought their support in the upcoming GHMC elections. “We missed a century with one seat in previous elections. But this time we will accomplish it,” he said. He appealed to people to elect TRS candidates from Kukatpally.

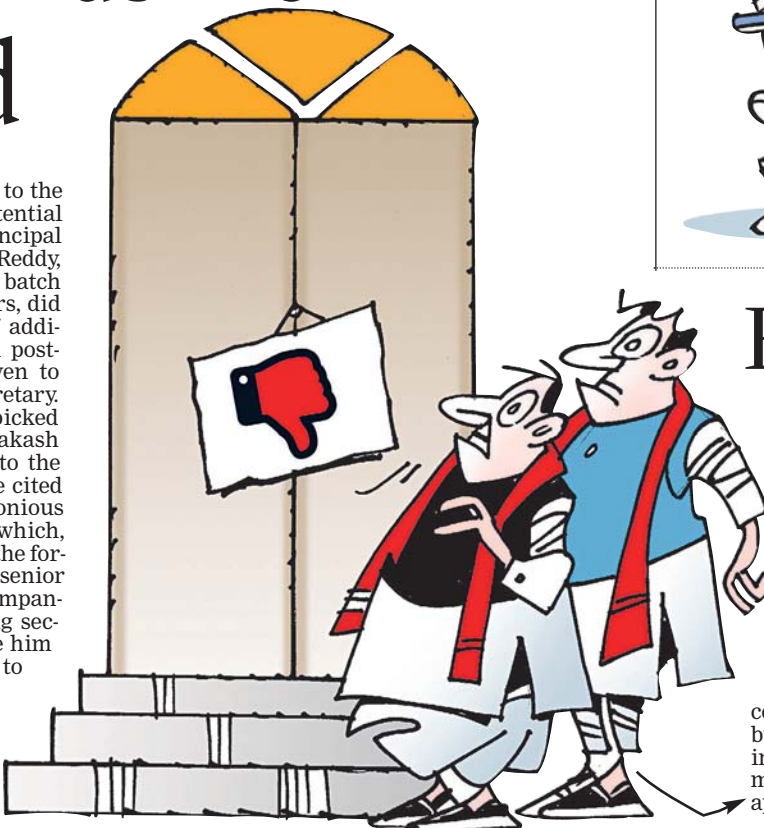
● **RAMA RAO** said that the BJP wants to divide people in the name of religion and create disturbances.

NETA’S NATTER



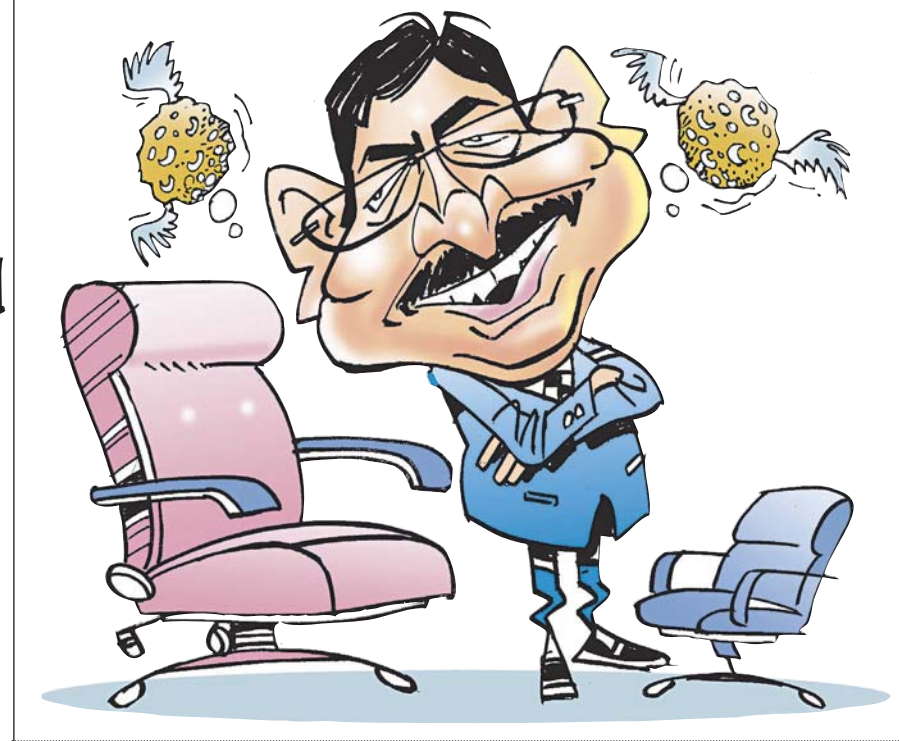
AP officer finds Delhi doors closed

Some of his admirers thought he would make it to the Prime Minister’s Office, others saw in him a potential Cabinet Secretary. But Praveen Prakash, principal secretary to AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, found the doors were shut in New Delhi. The 1994 batch officer, to the utter shock of his friends and followers, did not find a place in the Centre’s empanelment list of additional secretaries. This is crucial because Central postings for the rank of secretary and above are given to empanelled officers at the level of additional secretary. Only in rare cases are the secretaries at Centre picked directly from the states. There were reports that Prakash had urged the Chief Minister to allow him to go to the Centre once he is empanelled. Different reasons are cited for Prakash missing the bus, including the unceremonious exit of L.V. Subrahmanyam as Chief Secretary which, according to his critics, was triggered by a tiff with the former. Poor Prakash has to try his luck again like his senior Sanjay Jaju who had to apply for review and get empanelled at a later stage. Amidst rumours that a strong section in the ruling party is working overtime to ease him out of the CMO, the powerful babu too is trying hard to retain his position. It will be very difficult for him to work in other posts in the state in case of his exit from the CMO. That will leave him with the lone option of going back as Resident Commissioner, AP Bhavan, an independent post of the state government in New Delhi.



Second time unlucky for former babu

Former bureaucrat Dr P.V. Ramesh, who recently put in his papers as additional chief secretary to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, has missed the political bus not once but twice. YSRC leaders say that when all was set for Jagan fielding him from the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat in 2019, Dr Ramesh, who was in a Central post that time, met with an accident and fractured his hand. The YSRC had to import B. Durga Prasad, a TD leader, and field him. Unfortunately, Prasad passed away due to Covid-19 and this necessitated a bypoll. This time too, Dr Ramesh has no chance of becoming the party candidate as his relations with the Chief Minister became so badly strained in the meantime that he had to quit the CMO. His misfortune has brought a stroke of luck to another medical professional, Dr Gurumurthy, a physiotherapist to be precise, who accompanied the Chief Minister during his padayatra and treated him and is all set to be the party’s nominee for the bypoll.



Fade out, Jana Sena in GHMC polls

The Jana Sena Party’s desperate attempt to tie-up with the BJP for the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation elections appears to have put the BJP state unit chief Bandi Sanjay to some inconvenience. Sanjay, fresh from the Dubbak victory and in the midst of pulls and counter-pulls of the GHMC elections, had to refute a statement from the Jana Sena that the Pawan Kalyan-led party was having talks with the TS BJP leadership for seat-sharing in the local polls. Sanjay made it clear that the BJP had not made any effort to share seats with Jana Sena. Disappointed with the statement, Jana Sena leaders are learnt to have moved the BJP high command at Delhi — after all the two parties are allies in Andhra Pradesh — but to no avail. Even so, despite Sanjay having said that there was no seat-sharing with the Jana Sena, some BJP leaders caused an awkward situation by meeting with the Pawan Kalyan party. The Jana Sena which had suddenly appeared on the scene quietly melted away.

Kadapa intensifies measures to curb RS smuggling

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, NOV. 21

Kadapa forest and police departments have intensified their measures to curb red sandalwood smuggling. While the forest department has 17 base camps operating in remote forest areas, police also have an equal number of static check posts across the district to check red sanders smuggling.

Walkie-talkies and dog

squads are playing a key role in detecting and countering smuggling. Each of the 17 base camps in the forest area have five personnel, apart from six strike forces. Dog squads can smell out the red sanders hidden in any area or being carried in a vehicle.

The 17 police check posts have been stationed mainly to check illegal sand smuggling. But they are also looking out for vehicle

suspected of smuggling red sanders.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle* district forest officer (DFO) Ravindra Dhama said since last April, they have arrested 29 smugglers and seized 214 logs within Kadapa forest division alone. Smugglers caught are mostly from Tamil Nadu but also include locals. 14 cases have been registered and 19 vehicles seized, he said.

