

Timings

DELI

TUESDAY, OCT. 20

RISE 06:25	SET 17:47
RISE 10:10	SET 20:49
WEDNESDAY, OCT. 21	
RISE 06:26	SET 17:46
RISE 11:16	SET 21:45
THURSDAY, OCT. 22	
RISE 06:27	SET 17:45
RISE 12:16	SET 22:43

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 34 16
Safdarjung 34 16
Palam 33 19

Delhi Palam Today
35°C Pleasant hazy morning and warm day with light dry winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
35°C Pleasant morning with haze and warm day likely. Sky would remain sunny.

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Prosecutors move HC in riots case

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Prosecutors' Welfare Association (DPWA) has moved the Delhi High Court challenging the city government's decision to appoint special public prosecutors (SPPs), including Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, in cases pertaining to the north-east Delhi riots.

The plea seeks quashing of Delhi government's June 24 notification appointing the SPPs on the ground that it was issued on police recommendations, in violation of the scheme provided under the Criminal Procedure Code.

It has sought appointment of independent SPPs by respecting the principles of fairness and impartiality. The plea is likely to come up for hearing later this week.

Two die while cleaning septic tank in Azadpur

Workers were not wearing safety gear; factory owner held

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Two men died while cleaning a septic tank in north-west Delhi's Azadpur, the police said on Monday.

On Sunday evening, information was received that three men had fallen unconscious while cleaning a septic tank in a factory in G-Block, Azadpur. Fire officials sent four fire tenders to the spot to rescue the men.

During preliminary enquiry, it was found that the factory – located in G.T. Karnal Road industrial area in Bada Bagh Delhi – manufactures gold and silver chains, and stored various diluted chemicals, used in the process, in a large septic tank.

Engaged for ₹400 each

The tender for cleaning the tank was given by factory owner Rajender Soni to contractor Pramod Dangi (35), a resident of Najafgarh, a senior officer said.

A case has been registered. Mr. Soni and Mr. Dangi have been arrested. The

Bidhuri blames govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Monday accused the Delhi government of being "fully responsible" for the death of four people during cleaning of septic tanks in two separate incidents in Delhi in the last 10 days.

He demanded that the Chief Minister provide compensation of ₹1 crore each to the kin of the deceased and ₹50 lakh each to the injured.

labourers were not wearing any safety gears and had been engaged for ₹400 each, said DCP (North-West) Vijayanta Arya.

"When seven persons were cleaning the tank, two became unconscious. They were taken to Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital

On October 10, two people were killed and one was injured while cleaning a septic tank in Badarpur. The second incident took place in Azadpur on October 18.

"On November 15, 2019, the CM had held a press meet to announce the 'Chief Minister Septic Tank Cleanliness Scheme'. Why has it not yet been implemented? Where are the machines? What happened to the budget of ₹150 crore?" Mr. Bidhuri said.

where Idris, 45, and Salim, 45, both residents of Khurja in Uttar Pradesh, were declared brought dead," said the police officer.

Abdul Saddam, 35, Salim, 35, and Mansoor, 38, were treated and later discharged. Islam, 40, is still undergoing treatment and is stable.

arson and loot.

The court granted bail to Sonu Kumar and Mukesh on furnishing a bond of ₹20,000 and ₹25,000, respectively, with one surety of like amount in each of the 10 cases. The court also asked them to share their mobile numbers with the SHO of Bhajanpura police station upon their release and keep their phones in working condition. It also asked them to get Aarogya Setu App installed on their phones.

Lawyer Saroj Kumar Jha, who is representing several accused in riots cases, said Shyam Patel, Mukesh and Sonu Kumar were granted bail a few days after their arrest but were released after three months as they were unable to deposit surety bonds.

He said the fourth accused, Sunil Sharma, who too got bail is still in jail as he is unable to deposit surety bonds. Mr. Jha said the bails came after the police failed to produce any direct evi-

dence such as mobile video, CCTV footage to prove the presence of the accused persons at the crime spots.

'Common witness'

"In all the FIRs, the witness is common. How can it be possible for a single policeman to be present at all crime spots in the area at the same time?" Mr. Jha said, adding that the police framed the men as they are poor.

Mukesh is a rickshaw puller, Shyam a vegetable ven-

dor, Sonu works as a dishwasher at a restaurant and Sunil is a daily wage worker.

The police claim to have recovered women's undergarments, cosmetics, massage machines and bangles from Amit's possession on his disclosure that he had looted a shop belonging to one Gulshan Hussain during the riots. The other men sold the looted goods and spent the money on consumable items, an officer said.

A constable, who is the eyewitness in the case, said that on February 24, he was on duty in Bhajanpura when he saw 70-80 people – armed with iron rods, sticks and kerosene oil – chanting *Jai Shree Ram* slogans.

The crowd broke open a closed laundry shop, which belonged to a Muslim man, and set it on fire.

The crowd targeted more shops in the area, the constable had stated. He later identified eight people who were part of the crowd.

the civic bodies," Mr. Pathak said during a press meet.

"Naye chehre nayi udaan,

Dilli maange kamal nishan

was the slogan the BJP used to cover up their corruption. Their councillors have only stolen from Delhi and filled their own pockets. I am not saying this, former BJP chief Manoj Tiwari agreed that corruption is up to the brim in the management that runs

campaign are worse than the ones before. They have stolen so much from the municipalities that the civic bodies are unable to pay the salaries of COVID warriors," Mr. Pathak said, adding: "I appeal to Delhiites to not fall for the false promises made by the BJP. In the 2022 elections, I am sure citizens will be more aware and teach a lesson to people trying to ruin Delhi."

HC questions Amanatullah's appointment

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday questioned the city government as to how AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan can be allowed to be appointed as chairperson of the Waqf Board when he was facing allegations of irregularities.

"Why should he [Mr. Amanatullah] be allowed to be part of the system when there are serious allegations against him," the Bench asked.

The High Court was hearing a petition by Mohd Iqbal Khan seeking quashing of the notification on the ground that if the AAP MLA is elected as chairperson, the report of a special audit initiated to look into allegations of irregularities against him would be placed before him.

Additional Solicitor General Sanjay Jain, appearing for the Delhi government, said the Board has nothing to do with the special audit and its findings would go directly to the government.

The court has listed the case for further hearing on November 9.

BJP has accepted its councillors are corrupt: AAP

'Adesh Gupta's remark on fielding fresh faces for 2022 civic polls is an admission'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

AAP leader Durgesh Pathak said the BJP had changed candidates due to corruption in the 2017 civic polls too.

"In the last 14 years, they have only spread corruption. Their councillors have only stolen from Delhi and filled their own pockets. I am not saying this, former BJP chief Manoj Tiwari agreed that corruption is up to the brim in the management that runs

the civic bodies," Mr. Pathak said during a press meet.

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DU's second list admissions begin

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

On the first day of admissions to merit-based undergraduate courses under the second cut-off list, Delhi University colleges received 9,785 applications out of which 2,580 applications were approved.

The second cut-off list, which was released on October 17, saw a minor dip in cut-offs for most courses with several colleges closing the list for geography, political science, psychology, Hindi and Sanskrit.

The admission process under the new list will continue till Wednesday. Students



Students check the Delhi University website on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

have time till Friday to complete the payment process.

They also have the option of cancelling or withdrawing their admissions and migrating to other colleges if they meet the cut-off criteria.

A cancellation fee of ₹1,000 will be charged.

Court grants bail to four accused in riots case after police fail to produce evidence

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

A local court has granted bail to four persons accused of arson and looting shops of minority community during the north-east Delhi riots in Bhajanpura, noting that the police have failed to produce evidence against them.

A total of eight persons: Neeraj, Manish, Amit Goswami, Sunil Sharma, Sonu Kumar, Rakesh, Mukesh, and Shyam Patel were named in 10 different FIRs for rioting,

arson and loot.

The court granted bail to Sonu Kumar and Mukesh on furnishing a bond of ₹20,000 and ₹25,000, respectively, with one surety of like amount in each of the 10 cases. The court also asked them to share their mobile numbers with the SHO of Bhajanpura police station upon their release and keep their phones in working condition. It also asked them to get Aarogya Setu App installed on their phones.

Labourers were not wearing any safety gears and had been engaged for ₹400 each, said DCP (North-West) Vijayanta Arya.

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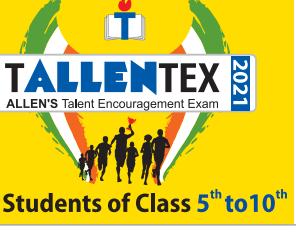
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c. INA Directory
d. INA Coffee Table Book
e. INA Portal
f. INA Membership Kit
g. INA Seminars, Workshops & Conferences
h. INA Training Diaries and Calendars
i. INA Training Institutes
j. This is an invitation of interest from reputed organizations/ consultancies/ agencies having relevant experience in consulting activities for the aforementioned projects. Kindly submit separate proposal for each project. The rates quoted will be valid for next 60 days of English calendar. Interested companies can send their proposal latest by 27th of October 2020
Mr. Mukul Tyagi
General Secretary
Indian Nurserymen Association
office@indiannurserymen.com

'Odd-even to be last weapon against pollution'

Awareness drive on 'red light on, gaadi off' campaign from Oct. 21, says Rai; AQI to worsen in coming days

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Monday said that the odd-even vehicle rationing policy will be used as a "last weapon" if everything else fails in the fight against air pollution in the city.

The air quality of Delhi, Gurugram and Noida were in the 'poor' category on Monday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

"We have implemented the odd-even policy many times and it will be our last weapon," he said, adding: People who are not turning off their vehi-

cles at red lights will be given a rose and environment marshals will appeal to them to turn off their vehicles."

Rai further said the government will launch an awareness programme from October 21 about the "red light on, gaadi off" campaign to reduce air pollution.

"We will run the campaign from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. As many as 100 busy traffic intersections have been selected for the purpose. A total of 2,500 environment marshals will be deployed at these junctions," he said, adding: People who are not turning off their vehi-

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	244	Gurugram	245
Ghaziabad	253	Faridabad	254
Noida	236	Greater Noida	238

Good Satisfactory Moderate Poor Very Poor Severe

51-100 201-300 301-400 >400

Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) | Source: CPCB

per CPCB's 4 p.m. bulletin on Monday, which is an average of the past 24 hours.

The AQI of Delhi is expected to be in the 'poor' to 'very poor' category on Tuesday and is likely to worsen thereon, as per SAFAR.

"A change in surface wind direction is forecast by Wednesday, which is likely to bring on calm surface wind conditions leading to low ventilation and deterioration of AQI. 'Very poor' AQI is predicted for Wednesday and Thursday," it added.

Meanwhile, the Environment Pollution (Prevention &

Control) Authority on Monday wrote to the Chief Secretaries of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to review emission standards of eight thermal power plants in the two States and inform them about it.

Closure of power plants

"We may have to direct closure of the plants, which do not meet 2015 standards as air quality deteriorates in the coming days," the letter read.

The closure of the plants has been a major demand of the Delhi government.

Three of the plants are in U.P. and five are in Haryana.

Delhi govt. to cut cost of RT-PCR test

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government is planning to reduce the price of the RT-PCR test and is expected to come out with a new rate in a week's time, said multiple officials.

"Currently, the rate is capped at ₹2,400 in Delhi... it is only ₹1,200 in Haryana, ₹1,600 in U.P. and ₹1,500 in Karnataka. A committee is being formed to recommend new rates for Delhi," a Delhi government official told *The Hindu*.

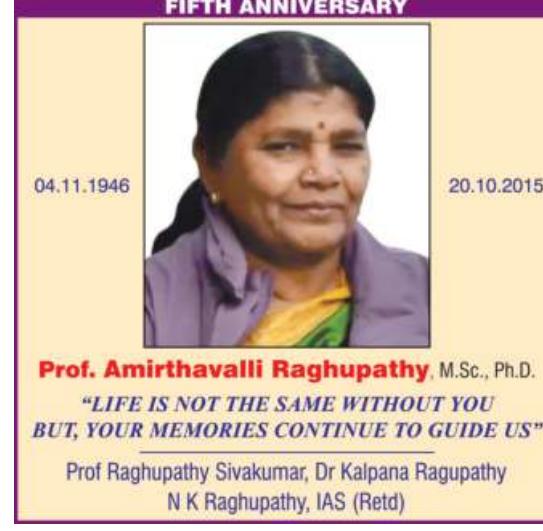
"The government has been planning to reduce the cost of the RT-PCR test for a while," a second official said, confirming the development.

Two types of tests are done to test for COVID-19 in the city: RT-PCR and Rapid Antigen Test. Both tests are done for free at government testing centres and hospitals. Private clinics charge for the test.

After public uproar, the Delhi government had on June 16 capped the rates of COVID-related procedures, including RT-PCR tests.

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1- Name of Item- Washable Mask

2- Date of Issue of Tender 17-10-2020

3- Last Date of receipt of Tender - 26-10-2020, 10:00 AM

4- Date of Opening of Tender - 26-10-2020, 11:00 AM

Further Details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal http://uktenders.gov.in.

IG P/M

Chairman of Purchase Committee, Police H.Q, Uttarakhand Dehradun

DIPR/UK/13571

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E-Tender No. SD-891- online e-Bids are invited for "Supply of 04 Nos. 200MVA

220/132/11kV, 3-phase Auto Transformers" E-tender has been uploaded on 16/10/2020 on www.ektenders.upnic.in Estimated Cost of work: Rs. 25,52 Crore only.

E.M.D. Cost: Rs. 12,80 Lacs only. Last date of tender submission 18/11/2020 at 15:30 hrs. Total Quantum of supply, tender specification and other terms & conditions are as per tender document available on the e-tender portal. Undersigned reserves the right to cancel the e-Bids without assigning any reason. Corrigendum, Addendum, Extension if any shall be uploaded only on the above website. Bidders are advised to visit the website regularly for updated information from time to time.

Superintending Engineer, ESDC-I, UPTCL, RO no: -276-ESDC-1(GS)/ Tender notice RO date : -19/10/20

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- i) Date and time of downloading/Sale of tender documents (Starting Date).
- ii) Date & Time of Bidding Queries/clarification/Pre-bid meet
- iii) Last Date & Time of Bid Uploading
- iv) Date of Submission of hard copies (only Original EMD/DD for Document Fee)
- v) Date & Time of Commercial/technical Bid (Cover-I) opening of the qualifying Bidders
- vi) Date & Time of Financial Bid(Cover-II) opening of the qualifying Bidders

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Notice Inviting E-Tender

Corrigendum NIT No: ENIT-3/2020-21/BLB

Name of Office: Addl. Superintending Engineer, BBMB, Ballabgarh (Faridabad)

Name of work: Misc. civil works at 220KV Sub Station, BBMB, Samaypur

Last date of submission of Pre-Qualification documents: 17.11.2020 up to 16:00 hrs.

Last date of receipt of tender: 24.11.2020 up to 15:00 hrs.

The detailed NIT may be downloaded from website <https://bbmbproc.abprocure.com> and www.bbmb.gov.in

2020-21/BLB

Date & time of start of sale of Bid document: 20.10.2020 at 09:00 Hrs.

Date & time for submission of Bid document: 02.11.2020 upto 17:00 Hrs.

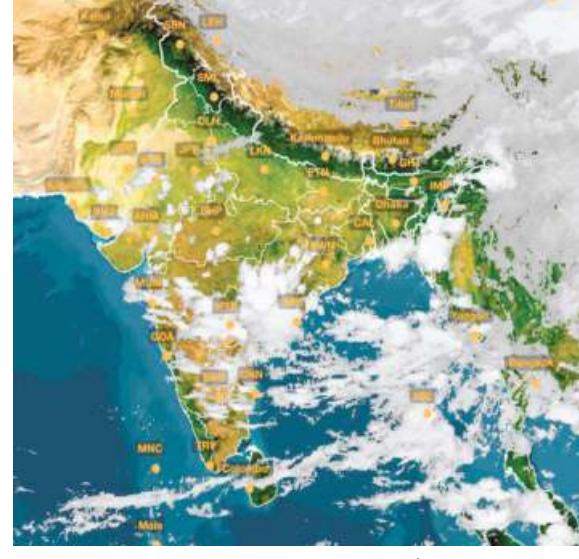
Date & time of opening of Technical Bid: 03.11.2020 at 11:00 Hrs.

