



HC has taken over executive functions, Jagan govt. tells SC
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Two soldiers killed in militant attack on an Army patrol in J&K
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Economic recovery stronger than expected, says Shaktikanta Das
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India's Australia tour begins with Sydney ODI today
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NEARBY



Rajasthan shifts focus to testing in rural areas

JAIPUR
Amid spike in COVID-19 cases, the Rajasthan government on Thursday decided to shift attention to testing in rural areas and intensify awareness drive in villages. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot gave these instructions at a meeting to review the pandemic situation here.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

'File inquiry report on JMI student's disclosure'

NEW DELHI

The High Court on Thursday told Delhi Police to submit a report on vigilance inquiry conducted on the alleged leak of information to the media about the disclosure statement of a Jamia Millia Islamia student, who was arrested in a case related to the north-east Delhi riots. Justice Vibhu Bakheria also asked the police to indicate further steps which it proposes to take.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

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Three killed, crops damaged as Nivar crosses Tamil Nadu coast

Cyclone triggers extremely heavy rainfall; fresh low pressure takes shape in Bay

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Severe cyclonic storm Nivar, which made landfall early on Thursday at Marakkam in Villupuram district, between Puducherry and Chennai, left three persons dead and caused considerable damage to crops and fields, besides leaving many areas inundated. The storm system is likely to move north-westwards and weaken into a low pressure by Friday.

Several interior areas such as Ambur, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore and Arani experienced rain and strong winds of 50 kmph.

Light to moderate rain may continue over a few places in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal for the next 48 hours.

The Indian Army of Dakshin Bharat Area Headquarters, which had positioned 22 rescue teams in Puducherry, Chennai and Tiruchirappalli, helped clear uprooted trees on the arterial roads following landfall. The team helped the Puducherry administration to resume normal activities with minimum loss of time, a press release said.

NDRF teams helped in relief and restoration activities in areas where they were stationed. They helped evacuate people in the Mudichur



Safe passage: NDRF members moving people from low-lying areas in west Tambaram following heavy rain in the aftermath of Cyclone Nivar. ■ S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

area that saw severe flooding.

Rain deficit wiped out

During landfall that started at 11.30 p.m. on Wednesday night and lasted till 2.30 a.m. on Thursday, Nivar dumped extremely heavy rainfall in the coastal areas.

Tambaram, a south-western suburb of Chennai, recorded the highest rainfall at 31 cm, followed by Puducherry at 30 cm, Cuddalore, 27 cm, and Chidambaram, 13 cm. In Chennai city, Nungambakkam recorded 11 cm, and Poonamallee and Taramani 10 cm each till 6.30 a.m. on Thursday, gave way to

Deputy Director-General of Meteorology (Chennai) S. Balachandran said Chennai's seasonal rainfall deficit that stood at 11% had now moved to an excess of 36%. Puducherry's shortfall of nearly 37% has moved to a surplus of 13% in a single day, thanks to the cyclonic storm.

While the State still has an overall deficit of 18%, Nivar has brought down the shortfall by 8% over the past few days, Mr. Balachandran said.

Extensive preparations by the Tamil Nadu government, including moving more than 2.27 lakh vulnerable persons to relief camps as of 10 a.m. on Thursday gave way to

post-landfall restoration work, including clearing fallen trees, pumping out water from low-lying areas.

A fresh low-pressure area

is likely to form over central parts of the south Bay of Bengal around November 29. It is likely to move west and has the potential to become a cyclonic storm and impact south Tamil Nadu, according to the Meteorological Department. On the new system, Mr. Balachandran said the Bay of Bengal had churned out back-to-back weather systems.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 8

First 'wave' of vaccination to cover 30 crore Indians

Broad blueprint ready: VijayRaghavan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

About 30 crore people will be part of the first "wave" to get the COVID-19 vaccine in India. They consist of health care workers, police personnel, those above 50 and those younger with underlying illnesses that make them vulnerable, said Principal Scientific Adviser K. VijayRaghavan.

Vaccine committee

He was speaking at a meeting organised by the Science Ministry and the

PM pitches for 'One Nation, One Election'

Frequent polls hamper development'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday again pitched for 'One Nation, One Election', saying it is the need of the country as elections taking place every few months hamper development works.

Mr. Modi was addressing the concluding session of the 80th All India Presiding Officers Conference via videoconferencing. He also said there should be a single voter list for all polls in the country.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister asked the presiding officers attending the meet to apply their mind to simplify the language of statute books and allow for an easier process to weed out redundant laws.

Mr. Modi was addressing the concluding session of the 80th All India Presiding Officers Conference via videoconferencing. He also said there should be a single voter list for all polls in the country.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Take a call on night curfew in Delhi: HC

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday told the city government to take a call "without losing further time" on whether night curfew is required to be imposed in the entire Capital or some parts of it, to contain the spread of COVID-19.

The court issued the direction after the Centre submitted that States and Union Territories can now impose local restrictions, such as night curfew.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 3

Police stop farmers' march to Delhi at Haryana, U.P. borders

Farm leaders held; water cannons used to foil rally

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Tens of thousands of farmers are planning to storm Delhi on Friday to protest against the Centre's new farm reform laws. With the Delhi police moving to prevent their entry, the alliance of farmers groups demanding the repeal of the laws has called for an "indefinite siege" of the Capital.

Convoys of farmers from Punjab surged across Haryana throughout the day, having broken through or bypassed police barriers at multiple locations. At other points in Haryana and along the Uttar Pradesh border, however, farmers were blocked, while leaders were detained or arrested. Within Delhi, two protests were broken up by the police, and hundreds were detained.

Although Delhi's borders have not been sealed, barricades and pickets have been activated to prevent entry by the marching farmers. Five sand-laden trucks have been stationed at the Singhu border point to stop tractors, said senior Delhi police officials, adding that drones have also been deployed for security purposes.

"It is expected that more than 50,000 farmers will be standing at the Delhi border



Show of dissent: Farmers protesting against the farm laws at Majnu Ka Tila in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

by today evening. The numbers are expected to swell through the night as thousands of tractors and trolleys are carrying farmers, women and children from interior areas of Punjab," said a statement from the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an alliance of farmers' groups.

Trade unions join stir

The Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh, the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, and various factions of the Bharatiya Kisan Union are leading the protest under the SKM banner. Protests and strikes were also held in eastern and southern States, with trade unions joining in the agitation.

At the Punjab-Haryana border in Shambu, the Haryana police resorted to use of tear gas and water cannons to disperse agitating farmers, who toppled and dismantled barricades.

"The way we are being stopped from reaching Delhi, it seems Punjab and its people are not citizens of India."

Barbed wires have been put at many places at Haryana border, which gives an impression as if it's 'Attari-Wagah' border," said Nirbhay Singh, senior leader of the Kirti Kisan Union.

More than 10,000 farmers from Punjab managed to cross over to Haryana at two border points in Fatehabad as well as the crossings at Kaithal and Ambala, Haryana DGP Manoj Yadav told *The Hindu*.

Swaraj India national president Yogendra Yadav, who was taken into preventive custody at Gurugram's Rathiwala village along with a dozen protesters around noon, said it was unfortunate that farmers were being deprived of their basic constitutional right to go to the national capital for protest on Constitution Day.

(With inputs from Ashok Kumar in Haryana, Vikas Vasudeva in Punjab, and Saurabh Trivedi and Priscilla Jebara in Delhi)

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 2, 4 & 10

No sipper to give Stan Swamy: NIA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The National Investigation Agency on Thursday told the special NIA court that it did not have a straw and sippy to give 83-year-old Father Stan Swamy.

Special NIA judge D.E. Kothalkar, presiding over the case, had directed the medical officer to reply to the requirement of a straw and sippy, along with winter clothes. The matter will be heard on December 4.

On November 6, Father Stan Swamy had filed a plea seeking permission to allow him a straw and sippy in Taloja Central Jail as he cannot hold a glass because he has Parkinson's disease.

On October 22, his medical bail was rejected by the same judge who relied upon the directions of the high-powered committee constituted to release undertrial prisoners during pandemic. The court said, "The accused is involved in commission of offence punishable under UAPA and cannot be said to be entitled for interim bail."

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CMs spar as Haryana denies entry to Punjab protesters

Amarinder accuses Manohar Lal of denying basic rights

VIKAS VASUDEVA

CHANDIGARH

The Chief Ministers of Punjab and Haryana were embroiled in a war of words as farmers from Punjab, marching to Delhi to protest against the Centre's recent agriculture laws, were denied entry into Haryana route.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh alleged that Haryana was forcibly stopping the marchers, which was condemnable and

also cautioned the BJP-led government against pushing the farmers to the brink.

'Undemocratic action' Capt. Amarinder issued a statement saying, "Why is M.L. Khattar govt. in Haryana stopping the farmers from moving to Delhi? The tyrannical use of brute force against peacefully protesting farmers is totally undemocratic and unconstitutional."

Terming it a "sad irony"

that on Constitution Day, the constitutional right of farmers to protest was being suppressed, the Chief Minister flayed the use of brute force by the Haryana police to stop the Punjab farmers from marching through the State.

Hitting back, Mr. Manohar Lal accused Capt. Amarinder of indulging in "cheap politics" and asked him to stop "inciting innocent farmers".

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

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Timings**DELHI**

FRIDAY, NOV. 27	RISE 06:54 SET 17:25
SATURDAY, NOV. 28	RISE 06:54 SET 17:25
SUNDAY, NOV. 29	RISE 06:55 SET 17:25
MONDAY, NOV. 30	RISE 06:56 SET 05:44

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	26	10
Safdarjung	26	10
Palam	24	14

Delhi Palam Today
25°C Haze/mist likely during morning. A pleasant day with few clouds. Hazeiness would prevail.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
24°C Drop in morning temperature. Dry weather with light cool winds and sunny sky. Pollution level to improve.

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File for 100-bed hospital pending with Delhi Minister for two years

Projects to clean the Yamuna and flyover also pending

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry's plan to construct a 100-bed hospital in Najafgarh is in a limbo, as the permission for cutting trees for the project has been pending with the Delhi Environment Minister's office for almost two years, according to documents accessed by *The Hindu*.

"The official concerned had recommended the cutting of trees and submitted the file to the Minister. It has been pending at the Minister's office since then," says a Delhi Govt. official.

The official concerned had recommended the cutting of trees and submitted the file to the Minister. It has been pending at the Minister's office since then

Alarming, it's not the only project that's pending. Permission to cut trees for several projects of the Central and State governments are pending with the Environment Minister for durations ranging from 60 days to almost two years. These include two waste water treatment plants (WWTP) to clean the Yamuna, flyover and railway overbridge by the Central government, besides work related to the Regional Rapid Transit System.

When contacted, a Delhi government spokesperson and the Minister's office refused to comment on the issue. The files pending before the Minister are projects where the officials have recommended to grant permission to cut trees. Remarkably, files for rejection of the application do not go to the Minister unless asked specifically.

As per rules, an applicant can go ahead and cut the trees if the government does

Air quality likely to improve today

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi and Noida improved to the 'very poor' category from 'severe' category and Gurugram's was in the 'poor' category, as per the Central Pollution Control Board data.

The air quality of Delhi is forecast to further improve on Friday.

Air pollution of the 'very poor' category can cause 'respiratory illness on prolonged exposure', according to the government.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR				
Delhi	302	Gurugram	289	
Ghaziabad	301	Faridabad	312	
Noida	301	Greater Noida	296	
Good	51-100	Satisfactory	51-100	
Poor	201-300	Very poor	301-400	>401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY				

Winds are forecast to pick up and improve the ventilation condition for the next two days. The AQI is forecast to improve towards the lower end of 'very poor' to the higher end of 'poor' for Friday. The

PUBLIC NOTICE/TENDER NOTICE					
CORRIGENDUM NOTICE-V					
SR. NO.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT/BOARD / CORP./AUTH	LETTER/MEMO, NO. & DATE	OLD REFERENCE/NOTICE/TENDER NO.	NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM	WEBSITE OF THE DEPARTMENT
1	Uttar Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam Limited	Ch-37/XEN/P-II/MM/02 dated 23.11.2020	Notice Inviting Tender No. 01/UH/XEN/P-II/MM/QHJ/2546 dated 30.06.2020	Date of submission extended upto 23.12.2020 (1300 hrs)	uhbv.n.org.in, etenders.hry.nic.in 8053423343

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Take a call on night curfew in Delhi: HC

Court also asks Delhi government to arrange for online deposit of fines to avoid cash transactions

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday told the AAP government to take a call "without losing further time" on whether night curfew is required to be imposed in the entire Capital or some parts of it, to contain the spread of COVID-19.

A Bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Subramonium Prasad issued the direction after the Centre submitted that States and Union Territories can now impose local restrictions, such as night curfew, based on their own assessment of the situation, as per its November 25 Guidelines for Surveillance, Containment and Caution.

The Centre, however, stated that any imposition of a local lockdown outside containment zones in State, district, sub-division or city-level will require prior consultation with the Central government.

Cashless fines
The High Court also asked the Delhi government to make arrangements for making "online deposit of fines to avoid cash transactions as far as possible". Recently, the penalty for not



A healthcare worker collecting a swab sample for COVID-19 test in New Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

wearing a face mask and violating other COVID-19 norms was increased to ₹2,000, which was ₹500 earlier.

The High Court also asked the Delhi government as to how it was ensuring that the cap of 50 guests at a marriage ceremony in Delhi is being strictly enforced.

House-to-house survey

During the hearing, the Delhi government stated that it was in the process of conducting house-to-house survey with the help of National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). The survey commenced on November 20 and as of November 24, about 57,89,799 persons have been surveyed.

"The said survey reveals that the highest of number of asymptomatic persons were found in South-West, East, North-West and West districts," the AAP government said.

The containment zones are also the highest in the said districts. There are 23,915 active cases in the containment zones, out of which the maximum number of cases are in West district followed by South-East, East, South-West and North," it added.

Between November 1 and 24, the total number of death in the Capital on account of COVID-19 infection was 2,049.

Responding to this, the High Court remarked,

"Even if the mortality rate in Delhi due to the infection is lower than some other cities in India, that can hardly be a solace to those who have lost a near and dear one".

The Delhi government said that the number of ICU beds in Delhi government hospitals here was 1,722, as on November 25. ICU beds in hospitals under the Central government have been increased from 89 as on June 01 to 567 as on November 23.

In the private sector, ICU beds have been increased from 11 as on June to 2,182 as on November 23.

A status report filed by the Delhi government also indicated that there are 13 COVID Care Centres, 6 COVID Health Centres and one Quarantine Facility Centre for COVID-19 patients or suspected cases.

The High Court, however, noted that out of the total 8,217 beds in 13 COVID Care Centres, 7,610 beds are vacant as of now. The occupancy is only of 607 beds.

The beds in the COVID Care Centre are permitted to be occupied on recommendations made by officers at the district level, upon visiting the residence of the

persons concerned and on finding that any family member is infected, thus making other family members susceptible but unable to isolate themselves within their home premises.

In the six COVID Health Centres, there are 882 bed facilities, out of which 619 are vacant. The Delhi government stated that there are adequate number of beds available in the COVID Care Centres and COVID Health Centres, as of now.

For convenience of the public, the information regarding availability of beds in the 33 private hospitals is made available on Delhi Corona App and on the website <http://delhifightscorona.in> on a real-time basis.

A helpline number, 1031, has been established by the Delhi government for people to seek information regarding COVID-19 infection, availability of beds in hospitals, etc.

The High Court directed the AAP government to furnish the data regarding the number of daily calls received on this helpline number from November 1 onwards and the number of queries answered satisfactorily.

Minister Gopal Rai tested positive on Thursday and was admitted to Max Hospital in Saket later in the day, according to the Minister's office.

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 5,475 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 5,51,262, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday.

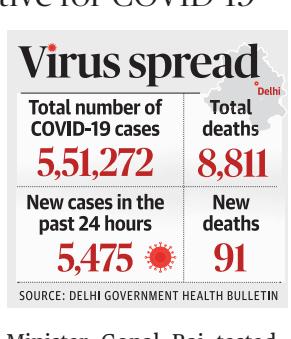
Also, 91 more deaths have been reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 8,811. Of the total cases, 5,03,717 people have recovered and there are 38,734 active cases.

About 86.23% ICU beds with ventilators and 72.3% ICU beds without ventilators were full by Thursday night, as per Delhi government data.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government has decided to expand door-to-door survey, officials said.

"Officials have been told to continue the survey for the rest of the district. It will take at least one month to do the survey in our district," a district official said.

By Wednesday, the survey was completed in "high-risk areas" under which more than 13.5 lakh households and about 57.5 lakh people were covered.



Minister Gopal Rai tested positive on Thursday and was admitted to Max Hospital in Saket later in the day, according to the Minister's office.

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Nearly 600 containment zones delineated in a week

City has 5,156 containment zones now

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Close to 600 containment zones were delineated in the Capital over the last week amid the ongoing third wave of the pandemic. The virus has so far claimed over 8,800 lives in Delhi.

Revenue Department records put the total number of containment zones till November 25 at 5,156 – an addition of 596, an average of 85 per day – since November 20 as the authorities concerned put into effect a strategy based on enhanced surveillance and strict enforcement in containment zones to contain the infection.

According to the Delhi government, the positivity rate in the city is currently 8.65% and the death rate 1.77%.

COVID-19 cases, according to Revenue Department records, surged between November 13 and November 20 with the delineation of containment zones along side. The maximum rise of 104 zones was recorded on Deepavali.

On Wednesday, Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal had directed strict monitoring of COVID-19 patients of home isolation and ensure their timely hospitalization in case of emergency.

Court terms COVID-19 figures in Delhi alarming

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday termed as alarming the number of COVID-19 cases in the Capital while hearing a plea challenging AAP government's decision to reserve 80% ICU beds for COVID-19 patients in 33 private hospitals here.

Justice Navin Chawla posted the case for further hearing on December 9.

The High Court was hear-

ing a plea by Association of Healthcare Providers seeking to quash the Delhi government's September 12 order on 80% reservation.

Additional Solicitor General Sanjay Jain, representing the Delhi government, said they were reviewing the situation periodically and it was last done by Delhi Disaster Management Authority especially with regard to Delhi by the Union Home Minister.

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GOVERNMENT OF					

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra Pradesh. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Chhattisgarh, Yanam, Rayalaseema, south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Mahe

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	29.9	13.8	Kozhikode	—	33.2	26.2
Ahmedabad	—	30.6	18.0	Kurnool	0.4	25.2	22.2
Aizawl	—	21.7	10.9	Lucknow	—	26.1	12.6
Allahabad	—	28.3	11.0	Madurai	0.2	33.0	23.6
Bangalore	1.8	22.4	19.6	Mangaluru	—	33.1	22.8
Bhopal	—	28.8	13.8	Mumbai	—	34.8	20.8
Bhubaneswar	—	27.0	18.2	Mysuru	—	27.0	19.4
Chandigarh	9.6	22.7	11.4	New Delhi	—	25.8	10.4
Chennai	113.9	25.5	22.4	Pondicherry	—	25.8	11.2
Coimbatore	—	30.5	23.0	Puri	—	30.9	26.8
Dehradoon	1.6	24.8	12.5	Puducherry	303.5	30.0	21.2
Gangtok	—	16.2	7.6	Pune	—	30.7	13.3
Goa	—	34.2	20.4	Raipur	—	28.6	15.8
Guwahati	—	29.3	19.3	Ranchi	—	28.4	11.6
Hubballi	—	29.0	19.0	Shillong	—	20.8	10.6
Hyderabad	0.5	25.7	19.5	Shimla	15.9	8.3	2.8
Imphal	—	23.6	8.4	Srinagar	0.6	5.1	2.3
Jaipur	—	24.2	15.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	32.8	27.5
Kochi	—	31.4	25.6	Tiruchi	—	19.1	26.6
Kohima	—	24.2	6.6	Vijayawada	10.1	23.0	21.4
Kolkata	—	26.4	16.9	Visakhapatnam	7.1	21.1	18.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES **SO₂** **NO_x** **CO** **PM_{2.5}** **PM₁₀** **CODE**

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	28	.85	49	.166	.153	—
Bangalore	—	.68	.87	.40	.41	—
Chennai	5	.6	22	.36	.36	—
Delhi	39	106	70	.272	.209	—
Hyderabad	.5	85	13	.103	.104	—
Kolkata	20	.21	.9	.297	.170	—
Lucknow	.4	112	.50	.413	.379	—
Mumbai	.5	.97	.85	.246	.204	—
Pune	.6	.90	.43	.164	.112	—
Visakhapatnam	—	22	—	—	—	—

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh recorded an average air quality index (AQI) score of 390 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 13

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

CM praises Mumbai Police on 12th anniversary of 26/11 attack

State government will take every step to strengthen the force, says Uddhav

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray paid tributes to the martyrs of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack on its 12th anniversary on Thursday. He praised the Mumbai Police and said the force needs to be so strong that terrorists do not dare to attack the State or its capital.