Smuggling of red sandalwood has been prevalent in almost all forest ranges of Kadapa district. In the past, it was mostly smugglers from Tamil Nadu who used to enter forests, cut down a large number of trees and smuggle them out.

Locals too have joined them now for the lucre of money.

Police and forest departments have formed five joint action teams to curb

entry of smugglers from key entry points. Vigil is on at strategic locations and whenever required, walkie-talkies are used to rush additional forces.

Besides there are six strike forces of forest department working outside the forest areas. Each team consists of six forest guards including the driver. Their job is to intercept red sanders being smuggled out in vehicles along the roads.

The anti-smuggling teams have been equipped with latest communication systems. All base camp staff have high-powered walkie-talkies using which they mobilise reinforcements when needed. There is also a dog squad with the district forest department. These dogs are trained to smell red sanders logs and trace them even if hidden in lorries or dumped in a forest area.

MAN DUPES GIRLS, MAKES ₹6.61 CRORES

Hyderabad: The North Zone Task Force on Saturday apprehended one Mudavath Srinu Naik for impersonating an Army officer, and cheating several girls by making marriage proposals.

Police said Naik had obtained an Aadhaar card on the name of Srinivas Chowhan, with a fake date of birth and posed as an Army officer. He procured a fake Army ID card and educational certificates, and purchased Army uniform, got photographs clicked and posted them on social media.

NAGESWARA RAO BALLEDA | DC
KADAPA, NOV. 21

Wakf assets worth a minimum ₹80 crore have been under illegal occupation in Kadapa district.

In fact, district Wakf Board inspector Muqtar Basha, speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, himself said almost ₹80 crore of worth wakf properties have been occupied in various places. These include Guduru village within Kadapa Municipal Corporation limits, Kabarastan in Akkapalli of Kadapa, land in Vankamarri village in Kasinayana mandal, one property in Rajampeta

town, land in Dharmapuram village in Jammalamadugu mandal and one dargah in Proddatur.

Mr Basha said tahsildars concerned have been asked to check out wakf properties that are under encroachments. He maintained that such lands will be seized by the board and taken into account as wakf properties. Digitisation of wakf records, which was stopped due to Covid-19 pandemic, will be started soon.

Allegations are rife that several bigwigs running the ministry are behind the encroachment of wakf properties, with blessings of officials themselves. When news about such

encroachments got published in media, authorities concerned seized them and put up signboards that they were wakf properties. There are 1,960.3 acres of wakf lands in the district. Of these, 601.19 acres of agricultural and others land are still under encroachment.

There are valuable wakf properties in Kadapa, Proddatur, Badvelu, Porumamilla, Rayachoti and so on. Years ago, some donors donated lands for maintenance of piers and mosques.

But many of them have since been occupied. There are allegations that a large number of wakf

properties in the district had been misappropriated during the tenure of a minister.

He and his followers are accused of having all records of wakf assets with them. It is allegedly they who are encroaching lands under a systemic plan.

Muslim elders say there are seven mosques at the intersection of seven roads in Kadapa. Whereabouts of some of their piers are missing. Some of them are said to have been occupied and turned into commercial complexes. Same is the situation with regard to a wakf property near the library on

Shankarapuram Road. The place is worth crores as is located next to the main road.

There is also a gang that is currently trying to occupy the space next to a bakery in the old bus stand. Wakf officials have put up signboards there following reports in media that attempts are being made to occupy precious lands including near the intersection of seven roads.

Attempts are also on to occupy the space next to a group of theatres at the old bus stand.

Speculation is that 30 per cent of the value of a land is paid to leaders who back the efforts to occupy wakf lands.

Leaders occupy wakf lands worth ₹80 crore

Dieback disease threatens to destroy neem trees

NAGABHUSHANAM HOSKOTE | DC
ANANTAPUR, NOV. 21

Even as there is all-round condemnation for felling thousands of big neem trees for the four-lane road on the National Highways, a fresh crisis looms in the form of dieback disease that is sounding the death-knell of the existing trees.

The situation is severe in Anantapur and Kurnool districts as dieback is causing bacteria that affect the apical and in turn the main stem. This will result in poor quality

timber in the future.

A national survey was undertaken on the impact of dieback on neem trees in different agro climatic regions in various parts of South India, including Anantapur and Kurnool districts.

Neem has multiple uses besides great medicinal values and is used widely in Ayurveda.

Traditionally, the tree is worshipped in different forms including as village goddess —Maramma. Twigs of Azadirachta indica (Neem) infected with dieback were collected

from different regions of Gooty, Guntakal, Maddikera and Patthikonda and they were further analysed to determine the extent of pathogen.

● **Neem is considered a miracle species, which can alleviate major global problems like pollution, deforestation, soil erosion and rising temperatures.**

● **Neem has multiple uses besides great medicinal values and is used widely in Ayurveda.**

“Phomopsis Azadirachtae, the causal organism was isolated on malt extract agar from dieback infected neem twigs. They were identified by conventional and molecular methods,” Dr Suresh, Praja Science Vedika state president observed and added that phomopsis genus specific primers (5.8S r-DNA) were then used for detection of P. azadirachtae, the causative agent of dieback polymerase chain reaction (PCR).

Studies revealed the amplification of expected

141 bp DNA in P. azadirachtae isolated from the diseased trees of different regions of Anantapur and Kurnool indicating the causal organism of dieback disease on neem.

Suresh stressed the need to protect the existing neem trees for securing the future generations.

“There was no alternative growth of saplings of neem trees cut during road formations and the forest department failed to mount pressure on NHAI,” he observed.

Environmental experts

say that species of all age and size may suffer from this problem.

Neem is an evergreen deciduous tree that is known to solve global environmental problems but is itself not free from microbial diseases.

A voluntary community effort has started in Bengaluru to save and protect neem trees from the deadly dieback disease.

Neem is considered a miracle species, which can alleviate major global problems like pollution, deforestation, soil erosion and rising temperatures.

NARSIMHA SANCTUARY IS NOW ESZ

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, NOV. 21

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) Government of India, has issued a gazette notification declaring Penusila Narsimha Wildlife Sanctuary as an eco-sensitive zone (ESZ).

Accordingly, certain activities that have a negative impact on fragile ecosystems will be disallowed.

The MoEFCC has also issued Dos and Don’ts. Commercial mining, sawmills, industries causing pollution (air, water, soil, and noise), establishment of major hydroelectric projects, commercial use of wood, tourism activities like hot-air balloons over the national park, discharge of effluents or any solid waste, or production of hazardous substances have been prohibited in the area.

Activities like felling of trees, establishment of hotels and resorts, commercial use of natural water, erection of electrical cables, drastic change of agriculture patterns and widening of roads have been restricted.

Forest authorities will permit only ongoing agricultural or horticultural practices, like rain-water harvesting, organic farming, use of renewable energy sources and adoption of green technology. A negative impact is increasing pressure on tourism.

As a result, government is developing new sites and gateways to this eco-sensitive zone.

Kadapa district forest officer Ravindra Dhama, speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, said, with the issue of notification, people will have to respect all regulations applicable to eco-sensitive zone areas. The sanctuary is spread over 1,030.85 sq kilometres.

DECCAN Chronicle

22 NOVEMBER 2020



Ranjona Banerji

Off the beaten track

How I tweeted away my pandemic summer

I say this to sound like I have an all-round life, but I mean Twitter. Thanks to Mark Zuckerberg and his strange ideas of how threatening decapitation is not threatening decapitation, my interactions with Facebook have diminished. WhatsApp I have always abhorred because there are only so many “Good Morning” fake cups of coffee and bunches of flowers that you can receive without falling violently ill.

Aha, I hear you thinking, this means you are in favour of “fake news” and are actually a secret WhatsApp addict. You could imagine that but you could also imagine that I ruthlessly block anyone who bores me with endless rightwing rubbish.

It is true that I have another Zuckerberg product or acquisition on my phone and that is Instagram. This I like. I haven’t fully grasped its purpose other than the purpose of all social media which I understand is to sell me as “data”. But I do enjoy the photographs. Especially of endless images of boiled eggs and avocados in such creative and innovative juxtaposition. The human mind is fabulous.

Is that it? There’s the Nasa app for the latest on space exploration, the Chirp app for the latest on gravitational wave detections, the free weather apps which are quite my favourite to waste time on, the Google map app which forces me to find geographical locations mentioned in every book I read. The tennis apps, well their purpose is obvious. If I can’t remember anything else after looking at my phone to check, well, this is it.

I don’t have much to do with the “gig” economy either and not just I live in a remote area where no one really wants to gig by. I am wary of using my phone to pay, transact, bank. And I do like humans and physical shops and such. And I don’t want to chat with my phone service provider on WhatsApp no matter how many annoying messages they send me!