Bid processing fee: As per Website. For detail log onto: <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

Note: Any corrigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Tuesday: Heavy/heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Odisha, Telangana, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema, central Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura and Chhattisgarh

CITY **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN** **CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN**

Agartala ... 34.0 ... 25.6 Kozhikode ... 33.2 ... 25.3

Ahmedabad ... 35.5 ... 26.5 Kurnool ... 33.2 ... 25.0

Aizawl ... 28.6 ... 18.3 Lucknow ... 34.5 ... 21.2

Allahabad ... 35.7 ... 23.0 Madurai ... 1.3 ... 37.0 ... 24.4

Bengaluru ... 1.9 ... 26.6 ... 21.0 Mangalore ... 32.1 ... 24.4

Bhopal ... 7 ... 34.3 ... 23.0 Mumbai ... 31.6 ... 26.2

Bhubaneswar ... 0.2 ... 30.8 ... 24.1 Mysuru ... 35 ... 31.0 ... 21.4

Chandigarh ... 34.7 ... 18.1 New Delhi ... 33.9 ... 16.0

Chennai ... 13.2 ... 34.2 ... 25.7 Patna ... 33.5 ... 20.4

Coimbatore ... 1 ... 32.6 ... 23.3 Port Blair ... 16.2 ... 27.8 ... 24.3

Dehradoon ... 32.2 ... 16.7 Puducherry ... 1.1 ... 32.1 ... 24.7

Gangtok ... 20.7 ... 16.1 Pune ... 56.1 ... 32.1 ... 21.5

Goa ... 31.4 ... 24.7 Raipur ... 34.2 ... 25.4

Guwahati ... 34.7 ... 24.9 Ranchi ... 31.7 ... 19.9

Hubballi ... 27.0 ... 21.0 Shillong ... 22.7 ... 17.1

Hyderabad ... 32.5 ... 22.0 Shimla ... 24.6 ... 14.3

Imphal ... 7.8 ... 28.2 ... 19.4 Srinagar ... 25.2 ... 3.0

Jaipur ... 33.3 ... 24.4 Thiruvananthapuram ... 32 ... 22.4 ... 24.2

Kochi ... 30.6 ... 25.0 Tiruchi ... 33.9 ... 24.5

Kohima ... 2.2 ... 24.4 ... 17.2 Vijayawada ... 33.8 ... 25.4

Kolkata ... 33.6 ... 27.0 Visakhapatnam ... 2 ... 33.2 ... 27.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES **SO₂** **NO_x** **CO** **PM2.5** **PM10** **CODE**

Ahmedabad ... 36 ... 54 ... 50 ... 135 ... 127 ... 1

Bengaluru ... 14 ... 30 ... 56 ... 72 ... 88 ... 1

Chennai ... 8 ... 8 ... 28 ... 58 ... 80 ... 1

Delhi ... 21 ... 85 ... 59 ... 303 ... 314 ... 1

Hyderabad ... 35 ... 43 ... 23 ... 75 ... 80 ... 1

Kolkata ... 8 ... 17 ... 77 ... 70 ... 85 ... 1

Lucknow ... 10 ... 81 ... 35 ... 345 ... 332 ... 1

Mumbai ... 16 ... 139 ... 53 ... 103 ... 105 ... 1

Pune ... 7 ... 34 ... 26 ... 45 ... 45 ... 1

Visakhapatnam ... 31 ... 27.0

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.

PM2.5 & 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

Air pollution can be tackled in less than four years: Kejriwal

He asks Centre to call meeting of U.P., Punjab, Haryana and Delhi CMs every month

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said that if all the governments work hard and make honest efforts together, then pollution caused due to stubble burning could be substantially reduced within a short period of time.

Agreeing with Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar that stubble burning is a big problem, Mr. Kejriwal disagreed with his statement that the problem cannot be solved in a short time.

"I completely agree with his views and I believe that all the State governments should come together and launch a battle against air pollution. But he also said that the problem of air pollution cannot be solved in one



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal

day and it will take a minimum of four years to solve the issue. I do not agree with this statement," he said.

"I believe that if all the State governments come together and all the political parties work honestly by keeping aside their political bias, then we can combat the issue of air pollution in less

than four years," he said.

"Till now the Central government is only convening meetings with the Environment Ministers of the States of north India. I want to request the Union Environment Minister to call a meeting of the Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi every month because this is a big issue and it can't be managed only at the level of the Environment Ministers of these States," the Delhi Chief Minister said.

Mr. Kejriwal said that while Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) scientists had developed a chemical that decomposes stubble and turns it into manure in Delhi, there was a factory in Karnal where stubble gets converted to com-

pressed bio-gas (CBG) which can be used just as CNG.

In Punjab, he said, there are around seven factories which make coal and coke from stubble. People from these factories go to the fields, cut the stubble and pay the farmers on ₹500-per-acre basis. Later these companies sell the coal to NTPC.

Products from stubble'

"This means that from stubble we can produce coal, coke, CNG and cardboards. If the State governments of India start utilising these new technologies by which rather than burning the stubble the farmers can increase their income by selling the stubble, then it can put a halt to this problem," he said.

Bhadoli MLA booked on charge of raping Varanasi-based singer

The woman alleged the lawmaker's son also assaulted her

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

MLA Vijay Mishra of Bhadoli and his son have been charged with raping a Varanasi-based singer, said police.

The four-time MLA, who was elected to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly on a Nishad Party ticket in 2017, was in August arrested for allegedly grabbing a relative's house and extorting money from him. He was then detained from Agar Malwa of Madhya Pradesh a day after he released a video on social media expressing a fear that he "could be murdered" or ar-

rested by the Uttar Pradesh police any day.

In a fresh trouble for him, a case under gang rape, wrongful confinement and criminal intimidation was lodged at the Gopiganj police station in Bhadoli against him, his son Vishnu Mishra and another accused, Vikash Mishra, said police.

In her police complaint, the woman has accused the MLA of sexually exploiting her since 2014.

Superintendent of Police Bhadoli Ram Badan Singh said the complainant alleged that during the 2014 Lok Sab-

ha election, Mr. Mishra invited her to perform at a programme. When she was changing in the changing room, the MLA barged in, held her hostage at gunpoint and raped her, the SP said referring to the complaint.

'Exploited since 2014'
The woman alleged that the MLA's son and his friend later raped her in a car. From 2014, they continued to sexually exploit her and harass her and even called her to locations in Prayagraj and Varanasi under the pretext of offering her a job, said the SP.

The first-of-its-kind scheme will cover Aksa and Maheshpura villages, with 33,000 sq. metres of land being reserved for developing 18 big warehouse plots. JDA Commissioner Gaurav Goyal said here on Monday that the remaining land would have hotels, petrol pumps, banks, electric sub-station, commercial establishments, weigh-bridges and automobile shops.

The project, to be developed on Jaipur-Sikar national highway west of Jaipur, is expected to give fillip to economic growth of the State Capital.

Direct fight between Cong., BJP in Baroda

Independent withdraws nomination

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

In a boost to the prospects of Congress in the Baroda by-poll, Independent candidate Kapoor Narwal, a BJP rebel, withdrew his nomination on Monday and announced his support to two-time Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

Earlier in a day of hectic political activities, Meham Independent MLA Balraj Kundu, who had earlier supported the candidature of Mr. Narwal, withdrew his nomination on Monday and announced his support to the Congress candidate.

The withdrawal of the candidature by Mr. Narwal now makes it a direct contest between Congress' Indrajit Bhalla and Bharatiya Janata Party's Yogeshwar Dutt, an Olympic medalist.

Besides Mr. Narwal, two more Independents, including Joginder Mor, withdrew their candidature and seven nominations were rejected leaving 14 candidates in the fray. Mr. Mor also announced his support to the Congress candidate.

Welcoming the decision of Mr. Narwal, Mr. Hooda said it was an "important" decision and would enhance his political and social stature. Mr. Hooda added that Mr. Narwal had taken a "right decision" at the "right time" and would emerge as the "Kingmaker of Haryana".

Rajya Sabha MP Deepender Hooda said the count-down of the ruling BJP-JJP coalition would begin soon after the counting of votes would end at Baroda. "The people of the State are now

demanding change because this government has wasted six years of the State and has left it on the verge of total financial collapse," said Mr. Hooda.

Snubbed by parties
Mr. Kapoor Narwal, a former Indian National Lok Dal leader, had joined the BJP in 2014 and was among the probables for the by-poll, but reached out to the Hoodas recently for a Congress ticket after failing to get any assurance from his party. However, the Congress too rejected his candidature, despite the Hoodas insistence, after state party chief Kumar Selja put her foot down for a party's worker to be its nominee.

Snubbed by both parties, Mr. Narwal, a strong烈 leader, then threw his hat in the ring as an Independent making it a triangular contest.

Plea seeks paid leave for women govt. employees

Facilities also sought during periods

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A petition before the Delhi High Court has sought direction to the Centre and the Delhi government to grant paid leaves and periodic rest to women employees during time of menstruation.

The plea by Delhi Labour Union said that women be provided special casual or paid leave as menstruation is intrinsically related to human dignity and by not providing separate toilet facilities, breaks to maintain hygiene during the particu-

lar period and paid leaves in form of special casual leaves, the authorities are depriving the employees of their dignity.

Overtime allowance
The petition filed, through advocate Rajiv Agarwal, sought direction to grant paid leaves for four days a month to all classes of women employees including daily wagers, contractual and outsourced workers and to pay overtime allowance to menstruating women employees if they opt to work during that period.

M.P. CM flays Nath for 'indecent remarks'

Based on flawed thinking, you and your party twisting the meaning, retorts ex-CM

SIDDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday hit out at Congress leader Kamal Nath for making "indecent remarks" against a woman Minister at a public meeting.

Stating the remarks were made against the Dalit Minister born in a poor family, Mr. Chouhan told reporters, "He is shamelessly trying to justify himself. I am upset about it.

Whether he atones for it or not, I will atone for it and observe a two-hour silence with the resolve that respect for mothers, sisters and daughters will be kept in Madhya Pradesh and we will work for their welfare dedicatedly."

Subsequently, BJP leaders, including Mr. Chouhan, Rajya Sabha MP Jyotiraditya Scindia and Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, observed silence in different parts of the State.

Accusing Mr. Chouhan of diverting voters from "real issues", Mr. Nath wrote to him: "I have made no disrespectful comments... Besides, the word in question has several connotations. But, based on flawed thinking, you and your party are twisting the meaning to serve lies and mislead the public."

Meanwhile, Mr. Chouhan wrote to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi calling for a condemnation and Mr. Nath's removal from all party posts.

Now, M.P. Minister uses derogatory words

Food Minister calls wife of Congress opponent 'mistress'

SITAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

A day after Congress leader Kamal Nath described a woman Minister in Madhya Pradesh as an "item", a video on Monday showed Minister Bisalihal Singh describing the wife of his Congress opponent in the by-election a "mistress".

In a video clip that went viral, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Minister Bisalihal Singh is heard saying, "When nomination papers are filed, you

move him from all posts for his comment, Mr. Nath retorted: "It would have been better if you had written to your party president instead and apologised to the State's women."

Meanwhile, Vishwanath Singh said he was yet to see the video, and would take action accordingly.

BJP State spokesperson Rajneesh Agrawal refused to comment saying party officials had not been able to contact former Congressman Bisalihal Singh.

The dedicated team had earlier stitched over 53,200 face masks for the public at large and 780 personal protective equipment (PPE) kits for doctors and nursing staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The last below 2,000 mark was recorded on August 13 when a single-day surge of 1,977 was reported and subsequently, the graph had seen a steady rise. On September 26, the highest single-day rise was recorded

at 4,356.

The drop in daily spike is attributed to continual decline in tests conducted in Odisha. The State government on Monday said 38,740 tests were conducted during the past



A tool for thought

Pandemic forecasts must be used to induce changes and avoid worst-case scenarios

A committee of experts – well-regarded mathematicians and infectious disease experts – appointed by the Department of Science and Technology to use mathematical modelling and forecast the course of the pandemic has brought good tidings. By their estimate, India passed its COVID-19 peak in September and the decline in the overall caseload being observed for nearly a month now is to continue. Active cases, about 7.5 lakh now, are expected to drop below 50,000 by December, and by February, the pandemic is likely to extinguish itself with only ‘minimal’ (not zero) infections. While it is reasonable to assume that the seven-member committee has been scrupulous, the caveat is that this is still a forecast based on mathematical modelling. There are some strong assumptions. The decline will continue only if there are no major mutations during winter, protective antibodies are durable, and current restrictions are maintained. There would be no significant gains from a strict lockdown beyond the district level, and current containment measures would suffice, except if there are local outbreaks that threaten to overwhelm health-care facilities there. Their calculation also showed a peak by July latest, with anything from six to 15 times the existing infections had there been no lockdown or if it had been delayed to April.

The purpose of pandemic modelling is to generate a probabilistic overview of the future and mathematical modelling has become a popular, creative exercise, with several models and forecasts being made available on pre-print servers and pending peer-review. The latest model is expected to be published in the *Indian Journal of Medical Research* this week, but it appears to be a quotidian exercise. The datasets it has relied on are publicly available and the modelling employs a category of models called SEIR that estimates, within a population, those Susceptible, Exposed, Infected and Recovered. It is extremely dependent on the quality of data that is used as an input and relies as much on simplifying assumptions that sacrifice complexity for comprehension but there is nothing to suggest, from what is known about the exercise, that it is more likely to be true than similar estimates from scores of models the world over that subscribe to a certain degree of rigour. Experts associated with the pandemic have reiterated many times that mathematical modelling ought not to be taken literally. The latest assessment too should then be used not to critique or justify past decisions but dwell more on the future. For instance, if the model suggests that the pandemic would extinguish by February with a dramatic dip by December, then should the accelerated clinical trials of potential vaccines be top priority? Mathematical models, to be useful, must induce policy or behavioural change to avoid their own worst-case scenarios and this latest assessment must be seen – no more, no less – as a tool to this end.

The NEET challenge

As NEET progresses, States must take affirmative action to protect weaker sections

In a year when merely executing the norm becomes an achievement, the conduct of two rounds of NEET, attendance at the test and the publication of results, all in the face of resistance from certain States, can presumably count as achievements. The results were declared last week, and the top score was a perfect 720, scored not by one, but two students, who will have their choice of college in the undergraduate medical programme. The decision to conduct the exam, when there was uncertainty about the ability of students to reach the centres, was probably bold, though it had not factored in the lowest common denominator. But then, the NEET is not about catering to the lowest common denominator, it is avowedly about standardising medical education, ensuring the quality of medical graduates who will hopefully go on to serve society. Working with the ideal of raising the quality is clearly a laborious, time-consuming process, and is bound to be uneven at the start, even if all States have begun to level the playing field. Different States have been allowed to offer their own education systems – different streams with varying standards and pedagogies – and NEET brings in an overarching single syllabus not all have access to. Therein begin the inequities. Students in certain circumstances, (poor, living in remote areas and disadvantaged, for instance), and in certain boards of education (State board, for instance) will remain at a disadvantage, as a result of this.

Even as scores show an overall improvement over the years, States must not rest in their endeavour to ease the access to, and enhance students' ability to clear the test successfully, even without the need to spend much on coaching classes. Certain measures, including Tamil Nadu's move to reserve 7.5% of MBBS seats for State government school students who clear NEET, running State-sponsored, free or heavily subsidised coaching programmes, and a reassessment of the regional State syllabus, will all enable a more equitable scenario. If coaching can help bridge the yawning gap, then the State could mandate that private coaching centres do not charge exorbitantly for conducting year-long coaching programmes and even provide reasonable subsidies for certain groups of students. Meanwhile, the overemphasis by parents on medicine as the only career option for their wards, and wanton politicisation of NEET will merely serve to exacerbate the acute deficiencies of the process. Pandemic-related challenges notwithstanding, for true positive impact, any welfare state must build systems around the core ideas of equity of access and affordability – especially in education and health care.

Love in the time of polarisation

The withdrawn Tanishq commercial is a victim of an unrepresentative exclusivism that fosters old social orthodoxies



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

A new front has opened in the culture wars occurring in India. After silencing academics and print journalists, conquering TV news channels, maligning the Mumbai film industry, the trolls have made advertising the new battlefield. The release of the Tata-owned Tanishq advertisement was followed by a manic backlash with complaints about hurt Hindu sentiment, threats of violence, and its abrupt withdrawal. These threats were not empty; showrooms in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh were visited by goons demanding a written apology.

Message and the attack

What is the advertisement trying to communicate and what is hurtful about it? An affluent Muslim family is seen organising a baby shower for their Hindu daughter-in-law. Marriage brings unanticipated tensions for the families of the couple, and a particularly profound disturbance in the life of the woman who often moves into the home of her husband. Without an entire network of support led by the husband and the mother-in-law, this transition is painful. In the advertisement, the Muslim mother-in-law arranges a Hindu ritual, affectionately puts her arm around her surprised daughter-in-law and says that the custom of loving a daughter far outweighs the demands of religious tradition.

Playing upon vile communal instincts, the trolls attacked it for its ‘secular’ message. One extremist

reason they offer is “love jihad”, allegedly a design to marry Hindu women with the sole objective of multiplying Muslim numbers and change India’s demography. This is why these marriages, they say, are not a personal or family matter but concern the community, and offend its morality. This intolerance of Hindu-Muslim marriage is entirely politically constructed. Instances abound of such marriages being turned into hell, at least in the initial years, by politically encouraged intolerance. The trolling must be seen in the context of a long-standing practice of politically triggered harassment of inter-religious couples.

A less hysterical reason is embedded in the assumption that the compatibility of two individuals due to their class, education and temperament is trumped by the natural incompatibility between a Hindu and a Muslim. This explains the social wrath against inter-faith marriages, particularly between Hindu women and Muslim men. There is something in this argument: if conversion and a change of the bride’s name is made a condition of inter-religious marriages, then an objection against it is understandable. But this is not always true. In any case, this advertisement emphasises that the young woman remains a Hindu. This should take the wind out of the sails of the objector. If it does not, it is because of a third reason: the impregnable belief that inter-religious marriages go against uncontested social norms. Thus,

for one ‘realist analyst’, the advertisement proves the disconnect of secular elites from Indian social norms. How unrealistic to expect that Indians will tolerate inter-religious marriage, when social norms do not permit even inter-caste marriages within Hindus, Muslims or Christians?



Moreover, inter-faith marriages are never arranged. The advertisement then appears to celebrate not only communal harmony but ‘love marriage’, individual choice, and the new egalitarian family that respects the distinctive identity and wishes of women. This provides an additional ground for conservative anger. Covertly, the trolls prey upon social anxieties surrounding the young falling in love, rebelling against the rigid traditions of community, and giving women equal respect. The backlash against inter-faith marriages comes from communalism’s juxtaposition with this asphyxiating conservatism.

At odds with reality

This deeply conservative general portrayal of Indians is a simplistic myth, at odds with the ever-changing, equally Indian social reality. Large towns and cities generate conditions for a partial collapse of the old community-dominated order. Public transport, the workplace, restaurants, malls, educational institutions – all facilitate and encourage inter-caste and inter-religious intermingling. This real and virtual proximity generates conflict as well as opportunity for friendship that can transform into love and even marriage no matter how much it enrages the socially orthodox and intolerant. No society has ever managed to completely control the emotional life of individuals. ‘Love marri-

age’ have a long ancestry. Even the Dharmashastras acknowledge and endorse love marriage at least for the Kshatriyas – the Gandharva Vi-vaha. The epics speak of Kshatriya women choosing their husbands too. Indian films build upon such long standing socio-mythical archetypes and frequently support individual choice and love as the only basis for marriage. Given this counter-current against caste and community-based arranged marriages, is it surprising that the young dream of falling in love and marrying the person of their choice?