"Mumbai's police force performs an important duty of protecting citizens from any threat, be it that of a petty thief to that of a terrorist. We are committed to strengthening the force and will ensure that it gains strength," said Mr. Thackeray in his address while inaugurating the martyrs' gallery at the office of the Director General of Police at the Maharashtra Police headquarters

Mr. Thackeray said though the State is facing a financial crisis, his government will take every step to strengthen the police force. He said the idea behind the gallery was to make people aware of "what conditions the police personnel work in, what is the meaning of the police, what is their life". "Besides at the police head-



Mark of respect: Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray lays a wreath in tribute to the personnel who lost their lives in the 26/11 attack, at the State police headquarters on Thursday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

quarters, this idea can be implemented at various locations across the State," the Chief Minister said.

'War on multiple fronts'
State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh also emphasised on the efficiency of the Mumbai Police, which is battling Naxals, terrorists, criminals, and anti-social ele-

ments at the same time. "The force has been working 24x7 during the pandemic. The battle against the novel coronavirus is likely to continue till an unforeseen period. I am sure that the force will continue to perform its important role," he said.

The special focus on the efficiency and dedication of the Mumbai Police comes in

the backdrop of the recent attacks on the force by political parties and social media users. The attacks mounted especially after the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

The Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party accused the police of acting at the behest of the Maha Vikas Aghadi government and not probing the case professionally.

HC dismisses plea seeking CBI probe into Disha Salian's death

Anyone with information on the case can approach the police'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday dismissed a petition seeking a court-monitored CBI probe into the death of Disha Salian, former manager of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, and said "if any person has information in the case, he/she is free to approach the police".

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni observed that the petitioner, Delhi-based advocate Purnet Dhandha, had no locus standi to file such a plea.

"Who are you? If there is any foul play in the death of

this person Disha Salian, then her family can take appropriate steps as per law," the court said.

Salian, 28, died on June 8 after falling off the 14th floor of a residential building in Malad, following which the city police registered an Accidental Death Report.

In his petition, Mr. Dhandha sought that the case be transferred to the CBI and the probe monitored by the court. The HC, in its order, said the Mumbai Police on August 5 issued a press note saying if any person has any information pertaining to the death, then he or she shall approach the police.

"There is nothing on record to show that the petitioner has approached the police. The petitioner has, in fact, directly approached the Supreme Court," the court said.

Salian, 28, died on June 8 after falling off the 14th floor of a residential building in Malad, following which the city police registered an Accidental Death Report.

The petitioner's advocate, Vineet Dhandha, argued that there were several media reports insinuating that Salian was murdered and the police had closed the case without carrying out a proper investigation.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

The police on Thursday claimed to have unearthed a major scam in Nagpur and arrested 11 people for allegedly duping over 25,000 investors from different States to invest ₹3,000 for getting its membership," he said.

Each investor would get ₹730 per month as commission for adding three members. The scammers floated several such schemes in 2020 and duped more than 25,000 investors not only in Maharashtra, but also in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and some other States," the official added.

"After duping the investors of ₹100 crore, the fraudsters hid some of the cash at different locations. One such place was traced in Amravati, from where ₹48 lakh were recovered from a house of Gurudeep's relative. The cash was buried and was recovered after digging a two-foot-deep pit," he said.

The police have so far recovered ₹1.03 crore cash from Mr. Gurudeep and his accomplices, the DCP said.

Over 25,000 people duped through chain marketing schemes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

Metro Vision Buildcon company in Nagpur in 2015 without any permission from the authorities. They devised a plan for chain marketing, under which people asked to invest ₹3,000 for getting its membership," he said.

Each investor would get ₹730 per month as commission for adding three members. The scammers floated several such schemes in 2020 and duped more than 25,000 investors not only in Maharashtra, but also in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and some other States," the official added.

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Storm warnings

Governments can handle cyclones better by investing in town planning and infrastructure

Cyclone Nivar raised fears of another epic disaster for millions of coastal residents in the south, but its passage overland near Puducherry early on November 26 was less destructive than anticipated. The reported loss of at least three lives is a relatively low toll for such a large-scale weather system, although property and agriculture have suffered considerable damage from the fierce winds and massive volume of rain it dumped in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Citizens and the government were fearful of a deluge that could be a repeat of the 2015 flood – which killed a few hundred people – and they overcame COVID-19 fatigue to prepare for the worst. There was also a welcome emphasis on periodic alerts and warnings. The IMD has been getting better at forecasting slow-moving, linear tropical cyclones in the Bay of Bengal, and multiple satellites now provide cyclone data. The deployment of over two dozen NDRF teams and disaster management equipment along the coast reassured civic agencies. Not everyone escaped Nivar with a minor penalty, however, and for suburban Chennai, the peak one-day rainfall of 31 cm in Tambaram wrought destruction mirroring what happened five years ago; smaller inland towns have also suffered inundation and severe losses. The aftermath now presents an opportunity to make a full assessment not just for distribution of relief but also to understand the impacts of extreme monsoon weather.

The Tamil Nadu government has shown alacrity in handling the acute challenge of a severe weather event, which has occurred in the run-up to the Assembly election due early next year. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami made field visits, and in parallel, the DMK, as the lead Opposition, mounted its own relief operations. What must worry the two major parties is that periodic papering of the cracks does not offer a sustainable solution to Chennai's evident civic decay. There is extensive documentation on the loss of its floodplains, lakes and peri-urban wetlands to encroachment, a key factor that is exacerbating monsoon flooding. This land grab is made possible by the benign indulgence of successive governments. What is more, governments have not shown the rigour to collect and publish data on annual flooding patterns, and measure the peak flows in the neglected rivers and canals to plan remedies. Appalling indifference to land use norms has spawned an amorphous housing sector characterised by inflated, speculative prices but no foundation of civic infrastructure. To keep Tamil Nadu competitive, governments and local bodies should hardwire urban planning and invest heavily for a future of frequent disruptive weather.

Policing faith

Anti-conversion laws that bar intermarriages will lead to the path of social regression

The proposed Uttar Pradesh ordinance seeking to prohibit "unlawful" religious conversions represents a regressive march towards unacceptable medievalism and a reprehensible zeal to police the private lives and beliefs of citizens. Cleared for promulgation by the Governor, it does not use the Islamophobic term that votaries of Hindutva have been bandying about to denote certain inter-faith marriages, but it is clearly targeted at the idea. It eschews the phrase "freedom of religion" that several other anti-conversion laws in other States have employed to title their laws. However, apparently inspired by similar legislation in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, it has sought to include "alluring into marriage" as an additional ground for declaring an instance of religious conversion as illegal, apart from the use of "force, coercion, undue influence and deceit". The U.P. proposal envisages prison terms, from one to five years in general, three to five years for conversions involving women and SC/ST members, and adds a possible three to 10-year jail term for "mass conversion". There is also a prior declaration provision on an intended conversion. These suggestions were contained in a report of the Uttar Pradesh State Law Commission submitted last year. While the panel had suggested that conversion solely for marriage should be declared null and void, the State's note on the ordinance says it provides for invalidation of marriages solemnised solely for conversion.

While upholding the validity of the Freedom of Religion Act of Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, in *Stanislaus* (1977), the Supreme Court had held that the "right to propagate" a religion did not include the "right to convert". However, those early laws did not bar conversions by marriage. The Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and the proposed U.P. law would be vulnerable on that score. After the Court's "right to privacy" judgment, and the Shafin Jahan-Hadiya case (2018), it would be no more constitutional to use "marriage" as a ground for prohibiting conversion, as it involves the rights of privacy, choice and marital freedom. Further, all such previous laws were seen as "public order" legislation – the claim is that "forced" or "fraudulent" conversions lead to disturbance of order. An inter-faith marriage, by itself, is unlikely to be seen by the courts as an event impinging on public order. Therefore, making marriage *simpliciter* a ground for rendering conversion illegal may not survive judicial scrutiny. Probably to avoid this lacuna, the U.P. ordinance uses the term "allurement by marriage", but its potential for misuse is the same. Further, the provision on mandatory prior declaration of an intent to convert is similar to the one struck down by the Himachal Pradesh High Court in 2012 as violating the right to keep one's faith a secret. It is disconcerting that several States are keen to join this bandwagon against inter-marriages despite its potential for deepening social discord and communal divides.

A clear reading of the Ayurveda surgery move

India needs its Ayurveda graduates, including surgeons, to improve the common man's access to decent health care



SANJAY NAGRAL

In 2014, while speaking at the inauguration of a hospital in Mumbai, Prime Minister Narendra Modi extolled the virtues of India's medical heritage. 'How else would Shiva have grafted an elephant head on Ganesha after having beheaded the boy?' he asked to thunderous applause from an audience of senior doctors and very important persons. Shiva as a surgeon is of course mythology. But we know about Sushruta and his surgical dexterity at a time when the world had not yet woken up to the art and the science of surgery. There are detailed descriptions in the *Sushruta Samhita*, the ancient Sanskrit text on medicine and surgery, of procedures such as rhinoplasty where the nose is reconstructed with tissue from the cheek. It was thousands of years later that modern plastic surgeons described this procedure.

Response to notification

Last week, on November 20, a *Gazette of India* notification (<https://bit.ly/3m8txl>) by the Central Council of Indian Medicine – a statutory body under the Indian Medicine Central Council Act, and "which regulates the Indian Medical systems of Ayurveda, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Unani Medicine" – identifying surgical procedures that can be performed by post-graduate Ayurvedic doctors in *Shalya* (surgery) has stirred up a hornet's nest.

Many of the reactions are on predictable lines. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has written a curious self-flagellating letter to the Prime Minister. Allopathic surgeon colleagues are outraged. Social media and WhatsApp groups are abuzz with alarmist responses. Some have portrayed doomsday scenarios, 'where our children will

be operated' by half-baked 'Ayurvedic doctors' in the future.

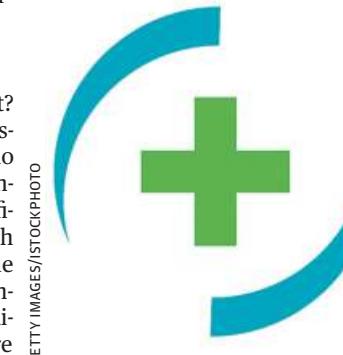
After 1947, what the state did

What is the overexcitement about? It is useful to go back a bit into history to understand the imbroglio better. After Independence, the Indian state was faced with the difficult task of accommodating both the ascendant modern medicine brought in by the British and India's traditional systems of medicine, notably Ayurveda. There were two options. One was to take the best from all systems and integrate them into one cohesive science. This was possible but not easy as the systems have certain incompatible differences of approach.

Faced with this vexing question, the state attempted everything. It patronised and encouraged formal medical education in modern medicine as well as in other traditional systems. For a brief period there actually existed 'integrated' courses, wherein both Ayurveda and Modern medicine were taught to students. But these withered away partly due to opposition from purists in Ayurveda who were outraged by the 'dilution' of their science.

Thus, the degree in Ayurvedic medicine became largely an Ayurveda course. However, it was necessary out of a practical career compulsion to teach the basics of modern medicine to these graduates. They had to survive in the medical market, which by that time was the dominant form of health care in India. Most Ayurvedic graduates entered general practice. More importantly, several of them went on to work in rural and under-served areas. Some set up nursing homes. In rural Maharashtra, several nursing homes were run by integrated graduates.

In Chiplun in the Konkan, for instance, the only nursing homes offering emergency obstetric and surgical services were run by non-allopathic graduates. In health care, availability is often more important than quality, specialisation and such extravagant ideas.



Handling an identity crisis

As modern medicine made rapid strides, Ayurvedic graduates experienced an identity crisis. Many of them had joined the course not for the love of Ayurveda but to get a degree with the honorific 'Dr.' which gave them upward mobility, social status and even value in the marriage market. They could not but practise allopathy which most of them do. And became an important cog in the modern medicine machine. Thus, they became resident doctors, intensive care duty doctors and operation theatre assistant surgeons. They picked up skills, were diligent and unlike their counterparts in MBBS, were not constantly distracted by thoughts of post graduation and entrance exams.

In an instance from a hospital, the Ayurvedic surgical assistant employed there closes the abdomen better than new trainees. In Mumbai, there is an instance of a homoeopathic graduate manning and training others on the extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, or ECMO, a complex heart lung machine in the largest unit used for critically-ill COVID-19 patients. In Maharashtra, the '108' emergency response ambulance service is manned by non-MBBS doctors. During COVID-19, a large number of the quarantine centres were manned by these doctors. Incidentally, they work for less pay which allows hospitals to control costs and even make profits. All this is not a rationalisation but an explanation which we ought to know.

Now to the idea of Ayurvedic surgeons. In an effort to develop postgraduate programmes, Ayurveda medical colleges developed one in "Shalya" or "surgery". This is awkward as unlike the vast pharmacopeia, there is really nothing called Ayurvedic surgery. A procedure called 'Kshar Sutra' used for anal fistula was described in Ayurveda texts and has been incorporated in modern medicine. In fact the Indian Council of Medical Research conducted a trial on this many years ago. To my knowledge, "Kshar Sutra" is the only substantive contribution.

Most Ayurvedic medical colleges run hospitals. In some areas, theirs is the only viable and equipped hospital. I am aware, for example, of the phenomenal work done by a surgeon in an Ayurvedic hospital in South Konkan who served the community for many years and at very low cost. Even today, even when there are several MS qualified surgeons, there is hardly a patient in this area who agrees for surgery unless they have his opinion. The Mumbai Municipal Corporation has appointed Ayurvedic surgeons to many of their hospitals, . but I have not seen them perform any surgery.

Procedures and complexities

The controversial notification, issued on November 20 – called the Indian Medicine Central Council (Post Graduate Ayurveda Education) Amendment Regulations, 2020 – by the Central Council of Indian Medicine authorises an MS (Ayurved) Shalya Tantra, or General Surgery postgraduate degree holder on completion of his course to perform 58 surgical procedures. Some of the procedures in the list are rather complicated. For example, I would not even trust a modern surgical postgraduate to perform a removal of the gallbladder called cholecystectomy independently unless they have assisted or been taken through at least 100 odd procedures. For Ayurvedic surgeons to do it is an obvious overkill. It has

been listed as "*PittashariNirharan-chchedam*" in the notification.

A silver lining

But there are ways to look at the move beyond just outrage and alarmist social media tropes. Ayurveda graduates including surgeons are a large workforce in search of an identity. India needs them. If they are creatively and properly trained, they can play important roles in our health-care system. In fact as we have seen in certain situations, they already do. On site or ambulance care of trauma victims is in a shambles in India. It is effectively delivered by trained paramedics in many countries. Given the right training, pay and identity, Ayurvedic surgeons can be trained to strengthen this service and save hundreds of lives.

AYUSH, or Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy, is a priority area for the present government. The revival of Indian medicine fits well into a certain narrative. Be that as it may, the IMA in its opposition to such moves needs to be precise and constructive. Currently, its response is like faux chest thumping of a guild of insecure professionals. A former office-bearer of the IMA has been active on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic invoking *Rahu Ketu* in the war against the novel coronavirus. If the IMA is defending science, it needs to publicly oppose such opportunism also. Pseudoscience is not a preserve of Indian medicine.

If the noise is a turf war between an overambitious Ayurveda establishment on the one hand and modern medicine with a siege mentality on the other, it is a superfluous distraction which will hopefully die down. But if it is a pointer to an urgently needed and serious discussion about utilising India's large workforce of non-MBBS doctors to improve access to decent health care for our ordinary citizens, then it is well worth our time.

Dr. Sanjay Nagral is a surgeon and writer from Mumbai

Rein in the vaccine nationalism, the profiteering

The WTO has a role in getting pharma firms and countries to treat vaccines and life-saving medicines as a public good



K.R. ANTONY

It is illegal to hoard, for black marketing, essential goods in drought-affected areas. Overcharging of commodities and services during any natural disaster is always a scandal. It is a crime against humanity to make a profit during any human tragedy. On the contrary, there is (and should be) empathy and concern about human suffering. Such solidarity is a recognition of the need to: prevent further damage and destruction, rescue and evacuate affected people to safer zones, and salvage belongings and meet their minimal survival needs. For this nobody is charged. Instead, it is considered as relief work which comes out profusely as charity, a humane gesture.

Business out of suffering

The COVID-19 pandemic is also a human tragedy and needs global solidarity. It is definitely not a time to be doing business and making a fast buck. Making enormous profit out of a human tragedy is shameful. Unfortunately, such a sense of shame is missing in the international trade market. When economies crumbled in many countries, e-commerce and gadget-based gaming business boomed. And in the novel coronavirus pandemic, there are numerous examples of companies having made enormous profits in the supply of personal protective equipment and kits and ventilators.

In a liberalised economy, there

is a shocking silence in the global market trying to do business out of human suffering. Business lies in selling technologies around COVID-19, the diagnostics, drugs and vaccine candidates. This is where organisations of the United Nations and global networks for people should come together in one voice. The World Health Assembly, in May 2020, in cognisance of the obstacles to equitable access to COVID-19 technologies such as vaccines, diagnostics, medicines, PPE kits and machines, set up mechanisms to counter it. When the entire global population, estimated to be nearly eight billion people, is in need of a vaccine (still being tested and yet to be approved) then production at full capacity and supply to every country will take time.

Mechanisms that can help

We cannot allow the rich and the strong to grab everything first. The advance purchase agreements that some countries have negotiated with pharmaceutical companies exemplify such adverse trends. Such vaccine nationalism undermines equitable access to vaccines. There has to be prioritisation for high-risk groups in all countries, especially in the least developed, low- and middle-income nations. That framework has to be accepted by the global community without dispute. In this, the COVAX partnership is a mechanism for ensuring that.

GAVI, or the Global Alliance for Vaccine Initiative, was in existence during the pre-COVID-19 period to ensure the pooled procurement and equitable supply of life-saving vaccines to low- and middle-income countries. It has been roped in for the COVID-19 vaccine too.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreye-



sus, the World Health Organization Director General, on June 13, exhorted member countries to treat COVID-19 technologies as a "public good". Obviously it fell on deaf ears as far as pharmaceutical companies were concerned. WHO's idea of a "voluntary pool to collect patent rights, regulatory test data, and other information that could be shared for developing COVID-19 therapies, vaccines, and diagnostics" was met with criticism. The CEO of Pfizer even qualified this as, "... I think it's nonsense, and... it's also dangerous."

Governments have a part

A public good is a common property of the nation and such goods are not excludable or there should not be any rivalries in dealing with it. If it is a public good, governments must step in to regulate its development, innovation, manufacture, sale, and supply ultimately to the public. If there is public financing for technology development, there is no scope for grant of patent protection. A public good cannot be submitted to the vagaries of market fluctuations of pricing dependent on demand-supply dynamics. Governments should be the custodian of public goods.

If such an idealistic outcome does not materialise based on basic human rights for availability of accessible and affordable health

care, then some regulation mandated by the UN General Assembly must be thought of.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) had raised concern over public health with regard to the non-availability of patented drugs in sufficient quantity, and at affordable prices. Through the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the Doha Ministerial Conference declaration 2001, the WTO made provisions for compulsory licensing. This is a provision where the government intervenes when patent clauses regarding availability, reasonable pricing, local production and technology transfer are not met by the patent holder. Compulsory licensing is an "involuntary contract" issued by the national government between a "willing buyer" or local manufacturer and an "unwilling seller" or patent holder foreign company. Thailand and Brazil have done this. India utilised this provision for the first time on March 9, 2012 to grant licence to Natco Pharma Hyderabad against the will of patent owner Bayer, Germany, to manufacture Sorafenib tosylate, a life-saving anti-cancer drug for kidney and liver tumours, with 97% cost reduction (<https://bit.ly/368EW3S>). It is sold by Bayer under the brand name, Nexavar. This is an extreme step available with India if rich countries go for advance purchase and hoarding of a COVID-19 vaccine produced in India by multinational pharma companies and deny India's supply needs.