So after this long detour, we reach Twitter. Or do we? Once, angry with Twitter for its Zuckerbergian refusal to stop toxicity and for suspending anti-toxic handles, a few of switched us to Mastodon. This was really sweet for a while. There were only like-minded people on it and you had lovely chats. But boy did it get hellishly boring after a while. There was no information you see, because there were no news sites, no information sites, no sports sites. No nothing, really. Bye-bye it was to Mastodon. I still get plaintive emails telling me what I’m missing, like from an old flame who hasn’t realised it’s over.

Now we reach Twitter. It’s got everything right with it and everything wrong with it. I’m not going to get philosophical and stuff and tell you it’s a microcosm of life blah blah. But it is compelling and it is negotiable. And I spend most of my day on it. Yeah, it sounds pathetic, but do I care?

You want the obvious: you interact with a wide range of people from all over the world. There is no endless procession of smiling cups of coffee. Fake news may proliferate but is easily called out. News itself is widely available with “real time” updates. You can take part in conversations or you can just watch.

Trolls? Yes. There are trolls. They can be putrid, vile, scary. You have to deal with them. For journalists, trolls have long been part of our lives. Earlier, trolls would write postcards and letters. Then they sent emails and wrote comments below your articles and columns. They made more or less the same threats of death and rape. It was just a question of scale and accessibility. There’s no one-size-fits-all answer. I don’t interact; they wither away.

It’s a great escape too from the real world and that’s why it’s an addiction. An ever-widening circle of information, entertainment, interaction, annoyance, humour, joy and so on. People you might never have known existed otherwise. People you never would have met. And yes, I have met some Twitter friends in real life. And sometimes, especially since Covid, have interacted more with real friends on Twitter than in real life!

I get that it’s not for everyone. It can be too political, too in-your-face, too demanding of responses. It can force you to fall into weird rabbit holes. Words, phrases, ideologies you don’t understand. I feel my age on Twitter at all times and have to use online dictionaries to understand what people, young people, say and mean. There are worlds within worlds revealed. If I were a proper psycho-babbler, I would have more insights to offer into human nature and the infinite spirals we can traverse!

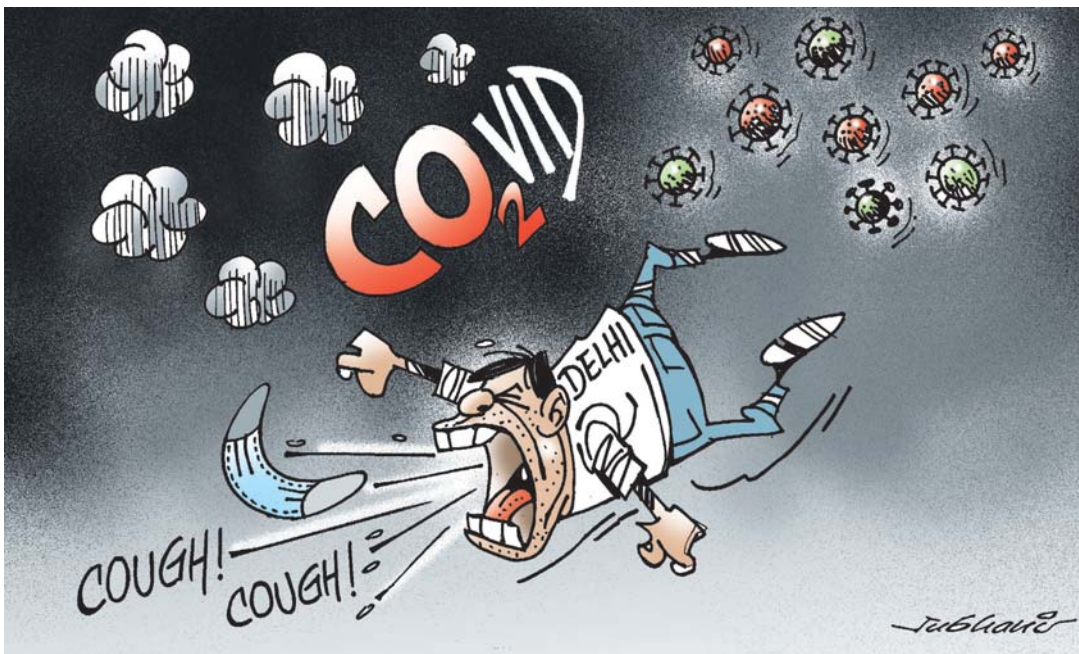
I get that some people prefer cat videos and holiday snaps. Either way, we are part of this grand social media exercise. If you’re up for a fight, you know where to find me!

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.



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Subhani



Get priorities straight in time of a pandemic



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dec 360

The number of Indians infected by Covid-19 has crossed 90 lakhs. Over 1.3 lakhs have died of the virus. The economic distress in the wake of the pandemic is palpable. Millions have seen their earnings drop.

Amid the deaths, disease, debt and despair, guess what some state governments in India are concerned about? They are worrying about who one marries, whether the person is of the same faith or a different one, and if there is any hint of conversions, forced or otherwise.

In the last few weeks, several BJP-ruled state governments have been ratcheting up tension by publicly announcing their plans to bring about legislation to outlaw what they describe as “love jihad”.

Last week, it was the turn of Madhya Pradesh, where night curfew has now been imposed in Indore, Bhopal, Gwalior, Vidisha, and Ratlam districts from November 21 as Covid-19 cases surge. In the middle of all this, Madhya Pradesh home minister Narottam Mishra found time to declare that a “love jihad bill”, which intends imposing five years of rigorous imprisonment for “violators”, will soon be introduced in the state Assembly.

Madhya Pradesh is not the only state stoking sentiments around the “love jihad” conspiracy theory, which pivots around the belief that Muslim men in India are part of some organised campaign to convert Hindu women to Islam. Four other BJP-ruled states — including Uttar Pradesh and Haryana — are following

the same playbook.

At an election rally in Jaunpur last month, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath warned of dire consequences to those found guilty of “love jihad”.

Earlier this month, Haryana home minister Anil Vij announced that his state was planning to bring in a strict law to control “love jihad” cases and soon a committee would be constituted to draft the law. The tourism minister of Karnataka, also BJP-ruled, has tweeted that the southern state would bring in a “a law banning religious conversions for the sake of marriage”. Assam minister and BJP Northeast point-person Himanta Biswa Sarma has joined in the chorus against “love jihad”.

What is behind this rush for laws to outlaw “love jihad” in the time of a pandemic?

It is clearly a rallying cry to mobilise BJP supporters. But that is only part of the story.

Think of all the issues and questions that gets pushed off the news cycle each time “love jihad” grabs headlines. Public health experts like Anant Bhan and Hemant Shewade point out that India is far from being on the top of the pandemic and governments at the Centre and in states must focus on addressing the needs of those with Covid-19 and those who have other diseases. There is literally no time to waste.

Why then this noise about “love jihad” when in February this year, G. Kishan Reddy, Union minister of state for home in the Narendra Modi government, said: “The term ‘love jihad’ is not

defined under the extant laws.” He also said: “No such case of ‘love jihad’ has been reported by any of the Central agencies.” Mr Reddy was replying to a question by Congress MP Benny Behanan in Parliament on “whether Central agencies have reported any case of ‘love jihad’ from Kerala during the past two years and if so, the details thereof?”

Mr Reddy also noted that Article 25 of the Constitution provides for the freedom to profess, practice and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health. “Various courts, including the Kerala high court, have upheld this view,” he said in a written reply.

It is astonishing that in 2020, an adult woman in India is not seen as capable of making decisions on her own about herself and there are so many who are willing to believe that there is a vast conspiracy leading to young Hindu women being seduced and coerced into marriage by Muslim men under false pretexes. Hadiya Jahan’s case comes instantly to mind. Her family claimed that she was a victim of “love jihad”, despite her saying that that she had converted willingly. The Supreme Court subsequently restored the marriage. A Supreme Court ordered probe by the National Investigation Agency into 11 cases of inter-faith marriages in Kerala has not found any evidence of forced conversion in any of the cases.

All this high-decibel talk about an imagined ‘love jihad’ and the rush for laws to stop something that does not exist is worse than tilting at windmills — it is helping divert attention from far more pressing issues surrounding the pandemic

In India, there is no law barring couples from different faiths from getting married. Couples, including interfaith ones, can get married under a Special Marriage Act without changing their religion. The law, however, requires the registrar to post a notice about the intended marriage 30 days before the wedding and this has triggered many problematic situations, with families and right-wing groups trying to stir the pot if it the couple are from different faiths.