Not a general trait

Moreover, the older generation is not as stubborn as is assumed. At least in metropolitan cities, the initial period of social boycott and disapproval gives way to acceptance, forgiveness, accommodation and reconciliation, particularly after couples have children. Many understand that beyond a point they cannot impose their own will on consenting adults. To ignore this fact portrays Indians as unalterable, heartless bigots for whom traditional custom has insuperable priority over love, which is an inaccurate depiction. A fanatical commitment to religious dogma may be common among habitual haters of other communities but this is a hardly a general trait of all Indians.

In short, social intolerance of inter-religious marriages exists but is exaggerated by the trolls. What then is the springboard of this intolerance and hostility? This is driven by the ambition of new power elites out to displace older ones. A minority within the majority community is forcing itself on everyone by claiming to be the voice of the people. It uses the rhetoric of ‘the people’, because in democracy, anyone who claims the back-

ing of the larger number gains social and political power. If mass opinion matters, large political benefits can be had from passing off a sectarian view as mass opinion. If a choice is to be made between curbing the voice of corporates or of “the people”, as one television commentator put it, one must curb corporate voice. In reality, this wrath and hate is manufactured by a predominantly, male-dominated discourse of new elites with a surfeit of power and money. Love jihad is part of this discourse.

There are two stories

In this polarised climate, it takes courage by a commercial enterprise to convey a message of understanding, acceptance, love and communal harmony. Instead of supporting it, most electronic and social media have openly chastised this effort. The Indian state has stood by passively; at best as a silent witness and at worse as irresponsibly backing the disruptors.

Much is at stake in India today. Not just communal harmony but also individual freedom, gender equality, and freedom of speech, besides economic freedom and equality. Capitalist markets have many drawbacks but they allow buying and selling irrespective of a person’s religion, ideology, race, colour and sexual preferences. The withdrawal of the advertisement undermines principles of freedom and equality associated with a safe business environment.

It is not true that all Indians are resistant to social change or that Hindus are inveterate Muslim-haters. Ground reports on ordinary people tell two stories, not one as the trolls and their followers would have us believe.

Rajeev Bhargava is Honorary Professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi

The sorry plight of the Andhra Pradesh higher judiciary

The letter of the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister cannot be brushed aside as interference with judicial independence

KRISHNA PRASANNA VAITLA

The High Court of Andhra Pradesh has seen many a legal gem and it is unfortunate that today, one of the three organs of the state, the executive, appears to have lost faith in the judiciary and the very same High Court. Who can forget Justice Koka Subba Rao who was the first Chief Justice and later went on to become the ninth Chief Justice of India in 1966? Or that Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy was the beacon for other High Courts?

The two sides

Against such a backdrop, the letter by the Chief Minister of the State of Andhra Pradesh to the Chief Justice of India, with allegations against a sitting Judge of the Supreme Court of India is cause for concern.

While some could argue that the executive could have a grudge against the judiciary and that the grievance aired by the Chief Minister of the State could be a reflection of this, at the same time, one cannot gloss over whatever the High Court has done. The Chief Minister’s allegation is that the High Court is being controlled by loyalists of his predecessor in office and political rival, passing orders against his regime and its actions. From the High Court’s point of view, the State police is reluctant to take action against those carrying on an online campaign against the court.

The orders passed by the High Court of Andhra Pradesh are disturbing. For example, the order gagging the press and directing the media (print, electronic, and social media) to take down whatever has already been published is quite strange since this protects not only the petitioner, the former Advocate General, but also the others named or not named in the First Information Report (FIR). Those named in the FIR, other than the former Advocate General,

are not even aggrieved as they did not approach the court for similar relief. But the gag-and-take-down order protects them too, without their being parties to the proceedings.

This makes the writ petition a proxy litigation, filed not only on behalf of the petitioner, but also on behalf of all others. Considering the high profile of two persons named in the FIR who were not before the court, the stay of investigation, the stay of arrest of all those named and not named in the FIR, and the direction issued to the media not to publish and to take down whatever has already been published is shocking and the government is justified in making a grievance out of it.

One that is self-inflicted

But the damage caused by the High Court to its own reputation by something done on the administrative side is even more shocking. In a writ petition filed by the BC, SC, ST and Minority Student Federation seeking certain reliefs in the wake of the unfortunate death of the then Registrar General of the High Court, the court filed a counter affidavit.

Paragraph 13 of the counter affidavit contained allegations as though the writ petition was engineered, at the behest of the State Government, by a former Acting Chief Justice of the combined High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad, who now holds office as Chairman of the Fee Fixation Committee for professional colleges. Had it been filed by any other party, paragraph 13 would have provoked the High Court to come down heavily on such a party. It reads as follows: ‘13. As per the preliminary objections, it is clear that this petition is filed by a political person to political gain and to malign the High Court. In this sequel it is relevant that former Justice V. Eshwaraiah, who was appointed as chairman of the A.P. Higher Education Regulatory Committee and chairman of



the BC Association, has also submitted a complaint with the same allegations to the President of India referred herein above against the Chief Justice. His appointment on the said post was made by the State Government as per the recommendation (September 4, 2019) issuing notification in the second week of September 2019.

The said recommendation was after the recommendation to appoint a regular Chief Justice of High Court of Andhra Pradesh on August 22, 2019 by the collegium of the Supreme Court. Thus, his appointment is under persuasion of the State Government to favour him. On having achieved his desire of appointment after post retirement, he wants to support the State Government under the cover of BC Association maligning the High Court... In fact, the State government is not happily accepting the verdicts of the High Court given in various cases against them. ... however, unscrupulous comments degrading the image of the institution are floated in social media by various persons, including the sitting Member of Parliament, the Speaker of the Assembly on which *suo motu* contempt proceedings have been initiated. In his intervention application, the judicial officer has claimed that the former Acting Chief Justice of the combined High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad, whose name was dragged in by the High Court in its counter affidavit, made a call to him offering help in the departmental enquiries pending against him.

The intervention application was accompanied by the transcript of the telephonic conversation he purportedly had. According to this transcript, the former Acting Chief Justice confessed to him that he had engineered the writ petition filed by the BC, SC, ST and Minority Student Federation.

Chief Justice as the person behind a litigation, and attack the senior-most serving judge of the very same High Court for obliging the State Government and recommending the name of the former Acting Chief Justice for appointment as the Fee Fixation Committee, is unthinkable.

The statement now made by the Chief Minister that the High Court is being used and manipulated to trample on the democratically elected government has to be seen in the context of the High Court’s own stand in a counter affidavit filed in a writ petition that the State Government is hostile to the court.

The issue did not end at that. In the writ petition, an application was filed by a subordinate judicial officer, who is now under suspension pending disciplinary proceedings, seeking intervention. In his intervention application, the judicial officer has claimed that the former Acting Chief Justice of the combined High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad, whose name was dragged in by the High Court in its counter affidavit, made a call to him offering help in the departmental enquiries pending against him.

The intervention application was filed by the suspended judicial officer, who is now under suspension pending disciplinary proceedings, seeking intervention. In his intervention application, the judicial officer has claimed that the former Acting Chief Justice of the combined High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad, whose name was dragged in by the High Court in its counter affidavit, made a call to him offering help in the departmental enquiries pending against him. The issue did not end at that. In the writ petition, an application was filed by a subordinate judicial officer, who is now under suspension pending disciplinary proceedings, seeking intervention. In his intervention application, the judicial officer has claimed that the former Acting Chief Justice of the combined High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad, whose name was dragged in by the High Court in its counter affidavit, made a call to him offering help in the departmental enquiries pending against him.

Hold an inquiry

After the filing of this intervention application by the suspended judicial officer, the case took an interesting turn. The High Court filed an application for deletion of paragraph 13 of the original counter affidavit, in which the court had alleged that the writ petition was engineered by the former Acting Chief Justice at the behest of the State government.

Thereafter, a Division Bench specially constituted for the purpose took note of the contents of the intervention application and passed an order on August 13, 2020 holding that the conversation whose transcript was produced as a document along with a pen drive, *prima facie* disclosed a conspiracy against the Chief Justice of the High Court and the senior-most Judge of the Supreme Court. After so holding, the Andhra Pradesh High Court passed an order to the following effect: ‘In view of the law discussed above in various judgments referred *supra*, this court while exercising power of judicial review under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, more particularly, while deciding a public interest litigation, procedural technicalities will not come in the way. Hence, we find that it is a fit case to order enquiry to find out the authenticity/genuineness of the conversation contained in the pen drive. Therefore, we request Justice R.V. Raveendran, retired Judge of the Supreme Court of India, to hold an inquiry to find out the authenticity/genuineness of the conversation contained in the pen drive, with regard to the plot designed against the Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh and being designed against senior most sitting judges of the Supreme Court and undisclosed interest of third parties. Registry is directed to obtain the consent of Justice R.V. Raveendran, retired judge of Supreme Court and provide necessary assistance. The inquiry is limited to find out the authenticity/genuineness of the conversation and third party interest behind the plot.’

It is clear that all is not well with the higher judiciary in the State of Andhra Pradesh. The letter of the Chief Minister of the State cannot be seen in isolation and it cannot be brushed aside as interference with the independence of the judiciary.

Krishna Prasanna Vaitla is a law student

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.

Raj Bhavan's new role

There is a vast difference in the role of a Governor in the ‘Old India’ and the ‘New India’. In fact I recall the book, *The Governor, Sage or Saboteur*, by Soli J. Sorabjee. Present-day Governors appear to have specific assignments – to destabilise non-BJP ruled States. Ultimately, federalism has been systematically trampled

upon, undermining democracy, secularism and the freedom of expression, and subjugating all constitutional bodies (Editorial page, “The Raj Bhavan’s new role – taking centre stage”, October 19).

A. JAISON,
Chennai

■ Governors too are politicians on a ‘temporary’ sabbatical. Perhaps the

governatorial post in all States should henceforth be held by a retired High Court or Supreme Court judge so that he or she will act within the letter and spirit of the Constitution. By and large, retired judges are apolitical. And, for Governors with a judicial background, discharging constitutional duties will be child’s play.

K. PRADEEP,
Chennai

Downward graph
While it is encouraging that the number of active COVID-19 cases and deaths being reported daily appears to be decreasing, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the next three months will be a defining moment for India in its pandemic fight. The challenge lies in making the general public to be compliant with simple precautionary measures. The

festive season along with winter problems can change the course of the virus’s spread. At this moment India cannot afford to lower its guard in the anti-virus war.

Da. D.V.G. SANKARARAO,
Nellore, Andhra Pradesh

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confusion created over who should bat or bowl from each team in the second super over, will also be fair to both the contestants and save time. It is high time the rules were amended (Sport page, “Kings rule after incredible finish”, October 19).

N. RAMA RAO,
Chennai



Nitish's claims and Bihar's reality

The Chief Minister says he has delivered good governance and prosperity, but data show otherwise



M.V. RAJEEV GOWDA & AKASH SATYAWALI

As Bihar goes to the polls, it is important to scrutinise Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's repeated claims about delivering 'sushasan' (good governance) and 'tarraqi' (prosperity). Does the reality justify these claims? Or are these boasts similar to the 'Gujarat Model', merely effective as propaganda?

Poor on many indicators

Bihar's economy has performed poorly under the Janata Dal (United)-Bharatiya Janata Party coalition government. Its gross state domestic product (GSDP) is well below the average of other States. Between 2011-12 and 2018-19, its compound annual growth rate (CAGR) was 6.16%, while the average of all States and Union Territories was 7.73%. Given its low economic base, Bihar should have clocked immense growth if it was governed half as well as the propaganda would have you believe. A couple of good years of economic growth have been overhyped to hide the overall poor performance.

The CAGR of Bihar's per capita income (PCI) was 4% in the 2011-12 and 2018-19 period, while the average of all States and Union Territories was 5.61%. In fact, Bihar's PCI is the lowest in the country. While in 2011-12, Bihar's PCI was 26.1% of the overall average, it fell to 23.48% in 2018-19. In 2004-05, before Mr. Kumar took over, Bihar's PCI was 26.48% of the overall average. An analysis of the suppressed National Sample Survey's consumption expenditure survey revealed that between 2011-12 and 2017-18, poverty in Bihar increased by 17 percentage points to 50.47%. Does making Biharis poorer count as a悲哀?

Bihar's debt burden has grown considerably: 375% since 2005 levels. Outstanding liabilities as a percentage of GSDP have been increasing since 2014-15. The Comptroller and Auditor General's audit of Bihar's finances noted, "Since 80 to 85 per cent of the borrowed funds were util-



Migrant labourers on their way home to Saharsa arrive in Patna in March soon after a nationwide lockdown was imposed to control the spread of the pandemic. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

ised for repayment of borrowings and interest thereon which implies that the State was spending less on developmental activities."

Jobs continue to be scarce. The National Sample Survey's periodic labour force survey (2017-18) revealed that 87% of workers in Bihar do not have a regular/salaried job. In this respect, Bihar is the worst performing State in the country. The unemployment rate has remained in double digits since February 2019, peaking at 46.6% in May this year. Suicides due to unemployment have increased by 438% since 2015.

Bihar was a pioneer in abolishing Agriculture Produce Marketing Committees (APMC). Agriculture remains one of the largest employment-generating sectors but Bihar has the lowest average monthly income per agricultural household ($\text{₹}3,558$) in the country. The national average is $\text{₹}6,426$. More than 86% of Bihar's marginal agricultural households are in debt compared to the national average of 63.6%. The agricultural growth rate fell to 0.6% in 2018-19 and crops recorded a negative growth rate of 3.9%.

A study by the National Council of Applied Economic Research post the APMC reforms concluded that net income had been declining. Mr. Kumar's government has simply aban-

doned Bihar's farmers, who receive a price much lower than the MSP due to inefficiencies by procurement agencies. More than 80% of procurement centres have shut down since 2015. This Rabi season, less than 1% of Bihar's wheat was procured. This is neither sushasan nor tarraqi.

The crown jewel of the good governance propaganda has been the claim of improved law and order. The reality is vastly different. Between 2010 and 2019, crimes in Bihar nearly doubled. Bihar ranks second in the country in violent crimes. Crimes against women and children increased at 26% and 73%, respectively, between 2017 and 2019. Every day, more than 12 minors are kidnapped for forced child marriages, the highest incidence of such crimes in the country.

A government that doesn't act
Given these crime statistics, one would expect any responsible government to act. Unfortunately, not the Nitish Kumar government. Until June 2019, Bihar had not spent a single rupee out of the different programmes under the Nirbhaya Fund. Only after much criticism were some of the sanctioned funds actually utilised, but 59% of the funds still remain unspent. Further, the alleged 'kidnapping raj' seems to be thriving

under the National Democratic Alliance: kidnappings have increased by 391% between 2005 and 2019.

Last, migrant labourers who returned home to Bihar after the sudden announcement of a lockdown by Prime Minister Narendra Modi have been disillusioned by the Bihar government's empty assurances of employment and livelihood opportunities. The government's tall claims of issuing more job cards are moot when existing card-holders cannot find work. Bihar has more than 2.5 crore workers registered under MGNREGA (the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act). However, only 4,788 households have completed 100 days of MGNREGA work guaranteed under the Act. The Central government's apathy combined with the Bihar government's neglect are proving disastrous for the people.

Bihar's citizens regularly face the brunt of floods and havoc inflicted by nature. More than natural calamities and pandemics, it is Bihar's elected leadership's inability to deliver sushasan that ensures that tarraqi remains a distant dream.

M.V. Rajeev Gowda is a former member of Parliament and chairman of the All India Congress Committee's research department. Akash Satyawali is outreach coordinator with the department

Dormant but waiting to strike

Terror outfits like al-Qaeda continue to pose threats to India and its neighbourhood



R.K.RAGHAVAN

During the pandemic, we have fortunately been hearing little about terror organisations of the likes of the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Islamic State, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). This is partly explained by the fact that open terror attacks have been reducing, presumably because terror outfits lack resources and because of temporary loss of support from those normally hostile to the non-Islamic world and tolerant Muslims.

Still a threat

But there is no ground to conclude that terror outfits have become less vicious or are irrelevant. Given their past resilience, they continue to pose threats to modern society, especially to India and its neighbourhood. They are also not less alluring to misguided youth in India whose loyalties are extraterritorial. Their numbers may not be formidable, but they can cause a ripple effect that cannot be underestimated. Terrorist cells are probably engaged in the quiet process of garnering resources for future lethal assaults against India and other countries in the neighbourhood, which are considered anti-Islamic by them. Once the pandemic eases, we may see a resurgence of terror. The aggravation of poverty in developing nations due to COVID-19 could offer a fertile ground for recruitment and intensified religious indoctrination, which are dangerous to peace.

We should keep a particularly close eye on the al-Qaeda and the Islamic State because there is evidence that their recruitment remains undiminished by the problems posed by the pandemic. Reports say that these outfits have been reorganising and rebuilding during the pandemic. Only these two outfits have an impressive global reach backed by global ambitions. They are present not only in West Asia but also in Africa. The other outfits – JeM, LeT, etc. – are confined to the Afghanistan-Pakistan area.

Of great import in this context is the Doha Accord signed on February 29 this year between the Taliban and the U.S., which has brought about an improved relationship between the two. The U.S. is now less of an adversary to the Taliban because it has agreed to a near total withdrawal of its troops in return for the Taliban's promise to preserve peace in Afghanistan. Ironically, the U.S. intervened in Afghanistan immediately after 9/11 only to capture Osama bin Laden and his associates. However, it ended up getting entangled with the Taliban. After hostilities for several years, the U.S. and the Taliban have displayed some sagacity and are in the process of brokering peace.

