



Suspended IAS officer M. Sivasankar arrested by ED in Kerala

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U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo slams 'predator' China on Sri Lanka trip

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Suryakumar, Bumrah help MI pull clear at the top

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NEARBY



President suspends DU V-C for 'misconduct'

NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind, in his capacity as Visitor of Delhi University, has suspended Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Tyagi and ordered an inquiry against him over allegations of grave misconduct and dereliction of duty.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

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Parliamentary panel asks Twitter for affidavit on geo-tagging glitch

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Joint Committee of Parliament on the Data Protection Bill sought an affidavit from Twitter Inc., the U.S.-based parent company of the social media platform, asking them to explain why it had shown Ladakh as a part of China, a panel member said on Wednesday.

The decision to seek an affidavit from the parent com-

pany was taken after the panel found the explanations offered by the Twitter India representatives, who appeared before them on Wednesday, to be "unsatisfactory and inadequate".

Appearing before the panel headed by Bharatiya Janata Party MP Meenakshi Lekhi, representatives of Twitter India "apologised" and claimed it to be a "mistake" as the app's geo-tag-

ging had suffered a technical glitch.

"The Committee was of the unanimous opinion that Twitter's explanation on showing Ladakh as a part of China was inadequate," Ms. Lekhi told PTI after the meeting. She said Twitter representatives told the panel that the company "respects the sensitivities of India".

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

ing had suffered a technical glitch.

The Capital reported 5,673 new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, which is the highest single-day jump in the number of cases, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Wednesday.

Over 60,571 tests were conducted with a positivity rate of 9.37%.

The Capital had recorded its previous highest number

dents are still at home after seven straight months.

The ASER survey provides a glimpse into the levels of learning loss that students in rural India are suffering, with varying levels of access to technology, school and family resources, resulting in a digital divide in education.

ASER is a nationwide survey of rural education and learning outcomes in terms of reading and arithmetic skills that has been conducted by the NGO Pratham for the last 15 years. This year, the survey was conducted via phone calls, reaching 52,227 rural households with school age children in 30 States and Union Territories.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Capital's daily virus tally crosses 5K for first time

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 5,673 new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, which is the highest single-day jump in the number of cases, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Wednesday.

Over 60,571 tests were conducted with a positivity rate of 9.37%.

The Capital had recorded its previous highest number

of cases on Tuesday when 4,853 people had tested positive. The number of new cases recorded on Monday stood at 2,832, 4,136 on Sunday, 4,116 on Saturday and 4,086 on Friday.

The health bulletin stated that 40 deaths were reported on Wednesday while 4,128 patients recovered, taking the total recoveries to 3,34,240.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 2

Mizoram last State to report COVID fatality

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Mizoram on Wednesday became the last of the States in the country to report a COVID-19 fatality.

State health officials said a 62-year-old man died at Zoram Medical College in Aizawl after undergoing treatment for more than 10 days. "The first COVID-19-related mortality in Mizoram comes as a huge shock to the entire State. We are pained and will continue putting up our guard against this pandemic," said Chief Minister Zoramthanga, adding that the man had no co-morbidities.

The State reported its first COVID-19 death 223 days after a 76-year-old man in Karnataka became India's first victim of the virus on March 12. Mizoram has so far recorded 2,607 COVID-19 cases, of which 2,233 patients have recovered.

nomic slowdown, we are not expecting buyers because green fireworks are somewhat expensive compared to conventional fireworks," said Ankit Jain, a trader based in Old Delhi.

Emission tests
Anto Alphonse, DCP (North), said a team of the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation and Delhi Police would ensure the sale of green fireworks this Deepavali. PESO gives a final manufacturing licence after emission tests.

"There is a list of green fireworks manufacturers. The team will ensure traders purchase fireworks from authorised manufacturers in order to prevent the sale of unauthorised products. We also request people to

purchase only green fireworks from licenced shops," said Mr. Alphonse.

"After a wait of two years, we were hopeful of doing good business this year but the COVID-19 pandemic has severely hit sales. Even the wedding season was cold this year due to restrictions. There has been no sale of fireworks for celebrations other than Deepavali. Every year we are facing losses due to some reason or the other. I will surrender my licence if the situation doesn't improve this year because solely depending upon the fireworks business for livelihood is no longer sustainable," said a trader who wished not to be named.

ANTI-CRACKER CAMPAIGN ▶ PAGE 3



Up for it: An elephant reaching for tamarind on a tree in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Tamil Nadu. ■ M. SATHYAMOORTHY

'Green' crackers to make full-fledged Delhi debut

Fireworks sale likely to remain low for third consecutive Deepavali due to COVID, economic slowdown

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

Delhi is set for its first full-fledged date with 'green' crackers this Deepavali amid growing sentiment against not deepening the air pollution crisis the Capital countenances every winter. A ban on fireworks was imposed in 2018 and in 2019 only 'green' crackers were allowed, but the permission had come too late for manufacturers to ensure their availability on time.

The production levels, however, are likely to be on the lower side this year due to the ongoing novel coronavirus pandemic, with the Capital continuing to register high daily numbers of fresh infections. According to the Delhi police, 40 traders in all had applied for a li-



'Green' crackers being sold near Jama Masjid in Old Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

cence to sell firecrackers in 2019; this year they received only 28 requests, out of which 15 have been given the nod. Around eight shops in Old Delhi have an all-year licence to sell firecrackers.

Traders aren't betting on heavy sales and have invest-

ed cautiously. "This year, due to the lockdown, the manufacturing of fireworks remained suspended. The lockdown was lifted only during the rainy season that is unfavourable for manufacture of firecrackers. Supply is scarce and due to eco-

logical reasons, we are not expecting buyers because green fireworks are somewhat expensive compared to conventional fireworks," said Ankit Jain, a trader based in Old Delhi.

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ANTI-CRACKER CAMPAIGN ▶ PAGE 3

SC rejects Delhi government's plea against bail to Pinjra Tod activist

Court rejects contention that Kalita will influence witnesses

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected an appeal by the Delhi government against the grant of bail to Pinjra Tod activist Devangana Kalita in a case connected to the riots that rocked north-east Delhi in February.

A Bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan dismissed the government's plea that Ms. Kalita was an "influential person". The court said bail

could not be denied merely because a person had influence. The court questioned the apprehensions raised by the government that Ms. Kalita would tamper with the witnesses.

The High Court had granted her bail saying the witnesses in the case were mostly police officers. The court, in its bail order on September 1, concluded that the police had shown no evidence to back their claim that Ms. Kalita

instigated communal violence or hate speech. It said she was engaged in a peaceful protest, which was her fundamental right.

Ms. Kalita and her colleague, Natasha Narwal, were arrested in May and booked for rioting, unlawful assembly and attempt to murder. They were charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for allegedly being part of a "premeditated conspiracy."

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English Medium 10 Nov 5 PM | 11 Nov 1:30 PM

Daily virus tally breaches 5,000 mark

Capital witnesses record COVID-19 cases for second day in a row; 5,673 fresh infections in 24 hours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The Capital reported 5,673 new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, which is the highest single day jump for the second day in a row. Delhi recorded its previous highest number of cases on Tuesday with 4,853 cases.

The total number of cases now stands at 37,014.

The death toll has reached 6,396 with 40 fatalities reported in 24 hours, according to a health bulletin re-

Virus spread	
Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
37,014	6,396
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
5,673	40

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN



A man being tested for the virus. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

8.19% while the case fatality rate stands at 1.73%.

Over 60,571 tests were conducted with a positivity rate of 9.37% in the past 24 hours. Of the 15,765 hospital beds in Delhi, 5,665 are occupied. At COVID-19 care centres, which have 7,887 beds, 894 are occupied. Of the 527 beds in COVID health centres, 324 are occupied.

There are 16,833 patients in home isolation.

The number of containment zones in Delhi in-

creased to 3,047, from 3,032 on Tuesday.

According to Revenue Department data, the South-West district has 558 containment zones, South (505), West (333), New Delhi (275), Central (267), South-East (247) and North-West (246). North-East has 82 such zones – lowest in Delhi, followed by East (165), North (171) and Shahdara (198).

The number of new cases on Monday was 2,832, and 4,136 on Sunday.

Schools to remain shut: Sisodia

Parents cagey about sending children for physical classes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday announced that all schools in Delhi will remain closed until further orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Sisodia said that there were some parents who expressed anxiousness and fear about schools reopening. "We assured them that schools will not reopen for now," he said.

"Teachers, parents, and students have been wondering if schools will reopen during this difficult time. Many parents have also expressed their fear, especially if students congregate on school premises in close quarters," said Mr. Sisodia, before announcing the continued closure of schools.

"Teachers, parents, and students have been wondering if schools will reopen during this difficult time. Many parents have also expressed their fear, especially if students congregate on school premises in close quarters," said Mr. Sisodia, before announcing the continued closure of schools.

The Minister added that the possibility of spike in cases, or catching COVID-19 on school premises is high.

Even in countries where schools have reopened, cases have increased among students. "Keeping parent's fear in mind, and the potential risk this can pose to children, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and the Delhi government has decided to put children's safety first, and hence, all schools will



A student attends an online class. ■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

remain shut until further orders," he added.

Parents welcome move
Parents have welcomed the government's decision.

While online learning has been challenging and does not match the social environment of a school, nothing is more important than the safety of "our children", said parents.

Preeti Khachroo Chandra, whose 12-year-old daughter studies in a private school, said: "The government's decision makes a lot of sense. From the safety perspective of children, there is limited infrastructure at schools to have social distancing and other hy-

giene protocols. With the number of cases spiking in Delhi, it does not make sense to send children to schools. Their immune systems are sensitive and susceptible."

Low attendance

Meanwhile, private schools in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar are struggling to get students of Classes 9-12 back in classrooms as parents are apprehensive of sending their wards to school.

Private schools recorded 14% attendance on Tuesday, while government and aided schools clocked 39% in Noida and Greater Noida, said government officials.

AAP govt. adds 1,330 seats to nine existing courses at IPU

'We are trying to help students in hard times'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



Admission seekers at Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University.

■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

students during an extremely difficult year.

New opportunities

Of the 1,330 seats, maximum seats have been allotted to BTech with a total of 630 seats. The breakdown for the new seats for the nine courses is – BVoc (20 seats), BBA (120 seats), BCom (220 seats), BA economics (120 seats), BCA (90 seats), MBA (60 seats), MSc yoga (15 seats), and MVoc (55 seats).

These additional seats, Mr. Sisodia said, is an effort by the government to offer new opportunities to

Mr. Sisodia said that the additional seats are as good as opening 5-6 new colleges. "When a new college opens up in this country, barely 200-odd seats are made available for students. If you look at these new seats, the Delhi government is providing the equivalent of at least 5-6 new colleges for students. It's a good opportunity for our children," Mr. Sisodia said.

Equal to new colleges
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Court acquits Kejriwal in 2016 defamation case by Bidhuri

BJP MP alleged that CM had defamed him in an interview

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday acquitted Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a 2016 criminal defamation complaint filed by BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri.

The complaint was filed against him Mr. Bidhuri, MP from South Delhi parliamentary constituency, under Section 500 (defamation) of the IPC. Mr. Bidhuri alleged that Kejriwal had defamed him in an interview to a news channel.

Mr. Bidhuri had taken objection to Mr. Kejriwal's statement that though criminal cases were pending against the MP, the Delhi police were not taking any action. "Ramesh Bidhuri ke khilaf bade bade saangeen charges hain, unkpaakdaapne [There are serious charges against Ramesh Bidhuri, did you catch him]," the complaint quoted Mr. Kejriwal as telling the interviewer.

"Such defamatory statements have been made with the ulterior motive and wrongful intent to malign and tarnish the image of the complainant," the complaint said.

The MP claimed that no case was pending against him, and the Chief Minister had defamed him by giving such statements.

The court had summoned Mr. Kejriwal in February 2016. He was granted bail on a personal bond of ₹10,000 in July the same year when he appeared before the court on the summons.

Man kills self over rent

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 35-year-old man was found dead at his accommodation in south Delhi's Kota Mubarakpur, the police said on Wednesday.

In a note, he has accused his landlord of harassment. During enquiry, it was found that he had a dispute over rent payment with his landlord. The landlord had also filed a court case against the victim and the hearing was scheduled on Wednesday, a senior officer said.

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, OII-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday (10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.)

2 minors among 4 held for damaging vehicles

Main accused yet to be arrested: police

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Two men were arrested and two juveniles apprehended for allegedly damaging vehicles in outer Delhi's Mangolpuri area, the police said on Wednesday.

In a note, he has accused his landlord of harassment. During enquiry, it was found that he had a dispute over rent payment with his landlord. The landlord had also filed a court case against the victim and the hearing was scheduled on Wednesday, a senior officer said.

Lewd comment
According to the police, on Monday, when a woman along with her brother went to a shop in the area, a man, standing nearby, allegedly made a lewd comment. When the woman's brother strongly objected to it, a heated argument broke out

between them, a senior police officer said.

The man decided to take revenge from the woman's brother. He, along with his group of friends, went to her house to look for her brother, but did not find him there. They looked for him in the area but could not trace him anywhere.

In a video which surfaced online, a group of people could be seen with sticks and damaging vehicles, including motorbikes and cars. The incident took place on Monday night, the police said.

There were around 14 people, including seven juveniles in the group.

They damaged around four-five motorcycles and smashed glasses of six-seven cars. But no one was injured, the officer added.

The police said the accused is yet to be arrested.

Efforts are being taken to nab others also.

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE

Tender No - BPL/LC/T /598

Date: 23.10.2020

E-tender on behalf of the President of India acting through Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer (Const), West Central Railway, East side of Habibganj Railway Station, (Shakti Nagar Side), Construction Office building, Habibganj, Bhopal (M.P)-462024, invites from the reputed Contractors, for the following work.

Tender No - BPL/LC/T /598

Description of work - Modification, Design, Supply, erection, testing and commissioning of Circuit Breaker at Maihar/SSP, Sakriya /SSP, Hindola Ramnagar/SP, Turki/SP and provision of new SSP at Satna with C.B.,

Completion period - 04 months,

Estimated cost in Rs. - 2,69,01,121/-, EMD in Rs. - 2,84,600/- through irrevs

Cost - Rs.10,000/- through irrevs

Time - 15.00 hrs on 18.11.2020. The complete information of above E-tender is available in website IREPS (www.ireps.gov.in) and also placed on the notice board of the office of DY.CEE(C)BPL. Tenders other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted against the above tenders. DY.CEE(C)BPL.

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West Central Railway, Jabalpur

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पर

Timings

DELHI

THURSDAY, OCT. 29
RISE 06:31 SET 17:39
RISE 16:43 SET 04:19
FRIDAY, OCT. 30
RISE 06:32 SET 17:38
RISE 17:12 SET 05:12
SATURDAY, OCT. 31
RISE 06:33 SET 17:37
RISE 17:43 SET 06:03

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	31	14
Safdarjung	31	14
Palam	30	15

Delhi Palam Today
32°C Pleasant morning with mist and haze. A comfortable day and mainly sunny sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
32°C Morning would remain pleasant with smoke haze and warm day likely.

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IN BRIEF

HC tells govt. to reply to plea on pending salaries

NEW DELHI

The High Court has asked the Delhi government to reply to a plea which has claimed that salaries and other emoluments of serving teaching and non-teaching employees of Delhi University have not been paid by their colleges for the last five months. DU has also been told to clarify its stand by November 20.

'Key accused had plans to forcibly marry victim'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
FARIDABAD

The prime accused in the murder case of a woman college student had plans to abduct and forcefully marry her, but he opened fire in a fit of rage when she resisted, said the police sources.

Nikita, 20, was shot dead by Tausheef and his friend Rehan in broad daylight during an abduction bid outside her college in Ballabgarh here on Monday. Both the accused were arrested.

Police sources said the two knew each other since school days. Tausheef had been putting pressure on her for marriage for long, but Nikita was not interested. He had abducted her in 2018 and a case was registered in this connection, but the woman's family later withdrew the complaint.

On the fateful day, Tausheef along with Rehan reached outside Nikita's college and the former tried to push her inside a car. But she resisted and Tausheef shot her point-blank. The two then drove away leaving behind the countrymade pistol. The car was also found on Sohna-Taura Road on Wednesday.

The SIT headed by ACP Anil Kumar met the deceased's family at their residence on Wednesday to gather more details.

Meanwhile, Tausheef's uncle Javed, who had twice unsuccessfully contested Assembly elections from Sohna, said the law should take its own course and his nephew, if found guilty, should be punished.

Situation not normal, do not lower guard: Delhi's 1st COVID-19 patient



People at a Dussehra event in Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO

Rohit Datta advises people to stay indoors during festive season as chances of virus spreading are higher

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

With experts predicting a major surge in COVID-19 cases in the coming months in Delhi, the city's first COVID-19 patient on Wednesday cautioned people to stay indoors as much as possible during the festive season while emphasising that the situation is "not back to normal". Rohit Datta, who was diagnosed with the infection on March 1, made an appeal to

the masses to "not lower our guard" by getting into a casual festive mode.

"I was diagnosed with COVID-19 at a time when the virus had already wreaked havoc in China and a few other countries. I was the first patient in Delhi. So much fear and uncertainty was there at that time. Despite all the research, the virus is still unpredictable," the 46-year-old said. Mr. Datta cautioned that though the economy has been reopened people

must realise that the situation in Delhi is "not back to normal". He referred to many residents going out without wearing masks and violating social distancing norms, giving the example of youths who are putting up pictures on social media of parties and events "as if it's all ok now".

"It is still not ok and work is on for the elusive vaccine. In the festive season, the chances of infection being spread through symptomat-

ic or asymptomatic carriers is huge," he said.

Days before the festival of Deepavali, he urged people to step out only for urgent matters and to take full precautions. "If you love your family, stay home this Deepavali," he said in his appeal to people.

Asked about his plan for Deepavali, Mr. Datta, a resident of Mayur Vihar in east Delhi who lives with his wife, two children and mother, said, "It will be a celebration

HSRPs will now be home delivered: govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

High-Security Registration Plates (HSRPs) will now be delivered to commuters.

The Delhi government on Wednesday reviewed the preparations made by Original Equipment Manufacturers' and dealers in the city to affix HSRPs and colour-coded stickers on existing vehicles in a time-bound manner.