The All India Lawyers’ Association for Justice, a national lawyers’ collective, has condemned the announcements made by the BJP-ruled states to pass a law against “love jihad”.

In a statement, the association said that it “believes that every person has the right to marry or not, and to select their partners as per their will and desire... Governments, instead of pursuing a communal agenda that penalises those who exercise their constitutional freedoms, must take immediate steps to enact a law that would specifically cover the field of so-called ‘honour’ crimes.”

It is clear that charges of “love jihad” may not stick in court. It is also clear that the “love jihad” bogey is more a marker of the politics of intimidation than anything else. All this high-decibel talk about an imagined “love jihad” and the rush for laws to stop something that does not exist is worse than tilting at windmills — it is helping divert attention from far more pressing issues surrounding the pandemic.

We can neither afford deepening of fissures nor diversions.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

LETTERS

COURTS ON CAPITAL

AP counsel has rightly pointed out the fact that courts have no role in deciding the location of the capital city. The HC is asking questions beyond its brief and sounds like one of the so-called ‘victim’ farmers from the Amaravati region. At the most the HC could ask the government to clearly spell out the relief package if required for farmers who parted with their lands for the capital. This stalemate should end soon.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

SEC BATTLE

The AP government and SEC are at variance once again (DC, Nov. 21). To conduct the gram panchayat elections smoothly during Covid times, it is necessary to have concerted efforts between the government and SEC. These are imperative and that is not happening. Legal battle appears more or less certain. In all likelihood, it may fizzle out with the blame game.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

POOR LEADERS

It is not at all surprising that so many ruling party leaders and even the CM himself getting infected as they hardly follow Covid-19 norms (*MP violates Covid-19 norms, DC, Nov. 21*). However, they advise people to follow the rules. They are hardly bothered about criticism from people or Opposition parties. Even though WHO is warning about a second Covid wave all over the world, these leaders do not take it seriously. It is negligent and irresponsible behaviour.

P. Govardhana Rao
Kankipadu, Krishna

WELL DONE MINISTER

I congratulate the Haryana health minister Vij for volunteering to take Bharat Biotech’s potential vaccine, Covaxin in third phase of trial, in Ambala Cantonment Hospital. He is the first Cabinet rank minister to volunteer for a noble cause and hopefully the vaccine will come to the rescue of humanity against Covid.

Dr. T. Ramadas
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Many European nations buying Indian wagons

NEW DELHI, NOV. 22 India has now become the largest supplier of railway wagons to some of the East European countries.

The State Trading Corporation has just concluded an agreement with Yugoslavia for the supply of 3,600 railway wagons costing about ₹38 crore. The first delivery of these wagons is to be effected by the end of 1971.

According to State Trading Corporation sources, these wagons are to be manufactured and delivered by the private sector wagon manufacturing industry in West Bengal.

The wagons to be supplied to Yugoslavia are to be utilised for carrying mineral ores in the country.

STC sources said Yugoslavia had now called for new tenders for supply of 10,000 railway wagons. India was also participating in this bid.

Kurt Jacobsen and Sayyed Hassan Khan

The real social distance in US: Can Joe, Kamala ensure change?

Be jubilant, but keep it short. Donald Trump clings to the White House but it’s a pretty good bet that he will depart, kicking and tweeting, on January 20. He nonetheless garnered 72 million votes, so his long-anticipated exit may not be permanent. The Democratic Party failed to cut into his support because they were loath to say one word that smacked of the visionary aspirations of FDR’s New Deal or LBJ’s Great Society, regarded as hideously socialist by their big donors.

Wall Street injected millions of dollars into Joe Biden’s campaign, and awaits Cabinet appointments and more, which will be duly granted given that some 40 former lobbyists populate his transition team. So we are a long way from Mr Biden posing credibly as a humble man of the people. It was truly bizarre listening to affluent Democrats dismiss Bernie Sanders as not a “real” party member when he and Elizabeth Warren were the only candidates who stuck to the values of traditional FDR Democrats.

After fending off the left-liberal

platforms of Mr Sanders and Ms Warren, complacent Democrat officials are determined to revert to the same stale economic policies that bred Mr Trump’s resistible rise to power in the first place. Throughout his lacklustre campaign, Mr Biden avidly played the Covid-19 card of extreme lockdown, pleasing perhaps a third of the populace who can afford a Zoom lifestyle but far less so a hard-pressed majority who plead that the economy (jobs, wages, small businesses and housing stability) is their foremost worry.

Lockdown proponents like to claim that disobeying their rules means you will murder your granny. They don’t like to hear that lockdowns mean condemning multitudes to poverty, homelessness and early deaths (from untreated illnesses) in order to protect their privileged selves. The anti-Covid measures in the United States simply managed to shift the risks from the upper class to the poor, and is no small part of the reason for the boosted Trump vote. A loss of seats in the House of Representatives and

an inability to gain a Senate majority should alert the Democratic Party lords that something essential is missing in their economic programmes, but all they do is blame the left for their own shortcomings.

Mr Biden’s popularity was only modestly higher than Mr Trump’s. The bulk of Democrats voted for Joe Biden out of distaste for Mr Trump, not enthusiasm for he who has little to offer those outside his high-income social orbit. Mr Biden has a track record any conservative can cherish — servant of the credit card industry in his home state of Delaware, passing a 2005 law stripping people of bankruptcy relief; tormentor of Anita Hill during a 1991 Supreme Court nomination event, installing a judge who became a reliable rubber stamp for reactionary views; pushing a 1994 crime bill that sent the incarceration of minorities skyrocketing; and blithely offering several times, including as Barack Obama’s vice-president, to slash social security and Medicare to make foolish compromises with crafty Republicans.

Mr Biden’s good manners will be a relief, but only for a short spell.

Kamala Harris praised Mr Biden for his “audacity” in choosing her as running mate when nothing was more obvious than the careful political calculations involved in the choice. In mainstream American politics, “identities” of race, creed, ethnicity and gender are allowed to flourish instead of class interests, which are not supposed to exist. One hopes that Ms Harris’ shattering of race and gender barriers puts those symbolic goals behind us, because Barack Obama’s presidency gave black voters who weren’t already prosperous nothing but a vicarious thrill. Canny elites can always pick useful opportunists to do their bidding, on the assumption that all that people crave is to become part of the establishment. Too often, they’re right about that. Ms Harris is a dedicated careerist who played her cards right as a public prosecutor with a merciless approach to the poor, even threatening to jail parents of truant children.

The US isn’t centre-right, but the

people who run it are. A New York Times poll attests two-thirds of US citizens want a wealth tax, national healthcare, free college tuition and a Green New Deal, just for starters. A recent Fox News poll put those figures even higher.

Mr Biden and Ms Harris became Democratic candidates because they are “safe hands” who enable Wall Street, mega corporations, and too-big-to-fail banks to go on bilking average citizens. The top 10 per cent in the US now own 78 per cent of the wealth. At this rate, the top 10 per cent should own everything in another lifetime, but something has to give. The real social distancing that the US has practised since the 1970s is the ever-yawning gap between the wealthy and the rest. Mr Biden is by no means a remedy, unless the social justice movements arising during Trump’s era pressure him ever so reluctantly into the role.

By arrangement with Dawn. The writers are the authors of No Clean Hands and Parables of Permanent War.

SHORT TAKES

FUEL PRICE HIKED FOR SECOND DAY IN A ROW

New Delhi, Nov. 21: Petrol price on Saturday was hiked by 15 paise per litre and diesel by 20 paise, the second straight day of increase in rates after firming international oil rates broke nearly a two-month-long hiatus in price revision.

The price of petrol in Delhi was hiked to ₹81.38 per litre from ₹81.23, according to a notification from oil marketing companies.

Diesel rates went up from ₹70.68 to ₹70.88 per litre.

On Friday, petrol price was raised by 17 paise per litre and diesel by 22 paise.

This is the first revision in petrol prices since September 22. Diesel rates had not changed since October 2.

Public sector oil marketing companies - Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd - revise rates of petrol and diesel daily based on benchmark international oil price and foreign exchange rate.

They have, however, resorted to calibrating the rates since the pandemic broke out with a view to avoiding volatility in retail prices.

The 58-day hiatus in petrol price revision and the 48-day status quo on diesel rates were preceded by no change in rates between June 30 and August 15 and a 85-day status quo between March 17 and June 6.

In Mumbai, the petrol price on Friday was raised to Rs 88.09 per litre from Rs 87.92, while diesel rates went up from Rs 77.11 to Rs 77.34.