This scenario highlights the fact that India will have no respite from the al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, the two most organised and motivated groups. Many recent raids by the National Investigation Agency point to an al-Qaeda network in India. In one such raid, nine activists belonging to Kerala and West Bengal were arrested for conspiring to attack various targets, including the National Capital Region. Also relevant is the training support received from Pakistan. Once the situation gets better, the al-Qaeda, in cahoots with other aggressive Islamic outfits in and around Pakistan, is bound to escalate the offensive against India. Pakistan will be unabashedly privy to such manoeuvres though it will continue to pretend otherwise. This is one factor that makes the al-Qaeda and other terror outfits still relevant to India's security calculus. These outfits may not indulge in spectacular attacks like 9/11, but they will have the determination and prowess to carry out operations that will unnerve our population on the border.

How can India protect itself against terrorism in the neighbourhood? There are some observers who are inclined to downplay the al-Qaeda because it has not repeated anything on the scale of 9/11. They also cite as a reason the ease with which the U.S. tracked down bin Laden in Pakistan and killed him. They also say the outfit's leadership is ageing. In the past few years, it is true that the al-Qaeda has lost many of its leaders in encounters with U.S. agencies. Vulnerability is writ large on the al-Qaeda's face. But operational skill and swiftness can quickly turn peace into disorder. The al-Qaeda has a robust cadre from which a strong and young leader could still emerge to lead it in order to intimidate the civilised world.

R.K. Raghavan is a former CBI Director

Many gains in fighting HIV

There are fewer new HIV infections among children and AIDS-related deaths in India

BILALI CAMARA

In this challenging moment when we are confronted with one of the biggest health emergencies in our history, the COVID-19 pandemic, we find our strength in the gains we are making despite this disruption.

Steps forward

The newly released 2019 HIV estimates by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO)/Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with the technical support of UNAIDS tell us that there has been a 66.1% reduction in new HIV infections among children and a 65.3% reduction in AIDS-related deaths in India over a nine-year period. The number of pregnant women living with HIV has reduced from 31,000 in 2010 to 20,000 in 2019. Overall, antenatal coverage has expanded, and HIV testing has increased over time and within target range. Treatment coverage has also expanded.

Under the leadership of NACO, a 'Fast-Tracking of EMTCT (elimination of mother-to-child transmission) strategy-cum-action plan' was outlined by June 2019, in the run-up towards December 2020: the deadline to achieve EMTCT. The plan entailed mobilisation and reinforcement of all national, State and partners' collective efforts – in a strategic manner, with district-level focus, and considering latest evidence – so that the States/Union Territories and the country as a whole achieve the EMTCT goal. Additionally, in March 2020, we began efforts to minimise challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

From 2010 to 2019, India made important progress in reducing the HIV impact on children through prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. This was done through education and communication programmes; increased access to HIV services with innovative delivery mechanisms for HIV testing (community-based testing, partner testing or index testing); counselling and care; and treatment and follow-ups. India made HIV testing for all pregnant women free and HIV treatment is offered the same way nationwide without cost to pregnant mothers living

with HIV through the national 'treat all' policy.

Cognisant of the challenge of diagnosing 20,000 pregnant women living with HIV in an estimated 30 million pregnancies annually in India, for two years UNICEF has worked with the World Health Organization and NACO to identify high burden districts (in terms of density of pregnant women living with HIV) as the last mile towards disease elimination.

Since 2002, when the EMTCT of HIV programmes or prevention of parent-to-child transmission of HIV were launched in India, a series of policy, programmatic and implementation strategies were rolled out so that all pregnant women can access free HIV testing along with other services at antenatal clinics, and free treatment regimens for life to prevent HIV transmission from mothers to babies. This has been made possible in government health centres and grass-root level workers through village health and nutrition days and other grass-roots events under the National Health Mission.

Indeed, the approach being promoted by UNICEF in focusing attention and resources in high burden districts is supported by the HIV strategic information division of NACO and UNAIDS to better understand the locations and populations most HIV affected, so that technical support and HIV services can be directed towards these areas.

Still a long way to go

However, there remains a need for increased treatment saturation coverage and for early HIV testing and treatment initiation to become the normal. While periodic monitoring of the data and reviews are the mainstay of the programme response, by 2019 it was very evident to all the stakeholders that while there are successes, we have a long way to go towards the final targets.

Using data-driven and decision-making approaches, we are certain that AIDS will no longer be a public health threat for children in India by the end 2030, if not before.

Bilali Camara is UNAIDS Country Director for India

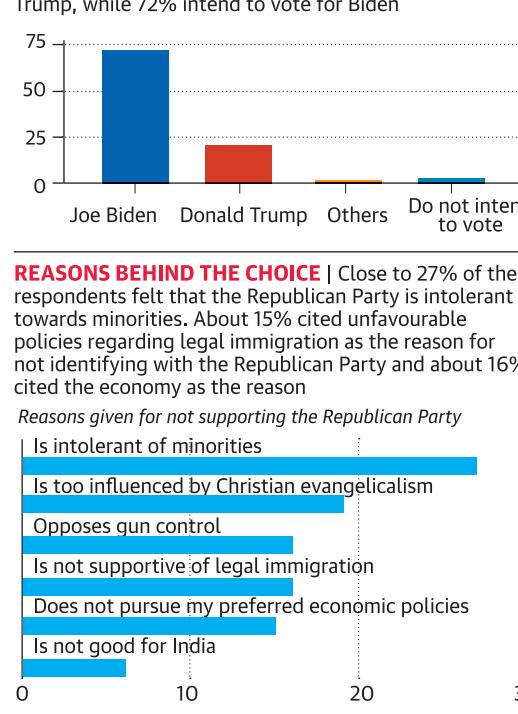


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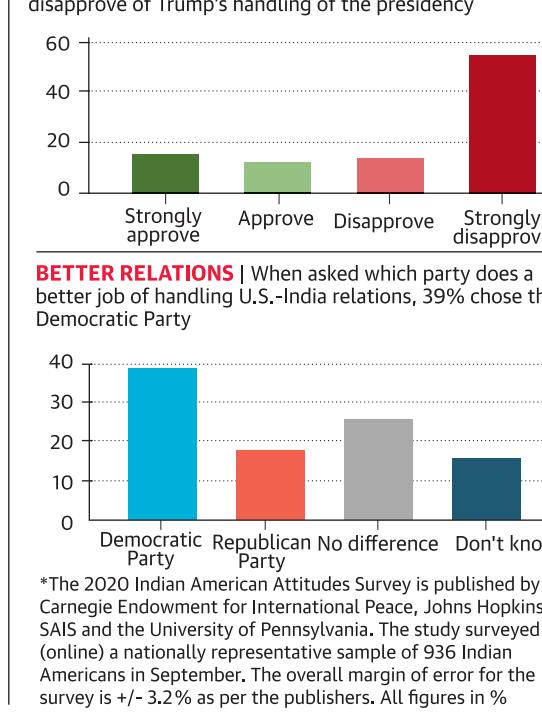
Indian Americans back Biden

Nearly three out of four respondents of a recent survey* of U.S. citizens of Indian origin said they are planning to vote for the Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden. This contradicts an emerging narrative that Indian Americans are moving away from the Democratic Party due to close ties between U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the report said. A majority of those surveyed 'strongly disapproved' of Trump's handling of his job. The share of respondents who felt that Democrats manage U.S.-India relations better was twice the share of those who felt Republicans manage ties better. Intolerance towards minorities was the reason most respondents gave for not identifying with the Republican Party. By **The Hindu Data Team**

BIDEN MUCH AHEAD IN SUPPORT | Only 22% of registered Indian American voters plan to vote for Biden, while 72% intend to vote for Biden



HIGH DISAPPROVAL FOR TRUMP | About 70% of the survey respondents either disapprove or strongly disapprove of Trump's handling of the presidency



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO OCTOBER 20, 1970

Over 300 arrested in Quebec

A Government offer to give Quebec kidnappers of the British diplomat, Mr. James Cross safe passage to Cuba stood to-day [October 19], despite the murder on Saturday of a second kidnap victim, Pierre Laporte. A letter from Mr. Cross yesterday said that he was still alive and asked the authorities to arrange for his release by meeting the main ransom demand of the Quebec Liberation Front (FLQ). – passage to Cuba or Algeria for 23 "political prisoners." By early to-day, 319 persons were being detained in the investigation, 183 in Montreal, the others in Quebec City, Sherbrooke, Hull and five other Quebec centres. The Quebec police last night named two men wanted for the kidnappers. A spokesman said warrants had been issued for the arrest of Marc Carbonneau (37), a taxi driver, and Paul Rose, a 27-year-old school teacher. Mr. Cross, senior British Trade Commissioner, was kidnapped from his home by members of the extremist F. L.Q. two weeks ago. Mr. Laporte, who was seized six days later, was found shot dead early yesterday. Meanwhile, Mr. Laporte lay in state to-day in a courthouse ringed by armed troops and police. The Minister will be buried here [Montreal] to-morrow and three days mourning has been declared in Quebec province.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO OCT. 20, 1920

The late Mr. Tilak

Mr. Jinnah in paying tribute to Mr. Tilak said it would be no exaggeration to say that the present political consciousness of the people of India was due in a large measure to Mr. Tilak. Mr. Tilak was the ideal of millions in India and his loss at the present juncture when they were passing through a most critical time was a great misfortune of India. Mr. Tilak was no dreamer but a very practical and sagacious politician and knew how far to lead his people.

Mr. V.J. Patel next moved the main resolution: That this public meeting places on record its deep sense of deep and profound sorrow at the death of Lokamanya Balagangadhar Tilak. The stainless purity of his life, his services and sufferings in the cause of his country, his deep devotion to the welfare of the people, his arduous endeavours in the fight for national autonomy... these will enshrine his memory in the grateful recollections of our people and will be a source of strength and inspiration to countless generations of our countrymen.

FROM PAGE ONE

Keep off India's affairs, Reddy tells China, Pak.

Mr. Reddy announced 7500 MWs power projects for Ladakh and promised to create 5,000 new jobs.

Power projects

"The power projects will serve the local population and will help farmers and industries. We gave a Union Territory status to Ladakh to take it to new heights of development that include, power, telecommunication, road and air connectivity, along with education and

health connectivity. All these sectors are being upgraded," the MoS said.

Mr. Reddy, also Minister in charge of Lakdah UT, said two cities in the UT would be developed as smart cities and taken up for development and air connectivity, so that the tourism sector got a boost. The Minister's visit to Leh comes just three days ahead of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council-Leh (LAHDC-Leh) polls.

ED questions Farooq in JKCA funds case

Speaking to the media after the questioning, Dr Abdullah said: "My fate will be decided by the court when they put the case before it. Let the ED do its job and I will do my own. I am quite clear. I will always face them."

"The battle will continue whether Farooq Abdullah is alive or dead, on the stage or not on the stage. Our fight is for restoration of Article 370 and our resolve will never change even if I've to be hanged," Dr. Abdullah said.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti and CPI leader Mohammed Yousef Tarigami came out in support of Dr Abdullah, saying the ED summons smacked of vendetta and an attempt to stifle dissent.

2015 case

The ED's money laundering case, alleging the misappropriation of ₹43.69 crore, is based on an FIR registered in 2015 by the CBI on a di-

rection from the J&K High Court.

The CBI had filed a chargesheet against Dr. Abdullah as the then Association president, former JKCA general secretary Saleem Khan, treasurer Ahsan Ahmad Mirza and senior J&K Bank executive Bashir Ahmad Misgar.

It was alleged that between 2002 and 2011, the Board of Control for Cricket in India granted ₹112 crore to the JKCA for infrastructure development and promotion of cricket. However, funds to the tune of ₹43.69 crore were allegedly diverted.

The ED alleged that funds from the BCCI were received in three different bank accounts of the association. However, several other accounts were opened in its name and the money was transferred further. Mr. Mirza also allegedly diverted huge amounts to his company, Mirza Sons.

Police officer, militant + killed in Kashmir

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

One militant and a police officer were killed in two incidents of firing in south Kashmir on Monday.

An official said suspected militants fired from a close range at Inspector Mohammad Ashraf Bhat in SUNDPOORA Kanelwan area of Anantnag district on Monday evening. He died of his injuries in a hospital.

"Bhat was returning home after attending evening prayers in a nearby mosque when was shot at. He was on leave", the official said.

Bhat was posted in Pulwama's Lethpora area.

Earlier in the day, security forces killed a militant in

an operation in south Kashmir's Shopian.

One unidentified terrorist was killed in Shopian's Melhaura area after a gunfight broke out during a search and cordon operation", a police spokesman said.

The operation in the area was on till late Monday evening. "More militants are believed to be hiding in the area", the official said.

A CRPF jawan was injured in another attack by militants in south Kashmir's Pulwama on Monday morning.

An official said the militants opened fire on a joint team of security forces in Gongoo area of Pulwama and the CRPF jawan was injured.

Bar owner Biju Ramesh,

Adapt to the changing nature of jobs: Modi

Startups are the strength of the country, he tells students

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MYSURU

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday called upon youth to be flexible and adaptable to the changing nature of jobs.

Delivering the University of Mysore's centenary convocation address virtually, he emphasised the importance of "skilling, reskilling and upskilling" in the modern-day world and how the National Education Policy (NEP) unveiled by his government recently paid attention to this aspect.

The NEP, Mr. Modi said, ensures a multi-dimensional approach towards education and would bring about fundamental changes in the field of education and make youngsters more competitive. He called upon the student community to strive for excellence based on their individual strength and ability, but advised them against restricting themselves to "fitting into a box." "Probably, the box in which you are trying to fit yourself into may not have been made for you," he said.

"Take time out for yourself, introspect, understand



Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivering the centenary convocation address of the University of Mysore. ■ M.A. SRIRAM

'Centre will help flood-hit'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MYSURU/SHIVAMOGGA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the Centre and State were making joint efforts to provide relief in flood-hit areas of Karnataka. Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa later said that Mr. Modi had

promised assistance from the Centre for the flood-hit areas.

During his virtual address at the University of Mysore, Mr. Modi said his sympathies were with the families that were affected by the rain that lashed the State a few days ago.

said startups were the strength of the country. "Your progress is the country's progress. If you become self-reliant, so will the country."

your strengths ... This will help you choose your future path," he said. He sought to draw the attention of students to startups floated by youth during COVID-19 and

"Cooperating with probe"

During the argument, counsel for the official submitted that he had presented himself before all investigating agencies for interrogation and was fully cooperating with the agencies. He had

sidered the two cases on that date, said Justice Ashok Meenon. The official, who was former Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, had moved the court seeking anticipatory bail.

The case relates to the seizure of 30 kg of gold from diplomatic baggage at the Thiruvananthapuram airport on July 5.

The court had earlier restrained the Enforcement Directorate from arresting the official till then. It will con-

cerned him over 90 hours by various agencies and he had travelled over 600 hours from his home in Thiruvananthapuram and back for appearing before various agencies. He submitted that he was being made a pawn in a political game.

Regarding his hospitalisation in Thiruvananthapuram, Mr. Sivasankar submitted that there were even attempts to forcibly discharge him from the Government Medical College Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram, self before all investigating agencies for interrogation and was fully cooperating with the agencies. He had

been interrogated for over

90 hours by various agencies

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'Without money, nothing moves' – it's the refrain in Paliganj

Voters in Arwal and Sasaram also say that things get done solely by greasing the palms of officials, and prohibition remains only in name

AMARNATH TEWARY

SASARAM

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, facing an anti-incumbency wave and the possibility that the BJP may be eyeing his post, is running for a fourth consecutive term at the helm in the State. But people's anger against corruption and the "loosely enforced" prohibition may play spoilsport.

In the Paliganj Assembly constituency, people are wary of approaching panchayats and police stations because officials demand bribes. "Corruption is so rampant at the block and panchayat levels and at the police stations that people, especially those from the Extremely Backward Classes, are badly affected," Bansidhar Paswan, a bicycle mechanic at the bus stand, said. "It is because of this com-

munity's support that Mr. Kumar has been in power for 15 years, but in the past five years, corruption has grown manifold, and we are hit hard."

He alleged that the police "don't move a step" without bribe. "Without money, nothing moves. It was not like this earlier," Mr. Paswan said.

Corruption appears to defeat even the State's prohibition law.

A travel agent at the bus stand asked, "What prohibition? Liquor is available everywhere... even at local police stations. Either the policemen or the local goondas are profiting from prohibition. For common people, the cost of liquor has gone up two or three times."

"Write it down, Nitish Kumar will have to pay a heavy price in this election because



Relentless fight: Nitish Kumar at a campaign rally in Atri, Gaya district, Bihar, on Monday. ■ PTI

of prohibition. Why doesn't the BJP understand this," he asked.

In a three-corner fight in Paliganj, BJP rebel Usha Vidhyarthi is contesting on Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) ticket.

Ms. Vidhyarthi, from the upper caste Bhumihi community, is pitted against the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidate Jaivardhan Yadav, who, in 2015, won on a Rashtriya Janata Dal ticket

but has recently joined the JD (U), and Sandeep Bhaskar of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) from the Opposition grand alliance.

Mr. Bhaskar and Mr. Jai-

vardhan are Yadavs. The constituency has nearly 88,000 Yadav and 46,000 Bhumihar voters.

A few kilometres from the bus stand, at Prasadi-English

IN FOCUS

village in Arwal district, Shiv Nandan Sharma, a farmer in his 60s, made the familiar complaint against corruption.

"No one is here to look after us. Nitish Kumar does only big talk, I've done this, done that." Bribery is at its peak everywhere, especially at the lower-level bureaucracy," said Mr. Sharma, a supporter of the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Asked about Mr. Modi's support to Mr. Kumar, Mr. Sharma said, "Yes, but it will be better if the BJP has its own candidate as Chief Mi-

nister. Anyone can be a better Chief Minister than Nitish Kumar."

He laughed derisively when asked about prohibition. "You all know... it [liquor] is available everywhere. Visit our village market in the evening and see how effective Mr. Kumar's prohibition is in villages," he said.