The officials were instructed to ensure hassle-free affixation of HSRP and colour-coded stickers on all vehicles. "In the new version of a website, which will be available for public from November 1, a single website URL, through SIAM, will be available for booking HSRP and colour-coded stickers. The National Informatics Centre will facilitate technical support for the website," the government said.

After booking of HSRPs or colour-coded sticker, consumers will get a real-time updates through SMS. "The customer will be notified of the same at least two days prior to the date of appointment so that there is no delay in delivery," the government said.

Civic doctors call off strike

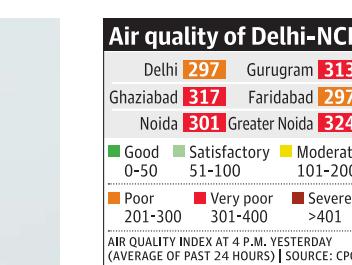
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Doctors of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation-run hospitals who have been agitating for the last several days over their pending salaries called off their strike on Wednesday, officials said.

While five resident doctors of Hindu Rao Hospital had been sitting on a relay hunger strike since Friday, senior doctors of the North Corporation-run facilities had gone on an indefinite strike on Tuesday.

Their associations had joined hands in solidarity since Tuesday.

"The strike by agitating doctors was called off as North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash offered juice to the medics on hunger strike. Salaries of all doctors have been released, till September," the North Corporation said in a statement.



now covers all the 70 Assembly constituencies in the Capital and that by November 2, it will cover all the 272 wards in the city.

The Minister said every person in Delhi should encourage five more persons to participate in the city government's anti-vehicular pollution campaign.

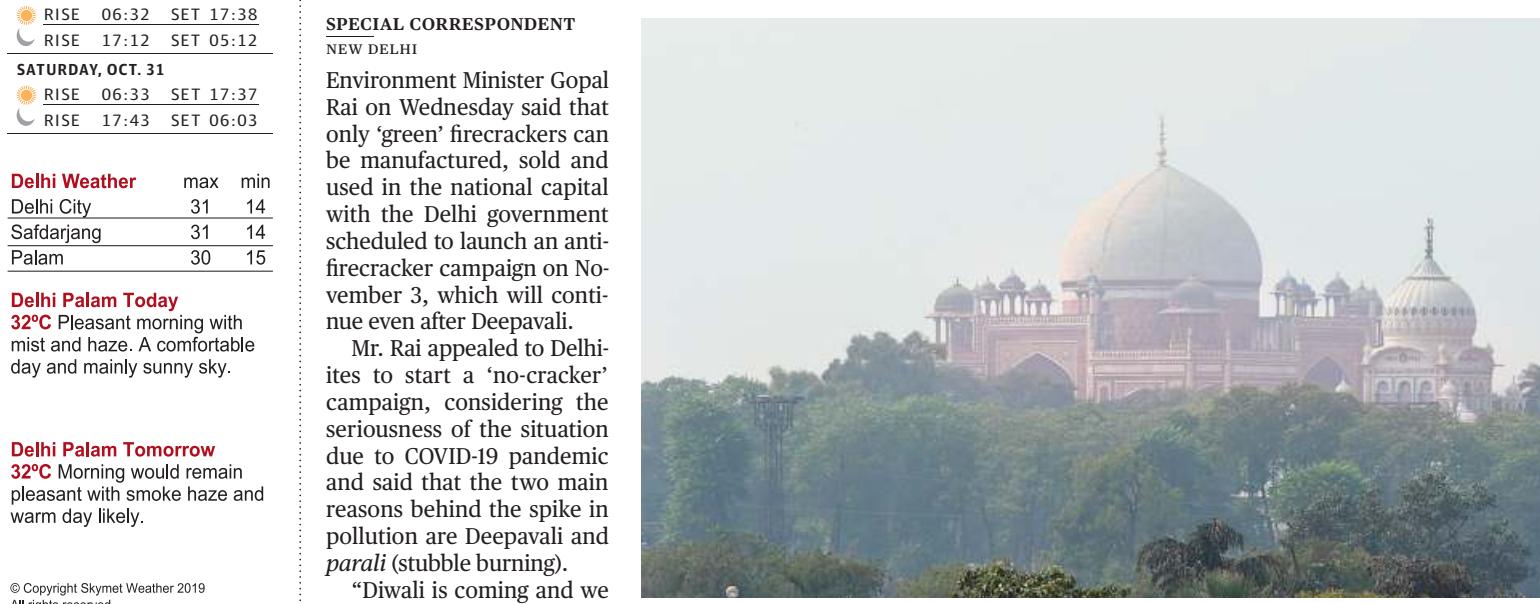
He also said that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday would be launching an app, 'Green Delhi', by which people can share complaints about any violation of environmental norms.

Air quality

Meanwhile, the pollution level in the city improved on Wednesday with an average AQI of 297 which fell in the 'poor' category, according to data provided by the Central Pollution Control Board.

Air quality of Noida, Greater Noida, Gurgaon and Ghaziabad continued to be in the 'very poor' category, with AQI of 301, 324, 313 and 317 respectively.

Forecast shows that the air quality of Delhi will enter 'very poor' category on Thursday and then the 'poor' category again on Saturday



Humayun's Tomb: Pollution level in the city on Wednesday was in the 'poor' category. It is likely to enter 'very poor' category on Thursday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

why using green crackers can control or curb the spike in pollution level. Due to these reasons the Supreme Court decided to ban all traditional cracker manufacturing in Delhi and allowed only green cracker," Mr. Rai said.

Across India, the Minister said, there are around 93 companies, which make green crackers using pyrotechnic. A list of these companies will be uploaded on the Delhi government's web-

site on Thursday so traders can contact them.

The Supreme Court, according to Mr. Rai, had given the licencing department of Delhi Police the responsibility to enforce the ban on traditional firecrackers and the Delhi government would reach out to the State police on Thursday.

"The Delhi government will also launch an anti-cracker campaign from November 3. This campaign

will continue after Diwali as well because many people burn crackers even after the festival," he said.

11 special squads

"The Delhi Pollution Control Committee [DPCC] will form 11 different teams as special squads, which will have engineers, five environmental marshals with vehicles. The teams will keep a vigil on the manufacturers across the Capital," he also said.

Mr. Rai also requested people to comply with norms and traders not to use any remaining stock of traditional firecrackers.

If the DPCC teams find any such firecrackers, strict action will be taken against violators under the Environmental Protection Act and Air Act, he cautioned. "I am hopeful that people will cooperate with us to combat air pollution," he said.

Talking about the various initiatives taken by the Delhi government to combat air pollution, Mr. Rai said that the government is sprinkling bio-decomposer to stop stubble burning in the national capital and has also launched the 'Red Light On, Gaadi Off' campaign, anti-dust pollution campaign and has come up with the Electric Vehicle policy.

He added that the 'Red light on, Gaadi off' campaign

BJP delegation meets L-G over funds dispute between civic bodies, govt.

AAP leader says it was an attempt to defame dispensation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The alleged dispute over funding between the Delhi government and the BJP-run municipal corporations of Delhi reached Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal's doorstop on Wednesday.

Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, led a delegation of the three Mayors and Opposition MLAs to Raj Niwas. Meanwhile, Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta said that the Delhi government should consider paying dues to the civic bodies in instalments.

AAP's civic bodies in charge Durgesh Pathak demanded an apology from the BJP, alleging that the municipalities had sufficient funds all along, which was why they had cleared some part

of the dues to doctors and workers on Tuesday.

"We told the L-G that the Mayors had gone to meet the Chief Minister on Monday to talk about outstanding dues of ₹13,000 crore and house tax of ₹10,000 crore," Mr. Bidhuri said, adding: "We have requested Mr. Baijal to direct the Delhi government to release outstanding funds at the earliest. He has given a positive response and assured us that he will take cognisance of the matter and take appropriate action."

Mr. Gupta requested the Delhi government to release the funds even if it was in instalments. "Sanitation workers, doctors, healthcare workers and other employees have worked with complete vigilance and honesty during this [COVID-19] crisis, but the Delhi government is now reluctant to pay them their salary," Mr. Gupta said.

"All the doctors and workers were paid their salaries by the BJP-led civic bodies. If they did not have funds to pay salaries, where did this money come from?" he said.

Anticipatory bail for Meham MLA

It appears to be a case of high-handedness of police: Judge

ASHOK KUMAR

GURUGRAM

The District and Sessions Court here has granted anticipatory bail to Meham MLA Balraj Kundu and others, including his younger brother, in a case of cheating and breach of trust.

The court said that prima facie, the design on the part of the complainant was to turn the civil litigation into a criminal one to exert pressure on the petitioners, but the law did not permit it.

Sessions Judge M.M. Dhonchak observed that the police had not displayed the "expected objectivity" in dealing with the case and "the complainant cannot be allowed to succeed in his design as it appears to be a case of high-handedness of the police in troubling the petitioners".

"The sequence of events unfolded in this case is not a happy countenance," remarked Mr. Dhonchak in his 16-page order.

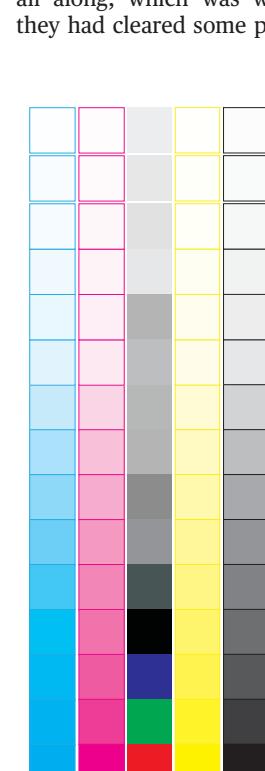
Financial dispute

The matter pertains to financial dispute between the petitioners' company, KCC Buildcon Pvt. Ltd., and Parivartan Singh, the former director of Parivartan Buildtech Pvt. Ltd., over a ₹75 crore-road project in Madhya Pradesh. A complaint was made to Gurugram pol-

ice on October 10 and a case was registered at Sector 50 police station on charges of cheating, criminal breach of trust, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy among others.

Mr. Dhonchak argued that Sections 406 and 420 of the IPC, were antithesis and in respect of one transaction both cannot be committed simultaneously.

He also pointed out that the Assistant Public Prosecutor failed to point out as to what valuable security was forged by the petitioners and how the alleged offence punishable under IPC Section 467 was made out against the accused.



Three persons get bail in riots case

They cannot be kept in jail till everyone in mob is identified

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday granted bail to three persons arrested in connection with the north-east Delhi riots and asked the investigating agency why it has been able to identify and chargesheet only the three persons from a riotous mob of several hundred people.

Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav, while granting bail to Shah Alam, Rashid Saifi and Mohd. Shadab, in a combined order, asked why the beat constable, who claimed to have categorically seen and identified the three accused indulging in the riots on February 24,

waited for 40 days to record his statement.

"There is a gap of about 40 days between the date of incident and recording of statement of the beat constable by the Investigating Officer [IO] and no plausible explanation in this regard has been given by the IO," the Judge said.

What stopped the beat constable from reporting the matter then and there in the police station or from bringing it to the knowledge of senior police officers? This casts a serious doubt on the credibility of this witness," the court remarked.

No CCTV footage or viral video capturing the pre-

sence of the trio at the crime scene on the date of incident is available on record.

The judge also noted that the three men were neither named in the FIR nor were there any specific allegations against them.

The court further noted that statements of public eyewitnesses have been recorded by the IO recently – a long time after filing of the chargesheet.

The court said that the three persons "cannot be incarcerated in jail for infinity merely because other persons, who were part of the riotous mob, have to be identified and arrested in the matter".

must realise that the situation in Delhi is "not back to normal". He referred to many residents going out without wearing masks and violating social distancing norms, giving the example of youths who are putting up pictures on social media of parties and events "as if it's all ok now".

"It is still not ok and work is on for the elusive vaccine. In the festive season, the chances of infection being spread through symptomat-

ic or asymptomatic carriers is huge," he said.

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3 Date of Publication of Bid on website Date-27.10.2020

4 Tender Cost No cost is applicable.

5 Earnest Money Deposit Bank draft of INR 1,50,000 (Rupees One Lakh Fifty Thousand Only) in the name of 'SPECIAL CENTRAL ASSISTANCE LOHARDAGA' payable at any nationalised bank branch in Lohardaga district to be submitted along with the proposal.

6 Last date and time of receipt of Tender 05.11.2020 until 12:00 PM.

7 Bid submission Place District Planning Office, First Floor, District Collectorate, Lohardaga. PIN: 835302

8 Date and Time of Bid Opening Date-05.11.2020, 03:00 PM

9 Opening Validity of Bid Validity of Bid: 90 days

10 Bid Opening Place District Planning Office, First Floor, District Collectorate, Lohardaga. PIN: 835302

11 Name & address of office inviting tender District Planning Office, First Floor, District Collectorate, Lohardaga. PIN: 835302

12 Helpline Number 9006872832: District Planning Officer, Lohardaga

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Uploading bid document at website : 30.10.2020 at 17:00 PM, (ii) Online Submission of e-bids : 09.11.2020 at 17:00 PM, (iii) Opening of Technical & Financial bid: 10.11.2020 at 15:00 PM.

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

Forecast for Thursday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over south Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Mahe

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 33.2	23.3	12.1	Kozhikode	... 33.7	25.2	11.1
Ahmedabad	... 34.8	19.1	11.1	Kurnool	... 33.8	21.1	11.1
Aizawl	... 27.2	16.6	11.1	Lucknow	... 32.0	17.6	11.1
Allahabad	... 33.7	19.4	11.1	Madurai	... 36.0	24.6	11.1
Bengaluru	... 28.9	19.0	11.1	Mangaluru	... 32.4	24.2	11.1
Bhopal	... 32.8	15.9	11.1	Mumbai	... 35.0	23.2	11.1
Bhubaneswar	... 31.8	20.1	11.1	Mysuru	... 30.7	19.3	11.1
Chandigarh	... 31.3	13.3	11.1	New Delhi	... 30.9	13.8	11.1
Chennai	... 12.8	28.2	25.0	Patna	... 33.4	18.0	11.1
Coimbatore	... 35.4	23.2	11.1	Poorni	... 31.1	24.4	11.1
Dehradun	... 30.5	12.2	11.1	Puducherry	... 32.1	23.5	11.1
Gangtok	... 20.7	12.5	11.1	Pune	... 32.6	18.9	11.1
Goa	... 33.2	24.7	11.1	Raipur	... 32.8	22.0	11.1
Guwahati	... 33.0	23.0	11.1	Ranchi	... 28.8	15.2	11.1
Hubballi	... 28.0	20.0	11.1	Shillong	0.3	23.3	14.0
Hyderabad	... 31.8	17.5	11.1	Shimla	... 24.5	12.6	11.1
Imphal	... 30.5	17.5	11.1	Srinagar	... 21.0	2.7	11.1
Jaipur	... 32.0	16.9	11.1	Thiruvananthapuram	13.3	32.9	23.9
Kochi	... 31.2	24.6	11.1	Tiruchi	... 33.6	25.2	11.1
Kohima	... 24.8	16.7	11.1	Vijayawada	... 32.8	25.8	11.1
Kolkata	... 32.6	23.1	11.1	Visakhapatnam	... 33.0	26.6	11.1

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	49	110	40	145	141	...
Bengaluru	11	49	60	120	122	...
Chennai	67	38	80	—	—	...
Delhi	18	137	113	343	339	...
Hyderabad	6	84	12	162	145	...
Kolkata	14	25	77	280	165	...
Lucknow	15	95	59	—	342	...
Mumbai	1	79	108	181	148	...
Pune	—	50	—	—	—	...
Visakhapatnam	13	50	27	79	114	...

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

HC directs BMC to pay salaries to 268 visually impaired employees

Civic body's circular and its action of withholding pay is illegal, says court

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday directed the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to pay salaries to 268 visually impaired employees, who were not paid during the lockdown, and said, "Denying benefits during the pandemic was 'illegal'."

The differently abled employees are members of the National Association for Blind (NAB). A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni was hearing a

public interest litigation filed by the NAB through advocate Uday Warunjikar after the civic body did not pay full salaries to the 268 employees.

Mr. Warunjikar said initially the BMC had exempted all its staffers from reporting to work. While the disabled employees were paid in full for the period between March 23 and May 31, in the subsequent months, the civic body began to make deductions for the days that they missed work, the petitioner said.

A circular was issued by

the BMC that said permissible leave needed to be sanctioned by senior authorities, and for the days that such leave was not sanctioned, an employee would have to undergo a loss of pay.

The court said, "The circular requires judicial intervention. The circular and its action of withholding pay is held illegal."

The court said that physically disabled employees, including the petitioner, were eligible for all monetary benefits, and directed the BMC to pay its physically disabled employees, even

those who could not report to duty during the pandemic, all salary arrears and due monetary benefits.

The Bench said that the payment must be made in two instalments, the first must be paid before Diwali and the second must be paid within 45 days from the date of the first instalment.

The BMC had previously said, "Around 1,150 physically disabled people, including the 268 visually impaired ones, are its staff members, and that it had started bus services for them."

Genesis of FIR against Sushant's sisters is flawed, CBI informs HC

'Allegations are mostly presumptive and speculative in nature'

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), in its reply on Wednesday to a plea filed by the sisters of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput to quash the FIR against them filed by actor Rhea Chakraborty said, "The very genesis of the FIR is flawed."

The central agency filed its reply after a Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Karnik of the Bombay High Court on Tuesday directed it to reply to the petition filed by Priyanka and Meetu Singh.

Referring to the FIR filed by Ms. Chakraborty on September 7, the CBI said, "The very genesis of the FIR registered at the Bandra police station is flawed. The allegations levelled in the FIR are

ceased. In view of the present situation and the order passed by the Supreme Court, it was expected from the Mumbai Police to forward the complaint received from Ms. Chakraborty to the CBI for necessary action, instead of registering an FIR itself," Mr. Yadav said.

The reply said, "Registration of another FIR on the same facts and cause of action was neither warranted nor allowed under law. Thus the FIR is vitiated and bad in law. The Mumbai Police were required to follow the procedure. It is submitted that it is correct that if the allegations mentioned in the FIR, prima facie, do not constitute any offence or make out a case against the accused, the FIR can be quashed by constitutional courts."

Anil Kumar Yadav, additional SP, said that it was settled law that two FIRs could not be registered on the same cause of action.

"It is a fact that the CBI is already investigating the causes relating to the death of Rajput on the basis of a complaint filed by K.K. Singh, father of the de-

ceased.