Rates vary from state to state depending on the incidence of local sales tax or VAT.

COVID CLAIMS OVER 500 LIVES IN 24 HRS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 21

With 46,232 fresh detections, India's overall tally of coronavirus crossed 90.5 lakh on Saturday morning. The death toll so far has been nearly 1.33 lakh out of which 564 fatalities occurred in the last 24 hours.

Delhi, Kerala, Haryana, West Bengal continue to remain areas of concern even as cases have started surging again in Maharashtra over the last two days.

Union Ministry of Health officials said an average of more than 10 lakh tests conducted daily have ensured that the cumulative positivity rate is sustained at low levels and is presently following a downward trajectory. The cumulative national Positivity Rate stands at 6.93%. The daily positivity rate on Friday was 4.34%.

"Higher volumes of testing eventually lead to low Positivity rate... The daily Positivity Rate is now 4.34% which points out that a comparatively huge volume was tested to detect these cases from the population. With a continuous surge in daily cases in European and the American countries, India is taking all precautionary steps to bring the trajectory of the disease under control. In view of the increase in cases of some of the north Indian States, the Centre has advised all states and UTs to ramp up testing," officials said.

As many as 12 States/UTs have lower tests per million than national average, and have been advised by the central government to substantially ramp up the levels of testing.

BJP FOR LAW AGAINST 'LOVE JIHAD' IN MAHA

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, NOV. 21

On the lines of Yogi Aadiyanath government, which is planning to bring a law against unlawful conversions in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP has demanded a similar act in Maharashtra. The BJP will propose to bring such an act against 'Love Jihad' in Maharashtra, said senior BJP leader Kirit Somaiya.

"We support the move of the UP government, which has decided to bring a law against love jihad. There should be a similar law in Maharashtra. The BJP will table a proposal in Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha in this regard," he said.

The BJP leader accused Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray of supporting Congress minister Aslam Shaikh who has ruled out bringing such a law in Maharashtra. Mr Shaikh had said, "The governments which want to hide their inadequacies are bringing in such laws."

NCB arrests Bharati after seizing cannabis from her

Bharati, hubby confirm that they had bought the banned substance

SAURABH JOSHI | DC
MUMBAI, NOV. 21

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), on Saturday, arrested comedian Bharati Singh following search and seizure of cannabis, in connection with the ongoing probe into drugs consumption by stars of entertainment industry.

The NCB officials had taken Singh and her husband Harsh Limbachiya for questioning at the agency's office. The officials later confirmed that the seized item was cannabis.

A team of the NCB raided the residence of the comedian at Lokhandwala Complex in Andheri following a specific information of presence of banned substance.

The officials found 86.5 gram cannabis from the residence of the couple. The investigators were probing her after her name cropped up during the course of investiga-

● **THE OFFICIALS** recently questioned actor Arjun Rampal in connection with the probe and after the NCB arrested his girlfriend Gabriel's brother over his alleged links with the international drug cartels.

"One of the arrested drug peddlers had named her during his interrogation. We are conducting more searches based on the information received from the arrested peddlers," said an officer.

The officials said that the accused were questioned about the consumption when they confirmed about having bought the banned substance and also consuming it.

They are being questioned further in connection with the same.

The officials are verifying details of her husband Limbachiya and they would take further



Bharti Singh arrives at the NCB office for questioning after a raid at her residence by the agency in a drug related case in Mumbai on Saturday. - PTI

decision based on the findings of the probe, officials said.

The officials recently questioned actor Arjun Rampal in connection with the probe and after the NCB arrested his girlfriend Gabriel's brother over his alleged

links with the international drug cartels.

The officials are now probing the links of the peddling of drugs to the entertainment industry, including Bollywood.

The NCB earlier questioned actors Deepika Padukone, Shraddha

Kapoor, Sara Ali Khan and Rakul Preet Singh, after the agency found chat exchanges between some of them and manager Karishma Prakash. The larger drug probe started following the suicide of actor Sushant Singh Rajput on June 14.

Bodoland Front ties end, BJP to induct BPF MP

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, NOV. 21

In what has almost confirmed the break up in alliance between the BJP and Bodoland Peoples Front (BPF), the BJP national parliamentary board has formally approved the joining of BPF MP in the Rajya Sabha, Biswajit Daimary, in the saffron party ahead of the Assam assembly election due in April.

The meeting was held at the official residence of BJP national president J.P. Nadda in New Delhi and was attended by union home minister Amit Shah, chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Assam BJP president Ranjeet Kumar Dass and cabinet minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Pointing out that parliamentary board has given approval for the induction of the BPF Rajya Sabha MP Mr Sarma said, "In the parliamentary board meeting, our national president JP Nadda gave the approval for Mr Daimary's joining in BJP. This approval was necessary because Mr Daimary is a sitting MP in the Rajya Sabha." Mr Daimary had resigned from the post of working president of BPF recently. Meanwhile, Mr Daimary while announcing his decision to join the BJP told reporters that he has resigned from his Rajya Sabha seat on which he was elected on the symbol of BPF. "I have sent my resignation to the chairman of the Rajya Sabha," said Mr Daimary whose resignation from the BPF has been seen as a major setback for the party.

Earlier, reiterating that the alliance with BPF is over, Mr Sarma clarified that the issue of breaking the alliance with the BPF was not discussed at the parliamentary board meeting. "Why will the BPF issue be discussed in the parliamentary board of BJP? When BJP is going to form the next government in BTC after this election (in December), where is the question of the alliance between the two parties in the 2021 assembly elections? BJP will contest all 12 assembly seats in Bodoland Territorial Region (spread over four districts) on its own. But our alliance with AGP will remain," Mr Sarma asserted.

A day before the parliamentary board meeting, Mr Sarma had announced that their five-year old partnership with BPF will not be renewed on expiry of the term of the present alliance in January, which means that the two allies will not fight the 2021 election as friends but as rivals.

Assam BJP president Ranjeet Dass who was also present in the parliamentary board meeting of BJP in New Delhi said that the party's national leadership was apprised of the situation in the Bodo heartland in the context of the coming council election.

"We have told the party parliamentary board that BPF has lost the trust of people in Bodoland Territorial Region and BJP will win the ensuing council elections on its own." In January, 2016, BJP had forged a pre-political alliance with the BPF and the AGP riding on which the saffron party formed its first government in the state.

Custodial death issue rocks Odisha Assembly

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 21

Turmoil reigned supreme in Odisha Legislative Assembly on Saturday as the Opposition Congress and BJP strongly condemned custodial deaths of two youths - K. Ramesh of Puri and Tarique Salim of Kuanarmunda police station in Sundergarh district - and sought judicial probe into them.

The transfer of Puri superintendent of police Akhileswar Singh and suspension of the Kuarmunda police inspector Suprabha Pradhan and two other sub-inspectors for their alleged role in custodial deaths on Friday night failed to pacify the Opposition lawmakers.

Two youths who were picked up by the police on different criminal charges on Thursday died under mysterious circumstances. Their families

alleged unbearable physical assault by the cops during the custody led to their deaths.

The Opposition lawmakers, while participating in a special debate on law and order situation in the House, repeatedly rushed to the well of the House to press for their demand. Unable to conduct the legislative businesses, the Speaker Dr S.N. Patro adjourned the thrice.

The Speaker also convened an all-party meeting to resolve the impasse. However, no consensus was reached at the all-party meeting as Opposition members remained firm on the demands for lodging criminal cases against the superintendents of Police of Puri and Sundergarh districts and judicial probes into the two custodial deaths in the two districts.

With no solution in sight to end the deadlock, Speaker adjourned the

House till Sunday (Sunday has been included in Odisha Assembly calendar as a working day). "We have very firm on demands to book the Puri SP on murder charge and disciplinary action against Sundergarh SP. Besides, judicial probes must be ordered into the two custodial deaths that happened in the two districts in the last 48 hours," said the Leader of Opposition.

BJP lawmakers - Lalitendu Bidyadhar Mohapatra and Jayant Kumar Sarangi - also came down on the ruling BJD heavily on the custodial deaths.

"It seems that the government under pressure from some non-Odia bureaucrats has unleashed a reign of terror using the police force. Women, children and common people are not safe here," said Mr Mohapatra and Mr Sarangi.

25 tigers die in MP in 11 months, highest in India

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, NOV. 21

Madhya Pradesh which has the highest number of 526 big cats as per the latest census has earned the dubious distinction of recording deaths of maximum tigers - 25 - in the country in the last 11 months.

According to tiger mortality updates provided by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, MP has witnessed death of 25 tigers, the highest among the states in the country, since January 2020 and majority of tiger mortalities were reported outside the reserve forests in the state.