Voters of Dedhaon in the Dinara constituency of Sasaram district too have similar complaints. "I raise a challenge; if Mr. Kumar himself goes to a block office in disguise for any work to be done there and gets it done without paying any cut money to the officials or, if he can file an FIR without bribing policemen, I will go out in public with my face blackened," retired Army jawan Harendra Kumar said.

"The first term of Mr. Kumar was good. He was active and really wanted to do things for people living in villages, but nowadays, he listens only to what his sycophantic officials feed him," he said.

In Sasaram town, people on the roads could not care less about COVID-19. "Corona has gone now... for how long it will survive in a place like Bihar," said an elderly man among a group at a roadside tea stall.

Amarendra Singh, who runs a small hotel near the railway station, says, "Let us wait for the poll results. Mr. Kumar will realise then what is happening at the ground level."

The voters say the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput is a non-issue here. "Even Rajput voters of our area are not ready to accept this as a poll issue," Sanjay Singh, who runs a school, said.

The polarising migrant question

Many are angry at Nitish, but old loyalties die hard

NISTULA HEBBAR JEHANABAD



Mrityunjay Kumar

Mrityunjay Kumar was working as a tailor at a small boutique in Noida when a nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19 was announced. He found himself without a job and far from his home at Mahmudpur village in Jehanabad district of Bihar. Like many whose travails were documented in visually searing images, he first tried to arrange a bus ticket to go home, and later took a truck ride to the Ghaziabad railway station, where he had been told that a train would take him to Patna.

"I waited 25 hours without decent food or drink at the station, and finally made it home," he told *The Hindu* outside his semi-pucca home. "Here, I was put into quarantine for 14 days in the village school," he said, adding that he was waiting to leave, but saw no prospect of work very soon. The election season has caught him in the raw, and he questions the need for it right now. "If the polling booth does not have adequate protection, I will not vote. The fear of corona led to the lockdown and forced me into all sorts of hardships, and now the government thinks nothing

of holding polls in such a situation," he says, his anger at the Bihar government obvious. He is reluctant to talk politics, but admits that the anger and despair of migrant workers from Bihar will be reflected in the Assembly polls.

His point is supported by Saurav Kumar, a taxi driver from Mumbai, whom this correspondent met in Patna. Currently without a job and hailing from Paharpur village near Gaya, he says he will return to Mumbai once things are better there.

Plight of workers

He too squarely blames the State government for the plight of workers from Bihar, especially a statement by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on why migrants should not return to Bihar and spend the lockdown in the host States. Mr. Saurav Kumar is a

traditional Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) supporter and intends to vote for the grand alliance candidate.

Ramadhar Singh was on a visit home during the "Phagwa" (March) holiday just before the lockdown was announced, so he escaped the exodus. His view is that the events following the lockdown were triggered by the *mahamari* (pandemic) rather than individual governments. "In a pandemic, how fair is it to blame Nitish?" he asks.

Ranjit Kumar, who worked as construction worker in Prayagraj, moved back to Lodhipur village in Jehanabad during "Unlock 3", when he finally got some transport back to Bihar. Currently unemployed, he says that he will be voting for electing back Nitish Kumar.

Every election hangs between the two points of *mauhul* (atmosphere) and *samikaran* (voter block equations), goes the popular wisdom on polls in Bihar. While hurt feelings exist, older voting loyalties haven't completely evaporated. Seven months after lockdown, opinion is still divided, and the election, considered a one-sided affair even a few weeks ago, is not a sure thing any more.

INTERVIEW | BASHISHTHA NARAYAN SINGH

'No credible alternative to Nitish Kumar'

Mahadalits, women are the CM's major supporters as he has empowered them, says Bihar JD(U) chief

NISTULA HEBBAR

Janata Dal(U) Bihar unit president Bashishtha Narayan Singh says the Assembly election is a straight fight between two major alliances, with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar having the clear advantage of being a recognised leader with a track record in administration and reform.

Have things settled down in the NDA with regard to the Lok Janshakti Party?

■ Whatever happens cannot be predicted. We have said before that Chirag [Paswan, LJP chief] has allied with the BJP, so this is between BJP and Chirag. The BJP has clarified that Chirag has left on his own so the matter is over for us. If you look at the tickets that Chirag has distributed, it has been to all sorts of outsiders. This time round, there are several alliances but I still feel the fight is a straight one between the two dominant alliances; vote *katusas* (spoilers) etc. do not have a long shelf life and are exposed soon. The NDA will win with a two-thirds majority because the leader of the principal Opposition party, Tejashwi Yadav, does not

have a record of credibility. The RJD is still running on Lalu Prasad's name rather than their current leader.

There is talk of heavy anti-incumbency against Nitish Kumar, starting from the Patna floods last year to how the migrant workers situation was handled.

■ Anti-incumbency factor is always talked about when a leader has been at the helm for a while. The Opposition had spread false propaganda on the handling of the migrant issue, but after the administration conducted quarantine and welfare measures properly, the talk died down. The same is the case with flood relief. Bihar has one of the earliest disaster management departments in the country and managed to take care of flood relief even during a pandemic.

Why is Nitish Kumar important? He is the person who has been able to empower and build confidence among sections of society which were oppressed like the Mahadalits. Politically, you can see that the longevity of Naveen Patnaik at the helm in Odisha and Jyoti Basu in West Bengal relate to



Nitish Kumar has been able to empower and build confidence among sections of society

the fact they are/were the face of their governments and the alternative face had no credibility. Nitish Kumar is the face of the NDA and there is no credible alternative to him.

Prohibition is said to have led to not only loss of revenue but also long-term moral decline of society as it gives rise to organised crime. Does the NDA government have any second thoughts?

■ We are completely satisfied with prohibition. To know why, you need to speak to people who are aged 30 to 45. They will tell you how in the past, during

wedding ceremonies and such, there was open drinking on the streets; roads would be blocked because of drunk wedding guests. The biggest thing is that after prohibition, drunken loitering has stopped, and domestic violence levels have come down.

People who are addicted to alcohol may manage to procure it [liquor] but the open display of drunkenness and behaviour associated with it has come down because of the fear of arrest. Revenue loss has been compensated by the fact that there is peace on the streets. Women especially have welcomed the move.

Will women again support the Nitish government over caste considerations, or is that phase over?

■ Women are still the biggest supporters of Nitish Kumar. The NDA government undertook 50% reservations for women in panchayats, empowered the rural woman from backward communities in a big way; they became *mukhiyas* (village heads) and sarpanches and it has radically changed society in the countryside. When ticket

distribution was being discussed, women zila parishad members came in large numbers asking for Assembly ticket, a radical departure from the past when women candidates meant only from certain families.

Other moves like giving cycles to girl students, or 35% reservation in jobs has created a norm in society of encouraging education of girl child, and them entering professions like the police etc. Among women Nitish Kumar is the most recognised leader and women are a part of the entrenched support base of the Janata Dal (U).

Why was former DGP Gupteswar Pandey denied ticket and Manju Verma, tainted by the Muzzaffarnagar incident, repeated?

■ The seat that Gupteswar Pandey wanted was traditionally with the BJP. We thought we would get that particular seat in Buxar this time [but] we didn't. As for Manju Verma, she was given ticket once the court cleared her.

Before that happened, we didn't even allow her to attend party meetings.

Cong. getting ready for physical rallies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

With only 10 days to go for the first phase of Bihar polls on October 28, the Congress is firming up its plans to have physical rallies, a senior leader said on Monday.

Former Congress chief Ra-

hul Gandhi is likely to kick off his Bihar campaign on October 23, at a joint rally with Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav at Hisar Assembly constituency in Nawada district, where Congress's Neetu Singh is the candidate.

On the same day, he will hold a public meeting at Kahaigaon in the Bhagalpur district, said a source.

Mr. Gandhi will be cam-

pling for the grand alliance candidates at two physical rallies in each of the three phases. Both the Con-

gress and RJD are trying to

work out other joint rallies as well for the next two phases.

The Congress party's list of

30 star campaigners includes Priyanka Gandhi Vadra apart from senior leaders and Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled States.

Jagan's letter attempts to coerce judiciary, says judges body

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The All India Judges Association has passed a resolution condemning Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's letter against Supreme Court judge Justice N.V. Ramana as a "deliberate attempt to scandalise and coerce the judiciary".

The Association said the "tone, tenor and timing of the letter portrays malafide intent and appears to be orchestrated for hidden agenda".

"The Executive Committee of All India Judges Association considers this act to be a deliberate attempt to scandalise and coerce the judiciary and legal fraternity. Moreover, such a scandalous letter interferes with the sovereignty of the judges conferred under our Constitution," said the resolution passed on Sunday.

The resolution also condemned "all such attacks on the judicial institution by vested interests, who are bent upon destroying judicial dignity and the independence of the judiciary and trying to intimidate judges for favourable orders".

The letter and its release to the media has created a furore among the legal fraternity, with many similar resolutions passed by several Bar bodies objecting to Mr. Reddy's actions as an affront to the judiciary.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU GUDALUR MUNICIPALITY			
1ST CALLED TENDER NOTICE			
FORM OF CONTRACT : ITEM RATE (Two cover system)			
Dated: 19.10.2020			
1.The Commissioner, Gudalur Municipality invites bids from the interested Registered Firms for the following works through E-Tendering process and off-line submission as mentioned below.			
Sl.No	NAME OF WORKS	Estimate amount (Rs. in Lakhs)	Tender Deposit/Cost of Tender/Period of Completion of work
Capital Grant Fund 2019-2020			
1	Extension and Improvement of the Existing Bus Stand at Gudalur	475.00	4,75,00/- 18,917.00 12 Months
2.The bid document can be downloaded from the website (https://ntenders.gov.in) at free of cost. Bid document can be downloaded 27.11.2020 Upto 3:00 PM. Online submission of tender will also be accepted. Any additional further details and conditions related to this tender can be had from, the Engineering section of this office on all working days during office hours. 5.Important dates.			
1	Date and time of pre-bid meeting	27.10.2020 at 11:00 AM	
2	Last date and Time of downloading bid documents.	26.11.2020 Upto 3:00 PM	
3	Last date and Time for Submission of bid documents, including online Submission	27.11.2020 Upto 3:00 PM	
4	Date and Time of Opening of Technical bid.	27.11.2020 at 3:30 PM	
6.In the event of specified date for submission of bids is declared a holiday, bids will be received and opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. 7. Tender received without valid EMD will be rejected. 8. Other details can be seen in the bid documents.			
Commissioner, Gudalur Municipality			

CM

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NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING / OPEN TENDER ENQUIRY

BRBNMPL invites bids from eligible bidders for following tenders:

1. **Tender No. 063/MYS/MMD/2020-21 - Supply of Block Board Packing Boxes at BRBNMPL, Mysuru.**
2. **Tender No. 072/MYS/MMD/2020-21 - Supply of LDPE Shrink Film Width 340mm, 490mm & 600mm.**

IN BRIEF



'Govt. ruined economy, increased infections'

NEW DELHI
Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Monday put out a chart on Twitter comparing how other countries handled the COVID-19 and the economy to argue that the Narendra Modi government "destroyed the economy and infected the maximum number of people". The data – sourced from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Worldometer – compared the GDP growth for 2020 and the number of COVID-19 deaths per million of a country's population.

Gujarat police invoke terror law against gang

AHMEDABAD
In a rare move, the Gujarat police have invoked the stringent Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime Act (GujCTOC) against 14 members of a powerful gang involved in dozens of cases of extortion and land grabbing in Jamnagar. The gang is allegedly operated by one Jayesh Patel, who is currently abroad since he fled the country in 2018. Out of 14 people slapped with the GujCTOC, eight have been arrested, while one was in jail.

Up to Khadse to decide on joining NCP: Pawar

PUNE
Commenting on the widespread speculation of estranged senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Eknath Khadse defecting to his party, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar said that while Mr. Khadse's contribution to establishing the BJP in Maharashtra was immense, it was ultimately up to him to take a decision whether or not to join the NCP or any other party in the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi government.

Heavy rain alert issued for southern Odisha

Bhubaneswar
The Odisha government warned on Monday all District Collectors to stay alert about heavy rain forecast for the next three days due to a cyclonic circulation over east-central Bay of Bengal. Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Ganjam and Gajapati may receive heavy rain from Tuesday as a yellow warning has been issued for these districts. On Wednesday, Puri, Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapara will also be affected by the atmospheric system.

Hathras: plea to probe destruction of evidence

Facts show role of doctors, U.P. officials in shielding accused, says activist

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court has reserved for orders a writ petition filed by activist Chetan Janardhan Kamble seeking an independent investigation into the role of medical staff and top Uttar Pradesh Police officers in the destruction of evidence in the Hathras rape and murder case.

The facts clearly indicate the involvement and complicity of certain U.P. State Police and officials of the State government machinery in manipulation and destruction of evidence and shielding the accused in respect of the subject crime," Mr. Kamble said in a writ petition, filed by advocate Vipin Nair.

The petition was reserved for orders on October 15 along with a separate one filed by Satyama Dubey.

The Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde had voiced an inclination to have the Allahabad HC monitor the ongoing CBI probe.

In his petition, Mr. Kamble said, "government hos-

No time for relaxation: WHO

Official says festival season and approaching winter can aggravate the situation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday cautioned against any relaxation of response actions following the recent slight decline in COVID-19 cases in the Southeast Asia Region, saying the pandemic continues unabated and "our response only needs to be strengthened further to curtail virus transmission".

Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region, said, "There should be no complacency in view of the declining numbers in recent weeks. The region still reports large numbers of COVID-19 cases. We need to continue to do our very best to curtail the pandemic."

Festival season

She said the upcoming festival season and the approaching winter or cold season threatened to aggravate the situation "if we let our guard down".

"This festive season we must continue to take responsibility as individuals need to maintain physical distance, hand hygiene, cough etiquette and wear a mask when and where needed. People must remember the three Cs – avoid crowded places, avoid closed settings and avoid confined and enclosed spaces with poor ventilation," she said.

In its release, the group said the co-circulation of seasonal influenza and CO-

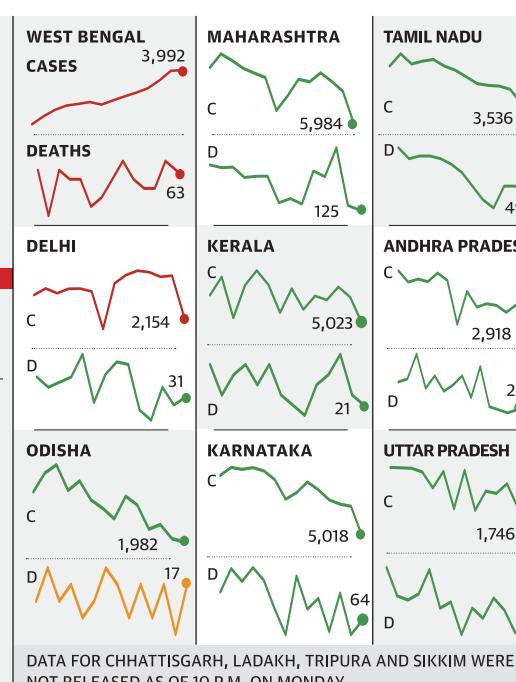
Viral tracker

With 43,129 COVID-19 cases recorded on Monday, India's tally stood at 75,91,914. As many as 541 deaths were registered, taking the toll to 1,15,217. Fewer than 10 lakh samples were tested for the third consecutive day on October 18.

NEW CASES AND DEATHS

CASES	7 DAY-CHANGE
43,129	-29.2%
DEATHS	7 DAY-CHANGE
541	-24.2%

The graphs depict the new cases and deaths in the last 14 days in select States. If average cases and deaths in the last seven days are higher than the previous seven days, then the cases and deaths are rising; if they are lower, then dropping; if they are similar, then cases and deaths are flattening in that State



VID-19 in the winters may present challenges for health systems and health facilities, since both diseases present many similar symptoms. "Many of the same measures that are effective in preventing COVID-19 are also effective for preventing influenza, including physical distancing, hand hygiene, covering coughs, ventilation and masks".

Positivity rate

India's national cumulative COVID-19 positivity rate has fallen under 8% and this trend has been sustained without a break for four days. "The positivity rate now stood at 7.94%", a re-

lease issued by the Union Health Ministry on Monday said.

The total tests have crossed 9.5 crore and the average daily positivity rate is 6.13% for October third week. India's active case load stood at 7,72,055 on Monday and presently the active cases comprised 10.23% of the total positive cases of the country. The total recovered cases were more than 66 lakh. Patients, numbering 66,399, have recovered and discharged in the last 24 hours, the Ministry said.

Seventy-nine per cent of the new recovered cases were observed to be concentrated in 10 States and Union

Territories – Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi, Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Maharashtra had contributed the highest, with more than 11,000 single day recovery, followed by Kerala and Karnataka, with more than 8,000 recoveries each.

The country has reported 579 case fatalities in the past 24 hours. "After 90 days, the daily deaths recorded are below 600. Of these, nearly 83% are concentrated in ten States/UTs."

More than 25% of new fatalities reported are from Maharashtra (150)," the Ministry said.

Akali Dal seeks farm laws for Punjab

AAP, Cong. MLAs arrive in Assembly on tractors in protest against Central Acts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

On the first day of a special session of the Punjab Assembly, convened to bring in a law by the State to nullify the Centre's three farm sector laws, MLAs of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Congress on Monday arrived on tractors to register their protest against the laws and extend their support to the ongoing farmers' protest. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) members came wearing 'black robes' to express their 'anguish' against the laws.

SAD and the AAP members also staged a protest outside the Assembly against the ruling Congress government, accusing it of maintaining 'secrecy' over the Bill



Paying homage: MLAs observing silence for farmers who lost their lives during the agitation over the new laws. ■ PTI

to be brought in the Assembly by not sharing it with Opposition members. AAP MLAs, led by leader of the Opposition Harpal Singh Cheema, burnt copies of the Union laws outside the Assembly complex.