The scene from Mirzapur 2. - SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in the said novel," said Mr. Pathak. He is seeking immediate removal of the said sequence failing which he would "initiate legal proceedings against the producers, writers and the actor".

in the said novel," said Mr. Pathak. He is seeking immediate removal of the said sequence failing which he would "initiate legal proceedings against the producers, writers and the actor".

The 80-year-old prolific writer said the "sequence defames him as an author and puts him in a bad light".

"I have been published by the multi-national publishers such as Harper Collins and Westland which is, ironically, an Amazon company."

Dhabba was originally pu-

lished by Raj Pocket Books in 2010.

Film critic Bobby Sing, who wrote about the misrepresentation in a Facebook post, said it showed the "absurd assumptions" of certain writer-directors about Hindi crime novels and their authors. "They would not have done it with foreign writers," he said.

Not symbolic
"We could understand that a production assistant came up with the wrong book at the last minute but how can you show reading an excerpt from a book which is not there in it," said film critic Ajay Brahmajit. "Surendra Mohan Pathak is not Mastram. He is not symbolic of the kind of writing that the writer and director are referring to. It reflects that many of those who are writing and directing films and web series in Hindi are not aware of the social, cultural, literary aspects of Hindi," added Mr. Brahmajit.

Interestingly, on September 14, the Hindi Day, the PR agency promoting *Mirzapur 2*. in a letter to the team of *Mirzapur* would help you speak pure Hindi. But the words that it cited in the release were *bhaukaal* (awesome impression), *kantaap* (slap delivered near the ear region) and *bawaal* (chaos).

"These are slangs or colloquial words which practitioners of dignified language avoid even in eastern part of Uttar Pradesh where the series is set," said Mr. Brahmajit.

The Amazon Prime PR team didn't respond despite repeated attempts. Mr. Pathak said he had been approached by a senior team member and had been promised a discussion over the issue.

Booked for vandalising hospital

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The police booked four men and three women, relatives of a 50-year-old man who died during treatment at Vashi NMMC hospital on Tuesday afternoon in a critical condition.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General Public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male Name: Unknown S/o Unknown, R/o Unknown Age: About 32 years, Height: 5'7", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Long, Built: Medium, ID: Old scar mark on right side forehead, Wearing: Blue coloured shirt, Grey coloured pant, Black coloured socks & Brown coloured shoes in feet, was fell down from under construction building on 02.05.2020 from Plot No.1, Motia Khan, Pahar Ganj, Delhi and he was shifted to LHMCH Hospital, where doctor declared brought dead. In this regard a FIR/ DD No.100/2020, u/s 288/304A dated 03.05.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Pahar Ganj, Delhi. If any one having any clue about deceased male may kindly inform the undersigned and contact on following numbers.

SHO

P.S. Pahar Ganj, Delhi

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DP/445/CD/2020



MNS, Sena warn Kumar Sanu's son over remarks on Marathi language

Parent company of Colors channel that broadcasts reality show *Bigg Boss* apologises to Uddhav Thackeray

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Singer Kumar Sanu's son Jaan Kumar Sanu on Wednesday landed in a controversy over his objectionable

entertainment industry by living in Mumbai. We will see to it that it never happens. We will beat you," said Ameya Khopkar, president, cinema wing of the MNS.

Mr. Khopkar said that Colors channel should have edited that part before broadcasting it. "Since it did not, we got to know, who the traitor was. Now I nominate you to get kicked out of Mumbai," he said.

Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik too reacted asking whether the channel was purposely promoting such controversy to increase the TRP of its show. "Mr. Sanu should be kicked out of the show. If the channel fails to do so, our party workers will stage a Sena style protest on the set of the *Bigg Boss*," Mr. Sarnaik said.

On Wednesday afternoon, the parent company of the channel sent a letter to Mr. Thackeray. "We hereby apologise if we have inadvertently hurt the feelings of the people of Maharashtra due to the broadcast of the said comment in relation to the Marathi language. We value the audience and the patronage of the Marathi speaking audience and respect all languages of India in the same manner," it said.

NCB seizes contraband hidden in courier shipment in Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The Narcotics Control Bureau's (NCB) Mumbai unit led by zonal director Sameer Wankhede on Tuesday seized 580 gm of a leafy substance suspected to be ganja from the shipment of a prominent courier company, an official said on Wednesday.

Based on a specific information, the Mumbai unit



Two together

While strengthening its U.S. ties, India must not let this interfere in the dispute with China

The India-U.S. Foreign and Defence Ministers meet for the “2+2” mechanism just a week before the U.S. elections is proof that bilateral ties between the two countries are on a firm footing. Ostensibly, the purpose was to conduct an annual review of ties and to wrap up the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for Geo-spatial Cooperation, the last of the three enabling agreements which will facilitate easier interoperability between the Indian and American defence forces. Other agreements signed or reviewed included those in the areas of health and COVID-19 cooperation, building strategic petroleum reserves in the U.S., renewable energy, space, cyberspace, counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics. In the Joint statement they issued, the Ministers also called on Pakistan to take “immediate, sustained and irreversible action” against cross-border terror groups on its soil, and to bring to justice the perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, and 2016 Uri and Pathankot strikes. However, the timing and the tenor of the American pronouncements prior to the visit made it clear that the larger import of the visit for the Trump administration was about dealing with China. In every interaction, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo referred to the challenge from Beijing, of the need to build a counter coalition to the “Chinese Communist Party”, and to further U.S. Indo-Pacific policy in this regard. In India, he made a reference to the “increasing aggression and destabilising activities by China” and mentioned Indian soldiers killed in clashes with the PLA on the LAC in June. He is taking the same message to his next stops. In Colombo and Male on Wednesday – he is also visiting Indonesia – Mr. Pompeo raised the need to counter and provide alternatives to what he called China’s “bad deals, violations of sovereignty and lawlessness on land and sea”.

For New Delhi, the visit by the U.S. officials was a way to demonstrate that the bilateral relationship is “poll-proof” and will grow regardless of the November 3 election result. The BECA agreement signed is an important addition to India’s defence and strategic capabilities, and it is significant that India-U.S. ties have been reaffirmed now given that it could take some months for the U.S. administration to restart bilateral engagements post-elections. While welcoming their U.S. interlocutors and taking ties forward, however, it is significant that the government has chosen not to enter into the comments made by Mr. Pompeo on India’s China challenge, in keeping with New Delhi’s stated policy that the LAC tensions are a “bilateral matter”. The conspicuous silence from External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in response to Mr. Pompeo’s comments on China is also a sobering reminder that while India appreciates support from the U.S., it retains its strategic autonomy in dealing with threats and troubles with its biggest neighbour.

Real estate

People’s participation in the political process is a must for J&K to see stability with growth

The changes in land laws in Jammu and Kashmir notified by the Centre on October 26 allow the purchase of land by those who are not permanent residents of the Union Territory, for the first time. Only permanent residents could purchase land in the erstwhile State, which was reorganised as two UTs, J&K and Ladakh, in August 2019. One of the arguments against the now nullified special status of J&K was that the restrictions on land transfers hampered investments. J&K industrial policy had limited land holding of investors to designated enclaves. The changes in land laws were logical steps to follow the end of the special status. Some restrictions remain on the transfer of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes, but this too can be cleared by the district collector. The government has said the changes will encourage investment and advance peace and progress in J&K. The argument that these changes would help the people of the region might have been stronger if these were done in consultation with them. The irony is that in all three regions – Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh – there is strong opposition to opening the land market to non-residents. Political parties in J&K too have opposed the changes.

Free movement of people, and an integrated national market can advance development but India’s governance structure accommodates fears and concerns of local populations in this context in a measured manner. There are several States which have provisions to regulate ownership and transfer of land under Article 371 of the Constitution. The Centre is expected to announce new land laws for the UT of Ladakh before October 30, and it has promised to “safeguard interests of the people” regarding “all issues related to language, demography, ethnicity, land and jobs”. The Centre’s approach towards J&K has been marked by a lack of trust, which has accentuated the alienation of large sections of the population. Fears of deliberate demographic engineering have dominated politics in the Valley for long. After the reorganisation of the State and the loss of its special status in 2019, the people of Jammu and Ladakh also turned nervous on this question. Desirable as it may be, there is no point forcing a particular path of development upon people. The situation is precarious also because of the heavy hand of the state on political and civil society activities in J&K. The unilateralism that has come to define New Delhi’s dealings with J&K is achieving little. There is no wisdom in pushing through measures aimed to promote investment when the end result is political volatility. The Centre’s policy towards J&K must be buttressed by a robust political process that enables people’s participation and ensures stability with growth and development.

The challenges of walking the Indo-Pacific talk

In countering China, India must note that strategic talk alone cannot trump overriding economic realities



HAPPYMON JACOB

The recently concluded third annual United States-India 2+2 ministerial dialogue has amplified the ongoing conversation in India on the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), the Indo-Pacific, the threat from China, and, the United States as a potential ‘alliance’ partner (<https://bit.ly/3eIMQq8> and <https://bit.ly/3kAMW3>). No strategic vision has captivated India’s foreign policy mandarins and strategic community in recent times as have the Indo-Pacific and the Quad.

The international community has once again decided to court New Delhi to play a decisive role in shaping the region’s strategic future. While during the mid-2000s the world expected India to be an economic powerhouse, a decade later, those expectations remain modest, at best. The expectation this time is more strategic and military, to lead the charge against China from within the region. Will India, and can India, fulfil these expectations?

The concepts, the differences

The Indo-Pacific is a grand politico-economic vision while the Quad is a forum for strategic and military consultations among India, the U.S., Australia and Japan. Depending on how one wishes to view it, they could be seen as conceptually interlinked or as separate visions. Their similarity comes from the fact that the Quad members are also major States in the Indo-Pacific region, and both the Quad and the Indo-Pacific constructs are focused on China. More so, they are also in some ways centred around India’s geographic location and its policies. Put differently, if you take China out of the equation, they would have little rationale for existence. And if you

Trade and the neighbours: 2018-19 (U.S. \$)

Indian and Chinese trade with key Indo-Pacific countries BN: BILLION | MN: MILLION

Main countries	India	China
Australia	30 bn	252 bn
New Zealand	2.64 bn	33.4 bn
United States	87.96 bn	737.1 bn
South Korea	20.7 bn	284.54 bn
ASEAN*	96.80 bn	600 bn
Bangladesh	9.21 bn	18 bn
Japan	17.63 bn	353.7 bn
Sri Lanka	4.19 bn	4,262.52 mn
Maldives	288.99 mn	-

SOURCE: GOVERNMENT TRADE PORTALS AND MEDIA REPORTS

take India out of the picture, their ability to sustain as geopolitical constructs would drastically diminish.

At the same time, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad are quite different from each other. The first is a politico-economic vision and the last is a military-strategic vision – the last does not form the military or strategic nucleus of the first.

While the Indo-Pacific provides a complex political and economic picture with a hesitant, but growing, articulation of China as a strategic challenge, the Quad is inherently more anti-China in character and intent. The Indo-Pacific, despite the subtle anti-China undertones, will find it impossible to avoid engaging China. Even the Quad, still in its institutional infancy, is mostly focused on diplomatic signalling and with little common intent let alone joint action. At the moment it seems, paradoxically however, that the Quad’s ability to succeed would entirely depend on China – the more aggressive China gets, the more resolute the Quad countries would be in strengthening it.

It is too early to say whether the Indo-Pacific as an economic construct will be able to pose an alternative to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is far more advanced, much more thought-out, and has the economic might of the Chinese state behind it. Several Indo-Pacific countries are already members of the BRI. On the

flip side, the BRI is a ‘Chinese’ project and is already under immense stress from its inherent weaknesses, such as China’s unilateral pursuit of the BRI and the associated economic burdens on the States that sign up to it.

Hurdles in India’s strategy

Notwithstanding the current excitement in New Delhi about the Indo-Pacific, the question we must ponder over is how successful New Delhi’s Indo-Pacific strategy would be going forward. For a politico-economic construct such as the Indo-Pacific to survive, there must be strong economic partnerships and linkages among its members. Merely focusing on strategic talk and possible military cooperation will not work because at some point, the unavoidable economic logic will kick in.

With that in mind, let us examine India’s economic engagement of the Indo-Pacific. For one, New Delhi’s recent decision not to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the region’s flagship free trade arrangement, could potentially complicate the country’s future engagements in the region.

But that is not the complete story. The RCEP decision, a direct result of domestic political compulsions in India, comes in the backdrop of the already huge gap between India and China on trade with almost every Indo-Pacific country. The table shows the gap

that exists between Indian and Chinese trade with the major Indo-Pacific and Quad States. This growing trade gap that India and China have with these countries will be a major determining factor in shaping the region’s strategic realities.

New Delhi’s decision not to sign on to the RCEP also needs to be viewed in the broader context of the Chinese institutional engagement of the region. Of the main countries of the Indo-Pacific, the bilateral free trade agreements are as follows.

In the case of India, it does not have FTAs with Australia, New Zealand, the U.S., Bangladesh and the Maldives. It has FTAs with South Korea, the Association of South East Asian Nations, or ASEAN, Japan and Sri Lanka. In the case of China, it has FTAs with all these countries barring the U.S. It does not have an FTA with Bangladesh, while negotiations are on with Sri Lanka. Trilateral FTA negotiations are also going on between China, Japan and South Korea.

Once again, economic compulsions will go a long way in shaping strategic realities for a variety of reasons including that trade with China is crucial for the economies of these States. Even if they attempt economic decoupling from China, it would be a long process, if pursued with adequate alternatives and political determination. The lesson is straightforward: strategic talk alone cannot trump economic realities.

China’s larger military reach

If our economic engagements with the region were insufficient, which are at least partly due to domestic political considerations, our strategic and military engagements in the region also fall short.

Beijing, for instance, is a major defence supplier to several of the region’s States including Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, dwarfing India’s minimal sales, defence dialogues and occasional joint military exercises

in the region.

Economic role is key

Put differently, India’s role in the Indo-Pacific will remain limited if it does not prove to be a major economic partner to these States. But given the economic slowdown in India today in the wake of COVID-19 (compared to the much better place that China is in) and the lack of political consensus in the country about regional economic agreements such as the RCEP, India’s ability to economically engage with the region remains limited. On the military-strategic side too, India’s performance in the region is less than desirable. The only choice, it appears then, is for some sort of a loosely structured regional strategic alliance with the U.S. and its allies in the broader Indo-Pacific region. But let us be clear. There is a fundamental difference between sustainably engaging the Indo-Pacific region using economic, strategic and military tools, and choosing to take the easier and quicker path of a military ‘alliance’ with the U.S. and its allies.

Moreover, is there sufficient political consensus within the country’s strategic elite to pursue such a path? Having been socialised in the Cold War crucible of non-alignment, and later strategic autonomy, is the Indian strategic elite ready to embrace a new set of beliefs and ideas about a balancing act in international politics?

For sure, there is an unapologetic ‘realist’ turn in India’s foreign policy today, perhaps an unavoidable one, and the Indian debates on balancing and alliance formation are undergoing major changes as well. New Delhi, however, remains caught between a deeply constrained, but unavoidable, need to rethink its strategic posture, and the recognition of its material inability to do so, at least for now.

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Countering deepfakes, the most serious AI threat

It is crucial to enhance media literacy, meaningful regulations and platform policies, and amplify authoritative sources



ASHISH JAIMAN

Disinformation and hoaxes have evolved from mere annoyance to high stake warfare for creating social discord, increasing polarisation, and in some cases, influencing an election outcome. Deepfakes are a new tool to spread computational propaganda and disinformation at scale and with speed.

Access to commodity cloud computing, algorithms, and abundant data has created a perfect storm to democratise media creation and manipulation. Deepfakes are the digital media (video, audio, and images) manipulated using Artificial Intelligence. This synthetic media content is referred to as deepfakes (<https://bit.ly/2J6tqYD>).

Deepfakes can depict a person indulging in antisocial behaviours and saying vile things. These can have severe implications on their reputation, sabotaging their professional and personal life. Even if the victim could debunk the fake via an alibi or otherwise, it may come too late to remedy the initial harm. Malicious actors can take advantage of unwitting individuals to defraud them for financial gains using audio and video deepfakes. Deepfakes can be deployed to extract money, confidential information, or exact favours from individuals.

Deepfakes can cause short- and long-term social harm and accelerate the already declining trust in news media. Such an erosion can contribute to a culture of factual relativism, fraying the increasingly strained civil society fabric. The distrust in social institutions is perpetuated by the democratising nature of information dissemination

and business disruption. Nation-state actors with geopolitical aspirations, ideological believers, violent extremists, and economically motivated enterprises can manipulate media narratives using deepfakes, with easy and unprecedented reach and scale.

Targeting women

The very first use case of malicious use of a deepfake was seen in pornography, inflicting emotional, reputational, and in some cases, violence towards the individual. Pornographic deepfakes can threaten, intimidate, and inflict psychological harm and reduce women to sexual objects. Deepfake pornography exclusively targets women (<https://bit.ly/2J6tqYD>).

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and social media platforms’ financial incentives. Falsity is profitable, and goes viral more than the truth on social platforms. Combined with distrust, the existing biases and political disagreement can help create echo chambers and filter bubbles, creating discord in society.

Imagine a deepfake of a community leader denigrating a religious site of another community. It will cause riots and, along with property damage, may also cause life and livelihood losses. A deepfake could act as a powerful tool by a nation-state to undermine public safety and create uncertainty and chaos in the target country. It can be used by insurgent groups and terrorist organisations, to represent their adversaries as making inflammatory speeches or engaging in provocative actions to stir up anti-state sentiments among people.

Undermining democracy

A deepfake can also aid in altering the democratic discourse and undermine trust in institutions and impair diplomacy. False information about institutions, public policy, and politicians powered by a deepfake can be exploited to spin the story and manipulate belief.

A deepfake of a political candidate can sabotage their image and

reputation. A well-executed one, a few days before polling, of a political candidate spewing out racial epithets or indulging in an unethical act can damage their campaign. There may not be enough time to recover even after effective debunking. Voters can be confused and elections can be disrupted. A high-quality deepfake can inject compelling false information that can cast a shadow of illegitimacy over the voting process and election results.

Deepfakes contribute to factual relativism and enable authoritarian leaders to thrive. For authoritarian regimes, it is a tool that can be used to justify oppression and disenfranchise citizens. Leaders can also use them to increase populism and consolidate power. Deepfakes can become a very effective tool to sow the seeds of polarisation, amplifying division in society, and suppressing dissent.