COVID-19 vaccine candidates are still in Phase 3 trials; regulatory approval and patent are still awaited. So, failure to comply with

a chance to act

Seizing the opportunity of the WTO itself mapping out key trade issues arising out of COVID-19 vaccine and fostering dialogue, India and South Africa jointly sent out a communication, on October 2, 2020 to the IPR Council of the WTO for a waiver of the protection of copyright, design, trademarks and patent on COVID-19 related technologies including vaccines. It is claimed that India's submission has the support of 43 members of the African group and 36 members of Least Developed countries group apart from South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation countries, Indonesia, Venezuela and Nicaragua. If this is decided favourably as a special case considering the unprecedented impact of the pandemic, it will set a precedent. A UN organisation such as the WTO can wield influence on member-nations to forgo trade profits for a humanitarian cause. Global campaigns through the media and civil society organisations can garner enough momentum to exert pressure on TRIPS. This is a pragmatic step for the time being. But having nothing less than vaccines and life-saving medicines being treated as a public good must definitely be the long-term goal.

Dr. K.R. Antony is a public health consultant at Kochi and an independent monitor for the National Health Mission. The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

'Nivar' and after

It is a case of a job well done by the India Meteorological Department for issuing frequent and detailed bulletins, with precise details such as the speed and direction of cyclone 'Nivar', and aiding the governments of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry in taking the necessary precautionary measures to

escape the fury of nature. Though water release from some of Chennai city's reservoirs was regulated incrementally in line with the inflow, the inundation in some areas was the only unfortunate event. The main problem in Chennai is the absence of a proper storm water drainage system. If there is one, it is not definitely

desited well before extreme weather events and the monsoon. With cyclones now a fairly regular feature between October to December, town planning officials, with the expertise of hydrologists, ought to 'estimate' the quantity of rain water that might fall and make suggestions for a quick-drain system. There also

needs to be a rainwater grid to feed water from the city to a reservoir outside city limits. Another suggestion, but expensive, would be to hydraulically 'lift' houses in low-lying areas.

A. JAINULABDEEN,
Chennai

Diego Maradona

In the passing of Diego Maradona, the world has

lost one of its finest footballers. His sublime skills, weaving runs and inch perfect passes took Argentina to the pinnacle of football glory. He also struck a chord with his rags to riches life story. For most sports aficionados, deciding the GOAT of any sport is always a delicious pastime. In my opinion, the GOAT of any

sport is also decided by how they conduct themselves off the field. Perhaps it is here that Maradona loses out on the title and Pele noses ahead. Going purely by his football skills, world football is the poorer in his passing.

V.V. KOUSHIK,
Chennai

To read more letters online, scan the QR code



Are tougher laws the answer to check online abuse?

PARLEY

There is a strong and wide gamut of laws, but implementation is poor in many cases

Following widespread criticism, the Kerala government has decided to withdraw an Ordinance that gives unbridled powers to the police to arrest anyone expressing or disseminating any matter that it deems defamatory. However, the move to introduce such a law in the first place shows that State governments believe that existing laws are not adequate to deal with social media abuse. To what extent is this true? Vrinda Bhandari and Rishab Bailey discuss this question in a conversation moderated by Jayant Sriram. Edited excerpts:

The principal argument of the Kerala government in bringing this law was that the Central government had not brought in legislation yet to replace the revoked Section 66A, and that had left the police hamstrung in effectively dealing with social media abuse and cyber crime. Are there effective laws to deal with these issues and is it then a question of implementation being weak?

Vrinda Bhandari: I think the Kerala experience shows a belief that many State governments have, that the existing laws are inadequate. But our existing laws are actually adequate. We have the Indian Penal Code (IPC) that criminalises speech that is obscene, defamatory, that insults the modesty of women and intrudes upon her privacy. It punishes anonymous criminal intimidation, it punishes voyeurism, it punishes digitally enabled stalking, hate speech, and even non-consensual sharing of sexual images online. In addition to that, you have the Information Technology Act of 2000 that punishes speech that is obscene. The IT Act also places obligations on intermediaries, where intermediaries have a duty of due diligence; they have to take down content based on a request by the government or a court order. This obligation is actually very broadly worded – any information that is grossly harmful, harassing, blasphemous, defamatory, obscene, pornographic, paedophilic, libellous, invasive of another's privacy, hateful, or racially or ethnically objectionable, dis-

paraging, etc. As you can see, there is a strong and wide gamut of laws that covers all of these offences.

Yet, you do have States which believe that the laws are inadequate. Apart from Kerala, you have Chhattisgarh, for instance, which recently brought in an amendment to criminalise sexual harassment online. This looked at criminalising "obscene, lewd, filthy or indecent comments online". And we saw this law being misused against Mohammad Zubair, the Alt News co-founder.

State governments must also be focused on improving the criminal justice system in order to make it easier for women to be able to access the system to make complaints, and for the police to be able to prosecute the complaints properly.

Rishab Bailey: There is no doubt that there is a problem with hate speech in the online space. This is something that's been discussed at various levels of government. In fact, in 2017, the Law Commission of India recommended that two new provisions be introduced to the IPC to specifically deal with online hate speech. The Central government has also initiated consultations on amendments to the IT Act. One of the issues being taken up in this context is likely to be the scope of offences under the Act; in particular, whether Section 66A needs to be replaced with a better drafted provision.

Of course, putting in place arbitrary or poorly defined offences is really not going to help the situation. So, in the Kerala example, rather than rush into making a new law that is likely to be struck down by the courts, it might have been better if the government had actually outlined the specific problem and conducted more transparent consultations with the stakeholders involved to try and figure out solutions.

Enforcement and implementation of existing laws is not very good. It's common knowledge that it's generally not very easy for victims or individuals to file and proceed with complaints. Given the massive usage of the Internet in India, the huge amounts of hate speech online or what you and I



would normally recognise as hate speech, there is a really low number of cyber crimes as per the NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) data. In 2017, for example, there were only about 21,000 cases in India, which is a huge jump from the 12,000 odd cases in 2016. But that still appears to be a fairly low number in the Indian context.

I want to take you back a little. What does the legal landscape on regulation of content online look like post the famous Supreme Court judgment of 2015 that struck down 66A of the IT Act? Has there been any significant legislation or guidelines on grievance redressal or removal of offensive content and do these work effectively?

RB: To answer your question quite simply, there hasn't been any single legislation that deals with online content, though, as Vrinda mentioned, there have been some States that have put in place amendments to the IPC. What a lot of the public discussion has focused on is how intermediaries need to do more to make the Internet a safer place. To this end, there have been some efforts to amend existing legal frameworks. Two are worth mentioning. The first was a Private Member's bill, which was introduced in Parliament by the Congress' Arunachal East MP, Ninong Ering. It was called the Social Media Accountability Bill and it sought to impose a range of

Rather than rush into making a new law that is likely to be struck down by the courts, it might have been better if the government had actually outlined the specific problem and conducted more transparent consultations with the stakeholders involved to try and figure out solutions.

RISHAB BAILEY

obligations on social media platforms, and also create a new regulator to oversee the space. However, the Bill wasn't actually taken up by Parliament.

Then there were proposed changes to the intermediaries rules under the IT Act that were released to the public in December 2018. They lay down the due diligence guidelines that intermediaries need to follow in order to not face prosecution for illegal content being shared by users on their platforms.

These amendments basically sought to increase the number of obligations on intermediaries of all types, so they would be required to use automated tools to filter illegal content and would also be required to ensure the liability of all the users and so on. The draft faced a lot of criticism from civil society and industry due to the possible chilling effects on free speech, the problems associated with automated filtering of content, and the cost to plat-

forms. So, no new rules have as yet been announced by the government despite the fact that we keep hearing that this may be done any time.

In the absence of any changes in the legislative structure, courts and governments have largely resorted to blocking content or forcing intermediaries to take steps to limit the spread of illegal content. You might remember, for example, how the Madras High Court threatened to ban TikTok because it was supposedly enabling the circulation of obscene content. It's also important to remember that the government from time to time issues directions, which has happened most recently in the context of WhatsApp, where they have been asked to take certain steps pertaining to illegal content on their platform. You also have an independent regulator, like the Election Commission, which has taken some steps in the context of electorally sensitive content.

What kind of precedent will this set, given that part of the motivation for this law was reportedly a surge in criticism of the Kerala government? Can other States also argue that what has followed 66A is still too transient and in the realm of proposal and so they need new laws?

VB: I think though it might have been politically motivated, one praiseworthy fact about the Kerala government is that it backtracked once there was significant criticism, and that is very rare to see. I hope that may give some cause of concern to other States before they rush to implement some laws, or they recognise that there are possibilities of misuse and will try to tailor the laws narrowly. I think one thing we want to be clear on is if a law is worded in a manner that is so broad that just does not allow any kind of reasonable interpretation and can be completely and patently subject to different interpretations, such a law will not stand. So, I think, yes, the fact that the Kerala government took this step may mean that other States may also take this up. Like I said before, Chhattisgarh has already passed an amendment using similarly broad language to criminalise online sexual harassment and I would argue that this law has already been misused. But I would hope

that the Kerala government's most recent move of withdrawing the Ordinance will make other States stop and think before they pass such laws, or have proper public consultation.

RB: The Kerala government has actually set a good precedent, not just for the States, but also for the Central government. Governments can actually afford to be responsive to criticism and take back laws that face significant public opposition.

Like the Kerala government using the Police Act, are there other State laws that governments can adapt to content online? Is the multiplicity of such laws a problem in this case?

RB: I wouldn't say that it's a problem as such, because our Constitution does recognise that States can make criminal law. What could be problematic is if you have a variety of laws being passed to deal with the same issue which might lead to inconsistency. Second, very often State amendments are not going to get public attention in the same way that Central laws do. For example, numerous States have amended laws such as the Goondas Act to apply these to the digital space. However, there's very little discussion on how exactly these laws are actually being implemented.

VB: The interesting point with regard to State laws is that in Shreya Singhal, which struck down Section 66A, the same judgment also struck down Section 118(d) of the Kerala Police Act which had similar provisions to Section 66A. The court said that Section 118(d) is also vaguely worded and over-broad and adopted a similar analysis to 66A.

This may be a purely hypothetical conjecture on my part, but I think one of the reasons that this Kerala example became so big, the reason it received a lot of media attention is because it was Kerala that was doing it, and it was just a combination of factors that led to this example being discussed. And I think that's why the government also backtracked, whereas I think in many cases, when amendments are made, especially State-level amendments, they don't get that kind of national attention.



Vrinda Bhandari
is a litigating lawyer in Delhi. She is Of-Counsel for the Internet Freedom Foundation, and specialises in the field of digital rights, technology, and privacy



Rishab Bailey
is a lawyer working with the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, Delhi, and works on issues such as data governance, privacy and surveillance, online content regulation and intermediary liability



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

Putting trade ties on a new footing

The future looks bright for U.S.-India trade, but it may not be any easier

MARK LINSCOTT

It goes without saying that the Joe Biden administration will be a far cry from what we have seen over the last four years. This will include its trade policies, although it may not be a radical departure altogether from the Trump administration. Certainly, there will be a more constructive stance on multilateral issues in the World Trade Organization (WTO). That should be welcome, as the Trump administration went out of its way in seriously undermining WTO institutions when the organisation was already on the ropes, although admittedly in need of reform and new direction. In bilateral trade policies, the Biden administration is likely to emphasise enforcement, and that will not differ so much, although it is less likely to engage in unilateral tariff increases and more likely to pursue remedies in the WTO.

For India, what might this mean? The Trump administration appeared to be interested in prioritising the trade relationship, as it pursued an aggressive approach to resolve market access concerns through threats to eliminate India's benefits under the Generalized System of Preferences programme. However, the follow-through was weak. The administration was on the brink of concluding a historic bilateral trade deal, yet it lost focus. Will the Biden administration resume these negotiations? Will it pursue new avenues for better aligning the trade relationship with the growing strategic one? Or will it revert to the approaches of previous administrations in putting trade issues with India on the back burner?

Five likely developments
I see five likely dynamics that could build on the early efforts of the Trump administration to raise the profile of U.S.-India work on trade but also mark substantial departures from the circumstances of the last four years. One, it is clear that Mr. Biden plans to focus on domestic concerns first, particularly in implementing a coherent COVID-19 policy. There may be trade aspects to some of these efforts, but they may have limited early relevance for a future U.S.-India trade policy.

Two, as it turns to trade policy, the

Biden administration is not likely to place India among its top few priorities. A first question is whether it should prioritise concluding Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations with the U.K. in April before the Trade Promotion Authority expires. Other top priorities will include fixing pending WTO issues, resolving the Airbus-Boeing dispute with the European Union, and of course formulating its approach with China, such as finding alternatives to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership to set new global standards that address China's practices. That said, India should be among the priorities at the next level down.

Three, the trade deal still pending with the Trump administration remains compelling. There could be an early opportunity to conclude these negotiations and for the Biden administration to get credit. Looking ahead, a bilateral deal will not lead to serious consideration of FTA negotiations any time soon. But this first trade agreement could pave the way for later additional small agreements.

Four, the existing Trade Policy Forum (TPF) met only once over the last four years, as negotiations on a trade deal sucked all the air out of the room. It seems likely that the Biden administration will see the TPF's value as a venue for more regular discussions on a range of trade issues.

Finally, a reinvigorated TPF will present new opportunities for the two countries to take up a range of cutting-edge trade issues that will be critical in determining whether the U.S. and India can converge more over time or will drift further apart. These include digital trade issues, intellectual property rights and approaches to nurturing innovation, better health sector alignment, and more regular regulatory work on science-based agricultural policies.

The future looks bright for U.S.-India trade under a Biden administration, but that does not mean it will be any easier. It will be critical for leadership on both sides to commit to strong efforts to put the trade relationship on a new footing, which will have to involve a 'can-do' attitude to solving problems.

Mark Linscott is Senior Fellow at The Atlantic Council and former senior U.S. trade official



NOTEBOOK

The false comfort of a perfectly organised election

The messy workings of a functioning democracy might not be the worst thing

ANANTH KRISHNAN

It was only a little past seven on a March morning in Beijing. But by the time I arrived at the Great Hall of the People, the massive structure near Tiananmen Square where China's leaders convene every year, a line of journalists were already snaking through the street all the way to the corner. It was a line so long that I couldn't even see the building's columned entrance ("Give me the name of your contractor," Barack Obama joked to an expressionless Hu Jintao when told this edifice was built in a year).

At the front of the line was a tired-looking cameraman for Reuters, who had been waiting in sub-zero temperatures since three in the morning for the honour of being first. Such was the media interest in China's presidential election – no matter that it was, as the Chinese State media called it without a hint of irony, a

"one candidate election".

This was an election with a foregone conclusion that had been decided six years before that spring day in Beijing in 2013, in a behind-closed-doors Communist Party Congress that had anointed Xi Jinping as Mr. Hu's successor as Party General Secretary. The next Party Congress, in November 2012, had confirmed Mr. Xi as the Party's next leader and as head of the Central Military Commission.

The meeting of Parliament, four months on, may have been merely to rubber-stamp Mr. Xi donning his third (and least important) crown, as President, yet it was striking that such an elaborate procedure was being followed to give the entire process the pre-eminence of authenticity.

Covering the carefully choreographed ascension of Mr. Xi that year came to mind as I followed, this November, the long-drawn-out election in America, all

the chaos (mostly thanks to an incumbent who seems to thrive on it), and, to my mind, the somewhat over-the-top hand-wringing about how the most powerful country couldn't get its act together to smoothly choose its next leader. No matter that it had, in the middle of a pandemic, been able to ensure that more than 150 million people were able to cast their vote – not that it stopped the losing incumbent, Donald Trump, from inventing allegations of widespread fraud that did not take place and demanding a recount, claims that the U.S. courts, so far, do not appear to be taking very seriously.

Back at the Great Hall, we filed in a few minutes before the voting began, making our way to seats in the nosebleed section of the cavernous hall reserved for print media. A ballot box in bright red was placed on the stage, and one by one, the 2,956 Par-

ty-chosen delegates of the National People's Congress marched in to cast their vote for the leader of their Party in an election that had no other candidate.

The reporters then trooped out, before being called back in for the result: 2,952 for, one against, and three abstentions. It was a victory for Mr. Xi with 99.86% of the vote. The one vote against was the biggest talking point, leading some Chinese reporters to joke if it had come from Mr. Xi himself.

There were no calls for recounts, legal challenges or other such messiness at the Great Hall (not that a legal challenge would get very far as the courts are also controlled by the Party). The inevitably messy workings of a functioning democracy might not necessarily be the worst thing, I learnt, when covering the most perfectly organised election I had ever witnessed on a cold spring morning in Beijing.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 27, 1970

Dearth of suitable films for children

Paucity of suitable films for children is stated to have greatly affected the growth of the Children's Film Movement in the country, particularly in the South. More than a decade ago, when it was realised that in India cinema was a powerful medium for educating children and enlarging their vision, plans were initiated to establish one Children's Theatre in each district in the country. These theatres were meant to screen films produced exclusively for children. Promptly, to begin with, in almost every State headquarters, a Children's Theatre sprang up. But the early enthusiasm soon waned due to non-availability of suitable films to be screened even in the few Children's Theatres, according to an official closely connected with the Children's Film Movement. The dearth of children's films was attributed by him to the 'lack of will' on the part of the Government-sponsored Children's Film Society, entrusted with production of suitable films since no private person would be interested in producing such films, which had no commercial value.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO NOV. 27, 1920

The next Viceroy

It seems fairly certain that Lord Willingdon is to be the next Viceroy. Everyone who recognises His Excellency's good heartedness and genuine liberalism will also have to admit that in selecting him for a most arduous office in these testing days England is not giving to India even of her second best, whereas the need is for a first rate statesman.

The "Bombay Chronicle" writes: - There is a persistent rumour in a section of the British Press that Lord Willingdon is to succeed Lord Chelmsford as Viceroy of India. The "Evening News", the "Observer" and "The Times" all point out that the final choice will fall on Lord Willingdon, the last named mentioning his continuous service in India and wide experience of Indian affairs. India has to look at these discussions with her eyes wide open, but without the power to raise her voice against an appointment or suggestion. Evidently, if the India Office wants a Viceroy, who will say "Amen" to all its edicts, Mr. Montagu could not select a better person than Lord Willingdon. Anyone possessing a strong personality and original ideas of Government, such as a Winston Churchill or a Haldane, will not be suitable if the object is to have an India Office grammar set up in Simla.

FROM PAGE ONE

3 killed, crops damaged as Nivar crosses T.N. coast

"It may gain strength subsequently and impact south Tamil Nadu. But, it is early to confirm its intensity and landfall. There is still time for the formation of another weather system around December 10 and we are monitoring these systems," Mr. Balachandran added.

The Meteorological Department has forecast that Chennai will experience thunderstorms with light to moderate rain till Saturday.

Heavy rain pounded different parts of south coastal Andhra Pradesh throwing life out of gear in SPSR Nellore and Prakasam districts and inundating low-lying areas. Vehicular traffic was

hit at several places as rivers and rivulets were in spate.

Paddy seedlings in 2500 hectares were submerged in Nellore district, while standing crops in 34,000 hectares were affected in Prakasam district.

Six people who were stranded in floodwaters were rescued in Chittoor district on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy instructed officials to take all steps to contain the damage. Mr. Reddy said, along with measures for rehabilitation of the affected people, officials should also assess the damage caused to crops.

Six persons rescued in Chittoor district

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA

Heavy rain pounded different parts of south coastal Andhra Pradesh as the severe cyclonic storm Nivar weakened into a cyclonic storm on Thursday.

Widespread rain continued both in SPSR Nellore and Prakasam districts under the influence of Nivar, which is expected to weaken further into a depression and later into a depression subsequently. The incessant rain threw normal life out of gear in Nellore, Gudur, Buchireddipalem and Ongole.

Weathermen predicted fairly widespread to widespread rainfall/thunderstorm activity with heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places with isolated extremely heavy rain likely in the region in



Tough task: People finding it difficult to travel during heavy rain in Visakhapatnam. ■ THE HINDU

the next 48 hours.

SPSR district received an average of 13.8 cm rainfall in the last 24 hours, inundating low-lying areas in Nellore city and other places, including Sulurpetta, Naidupeta, Kaligiri, Kaluvaya and Venktagiri. Vehicular traffic was hit at several places as rivers and rivulets, including Swarnamukhi and Kaivalya, were in spate.