Incidentally, it was the 6th year in a row that the state has topped the chart of tiger mortality among the states. Forest officers have attributed the high

mortality of tigers in MP to congestions in reserves.

"The state is witnessing an increase in tiger population due to favourable habitats. But, at the same time the growth of tiger population has left less than 10 sq km for each tiger in these reserves", a senior forest officer of the MP government told this newspaper requesting not to be quoted since he was not authorized to speak to the media.

"We need to learn from the conservation model of Karnataka where the tiger mortality is much lower", he added.

Karnataka has the second largest population of tigers (524) in the country.

Principal chief conservator of forest (PCCF) of MP government Alok Kumar, however, said the tiger population in the state was increasing.

erate the rail blockade issue.

The farmers' organisation, that had resorted to 'rail roko' agitation from September 24 over the farm laws, had already agreed to allow goods trains to run in the state, besides clearing rail tracks and vacating platforms. But the deadlock between the protesting farmers and the Railways continued over resumption of trains.

The farmers' bodies had

maintained that they would consider allowing passenger trains to run in the state if the Centre starts running goods trains first. However, the Railways had refused to resume goods trains, saying it would either operate both freight and passenger trains or none. The Railways has maintained that it needs full guarantee from the state government that no trains will be disrupted. -PTI

Par panel: Pvt hosps charged exorbitant fees for Covid-19

New Delhi, Nov. 21: Amid rising Covid-19 cases, inadequate beds in government hospitals and absence of specific guidelines for Covid treatment resulted in private hospitals charging exorbitant fees, a parliamentary panel on Saturday said, asserting that a sustainable pricing model could have averted many deaths.

Chairperson of the parliamentary standing committee on health Ram Gopal Yadav submitted the report on 'Outbreak of Pandemic Covid-19 and its Management', to Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu.

This is the first report by any parliamentary committee on the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Underlining that healthcare spending in the country with a population of 1.3 billion is "abysmally low", the panel said fragility of Indian health ecosystem posed a big hurdle in generating an effective response against the pandemic.

"The committee, therefore, strongly recommends the government to increase its investments in the public healthcare system and make consistent efforts to achieve the National Health Policy targets of expenditure up to 2.5 per cent of GDP within two years as the set time frame of year 2025 is far away and the public health cannot be jeopardised till that time schedule," the report stated.

The National Health Policy 2017 has set a target of government expenditure on healthcare up to 2.5 per cent of GDP by 2025 from just 1.15 per cent in 2017.

Stating that the public had to undergo trauma and distress

due to absence of a dedicated healthcare system, the committee observed that the number of government hospital beds in the country were not adequate to handle the increasing number of Covid and non-Covid patients.

"... Cost of health service delivery increased due to absence of specific guidelines for Covid treatment in private hospitals as a result of which patients were charged exorbitant fees," the committee noted in the report.

Stressing on the need for better partnership between the government and private hospitals in wake of the pandemic and shortage of state-run healthcare facilities, the report said, "The Committee is of the view that arriving at a sustainable pricing model to treat Covid patients could have averted many deaths."

The committee believes healthcare should never be limited to only those who can afford to pay but should move towards the noble vision of universal health coverage. For this happen, the government needs to be considerate and support the private health care sector, the report said.

The committee was all praise for healthcare workers and doctors for being on frontline in handling of the deadly virus and said they should have defined working hours, predictably functioning reliever rosters and scheduled off-duty days.

The doctors, who have laid down their lives in fight against the pandemic, must be acknowledged as martyrs and their families be adequately compensated, it suggested in the report. -PTI

AGRA DOC KILLED INSIDE HOME, KIDS INJURED; 1 HELD

Agra, Nov. 21: A 38-year-old dentist was allegedly strangled to death here on Friday while the perpetrator was arrested within five hours of committing the crime, police said on Saturday.

The victim, Nisha Singhal's eight-year-old daughter and four-year-old son too were injured after being attacked with a knife by the accused identified as Shubham Pathak, they said.

Pathak, who had robbed Singhal's house, was caught following an encounter at Kalindi Vihar area. He was shot in the leg, a police officer said, adding that the stolen cash and jewellery was seized from him.

According to police, Pathak gained entry into Singhal's house in Kaveri Kunj Colony in Kamanagar on the pretext of recharging a TV set top box.

He was identified after the police analysed footage retrieved from a CCTV camera installed in front of the house. -PTI

ACCIDENTAL FIRING KILLS 1 IN SP MLC'S OFFICIAL RESIDENCE

Lucknow, Nov. 21: A 35-year-old man died of gunshot injuries suffered in an accidental firing amid the playful scuffle among friends for a pistol during a birthday celebration at the official residence of Samajwadi Party MLC Amit Yadav, police said on Saturday.

Following the death of Barabanki native Rakesh Rawat, four men have been arrested for their alleged roles in the accidental killing, said Deputy Commissioner of Police Somen Barma.

The incident occurred on Friday night at MLC's official residence in Lucknow's Hazratganj police station area where the five people had gathered to celebrate the birthday of one Vinay Yadav.

The four arrested men have been identified as Vinay Yadav, Gyanendra Kumar, Aaftab and Pankaj Yadav.

The four were arrested on the complaint of deceased's father Mani Ram, who told police that he suspected foul play in his son's death and named the four behind the killing. -PTI

Amit Shah walks on Chennai road to greet supporters

Chennai, Nov. 21: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday sprang a surprise here when he virtually broke protocol to get out of his vehicle and walk on the busy GST Road outside the airport to greet supporters, minutes after he landed here for a two-day visit of the city.

Shah, who thanked the metropolis for its love, said it was "great" to be in Tamil Nadu.

Shah is slated to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for projects worth over Rs 67,000 crore, including phase II of Chennai Metro Rail.

Soon after his arrival from Delhi, Shah was received by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami, his deputy O Panneerselvam, senior cabinet members and BJP State President L Murugan among others, before proceeding to the city hotel where he will be put up.

However, after exiting the airport, Shah's car suddenly stopped and the BJP veteran got out, before walking a short distance, waving at scores of BJP and AIADMK workers

who had gathered to receive him with their respective party flags.

Accompanied by BJP National General Secretary and party in-charge of poll-bound Tamil Nadu, C.T. Ravi, and Murugan, with his security detail in tow, the Home Minister warmly waved at the overjoyed supporters who had thronged the airport since the morning.

A heavy security cover has been provided in the city following Shah's visit, during which he will meet state BJP functionaries and possibly discuss Tamil Nadu elections, due next April-May, before leaving on Sunday morning.

Meanwhile, Shah took to Twitter to thank the city for its love and support.

"It is always great to be in Tamil Nadu. Thank you Chennai for this love and support," he said in a tweet accompanying a video clip of his walk on GST Road.

Shah had earlier been here in August 2019 to release a book on Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu's two years in office then. -PTI

IN BRIEF

RESIGN WITH ME,
GUATEMALA VP
URGES PREZ

Guatemala City, Nov. 21: Guatemala's vice president told President Alejandro Giammattei that both men should resign their positions "for the good of the country" following the approval of a budget cutting educational and health spending that caused a public outcry. "We both resign," Vice President Guillermo Castillo said he told Giammattei Friday. He had suggested vetoing the approved budget, firing government officials and attempt more outreach to various sectors around the country. Giammattei had not responded publicly and Castillo did not share the president's reaction to his proposal. Castillo said he would not resign alone. Discontent had been building over the new 2021 budget on social media and then generated clashes with police Friday in front of the congress.

JAN MORRIS,
AUTHOR, PASSES
AWAY AT 94

New York, Nov. 21: Jan Morris, the celebrated journalist, historian, world traveller and fiction writer who in middle age became a pioneer of the transgender movement, has died at 94. Morris died in Wales on Friday morning, according to her literary representative, United Agents. Her agent Sophie Scard confirmed her death. Morris had been in failing health. Additional details were not immediately available. The British author lived as James Morris until the early 1970s, when she underwent surgery at a clinic in Casablanca and renamed herself Jan Morris. Her best-selling memoir "Conundrum," which came out in 1974, continued the path of such earlier works as Christine Jorgensen's "A Personal Autobiography" in presenting her decision as natural and liberating. "I no longer feel isolated and unreal," she wrote.