Another concern is a liar’s dividend (<https://bit.ly/2G6cjD>); an undesirable truth is dismissed as deepfake or fake news. Leaders may weaponise deepfakes and use fake news and an alternative-facts narrative to replace an actual piece of media and truth.

Major solutions

To defend the truth and secure freedom of expression, we need a multi-stakeholder and multi-modal approach. Collaborative actions and collective techniques across legislative regulations, platform policies, technology intervention, and media literacy can provide effective and ethical countermeasures to mitigate the threat of malicious deepfakes.

Media literacy for consumers and journalists is the most effective tool to combat disinformation

and deepfakes. Media literacy efforts must be enhanced to cultivate a discerning public. As consumers of media, we must have the ability to decipher, understand, translate, and use the information we encounter (<https://bit.ly/2HFIUs8>). Even a short intervention with media understanding, learning the motivations and context, can lessen the damage. Improving media literacy is a precursor to addressing the challenges presented by deepfakes.

Meaningful regulations with a collaborative discussion with the technology industry, civil society, and policymakers can facilitate disincentivising the creation and distribution of malicious deepfakes. We also need easy-to-use and accessible technology solutions to detect deepfakes, authenticate media, and amplify authoritative sources.

Deepfakes can create possibilities for all people irrespective of their limitations by augmenting their agency. However, as access to synthetic media technology increases, so does the risk of exploitation. Deepfakes can be used to damage reputations, fabricate evidence, defraud the public, and undermine trust in democratic institutions.

To counter the menace of deepfakes, we all must take the responsibility to be a critical consumer of media on the Internet, think and pause before we share on social media, and be part of the solution to this infodemic.

Ashish Jaiman is the Director of Technology and Operations in the Customer Security and Trust organization at Microsoft, focusing on the Defending Democracy Program

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DisCom stress
I refuse to accept the line that privatisation cannot solve the problem of DisCom stress. The privatisation, in 2002, of the Delhi DisCom is a reminder of how to reach the goal without pain being caused to the public.

Piyush Kumar Meena, New Delhi

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.

Buying land in J&K</b

Helping dyslexic children bloom

When inclusive teaching strategies become mainstream, each student in the class will flourish

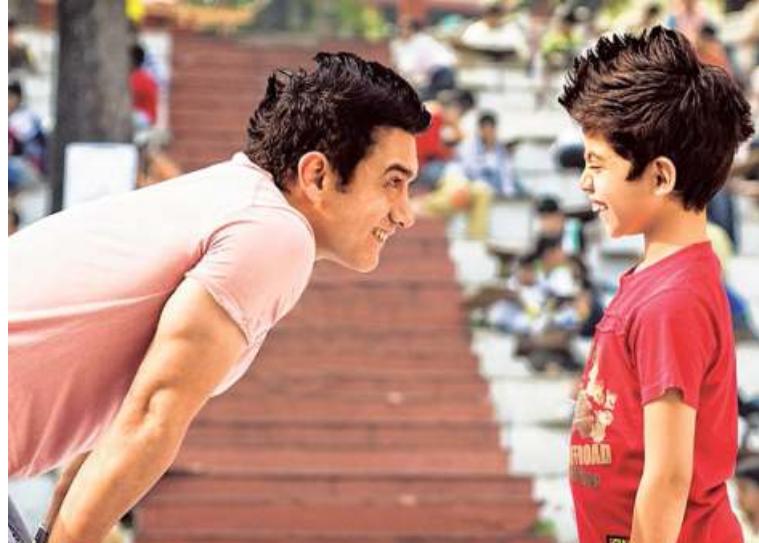


CHETANA SACHIDANANDAN

Mumtaz does not like reading. At nine she can manage basic stories, but reading leaves her tired and irritable. Movies and television dramas fascinate her, but even the lure of a well-written story cannot coax her into reading. She does not do storytelling either. The story would unfold with the beginning, middle and end all jumbled up. Then there are the funny words: hospital (for hospital), strachedy (for strategy). But she was a happy, chirpy kid, always the life of a party, loved by all.

Things began to change as she entered school. Her mother was the first to notice. For an otherwise multilingual chatterbox, she appeared to lack an intuitive understanding of phonics or basic arithmetic. Her vocabulary was lagging, her comprehension lacking. Her father could somehow relate to her better. A successful financial analyst, he still avoids books. He vividly remembers struggling through school, labelled 'lazy' by his teachers. His daughter perhaps took after him, but she will figure it out, just like he did. But six months of internal struggle and the undeniable social withdrawal of their bright and happy child drove them to finally approach a child psychologist. The psychologist conducted a cognitive assessment and finally delivered the verdict.

Struggling to keep it all together
Mumtaz has a specific learning disorder or SLD, in her case, dyslexia. This is a condition that makes it difficult to read and write, often accompanied by difficulties in math. Reading requires (1) decoding or converting symbols into sounds and (2) comprehension or understanding the meaning of words. Dyslexics may have difficulty in either or both. Dyslexics have poor phonological awareness, the ability to recognise similarities and differences in sounds, for example in rhyming words. They may have trouble sequencing; for instance remembering sequences such as days of the week, syllables in a



"Children with dyslexia may look like they are not paying attention, but in reality they are struggling to keep it all together." A still from the Hindi movie 'Taare Zameen Par'. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

word (hence hospital), steps in a long division, or the order of events in a story. They may also have a weak working memory such as difficulty in listening to the teacher while taking notes or following their mother's multi-step instructions. Working memory is like the RAM of a computer, where you temporarily store bits of information to be retrieved for daily activities. Children with dyslexia may look like they are not paying attention, but in reality they are struggling to keep it all together. Dyslexia is a very diverse condition: Mumtaz is one example while young Ishaan in the movie *Taare Zameen Par* is another, with different combinations of deficits.

For most of our existence we *Homo sapiens* have communicated verbally. When books were first written, only the scholars needed to read them. As modern societies began embracing universal school-based standardised education, instead of the usual apprenticeship for vocational training, we stumbled upon dyslexia.

Differences in the brain

Dyslexia often runs in the family. Comparisons of genomes of dyslexic people with proficient readers have found changes in many genes that could be associated with dyslexia. These studies are opening new windows into our understanding of how the brain learns. The brain is, however,

too complex for us to yet be able to figure out whether these genes have any direct role in reading deficits. In humans, the area known as visual word form area (VWFA – that recognises written words) in the brain is connected to the language region even before children have learned to read. This must be one of those evolutionary inventions that set us up to be linguists and decoders meant for greater things. Comparisons of functional MRI (fMRI) scans of brains of skilled and dyslexic readers clearly show differences in regions related to reading and language processing. But they also show many other differences. Differences in our brain are what make us sociable, moody, imaginative or creative. Thus, these differences in the brains of dyslexics manifest in the way they look at the world, think about and solve problems. Dyslexic individuals are more likely to miss the details while being able to see the larger picture. They may have better pattern recognition and visual-spatial abilities even as they struggle with reading and sequencing. They may be better at dealing with social interactions and managing people. Perhaps these are the traits that helped Albert Einstein and Agatha Christie and Steve Jobs, all dyslexics, to make their mark in the world. But this blooming generally happens after they leave the trauma of school and discover their strengths for them-

selves.

Could we forgo this trauma and bolster their strengths in the school itself? Armed with the diagnosis, Mumtaz's parents entered her into a remedial programme where special education teachers worked with her individually to strengthen her phonological awareness, sequencing and math skills. The school started providing accommodations in the class and gave her extra time and help in understanding the questions during tests. Slowly she began to regain her footing in the school. She is still way behind her classmates in academics, but with encouragement from teachers and parents she has discovered a talent for music and sports. She received this support and help thanks to her getting identified as a dyslexic. Every teacher will agree that there are always a few children in their class who have difficulties with language and math. But these deficits do not get formally identified due to a lack of awareness among teachers and parents. To add to this, privately administered cognitive assessments and remedial classes are very expensive and not within the reach of all.

Remedial measures

Some of these issues can be remedied by making cognitive assessments compulsory in junior school. The National Education Policy 2020 mandates inclusive education for all children with disabilities. It states that teachers should be provided with help to identify children with learning disabilities early, so that these children can be supported from the beginning. It lists out specific actions such as using appropriate technology, allowing students to work at their own pace and making curricula flexible to make education accessible to all. There is now a framework in place to implement such changes in our educational institutions. When inclusive teaching strategies become mainstream, then each student in the class will flourish. A child who believes in herself and feels confident to face her own personal challenges is a child set on a path to success and happiness.

Chetana Sachidanandan is a scientist at CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, New Delhi and mother of a dyslexic child. Views are personal. October is Dyslexia Awareness Month

Bihar's circulation of elites

Marginalised groups get token representation for electoral purposes and are largely excluded from the levers of power



BADRI NARAYAN

provided opportunities to them to avail of good education and government jobs and political power later on. These groups were initially mobilised around most non-Congress political outfits, the Socialist parties, as the Congress was predominantly hegemonised by the upper caste political elite. Later, the non-Congress outfits allowed for an OBC-elite dominated political forum which managed to supplant the upper caste-dominated political structure by getting accommodated into the structures of state power, beginning in the 1980s. Under this political regime of Yadav-Kurmi-Koeri-led political elites, however, only a few OBC groups got a political share. The rest, more than 90 OBC groups, are yet to be accommodated in structures of political power and lack the ability to take advantage of state patronage.

■

Contradictions within

Upper caste elites supporting the Congress gradually shifted to the BJP in the 1980s. This process quickened during the Ramjanmabhoomi movement. The OBC elites got divided between the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Janata Dal (United) by the 2000s – a process that occurred due to the competing aspirations of the Yadav-dominated OBC leadership on the one hand and the Kurmi-Koeris on the other. The internal contradictions among the OBCs and the consequent lowering of numerical superiority led to these parties providing for some representation for marginalised groups as well. Among the Dalits too, the numerically superior Chamars and Dusadhs managed to gain a share in state power over time and produced new political elites, while other Dalit communities did not gain a share. Essentially, distribution of various opportunities through government schemes and policies were still controlled by the dominant political elite.

As Bihar's political leadership transits from its Mandal generation – with Lalu Prasad in jail, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar diminishing in popularity, and the death of Ram Vilas Paswan – to a new crop of leaders, there is the expectation that the dependence on identity politics will give way to a more inclusive politics that tries to mobilise people across different segments. Yet, if the emphasis remains on representation in power structures being limited to the elite among a select set of not more than 20 castes, there will not be any true change. The marginal communities which lack the capacity to aspire towards and engage in this system and those who have not yet had access to education and wealth will continue to be invisible.

Badri Narayan is Director of the G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad

Victim's account may be more conclusive than medical finding

Courts should find no difficulty to convict the accused solely on the survivor's word

R.K.VIJ

The alleged gang-rape of a woman in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, in September brought forth an important issue concerning the relevance of forensic evidence of the victim of rape, i.e., about the signs of recent sexual intercourse and struggle. This acquired more attention after a senior police officer of U.P. stated that the forensic science laboratory report did not confirm the allegation of rape. Since the Hathras case is still under investigation, instead of commenting on it, I will explain the general medico-legal status and the various judgments of the Supreme Court in this regard.

It is surprising that doctors conducting medical examinations on victims still use the word 'rape' in their conclusions. They forgot that rape is an offence and not a medical diagnosis to be made by them. The issue of whether someone has been raped or not is a legal conclusion; it is to be made by an investigating officer on a complaint by the victim. The medical officer can only state whether there is evidence of recent sexual activity and injuries in and around the private parts of the victim or bite marks noticed in any part of the body.

Collecting evidence

The presence of semen is always a material piece of evidence, but by no means conclusive. Semen, a human body fluid, is a suspension of a single type of cell known as spermatozoa. The nucleus of the sperm head contains deoxyribonucleoproteins which is used to establish the identity of the accused. The spermatozoa can be identified only for 72 hours after sexual assault and the likelihood of its presence after that is greatly reduced. Therefore, it is generally advisable to collect evidence up to 96 hours in case the victim is unsure of the number of hours that have elapsed since the assault. However, in such cases, swabs can still be collected for identifying semen. Evidence on the outside of the body and on material such as clothing can be collected even after 96 hours.

The courts have carefully exa-

mined the value of victim statements qua forensic evidence. In *Tuka Ram v. State of Maharashtra* (1978), also known as the 'Mathura case', the accused policemen were acquitted as the victim bore no traces of violence. But in later cases, absence of live or dead spermatozoa during vaginal examination was held to be irrelevant by the Supreme Court. It is established now that injury is not a sine qua non for deciding whether rape has been committed. In *State of Punjab v. Gurmit Singh* (1996), the court laid down that the victim's ipse dixit is sufficient to record a conviction and no corroboration is necessary.

Change in rape law

There was no change in the rape law from 1860 to 1983. The first major change came about after the apex court decision in the 'Mathura case' and the burden of proof was shifted to the accused. The Criminal Procedure Code was amended to incorporate medical examination of the victim within 24 hours of receiving information relating to commission of rape. The definition of rape was enlarged after the 'Nirbhaya' case in 2012. The expression 'sexual intercourse' has been removed from the definition for a shift in emphasis that it is not necessarily a union of sexual organs that could give rise to proof of rape. There is no need to find out whether or not the woman is habituated to sex. It is irrelevant and inappropriate to record such findings.

It is well settled that the testimony of a victim in sexual assault cases is vital and unless there are compelling reasons which necessitate corroboration, the courts should find no difficulty to convict the accused solely on the testimony of the victim. If the evidence is reliable, conviction can be based on the sole testimony of the prosecutrix. The forensic evidence is at the most corroborative evidence; not conclusive. Moreover, the forensic details need not be disclosed to the public when the matter is still under investigation. It may hurt the victim's fundamental right to privacy.

R.K.Vij is a senior IPS officer in Chhattisgarh



DATA POINT

Early voting in U.S. polls

More than 70 million American citizens have already cast their ballot as "early voters" in the 2020 U.S. presidential polls with less than a week left for election day. A significant share of early votes was cast through mail, a method which results in significantly more ballot rejections than the traditional in-person voting. Close to 2% of mail votes were rejected in this year's primary elections. If a similar share of mail votes gets rejected in the 2020 presidential polls, about a million votes may go uncounted, given the increased early voting due to the pandemic. Also, this may disproportionately affect the Democrats more than the Republicans as data show that a significantly higher number of voters affiliated to the Democratic Party request postal ballots compared to the Republican Party. Studies also show that ballots of Black and younger voters, who form an important part of the Democratic support base, have a higher probability of getting rejected than other types.

By Suman Sen, Naresh Singaravelu and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

1. Early bird | Around 71.1 million Americans voted early this year, surpassing the previous record of 57.5 million set in 2016. More than 50% of 2016's total votes have already been cast as early votes this year, of which 34.4% were sent through mail

Types of early votes	Votes cast in 2020 (in million)	2020's votes as a % of 2016's total votes	Votes cast in 2016 (in million)	2016's votes as a % of 2016's total votes
Mail votes	47.8	34.4%	33.4	23.7%
In-person votes	23.3	16.8%	24.1	17.2%
Total early votes	71.1	51.2%	57.5	40.9%

2. Rejected ratio | Close to 1% and 2.1% of mail votes were rejected in the 2016 election and 2020 presidential primaries, respectively. If a similar or a slightly higher % of mail votes get rejected in the 2020 polls, 0.5 to 1.5 million votes may go uncounted

Past polls for which mail votes were analysed	Mail votes rejected	As a % of total mail votes
Presidential elections 2016	3,18,728	0.95%
Presidential primaries 2020	5,58,032	2.1%
Scenarios for 2020 polls (considering the 47.8 million mail votes polled until Oct. 27)	Estimated votes rejected (million)	
Rejection rate same as 2016 (0.95%)	0.45	
Rate same as 2020 primaries (2.1%)	0.95	
Rejection rate 1% point more (3.1%)	1.48	

3. Mostly Democrats | Some U.S. States maintain party affiliation data of voters who request for postal ballot. In 2020, close to 25 million (mn) such voters were affiliated with the Democratic Party, compared to the 14.7 million affiliated with the Republican Party

Party affiliation of voters	Mail ballots requested	Filled ballots returned
Democrat	25 mn	13.7 mn
Republican	15 mn	6.9 mn
Unspecified	17 mn	9.3 mn

4. Calculating impact | The uncounted votes aren't insignificant as the small margins of victory for Donald Trump in 2016 in swing States show

Seat	Trump's win margin in 2016	Mail votes rejected in 2020 Presidential Primaries	Rejected votes as a % of margin
Wisconsin	22,748	23,196	102.0%
Pennsylvania	44,292	37,119	83.8%
Michigan	10,704	7,997	74.7%
Florida	1,12,911	18,000	15.9%

Source: electproject.github, New York Times, National Public Radio, eac.gov, fec.gov

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO OCTOBER 29, 1920
Communications with spirits

Our readers will be interested to learn that Mr. Edison, the famous inventor of America, is perfecting a machine by which he hopes to open communications with spirits. The existence of spirits is a popular belief surviving from antiquity and there is hardly a race or a country without its stories of them. Among the scientific moderns, faith, instead of fading, grows deeper and there are many not merely to assert the existence of spirits but to credit them with the superintendence and even the direction of the mundane world. As yet, however, the only evidence of them, intelligible to the common man, is the vague dread lingering in the mind from nursery days and the asseverations of men who claim to have seen them or talked to them by means of indescribable occult powers. To an age that questions and declines to take things at face value, such evidence is manifestly inadequate and must be supported by some means of verification within reach of men unknown to clairvoyance. If a recording instrument such as Mr. Edison has planned induces spirits to send down their thoughts to us, that will, of course, be a "medium" more reliable than the most impressionable girl.

FROM PAGE ONE

20% rural students lack books: ASER survey

It found that 5.3% of rural children aged 6-10 years had not yet enrolled in school this year, in comparison to just 1.8% in 2018. This seems to indicate that due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic, families are waiting for the physical opening of schools to enrol their youngest children, with about 10% of six-year-olds not in school. Among 15-16-year-olds, however, enrolment levels are actually slightly higher than in 2018. Enrolment patterns also show a slight shift toward government schools, with private schools seeing a drop in enrolment in all age groups.