Paddy seedlings on 2,500

hectares were submerged as also black gram crop on over 3,500 hectares in Nellore district, while standing crops on 34,000 hectares, including cotton on 21,000 hectares, black gram on 4,500

CMs spar as Haryana denies entry to protesters



Police stand guard on the Singhu border as farmers march towards New Delhi on Thursday. ■ PTI

"@Capt_amarinderji, I've said it earlier and I'm saying it again, I'll leave politics if there will be any trouble on the MSP – therefore, please stop inciting innocent farmers," the Haryana Chief Minister tweeted.

"I've been trying to reach out to you for the last 3 days but sadly you decided to stay unreachable – is this how serious you are for farmer's issues? You're only tweeting and running away from talks, Why," he asked.

In another tweet, he said, "Time for your lies, deception and propaganda is over. Let the people see your real face. Please stop putting the lives of people in danger during the corona pandemic. I urge you to not play with the lives of the people – at least avoid cheap politics during the time of pandemic."

Expressing surprise at Mr. Manohar Lal's remarks on the use of force by the

First 'wave' of vaccination to cover 30 crore Indians

"There are one crore health workers, frontline workers such as State and central police, armed forces, home guards, civil defence about 2 crore; priority groups above the age of 50 because you are including those with significant challenges as India has a large fraction of those with cardiovascular disease and diabetes – that's about 26 crore – and finally those below 50 with significant comorbidities, about 1 crore. So that's nearly 30

crore," Mr. VijayRaghavan said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday had asked State governments to set up steering committees and block-wise task forces to prepare for the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and disbursement as and when they become available. Vaccines will be available when they pass regulatory stages, Mr. Modi had said at his meeting with Chief Ministers.

(With inputs from PTI)

PM pitches for 'One Nation, One Election'

"One Nation, One Election' isn't just an issue of deliberation but also need of the country. Elections are held at different places every few months and it hampers the developmental work and all of you know about it. Therefore, it's a must to have a deep study and deliberation on 'One Nation, One Election,'" he said.

On one voter list, he observed: "Only one voter list should be used for Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and other elections. Why are we wasting time and money?"

Emphasising the need for coordination between all

the wings of the state – legislature, executive and judiciary – he said that everything, from their role to their decorum, was described in the Constitution itself.

"In the 1970s, we saw how there was an attempt to breach the dignity of separation of power, but the country got the answer only from the Constitution. After that period of Emergency, the system of checks and balances became stronger and stronger. The legislature, the executive and the judiciary, all three, learned a lot from that period and moved forward," he said.

The well-coordinated operation involving defence, intelligence and other drug-law enforcement agencies was launched on November 17 on the basis of a specific input that Pakistan-based

smugglers would be transferring a huge consignment of drugs at sea to a Sri Lankan boat. The security agencies were already working on information that a group of international drug peddlers were operating along the Pakistan-Sri Lankan water

route transporting drugs to many countries, police sources said.

After seven days of surveillance at sea, Coast Guard personnel on board five vessels and two aircraft narrowed down on the suspicious Sri Lankan boat

"Shenaya Duwa" located south of the Thoothukudi coast and 20 nautical miles off Kanniyakumari. Armed guards searched the boat and found the drugs concealed in an "unapproachable" location. The crew of six Sri Lankan nationals was in possession of 99 packets of heroin, 20 boxes of synthetic drugs, five pistols and a satellite phone set, the sources said.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the 100 kg heroin and other contraband substances were transferred from a Pakistani dhow from Karachi in the high seas. The drugs were meant to be sent to western countries and Australia, investigators said.

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) which took over investigation of the drug seizure case would look into

HC has taken over executive functions: A.P.

It has seriously violated the doctrine of Separation of Powers, State govt. tells SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has "virtually taken over the executive functions of the State", the Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy government told the Supreme Court on Thursday.

The State complained that the High Court had now assumed for itself the power to decide even something as "innocuous" as the construction of a guest house.

"In doing so, the High Court has completely ignored the warning that the Supreme Court has, time and again, sounded advising the courts to respect the other co-equal



The HC asked A.P. govt. to submit the construction plans for a guest house in Vizag.

organs of the State and to refrain from assuming such powers to itself," the petition said.

The bone of contention is a November 2 direction of the High Court to the State to

submit before it the construction plans for a guest house proposed in Vishakapatnam. The High Court had "seriously violated the doctrine of Separation of Powers", the State, represented by advocate Mahfooz Ahsan Nazki, contended.

2008 order

The State's petition referred to a 2008 judgment of the Supreme Court which said "in the name of judicial activism, judges cannot cross their limits and try to take over functions which belong to another organ of the State".

The State government

pointed to what former Chief Justice of India J.S. Verma had said in the Dr. K.L. Dube lecture about judiciary intervening in all and sundry, including "a mysterious car" racing down Tughlaq Road in Delhi, allotment of a particular bungalow to a judge, specific bungalows for the judges, monkeys capering in colonies, stray cattle on the streets..."

The State drew the court's attention to the U.S. Supreme Court's lesson in history on how "the independence of the judiciary is jeopardised when courts become embroiled in the passions of the day".

IN BRIEF



Kerala declares two-day mourning for Maradona

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The Kerala government has announced a two-day mourning in the sports sector as a mark of respect to football legend Diego Maradona who passed away on Wednesday. An official press note quoting Sports Minister E.P. Jayarajan said the departure of Maradona had plunged football fans around the world into grief.

More pilgrims to be allowed to Sabarimala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
A meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Viswas Mehta has given in-principle approval to increase the number of devotees being allowed to undertake pilgrimage during the Mandala-Makaravilakku pilgrimage season of the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple from the present 1,000 daily. A decision to this effect will be made in consultation with the government on Friday.

Mysore varsity to set up study chair in SPB's name

MYSURU
As a tribute to the legendary playback singer S.P. Balasubrahmanyam, who passed away recently, the University of Mysore has decided to set up a study chair in his memory. "We want to pay our homage by taking up research and other activities in his memory," said Vice-Chancellor G. Hemantha Kumar.

Kannada writer Deshamsha Hudagi dead

BELAGAVI
Shantappa Sharannappa Devaraya, writer, theatre personality, folk art scholar and lexicographer, known by his pen name 'Deshamsha Hudagi', died in Bidar on Wednesday. He was 91. He is survived by children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He suffered from COVID-19 related complications recently.

No bail for former Minister Ebrahim Kunju Kochi

Observing that the Palarivattom flyover corruption case belonged to the category of socio-economic offences, the Vigilance special judge, Muvattupuzha, on Thursday denied bail to former Minister V.K. Ebrahim Kunju. The court permitted the interrogation of Mr. Kunju, who is arraigned as the fifth accused in the case, for one day.

Resume trial in actor rape case, says court Kochi

The special judge considering the actor rape case has directed the Director General of Prosecution (DGP) and the district government pleader to make arrangements for resuming the trial in the case. A. Sureshan, special public prosecutor in the case, had resigned last week. The special judge posted the case for December 2.

In Karnataka, low positivity trend holds

A.P. too retains gains; Kerala records 27 deaths; Telangana adds over 800 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala reported 5,378 new cases of COVID-19 on Thursday, and a test positivity rate of 9.6% for 55,996 samples.

The active case pool stood at 64,486 cases. The Health Department added 27 more deaths to the list of fatalities.

Six deaths were reported from Thrissur, four each from Alappuzha and Kozhikode.

COVID-19

kode, three each from Ernakulam and Kannur, two from Thiruvananthapuram and one each from Malappuram, Palakkad, Kollam, Idukki and Kottayam.

The HRCA also included officials of the Kerala Tourism Department and professionals from various strata of the expansive tourism industry, including tour operators, travel agents, a nominee from the hotel industry and a principal of the Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Kovalam.

Investigators confiscated a set of mobile phones and a computer from the tourism official. However, they were yet to charge him formally. The seizure reportedly yielded a trove of "incriminating" information and triggered raids on various premises in the State. Official sources said the surprise inspections targeted some members of the Hotel and Restaurant Approval and Classification Committee (HRCA) and a set of so-called "hospitality consultants."

The anti-corruption inspections in Kerala reportedly commenced on Wednesday when a CBI team from Tamil Nadu headed off a Union Ministry of Tourism official from boarding a flight at the Nedumbassery airport in Kochi.

Sources said the Chennai-based tourism official had a prominent role in grading hotel projects.

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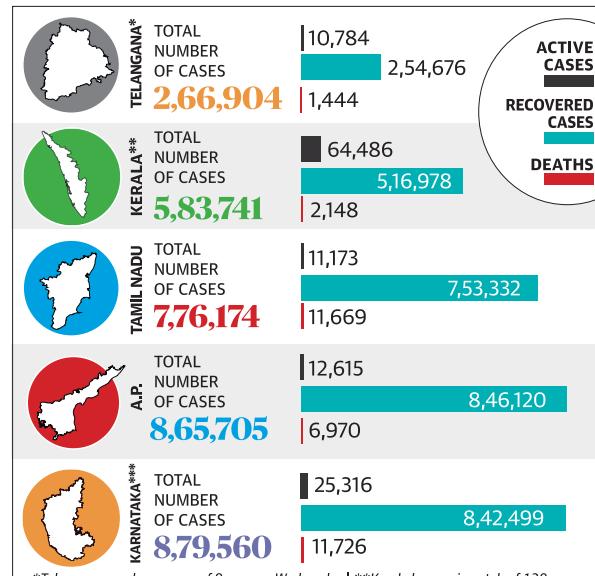
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on Wednesday, including 38,088 in government centres, the State had done 52,89,908 tests so far. Of the 2,66,904 positive cases, 70% were asymptomatic. Nearly 77% positive cases were 21 years to 60 years old.

Of Wednesday's cases, 164 were reported from Greater Hyderabad area.

Andhra Pradesh reported 1,031 new infections and eight deaths in the 24 hours ending on Thursday.

In 24 hours, 67,269 samples were tested with a positivity rate of 1.53%.

Krishna district reported two new deaths. There were no fatalities in six districts, and East Godavari, Guntur,

and Kadapa, Kurnool, Visakhapatnam and West Godavari reported one death each.

Karnataka on Thursday reported 1,505 new cases and 12 deaths.

The positivity rate for the day stood at 1.25% and Case Fatality Rate (CFR) at 0.79%.

Bengaluru Urban reported 844 cases and seven deaths.

The number of active cases in Tamil Nadu on Thursday was 11,173, with 1,464 new cases being identified. The total number of positive cases is 7,76,174. In the last 24 hours, 1,797 persons were discharged following treatment from various healthcare facilities, bringing the tally to 7,53,332 persons.

At the same time the State also recorded 14 deaths. So far 11,669 persons have lost their lives. The number of new cases in Chennai district fell further with 396 persons testing positive in a day.

M.P. revises Bill on 'forcible' conversions

STAFF REPORTER
BHOJPAL

In Madhya Pradesh, marriages to enable forcible religious conversions will invite imprisonment of up to 10 years. Earlier, the proposed maximum punishment was five years.

Home Minister Narottam Mishra told reporters on Wednesday, "In addition, priests solemnising such marriages will also face imprisonment of five years. The registration of organisations enabling such marriages will be cancelled."

The revisions to the proposed law come a day after the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh cleared an ordinance making religious conversion a non-bailable offence inviting penalties up to 10 years in prison if found to be effected for marriage or using force.

The government plans to table the Bill during the Assembly session from December 28.

Two soldiers killed in Srinagar

Police say three Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists were involved in the attack

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two soldiers were killed in an attack carried out by car-borne militants on the Srinagar-Baramulla National Highway on the outskirts of Srinagar on Thursday.

The attack coincided with the 12th anniversary of the Mumbai attack.

Crowded area

"Terrorists fired indiscriminately at a quick reaction team of the Army at Aban Shah Chowk, HMT, near Srinagar. Since it was a crowded area, troops exercised restraint to avoid any civilian casualties. However, two soldiers sustained injuries and later succumbed at a nearby hospital," a Srinagar-based Army spokesman said.

The deceased were identified as Sepoy Ratan of the 163 Battalion Territorial Army and Sepoy Deshmukh of the 101 Battalion Territorial Army. Inspector-General of Police Vijay Kumar said three Lashkar-e-Taiba terror-



Tight vigil: Soldiers seal the area where militants attacked the Army in Srinagar. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

rists were involved in the attack.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that terrorists were travelling in a Maruti car and took undue advantage of the crowded place, while opening indiscrimi-

nate fire," Mr. Kumar said.

Police sources said the vehicle was chased by the security forces but could not be traced immediately.

"An investigation is in progress and the officers continue to work to establish the

JCO killed in Pak. firing in Poonch

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

A Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) of the Army was killed and a civilian was injured in ceasefire violations by Pakistan in Pir Panjal valley's Poonch district on Thursday afternoon.

An official said Pakistan had resorted to firing and shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) from 1:30 p.m. in Kurni and Qasba sectors of Poonch.

full circumstances of this terrorist crime," Mr. Kumar said.

A chopper was pressed into service to locate the militants and the vehicle. The police suspect the hand of non-local militants in the attack.

Beneficiaries of Roshni Act move SC

'We were not heard by J&K HC'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

As the J&K administration continues to make the names of the beneficiaries of the now-nullified Roshni Act public, a petition has been filed before the Supreme Court by the beneficiaries claiming they "were not even heard by the J&K High Court as it passed the directions."

"We were not given an opportunity of being heard. Our rights acquired under the Act enacted by a competent legislature were extinguished by the peremptory order... Apart from our civil rights, it raises questions of distribution of power between the executive, judiciary and the legislature..."

former J&K Public Service Commission Chairman Mohammad Shafi Pandit, whose name was also made public, told *The Hindu*.

"The credibility of all the governments will be lost if the practice of retrospective annulment of laws is allowed

MOHAMMAD SHAFI PANDIT
Former J&K Public Service Commission Chairman

the practice of retrospective annulment of laws, without saving the action taken, is allowed to prevail," said Mr. Pandit. "Grant of freehold rights is nothing outlandish..." he said.

Roshni Act was passed by J&K legislature in 2001 to confer ownership rights on occupants of State land to raise ₹25,000 crore for hydro projects, but only ₹76 crore was collected. In 2018, the then Lieutenant Governor Satyapal Malik repealed the Act. Later, the High Court also scrapped the Act and directed the authorities to retrieve the land from the occupants.

CBI books former J&K Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has booked Taj Mohiuddin, a former Congress Minister in Jammu and Kashmir, and others in connection with the alleged illegal conferment of land ownership under the now-annulled Roshni Act.

The case was initially registered by the erstwhile Vigilance Organisation. Mr. Mohiuddin, the then Deputy Commissioner (Shopian) Mohammed Ramzan Thakur, then Additional Deputy Commissioner Mohammed Yousuf Zargar, then Assistant Commissioner (Revenue) Hafizullah Shah, and then tehsildar Hassan Rather were named as the accused.

The Revenue officials had approved illegal claims, clearing the way for vesting of ownership rights to the accused under the Roshni Act, it is alleged. The CBI has taken over investigation into nine cases.

Those in high offices should be above prejudices: President

Kovind commends SC for work during the pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Thursday said persons occupying high constitutional posts should strive to set an example by rising above partisanship and prejudices.

"I have always held that the time for congratulation is not when a man is appointed to an office, but when he retires..." Mr. Kovind said, quoting Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, in his virtual address at the Constitution Day celebrations organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association.

Mr. Kovind commended the Supreme Court for delivering justice even during the COVID-19 pandemic with the help of technology.

Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, speaking on the occasion, said the pandemic had generated a "new kind of inequality": the in-

equality between those who have access to technology and those who do not.

The Chief Justice said visitors to districts revealed to him that for many who had no access to technology, the courts "simply did not exist".

The top judge said the Supreme Court, which did not stop functioning even for a day during the pandemic, had been making access to virtual courts easier for lawyers and litigants through the installation of kiosks and mobile vans.

Backlog of cases

Chief Justice Bobde, however, said the judiciary and the government had to work in tandem to meet an explosion of filings and the ensuing increase in backlog once the pandemic fades out.

The CJI mooted the idea of "pre-litigation mediation with the force of a decree" as

a solution to pendency. This was after Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal recommended the judiciary, government and lawyers to "pull up their socks" and devise a way out of the existing pendency.

Digital hearing Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad commanded the digital hearing and disposal rate of cases by the judiciary during the past months of the health crisis.

Mr. Prasad said that the Supreme Court had digitally heard and disposed of over 30,000 cases, the High Courts had dealt with 13.74 lakh cases while the District Courts had dealt with 35.93 lakh matters.

Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal suggested setting up of four Benches of the Court of Appeal with 15 judges to reduce the workload of the Supreme Court.



President leads reading of Preamble

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Thursday led the nation in a community reading of the Preamble to the Constitution on Constitution Day.

"The President read the Preamble from the Rashtrapati Bhavan which was live telecast by Doordarshan and joined by the people across the nation," a Rashtrapati Bhavan statement said.

Participants at the All India Presiding Officers' Conference at Kevadia in Gujarat joined the reading, it added.

Armed forces given free hand on LAC: Rajnath

'PLA's unilateral moves will be stopped'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union government has given a free hand to the armed forces to strongly oppose any change on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and this is what the Army did at Galwan where soldiers bravely faced the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers and "forced them to retreat", Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday.

Speaking on the 12th anniversary of the 26/11 Mumbai

bai terror attacks, Mr. Singh said there had been "paradigm shift" in the country's security architecture with respect to coastal security, and the government had designed the nation's security policy in such a manner that a repeat of 26/11 was nearly impossible.

"When agreed protocols are ignored then problems arise. Under any circumstances, we can't allow PLA to do unilateral action on the LAC," he said speaking at the HT Summit.

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Due Date & Time	10/12/2020
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E-Tender Enquiry No: 18/MM-I/BMC-335(XI)/O&M/GHTP/2020
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Ernest Money Deposit: Rs. 4,10,000/- (Four Lakhs Ten thousand only).
Last Date & Time for bid submission: 28-12-2020 up to 11:30 hrs.
Date & Time of opening of Techno commercial stage bid: 30-12-2020 at 12:00 hrs.
Detailed NIT and tender specification can only be downloaded from PSPCL website https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from dated 26-11-2020 onwards.
NOTE:
1. The prospective bidders can obtain clarification regarding tender specifications from this office. For registration of digital signatures and uploading of tender, information may be sought from M/s GePNIC, Contact No. 91-120-40010025.
2. It is informed that in case the tender process is not completed due to any reason no corrigendum will be published in newspapers. Detail regarding corrigendum may be seen on PSPCL official website i.e. https://pspcl.in .
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1. Nos. of Work : 23 Nos RPWS schemes in Balasore district. Rs. 19.17 lakhs to Rs. 411.16 lakhs 2. Estimated cost : 180 days to 330 days 3. Period of completion : 08-12-2020 at 10.00 hours to 17-12-2020 up to 17.00 hours through online. 4. Availability of bid document in Portal: Dt. 08-1	

Trade unions join farmers' protests

'BJP govt. using unconstitutional means to sacrifice interests of workers in favour of corporates'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The strike called by a joint platform of 10 Central trade unions on Thursday in support of the farmers' agitation and workers' demands partially affected life in some parts of the country.

The trade union leaders and workers assembled at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, where farmers had also gathered to protest against the recent agriculture laws passed by Parliament.

Shutdown in States

"Kerala, Puducherry, Odisha, Assam and Telangana have reported complete shutdown. Tamil Nadu reported complete shutdown in 13 districts, while the industrial strike continues in the rest of the districts. Punjab and Haryana have reported that the State road transport buses have not left their depots in the morning," a statement issued by the joint platform said.

Coal, defence, telecom and banking sectors also saw a partial strike, the unions



People's cause: Trade union leaders and members protesting at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

said. They said the All-India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, an apex organisation of farmers' groups, had come out in support of the workers' demands. They said 25 crore workers had participated in the strike.

"This situation has arisen because the incumbent BJP government is following in the footsteps of the Britishers, using unconstitutional means to sacrifice the interests of the workers and farmers in favour of the corporates," the statement said.

The workers demanded monthly cash transfers of ₹7,500 for all families that did not fall in the income tax bracket, 10 kg of free monthly rations to every person in need, expansion of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee

Scheme, withdrawal of the new farm laws and labour codes, a stop to privatisation of the public sector, withdrawal of the decision on "forced premature retirement" of government employees and payment of pension to all.