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

A special hundred
for Chandorkar

New Delhi: Former first class cricketer Raghunath Chandorkar on Saturday turned hundred years old, becoming only the third Indian cricketer to complete a century of birthdays. Chandorkar played seven first class games, representing Maharashtra (1943-1944 to 1946-1947) and Bombay (1950-1951). The wicket-keeper batsman had scored 155 runs in seven games. He also effected three catches and two stumpings. Prof. DB Deodhar (1892-1993) and Vasant Raiji (1920-2020) are the only other Indian cricketers to celebrate 100 birthdays. — PTI

Live on TV

- CRICKET
- Big Bash League:** Melbourne Stars vs Sydney Sixers from 8.15 am on Sony Six, HD
- TENNIS
- ATP Finals:** Final from 11.30 pm on Sony Six, HD
- FOOTBALL
- Indian Super League:** FC Goa vs Bengaluru FC from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3
- English Premier League:** Fulham vs Everton from 5.30 pm; Sheffield United vs West Ham from 7.30 pm; Leeds United vs Arsenal from 10 pm; Liverpool vs Leicester City from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD
- Italian league:** Fiorentina vs Benevento at 5 pm on Sony Ten 2; Roma vs Parma from 7.30 pm on Sony Six; Inter Milan vs Torino from 7.30 pm; Udinese vs Genoa from 10.30 pm; Napoli vs AC Milan from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2
- UFC
- Fight Night:** Figueiredo vs Perez and other bouts from 8.30 am on Sony Ten 1, HD
- WWE
- Survivor Series:** Kick-off show followed by bouts from 4.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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Daily US virus deaths highest since May

Country now averaging over 1,300 Covid deaths per day, daily infections at a record high of 188,000

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Washington, Nov. 21: The surging Coronavirus is taking an increasingly dire toll across the US just as a vaccine appears at hand, with the country now averaging over 1,300 Covid-19 deaths per day — the highest since the calamitous spring in and around New York City. The overall death toll has reached about 253,000, by far the highest in the world. Total confirmed infections have eclipsed more than 11.7 million, after the biggest one-day gain on record Thursday — almost 188,000. And the number of people in the hospital with Covid-19 hit another all-time high at more than 80,000. With health experts deeply afraid Thanksgiving travel and holiday gatherings next week will fuel the spread of the virus, many states and cities are imposing near-lockdowns or other restrictions. California ordered a 10 pm to 5 am curfew starting Saturday, covering 94% of the state's 40 million residents. The Texas border county of El Paso, where more than 300 people have died from Covid-19 since October, is advertising jobs for morgue workers capable of lifting bodies weighing 175 pounds or more. Officials are offering more

than \$27 an hour for work described as not only physically arduous but "emotionally taxing as well." The county had already begun paying jail inmates \$2 an hour to help move corpses and has ordered at least 10 refrigerated trucks as morgues run out of room. Covid-19 deaths in the US are at their highest level since late May, when the Northeast was emerging from the first wave of the crisis. They peaked at about 2,200 a day in late

Russia Covid-19 toll hits new high

Moscow, Nov. 21: Russia on Saturday registered record numbers for daily infections and deaths from the Coronavirus, two days after having passed two million cases. Health officials reported 24,822 new infections and 476 deaths, bringing the national total to 2,064,748 million cases and 35,778 fatalities since the beginning of the year. While those figures suggest a lower death rate

than elsewhere in the world, they need to be treated with caution. The official Russian death toll only includes those in which Covid has been established as the primary cause of death after an autopsy. Data published by Russia's federal statistics service earlier this month indicated excess deaths of more than 117,000 year-on-year between March and September, suggesting that virus fatalities could

be much higher. Most of the new cases announced Saturday were recorded in Moscow (7,168) and in the country's second city, Saint Petersburg (2,476), with other regions recording figures in the tens or hundreds. "We are getting a lot of calls at the moment," Dmitri, a Saint Petersburg ambulance driver, told AFP. "The number of sick people is growing." The medical team he worked

with collecting samples to identify cases visited around 20 addresses every day, he said. "People are scared, and they are calling for a doctor as soon as they get a little cough," said Lyudmila, one of the two nurses on the team. On Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the surge in infections and deaths as "alarming". — AFP

PORTUGAL
EXTENDS VIRUS
EMERGENCY

Lisbon, Nov 21: Portugal on Friday extended until December 8 the state of emergency it imposed to bring down the Coronavirus infection rate as the second wave of the disease spreads. President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa announced he had signed the decree extending the emergency measures which had been due to lapse on Monday, warning that a further extension remains a possibility. "The state of emergency will last as long as is necessary to fight against the pandemic" he said in a televised address. While the second wave of the virus should reach its peak in late November or early December, a third wave will "probably" follow early next year, the president added. More than 80 percent of Portugal's population has been under partial lockdown. The announcement came after the socialist government held an emergency cabinet meeting to decide on the virus restrictions. — AFP

Warangal doc finds possible
cure for Covid-19 issues

Washington, Nov. 21: An Indian-American scientist has discovered a potential strategy to prevent life-threatening inflammation, lung damage and organ failure in patients diagnosed with Covid-19. Published online in the journal Cell, the research coming from the lab of Dr Thirumala-Devi Kanneganti, an Indian-born researcher working at St. Jude Children's Research Hosp-

ital in Tennessee, identified the drugs after finding that the hyperinflammatory immune response associated with virus leads to tissue damage and multi-organ failure in mice by triggering inflammatory cell death pathways. The researchers detailed how the inflammatory cell death signaling pathway worked, which led to potential therapies to disrupt the process. "Understan-

ding the pathways and mechanism driving this inflammation is critical to develop effective treatment strategies," said Kanneganti, vice chair of the St Jude Department of Immunology. Kanneganti was born and raised in Telangana. She received her undergraduate degree at Kakatiya University in Warangal, where she majored in Chemistry, Zoology, and Botany. — PTI

Eight killed as mortar shells strike Kabul

Kabul, Nov. 21: About 23 mortar shells slammed into different parts of the Afghan capital on Saturday, killing at least eight people and wounding 31 others, an official said. The shells were fired from two cars, Interior Ministry spokesperson Tariq Arian said. No one took immediate

responsibility for the early morning attack that also targeted the posh Wazir Akbar Khan area of Kabul, which houses diplomatic missions. The Taliban issued a quick statement denying any responsibility for the attack. The Islamic State group affiliate also operates in the area and has

claimed responsibility for recent assaults in Kabul including two devastating attacks on educational institutions that killed more than 50 people, many of them students. As well as insurgent groups, there are several heavily armed warlords with militias living in Kabul with long-standing

animosities against each other. The mortar barrage comes as representatives of the Afghan government and the Taliban continued to hold talks in Qatar, though progress has been slow. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is expected to press for a reduction in violence in his meetings

with both Taliban and government negotiating teams later Saturday during a daylong stop in Doha. The Taliban have mostly ignored such previous requests. Hours before the attack rattled Kabul, a bomb attached to a car killed one security personnel and wounded three in the capital. — AP

TIBETAN LEADER IN WH: 1ST IN 60 YRS

Washington, Nov. 21: The head of the Tibetan government in exile has visited the White House for the first time in six decades and met the newly appointed senior US official on Tibetan issues, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) said on Saturday, a development that could enrage Beijing, which has accused the US of trying to interfere in China's internal affairs. Dr

Lobsang Sangay entered the White House on Friday — a historic feat. This is the first time in the last 6 decades the head of the CTA has been invited into the White House, the CTA said in a statement. "It is a great honour to be the first political head of the CTA to formally enter the White House," Sangay said in a tweet. — PTI

Chelsea's new castle

Blues take top spot for first time in over two years

Newcastle (United Kingdom), Nov. 22: Frank Lampard warned Chelsea to stay humble after they climbed to the top of the Premier League for the first time in more than two years with a convincing 2-0 win at Newcastle on Saturday. Lampard's side moved above Leicester on goal difference thanks to Federico Fernandez's first half own goal and Tammy Abraham's strike after the interval. Chelsea are unbeaten in nine games in all competitions and haven't lost in their last six league matches.