The House proceedings

began with members paying homage to all the farmers who lost their lives in the ongoing agitation against the agriculture laws. The Assembly also paid respects to the deceased freedom fighters, political and other eminent personalities, as well as

soldiers during the obituary references and it was adjourned for an hour.

After its resumption, SAD MLAs demanded that no other business other than a discussion on the farmers' issues should be held. AAP members demanded a copy of the proposed legislation that the government intends to bring in. Amid the ruckus, the Speaker adjourned the House for the day.

After this, AAP MLAs staged a 'sit-in' inside the House, demanding copies of the proposed Bill.

Mr. Cheema said the State government was not at all serious about the issues and concerns of farmers. Akali Dal MLAs also staged a sit-in outside Punjab Bhawan.

India setting up a robust vaccine delivery system: PM

Modi says high recovery rate due to flexible lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India was one of the first countries to adopt a "flexible" lockdown approach and thereby managed to keep death rates from COVID-19 relatively low, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at the launch of the Grand Challenges Annual Meeting, organised by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The three-day programme aims to bring together policy makers and scientific leaders, calling for scientific collaboration in solving global health problems, with emphasis on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and will feature leaders' talks, panel discussions and virtual informal conversations.

Nearly 1,600 people from 40 countries are expected to participate.

"India is now at the forefront of COVID-19 vaccine development. We are work-



Thanks to a people-powered approach, we have kept our death rates low

community curious. Thanks to a people-powered approach we have kept our death rates low. We are seeing a per day decline in growth of cases and we have a high recovery rate of 88% and this was because we adopted a flexible lockdown. We were among the first to encourage use of masks and rapid antigen tests," the Prime Minister said.

India's vaccine delivery system would be used to ensure immunisation of citizens. "We are known for our capability of making low cost vaccines," Mr. Modi said. "We want to help other nations enhance their capabilities in vaccine manufacturing and immunisation."

Along with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the meeting is being hosted by the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, the Indian Council of Medical Research and NITI Aayog.

More than half of farmers oppose farm laws: survey

Almost 40% fear new laws will end state-run markets

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

More than half of Indian farmers oppose the three farm reform laws passed by Parliament last month, while only 35% support them, according to a new survey in 16 States conducted by Gaon Connection Insights. Almost 40% expressed fear that the new laws will end state-run markets and government procurement at minimum support prices, and almost 60% are in favour of a legal guarantee for MSPs.

Despite the widespread opposition to these laws, almost 44% of respondents said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government was "pro-farmer", while 28% said it was "anti-farmer."

Asked about whom the Modi government supports, however, about 35% of those surveyed thought that it supports farmers, while 30% felt that it supports private companies and multinationals, and 15% said the govern-

ment supports middlemen and traders.

Gaon Connection did a face-to-face survey of a sample of more than 5,000 farmers, three-fourths of whom own less than five acres of land, in 53 districts across 16 States between October 3 and 9. It found that state-run mandis are the most popular medium of produce sale across the country (36%), followed by private traders (26%). Cur-

rently, only 2% sell to corporates.

The northwestern States of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, which have the highest proportion of sales in state-run markets (78%), also have the highest rates of opposition to the new reform laws (77%).

The west was, however, the only region where supporters of the new laws (52%) narrowly overtook the opposition (48%).

Centre steps in to halt boundary row

Several injured in Assam, Mizoram

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

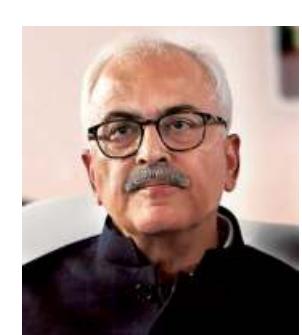
The Union Home Ministry has asked Assam and Mizoram to maintain peace and display "no aggressive posturing" after violent clashes took place on the border between the two States on Saturday night.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla held a video conference with the Chief Secretaries of Mizoram and Assam on Monday and reviewed the situation.

The two States were asked to provide security to trucks and goods vehicles passing through the inter-State border so that supply of essentials was not blocked in Mizoram.

Assam has had a boundary dispute with Mizoram for decades and several rounds of talks have been held since 1994-95 to solve the issue.

Saturday's clashes were reported near Vairenge village in Kolai district of Mizoram and Assam's Lailapur in Cachar district. The Mizoram government claimed that some miscreants pelted stones at a group. A large number of persons gathered and set fire to about 20 temporary bamboo sheds said to be in Assam's jurisdiction. Sec-



Ajay Kumar Bhalla

tion 144 was imposed and a large number of security personnel deployed. Several persons were injured.

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal tweeted on Monday that he had apprised Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the present Assam-Mizoram border situation over phone. "I thank the Hon'ble PM for his support and assurance to solve the issue," Mr. Sonowal said.

The office of Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga tweeted, "Hon'ble Home Minister @AmitShah, DoNER Minister @DrJitendraSingh, Home Secretary & others have telephoned HCM @ZoramthangaCM regarding the situation in Mizoram's border. They expressed support of the CM's wish for peaceful resolution of the situation."

BARC 'highly disappointed' with Republic TV

TV network aired contents of a confidential communication from rating agency

Issue summons to Arnab: HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday asked the Mumbai Police to issue summons to Republic TV chief Arnab Goswami, if he is proposed to be added as an accused in the FIR in the TRP manipulation case.

statement on Sunday.

"BARC India is highly disappointed with the actions of the Republic Network by disclosing private and confidential communications and misrepresenting the same,"

it stated. "BARC India reiterates that it has not commented on the investigation and without prejudice to BARC India's rights, it expresses its dismay at the actions of the Republic Network."

This year, the exercise had been planned on a 'non-contact - at sea' format.

Japan and U.S. will also participate

DINAKAR PERI

<p



Trapped in a man's world
Shweta Tripathi; (below) Rasika Dugal • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The women of *Mirzapur*

Rasika Dugal and Shweta Tripathi talk about the web series' second season, their lockdown experience, films versus web series and more

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

Mirzapur is a testosterone-heavy show. Set in the eponymous city of Uttar Pradesh, the web series has crime, corruption, mafia, and more men. But the women, despite being outnumbered by men in this violent world, are neither inconsequential nor damsels in distress; they, too, are powerful agents. Their character arcs are as dramatic as that of their male counterparts. The trailer for the show's second season promises interesting developments especially for Beena Tripathi (played by Rasika Dugal) and Gajagamini 'Golu' Gupta (Shweta Tripathi). Excerpts:

How did you experience the lockdown?

Rasika: I had been working continuously for the last one-and-a-



half years. I welcomed this pause, though I wish the circumstance that led to it was different. A lot has happened in the news, starting with the migrant labour crisis,

which was a big humanitarian one. I still can't understand how something as careless as that could have happened in our country.

Shweta: After shooting for *Mirzapur* last September, I was at home waiting for the right kind of project. So, my lockdown, in a way, started early. That phase leading up the actual lockdown, was tough. I was not happy with the work I was getting. There were tears, mood-swing and all that. But during the lockdown, I had a lot of work. I had promotions for my new releases: *Raat Akeli Hai*, and *The Gone Game*, which was shot at home. That was exciting.

Was it challenging to get back into your characters after season one?

Rasika: It was challenging to revisit the character after listening to people talk about it. Once you have heard many opinions about it, your personal equation with that character gets corrupted. So, I felt like I had to forget all that before going into season two.

Shweta: I signed up for *Mirzapur* because of season two. In the first, there isn't much drama in Golu's life. And, I am someone who loves drama. Also, we did season one without much expectation. But the show became a big hit. And, the kind of love I received for Golu put some pressure on me. The character has completely flipped from season one. Her situations have changed.

Mirzapur: Season two streams on Amazon Prime Video from October 23.

CHITRADEEPA ANANTHARAM

A corn husk doll is currently enjoying its moment in the sun. Its creator, 19-year-old Madhumita Karan from South Delhi, is fascinated with the idea of making art from waste. Madhumita picked up this skill from her crafts teacher, Huma Khailil, back in school at the Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya.

When corn was in season (July-September), she made one and sent it to Chitra Mukherjee's residence, where her mother works as a domestic help. "These corn husk dolls are amazing. I was impressed by the fact that it was created using waste material. These dolls are part of the culture and tradition in the West and are rather expensive," says Chitra, who then posted the photos of these

Not so corny

These eco-friendly corn husk dolls, made by a Delhi student, could be an innovative addition to *golu*

dolls on social media.

Madhumita would collect corn husk from roadside vendors in Delhi to make these dolls. But during the pandemic, she began to buy whole corn and use the husk to create dolls. She also collects husk from wholesale markets, and stocks it for later.

"After seeing photographs of my dolls on social media, more orders are pouring in," says Madhumita, adding that, "This is the first time I am selling my

work of art; my first order for six dolls came from Chennai."

City-based architect, S Thirupurasundari, is the first to have placed an order for the dolls as they rekindled fond memories of her childhood. "Twenty-three years ago my grandfather had gifted me a corn husk



doll from Italy. It is still in good condition. This shows that these dolls have a long life if preserved well. I was impressed by the detailing Madhumita has given to each of her dolls. Corn husk dolls will be the highlight at our *golu* this Navratri," says Thirupurasundari.

After doing extensive research online about corn husk dolls, Madhumita learnt about the different techniques used to make them. "I have made about 23 different types of dolls so far, and I am in the process of creating them in ethnic Indian outfits," she says.

Dolls by Madhumita, as she calls them, has detailing such as buttons, bow ties, laces, frills, bonnets, baskets, flowers, cap, scarves and hats. "It takes almost an hour and a half to make one doll, but the processing and preparation take an entire day," says Mad-



humita. She carefully removes the husks, washes them in clean water, wipes them down with a clean cloth and lets them dry in the shade.

Madhumita (far left) makes corn husk dolls • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Once the husk is pruned and damaged edges trimmed, it is ready to use. The colour is made by mixing water, salt and dye and boiling them for 20 minutes. The artist also uses natural leaves, twigs and flowers for embellishments. "Twigs, twine and maida paste are used to design and bind the doll. The toughest part is making the hat," she says.

Says Chitra, "So many queries began to pour in soon after I posted the images of these dolls. I am glad to see this young girl transform into a young entrepreneur."

"I am overwhelmed," says Madhumita, discussing the response. "I wonder how I am going to keep up with the demand."

For orders, email madhumita.karan2000@gmail.com; ₹250 upward

POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



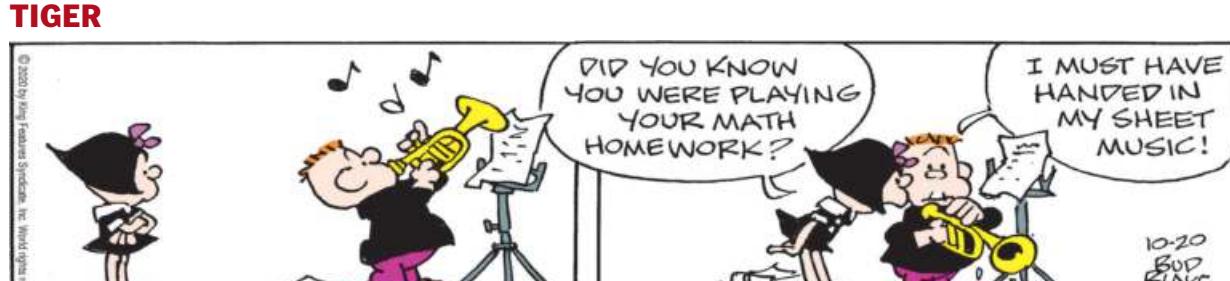
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



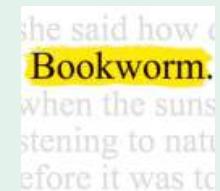
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HOMING IN

The pandemic has forced book clubs to meet online. But, if you aren't a part of a club and like reading, these **podcasts** are for you

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN



Bookworm

If you are thirsty for conversations on literature and reading, then this podcast is an ocean. Los Angeles public radio station KCRW's Bookworm is one of the longest running radio shows on English literature.

On this show, American literary critic Michael Silverblatt has hosted some of the most celebrated writers including TC Boyle, David Foster Wallace, William Gass, Zadie Smith, and Richard Powers. The conversations in the show don't seem to be a Question and Answer session.

Silverblatt makes the dialogue organic and extracts insightful information from his guests.

Episode length: 28 minutes

Available on: Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts and more



Slate's Audio Book Club

What if you are a fly on the wall in a book club? Listening to this podcast gives you that experience. In each episode, three literary critics of Slate discuss a book. And, usually, all three hosts have different opinions about it. It's best to pick an old episode of a book which you have already read for a spoiler-free conversation.

Episode length: Over 40 minutes

Available on: Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts and more



The Book Review Podcast by the New York Times

It is the publication's longest-running podcast and, arguably, its most popular. Editor Pamela Paul discusses new books with the author or an NYT staffer. You get all the essential news in the world of literature and publishing. In the next segment, the hosts discuss what they are currently reading.

Episode length: Over 60 minutes

Available on: Google Podcasts, nytimes.com, Spotify and more



Book Fight

Book Fight is more informal and discusses all kinds of writing (thick novels to essays). The conversation, as the description says, are like the ones "writers have at the bar, which is to say they are both honest and open to tangents, misdirection, and general silliness. You don't need to have read the work to follow the discussion. The hosts make sure they don't give anything away plot-wise (when they are discussing fiction). They usually start with a specific topic

and branch off to more general discussions about writing.

Episode length: Over 60 minutes

Available on: Google Podcasts, nytimes.com, Spotify and more

We would love to know how you are keeping busy at home. Tell us what you are listening to at metro@thehindu.co.in

Morales aide poised to win Bolivia vote

Quick count suggests victory for Arce, marking a comeback for the socialist party; rival concedes defeat

REUTERS
LA PAZ

Bolivia's socialist candidate Luis Arce looks set to win the country's presidential election without the need for a run-off, an unofficial count indicated on Monday, putting the leftwing party of Evo Morales on the brink of a return to power.

The quick count from pollster Ciesmori, released by Bolivian TV channel Unitel around midnight on Sunday, showed Mr. Arce had 52.4% of valid votes, more than 20 percentage points above the second place centrist rival Carlos Mesa, who had 31.5%.

Bolivian presidential candidate Carlos Mesa conceded the election on Monday. "The result of the quick count is very strong and very clear," Mr. Mesa said.

Still counting

The official count had reached just 5% of votes cast,



Big win: Luis Arce, centre, of the Movement for Socialism, celebrating after claiming victory for the party in La Paz. ■ AFP

and exit polls had been delayed hours after polls closed, leaving Bolivians in the dark about the election result. A candidate needs 40% of the votes and a 10-point lead to win outright.

"All the data known so far indicate that there has been a victory for the Movement for Socialism," Mr. Morales, who handpicked Mr. Arce and has been closely advising the campaign, said in a press conference in Buenos Aires.

Mr. Arce, a former Economy Minister under Mr. Morales, sounded confident of victory without explicitly claiming the win at his own press conference shortly after midnight in the Bolivian capital La Paz.

"We are going to work, and we will resume the process of change without hate," Mr. Arce told reporters.

"We will learn and we will overcome the mistakes we've made (before) as the Movement for Socialism party."

Conducted amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Sunday's poll was regarded as a test of democracy in the Andean nation after last year's election was annulled after allegations of vote rigging, which sparked bloody protests and led to Mr. Morales quitting after almost 14 years in power.

Jeanine Anez, the conservative interim President who took over in a power vacuum last year, said that it appeared Mr. Arce was the election winner and offered her congratulations.

The election outcome, if confirmed, is chastening for the country's conservatives and will likely bolster the im-

age of Mr. Morales, the socialist indigenous leader whose shadow still looms large over the country despite him living in exile in Argentina since last year's disputed election.

Morales to return

Mr. Morales was an iconic and long-lasting figure in a wave of leftist Presidents in the region over the last two decades, and the Bolivian election is a litmus test of the left's abiding clout in Latin America.

"The vote is set to be the most important since Bolivia returned to democracy in 1982," Carlos Valverde, a political analyst, said earlier in the day.

"Sooner or later we are going to return to Bolivia, that is not in debate," Mr. Morales said.

"My great desire is to return to Bolivia and enter my region. It is a matter of time," said Mr. Morales.

Pak. police arrest Sharif's son-in-law

Safdar led a demonstration at Jinnah's tomb, raising slogans against the military

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KARACHI

Pakistani police arrested the son-in-law of the country's exiled former premier Nawaz Sharif on Monday after he led a crowd in chanting against the military at the tomb of the country's founder.

The arrest of Muhammad Safdar comes after Mr. Sharif's akistan Muslim League (PML-N) joined a series of nationwide protests against the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan. His arrest drew condemnation from the Opposition, which said authorities wanted to target

Mr. Sharif's family.

Police detained Mr. Safdar at a Karachi hotel room where he was staying with his wife Maryam Nawaz, who addressed a large anti-government rally on Sunday.

Mr. Safdar on Sunday had visited the mausoleum of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who led independence movement to get a separate homeland from Britain in 1947. Jinnah remains a revered figure in Muslim-majority Pakistan, with his tomb often drawing politicians and leaders.

While at the tomb, Mr. Safdar led a crowd in chanting — "Give respect to the vote!"



Muhammad Safdar

That slogan is viewed in Pakistan as criticism of the military, which ruled the country of 220 million people — directly or indirectly — for most of its history.

Chanting political slogans

at Jinnah's tomb is widely considered taboo. Police say they arrested Mr. Safdar, himself a member of the PML-N, after receiving a complaint from a citizen alleging he was harassed.

Ms. Nawaz added Opposition parties will continue their protests until Mr. Khan is removed from power.

Mr. Sharif, 70, who has had a long uneasy relationship with the military, served as Pakistan's Prime Minister three times. A court in 2017 ousted him from power over corruption charges. Mr. Sharif has been staying in London since November 2019.