The unions said they would continue to support the farmers' agitation as they attempt to reach Parliament on Friday.

The unions that called the strike were the All India Trade Union Congress, the Indian National Trade Union Congress, the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, the All India United Trade Union Centre, the Trade Union Coordinating Committee, the Self Employed Women's Association, the All India Central Council of Trade Unions, the Labour Progressive Federation and the United Trade Union Congress.

The RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh did not support the strike, saying in a statement that it was "politically motivated".

Centre, Haryana unleashed cruelty on farmers: Cong.

'Instead of hearing them, water was thrown at them'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

"On a day when the nation is celebrating Constitution Day, don't farmers have the right to enter Delhi and protest peacefully?" the Congress asked on Thursday and accused the BJP governments at the Centre and in Haryana of unleashing 'cruelty' on farmers.

The unions said they would continue to support the farmers' agitation as they attempt to reach Parliament on Friday.



Medha Patkar and other activists being stopped by the U.P. police on their way to Delhi. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

federal banks, loan waivers, airports and railway stations."

At a virtual press conference, Congress spokesperson Gaurav Vallabh said, "On a day when we are celebrating Constitution Day, are farmers not allowed to enter Delhi and peacefully protest? Does the Constitution not give them this right?"

IN BRIEF



Lalu Prasad moved back to Ranchi hospital

PATNA

Imprisoned Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad was shifted on Thursday from Kelly Bungalow, the official residence of the Director of the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences, to its pay ward in Ranchi, where he is being treated for several ailments. This comes amid the row over his alleged phone call to a BJP MLA to seek his support for the Assembly Speaker election.

NCB probe: court grants bail to Kshitij Prasad

MUMBAI

The City Civil and Sessions Court on Thursday granted bail to Kshitij Prasad, executive producer of Dharma Productions owned by director Karan Johar. Prasad, who was arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau, however, will not be released now as he has been implicated in another case that will be heard next week. He was directed to furnish a PR bond of ₹50,000 with one or two sureties in the like amount.

Maoist killed in exchange of fire in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR

A member of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist) was killed and another seriously injured in exchange of fire with security forces in Swabhimani Anchal of Odisha's Malkangiri district during an anti-naxal operation on Thursday. One AK-47, two magazines, ammunition and other materials have been recovered from the spot, the police said.

Ex-Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi cremated

GUWAHATI

Former Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi was cremated in Guwahati with full State honours on Thursday afternoon. The last rites of the three-time Chief Minister were performed in the presence of Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, State BJP president Ranjeet Kumar Dass, his Congress counterpart Ripun Bora and AICC Assam in-charge Jitendra Singh.

BJP a party of outsiders, says West Bengal CM

KOLKATA

Days after her party, the Trinamool Congress, raised the pitch against "outsiders" and accused them of trying to occupy West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said the BJP was a party of outsiders. "There is no place for outsiders in Bengal. I welcome those who have made Bengal their home... But those who come to the State only during elections and try to disturb peace are not welcome."

60% of new cases came from 6 States

44,489 more test COVID-19 positive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India reported 44,489 new confirmed COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, with Kerala, Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh contributing 60.72% of them, says a Health Ministry release on Thursday.

Kerala leads the tally with 6,491 new COVID cases followed by Maharashtra (159 new cases), while Delhi registered 5,246 new cases. 60.50% of the 524 case fatalities reported in the past 24 hours are concentrated in six States/Union Territories – Delhi, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Delhi with 99 deaths reported the maximum new fatalities. Maharashtra saw a fatality count of 65 followed by West Bengal with 51, the release states.

Sixty-five per cent of the active cases are in eight



A worker collecting samples for COVID-19 testing in New Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

States/UTs that have contributed to the maximum daily new cases. "Total recovered cases in India are nearing 87 lakhs (86,79,138) and the national recovery rate stands at 93.66%. 36,367 recoveries were registered in the last 24 hours," it notes. Twenty States/UTs have reported recovery rate less than the national average, it adds.

Modi to visit Serum Institute

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to visit the city-based Serum Institute of India (SII) on Saturday, senior Pm administration authorities confirmed on Thursday. The SII has partnered with pharma major AstraZeneca and Oxford University for its COVID-19 vaccine.

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation has granted permission for the manufacture of COVID-19 vaccine to seven firms, two of which are the SII and the Gennova Biopharmaceuticals.

In view of Mr. Modi's visit, another major event – a visit by ambassadors and High Commissioners from around 100 countries to SII and Gennova Biopharmaceuticals Ltd. in Pune's Hinjewadi area – scheduled for November 27 has now been pushed back to December 4, said the authorities.

"Both sides shared their perspectives on boundary matters and discussed ways to take it forward under the appropriate bilateral mechanisms," an informed source said here on Thursday evening, elaborating on the discussion held between Mr. Shringla and Mr. Paudyal.

The Hindu has learnt that Mr. Shringla held a "candid review" of the bilateral relationship with Nepal during his interaction with Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli.

Shringla in Nepal to mend ties

Foreign Secretary discusses border dispute and bilateral projects

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla reached Kathmandu on Thursday in a major outreach to Nepal, which has been caught in a bitter boundary dispute with India regarding the Kalapani region for more than a year.

Mr. Shringla met with his counterpart Bharat Raj Paudyal and the Nepalese leadership and discussed a number of issues, including the border dispute.

"Both sides shared their perspectives on boundary matters and discussed ways to take it forward under the appropriate bilateral mechanisms," an informed source said here on Thursday evening, elaborating on the discussion held between Mr. Shringla and Mr. Paudyal.

The Hindu has learnt that Mr. Shringla held a "candid review" of the bilateral relationship with Nepal during his interaction with Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli.



Extending assistance: Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla handing over 2,000 vials of Remdesivir to Nepal Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali. ■ TWITTER

"PM Oli conveyed Nepal's desire to build on the momentum in the bilateral relationship and enhance the level of bilateral engagement," said the source.

Both sides discussed multiple plans like the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project as well as the starting of an air travel bubble between Nepal and India.

A statement from the Nepalese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said the Indian Foreign Secretary and

his Nepalese hosts discussed "matters of mutual interests" during the multiple discussions held on Thursday. "They reviewed various aspects of Nepal-India relations covering trade, transit, connectivity, infrastructure, energy, agriculture, investment, culture, people to people relations among others," the statement from MoFA, Nepal explained.

Mr. Shringla also met President Bidhya Devi Bhandari on Thursday afternoon and

Burglar mortgages stolen gold to secure loan

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BHUBANESWAR

Enterprises that extend loans against gold came under the scanner after a burglar managed to mortgage stolen gold to secure a loan in Odisha's Ganjam district.

The novel plan unravelled when the Berhampur police launched an investigation into a series of

burglaries reported in the city. After a month-long operation, two burglars were arrested and 540 gram of gold ornaments, worth ₹25 lakh, was recovered from them.

The accused confessed to their involvement in no less than 15 burglaries. But that wasn't all.

"One of the burglars was found to have opened an account with a gold loan company. Over a period of time, he deposited stolen gold with the company to secure ₹21 lakh as loan," Berhampur Superintendent of Police Pinak Mishra said on Thursday.

"Customers pledge their gold ornaments as collateral deposit to secure loan. It is up to the companies to find out the source of gold being mortgaged. We have decided to expand the purview of our investigation to see if these companies have become a point for converting ill-gotten gold into loans," Mr. Mishra said.

\$20-bn potential in renewable sector: PM

Modi invites investors and businesses to join India's 'unparalleled' journey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's renewable energy deployment plans for the coming decade are likely to generate business opportunities worth \$20 billion a year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday.

Inviting global investors to join what he termed India's unparalleled journey towards expanding power generation capacity so that each citizen got access to electricity, he said the country's renewable energy capacity was now the fourth largest in the world.

Surging capacity

"In the last six years, we increased our installed renewable energy capacity by two-and-a-half times... it is growing



Bright future: Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking during the inauguration of the Global Renewable Energy Investment Meeting and Expo in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ PTI

ing at the fastest speed among all major countries. Even when it was not affordable, we invested in renewable energy [and] now our investment and scale is bringing costs down," Mr. Modi said at the inaugural session of the Global Renewable Energy Investment Meeting and Expo.

"We are showing to the world that sound environmental policies can also be sound economics," he said, urging global investors to consider tapping the recently approved production-linked incentive scheme for manufacturing high-efficiency solar power modules in the country.

"There are huge renewable energy deployment plans for the next decade. These are likely to generate business prospects of the order of around 20 billion dollars per year. I invite investors, developers and businesses to join India's renewable energy journey," he concluded.

COVID-19. While Patel, 71, a serving member of the CWC, passed away on Wednesday morning after weeks of hospitalisation, Mr. Gogoi, 85, died on Monday.

One of the key strategists and a trouble shooter of the party, Patel was not only one of the closest aides of president Sonia Gandhi but is also credited with keeping the party and the Congress-led UPA government together by managing its factions.

CWC to pay homage to Ahmed Patel, Gogoi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday adjourned the hearing of a PIL petition for a master plan on affordable healthcare, especially in times of a public health crisis like COVID-19.

A Bench led by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde, in August, had found it unfortunate that the National Health Bill of 2009, which defined "affordable" healthcare, had

not seen "the light of the day". The court had directed the Centre to use its powers under the Disaster Management Act to come up with a master plan by taking a cue from the already existing Public Health Acts of various States and the National Health Bill, 2009. The court had earlier said none should be turned away from hospitals due to higher cost of treatment.

Both leaders died of complications after contracting

chance ships, air and traffic management system and global shipping databases.

After the 26/11 terror attack, all fishing vessels more than 20 m long were mandated to have AIS transponders installed, while efforts were on to have such system on under-20-m fishing vessels as well. At any point of time there are 11,000-12,000 vessels present in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as of now, which shows the magnitude of the challenge in tracking vessels.

White shipping pacts

As part of improving transparency on maritime traffic on the high seas, the Navy had been authorised to conclude white shipping agreements with 36 countries and three multilateral constructs. So far they have been concluded with 22 countries and one multilateral construct, of which 17 and the one multilateral agreement had been operationalised, another official said.

Under Phase-I, 46 coastal radar stations were set up. Phase-II of the coastal radar chain network, under which 38 static radar stations and four mobile radar stations were being set up by the Coast Guard and they were in advanced stage of completion, the official stated.



A bite of rainy-day comfort

NAHLA NAINAR

This time of the year has become synonymous with torrential rainfall in much of southern India, with a greater frequency of cyclonic weather patterns, thanks to climate change.

Feeling hungry while cooped up and trying to be part of an invisible army of work-from-home soldiers? Try these traditional recipes that are tasty and nutritious (when taken in moderation) and will keep you warm enough to face the wet months.

The winter diet of our Bohra Muslim community includes dishes to keep everyone immune from colds and fevers," says Alifaya Husein, a former catering industry professional and avid home chef based in Chennai. "We have *bhajiya* (fritters) using seasonal vegetables along with small *malpuas* pancakes made with a semolina-flour batter. The cuisine of our migrant community has evolved to integrate local ingredients wherever possible."

Husein says the hearty breakfast dish *kheema lasanya* that has layers of chopped sprouted garlic and minced mutton topped with fried egg, is typically prepared only during winter. Besides the



rich stuff, there are some simpler preparations too, such as stew-type *mutton white khurdi* (see recipe), served with warm *khichdi*.

Long before fruits and vegetables began to be available through the year rather than according to their natural farming cycle, the subcontinent already had a set of weather-specific dishes.

In North India, for example, home cooks made big batches of *gaajar* (carrot) *halwa* to utilise the root vegetable that grew abundantly during winter. The rich dessert, made with grated

Mutton white khurdi recipe

INGREDIENTS

- 1 kg mutton pieces
- 1 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- Water as needed
- 2 tbsp ghee
- 4 black peppercorns
- 3-4 cloves
- 1 small cinnamon stick
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 tsp cumin seed
- 2 medium chopped onions
- 2 tbsp wheat flour (atta)
- 1 bunch of mint leaves
- Salt to taste
- Juice of half a lime
- 3-4 (or to taste) slit green chillies
- ½ cup milk

METHOD

- Wash mutton, and coat it with ginger-garlic paste. Add water (as per desired serving size), and cook it in a pressure cooker until done. In another heavy-bottomed pan, sauté cumin seed, peppercorns, green chillies with sliced onions until lightly browned. Dissolve the wheat flour in a little bit of water, and add to the mix. Pour in the cooked mutton, milk and salt and bring to a boil, while stirring the soup constantly. To finish, add lime juice and mint leaves and simmer. Serve warm with khichdi.

Soups, halwas and rasams... Indian cuisine serves up a wonderful spread of warm options for surviving the cold and wet months

carrot cooked down to a mushy paste with lashings of creamy milk, sugar and dried fruits, was stored in containers and naturally refrigerated by the cold air. When serving, portions of the halwa would be reheated, bringing alive the caramelised flavours on the palate.

There are many recipes for sweets like *gond ke laddoo* made with edible acacia gum, and *gur aate ka halwa*, a delicious melding of whole wheat flour and jaggery, that are cooked specifically during winter, because the ingredients create warmth, and increase the body's ability to bear the winter's much lower temperatures. Beetroot halwa, also cooked in generous amounts of clarified butter with sugar and nuts, is yet another winter-time treat.

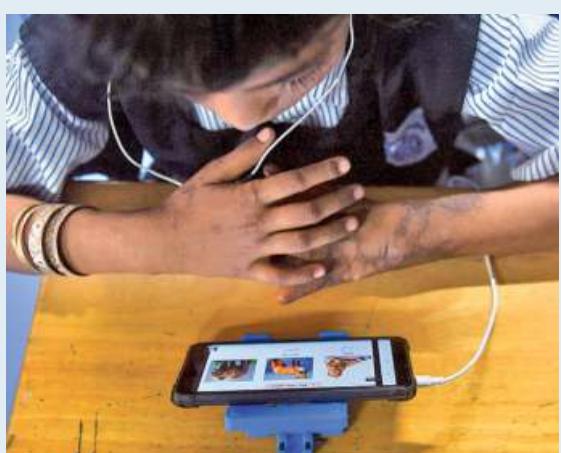
Nutritionists advise people to look out for seasonal produce that can enhance immunity and fight winter infections. Fruits like oranges, guavas, figs, pomegranate and grapes and vegetables like French beans, yam, beetroot and radish are beneficial during cold weather.

In the South of India, soups and *rasams* that are spiced with ingredients like pepper and turmeric are popular during winter. Vegetarian options include *poondi milagu rasam* (made by cooking peeled garlic cloves in tamarind water spiced with pepper), and *sundal*, a snack made with pre-boiled chickpeas, or horsegram tempered with mustard seeds, dried chilli and curry leaves in hot oil.

For non-vegetarians, *manjal thanni* (literally turmeric water) is a mild and watery gravy made with chicken or mutton, to help banish the chills. *Paaya* soup, made with lamb trotters slow cooked with an infusion of spices, has travelled from the erstwhile Deccan kingdom of Hyderabad to all parts of the country, and remains a favourite for winter breakfasts and dinners.

So, if the weather is making you hungry for comfort food, keep an eye on the healthy and traditional dishes that you could be eating this season.

Technology for all



NGOs Goonj and Change Agents have launched a campaign, Build Connections, to mitigate the digital exclusion of children who cannot afford tech for at-home education. The campaign encourages people to donate new (or used but functional) smartphones, laptops, tablets, printers,

chargers and multi-point plugs. "While kids from privileged homes are able to continue their education, it is clear that so many others do not have access," says Sanghamitra Chakraborty, founder, Change Agents. The access she speaks about, refers to both hardware aka gadgets, and data, both expensive commodities in situations where parents may have to choose between food or medical care and their child's education. The campaign also accepts donations of data packs.

Goonj has collection centres in Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Rishikesh, Delhi, Mumbai, Kochi where you can drop off products.

The country and its crafts

The Shilp Route Crafting Connections is an exhibition of home furnishings and décor that is available online till November 30. Featuring the work of 15 artisans from across the country, The Shilp Route initiative is in collaboration with Social Venture Partners, Bengaluru, and is powered by GoCoop.

"Our priority while putting together this exhibition was to find artisans from remote locations who have always sold their products at traditional or local markets as they were the hardest hit when sales dropped during the pandemic. Besides, most of them don't have the bandwidth to go digital and never sold their products online," says Sanjana Govindan, general manager of Social Venture Partners, Bengaluru. Artisans from Karnataka, Nagaland, Gujarat and Kashmir are showcasing handmade Kutchi carpets, copper cookware, miniature Pichhvai paintings, wall hangings and more.

The Shilp Route online exhibition can be viewed on www.gocoop.com.



Language of the nawabs comes home

E-platform Aamozish helps to learn Urdu in seven days using animations and self-assessment quizzes

NEERAJA MURTHY

"My grandmother said one learns English to woo a girl but when there's heartbreak, you come back to Urdu," shares Devyesh Tripathi, a lawyer practising at the Delhi High Court.

The Urdu enthusiast uses his free time to explore the digital Urdu learning platform Aamozish to refresh the skills that he had picked up three years ago. He refers to the platform to remember forgotten letter and words while writing Urdu nazms and Hindi poems on his Instagram page.

"Earlier, I used to switch between Hindi and Urdu while conversing; that confused the listener. Not any more," he elaborates.

Aamozish regularly introduces Urdu words and synonyms in Devanagri (Hindi) or English scripts and their translations, on its social media platforms. For instance, the Deepavali post sparked with new words *noor* (light), *shama* (candle), *jamaal* (beauty), *charaag* (oil-lamp) and *tajalli* (brilliance).

Launched by Delhi-based Rekhta Foundation in 2017, Aamozish is an e-learning initiative that seeks to promote the Urdu script.

"Based on the feedback of our portal users – especially the Indian and Pakistani diaspora living abroad – we realised many are interested in learning the Urdu script and understand the nuances of the language. As online learning takes teaching beyond geographical barriers, we came up with a suitable course," shares Satish Gupta, head, out-



The editorial team consists of eight Urdu scholars from different universities

reach and communication, Rekhta Foundation, adding the course breaks the myth that 'there is only one community that could learn Urdu'. The script (writing from right to left) used is a calligraphy style appears as a beautiful art form."

STRUCTURED LEARNING

A team of in-house scholars conducted a survey last year to enhance the course. Around 40 people, randomly selected from different locations, including two employees from the Rekhta Foundation, with no knowledge of Urdu did an hour of e-learning

A rap in time

The Ettisheri brothers, owners of Khaana Peena restaurant in Thiruvananthapuram, set their lockdown woes to music and serve it up with grilled chicken

SARASWATHY NAGARAJAN

A Malayalam lockdown rap number, laced with double entendres and expletives, is making waves with its narrative of the woes of Niyas Ettisheri, an entrepreneur.

Just as Niyas was finding his place in the sun, the lockdown forced him to down the shutters of his new restaurant in Thiruvananthapuram. Situated in Attakulangara, in the heart of the city, Khaana Peena, a small restaurant that was open 24x7, was getting popular for Malayali favourites such as Kerala parottas, meat fries, ghee rice and so on.

In the first stage of exit-lockdown, restaurants were permitted to function till 7 pm. "But our place was frequented by the night owls and we struggled to find customers when we had to close by 7 pm. So he closed the outlet again," explains Shanavas Ettisheri, Niyas' eldest brother and an investor in the business.

"Things were not going well for Niyas. As he was unable to find a foothold in Kerala as an entrepreneur, he managed to get a visa and left for the United Arab Emirates. His restaurant in Dubai was doing reasonably well, when suddenly the building he was working from was

demolished to make way for a new highway. Disheartened, Niyas returned to Kerala in 2016," says Shanavas.

To help his brother, Shanavas, an entrepreneur and hotelier himself, invested in Niyas' new venture, Khaana Peena. Eight months down the line, it had to be shut down as the pandemic was spreading in Kerala.

The brothers' friend Samarth Ambujakshan directed the now-popular video to go with the song

All through the lockdown, Niyas kept lamenting his bad luck. But in the second stage of the exit-lockdown, he opened shop again, this time with a different menu.

"Since many of our waiters and cooks had left the city, we had to come up with something that did not require a lot of manpower. We switched to varieties of *chutta kozhi* (grilled chicken) and that is catching on now," explains Shanavas.

Moved by Niyas' hardship, Shanavas captured his brother's angst in verse and had it set to tune by siblings, Vaishakh MK and Vignesh MK, known as MK Bros, who are based in

Thiruvananthapuram.