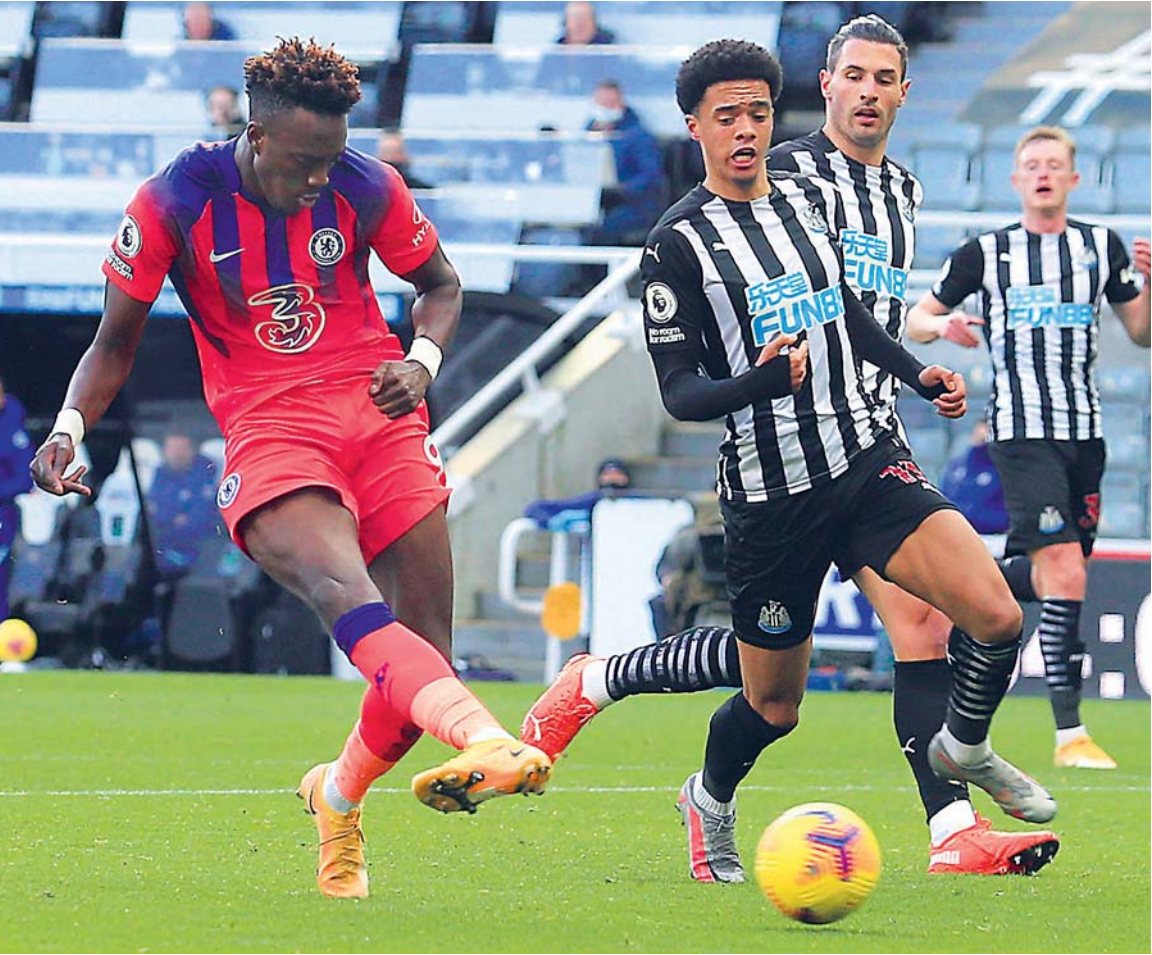
Chelsea's third successive league victory was the perfect way to start a hectic period leading up to Christmas. Chelsea's weary stars shrugged off their fatigue to make a strong start as Timo Werner raced onto a through ball for a low strike that Karl Darlow pushed away for a corner. Darlow was at full stretch again when Abraham met Hakim Ziyech's cross with a powerful header that the Newcastle keeper tipped over.

The Blues' pressure was rewarded in the 10th minute when a short corner caught Newcastle flat-footed.

Mason Mount whipped in a low cross and Fernandez turned it into his own net under pressure from Chilwell at the far post. The fifth Premier League own goal of the hapless Fernandez's career didn't sate Chelsea's appetite.

With Lampard's men monopolising possession, Werner should have doubled their lead from Mount's pass, but the German forward scuffed his shot wide from 10 yards.

Chelsea put the result beyond doubt in the 65th minute when Werner accelerated away from the Newcastle defence and slipped a pass to Abraham, who guided his shot past Darlow and in off the post. — AFP



Tammy Abraham (left) of Chelsea scores his side's second goal against Newcastle during their English Premier League football match at the St. James' Park in Newcastle, England, on Saturday. Chelsea won 2-0. — AP

Northeast topple Mumbai

Vasco, Nov. 21: Kwesi Appiah scored from the spot as NorthEast United FC began their Indian Super League campaign with a 1-0 win over Mumbai City FC here on Saturday. A red card and a penalty turned a game, that Mumbai were otherwise dominating, on its head and handed NorthEast United FC a winning start at the Tilak Maidan. Appiah (49') scored the only goal from a penalty after the Islanders were reduced to 10-men following Ahmed Jahouh's red card just before the breather. Predictably, it was

Mumbai who dominated the first half. The Islanders were neat and proactive for long spells, though they were unable to find a cutting edge. They did hold the lion's share of the possession that occasionally resulted in hopeful efforts. In the 12th minute, Adam le Fondre's cross from the right wing found striker Bartholomew Ogbeche. The resulting effort though was intercepted by NorthEast defender Ashutosh Mehta. In the next few minutes, an Ogbeche header went over the bar while Jahouh took two attempts from distance. A clear-cut

chance though was still eluding Lobera's men. Then, the match took an unexpected turn as Jahouh, who was dictating things from midfield, was sent off with a straight red, a couple of minutes before half time. His offence was a studs-up challenge on NorthEast's Khassa Camara. Gerard Nus' men capitalised on their numerical advantage soon after the restart. The Highlanders were awarded a penalty in the 49th minute and then NorthEast took control over the game with Khumanthem Meetei and Appiah making regular inroads. — PTI

MONACO MUM
LEADER PSG

Paris, Nov. 21: Kylian Mbappe's two goals against his former club were not enough as French league leader Paris Saint-Germain wasted a 2-0 lead and lost at Monaco 3-2. Mbappe's first-half brace took him to 99 goals for PSG since joining from Monaco three years ago in a deal worth a staggering 180 million euros. But lively German forward Kevin Volland netted twice after the break, and was fouled by center half Abdou Diallo for a penalty converted by Cesc Fabregas in the 83rd minute. — AP

Siraj stays in Oz
post Dad's demise

Kolkata, Nov. 21: BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Saturday said that pacer Mohammed Siraj, who has lost his father, was given the option of flying back home to be with his grieving family but he decided to stay back in Australia for "national duty". Ghouse, who was suffering from a lung ailment, died on Friday. He was 53. "The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had a discussion with Siraj and he was offered the option of flying back and be with his family in this hour of grief," Shah was quoted as saying in a BCCI media release. "The fast bowler has decided to stay with the Indian contingent and continue performing his national duties. The BCCI shares his grief and will be supportive of Siraj in this extremely challenging phase," Shah added. Board president Sourav Ganguly took to Twitter to laud the Hyderabad pacer for his resilience and mental fortitude in this hour of tragedy. "May Mohammed siraj have a lot of strength to overcome this loss.lots of

● **Board president Sourav Ganguly took to twitter to laud the Hyderabad pacer for his resilience and mental fortitude in this hour of tragedy.**

good wishes for his success in this trip... tremendous character," Ganguly tweeted. Ghouse, who was an auto rickshaw driver, was the biggest influence in Siraj's life, as he encouraged him to take up cricket as a career and took care of all his needs despite limited means. Siraj first came into limelight with 41 wickets for Hyderabad in Ranji Trophy, followed by a record Rs 2.6 crore IPL deal from Sunrisers Hyderabad as an uncapped player. He has only been picked the four-match Test series in Australia. If Siraj had chosen to fly back to India, he would have had to do another 14-day quarantine here in Australian under the local government rules on his arrival. — PTI

Thiem edges past
Djokovic in semis

London, Nov. 21: Dominic Thiem recovered from squandering four match points in a dramatic second-set tie-break to beat Novak Djokovic in three pulsating sets in the last four at the ATP Finals on Saturday. The Austrian third seed's 7-5, 6-7 (10/12), 7-6 (7/5) win ended Djokovic's hopes of equalling Roger Federer's record of six titles at the elite eight-man event. The US Open champion will face either Rafael Nadal or Daniil Medvedev in Sunday's final as he chases the second-biggest title of his career. The 2019 runner-up, who forced the only break in the first set, faced an uphill battle psychologically after

his missed chances in the second-set tie-break. But he was quickly back in the groove and held his nerve to rally from 4-0 down in the final-set tie-break, winning six successive points to earn two match points and taking the second of those. "It was for sure a mental battle. I got so tight in the second-set tie-break, first of all because to play these legends is always going to be something special," said Thiem. Thiem took time to settle at the start of the match, hitting a number of unforced errors, but found his rhythm and his single-handed backhand became an important weapon as the match wore on. — AFP