Pakistan to lift ban as TikTok falls in line

REUTERS

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has decided to lift a ban on popular social media app TikTok after the company vowed to block all accounts involved in spreading "obscenity and immorality", Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) said on Monday.

The move comes some 10 days after Pakistan blocked TikTok for failing to block "immoral and indecent" content. "TikTok has agreed to moderate accounts in accordance with local laws," said a spokesman for the PTA.

Thai PM recalls Parliament as protesters raise pressure

REUTERS

BANGKOK

Thailand's embattled premier called on Monday for a special session of Parliament as protesters planned more rallies to demand his resignation, the release of jailed activists, and reforms to the monarchy.

Tens of thousands of mostly young protesters have taken to the streets in the past week in defiance of an emergency decree banning gatherings of more than four people.

Police said around 20,000 people protested across the capital on Sunday, although activists and local media estimated much bigger crowds.

Demonstrators seek his ouster over last year's 'rigged' poll



Prayut Chan-o-cha

As they prepared to rally again on Monday, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha said Parliament — currently in recess — would be recalled to discuss how to reduce tensions.

"We support opening an extraordinary session to solve this conflict," he told

reporters, warning protesters not to break the law.

"I request protesters rally peacefully. The government has already compromised to some degree," he said.

The largely leaderless movement is calling for the resignation of Mr. Prayut — a former Army chief and mastermind of a 2014 coup — as well as the re-writing of the military-drafted Constitution they say rigged last year's election in his favour.

They want the abolition of a draconian defamation law that shields King Maha Vajiralongkorn from criticism, greater transparency of royal finances, and for the monarch to stay out of politics.



Supporters of Joe Biden at a rally in Orlando. ■ AP

Trump says the vote is between recovery and depression

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON

With just over a fortnight to go until Election Day, U.S. President Donald Trump and his opponent Democratic nominee Joe Biden continued to woo voters in 'battlefield states'. However, the commonalities mostly stopped there — the two candidates delivered sharply contrasting messages on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. economy and questions of policing and racial justice.

On Sunday afternoon, Mr. Biden held a drive-in campaign event in Durham, North Carolina, while Mr. Trump flew to a rally in Sun City, Nevada, after campaigning in Wisconsin and Michigan.

With regard to racial tensions and racial justice, Mr. Biden said the country needed "hope" and "to heal" and "needed to de-escalate tensions, open lines of communication."

"Folks, times are hard, unemployment's way up," Mr. Biden said, linking job security to his own childhood in Scranton Pennsylvania and Claymont, Delaware; Mr. Biden's father had to move for his father's work.

Mr. Biden said nearly 4,000 people had died of COVID-19 in North Carolina and over 217,000 had died in the U.S. but Mr. Trump was insisting that the U.S. had "turned the corner".

"And my grandfather would say, 'This guy's gone around the bend if he thinks we turned the corner.'"

"Experts say we're likely to lose as many as 200,000 additional lives nationwide between now and the end of the year. All because this President cares more about his Park Avenue perspective on the world, the stock market, than he does about you. Because he refuses to follow the science," Mr. Biden said, emphasising what has been

6 Russian military officers charged for cyberattacks

French polls, Winter Olympics targeted

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Six current and former Russian military officers sought to disrupt through computer hacking the French election, the Winter Olympics and U.S. hospitals and businesses, according to a Justice Department indictment unsealed on Monday that details destructive attacks on a broad range of political, financial and athletic targets.

The indictment accuses the defendants, all alleged officers in the Russian military agency known as the GRU, in destructive attacks on Ukraine's power grid, in a hack-and-leak effort directed at the party of French President Emmanuel Macron in the days leading up to the 2017 election.

The 50-page indictment was filed in federal court in Pittsburgh. Those include cyberattacks that targeted the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea. "No country has weaponized its cyber capabilities as maliciously and irresponsibly as Russia," said Assistant Attorney General John Demers.

tion, and to impede an investigation into the suspected poisoning of a former spy and his daughter.

The indictment does not charge the defendants in connection with interference in American elections, though the officers are part of the same military intelligence unit that prosecutors say interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election by hacking Democratic email accounts.

The 50-page indictment was filed in federal court in Pittsburgh. Those include cyberattacks that targeted the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea. "No country has weaponized its cyber capabilities as maliciously and irresponsibly as Russia," said Assistant Attorney General John Demers.

It's China that happens to have the cash now, says Sri Lanka Minister

Each country works out its own financing arrangements, says Ajith Nivard Cabral, referring to Sri Lanka's borrowing from China

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

While government critics and the Opposition in Sri Lanka raise concern over the Rajapaksa administration's growing reliance on China, in the wake of Colombo seeking a new \$700 million loan from Beijing, a State Minister has said it is China that has the "most amount of cash now".

"In different times in world history, different countries have been the ones who have had the most amount of cash. And now it happens to be China, so China will naturally invest all over the world," Ajith Nivard Cabral, State Minister of Money and Capital Market and State Enterprise Reforms, told *The Hindu* in a recent interview, on Sri Lanka's response to the economic impact of the global pandemic. "I think we should all



flew into Colombo, and met President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is also the Finance Minister. China, which sanctioned a \$500 million loan in March to help Sri Lanka cope with the coronavirus's blow, is likely to favourably consider the Rajapaksa government's request for an additional \$700 million now, having pledged support to the island

nation's pandemic recovery effort. Further, Sri Lanka is also negotiating a nearly \$1.5-billion currency swap facility with the People's Bank of China. Sri Lanka owes China over \$5 billion so far.

Trade practices

"Nobody says China has given \$1.5 trillion loans to the U.S.? We are talking about \$700 million coming in... these are the trade practices, financing practices, prevalent in the world. Each country works out their own financing arrangements in line with what they feel is best for them," Mr. Cabral said, adding, other countries such as Japan, the U.S. and India have also been big investors in Sri Lanka. The U.S., for instance, "is a very strong investor in Sri Lanka's sovereign bonds. I met the Indian CEO forum here, and I was quite surprised that there are

more than 50 in Indian CEOs here."

'Different sources'

Government critics, including former Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera, has urged the Rajapaksa administration to engage the IMF, rather than fall into a "Chinese debt trap", but the government has ruled out an IMF bailout. While President Rajapaksa has vowed to disprove the "Chinese debt trap analysis", few other sources seem as willing to lend readily. As for India, the Reserve Bank of India signed a \$400 million swap agreement with Sri Lanka in July, to help boost Sri Lanka's foreign reserves, and is perusing a further \$1 billion requested by Sri Lanka. New Delhi is also yet to respond to PM Rajapaksa's request for a debt moratorium — Sri Lanka owes \$960 million to India — but Mr. Cabral observed bilateral moratoriums cannot help much. "Emerging nations have all faced external sector stresses, which is not peculiar to Sri Lanka. Recently, some of the international agencies had provided some support for around 70 odd countries, which have been in ad-hoc arrangements. This is a global problem, which needs a global solution," he said.

Despite the external sector weakening significantly, Sri Lanka is "fortunate", in Mr. Cabral's view. The country's foreign reserves have "not been affected too much", exports have "held firm" and remittances have been "pretty strong". In September, Sri Lanka recorded over \$700 million from worker remittances. Exports in July crossed \$1 billion and the government's move to res-

'15 dead since start of Nigeria protests'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LAGOS

At least 15 people have been killed, including two policemen, since protests against police brutality erupted in Nigeria this month, according to Amnesty International on Monday.

Anger over abuses by Nigeria police's notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) forced the government to scrap the unit, but protests have continued and snowballed into calls for sweeping changes in the West African powerhouse. Meanwhile, protesters paraded Lagos on Monday, blocking the airport. Footage seen by AFP showed hundreds of protesters waving flags and placards as they marched outside the international departure terminals.

A NO-NO

CM
YK

MARKET WATCH

	19-10-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	40,432	1.12
US Dollar	73.37	-0.03
Gold	51,740	0.07
Brent oil	43.03	0.91

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	347.55	-2.40
Asian Paints	2070.10	8.90
Axis Bank	492.95	20.55
Bajaj Auto	2980.00	-64.75
Bajaj Finserv	5981.10	28.80
Bajaj Finance	3367.20	35.85
Bharti Airtel	397.70	-3.95
BPCL	346.65	6.70
Britannia Ind	3772.45	25.25
Cipla	764.00	-18.35
Coal India	114.70	3.35
Divis Lab	3093.40	-129.30
Dr Reddys Lab	5058.15	-22.40
Eicher Motors	2198.15	-71.75
GAIL (India)	87.45	3.45
Grasim Ind	773.15	0.45
HCL Tech.	844.75	17.60
HDFC	2031.50	69.80
HDFC Bank	1203.55	4.20
HDFC Life	570.50	9.35
Hero MotoCorp	3248.70	-97.75
Hindalco	182.70	2.90
Hind Unilever	2177.80	27.25
ICICI Bank	417.10	21.00
IndusInd Bank	627.10	18.80
Infosys	1125.90	-1.60
Indian Oil Corp.	76.80	2.60
ITC	168.25	2.55
JSW Steel	313.50	2.45
Kotak Bank	1376.70	40.15
L&T	902.90	8.80
M&M	597.45	-9.20
Maruti Suzuki	6851.95	-42.95
Nestle India Ltd.	16093.15	662.90
NTPC	81.65	1.35
ONGC	69.30	2.05
PowerGrid Corp	159.75	0.80
Reliance Ind	2176.20	0.40
SBI Life	798.30	-1.25
State Bank	204.00	8.05
Shree Cement	21102.25	-75.20
Sun Pharma	483.65	-3.25
Tata Motors	128.25	0.50
Tata Steel	395.50	-1.65
TCS	2711.55	-51.75
Tech Mahindra	824.15	1.40
Titan	1228.80	5.65
UltraTech Cement	4514.60	32.50
UPL	463.45	-3.50
Wipro	343.20	3.55

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.17	73.49
Euro	85.93	86.31
British Pound	95.16	95.58
Japanese Yen (100)	69.44	69.75
Chinese Yuan	10.94	10.99
Swiss Franc	80.16	80.53
Singapore Dollar	53.90	54.15
Canadian Dollar	55.53	55.78
Malaysian Ringgit	17.65	17.75
Australian Dollar	52.00	52.24

Source: Indian Bank

Kalyan Jewellers gets nod for ₹1,750-cr. IPO
MUMBAI
Kalyan Jewellers India Ltd. has received the Securities and Exchange Board of India's approval to go ahead with its ₹1,750-crore IPO, according to SEBI's website.

Wadhawan offers assets of ₹43,000 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The jailed promoter of crisis-hit mortgage lender DHFL, Kapil Wadhawan, has offered his personal and family properties, which he claims are worth ₹43,000 crore, for repayment of outstanding loans of lenders to the company.

He wrote to the RBI-appointed administrator R. Subramaniamkumar on October 17 saying his offer would ensure maximum value for the assets that have been put on the block to repay loans. Currently under judicial custody, Mr. Wadhawan has proposed to the transfer of the right, title and interest in projects that form part of the real estate portfolio of his family to enable complete resolution of DHFL.

India may produce 310 lakh tonnes of sugar'
Country has to ship 60 lakh tonne: ISMA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE
The Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) estimates sugar production during the current sugar season (October 2020 to September 2021) at 330.23 lakh tonnes.

As per an ISMA statement, the estimate is based on total sugarcane expected to be crushed by sugar mills during the season.

However, a significant quantity of sugarcane juice and B-molasses would be diverted for ethanol production. This will bring down sugar production by almost 20 lakh tonnes. "ISMA will get a better idea of this diversion once the tenders happen and bids are given by millers for ethanol supplies," according to a statement. So, the actual sugar

Centre said to ask at least eight PSUs to consider buy-backs

Move to help cash-strapped govt. raise funds; firms include Coal India, NTPC

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

India has asked at least eight state-run companies to consider share buy-backs in the fiscal year to March 2021, two government officials said, as New Delhi searches for ways to raise funds to rein in its fiscal deficit.

The firms asked include miner Coal India, power utility NTPC, minerals producer NMDC and Engineers India Ltd., said one of the sources, who sought anonymity as the discussions are private.

"Buy-back is an important tool in our strategy and it helps in building market price," added the second official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity.

India is unlikely to be anywhere near its fiscal deficit target of 3.5% of GDP for



Cash woes: COVID-19 curbs have hit tax revenues and delayed efforts to privatise BPCL and Air India. • C.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

2020/21 as COVID-19 curbs hit tax collections and delayed efforts to privatise Bharat Petroleum Corp. and flag carrier Air India.

In February, the government had set itself a target of raising more than \$27 billion from privatisations and sale of minority stakes in state-owned companies this fiscal.

However, some PSUs, particularly in the oil sector, may not be able to do buy-backs, the sources warned, as the government's stake is just sufficient to ensure its position as a majority holder.

"The government stake in these companies is about 51% and there is a competing claim on their cash in the

form of huge capex commitment and dividend payments," the official said.

But for those with sufficient funds and capital expenditure below target for this fiscal year, the government could seek approval from the Cabinet to prune its stake to less than 51% in individual firms without giving up control, the official said.

India had tasked 23 state-run companies with capital expenditure of ₹1.65 trillion (\$22.5 billion) this fiscal year, but some firms face spending challenges as the world's second most populous nation adds virus infections.

The Centre had asked PSUs to either meet their targets for capital expenditure or "reward the shareholder in the form of a dividend," the officials added.

CPSEs told to meet 75% capex target by Dec.

FM urges spending to spur economy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday exhorted large central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) to achieve 75% of their planned capital expenditure (capex) target for FY21 by December, to support economic growth impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

She held a virtual meeting with Secretaries of coal and petroleum & natural gas, along with the Chairmen and Managing Directors (CMDs) of 14 CPSEs belonging to these Ministries, an official statement said.

This was the fourth in the ongoing series of meetings

that the Finance Minister has been having with various stakeholders with an aim to accelerate economic growth amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

While reviewing the performance of CPSEs, Ms. Sitharaman said capex by CPSEs was a critical driver of economic growth and needed to be scaled up for FY21 and FY22.

In FY20, against the capex target of ₹11,672 crore for these 14 CPSEs, the achievement was ₹11,632 crore, that is, 104%, the statement said, adding that the capex target was pegged at ₹15,934 crore for these firms for the current fiscal.

The government has just begun its own assessment of India's growth prospects for this year that would be shared in due course of time, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday evening.

The Minister also said that the government's new policy for public sector enterprises, which will notify strategic sectors where at least one public unit needs to operate, is being finalised and will be put up for the Union Cabinet's approval soon.

"We have only now started doing some kind of an as-

essment," the Minister said.

"We waited for the commencement of the second half of the year, which has just started. We have got a lot of inputs that are fairly different from what we had got in July, as ideally it should be,"

Brookfield to buy 18% of RMZ's assets for \$2 billion
Realty firm has debt of ₹12,500 crore



its real asset portfolio to 85 million sq. ft. over the next six years. RMZ, whose debt is estimated at ₹12,500 crore, has sold 12.5 million sq. ft. of its total real estate assets of about 67 million sq. ft. The deal also includes divestment of the group's co-working business CoWrks.

The commercial real estate asset portfolio of RMZ is valued at about ₹10 billion.

Hatsun Agro announces 1:3 bonus issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI
Dairy products maker Hatsun Agro Product Ltd. has approved the issue of bonus shares in the ratio of one new equity share for every three shares held by shareholders. The record date is December 3, 2020.

The board also approved a plan to raise ₹900 crore via the Qualified Institutional Placement route. On Monday, Hatsun named current MD, R.G. Chandramogan, as chairman, following the relinquishment of the post by K.S. Thanarajan. Executive director C. Sathyam was named MD.

The firm also reported a 161% rise in second-quarter standalone net profit to ₹66 crore. Total income rose 3.8% to ₹1,329 crore.

(IBC) through an ordinance that provided relief from insolvency proceedings on defaults that happened on or after March 25, 2020.

The NCLAT noted that the bar created was retrospective as the cut-off date had been fixed as March 25, 2020 and the newly inserted Section 10-A had come into effect on June 5, 2020.

It would be absurd to hold that the embargo would extend to an application in respect of such default after March 25, 2020, but before June 5, 2020, i.e. the commencement of the IBC (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020, as the bar operates in respect of default arising on or after March 25, 2020 and not before such date, the appellate tribunal noted.

The NCLT had rejected the plea citing the insertion of Section 10-A in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

Vineet Nayyar to exit IL&FS Group's board

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI
The board of IL&FS Group has announced the resignation of Vineet Nayyar as the executive vice chairman of IL&FS Group.

"The board, in its meeting held on Monday, accepted Mr. Nayyar's resignation with effect from October 31, 2020, and granted him leave till then, on medical grounds," IL&FS Group said in a statement.

India had tasked 23 state-run companies with capital expenditure of ₹1.65 trillion (\$22.5 billion) this fiscal year, but some firms face spending challenges as the world's second most populous nation adds virus infections.

The Centre had asked PSUs to either meet their targets for capital expenditure or "reward the shareholder in the form of a dividend," the officials added.

In the interim, C.S. Rajan, MD, IL&FS, has been

China GDP growth accelerates to 4.9%

Industrial output undergirds recovery

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China's economic growth continued to gain momentum in the third quarter,



with the GDP expanding 4.9% from a year earlier in the July-September period, according to official Chinese data released on Monday.

The pace of expansion was faster than the preceding quarter's 3.2% and underlined the rebound in the world's second-largest economy at a time when other major economies are struggling to recover from contractions triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns to combat it.

In the interim, C.S. Rajan, MD, IL&FS, has been

asked to discharge Mr. Nayyar's responsibilities and, in consultation with senior management, put in place a revised organisational structure. Mr. Nayyar was appointed on October 4, 2018 in the first meeting held by the new board immediately after its constitution by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

The IMF has forecast

Royals trounce Super Kings, rise above bottom-half logjam

Butler drives 126-run chase after loss of early wickets to lift side to fifth; Dhoni's men fail to force the pace, especially against the leg-spinners

IPL 2020

SPORTS BUREAU

Jos Buttler slammed an unbeaten 70 off just 48 balls (7x4, 2x6) to guide Rajasthan Royals to a comprehensive seven-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Monday.