The rap song belted out with swag and fervour by Niyas and his younger brother, Ibrahim Ettisheri, also one of the partners of Khaana Peena, conveys the essence of the anguish of hoteliers who were hit by the lockdown and the pandemic. The song narrates how the brothers had opened their small outlet with high hopes and how their dreams of making it big were dashed by the lockdown.

The catchy beat has struck a chord with listeners who are able to empathise with the duo's lockdown blues.

The brothers' friend Samarth Ambujakshan directed the now-popular video to go with the song

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Work and play The Khaana Peena team • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and now [in October] we have 67,000 users."

Technology plays a big role – an IT team of 20 members, with a five-member core team handling the Rekhta website have worked to make it as user friendly as possible.

In 26 units (chapters), the platform uses its proprietary software to create animations that show how letters of the alphabet are written, audio to learn pronunciation, and self-assessment quizzes after every unit.

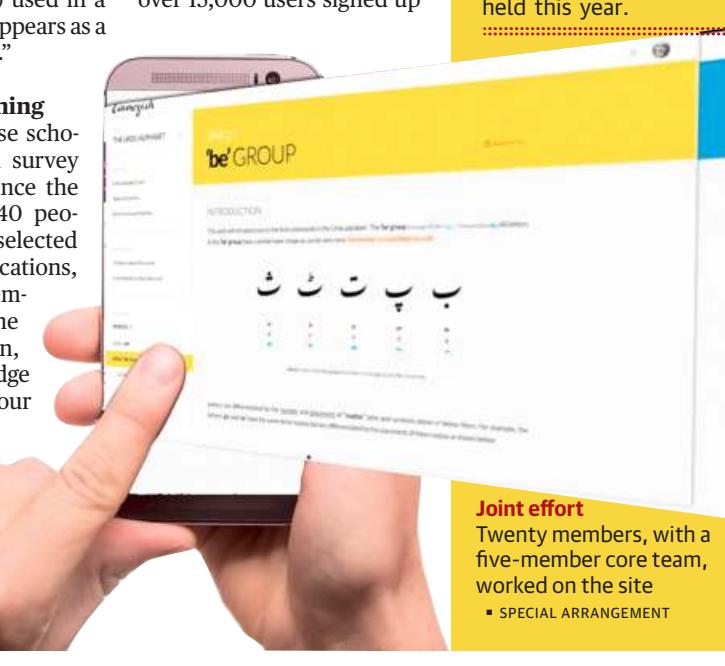
Rekhta Foundation also conducts physical Urdu classes and has completed eight batches till now. The editorial team consists of eight Urdu scholars from different universities.

New members sign up while preparing for a job interview and developing their communication skills. The vocabulary also helps users broaden their appreciation for Urdu poetry," says Satish.

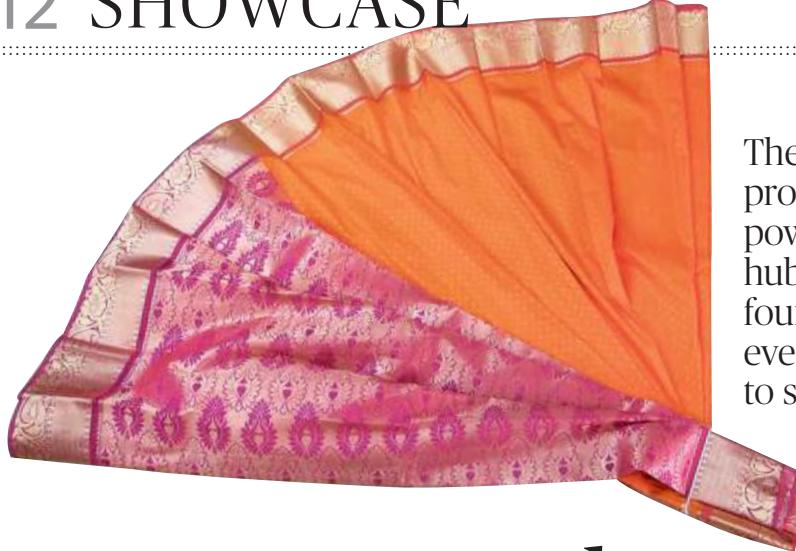
Kritika Agarwal, an advocate-on-record in the Supreme Court who had attended the first batch of in-person classes, loves learning new languages.

Having also learnt the Tamil-Brahmi and Punjabi scripts, Kritika says learning Urdu digitally can be challenging. "Urdu script also has many rules that can confuse learners. Just as Hindi's 'Sha' sound has two letters, Urdu has one sound in multiple letters and knowing which letter goes with which word comes with practice."

The platform hopes to launch a vocabulary course with 300 new words and a detailed insight into its contextual application.



Joint effort Twenty members, with a five-member core team, worked on the site • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



The silk route to Elampillai

NAHLA NAINAR

Deep down the winding road that leads away from the Salem/Sankagiri highway, the scenery is breathtaking, with mountains and temples framing paddy and sugarcane fields. Despite the agrarian setting, the fields are empty, except for a few, where women are planting paddy saplings in plots flooded with ankle-deep water.

We are going to Elampillai, which seems to be gaining popularity on social media for its saris. Soon enough, textile showroom billboards pave the way into this nondescript town that manufactures saris for sale in India and abroad.

"There are over 20,000 power looms in Elampillai. Besides 10,000 workers manning the looms, there are at least 20,000 more engaged in ancillary industries such as zari manufacture and computer-aided designing, many of them from other States," says K M Siddharaman, proprietor of the family-run Sri Balaji Silks.

Siddharaman is a veteran in the sari trade, having started out as a handloom weaver with his father 40 years ago. "By the 1970s, the power loom had taken over the textile industry in a big way here. Most of the companies are small scale industries, with around 10-15 looms per firm. Those who have



Powerhouse Elampillai is home to over 20,000 power looms, as well as ancillary industries like zari making • NAHLA NAINAR

over 200 power looms cannot take care of them alone, because of the shortage of labour," says Siddharaman, whose two sons manage 60 power looms between them.

"In recent years, due to over production, Elampillai's manufacturers have had to undersell their products so that they can pay staff salaries every Friday. So a sari that costs ₹700 to make, is usually sold for ₹500 to ₹600 by Thursday," he says.

By mid-day, the main street of Elampillai, crowded with clothing stores, is open for business. Unlike the showy interiors favoured by shops in big cities, this town believes in more utilitarian iron shelving for its beautiful goods.

Men with bundles of yarn and

The saris produced by this power loom weaving hub near Salem have found fans everywhere, thanks to social media

ram, Elampillai's saris are not known by their place of origin. But weavers like me can recognise an Elampillai sari simply from the way it is draped," he says.

Working social media The lack of a distinct identity has actually worked in Elampillai's favour, especially during lockdown as connoisseurs began looking for made in India fabrics. Social media has played an important role in popularising the saris, especially since manufacturers like R Gowrishankar of RGS Tex, ship orders to any part of India.

"Despite the lockdown, we had a good response for our Deepavali orders. We supply stock for mostly big retailers in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, but there were a lot of queries from women entrepreneurs who resell our saris from their homes," says Gowrishankar, whose company is based in Thappakutai village, between Edappadi and Salem.

Elampillai saris come in a variety of styles and colours, but most of them are soft-textured and have a jacquard self-design that improves their drape considerably.

This year, Kota cotton and art-silk (an affordable synthetic alternative to the real thing), are doing well, says Siddharaman.

The lockdown has accelerated the need for digital banking and contactless payments, which has aided traders with a social media presence. Google searches for Elampillai saris will invariably lead people to not just local manufacturers but also fashion vlogs focused on the saris.

"I started our Facebook page titled Elampillai Saris five years ago, but it has come into its own only during the lockdown. We post pictures or short videos about our new products, and customers get in touch almost immediately, from far-flung cities," says Gowrishankar. He adds, "In a way, not being overexposed through traditional advertising is good, because Elampillai saris have been able to retain their uniqueness in the market."



Say hello to Wonder Woman



Warner Bros. recently announced that their ninth instalment in the DC Extended Universe, Patty Jenkins' *Wonder Woman 1984*, will release in theatres and HBO Max simultaneously.

The production house has now confirmed the release dates. *Wonder Woman 1984* is set to release in theatres in India, the US, Canada, and a few other European countries on December 25. In an attempt to avoid piracy, plans are on to release the Gal Gadot superhero film in international markets, where HBO

Max is not serviceable, ahead of its release in the US on Christmas day.

Patty Jenkins directs the superhero sequel with Gal Gadot, Chris Pine, Robin Wright and Connie Nielsen reprising their roles from the 2017 box-office hit *Wonder Woman*. The film also stars Kristen Wiig as the antagonist, Cheetah. It must be noted that the film's trailer, which was released earlier in August, received overwhelming responses from fans of the franchise.

The friendly neighbourhood tailor goes the extra mile now to make a mask from the leftover material of your blouse



Match made in heaven

PRABALIKA M BORAH

There are a lot of benefits if you are nice to your tailor. Spare them the last-minute orders and unreasonable design requests for a quintessentially 2020 perk: They will not just stitch your clothes well and on time, but will also offer to make a pretty matching mask with the leftover fabric.

Stating that the wedding season and Bihu were in lockdown he says things finally looked up during Durga puja. "So we wanted to cheer our clients. Masks are a necessity and if it is matching their outfit, it will make them happy. Anyway, their make-up is not seen, so we thought the beautiful mask can make up for that. We use a double-layer lining for muga and tripe for paat and paat-muga.

At least that's what Guwahati-based tailor Mohammed Ali of New Tailoring House is doing. He is keeping his clients happy by volunteering to stitch masks with leftover silk material from blouse orders. He does not charge for the masks and says he does it out of goodwill because of the business his clients have been giving him over the years.

Ali says "Most of my regular clients enquired about me and my team's well-being during the lockdown. Stitching a mask is no big deal for

The borders are stitched in a way that it doesn't have contact with the skin. Gold thread can cause rashes on the face. Also because muga and eri silk are a little rough we add piping to the masks from those materials," says Ali.

Ali uses elastic and makes fitted masks for his regular clients. He, however, refuses to make masks with materials that come with tiny beads and glitter. "I feel it is not safe to have beads and glitter around the nose and mouth," he says.

Hyderabad-based fabric designer Sravathy Anand who also has a stitching unit for select clients says matching masks with blouses for special occasions is in demand. She started stitching as a complimentary give away.

It all began when she needed a coordinating mask for her Kalamkari silk sari for a family occasion. "So, I decided to stitch one for myself to match my blouse. It caught everyone's attention and I received requests from family. We are however avoiding masks with *pattu* sari because of the heavy borders. They tend to irritate the skin."

Sravathy suggests those who want the sari border or lace on their masks should ask their tailors to fix it in a place that does not touch the skin.

She adds, "Kanjeevaram material is good because even though it is silk it is quite soft and thick at the same time. For Kanjeevaram silk, we use single-layer pre-washed lining material. For the rest, we use a double layer."

Her clients though want the string instead of elastic. Says Sravathy, "They cleverly tie the string at the back and hide it with their hair or jewellery."

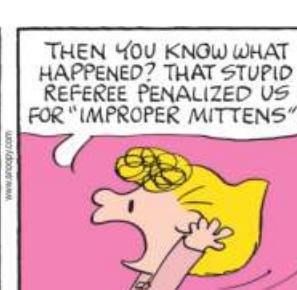
Safe in silk Kanjeevaram silk is good for masks as it is soft and thick at the same time • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



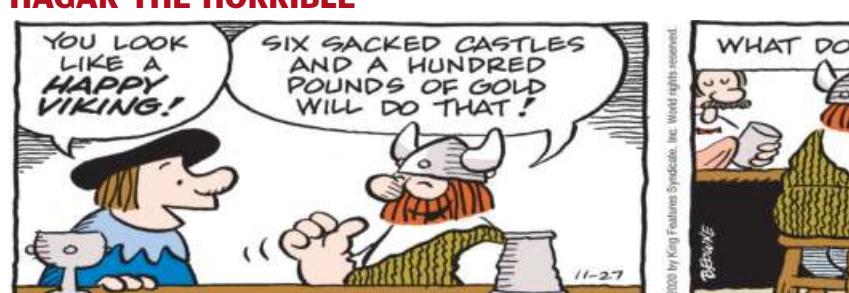
POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Biden seeks unity as U.S. battles virus

'We need to remember we're at war with the virus, not with one another. Not with each other'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WILMINGTON

On a day of grace and grievance, President-elect Joe Biden summoned Americans to join in common purpose against the coronavirus pandemic and their political divisions while the man he will replace stoked the fading embers of his campaign to "turn the election over."

Mr. Biden, in a Thanksgiving-eve address to the nation, put the surging pandemic front and centre, pledging to tap the "vast powers" of the federal government and to "change the course of the disease" once in office. But for that to work, he said, Americans must step up for their own safety and that of their fellow citizens.

"I know the country has grown weary of the fight," Mr. Biden said on Wednesday. "We need to remember we're at war with the virus, not with one another. Not with each other."

Overtur election
President Donald Trump, who has scarcely mentioned the pandemic in recent days even as it has achieved record heights, remained fixated on his election defeat.

"We have to turn the election over," Mr. Trump said

from the Oval Office, where he joined the meeting by speakerphone.

"This was an election that we won easily," he said. "We won it by a lot." In fact, the election gave Mr. Biden a clear mandate, and no systemic fraud has been uncovered. Judge after judge has dismissed the Trump campaign's accusations as baseless, and the transition to Biden's presidency is fully underway.

Nevertheless, Mr. Trump repeated: "This election has to be turned around."

Mr. Trump had been expected to appear in person in Gettysburg, but did not after another member of his legal team tested positive for the coronavirus. Few at the meeting wore masks.

Altogether, the forum heard – and cheered – yet another declaration from a U.S. President seeking to reverse a democratic election and the voters' will because he wants to stay in power.

The setting was about a mile from the scene of Pickett's Charge, where Union troops repelled a desperate Confederate attack in July 1863 and helped turn the tide of the Civil War.

For his part, Mr. Biden has largely projected serenity as the necessary elements of a



Top priority: Joe Biden arriving for a Thanksgiving address at the Queen Theatre in Wilmington on Wednesday. ■ AFP

presidential transition – money, access to office space and more – were held at bay for nearly three weeks by Mr. Trump's machinations and a delayed ascertainment by the General Services Administration that he had won the election. On Wednesday, he addressed Mr. Trump's raw tactics only in passing.

"Our democracy was tested this year," Mr. Biden said, "but the people of this nation are up to the task."

"In America, we have full and fair and free elections, and then we honor the results," he said. "The people of this nation and the laws of the land won't stand for anything else."

And he offered an optimis-

tic vision, calling on Americans to "dream again" and predicting that "the 21st century is going to be an American century."

Combating virus
Mr. Biden pledged more virus testing, more protective gear and clearer guidance for businesses and schools to reopen when he becomes President. Until vaccines are distributed, he said, masks, social distancing and limits in the size of gatherings "are our most effective tools to combat the virus."

Mr. Biden's remarks came as COVID-19 cases are surging nationwide. Hospitalisations, deaths and the testing positivity rate were also up

Trump pardons ex-NSA Flynn

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump announced on Wednesday he has pardoned his former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who had twice pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI during the investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election. ■ AP

sharply as the nation headed into Thanksgiving. Health experts have warned that the large family gatherings are likely to extend and exacerbate the surge.

This week, Mr. Biden unveiled his national security team on Tuesday. Drawing implicit contrasts with Mr. Trump, Mr. Biden said the team "reflects the fact that America is back, ready to lead the world, not retreat from it." He's expected to name Janet Yellen as Treasury Secretary in the coming weeks. Mr. Trump will forgo his usual plans to celebrate Thanksgiving at his private club in Florida and will instead remain at the White House.



Xi Jinping

winds, and this pandemic may intensify counter-globalisation trends," he said. "With inward-turning tendencies clearly on the rise among nations, there could be significant changes in the external environment facing China's development. Implementing the internal demand expansion strategy is

NEWS ANALYSIS

a necessity for responding to the pandemic's impact."

The second pillar of this strategy, as he put it, was to "optimise and stabilise production chains and supply chains." The pandemic, he said, was "a stress test under combat conditions" and had served warnings of the dangers of decoupling.

"In order to safeguard China's industrial security and national security, we must focus on building production chains and supply chains that are independently controllable, secure and reliable, and strive for important products and supply channels to all have at least one alternative source," he said, listing sectors such as high-speed rail, electric power equipment, new energy, and communications equipment where China is moving to erect ever higher non-tariff barriers for foreign firms, particularly in sensitive sectors – all while positioning itself as a defender of globalisation.

In fact, agreements like the RCEP failing to adequately address this contradiction was one key reason why India ultimately withdrew from the negotiations, receiving no assurances of a level playing field, even as it was asked to open up its economy.

The most revealing part of Mr. Xi's essay was his statement that China "must tighten international production chains' dependence on China" with the aim of "forming powerful countermeasures and deterrent capabilities". This would give China lever-

age should countries threaten to limit access to key technologies, as the U.S. has done with semiconductors.

The idea, in his view, is for China to "rely more on the domestic market". He said there was "no contradiction" between doing so and opening up, because domestic and external "circulation" would be "mutually reinforcing".

Self-sufficiency

That, however, is not how India and many of China's biggest trading partners see it, instead viewing a push that will increasingly prioritise self-sufficiency.

The key difference with India's own "self-reliant" emphasis is that China is at the same time embracing new trading arrangements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), from which India withdrew last year, and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the other big regional trading bloc that succeeded the TPP after America's withdrawal, which Mr. Xi has expressed interest in joining.

Trading agreements, in Beijing's view, will open new markets and help increase trade dependencies on China overseas – China is already the biggest trading partner for many of the RCEP's members – even while China is moving to erect ever higher non-tariff barriers for foreign firms, particularly in sensitive sectors – all while positioning itself as a defender of globalisation.

In fact, agreements like the RCEP failing to adequately address this contradiction was one key reason why India ultimately withdrew from the negotiations, receiving no assurances of a level playing field, even as it was asked to open up its economy.

U.S. top court backs religious groups on virus rules

They had challenged New York State's new curbs; Trump-appointee Justice Barrett casts deciding vote

REUTERS
NEW YORK

The U.S. Supreme Court late on Wednesday backed Christian and Jewish houses of worship challenging New York state's latest restrictions in novel coronavirus hotspots.

The court on a 5-4 vote granted requests made by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and two Orthodox Jewish congregations.

The order marked one of

the first consequential actions on the court of President Donald Trump's new appointee, conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett, who cast a deciding vote in favour of the religious groups. Conservative Chief Justice John Roberts dissented along with the court's three liberals.

An October 6 decision by New York Governor Andrew Cuomo shut down non-essential businesses in targeted areas where infections

have spiked, including some Brooklyn neighborhoods. It limited gatherings to 10 people in some areas and 25 in others.

The houses of worship say that the limits violated religious freedoms protected by the U.S. Constitution, and that their facilities were singled out for more stringent restrictions than essential businesses, such as food stores.

The court noted that: "Even in a pandemic, the Constitution cannot be put away and forgotten." The restrictions at issue here, by effectively barring many from attending religious services, strike at the very heart of the First Amendment's guarantee of religious liberty," the ruling added.

A federal judge in Brooklyn rejected separate requests made by the religious groups joined by Justice Roberts in the majority.

New York-based 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals declined emergency requests filed by both sets of challengers on November 9.

In two previous cases this year, the court turned away similar requests by churches in Nevada and California. Those votes occurred before the death of liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and saw her and her three liberal colleagues joined by Justice Roberts in the majority.

In the newly published essay, which was based on an internal speech Mr. Xi delivered in April that wasn't publicised, the Chinese President said "the strategy of domestic demand expansion" should be China's priority, and "building a complete internal demand system bears on China's long-term development and long-term peace and stability".

"Economic globalisation has encountered head-

longer strike in prison, was visibly "weak" and "shaking uncontrollably" when she appeared at Riyadh's criminal court, where she has been tried since March 2019 in closed-door sessions, her sister Lina al-Hathloul said.

The judge announced that his court lacked jurisdiction and transferred al-Hathloul's case to the Specialised Criminal Court, or the anti-terrorism court, she said.

"How is it possible for the judge to realise the court lacks jurisdiction after dealing with the case for 1 year and 8 months?" Ms. Lina wrote on Twitter.