In 2018, ASER surveyors found that about 36% of rural households with school-going children had smartphones. By 2020, that figure had spiked to 62%. About 11% of families bought a new phone after the lockdown, of which 80% were smartphones.

This may indicate why WhatsApp was by far the most popular mode of transmitting learning materials to students, with 75% of students who got some input receiving it via the app. About a quarter of those who got input had personal contact with a teacher.

In Bihar poll rallies, Modi invokes Ram temple

"The motive of demonetisation and lockdown was the same... It was aimed at destroying marginal farmers, small businessmen, traders and workers," he alleged.

Mr. Gandhi also took on Mr. Kumar on the development issue. "He has not done enough for the development of the State... Tejaswi Yadav has a vision and roadmap for the development of Bihar," he said.

"Developments in Darbhanga district, like the opening of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and the construction of an airport, software park and the Ramayan circuit, would help people in making connectivity," he stated.

Mr. Modi, however, reposed confidence in the CM, who was present on the dais, saying, "In the last 15 years, Bihar has made progress under Nitish Kumar's leadership and you all should vote for him again for its development." He reiterated this at all the three public meetings and asserted that Mr. Kumar would be the Chief Minister again.

He asked the people to "vote for the NDA (National Democratic Alliance) that had brought development to the State" and "pulled it out of darkness".

The Prime Minister listed out the steps taken by the NDA government for farmers and the poor. "A sum of ₹1 lakh crore has been transferred directly into the farmers' accounts, 40 lakh crore

Panel asks Twitter for affidavit on glitch

"But it is not only a question of the sensitivity of India or Indians. It is a question about national integrity and sovereignty of the country, and not respecting that is a criminal offence. And displaying Indian map improperly and incorrectly is an offence of treason and attracts imprisonment of seven years," Ms. Lekhi said.

The panel that questioned Twitter India's executives for over two hours on the issue of Ladakh, also asked about its "banning policy". "Shadow banning, banning policy - there is no clarity about it. Such actions are very subjective... Twitter is becoming a law unto itself and, under these circumstances, they are violating Article 19 of the Constitution about the freedom of expression," Ms. Lekhi said.

"The recent geo-tagging issue was swiftly resolved by our teams. We are committed to openness, transparency around our work and will remain in regular touch

(With PTI inputs)

Curbs likely to stay on T.N. schools, colleges, cinemas

nismami on Wednesday, a couple of officials said cinemas were a luxury at this point in time during the fight against the pandemic.

Noting that schools in countries like the U.K. had seen a surge in cases, they urged caution on the issue of reopening schools. A senior official said the State government was also waiting for the Centre to issue guidelines for the reopening of schools.

At a meeting with Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palan-

CM

Death sentence for Warangal mass murderer

Police say he killed nine migrants in May to cover up another murder

MARRI RAMU
HYDERABAD

A local court in Warangal on Wednesday awarded death sentence to Sanjay Kumar Yadav of Bihar, after convicting him of killing nine persons, including a three-year-old boy, five months ago.

The 24-year-old convict, who was brought to the first additional district and sessions judge court hall amidst tight security, appeared unfazed as judge K. Jaya Kumar pronounced the verdict. The death sentence was conveyed to him in Hindi through a translator.



TELANGANA

The victims, all of them members of migrant workers' families, were killed on the intervening night of May 20 and 21 in Gorrekunta village of Geesukonda mandal in Warangal district.

Mammoor Assistant Commissioner of Police G. Shyam Sunder, who investigated the case, filed the chargesheet within a month. Police accused Sanjay of killing the nine persons to cover up the murder of Rafika, who he threw out of a running train near Tadepallygudem after giving her sleeping pills.

"A separate murder case



Killing spree: Sanjay Yadav being brought to a local court in Warangal for sentencing on Wednesday. •PTI

was registered by the Government Railway Police of Andhra Pradesh against Sanjay for this. The chargesheet

is yet to be filed in this case," Public Prosecutor Mokila Satyanarayana Goud said.

Sanjay is also facing another

criminal case registered by the Warangal police under Section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code and Sections 5 and 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

This case was filed after investigators found evidence that he had sexually assaulted Rafika's minor daughter and impregnated her. A chargesheet has been filed and trial in the case is likely to begin soon.

Mr. Satyanarayana Goud said Rafika was a close relative of Nisha Alam, one of the nine victims. Nisha knew that Rafika, who had three children, was in a live-in relationship with Sanjay.

Sanjay decided to eliminate Rafika when she began to pressure him to marry

her, Mr. Goud said.

After throwing her from a running train in March at Tadepallygudem, he returned to Warangal. Nisha Alam became suspicious as he evaded answers to queries about Rafika. When she threatened to approach the police, Sanjay decided to eliminate her and her family members, Mr. Goud said.

Sleeping pills in food
He mixed sleeping pills in the food prepared for the birthday party of Nisha Alam's son.

After consuming it, Nisha Alam, five of her family members and three other migrant workers fell unconscious. Sanjay dumped them in a nearby well, killing all of them, Mr. Goud added.

ED arrests senior Kerala bureaucrat

CM's ex-Principal Secretary denied bail by Kerala HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested M. Sivasankar, former Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, on Wednesday night in connection with the money laundering angle of the UAE Consulate-linked gold smuggling case.

His arrest was recorded around 10.15 p.m. after nearly seven hours of questioning by the investigating team at the agency's office here.

Mr. Sivasankar will be produced before the Principal Sessions Court, Ernakulam, on Thursday.



KERALA

Anticipatory bail
The day's drama unfolded after the Kerala High Court rejected his anticipatory bail in the morning. Two ED officials arrived at a private ayurveda hospital in Thiruvananthapuram,

where Mr. Sivasankar was undergoing treatment for back pain and served him summons for further interrogation. The embattled bureaucrat appeared stoic and refused to answer questions from presspersons as he emerged from the hospital flanked by plainclothes officers.

The investigating team soon whisked him away in a car to their office in Kochi. The agency suspects that Mr. Sivasankar helped gold smuggling case accused Swapna Suresh con-

Infections in Kerala may be plateauing: experts

Test positivity rate in Karnataka, A.P. stays under 4%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala's COVID-19 case graph, which had dipped with a slump in testing changed course on Wednesday, registering 8,790 new cases from 66,980 samples.

Epidemiologists said that the State's weekly growth rate, at 10%-15% two weeks ago, came down to less than 5% during October 18-25 and the active case pool stabilised at around 95,000. At the current growth rate it could take weeks for the active case load to cross a lakh, they said.

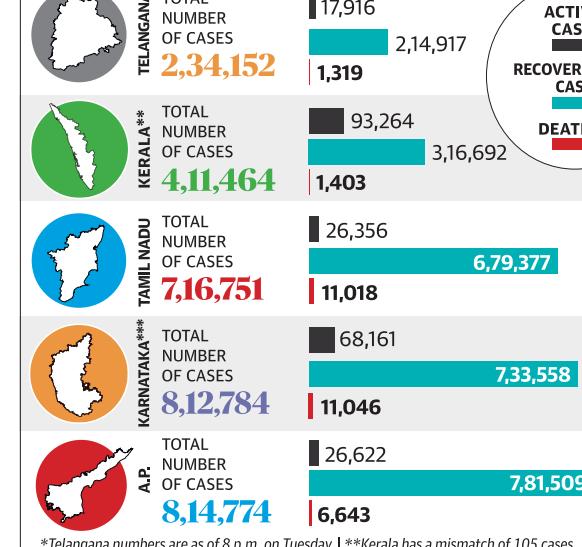
The test positivity rate on Wednesday was 13.12%.

With 27 fresh deaths from October 16 to 26 being added to the official list, the State's COVID-19 toll stood at 1,403 deaths. Thrissur accounted for 10 of these deaths, Thiruvananthapuram five, Ernakulam four, Palakkad and Alapuzha two each while Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad and Kollam reported one death each.

Ernakulam district reported the highest number of cases at 1,250, Kozhikode 1,149, Thrissur 1,018, Kollam 935, Alapuzha 790, Thiruvananthapuram 785, Kottayam 594, Malappuram 548, Kannur 506, Palakkad 449, Pathanamthitta 260, Kasaragod 203, Wayanad 188 and Idukki 111.

Cases in Telangana were back in a familiar range, with 1,481 people testing positive on Tuesday, with 40,081 people being tested. Four more COVID-19 patients died.

Of the 1,481 new cases, 279 were from Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation region, 138 from Medchal-Malkajgiri, 111 from



Rangareddy, 82 each from Khammam and Nalgonda, and 79 each from Bhadravathi, Kothagudem and Karimnagar. Four were recorded in Narayanapet.

Andhra Pradesh reported less than 3,000 new cases

COVID-19

on Wednesday, for the fourth consecutive day. Also, the State recorded 18 new deaths.

In the past day, 77,028 samples were tested and their positivity rate was 3.83%, while the overall positivity rate of 7.77 lakh samples tested so far remained 10.48%.

Karnataka on Wednesday reported 3,146 cases taking the total to 8,12,784. Bengaluru Urban reported 1,612 cases, taking the district's tally to 3,30,862. The State's test positivity rate for the day reduced to 3.65%.

(With inputs from Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Bengaluru and Chennai bureaus)

As many as 7,384 persons were discharged on Wednesday taking the total number of recoveries to 7,33,558.

Of the remaining 68,161 active cases, 939 patients were being monitored in ICUs.

After a dip in the number of tests since Monday, as many as 86,154 tests were conducted. With this the total number of tests rose to 76,00,348.

For the second consecutive day, Tamil Nadu recorded a little over 2,500 new cases of COVID-19, with 31 of the 37 districts reporting less than 100 fresh cases. A total of 2,516 persons tested positive for COVID-19 and 35 persons, including a 101-year-old woman, died.

Fresh infections have been marginally declining in the State in the last few days. The overall tally of cases stood at 7,16,751.

(With inputs from Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Bengaluru and Chennai bureaus)

It will be a befitting tribute to the countless corona warriors if we truly observe discipline during the festival season and not allow an explosion of cases due to our complacency," added the DG.

No room for complacency, says CSIR chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

"The only proven way to control the pandemic across the world is following some simple precautions of wearing face masks, personal hygiene and social distancing, particularly during these festive times," Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) Director General Shekhar C. Mande said on Wednesday.

In a communication to all CISR labs across the country, the DG cautioned against people congregating in one place.

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APPEAL

I. Annalakshmi aged 10 years need your support to bring a new hope to my life. I suffer from Aplastic Anemia and require Rs. 6,00,000/- towards Anti-Thymocyte Globulin therapy at Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Foundation, Madurai. Donations can be sent to the following account: Name: Meenakshi Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai - 625002. A/c No: 60182010063310. IFSC No: SYNB0006018. WELFARE SYNDICATE is exempted under ChD/DINFT Transfer (Society), Nungambakkam Branch, A/C No: 60182010063310. Email ID: womenwelfaresyndicate@gmail.com. Website: www.womenwelfaresyndicate.org.

High Court for transfer of the case. It is likely to come up for hearing on Friday.

The actor said the Additional Special Sessions Judge (SPE/CBI)-3, Ernakulam, "sat like a mute spectator" when she was harassed by counsel for actor Dileep, the eighth accused.

The State also moved the

Court grants bail to Ministers Jaleel, Jayarajan

Case pertains to vandalism in House

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

R. Jayakrishnan, Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM), Thiruvananthapuram, on Wednesday granted bail to two Ministers alleged to be among the six Left Democratic Front (LDF) legislators responsible for the vandalism in the Assembly on March 13, 2015.

Industries Minister E.P. Jayarajan and Higher Education Minister K.T. Jaleel are accused in the offence that occurred when they were in the Opposition.

The LDF legislators disrupted the Assembly to prevent the then Finance Minister K.M. Mani from

delivering the Budget speech on the ground that he had accepted a bribe from the Kerala Bar Hotel Association to revoke cancelled liquor permits. Mr. Jayakrishnan ordered the Ministers to post ₹35,000 each as bail amount.

Six students drown in rivulet in A.P.

VELERUPADU (WEST GODAVARI DT.) Six students, who went for a swim in Pedda Vagu, a rivulet, in Vasantawada village in the mandal in Agency area in Andhra Pradesh, drowned on Wednesday.

60 persons get Rajyotsava award

BENGALURU To mark the 65th Karnataka Rajyotsava celebrations on November 1, the Karnataka government on Wednesday announced its annual Rajyotsava Award for 60 people and five organisations for their work in 25 fields.

Survivor in actor rape case moves High Court

Wants trial moved to another court

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHE

Aggrieved by the "biased and hostile attitude" of the court hearing the actor rape case, the survivor has moved the Kerala High Court for transferring the trial to another court.

The State also moved the

Bihar election phase 1 sees 54% turnout

Polling largely peaceful amid reports of clashes and EVM malfunctioning in a few places

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

The first of the three-phase Bihar Assembly election in 71 constituencies across 16 districts ended peacefully on Wednesday, amid reports of clashes between supporters of two parties in Shahpur, Kaimur and Gaya, and electronic voting machines (EVM) not working properly in some places.

According to the Election Commission's (EC) Voter Turnout App, the provisional polling was 54.26% that was updated till 10 p.m. Nearly 2.15 crore eligible voters exercised their franchise, marginally lower than in 2015.

The second phase of polling for 94 seats will be held on November 3, while the third one will be on November 7 for 78 seats. Counting of votes will be done on November 10.

FIR lodged

An FIR was lodged at the Kotwali police station in Gaya against Prem Kumar, BJP

Tepid turnout

Bihar recorded only 54.26% voter turnout in the first phase as of 9.30 p.m. The State had registered a 54.75% turnout in the first phase in the previous election in 2015



HIGH TURNOUT LOW TURNOUT

Constituency	Turnout %	Constituency	Turnout %
Chainpur	63.3	Karakat	46
Dhuraiya	62.5	Nokha	46.1
Banka	61	Sandesh	46.2
Katoria	60.8	Jamalpur	47.3
Tikari	60.7	Munger	47.9
District	Turnout %	District	Turnout %
Banka	59.6	Rohitas	49.6
Kaimur	59.5	Bhojpur	49.9
Jamui	57.6	Munger	49.9
Gaya	57.1	Nawada	52.3
Sheikhpura	56	Aurangabad	52.9

candidate and Agriculture Minister in the Nitish Kumar Cabinet, for wearing a mask with the party logo while casting his vote at a polling booth. However, Mr. Kumar later told reporters that "it was unintentional and he couldn't throw attention to it as he was busy".

Young voters between the ages of 18 and 35 and women were mostly seen in queues to exercise their franchise at many places. There were re-

ports of EVMs not working at some booths in the Suryagarh constituency of Lakhisarai, Paliganj and other places as polling began in the morning, but the problem was rectified by officials.

Clashes between supporters of two candidates were reported in the Shahpur constituency of Buxar and Kaimur, while a candidate's vehicle was damaged by some people in the Tekari constituency of Gaya district.

As many as 1,066 candidates were in the fray for Wednesday's polls, which took place in a total of 31,371 polling booths. The total number of electorate in this phase was 2,14,84,787. Un-

"Good turnout of voters even during the COVID-19 pandemic is not a good sign for the ruling NDA as people usually turn out in large numbers to vote against the present government", said political analyst Ajay Kumar.

As many as 1,066 candidates were in the fray for Wednesday's polls, which took place in a total of 31,371 polling booths. The total number of electorate in this phase was 2,14,84,787. Un-

employment, corruption at lower level of bureaucracy, prohibition and migration have been the main issues for voters.

COVID-19 guidelines

At some polling booths, people were seen exercising their franchise without wearing masks and without following social distancing, though at some places some of the voters and poll officials were seen following the ECI guidelines.

Of the 71 seats in the first phase, the RJD won 27 in 2015, while the JD(U) got 18, the BJP 13, the Congress nine and others four. Principal Opposition party RJD has nominated its 25 sitting legislators, while the JD(U) and the BJP did so for 23 and 13 seats respectively. The Congress has repeated its eight MLAs, while the Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) one each.

(With PTI inputs)

All SOPs were followed in phase 1: EC

Dismiss Bihar government: Congress

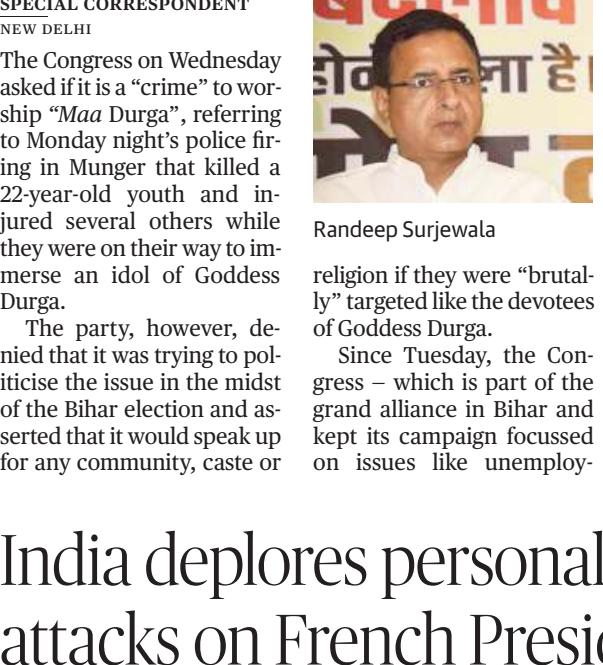
Party denies it is trying to politicise Munger incident amid the Assembly poll

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora on Wednesday said polling in phase one of Bihar Assembly election, the first general elections to be held during the COVID-19 pandemic, had been carried out with all COVID-19-safety standard operating procedures (SOPs) in place and that voters cast their ballots in a disciplined manner.

Speaking at the Election Commission's (EC) post-polling briefing, Mr. Arora said despite the pandemic, the turnout till 5 p.m. had been 52.24%. He thanked the voters, political parties and administration in Bihar for their participation. From entering the polling station till casting votes, all SOPs – thermal scanning at the gate, hand sanitisers being made available and wearing gloves while casting the vote – were followed, he said. "For the EC, it was a leap of faith and not a leap in the dark."

Mr. Arora said 0.22% of ballot units, 0.25% of control units and 1.28% of VVPATs had to be replaced during phase 1. Deputy Election Commissioner (DEC) in-charge of Bihar Chandra Bhushan said 89 cases under the IPC and NDMA had been lodged for violating COVID-19 norms. DEC Ashish Kundra added that 450 complaints of violation of the model code of conduct had been lodged via the C-Vigil application.