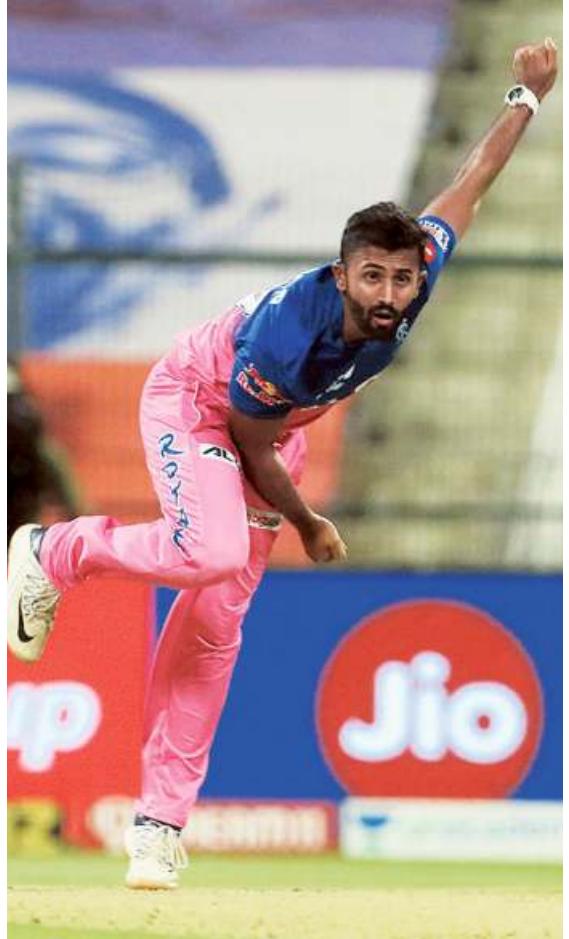
Chasing a modest target of 126, RR was struggling at 28 for three before Buttler and Steve Smith (26 n.o., 34b, 2x4) took charge and sealed victory with 2.3 overs to spare.

RR's fourth win in 10 games keeps its hopes of a playoff spot alive. CSK's seventh defeat means its chances are remote.

Walking in at five, Buttler slowly but steadily took control of the chase and was able to find the boundary when needed while Smith was happy to play second fiddle in their unbeaten 98-run stand for the third wicket.

The Englishman started with a reverse sweep off Ravindra Jadeja before he attacked the CSK medium-pacers with his powerful shots down the ground as he got his eye in.

In the 12th over, Buttler



Making an impact: Shreyas kept the CSK batsmen on a leash while Buttler sealed the issue with an explosive knock. ■ BCCI/IPL



hit Shardul Thakur for a four over point and followed it with a six over long-off to switch gears.

Next assignment

RR: Oct. 22 vs. SRH
Dubai, 7.30 p.m. IST

CSK: Oct. 23 vs. MI
Sharjah, 7.30 p.m. IST

Piyush Chawla faced the fury of Buttler's willow in the 15th over, going for three consecutive boundaries, the first of which brought up the batsman's half-century.

In contrast, the RR bowling effort was led by its leg-spinners Shreyas Gopal and Rahul Tewatia, who stifled

the CSK middle-order on a wicket that was on the slower side.

Electing to bat, CSK lost Faf du Plessis and Shane Watson cheaply.

The team appeared to build some momentum when Sam Curran and Ambati Rayudu got 15 runs off Ben Stokes in the fifth over.

However, Shreyas accounted for Curran with a

googly, forcing the batsman to chip it to long-off, while Tewatia found Rayudu's top-edge off an attempted sweep to have him caught by the keeper.

Boundaries dry up

CSK failed to score a boundary from the sixth to the 13th over.

The spinners conceded only 32 runs in eight overs

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

Sam Curran c Buttler b Shreyas 22 (25b, 1x4, 1x6), Faf du Plessis c Buttler b Archer 10 (9b, 1x4), Shane Watson c Tewatia b Tyagi 8 (3b, 2x4), Ambati Rayudu c Samson b Tewatia 13 (19b, 2x4), M.S. Dhoni run out 28 (28b, 2x4), Ravindra Jadeja (not out) 35 (30b, 4x4), Kedar Jadhav (not out) 4 (7b); Extras (b-1, lb-2, w-1, nb-1); Total (for five wkts. in 20 overs): 125.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-26 (Stokes, 2.6 overs), 2-28 (Uthappa, 3.2), 3-28 (Samson, 4.3).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING

Archer 4-0-20-1, Rajpoot 1-0-8-0, Tyagi 4-0-35-1, Stokes 3-0-27-0, Shreyas 4-0-14-1, Tewatia 4-0-18-1.

ROYALS BOWLING

Archer 4-0-20-1, Rajpoot 1-0-8-0, Tyagi 4-0-35-1, Stokes 3-0-27-0, Shreyas 4-0-14-1, Tewatia 4-0-18-1.

RAJASTHAN ROYALS

Rajasthan Royals won by seven wickets with 2.3 overs to spare.

Ben Stokes b Deepak Chahar 19 (11b, 3x4), Robin Uthappa c Dhoni b Hazlewood 4 (9b), Sanju Samson c Dhoni b Deepak Chahar 0 (3b), Steve Smith (not out) 70 (48b, 7x4, 2x6); Extras (b-1, lb-2, w-1); Total (for three wkts. in 17.3 overs): 126.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-26 (Stokes, 2.6 overs), 2-28 (Uthappa, 3.2), 3-28 (Samson, 4.3).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING

Deepak Chahar 4-1-18-2, Hazlewood 4-0-19-1, Jadeja 13-0-11-0, Shardul 4-0-34-0, Sam Curran 1-0-6-0, Chawla 3-0-2-0.

Toss:

Man-of-the-Match: Buttler.

Rajasthan Royals won by seven wickets with 2.3 overs to spare.

It feels good but it's just a number, says Dhoni

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ABU DHABI

Chennai Super Kings' match against Rajasthan Royals on Monday marked the 200th appearance of Mahendra Singh Dhoni in the IPL but the CSK skipper said he was oblivious to it and played down the milestone.

"I spoke about it and that's how I got to know," Dhoni told presenter Danny Morrison at the toss. "It feels good but at the same time it's just a number. I feel fortunate to play for such a long time without too many injuries."



Dhoni... 200 games in the IPL. ■ BCCI/IPL

Innings scan

CSK	RR
51	Dots 48
12	Fours 12
1	Sixes 2
43/2	PP 31/3
6.25	RR 7.20

Facing Buttler's fury

Piyush Chawla faced the fury of Buttler's willow in the 15th over, going for three consecutive boundaries, the first of which brought up the batsman's half-century.

In contrast, the RR bowling effort was led by its leg-spinners Shreyas Gopal and Rahul Tewatia, who stifled

the CSK middle-order on a wicket that was on the slower side.

Electing to bat, CSK lost Faf du Plessis and Shane Watson cheaply.

The team appeared to build some momentum when Sam Curran and Ambati Rayudu got 15 runs off Ben Stokes in the fifth over.

However, Shreyas accounted for Curran with a

googly, forcing the batsman to chip it to long-off, while Tewatia found Rayudu's top-edge off an attempted sweep to have him caught by the keeper.

Boundaries dry up

CSK failed to score a boundary from the sixth to the 13th over.

The spinners conceded only 32 runs in eight overs

between them and bowled a whopping 23 dot balls.

Dhoni (35 n.o., 30b, 4x4) added 51 for the fifth-wicket from 46 balls, but struggled to get the boundaries and power the side to a fighting total.

RR still in it

■ RR's fourth win in 10 games keeps its playoff hopes alive. CSK's seventh defeat means its chances are remote

On-a-high Rahul's Kings take on Shreyas' mighty Capitals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA DUBAI

Riding on the high of two back-to-back victories, Kings XI Punjab takes on table leader Delhi Capitals here on Tuesday. Having lost two close games at the start of the season, KXIP managed to get on the right side of the results in the last couple of games, although it was too close for comfort.

Death bowling and Glenn Maxwell's form in a shaky middle-order remain a concern for KXIP, which needs



Shikhar Dhawan... striking it rich. ■ BCCI/IPL

Maxwell... time to turn things around. ■ BCCI/IPL

to win its remaining five games to make the play-offs.

Chris Gayle's return has reduced the burden on skipper KL Rahul.

Delhi is clearly the team to beat in the tournament.

While Prithvi Shaw needs to be back among the runs after a couple of ducks, his opening partner Shikhar Dhawan has elevated his game to a different level.

Axar Patel has shown his

Amazing performance from Lockie: Cummins

Y.B. SARANGI KOLKATA

Pat Cummins was happy for fellow Kolkata Knight Riders paceman Lockie Ferguson whose brilliant performance enabled the team to defeat Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Super Over on Sunday.

"It was a pretty easy decision to pick Lockie (for the Super Over) because he bowled absolutely beautifully during the main innings. He was unbelievable today. Great skills to take two wickets and then we were trying to get those three runs," Cummins said in the post-

match press conference.

"Amazing performance from Lockie. So happy for him. You have to remember he has not played the last month here and also through the lockdown he has been working so hard for this chance. When we knew he was ready, he got out there. He is one of the best in the world."

The Aussie said Ferguson's performance lifted the whole side. "A person who has been a fast bowler always loves seeing a bit of pace out there. Hope to see more of him," he said.



Creating a buzz: Ferguson scalped three in the match and two in the Super Over against Sunrisers. ■ BCCI/IPL

utility not just with the ball but also with the bat. With an enviable bowling line-up, Delhi has shown it can defend even below-par totals.

Dubey to replace Mishra

Meanwhile, Delhi Capitals on Monday named Karnataka leg-spinner Pravin Dubey as replacement for veteran spinner Amit Mishra, who was ruled out of the IPL due to a fractured finger.

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Williamson as opener

The legendary spinner said Sunrisers preferred Kane Williamson as opener because of his injury and also the fact that he was finding it difficult to run twos and threes.

Missed Bhuvneshwar: Muralitharan

'Bowlers did their job, batsmen have to step up'

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM HYDERABAD

Sunrisers Hyderabad bowling coach Muttiah Muralitharan said his team felt the absence of Bhuvneshwar Kumar during the loss to Kolkata Knight Riders on Sunday.

However, he didn't want to find fault with the bowling attack.

"They have been doing a good job, restricting teams to below 160," he said.

"It is in bat that we are lacking. We can click and still have a chance, for it is a matter of winning three or four games to qualify for the playoffs," said Muralitharan at the post-match briefing.

Williamson as opener

The legendary spinner said Sunrisers preferred Kane Williamson as opener because of his injury and also the fact that he was finding it difficult to run twos and threes.

"We wanted Kane to use the PowerPlay and put up a good total. He did his job," Muralitharan said.

"There was nothing wrong with the pitch. The pressure levels were different, chasing is always difficult," he added.

"Lockie Ferguson bowled well to pick up those

wickets and we didn't rebuild the innings after that," he said.

"I repeat, it is all about winning one game and getting back the momentum as this time one team with seven wins will make it and our net run-rate should come in handy," said Muralitharan.

Vallalar finds Lord Muruga delightful. His mind is filled with joy whenever he thinks of Muruga. He extols Him as the One who is always young. Vallalar sees Him as his wealth. Appar says that all you need to do is to contemplate on Lord Siva's feet. The moment you do that, it seems as if honey has dropped by your side. In Peria Puranam, Sekkizhar speaks of Sundaramurthy Nayanan's delight upon seeing Lord Siva's divine dance. When a devotee's mind is full of thoughts of his favourite deity, then wherever he looks, he sees his God, said M.A. Manickavelu in a discourse. Whatever he hears, it seems as if that deity's name is being recited.

Varagunapandian, king of Madurai, was a devotee of Lord Siva. Once, he asked his ministers to build a roof over a neem tree, because of the many lingas in it. The ministers were puzzled, for how could there be any lingas in a tree? Varagunapandian, however, insisted that there were indeed many lingas on the neem tree, and he pointed to the fruits in the neem tree as lingas. So engrossed was he in thinking about Lord Siva, that the fruits of the neem tree appeared as lingas to him.

The same king once happened to pass a pond, and he called out to his ministers and told them to cast rice and ragi into the pond. Again, his order seemed bizarre to the ministers. Varagunapandian then explained that there were devotees of Lord Siva inside the pond chanting, "Hara, Hara." Actually, the only inhabitants of the pond were frogs, and their croaking sounded like the chants of Siva bhaktas to the king. Every sight, every sound reminded him of Siva.

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TV PICKS

UEFA Champions League:
Sony Six & Ten 2 (SD & HD),
10.25 p.m.; Sony Ten 1, 2, 3 &
Six (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m.
(Wednesday).

IN BRIEF



Kokrak finally captures first USPGA title

LOS ANGELES
World No. 53 Jason Kokrak reeled off six birdies on a seven-hole stretch on Sunday on his way to winning the CJ Cup and capturing his first US PGA Tour title. The 35-year-old American fired a final-round eight-under 64 to finish 10 under 268, two strokes ahead of compatriot Xander Schauffele. The breakthrough victory for Kokrak comes in his 23rd Tour event. Tyrrell Hatton and Russell Henley finished a further stroke behind. **AP**

Shubhankar ends T-37, Chawrasia T-51

ST. ANDREWS (SCOTLAND)
Shubhankar Sharma shot his best score of the week, a four-under 68, to finish tied 37 on seven-under 281 in the Scottish Championship here on Sunday. S.S.P. Chawrasia returned a 70 and a total of five-under 283 for T-51st place. Spaniard Adrian Otaegui won his first European Tour title at 23-under and four shots clear of Matt Wallace. **PTI**

AFI postpones throws competition

NEW DELHI
The Athletics Federation of India on Monday decided to indefinitely postpone the National Open throws competition. The AFI said the decision was taken, after discussions with coaches and the high performance director, due to the continued high risk of COVID-19. New dates will be announced later. The first edition of the competition was to be held on October 26-27 at NIS, Patiala.

'Maestro' Pirlo faces mentor Lucescu in opener

Barca not among favourites, says Koeman; PSG to tackle United's counter-attacks

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

AGENCIES

MILAN

Andrea Pirlo takes his first managerial steps in the Champions League at Dynamo Kiev on Tuesday, a game which pits the fledgling Juventus coach against his vastly experienced former mentor Mircea Lucescu.

Lucescu, 75, with four decades of coaching experience, and 41-year-old Pirlo have both taken over their respective clubs this season.

It was the former Romanian international who gave a 16-year-old Pirlo his first Serie A start in the Italian's hometown club Brescia 25 years ago.

Juventus is chasing a third Champions League title after 1985 and 1996, with seven runner-up finishes including in 2015 and 2017.

Under construction

But for Pirlo, his Juventus is "under construction, a young team who need to gain experience".

To complicate the task, Cristiano Ronaldo is quarantined because of coronavirus, and will miss the Kiev trip and possibly the game against Barcelona in Turin.

Meanwhile, Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman believes his side is not among the favourites to win this season's title.

Speaking ahead of Tuesday's visit of Hungarians Ferencvaros in their Champions league Group G opener, Koeman played down media talk that the PSG's all-time top scorer Edinson Cavani could debut for the visitor.

PSG will not have it easy as it is without injured midfielders Marco Verratti and Argentine Leandro Paredes, with the Italian out of action for three weeks with a thigh problem.

In addition, Argentina striker Mauro Icardi is absent with a knee problem, while the defensive pair of Thilo Kehrer and Juan Bernat is also on the sidelines.

Koeman will be without

goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen and Jordi Alba plus long-term injury absentee Samuel Umtiti.

Paris St. Germain will concentrate on combating Manchester United's counter-attacks in its opener, 18 months after a heart-breaking elimination by the English side in Europe's premier club competition.

Coach Thomas Tuchel warned that previous achievements would mean nothing on Tuesday at the Parc des Princes, where PSG's all-time top scorer Edinson Cavani could debut for the visitor.

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Despite rising numbers of coronavirus cases across Germany, the local health authority in Leipzig has granted permission for up to 999 spectators to attend, down from the usual number of 8,500 fans allowed for home Bundesliga games.

Lampard believes reigning European champion Bayern Munich is a benchmark for his young players as it targets improvements on all fronts ahead of its opener against Sevilla.

Chelsea has added Champions League experience to the squad in the close season with the arrival of defender Thiago Silva and forward Kai Havertz, Timo Werner and Hakim Ziyech.

Sevilla visits Stamford Bridge for Chelsea's first match in Group E.

Fans for Leipzig

Meanwhile, RB Leipzig will be allowed to welcome fans to the Red Bull Arena for its opener against Istanbul Basaksehir.

Edinson Cavani Uruguay
Set to make debut for Manchester United against former team PSG

UEFA Champions League 2020-21

MATCHDAY 1: OCT 20 Head-to-head W D L

GROUP E

Chestea ENG vs Sevilla ESP

Rennes FRA vs Krasnodar RUS

First meeting

Sevilla Chelsea Last 16

Krasnodar Rennes Debut

2019-20

GROUP F

Zenit RUS vs Club Brugge BEL

Lazio ITA vs Dortmund GER

First meeting

Zenit Dortmund Last 16

Club Brugge Lazio

Brugge Group

—

GROUP G

Dynamo Kyiv UKR vs Juventus ITA

Barcelona ESP vs Ferencvaros HUN

First meeting

Juventus Barcelona Last 16

Kyiv Ferencvaros Q-final

—

GROUP H

PSG FRA vs Man Utd ENG

Leipzig GER vs Basaksehir TUR

First meeting

PSG Man Utd Final

Leipzig Basaksehir S-final

Basaksehir Debut

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EDISON CAVANI Uruguay

Set to make debut for Manchester United against former team PSG

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