A Turkish court jailed 337 former pilots and other suspects for life in one of the largest trials stemming from the bloody 2016 coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Fethullah Gulen, a U.S.-based Muslim preacher who was once an Erdogan ally, is accused of ordering the failed putsch. Mr. Gulen, whose movement has been proscribed as a terrorist group by Ankara, strongly denies all charges.

A total of 251 people died and more than 2,000 were injured in what has turned into the defining moment of

Troops ordered to move into Tigray capital: Abiy

PM warns people to stay indoors

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NAIROBI

Ethiopia's Prime Minister said on Thursday the Army has been ordered to move on the embattled Tigray regional capital after his 72-hour ultimatum ended for Tigray leaders to surrender, and he warned the city's half-million residents to stay indoors and disarm.

It also asserted that thousands of Tigray militia and special forces surrendered during the 72-hour period.

The military offensive "has reached its final stage" after three weeks of fighting, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's office said. That means tanks and other weaponry can close in on Mekele, whose residents were warned of "no mercy" if they didn't move away from

Tigray leaders in time.

That caused international alarm as rights groups said such wording could violate international law and put civilians in further danger. "We will take utmost care to protect civilians," Mr. Abiy's statement said.

It also asserted that thousands of Tigray militia and special forces surrendered during the 72-hour period.

The UN has reported people fleeing Mekele, but communications and transport links remain severed to Tigray, and it's not clear how many people received the warnings in time. Tigray regional leaders couldn't immediately be reached.

Saudi activist's trial transferred to terrorism court, says family

She was jailed in 2018 on charges of aiding enemies of state

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
RIYADH

Saudi authorities have transferred the trial of jailed activist Loujain al-Hathloul to an anti-terrorism court, her family said on Wednesday, raising the prospect of a lengthy prison sentence despite international pressure for her release.

Ms. al-Hathloul, 31, was arrested in May 2018 with about a dozen other women activists just weeks before the historic lifting of a ban on female drivers, a reform they had long campaigned for. While some of them have been provisionally released, Ms. al-Hathloul and

others remain imprisoned on what rights groups describe as opaque charges that include aiding enemies of the state as well as contacting foreign media, diplomats and activist groups.

Ms. al-Hathloul, who recently went on a two-week hunger strike in prison, was visibly "weak" and "shaking uncontrollably" when she appeared at Riyadh's criminal court, where she has been tried since March 2019 in closed-door sessions, her sister Lina al-Hathloul said.

The judge announced that his court lacked jurisdiction and transferred al-Hathloul's case to the Specialised Criminal Court, or the anti-terrorism court, she said.

"How is it possible for the judge to realise the court lacks jurisdiction after dealing with the case for 1 year and 8 months?" Ms. Lina wrote on Twitter.

Mr. Erdogan's rule and contemporary Turkish politics.

The presiding judge handed down multiple life sentences to disgruntled air force pilots, who bombed the capital Ankara, and civilians who orchestrated the coup attempt from inside the Akinci military base near the capital.

Court documents obtained by AFP showed 337 defendants were handed life sentences for murder, violating the constitutional order and attempting to assassinate Mr. Erdogan.

Sixty suspects were given jail sentences of various lengths while 75 were acquitted.

INTERVIEW | KAREN HULT

'Transition of power in the United States risks conflict on both sides'

It becomes more difficult when an incumbent loses an election, as President Trump did in this case, and when the political parties are turning over, says expert

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

Weeks after the 2020 U.S. presidential election, the ferment Washington politics looks to be impacting the broader transition to a new arrangement in the federal government, owing to outgoing President Donald Trump's refusal to concede power and perhaps also less-than-forthcoming cooperation from the bureaucracy. Professor Karen Hult of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and a board member of the White House Transition Project, spoke about the risks and opportunities within the opaque presidential transition process.

What are the different dimensions of the

presidential transition process – in terms of budgets, personnel, infrastructure – and what challenges does it face?

■ A presidential transition is always important because it is a time when the U.S. is moving the entire working Executive, including people in the White House, Cabinet members and executive branch departments and agencies. Those people are transitioning out of power, and a new group is coming in, and that is difficult to do for logistical reasons, but also because of policy differences. Transitions become more difficult, perhaps not surprisingly, when an incumbent President loses an election, as President Trump did in this case, and when the

political parties are turning over, as also happened in this case. All of this make the transition of power fraught and risks conflict on both sides.

In the U.S. context, when a President leaves office, most of the White House staff that supports the President in policy debates and in structuring decision-making, also leaves with the President. The President also has about 4,000 appointees throughout the broad executive branch of government, including the Department of Defense, Department of the Treasury, Department of State, and so on. The new President has to be prepared for putting people in places in those positions, as well as figure out what it is that the current administration has

already a delay in the ascertainment of Mr. Biden's election victory, by General Services Administration chief Emily Murphy.

■ By and large, this is driven by senior career civil servants, who do this as part of their professional lives repeatedly. Many of them take an oath on the Constitution, and they take that oath seriously. What this means is that in preparing the transition, they are prepared to do the best job they can to get the information available to the Biden team to work toward a smooth transition as possible. Will there be resistance? Presumably, there will be in limited cases. Will there be some slow-walking or delaying of some kinds of activities and responses? There was

sumably, there will be, and we have had evidence of that in past transitions.

Are there any circumstances where this sort of obstructionism might compromise national security of the U.S.?

■ Certainly, that is possible. It is that kind of slowness, that kind of lapse of information being communicated, and then being communicated in credible ways, that could produce some issues related to national security, Homeland Security, and certainly with the logistics of moving forward with the vaccine. This is a very fraught period. Some have called this transition process in the U.S. the most perilous time of the shift of power.

Looking forward to how the Biden administration might work, do you think they will return to business as usual in terms of the Democratic Party values and agenda, or win broader acceptability they might pivot towards something else?

■ There will be at least two different streams. In terms of the legislative agenda, there will be an effort to build small majorities in both houses of Congress. That means moving away from what some may view as standard Democratic values. Simultaneously, in terms of appointments within the larger executive, and actions that the President-elect takes, in terms of the executive order and other things that presidents can do administrative-

ly, there will be an effort to open up and follow the values that have been put forward by some on the Democratic side.

I would expect to see right away that there will be very quick movements to attempt to rejoin the Paris Accord, to at least work rejoining the Open Skies agreement, and to do a whole variety of things to re-engage other parts of the world.

I also think that a very strong signal has been sent by naming former Secretary of State John Kerry as the President's Special Envoy on Climate Change. That, to me is a poignant marker, both symbolically about presidential priorities, but probably in terms of early actions that the United States is poised to take.

With self-reliance push, China looks to reset ties with world

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	44,260	0.98
US Dollar	73.88	0.04
Gold	48,257	-0.03
Brent oil	48.12	-0.29

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	410.15	11.20
Asian Paints	2155.30	1.00
Axist Bank	612.55	12.70
Bajaj Auto	3129.20	77.95
Bajaj Finserv	8806.70	88.95
Bajaj Finance	4921.25	131.50
Bharti Airtel	468.40	4.30
BPCL	378.00	-4.05
Britannia Ind	3548.75	-7.05
Cipla	738.70	7.05
Coal India	125.05	1.10
Divis Lab	3544.30	74.85
Dr Reddys Lab	4901.35	95.05
Eicher Motors	2549.20	-45.90
GAIL (India)	102.75	0.45
Grasim Ind	877.40	34.30
HCL Tech.	842.05	17.35
HDFC	2238.40	47.05
HDFC Bank	1426.65	23.85
HDFC Life	660.80	-4.30
Hero MotoCorp	3024.55	15.80
Hindalco	229.90	6.45
Hind Unilever	2154.20	18.35
ICICI Bank	475.30	2.60
IndusInd Bank	850.55	-4.50
Infosys	1113.20	-2.45
Indian Oil Corp	85.60	-0.15
ITC	194.80	0.95
JSW Steel	359.20	20.95
Kotak Bank	1889.10	26.65
L&T	1118.85	2.85
M&M	728.50	8.55
Maruti Suzuki	6994.25	-61.45
Nestle India Ltd.	17741.95	221.75
NTPC	94.10	0.15
ONGC	80.20	-0.60
PowerGrid Corp	197.65	2.35
Reliance Ind	1952.60	4.80
SBI Life	851.50	2.45
State Bank	245.45	2.45
Shree Cement	24381.15	682.35
Sun Pharma	511.70	5.50
Tata Motors	173.75	2.30
Tata Steel	568.40	27.15
TCS	2720.60	19.30
Tech Mahindra	857.05	-5.20
Titan	1327.40	20.45
UltraTech Cement	4834.15	14.30
UPL	420.55	1.95
Wipro	354.85	4.85

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.69	74.01
Euro	87.76	88.17
British Pound	98.39	98.83
Japanese Yen (100)	70.67	70.97
Chinese Yuan	11.21	11.26
Swiss Franc	81.11	81.46
Singapore Dollar	55.05	55.31
Canadian Dollar	56.65	56.90
Malaysian Ringgit	18.10	18.20
Australian Dollar	54.26	54.54

Source: Indian Bank

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed a plea to quash an FIR registered against a company dealing with the business operations of luxury car brands for allegedly "duping" a customer.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde refused the plea filed by Skoda Auto Volkswagen India Pvt. Ltd. – which handles brands such as Skoda, Volkswagen and Audi – in a judgment. The FIR was based on a complaint filed by a customer in U.P. He claimed he had bought 7 Audi cars from authorised dealers who had assured him there were no cheat devices in the cars to manipulate the effectiveness of emission controls. He later found the NOx emissions high and had to pay a hefty fine.

F.C. Kohli set India on a path that brought it glory

He deserved the title Father of Indian IT industry'

S. MAHALINGAM

It is debatable if India could have become a force in the Information Technology (IT) industry if Faqir Chand Kohli had not assumed leadership of a tiny division of Tata Sons called Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) in 1969.

He was, at first, reluctant to assume the position of General Manager in TCS when he thought he was destined for much greater things in Tata Power, an organisation he had joined in the early 1950s after graduating from MIT in the U.S.

An engineer first, he soon became fascinated with computing technology, which was reshaping the world. He felt that India had the capability to participate in the IT industry on equal terms along with the giants in the western world. He went about preparing TCS to pioneer the Indian IT revolution.

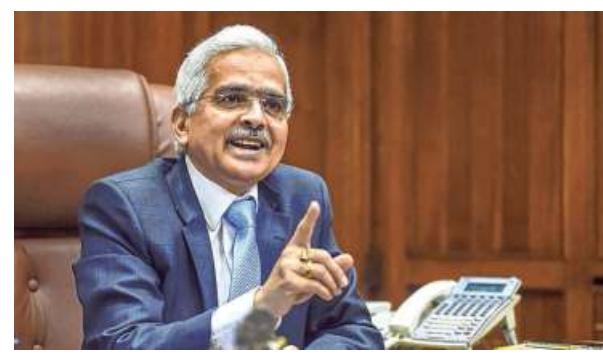
Recovery's momentum is stronger-than-expected: Das

'Need to watch demand sustainability amid downside risks from COVID-19 surge'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

India's economy has exhibited a stronger-than-expected pick up in momentum of recovery following a multi-speed normalisation of activity in the second quarter, Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Thursday.

"The global economy has also witnessed a stronger than expected rebound in activity," Mr. Das said at a Foreign Exchange Dealers' Association of India (FEDAI) event. "The IMF has accordingly revised its assessment for global growth in 2020 to a less severe contraction than what was assessed in June," he added.



Mr. Das cited the IMF revising its global 2020 growth outlook to a less severe contraction than assessed in June. ■ PTI

The RBI chief, however, cautioned that even as the economic outlook had improved, downside risks to growth continued due to a recent surge in COVID-19 infections in advanced economies and parts of India.

Post-festival activity

"We need to be watchful about the sustainability of demand after festivals and a possible reassessment of

market expectations surrounding the vaccine," he stressed.

"The monetary policy guidance in October emphasised the need to see through temporary inflation pressures and also maintain the accommodative stance at least during the current financial year and into the next," he added.

Mr. Das said a key source of resilience had been the comfortable external balance position supported by surplus current account balances over two consecutive quarters, resumption of portfolio capital flows on the back of robust FDI inflows, and sustained build-up of foreign exchange reserves.

Nielsen widens estimate for FMCG contraction to 1-3%

'Consumer confidence, IIP, inflation are all headwinds'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The FMCG sector in India is expected to contract by 1% to 3% in 2020 despite green shoots seen recently in economic indicators, due to significant headwinds seen in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, according to market research firm Nielsen.

This is the third time that Nielsen has downgraded its growth forecast for the sector amid the outbreak of the pandemic. In January, the sector was projected to grow at 9-10% in 2020; this was revised to growth of 5-6% and then to a minimal change over the previous year, in the



range of -1% to 1%.

Replying to a query, Rajesh Shirali, lead, Data Science, South Asia, Nielsen Global Connect, said, "The fact is that the headwinds, whether it is overall consumer confidence which has plummeted or GDP which is still to get back into the

green zone or inflation which is still inching towards higher levels or IIP which is still somewhere around the borderline... The headwinds are outweighing the tailwinds." He added that the sector saw significant growth in the second quarter ended June and it was highly unlikely that that would get compensated in the fourth quarter [October-December].

However, in the July-September quarter, the FMCG industry displayed some signs of recovery with a 1.6% growth over the year earlier period. The growth followed a year-on-year decline of 19% in Q2.

Future rebuffs Amazon tack on disclosure

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Kishore Biyani-led Future Retail Ltd. (FRL) on Thursday accused e-commerce giant Amazon of adopting a media strategy of "having every development reported and converted into a line of communication with stock exchanges" regarding the Amazon-Future Coupons' arbitration proceedings in Singapore.

The Court of Singapore International Arbitration Centre had turned down a plea by FRL to be excluded from being a party to arbitration. In a regulatory filing, FRL said, "This disclosure is being made out of abundance caution to avoid any speculation."

The Court of Singapore International Arbitration Centre had turned down a plea by FRL to be excluded from being a party to arbitration. In a regulatory filing, FRL said, "This disclosure is being made out of abundance caution to avoid any speculation."

'GDP contracted 10.7% in Q2'

Business activity index indicates further recovery in Q3: SBI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's GDP likely contracted 10.7% in the second quarter, with a further recovery likely in the third quarter, SBI Research said in a report released on Thursday, citing improvements in economic indicators over October and November.

"After witnessing a decline of 23.9% in real GDP in Q1 FY21, we expect Q2 GDP growth at -10.7% (earlier: -12.5%) with positive bias, based on our 'Nowcasting' model with 41 high frequency indicators, associated with industry activity, service activity, and global economy," SBI Group chief economic adviser Soumya Kanti Ghosh wrote in the research report.

"The yearly SBI Composite Index reached a 19-month high of 53.9 (reflecting moderate growth) this month, compared to 53 in October. The



monthly index has touched an all-time high of 62.1 (reflecting high growth) in November, from 59.3 in October, the report's author pointed out.

GST collections to rise

Based on this, SBI projected that the index of industrial production (IIP) and manufacturing sector output may grow by 2-3% in October 2020 and 3.5-4.5% in November. Goods and Services Tax collections were expected to improve further in November.

"We project November GST collections at a 10-month high of ₹1.08 lakh crore as compared to ₹1.05 lakh crore in October. The excellent improvement in GST is mainly due to traction in economic activities and services in festive month of November," Mr. Ghosh said.

TVS Group firm to buy 100% stake in MFCS, arm M&M to get minority stake in share swap

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

TVS Automobile Solutions Pvt. Ltd. (TVS ASL), a part of the TVS Group, announced the acquisition of the entire equity stake of Mahindra First Choice Services Ltd. (MFCS) and its subsidiary Auto Digitech Pvt. Ltd. (ADPL) through a share-swap deal.

The acquisition will enable MFCS, a part of the \$19.4 billion Mahindra Group, to integrate its operations with TVS ASL, a multi-brand independent automobile aftermarket player, the companies said in a filing.

"It is a share swap transaction in which M&M will secure a minority stake in TVS ASL, while the latter



will get 100% stake in MFCS," G. Srinivasa Raghavan, MD, TVS ASL, said.

M&M said the company would invest about ₹35 crore for acquisition of shares in TVS ASL, comparable to the consideration the latter will pay to acquire shares of MFCS and ADPL.

NPCI raises ₹81.64 cr. from 19 entities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has completed private placement of 4.63% of its equity shares worth ₹81.64 crore.

NPCI made an offer for private placement to 131 RBI-regulated entities, out of which 19 showed interest and were allotted shares. "With this we have also broad based our shareholding to include new categories like payments banks, small finance banks and payment system operators in addition to existing public sector, private sector, foreign, cooperative and regional rural banks," said NPCI's chief of finance Rupesh H. Acharya.

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TII acquires control of CG Power

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Tube Investments of India Ltd. (TII), a Murugappa group firm, has acquired controlling stake in CG Power and Industrial Solutions with allotment of equity shares and warrants. With the allotment of equity shares, TII holds 50.62% and CG Power has become its subsidiary.

As per the proposal, CG Power has allotted 64.25 crore equity shares of ₹2 each at a price of ₹8.56 (including premium) per share, for an aggregate sum of ₹550 crore, and 17.52 crore warrants amounting to ₹37.50 crore

A storied rivalry looks to add more engrossing chapters

Friday's ODI marks India's return to international cricket after eight months; hungry Australia desperate for revenge after the 2018-19 loss at home

INDIA IN AUS

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR

In a year that witnessed a virus forcing mankind to be static, it is time for Indian cricket to get back on the rails. The southern hemisphere beckons and Virat Kohli's men are set to kick off their Australian tour with the first ODI at Sydney on Friday. And over the next eight weeks, the Men in Blue will play two more ODIs and three Twenty20Is before slipping into their whites for the subsequent four Tests.

Interestingly, it was from Australia's Trans-Tasman neighbour New Zealand that India flew back after the second Test concluded at Christchurch on March 2. And now, after a prolonged gap forced by COVID-19, the team is back Down Under. Most of the stars played the recent Indian Premier League, but as members of a united national team, the Sydney clash would be their first after eight months.

Kohli and company will step into a storied rivalry on par with the Ashes and Indo-Pak encounters. India and Australia have carved their

unique niche, with the miracle at Eden Gardens in 2001 remaining top of the charts. Kohli's men have to add their share of engrossing chapters. They did that with aplomb during the 2018-19 tour in which the Test and ODI series were won. But this time, more needs to be done, be it coping with bio-bubbles or devising plans against a strong host.

Smith, Warner back

Australia has the services of Steve Smith and David Warner besides other promising batsmen, notably Marnus Labuschagne, and an incisive pace attack featuring Mitchell Starc. Smith and Warner were absent in the 2018-19 series following the ball-tampering controversy.

In contrast, India will miss Rohit Sharma (sore hamstring) in the limited-over encounters. However, there is an opportunity to seize for newly elevated vice-captain K.L. Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan, Mayank Agarwal, Shreyas Iyer and Manish Pandey. Hope floats too for left-arm seamer T. Natarajan.

And as the outfit dons a 1990s inspired retro-jersey, it also marks India's maiden fo-

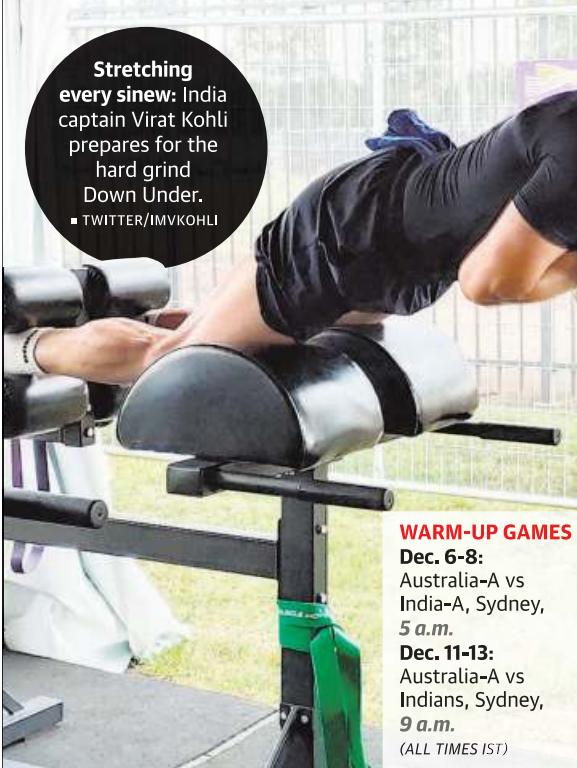
ray in the post-M.S. Dhoni era. The former skipper's shoes are massive and whether the balancing and explosive role he combined together would sit easily on Hardik Pandya or Ravindra Jadeja remains to be seen.