Randeep Surjewala

religion if they were "brutally" targeted like the devotees of Goddess Durga.

Since Tuesday, the Congress – which is part of the grand alliance in Bihar and kept its campaign focussed on issues like unemploy-

ment – has held three press conferences on the firing and dared Prime Minister Narendra Modi to dismiss the Nitish Kumar government for targeting the bhakts (devotees) of "Maa Durga". "Prime Minister Modiji, if you have any wisdom left, then you should dismiss this government that fired upon the devotees of Maa Durga in such a cruel manner ... If you don't do so, then it will be proven that sanskar [tradition] and sanskriti [culture] are only a means to achieve power and

not a matter of faith for the BJP," Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala told reporters at a joint press conference in Patna with Rashtriya Janata Dal's Tejashwi Yadav on Wednesday.

While Mr. Yadav asked for a court-monitored probe, the Congress asked the BJP to explain its "silence". "Is it now a crime to do Durga Puja?" asked Rajya Sabha MP Abhishek Singhvi at another press briefing. "The devotees were being chased like animals and treated like worms," he said.

In a close contest, as Bihar Assembly election 2020 is turning out to be, one of the key questions is: will the AIMIM play a bigger role than just being a spoiler? Mr. Owaisi first came to Bihar five years ago, contesting in the 2015 Assembly election. He has managed to gain more trust since then but there are also many who reject what they call his "fundamentalist" ideas. In this election, the AIMIM is contesting 20 seats, of which 12 are against the RJD or the Congress. The AIMIM's expansion will come at the *Magadhbandhan's* cost.

The National Register of

India deplores personal attacks on French President

Ministry condemns killing of schoolteacher

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

the world," said the Ministry of External Affairs.

France has come under intense criticism in the Arab world and Pakistan after the development. This has been accompanied by strong reaction against Mr. Macron in various Muslim-majority societies. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan repeatedly raised the issue in his public speeches in the last few days. On Wednesday, he wrote to leaders of Muslim states to "act collectively to counter the growing Islamophobia in non-Muslim states". Bangladesh, too, saw protests during the last few days over Mr. Macron's remarks.

"There is no justification for terrorism for any reason or under any circumstances," India's statement said.

We strongly deplore the personal attacks in unacceptable language on President Emmanuel Macron, who has been subjected to personal attacks and harsh observations in various parts of the world after he spoke in favour of the freedom of expression against the backdrop of the beheading of a schoolteacher in Paris for showing cartoons of Prophet Muhammad to students.

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Troops standing firm on LAC: Rajnath

No budgetary constraints for Army's requirements, he says at Commanders' conference

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday expressed the confidence that ongoing talks for a peaceful resolution of the crisis with China "will continue", while troops are standing firm along the disputed border in eastern Ladakh.

"It is our national responsibility to ensure availability of best weapons, equipment and clothing to our troops braving extreme weather and hostile forces to defend our territorial integrity," Mr. Singh said at the Army Commanders' Conference that began on Monday. "There are no budgetary constraints for capability development and meeting other requirements of the Army," he asserted.

With several rounds of talks failing to make any headway for disengagement and de-escalation along the Line of Actual Control, both sides have prepared to be de-



Warm greeting: Rajnath Singh at the Army Commanders' Conference in New Delhi. ■ PTI

ployed in the high altitudes though the harsh winter.

Mr. Singh said the creation of the post of Chief of the Defence Staff and the Department of Military Affairs was a "momentous decision" and the concept of integrated

battle groups, integrated theatre commands and integrated air defence command would be game changers in future wars.

"He also alluded to the establishment of the defence cyber and space agencies

which will enhance the kinetic potential of the forces," a Defence Ministry statement said. Mr. Singh said the government was focused on "enhancing combat capability and ensuring welfare of soldiers".

The delegation of financial powers, the defence procurement manual and the Army headquarters restructuring proposals were under review and would be finalised soon.

He also reiterated the government's resolve to corporatise the Ordnance Factory Board to enhance their efficiency and accountability.

Cross-border terror

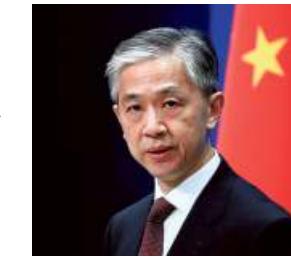
On the border with Pakistan, Mr. Singh appreciated the Army's response to cross-border terrorism and ceasefire violations.

"I compliment the excellent synergy between the Central Armed Police Forces and police forces and the Army in tackling the menace of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. It is due to the synergised operations in the Valley that the Union Territory is moving to a stable and peaceful environment conducive for overall growth and development," he said.

Boundary issue with India is bilateral, China tells Pompeo

It accuses U.S. Secretary of State of 'repeating old lies'

ANANTH KRISHNAN



China has accused United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of "repeating old lies" and "violating the norms of international relations", and told Washington "the boundary question is a bilateral matter between China and India" and "there is no space for a third party to intervene."

Two strong statements from the Foreign Ministry in Beijing and the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi followed Mr. Pompeo's remarks at Tuesday's 2+2 ministerial dialogue, which he attended along with Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

Mr. Pompeo said the U.S. "will stand with the people of India as they face threats to their sovereignty and their liberty."

In statement, the Chinese Embassy said the U.S. was looking to "stir up confrontation among different groups and blocs to stoke geopolitical competition."

"China has been advocating that the development of bilateral relations between countries should be conducive to regional peace, stability and development, and not infringe upon the legitimate rights and interests of a third party. The boundary question is a bilateral matter between China and India. The two sides have been discussing disengagement and geopolitical games", and told Washington to not involve itself in the boundary dispute.

"I want to say that the border affairs between China and India are things between the two countries," it stated.

India and the U.S. discussed the situation in Ladakh at the dialogue, with the eighth round of Corps Commander-level talks expected to take place soon, with little progress towards disengagement and a return to the status quo in the wake of China's mobilisation of troops and transgressions across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) starting early May.

On Mr. Pompeo's remarks on the CPC, the embassy statement said he "repeated old lies, attacked and made allegations against China, violated the norms of international relations and basic principles of diplomacy, instigated China's relations with other countries in the region, which once again exposed their Cold War mentality and ideological bias," adding that China "expresses its firm opposition to it".

U.S.' COVID-19 response

The statement also hit out at the U.S. government for its

response to the COVID-19 pandemic and accused it of

"trying to shift the blame".

It said: "This year, under the leadership of the CPC, the Chinese people have achieved strategic victory in fighting the virus. The U.S. side once again tries to shift the blame onto China on COVID-19, which is indeed distorting facts to mislead the public. What China has done and achieved in our fight against the virus are open for all to see. We hope U.S. politicians could focus on their own epidemic response and saving lives instead of shifting the blame on others."

Two JeM militants gunned down

Security forces search Budgam in central Kashmir

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) militants were killed in a night-long operation in central Kashmir's Budgam on Wednesday.

"Two militants were killed in the operation. One was identified as Ilyas, a Pakistani militant, and another Javed Ahmad, from south Kashmir's Pulwama district.



Fierce fight: Security personnel inspecting a house near the encounter site in Budgam district in Kashmir. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Left parties flay pact with U.S.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The two major Left parties have slammed the agreements which the Centre has signed with the United States this week, saying the pacts would bind the armed forces with the U.S. military and its strategic designs in the long term.

"The interlocking of the communications and elec-

tronic systems are going to adversely affect the integrity and independent decision making of the Indian defence structure. These agreements will make us dependent on U.S. weaponry whose technology and systems are going to be controlled by the United States," said a joint statement issued on Wednesday by CPI general secretary D. Raja and CPI

(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury.

"The emerging military alliance with the U.S. will have long-term consequences for independent foreign policy and strategic autonomy. It is not in conformity with national interests," said the statement, cautioning that India should not become subordinate to America's geo-political strategy.

A petition was filed before the Bombay High Court on Wednesday seeking a direction to remove Rekha Sharma, Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, over a tweet on 'love jihad' posted on her account. Saket Gokhale, a social activist, filed the petition stating that Ms. Sharma had engaged in a blatantly communal and divisive discourse.

Plea filed in HC against NCW Chairperson

MUMBAI

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Viral tracker

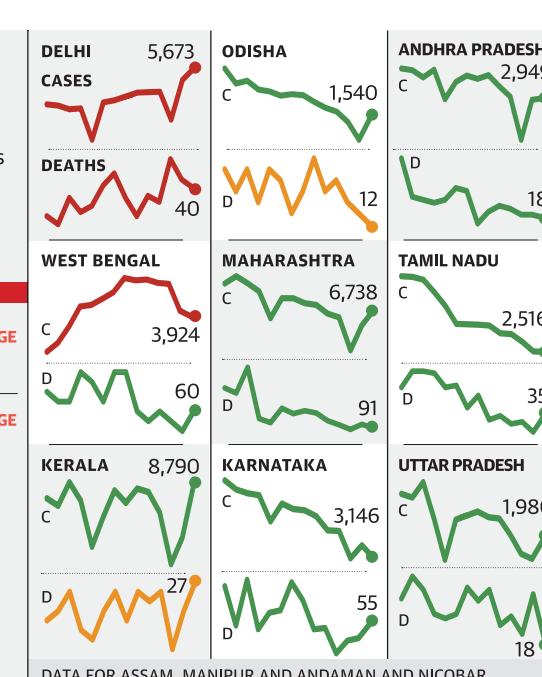
With 49,828 COVID-19 cases recorded on Wednesday, India's tally crossed the 80 lakh mark. As many as 564 deaths were registered, taking the toll to 1,20,620. A total of 10.54 crore samples were tested as of October 27, according to the ICMR

NEW CASES AND DEATHS

CASES 49,828 **7 DAY-CHANGE** -73%

DEATHS 564 **7 DAY-CHANGE** -15.7%

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 flatlining in that State



NIA searches 10 places in Kashmir

They include office of *Greater Kashmir*, houses of two activists and a journalist

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR/BENGALURU

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday conducted searches at one place in Bengaluru and 10 premises in Kashmir, including the office of the daily *Greater Kashmir*, houses of two human rights activists and a journalist, in a case pertaining to "raising funds and using it for carrying out secessionist and separatist activities".

An NIA spokesman said the 10 searches took place in Srinagar and Bandipora, and at Thanesandra in Bengaluru. "These searches were made in connection with a case pertaining to certain so-called non-governmental organisations [NGOs] and Trusts raising funds in India and abroad in the name of charitable activities and then using those funds for carrying out secessionist and separatist activities in J&K," the spokesman said.

On October 8, the NIA registered a fresh case under Sections 120B, 124 A of the IPC and Sections 17, 18, 22A, 22C, 38, 39 and 40 of the UAPA, 1967 "on receipt of credible information that

certain NGOs and Trusts are collecting funds through so-called donations and business contributions etc. and are utilising these funds for secessionist and terrorist activities in J&K".

According to the NIA, the premises searched include the residence and office of Khurram Parvez, coordinator of the JK Coalition of Civil Society, his associates Parvez Ahmad Bukhari, a journalist, Parvez Ahmad Matta and Bengaluru-based associate Swati Sheshadri.

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president and ex-Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti condemned the searches. "The NIA raids on human rights activist Parvez and the *Greater Kashmir* office in Srinagar is yet another ex-

ample of the Government of India's vicious crackdown on freedom of expression and dissent. Sadly, the NIA has become BJP's pet agency to intimidate and browbeat those who refuse to fall in line," she tweeted.

Kashmir Times editor Anuradha Bhasin said the searches at the newspaper office and Mr. Parvez's house "are attempts to impose silence even on our whispe

rers". "This comes a day after the disempowering land laws. Can this be just a coincidence?" she tweeted.

The Kashmir Editors Guild (KEG) has expressed concern over the pre-dawn NIA searches at the *Greater Kashmir* premises.

"Kashmir media continues to get targeted, demonized, vilified and raided by both the state and non-state actors for a long time now. Kashmir media has proven record of being a professional institution that maintained textbook objectivity, while maintaining its core journalistic values. The KEG expresses its concern over the mounting costs of being a journalist in Kashmir", a KEG spokesman said.

IT Ministry working to comply with CIC orders on Aarogya Setu

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Following a show cause notice issued over the government's "preposterous" response to an RTI (Right to Information) query related to the Aarogya Setu application, the IT Ministry said it was taking steps to comply with the CIC's orders, while adding that the app had been developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in collaboration with volunteers from industry and academia.

"As per the orders of the CIC, Central Public Information Officers (CPOs) of Ministry of Electronics and IT

(MeitY), National e-Governance Division (NeGD) and NIC have been directed to appear on November 24, 2020.

MeitY is taking necessary steps to comply with the orders of the CIC," the IT Ministry said in a statement.

Evasive reply

The statement comes after the Ministry and NIC were slammed by the CIC over their reply to an RTI stating that they do not have any information about the "creation" of the Aarogya Setu application promoted by the government to contain the spread of COVID-19. The CIC

termed the response as "preposterous" and issued a show cause notice to the NIC to explain why a penalty under the RTI Act should not be slapped on it for *prima facie* obstruction of information and providing an evasive reply".

In the order, Information Commissioner Vanaja Sarna pointed out that the website of the application mentions that the content on it is "owned, updated and maintained" by MyGov and MeitY, and directed the CPIO of the Ministry to explain why they did not have the requisite information.

(With PTI inputs)

ISRO to launch satellite EOS-01 on November 7

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BENGALURU

India will launch its latest earth observation satellite EOS-01 and nine international customer spacecraft onboard its Polar rocket PSLV-C49 from the spaceport of Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh on November 7, 2020, ISRO said on Wednesday.

This is the first launch by ISRO since the COVID-19 lockdown came into force in March.

ISRO Chairman K. Sivan had said in June that ten space missions being prepared for launch this year had been 'disturbed' due to the lockdown.

EOS-01 is intended for ap-

plications in agriculture, forestry and disaster management support, ISRO said. The launch is tentatively scheduled at 3.02 p.m. on November 7 subject to weather conditions from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, the statement noted.

The customer satellites are being launched under commercial agreement with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), Department of Space, the space agency said.

The live telecast of the launch will be available on ISRO website and its YouTube, Facebook and Twitter channels.

President suspends V-C of Delhi University for 'dereliction of duty'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind, in his capacity as Visitor of Delhi University, has suspended Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Tyagi and ordered an inquiry against him over allegations of grave misconduct, dereliction of duties, abuse of power and lack of commitment to uphold the provisions of the Delhi University Act.

Mr. Tyagi had been appointed Vice-Chancellor in March 2016. An order issued by the Ministry of Education said all orders issued by Mr. Tyagi during his period of absence on medical grounds



after Pro Vice-Chancellor P.C. Joshi assumed charge of the Vice-Chancellor on July 17 be set aside and to be treated as null and void. It further stated that Prof. Joshi would function as the Vice-Chancellor during the period of suspension/absence of Mr. Tyagi for the

smooth functioning of the university.

Not lost in translation



Hindi-dubbed versions of Tamil and Telugu films are minting money across India, as film distributors compete to satiate an audience deprived of 'masala content'

SRIVATSAN S

The lockdown might have allowed film buffs to discover regional films on digital platforms, but interest in dubbed cinema from the South, particularly Telugu and Tamil films, too, has been mushrooming in parallel.

This is not a recent phenomenon. The 2018-19 report published by Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), India, about the viewership percentage for films from the South on television, states that Hindi channels relied on dubbed films for "at least 11% of the viewership". The report adds that films in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, and Malayalam languages "clocked at least 135 billion hours" of viewership.

Love for the masala

What explains the growing audience for dubbed content up North? There was a time in the '90s and early noughties when Bollywood churned out 'masala' films' starring the likes of Sunny Deol and Sanjay Dutt. These films, which occupied prime time slots, gradually diminished in number with the emergence of content deemed 'multiplex-friendly'.

It is this dearth of commercial pot-boilers that prompted distributors like Aneesh Dev, managing director, WAM India (a pioneer in film distribution) to venture into the dubbing business. He bought the rights of sought-after Telugu and Tamil films, dubbed and presented them to non-native speakers. That was until Rajinikanth's 2005 film, *Chandramukhi*, whose dubbed version was lapped up by the Hindi speaking audience, woke Aneesh up to the untapped potential of 'masala' films'.

"Television channels used to screen old movies of Chiranjeevi and Nagarjuna in the 2000s. But the major shift happened with *Chandramukhi*, whose Hindi rights we had bought. Thereafter, we started looking at Telugu and Tamil films more," says Aneesh, over a phone call from Mumbai.

He observes that the popularity of dubbed movies from the South has grown at such an exponential rate that when presented with an opportunity, he launched an exclusive streaming platform for such films. It's called Dollywood Play, which went live in July this year.

Exchanging voices Video-on-demand services have opened a new source of revenue for producers and distributors in the dubbing market ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

NUMBERS GAME

The 2017 Telugu film *Ninni Kori* starring Nani, Aadhi Pinisetty and Nivetha Thomas, has been uploaded to YouTube by Aditya Movies as *Aaj Ka Khiladi*. It has gained 18 million views in less than a month.

The Hindi-dubbed version of Tamil film *Action* starring Vishal and Tamannaah Bhatia — a film which underperformed critically and commercially upon release — has 74 million views on YouTube in under three weeks of its upload.

Vijay's *Jilla* dubbed as *Policewala Gunda 2* and *Bairavaa* have 123 million and 100 million each, Dhanush's *Maari 2* and *Vada Chennai* garnered 93 and 30 million, while Karthi's *Dev* and *Sivakarthikeyan's Remo* have 79 and 77 million views.

The Hindi version of Telugu film *iSmart Shankar* has 138 million views, *Majili* has 73 million views and the 2018 film *Srinivasa Kalyanam* has 136 million views on YouTube.

According to Aneesh, dubbed movies are categorised in two verticals: A plus and A minus. The former includes star vehicles, while the latter features films headlined by mid-tier actors.

Plus or minus

"We don't opt for A plus because it is difficult to recover the money. A minus is a safer zone and the price will not fluctuate," he adds. In most cases, distributors acquire the Hindi dubbing rights from a producer and dub on their own, as opposed to buying the rights of an already dubbed film.

"We prefer it this way because we are able to supervise quality. Dubbing into vernacular languages is a market that is emerging," says Aneesh.