The longer format would offer a tougher scrutiny, especially with Kohli taking paternity leave after the first Test. There is uncertainty around Rohit being fit in time for the last two Tests, and also about getting past the quarantine clause. Much would hinge on Cheteshwar Pujara continuing being the bulwark. Meanwhile, Ajinkya Rahane will have the added pressure of leading in the last three Tests.

What would satiate the Indian appetite through the tour is the presence of speedsters Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami, who could be a handful both for Aaron Finch's men in limited-over skirmishes and Tim Paine and colleagues in the Tests. With fans being allowed, though with curbs on their numbers, live audience-involvement would bolster the players. Sport needs an audience and India against Australia has its own splendid charms.

Tour guide

India is set to play three ODIs, three T20Is and four Tests in Australia. Here's a look at how the touring side has fared Down Under in each of the three formats on previous visits and who the top performers have been:



WARM-UP GAMES
Dec. 6-8: Australia-A vs India-A, Sydney, 5 a.m.
Dec. 11-13: Australia-A vs Indians, Sydney, 9 a.m.
(ALL TIMES IST)

SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO
COMPILED BY R. NARAYANAN AND G. PRASAD

		ODI SERIES					TRIANGULAR						
		BILATERAL		INDIA			AUSTRALIA		AUSTRALIA				
Played	2	India	1	Australia	1		8	India	1	Australia	7		
India won the 2018-19 three-match series 2-1													
India won the Commonwealth Bank Series in 2007-08													
		MOST RUNS					T20I SERIES						
Played	4	India	1	Australia	1		12	India	1	Australia	8		
Rohit Sharma	18	956	171 n.o.	59.75	91.92	2/4	Sachin Tendulkar	38	1809	241 n.o.	53.20	7	
2020 SCHEDULE: Nov. 27 and 29: Sydney Dec. 2: Canberra. All at 9.10 a.m.													
		MOST WICKETS					Most Wickets	Inn	Wkts	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	4W/5W
Irfan Pathan	14	22	4/41	32.95	6.45	1/0	Australia	1	8	Jasprit Bumrah	6	8	3/23
2020 SCHEDULE: Dec. 4: Canberra Dec. 6 & 8: Sydney. All at 1.40 p.m.													
India's series win came in 2015-16, a 3-0 sweep													
		TEST SERIES					Test Series	Inn	Runs	HS	Avg.	50s	100s
Played	12	India	1	Australia	8		12	India	1	Australia	8		
Sachin Tendulkar	38	1809	241 n.o.	53.20	7	6	Kapil Dev	21	51	8/106	24.58	61.5	5/0
2020 SCHEDULE: Dec. 17-21: Adelaide (Day-Night), 9.30 a.m. Dec. 26-30: Melbourne, 5 a.m. Jan. 7-11: Sydney, 5 a.m. Jan. 15-19: Brisbane, 5 a.m.													
India won its only series on the previous tour in 2018-19, when it triumphed 2-1 (four-Test series)													

Thought Rohit was travelling with us: Kohli

India skipper says that the way the matter was handled was 'confusing'

WRIDDHAAYAN BHATTACHARYYA

Virat Kohli, disappointed at the lack of clarity in the Rohit Sharma issue, said the way the matter was handled was "confusing." He also felt that Rohit and Ishant Sharma could have recovered in Australia like Wriddhiman Saha. At a virtual press conference of Thursday, the India skipper was candid in his views. Excerpts:



Vital cogs: India will look to Shami and Rahul to power the side against Australia. ■ TWITTER/BCCI

on that flight to Australia. We had no information on why he was not travelling with us. The only other information we received officially was that he was at the NCA and will be further assessed on December 11. We had been playing the waiting game for a while, which is not ideal at all. It has been confusing.

We are looking at giving opportunities to the younger players. It is a very important series for them to grow as individuals.

On Bumrah and Shami's workload in the series

It is a no-brainer. They have gone through a full IPL season and bowled beautifully. They are in great rhythm. It will be important to monitor the workload and that's when the young guys come in. As a captain, it is crucial to know how the bowlers stand in terms of workload and how their bodies are feeling.

On starting well in the white-ball series for momentum

I don't think there is any extra desperation or need to think on those lines. The last time we were successful here was for a reason. We are focusing on a process and we are strong in our mind to be at our best in difficult situations and that doesn't change.

On the percentage point system in the World Test Championship

It is surprising because we were told that points were the matter of contention for the top two teams qualifying in the World Test Championship and now suddenly, it has become percentage. Further questions about this should be asked to the ICC to understand why this has been done.

On youngstars such as Gill

I watched his documentary last year while we were at the World Cup. It was amazing to see the aura and the persona around him, and the stuff that he went through. It is a void that can't be filled.

We have lost a genius: Kohli on Maradona

SPORTS BUREAU

Virat Kohli remembered Maradona, who passed away on Wednesday, as someone who inspired people from every discipline.

"It's a sad day for sport, and obviously for football. We have lost a genius. We have lost someone who has inspired people across generations and walks of life."

"I watched his documentary last year while we were at the World Cup. It was amazing to see the aura and the persona around him, and the stuff that he went through. It is a void that can't be filled."

Ishant ruled out; Natarajan in ODI squad

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The BCCI has announced that pacer Ishant Sharma has been ruled out of India's Test series in Australia, while left-arm pacer T. Natarajan has been added to the ODI squad ahead of Friday's opener as a backup for the injured Navdeep Saini.

The Board also clarified that Rohit Sharma had returned to Mumbai from the UAE to attend to his ailing father.

Argentina mourns its *dios*

Maradona to be buried in same cemetery as his parents

AGENCIES BUENOS AIRES

Argentines lined up in the streets of Buenos Aires on Thursday to say goodbye to Diego Maradona, who passed away on Wednesday, as someone who inspired people from every discipline.

"It's a sad day for sport, and obviously for football. We have lost a genius. We have lost someone who has inspired people across generations and walks of life."

"I watched his documentary last year while we were at the World Cup. It was amazing to see the aura and the persona around him, and the stuff that he went through. It is a void that can't be filled."

Maradona for me is the greatest thing that happened to me in life. I love him as much as my father and it's like my old man died," Christian Montelli, 22, a fan of the star's former club Boca Juniors.

Argentina also declared three days of national mourning.

Major athletes and world leaders, including Argentina-born Pope Francis, paid tribute to Maradona.

The first to bid farewell

were his daughters and close family members. Then came former teammates of the 1986 World Cup-winning squad including Oscar Ruggeri.

The first fan to visit was Nahuel de Lima, using crutches to move because of a disability.

Meanwhile, Carlos Bilardo, the coach of Argentina's 1986 World Cup-winning team who is in poor health, was still unaware on Thursday of Maradona's death because of his family's wish not to upset him.

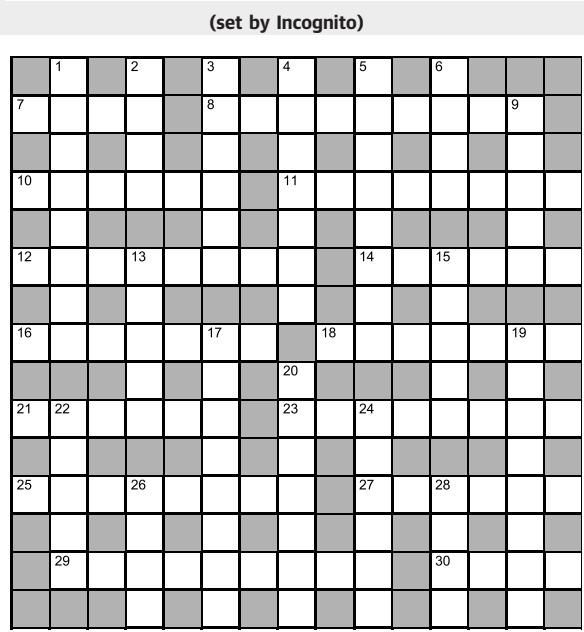
"I cannot tell him that Diego is dead," Carlos's brother Jorge Bilardo told Radio Provincia, because he had a "father-son" relationship with Maradona.



Honouring the legend: A World Cup trophy replica stands next to Diego Maradona's casket at the presidential palace in Buenos Aires. ■ REUTERS

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(set by Incognito)



■ ACROSS

7 North African doctors' room (4)

8 Want a trek to be organised to reservoir? (5,4)

10 Cast actors: hero for heroine, perhaps, or vice versa (2-4)

11 Panel is ordered by Earl? That's fine! (8)

12 Smear pan haphazardly to make cheese (8)

14 Wild rage displayed by an American President (6)

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at <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>



SUDOKU

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TV PICKS

Australia v India: 1st ODI, Sony Ten 1 & Six (SD & HD) and Ten 3 (SD), 9 a.m.
ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Star Sports 3 (SD), 7.30 p.m.
South Africa v England: 1st T20I, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 9.30 a.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Saturday)

IN BRIEF



Naples moves to rename stadium after Maradona

WASHINGTON The mayor of Naples on Thursday started the formal process to rename the San Paolo stadium after Diego Maradona. The move comes with the city in mourning for the soccer great, who died on Wednesday. "We are already putting it together this morning, taking the first steps to dedicate Naples' stadium to Maradona," Luigi De Magistris said. AP



Injured Pretorius to miss England series

CAPE TOWN Cricket South Africa on Thursday announced that medium-pacer Dwaine Pretorius had been ruled out of the squad for the upcoming series against England due to a hamstring injury. Pretorius was injured during a team practice session at Newlands and is expected to take three to four weeks to recover. ANI

Manish and Muthu lose in the opening round

CAIRO Manish Sureshkumar was beaten 3-6, 6-2, 6-4 by qualifier Yurii Dzhavakian in the first round of the \$15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament here. In another match, Poland's Daniel Michalski got the better of Muthu Aadhiya Senthilkumar 6-2, 6-2.



White to continue at Strikers as coach

ADELAIDE Former Australia cricketer Cameron White will continue his coaching career as an assistant with Adelaide Strikers for the upcoming edition of the Big Bash League, the club announced on Thursday. White, a playing member with the Strikers in BBL season nine, announced his retirement from professional cricket in August to turn his attention to coaching. ANI

Fans to return for Premier League matches

LONDON Liverpool, Chelsea, Brighton and West Ham will be able to allow fans into their stadiums next month under a new tier system to tackle the spread of coronavirus in England. The clubs are within tier-two areas, meaning it can welcome up to 2,000 fans. The League is yet to confirm the scheduling for matches to be played over the weekend of December 5 and 6. AFP

Naples bids adieu to its adopted 'king'

Maradona's achievements at Napoli cemented his position as one of the greatest ever

TRIBUTE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE NAPLES

A cry goes up outside the San Paolo Stadium in Naples, where since daybreak Thursday tearful mourners have been laying candles and messages for football great Diego Maradona.

"Diego, Diego, Diego!" chants the crowd which gathered where scarves and shirts in Napoli's blue and white have been hung on the fence, transforming it into a makeshift shrine to the city's adopted "king".

"Hear our voices, hear our hearts," shouts Rosario, 77, famed among fans as the stadium's resident "poet", as applause goes up and grown men in face masks in the team's colours openly weep.

An icon

Buildings around the southern Italian city are adorned with depictions of the man who dragged Napoli to the top of the Italian game and became an icon for Neapolitans.

Maradona played for the then-unfashionable Napoli between 1984 and 1991, after joining following an increasingly unhappy spell at Spanish glamour club Barcelona.

He also lifted the 1989 UE-



Crowning glory: Diego Maradona maintained that the league triumph with Napoli was his greatest, eclipsing the World Cup win a year earlier. ■ AP

FA Cup, Napoli's only European trophy. He was still Napoli's record goalscorer until three years ago.

Sunday warrior

"He was our Sunday warrior," 46-year old Fernando Carfora, whose apartment building sports a mural of Maradona, told AFP.

"Maradona didn't play with his feet, he played with

his head. Nobody scored Maradona's goals," he said.

"We couldn't wait for him to play, (Sunday) was a day of celebration. When he wasn't playing we were all sad."

Quasi-religious

Courted by criminals, the King of Spain and even the Pope, Maradona became a quasi-religious figure in Naples.

Fathers and sons per-

formed joy to a desperately poor city blighted by bloody conflicts between the competing clans of the powerful Camorra organised crime network, one of whom Maradona would get to know well.

On Thursday many of the pictures and letters being left for him outside the stadium were from adoring children.

Fathers and sons per-

The Foot of God.



Carlsen survives day of upsets

SKILLING OPEN

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Magnus Carlsen was the only expected winner, after other pre-match favourites Hikaru Nakamura, Ian Nepomniachtchi and Wesley So crashed to surprising first-set defeats, in the quarterfinals of the \$100,000 Skilling Open online chess tournament on Wednesday.

Carlsen, after escaping a seemingly lost position in the first game of the best-of-four-rapid-game set, saw off

Anish Giri in two more games before winning the fourth. Giri, like the other three losers of the day, faces a must-win situation in the second set to stay alive in the competition.

Teimour Radjabov won with black against So to emerge the fastest winner of the day.

The results: Quarterfinals, Set One: Magnus Carlsen (Nor) bt Anish Giri (Ned) 2.5-1.5; Levon Aronian (Arm) bt Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus) 2.5-1.5; Teimour Radjabov (Aze) bt Wesley So (USA) 2.5-0.5; Maxime Vachier-Lagrange (Fra) bt Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 2.5-1.5.



Feat: Lewandowski moved level with Raul to be third highest scorer in CL with 71. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Lewandowski fires Bayern into last 16

City makes it four wins out of four; Liverpool stumbles; Inter on the brink

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

Robert Lewandowski set Bayern Munich on the way to a 3-1 Champions League win over Salzburg on Wednesday as the holder joined Manchester City in qualifying for the last 16 with two group games to spare, while Liverpool went down 2-0 to

Atalanta. On a night when clubs marked news of Diego Maradona's death by holding a minute's silence before all games, Bayern eased to a record-extending 15th straight win in the competition.

Pepe Guardiola's City earli-

er secured progress with a 1-0 win away to Olympiakos in Greece, its fourth win out of four in Group C.

The results:

Group A: Atletico Madrid 0

drew with Lokomotiv Moscow 0;

Bayern Munich 3 (Lewandowski 42, Coman 52, Sane 68)

bt Salzburg 1 (Berisha 73).

Group B: Inter Milan 0 lost to

Real Madrid 2 (Hazard 7-pen,

Kaká 20, Llorente 24)

Group C: Marseille 0 lost to

Porto 2 (Sanusi 39, Oliveira 72-

pen); Olympiakos 0 lost to

Manchester City 1 (Foden 36).

Group D: Ajax 3 (Gravenberch

47, Mazraoui 49, Neres 66) bt

Midtjylland 1 (Mabil 80-pen);

Liverpool 0 lost to Atalanta 2

(Ilicic 60, Gosens 64).

NorthEast holds Blasters in a thriller

The Kerala team will be unhappy having let go a two-nil advantage

ISL 2020-21

SPORTS BUREAU

On a day when the Kerala government announced a two-day official mourning in honour of Diego Maradona, the State's best-known football team - Kerala Blasters - tried hard to give something to cheer about for the fans, but did not quite succeed.

Blasters, however, picked up their first point of the ISL season thanks to a thrilling 2-2 draw with NorthEast United at the GMC Stadium, Bambolim, Goa. Kibu Vicuna's boys would not be too pleased with that result, though, having led 2-0 at one point.

They seemed determined to put behind their disappointing start to the campaign, when they were beaten 1-0 by ATK Mohun Bagan six days ago.

After conceding a free-kick, from a potentially dangerous position in the second minute, Blasters hit right back and took the lead



Pleased as punch: Idrissa Sylla, centre, celebrates scoring NEUFC's equaliser. ■ ISL/SPORTZPICS

not long after.

In the fifth minute, a superb, curling free-kick into the box by Seityasen Singh found Sergio Idoncha, who jumped above the NorthEast defenders and headed the ball in. Some 18 minutes later, the Spaniard provided an excellent chance to Gary Hooper, who, however, missed it up.

But Hooper made amends from the spot in injury time. The penalty, awarded for Ra-

kesh Pradhan's challenge on Puitea, seemed a harsh one though.

The NorthEast men came strongly back in the second half. They reduced the lead six minutes after the break through Kwesi Appiah, following a corner kick. But his joy turned into agony some 15 minutes later, as he wast ed a penalty.

Idrissa Sylla, however,

found the equaliser towards

the end, giving the finishing touches to a splendid long ball from Gurjinder Kumar.

The result: Kerala Blasters 2 (Sergio Idoncha 5, Gary Hooper 45+1-p) drew with NorthEast United 2 (Kwesi Appiah 51, Idrissa Sylla 90).

FRIDAY'S MATCH

SC East vs ATK Mohun Bagan

7.30 P.M.

STAR SPORTS 2 (SD & HD) AND 3

Different habitat, but same old rivalry

ATKMB, SC East Bengal in marquee clash

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA

One of the most important dates in the Indian football calendar, the day of Kolkata Derby, returns after a prolonged break. The clash of the Kolkata giants East Bengal and Mohun Bagan has changed its habitat to be a part of the Indian Super League from this season.

This transformation is the result of a metamorphosis in the two teams' ownership pattern but the change does little to dent the intensity of the rivalry that is almost a century-old now. The spirit has definitely permeated to the squads preparing for the "big match" which gets underway at Tilak Maidan Stadium, Vasco da Gama, Goa, on Friday evening.

"It is a massive game not because we are playing ATK Mohun Bagan, but it is important because it is our first game as a team," said the East Bengal coach Robbie Fowler.

"But the important thing is you got to go into them and

try to use your head. You got to try and be sensible. In these types of games, the players can't get carried away. You will dive into tackles, you will get too enthusiastic. So in this case, let's try and play sensibly," says the Liverpool FC legend. East Bengal has announced experienced defender Daniel Fox as the captain for the season.

Spirit upbeat

The spirit is quite upbeat in the ATK Mohun Bagan camp, which is now an amalgamation of the ISL and the I-League champions. Spanish head coach, Antonio Lopez Habas said both the sides are on an even plane even though his side may have the confidence of winning the opening match against Kerala Blasters.

"Maybe the advantage is with us as we have played the first match and won it. That way it may not be favourable for East Bengal. Again, East Bengal can be benefiting as they are playing their first match," Habas said.

Six Pakistan squad members test positive in NZ

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WELLINGTON

Pakistan's cricket tour of New Zealand was in the balance on Thursday after six squad members tested positive for COVID-19 and the team received a "final warning" for flouting quarantine rules.

New Zealand health authorities revoked the permission given to Pakistan players to train while in isolation at their Christchurch hotel, making it clear they would not tolerate risky behaviour in a country that has largely eradicated the virus.

"It is a privilege to come to New Zealand to play sport, but in return teams must stick to the rules that are designed to keep COVID-19 out of our communities," director-general of health Ashley Bloomfield said in a statement.

Bloomfield said CCTV showed members of the tour party breaching social distancing protocols.

DELHI ROUND-UP



The best: The champions and runners-up in the AITA Championships series under-14 tennis tournament. From left, Pratyushraj Goel, Kartikey Tyagi, Aditi Tyagi and Raja Sarvagna Kilaru. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

sub-junior snooker championship at the Mega Pool Academy in Dwarka.

The two will represent Delhi in the National championship. Activities have been few around

Athletes at ease, promise their best performance

Organisers assure safest arrangements despite surge in COVID-19 cases in the Capital

HALF-MARATHON

KAMESH SRINIVASAN NEW DELHI

It was surprise back home when they set out to compete in the Airtel Delhi Half marathon scheduled for Sunday, but the defending champions and world record holders were at ease in the Capital. They promised their best performance in their interaction during the "meet and greet" session here on Thursday.

With the pandemic having swept the world, sporting activities have been few around

the world. Despite a surge in the positive cases of the coronavirus, the organisers in the Capital have assured the safest arrangements, much to the conviction of the assembled world-class field.

"Very happy to be in India. I love to run here," said the men's defending champion Andamlac Belihu, quite confident that the focused training back home could lead to a course record, even though he had missed a medal in the world championship.

The two-time world champion