One of the contributing factors to this preference for 'masala' films' among the audience is the way action sequences are choreographed in Southern films, says SR Prabhu, partner, Dream Warrior Pictures production firm. "Action scenes in our movies are superior to the ones you would find in Bollywood. In fact, when a distributor approaches us for the Hindi rights, the first question he asks is: 'How many ac-

tion blocks does the film have?'" he says.

Umesh Gupta, managing director, Aditya Movies, shares a similar train of thought. "The Hindi-speaking audience love the one-liners that we call 'punch dialogues', the comedy, and action sequences," he says, adding that recent years have witnessed a demand for non-action films as well, such as Telugu director Trivikram Srinivas' *A... Aa*, starring Nithiin and Samantha Akkineni. "The dubbed version of *A... Aa* got 200 million views," he adds.

It's the same with the Tamil social-drama, *Raatchasi*, which was dubbed and released as *Madam Geeta Rani* by Goldmines Telefilms on their YouTube channel. In under a month, it had amassed 100 million views.

Prabhu, who is *Raatchasi*'s producer, says that the film performed better on digital platforms than during its theatrical run. Its dubbing rights fetched his company nearly the same revenue as satellite and digital streaming rights.

Thriving business

What is the demography of the audience watching dubbed movies online? Prabhu says that dubbed films resonate more with people from economically-weaker sections, who prefer watching movies in their vernacular languages.

"There is a whole section of the audience that does not watch movies with subtitles. When someone from an underprivileged background watches a dubbed film, they are able to relate to the emotions, even if they don't know understand the film's original language," he says.

Lately, YouTube has opened a new source of revenue for producers and distributors, whereby the latter monetises the viewership numbers based on the ads generated for the content. Prabhu, however, feels that this revenue is meagre. "If your movie crosses 100 million views, you might end up making ₹1 crore on YouTube; it is a small model," he says, and adds: "That is why producers prefer selling the Hindi remake rights because it fetches more money."

Aneesh, however, believes the dubbing industry is here to thrive. "In our country, 80% of the audience likes masala and the remaining watch all kinds of content. So, when it comes to business, I am only concerned about what the majority likes because only that is bringing money."

With inputs from Sangeetha Devi Dundoo



HOMING IN

Musical icons pay tribute to other icons and family humour plays with shades of grey in this week's edition of **Live Gigs** to catch online

MEGHNA MAJUMDAR



Jim Beam Originals

Colonial Cousins, Usha Uthup, Benny Dayal, Shalmali Kholgade and Shaan are some of the names that PayTM Insider mentions as part of its upcoming series of 10 virtual music lives. The idea behind the event, titled PayTM Insider Presents Jim Beam Originals, is for leading Indian musicians to reinterpret the classic songs of global favourites. The series is set to begin with Colonial Cousins blending in its signature style to recreate an abridged The Eagles' discography. Playback singer Shalmali follows with her take on Michael Jackson songs, and so on. Thaikudam Bridge, Shor Police, Karsh Kale and Purbayan Chatterjee are also part of this series put together by Turnkey Music Publishing and Music Plus.

Each live will be streamed on insider.in at 9 pm, starting November 7. Visit the website for individual tickets or season passes.



Vivek Muralidharan

For weeks now, the Chennai-based comic has been doing an hour-long live every night, and has reached a point where he is comfortable enough with the show for it to feel breezy and conversational without sounding done-to-death. If you like your comedy clean with no grey areas, you might feel guilty laughing at a few of his punchlines. But you also won't be able to help yourself from an innocent niece to an earnest grandmother, everyone's a punchline. Vivek begins his show on Zoom at 10 pm on weeknights and 7 pm on weekends; passes are on insider.in.

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

A novel attempt

Filmmaker Bejoy Nambiar discusses his film *Taish*, which has had a simultaneous release as a film and a web series

PRADEEP KUMAR

Try asking a creative mind to shoehorn his work of art in a style that suits the audience's perception of his idea, chances are that you will be met with a response similar to Bejoy Nambiar's. "If I had to distill [the film], then yeah... *Taish* is a revenge drama," the 41-year-old filmmaker says, when asked to classify his upcoming film's genre.

"I'm a big fan of the drama genre. I'm also a fan of human [centric] stories. I tend to gravitate towards these ideas when I write. *Taish* is an example. It has action, it is set in

the format of a thriller, but at the core of it, the film is a human [centric] story and tackles serious issues (sic)," he adds, over a phone call from his Mumbai residence.

Cut from the same cloth

Starring Pulkit Samrat, Kriti Kharbanda, Jim Sarbh, Harshvardhan Rane and Abhimanyu Singh among others, *Taish* makes a simultaneous release as a film and a six-episode web series on ZEE5 today. It follows the story of two warring

families and a past incident that comes to haunt them. "A cycle of violence and revenge starts and there is seemingly no tangible end," Bejoy notes.

While he shot *Taish* as a feature film, the idea to make a

I'm a big fan of the drama genre. I'm also a fan of human [centric] stories. I tend to gravitate towards these ideas when I write. *Taish* is an example

BEJOY NAMBIAR
Filmmaker

separate cut and package it as a web series became possible after the lockdown. Bejoy had screened a rough cut to a test audience prior to this. Feedback indicated a preference to watch the content as web series, but the filmmaker only acted on it after the pandemic outbreak. "The lockdown really helped because the film's editor [Priyank Prem Kumar] and I

grew up watching. It is their cinema that inspired people like me to join films. I did go to Lal sir with a Malayalam subject but it didn't work out. I ended up making it as a one hour short film later on, but there still is time," he adds.

Taish is streaming on ZEE5





Need a vacation? Just set sail. In a socially-distanced world, people are finding freedom in water-based solo adventure sports

Cake by the ocean

SWETA AKUNDI

It was an unusual Sunday in an unusual year for Sendil Nath. Six kilometres into the Bay of Bengal, atop a yacht, as he manned the boom and pulled the ropes to steer the boat under his captain Dheer Singh's orders, he felt a familiar thrill.

"There were times the wind was so strong, it felt like the boat would almost capsize," says the 41-year-old former motorbike racer. "That rush I felt while rac-

ing was back after 15 years."

A day at sea is one of the main thrills that Sportifying India, a Chennai-based niche sports company is offering. "People come looking to escape city life. Once you have exited the harbour, it no longer feels like you are in Chennai," says Dheer, who co-founded Sportifying India, along with fellow international sailors, Abhimanyu Panwar and Avinash Shanbagh.

As cities limp cautiously back to recovery, entertainment ave-



nues are still limited. Niche watersports such as sailing, kayaking, paddling and canoeing hope to fill the void.

"Sailing is not a team sport. You are on boat and on your own (in the case of single-handed boats). You may have one more person as a crew member, but social distancing is part of the game," points out Dennis Luiz, commodore of the Ernakulam Sailing Association in Kerala. After a hiatus since the lockdown when it had to down oars, the association is gearing up to reopen soon.

Setting sail

After launching in November 2019, Sportifying India had to put an early brake on its operations due to the pandemic. But once the Chennai harbour opened up to commercial activities, in late September, they resumed the sailing trips, starting by inviting city musicians such as Maalavika Manoj and The F16 band for a day of music and fishing.

"We first ask people what kind of experience they are looking for. Some want to celebrate a birthday or an anniversary, some just want to go out to sea. We curate the trip accordingly.

We could get a cake or decorate the boat with balloons," says Dheer, adding that all COVID-19 protocols of wearing masks and sanitising are followed. "If you wish, you can come in lesser numbers so that you feel safer," he adds.

While sailing has just restarted in Chennai, the Global Sailing Club in Kochi, a seven-year-old association, has been back in business since June. In fact, the number of people participating in sailing has doubled since last year, says OC Thomas, founder of the sailing club, adding that up to 40% of them were newcomers. "People learn sailing

but mostly, they want to make a whole day out of it – they come with their families to sail, have lunch, drinks and then head back," he says.

This strategy of promoting water sports at a family level, is one that even the Ernakulam Sailing Association has embraced. "The idea is to rope in adults who are interested. So, when they join, their family too, especially kids, jump on the bandwagon," Dennis says.

About a week ago, Kollam's Syzygy Ecosports restarted

kayaking and canoeing, for up to three people. Located at Pozhikkara beach, it takes its customers to the Paravur backwaters



and the Ithikkara river. "We already have bookings made by residents of Trivandrum and Varkala. They prefer weekdays, while on weekends we get visitors from nearby resorts," says Dani George, founder.

In still waters

Dani describes how paddling in the Ithikkara River, when you cross a mangrove forest, feels like a mini-Amazon. "Even at midday, there is no sunlight, the canopy is that thick and tall. You can also get out of the canoe onto a sandbar. It is a good place to take a break and rest, and play volleyball. During high tides, it appears as if you are standing on the surface of the water," he says. Being stifled at home for a few months has clearly increased appreciation for the out-

doors. This, Chennai-based Kumaran Mahalingam, founder of Paddle for Future, discovered looking at his sales over the past few months.

The company expanded its Mangrovebay Ecocamp in Chidambaram near Pichavaram and now includes sunrise kayaking. "If we had 50 bookings a month before the pandemic, it has increased to 150 now, post the lockdown," says Kumaran cheerily. "The value of being in Nature has increased."

The ecocamp takes a maximum of 14 people per day, and the 10-acre campus makes social distancing easier. Guests come in a day in advance, stay the night in tents or bunks, kayak early morning, have breakfast and then head back to the city.

Its Work From Camp programme sees people staying there for longer – the 9 to 5 day begins with a round of kayaking in the morning and paddling in the evening. "We take the kids to a beach near Pichavaram and teach them about the ecosystem there. We have also introduced silambam training on the beach," says Kumaran.

Kumaran and his family live the outdoor life they preach. For 100 days, from March to July, and again for the past three weeks, they have been living by the mangroves. "We spotted wild otters every day last month." But the best part? "My 10-year-old son has become an expert in kayaking and bird watching."

With inputs from Harikumar JS



(Clockwise from left) Ber on a bush, Jewel Beetles and nymphs, Pierrot species butterfly

• WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/SHIJAN KAAKKARA,
ABHISHEK GULSHAN

IN OUR BACKYARD

Winter's wild fruit

The Ber and Jhad Beri can be prickly, but their fruits are sweet

ABHISHEK GULSHAN

It has been over a year since I first started writing the 'In Your Backyard' series, and it has been the most remarkable journey. In writing these articles, I have been able to rediscover my love for urban ecology and a few species that I often ignored. Mostly, it reinforced the absolute joy I feel about nature.

The key to understanding the environment we live in better, is to understand plant-animal interaction. We know that plants attract insects for nectar, but do we know that they attract specific insects at times? Butterflies laying their eggs on leaves is common knowledge, but do we know that this isn't a random selection and that these butterflies have specific host plants?

All this was new for me when I began to explore Nature about six years ago, but making these connections is what a nature educator does. The more I ventured into it, the more logical and fun it became, and the more I realized that this was Nature's common sense.

I began to think that it might be a good idea to add a wild-fruit-tasting trail to our itinerary of walks around Delhi-NCR, so children can get a feel of plucking and eating fruits directly from trees.

October to March is the migratory bird season and also the time when Ber (*Ziziphus mauritiana*) and Jhad Beri (*Ziziphus nummularia*) are fruiting. When in winter, plants in scrublands display earthy-brown shades, the hardy *Ziziphus* species adds a little colour to the otherwise dry landscape.

Ber or the Desert Apple, also called Indian Jujube/plum/cherry is deciduous and is most often a bush, but can grow into a small to moderate-sized tree. A characteristic dry-land tree with spines, it has a short dark grey to black bark and indivi-

dual trees may look very different, in terms of size and appearance.

Though the scrublands are mostly confined to certain areas of Delhi-NCR now, these trees are still found on Aurobindo Marg, in Safdarjung Enclave, Hauz Khas, Shalimar Bagh and even the Qutab compound, according to Pradip Krish-

en's book *Trees of Delhi*.

Like the Ber, even Jhad Ber/Beri or Jhad Ber which translates from Hindi to Ber of bushes/shrubs in English, is a shrub that grows up to 3 metres in height. It is native to the Western deserts of India, Pakistan, and in certain parts of the Gulf. In the city, this shrub is widely seen in the Aravalli

Biodiversity Park in Gurugram, in Vasant Kunj, Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary and in the

Jhanpanah City Forest.

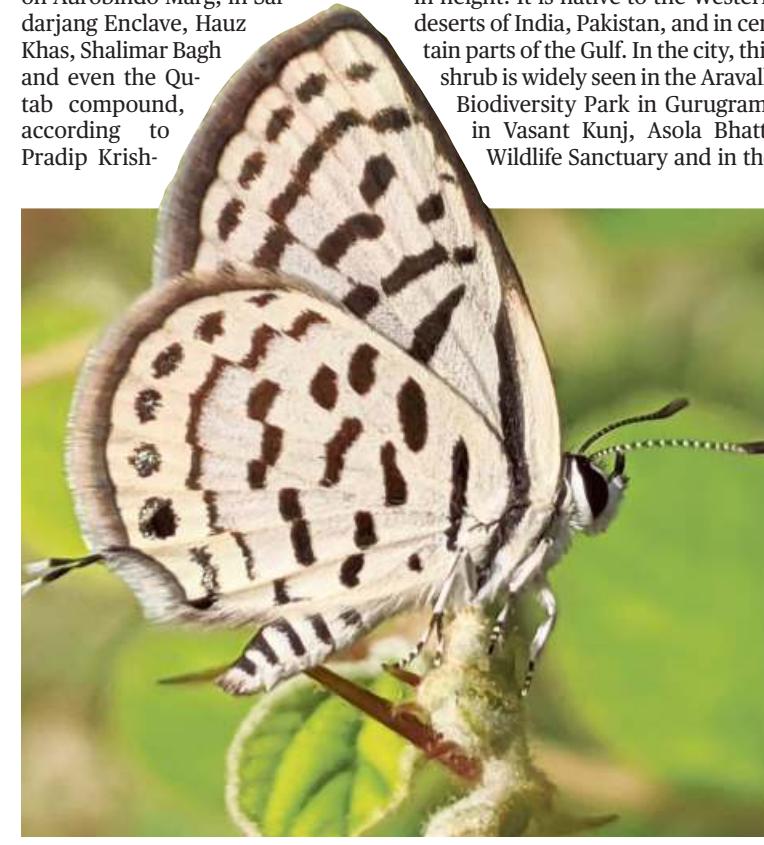
Even though the Ber from Jhad Beri is sweet, it is quite a task to get to the berries, because of the thorns that protect them against animals (mostly cattle). The fruit is green at first, then slowly turns yellow that ripens to red. The not so ripe yellowish-red ones have a certain tang to them. Animals like jackals and the Indian Peafowl feed on them and scatter the seeds widely in their excreta. The leaves on both plants are broadly oval and glossy green on top and rough below.

Both these plants have been cultivated for their fruit, but also for timber and fuel for fire in drier areas.

One cold winter morning in November, 2016, a group of us came across a huge congregation of Jewel Beetles and their nymphs (immature form) on one of the shrubs. Later on, I also observed that these plants play host to a variety of beautiful butterfly species like some Pierrots and the elusive Indian Red Flash. Spiders and their webs are a common sight on these plants, considering that a lot of insects are attracted to the plant for food and end up falling prey to these eight-legged arachnids.

Being your friendly neighbourhood naturalist for a little over a year has been a wonderful experience for me and I hope it has helped you explore your own backyard. With today's article being my last for this series, I wish you a very Ber-ful life ahead. Thank you, dear readers, for all your support.

The writer is the founder of NINOX - Owl About Nature, a nature-awareness initiative. He is the Delhi-NCR reviewer for Ebird, a Cornell University initiative, monitoring rare sightings of birds. He formerly led a programme of WWF India. He can be reached at ninox.edu@gmail.com



Colours of the sea

In Season Fish has put together a marine-themed colouring book to be distributed to children across Tamil Nadu's coast

AKILA KANNADASAN

There was excitement amidst children of the seaside village of Alamparai, near Puducherry. They lined up at the village square to receive a precious package: a colouring book and colour pencils from a team from Chennai.

This was last weekend, when wildlife biologist Chaitanya Krishna and marine geographer Divya Karnad of In Season Fish, a sustainable seafood initiative, visited the village. "They leafed through the book and were curious," recalls Chaitanya.

The colouring book, titled *Art to Heal*, was the result of several weeks of work during lockdown. It has sketches by 39 artists – one from Australia and the rest from across India – themed on the marine world. It features line drawings of marine life including whales, sharks and turtles found in Indian coastal waters. With text in English and Tamil, the book has a fun Spot The Fish exercise that asks children to identify the species they colour.

Chaitanya and team distributed the book and colour pencils to around 70 children in the village, and will continue the exercise across fishing villages in Tamil Nadu and later, among children living in land too.

Chaitanya says, it all began as In Season Fish's "Covid relief work". "We distributed rice, dal, and oil to 1,000 fisherfolk families from Tiruvallur, Ennore, Cuddalore, Tuticorin, Nagapattinam, and Rameshwaram in April to help supplement their savings." The pandemic was hard on the fisherfolk since they could not



Little hands at work The book is aimed at keeping children engaged; (above) at Alamparai • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

head out to sea for several weeks. "This took care of their physical well-being. But what about their mental well-being?" asks Chaitanya.

And so they came up with the idea of putting together a colouring book. "Children missed their school environment. We hoped the book would keep them engaged as well as keep their memory of the sea and all its creatures alive," explains Chaitanya. In April, the team put out a request on its social media handle asking for artists to contribute and slowly, the book took shape.

Madhuri Tarimane is among the artists who contributed. "I'm from the coastal region myself," says Madhuri, speaking over the phone from Bengaluru. "I spent my early childhood in Karwar, Karnataka." Which is why when she came across the opportunity, she did not let it go. "It also helped me cope during lockdown; I was stressed due to all the uncertainty," she says. Madhuri also teaches children art and knows that it can be therapeutic. "Children have so much energy in them and art is a good way to channelise it," she adds.

Chaitanya says that through *Art To Heal*, they plan to strike a rapport with people in the various fishing villages and start a conversation about conserving marine species and ocean health. The book, therefore, is just the beginning.

For details, write to chaitanya@inseasonfish.com



Campaign heats up in the final week

Biden focuses on expanding his electoral map, Trump defends administration's response to COVID-19

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

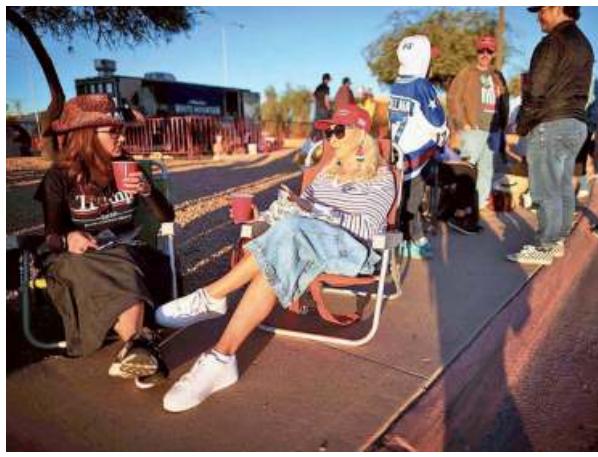
WASHINGTON

With Election Day less than a week away and close to 65 million Americans having already cast their ballots, the presidential candidates and their star campaigners are criss-crossing the country taking chances on how best to spend their final days in order to win on Tuesday next.

On Monday and Tuesday this week, U.S. President Donald Trump, focused on defending his gains in 2016, campaigned in the Upper Midwestern States of Michigan and Wisconsin as well as Nebraska after spending Monday intensely focused on Pennsylvania, where he made multiple stops. Mr. Trump won these States in 2016 with wafer thin majorities (except for Nebraska).

First Lady Melania Trump held her first (and possibly, only) campaign rally in Chester County, Pennsylvania, which her husband narrowly won in 2016.

Democratic candidate and former Vice-President Joe Biden is leading in the polls in Pennsylvania (+3.8 points), Michigan (+8.7 points) and



Morning show: People waiting in queue at sunrise to attend a Trump rally in Goodyear, Arizona. ■ AFP

Wisconsin (+7.6 points), according to an average of recent polls from polling aggregator *Real Clear Politics*.

Mr. Trump's path to victory – 270 seats in the Electoral College – is narrow but still within reach.

Mr. Biden's strategy this week appears to be different: what's been described by analysts as an effort to 'expand his electoral map' – forcing Mr. Trump to defend States such as Florida and Georgia, which he won in 2016. Mr. Biden will travel to Iowa on Friday – a State Mr.

Trump won comfortably in 2016.

'Heal the nation'

However, it's not just about the presidential race. In Georgia, Mr. Biden also campaigned with Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, fighting competitive Senate races. In Iowa too, Republican incumbent Joni Ernst and her Democratic challenger Theresa Greenfield are battling it out in the country's second most expensive Senate race as per the *Des Moines Register*.

Speaking in Warm Springs, Georgia, at a retreat of former U.S. President F.D. Roosevelt, Mr. Biden brought up the theme of "healing" the nation. "A few weeks ago, I spoke at Gettysburg about the need to unite our nation, and today I'm here at Warm Springs because I want to talk about how we're going to heal our nation," he said.

His speech included references to Civil Rights icon Martin Luther King, Pope Francis and the Bible.

"I'm running as a proud Democrat, but I will govern as an American President. I'll work with Democrats and Republicans," Mr. Biden said, repeating one of his core campaign messages. The former Vice-President has also dwelt at length on the need to control the pandemic before rebuilding the economy.

Mr. Biden's star campaigner – former President Barack Obama – held a drive-in rally in Orlando on Tuesday, having already made stops in Pennsylvania last week and in Miami over the weekend. Mr. Biden lost Florida in 2016 and is currently running neck and neck with Mr.

Trump. "You've got the chance to set two things right. You can bring a World Series championship [a baseball tournament] to the Sunshine State and you can send Joe Biden and Kamala Harris to the White House," Mr. Obama told the audience.

While on the campaign trail, Mr. Obama has focused on contrasting Mr. Trump's character and Mr. Biden's, saying the former treats the presidency as a reality show. He has also taken to mocking Mr. Trump. "He's jealous of COVID's media coverage," Mr. Obama said. "If he had been focused on COVID from the beginning, cases wouldn't be reaching new record highs across the country this week."

Mr. Trump's messaging has been that the country is "rounding the turn" [turning the corner] on the pandemic – a hypothesis that runs counter to scientists' expectations based on rising infection numbers and dropping temperatures. He has also linked the pandemic to an economic message – that the election is a choice between a "Trump super recovery" and a "Biden depression".

Armenian missile strike killed 21, injured 70, says Azerbaijan

Yerevan denies launching Smerch missile at Barda town

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BAKU

Azerbaijan accused Armenia of killing 21 people and wounding dozens in a missile strike near Nagorno-Karabakh on Wednesday, the deadliest reported attack on civilians in a month of fighting over the disputed region.

Armenia immediately denied carrying out the attack, the second in two days that Azerbaijan says killed civilians in the Barda district close to the front line.

Yerevan also accused Azerbaijani forces of deadly new strikes on civilian areas of Karabakh, as both sides claim the other is targeting civilians after weeks of fierce front-line clashes.

The latest attacks came despite a U.S.-brokered truce agreed at the weekend, the third ceasefire attempt in a row to collapse just minutes after it took effect.

Azerbaijani presidential aide Hikmet Hajiyev said Armenian forces had fired



At a loss: People seen in front of a damaged building in the town of Barda on Wednesday. ■ AFP

Smerch missiles at Barda, accusing them of using cluster munitions "to inflict excessive casualties among civilians".

The Prosecutor General's office said the strike had hit a densely populated area and a shopping district, killing 21 civilians and wounding at least 70.

Azerbaijan had on Tuesday accused Armenia of another missile strike in the Barda district that killed four civilians, including a two-year-old girl. The casualties are the worst for Azerbaijani civilians since 13 people were killed in shelling on the country's second largest city Ganja on October 17.

The Chinese Embassy in Colombo was quick to respond to Mr. Pompeo's attack. "Sorry Mr. Secretary @SecPompeo, we're busy promoting #China-SriLanka friendship and cooperation, not interested in your #AlienVsPredator game invi-

Senators spar with tech CEOs over key Net law

Pichai, Dorsey defend Section 230

REUTERS

WASHINGTON

The chief executives of Twitter and Google defended a law protecting Internet companies before a U.S. Senate panel on Wednesday.

The topic of reforming the law has split U.S. lawmakers on ways to hold Big Tech accountable for how they moderate content on their platforms and shape political discourse.

Twitter's Jack Dorsey and Google's Sundar Pichai told the committee that Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act – which protects companies from liability over content posted by users – is crucial to free expression on the Internet.

Mr. Dorsey warned the committee that eroding the foundation of Section 230 could significantly hurt how people communicate online. Mr. Pichai said the company operates without political bias and that doing otherwise would be against its business interests.

Facebook Inc's Mark Zuckerberg, however, said he supports changing the law but also warned that tech platforms are likely to censor more to avoid legal risks if Section 230 is repealed. All three CEOs



Jack Dorsey

agreed that the companies should be held liable if the platforms act as a publisher.

Republican Senator Roger Wicker, who chairs the committee, said that the liability shield has protected companies from "potentially ruinous lawsuits". "But it has also given these Internet platforms the ability to control, stifle, and even censor content in whatever manner meets their respective standards. The time has come for that free pass to end."

Mr. Wicker also criticised the companies' decision to block stories from the *New York Post* that made claims about Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's son. He and other Senators went after Twitter for not taking down tweets from world leaders that allegedly spread misinformation but going aggressively after Republican President Donald Trump's tweets.

Mr. Morales wrote on Twitter, however, that "the Constitution is very clear on the role of the armed forces and the Bolivian police: We, as we always have done, will respect them as institutions".

"We must all act calmly in a constitutional way."

Bolivia has been in political crisis for a year after Mr. Morales ignored the Constitution and stood for and won a fourth successive term as President, even though leaders are limited to two terms.

The average age for the 12 members of the NLD's top decision-making body, including party boss and civi-

Bolivia's Morales calls for calm

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LA PAZ

Exiled former Bolivian President Evo Morales called for calm on Tuesday after several hundred right-wing protesters demanded that a "military junta" replace socialist President-elect Luis Arce.

On Monday, hundreds of demonstrators marched to military barracks in the eastern city of Santa Cruz – a right-wing stronghold – and called for "military help" to prevent the Movement for Socialism party from regaining power following a year under conservative Jeanine Añez's interim government.

Role is clear

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Suu Kyi, old guard frustrate young Myanmar politicians

They have been accused of censorship

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON

lian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, is more than 70. All of them were jailed or placed under house arrest for opposing the military regime.

Younger members of the party were largely reduced to supporting acts for their seniors, required to ask permission to speak to anyone outside the party and submit speeches for "censorship", said Aung Hlaing Win.

No different

"It turned out to be an oppressive system – no different from the system of military rule," he added. "Just because they'd been political prisoners didn't mean they knew how to run a country."

The hopes for change were dashed for many young democracy activists, who accuse the NLD of operating no better than other parties.

Political parties still ask new members about the role they played in the 1988 protests, complained 28-year-old Thinzar Shunlei Li, even though a majority of people in Myanmar were born in or after the 1980s.

"This is not the right way to judge a person," she said. "Our issues, concerns and struggles are different."

Erdogan blasts 'disgusting' Charlie Hebdo cartoon

Turkey President vows to take 'legal and diplomatic action'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ISTANBUL

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday vented his outrage at the "scoundrels" at the French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* for mocking him in a front-cover cartoon.

While on the campaign trail, Mr. Obama has focused on contrasting Mr. Trump's character and Mr. Biden's, saying the former treats the presidency as a reality show. He has also taken to mocking Mr. Trump. "He's jealous of COVID's media coverage," Mr. Obama said. "If he had been focused on COVID from the beginning, cases wouldn't be reaching new record highs across the country this week."

Mr. Trump's messaging has been that the country is "rounding the turn" [turning the corner] on the pandemic – a hypothesis that runs counter to scientists' expectations based on rising infection numbers and dropping temperatures. He has also linked the pandemic to an economic message – that the election is a choice between a "Trump super recovery" and a "Biden depression".

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Mr. Erdogan also vowed to take "legal and diplomatic action" over the depiction of the 66-year-old leader.

The publication stoked fury in Turkish political circles and added to a sense of crisis enveloping Turkey's deteriorating relations with France.

The cartoon came out just days after Mr. Erdogan called for a boycott of French products and questioned President Emmanuel Macron's sanity for promoting a drive against radical Islam.

Mr. Macron's accompanying defence of the media's right to mock religion stirred angry protests across Turkey and swaths of the Muslim world.

Mr. Erdogan said he had never personally seen the *Charlie Hebdo* drawing be-



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

cause he did not want to "give credit to such immoral publications". But he called it "disgusting" nonetheless.

"I don't need to say anything to those scoundrels who insult my beloved prophet on such a scale," Mr. Erdogan said in a speech to his party's lawmakers.

"I am sad and frustrated not because of this disgusting attack on me personally but because of the impertinence taking aim at our prophet we love more than ourselves."

Turkey is a mostly Muslim but officially secular country

that has taken a more conservative and nationalist course under Mr. Erdogan's rule. These policies have put Turkey and Mr. Erdogan at growing odds with France and Mr. Macron – one of Ankara's most vocal critics.

France's European Affairs Minister said on Wednesday that Paris would "push for strong European responses, which include sanctions" over Mr. Erdogan's series of "provocations".

Probe being launched

Ankara prosecutors said they were launching an investigation into the publication for "insulting the head of state".

The cartoon was published in the midst of an emotional debate over France's broader policy toward Muslims.

That conversation has been lent urgency by the murder near Paris this month of a teacher who showed his class cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed previously published by *Charlie Hebdo*.

won't happen overnight but it's worth it," Mr. Pompeo told a news conference on an island resort near the archipelago's capital Male. "It's the right thing to do. Your role here in the Indo-Pacific and in the international community is increasingly important," he added.



Mike Pompeo

ment model, Mr. Rajapaksa told the delegation from Beijing that he wished to disprove the prevalent "debt trap" analysis of Sri Lanka's borrowings – totalling over \$5 billion – from the Asian giant.

Further, President Rajapaksa in his meeting with Secretary Pompeo "stressed that he is not ready to compromise the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation in maintaining foreign relations whatever the circumstances may be," his office said in the statement.

While India and China are negotiating another \$700 million loan – the Sri Lankan President told Mr. Pompeo that Colombo's foreign policy was "based on neutrality". Sri Lanka, over the last decade, has borrowed heavily from bilateral partners and multilateral agencies, and is due to repay \$4.5 billion next year.

In his remarks to the press, Mr. Pompeo said the State Department has offered "substantial counter-terrorism assistance" to help Sri Lankans bring those behind the Easter terror bombings to justice. "These Easter Sunday attacks represent the kind of sectarianism that Sri Lankans are ready to leave behind forever."

China is a predator, Pompeo tells Sri Lanka

'U.S. planning Male embassy'

REUTERS

MALE

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Wednesday that Washington will open an embassy in the Maldives for the first time, during a five-day Asia trip attempting to counterbalance the rise of China in the region.

"Getting this facility open

and China escalated around Mr. Pompeo's visit, even before the open diplomatic clash on Wednesday. Responding to U.S. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Dean Thompson's remarks ahead of Mr. Pompeo's visit, the Chinese Embassy in Colombo issued a statement, saying the U.S. was using the visit to "interfere in China-Sri Lanka relations, and to coerce and bully Sri Lanka".

Reliance on Beijing

Even as government critics flag the Rajapaksa administration's growing reliance on China for economic help – a \$500 million Chinese loan was sanctioned in March and

Colombo is negotiating another \$700 million loan – the Sri Lankan President told Mr. Pompeo that Colombo's foreign policy was "based on neutrality". Sri Lanka, over the last decade, has borrowed heavily from bilateral partners and multilateral agencies, and is due to repay \$4.5 billion next year.

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Notification - Selection of Vice-Chancellor of Bengaluru city University

1. The Government of Karnataka invites applications for the selection of Vice-Chancellor of Bengaluru City University, Bengaluru as per sec. 14(2) of Karnataka State University Act, 2000 from eligible distinguished Academicians/Professors with following credentials

- A person of the highest level of competence,

MARKET WATCH

	28-10-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	39,922	-1.48
US Dollar	73.87	-0.22
Gold	51,220	0.22
Brent oil	39.16	-3.64

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	353.65	-10.75
Asian Paints	2159.55	-38.25
Axis Bank	504.70	-3.40
Bajaj Auto	2944.05	-3.30
Bajaj Finserv	5642.35	-24.90
Bajaj Finance	3370.80	-92.45
Bharti Airtel	451.85	18.50
BPCL	345.45	-3.20
Britannia Ind	3541.70	-30.55
Cipla	765.25	-5.00
Coal India	112.70	-1.25
Divis Lab	3131.45	-25.40
Dr Reddys Lab	4951.00	-148.40
Eicher Motors	2135.00	16.75
GAIL (India)	83.10	-1.10
Grasim Ind	777.25	-1.85
HCL Tech.	829.60	-17.65
HDFC	1968.90	-72.45
HDFC Bank	1209.60	-23.50
HDFC Life	586.15	-1.15
Hero MotoCorp	2946.20	-34.25
Hindalco	170.45	-4.00
Hind Unilever	2164.50	-12.35
ICICI Bank	396.05	-13.90
IndusInd Bank	592.85	-21.15
Infosys	1076.55	-14.30
Indian Oil Corp	78.05	-0.05
ITC	165.50	-1.70
JSW Steel	305.85	-3.10
Kotak Bank	1551.35	-36.30
L&T	982.85	0.90
M&M	604.15	7.00
Maruti Suzuki	7186.05	27.65
Nestle India Ltd.	17119.15	-10.70
NTPC	88.10	-1.35
ONGC	66.35	-0.50
PowerGrid Corp	172.85	-0.65
Reliance Ind	2011.45	-23.05
SBI Life	771.00	-3.45
State Bank	190.45	-4.20
Shree Cement	21361.20	-373.15
Sun Pharma	463.40	-7.05
Tata Motors	134.80	-0.85
Tata Steel	402.30	-8.70
TCS	2622.20	-7.95
Tech Mahindra	804.30	-24.35
Titan	1217.00	-14.80
UltraTech Cement	4469.30	-97.65
UPL	450.75	12.20
Wipro	335.65	1.60

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.68	74.00
Euro	86.58	86.98
British Pound	95.59	96.05
Japanese Yen (100)	70.64	70.95
Chinese Yuan	10.98	11.03
Swiss Franc	80.81	81.16
Singapore Dollar	54.09	54.33
Canadian Dollar	55.66	55.91
Malaysian Ringgit	17.72	17.82
Australian Dollar	52.43	52.70

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



SBI inks \$1 billion loan pact with JBIC

MUMBAI State Bank of India has signed a loan agreement for up to \$1 billion with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). The loan is to promote smooth flow of funds for the whole range of business operations of Japanese automakers and their dealers in India. While \$600 million will be financed by JBIC, \$400 million will be from other participating banks.

LG launches 5G swivel phone at ₹69,990

NEW DELHI Korean major LG unveiled two new smartphones in India, including the 5G-ready dual screen 'LG Wing' which comes with swivel mode that allows the main display to rotate 90 degrees, giving a T-shaped form factor. LG also introduced LG Velvet, which gives users an option of using it with dual screens. LG Wing would cost ₹69,990 and LG Velvet, ₹36,990 (single screen).

Carborundum Q2 profit rises 15.4% to ₹50.2 cr.

CHENNAI Murugappa Group firm Carborundum Universal Ltd. (CUMI), posted a 15.4% rise in standalone net profit for the second quarter ended September to ₹50.2 crore amid steady performance across segments. Total income shrank 1.35% to ₹438 crore. Revenue from the electrominerals and abrasives segment was flat, while that of ceramics dipped 9.5%, CUMI said in a filing.

Axis Bank logs ₹1,683 cr. profit as bad loans drop

NEW DELHI Axis Bank on Wednesday reported a net profit of ₹1,683 crore on a standalone basis for the quarter ended September on account of a decline in bad loans. The private sector lender had posted a loss of ₹112 crore in the corresponding July-September period of the previous fiscal. Total income rose marginally to ₹19,870 crore from ₹19,334 crore in the same period last year. PTI

U.K. to partner for developing GIFT City, funding infra pipeline

Fund of Funds to manage British govt's future development capital investments

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The United Kingdom has entered into a strategic partnership to develop India's fledgling international financial services centre GIFT City, and agreed to set up a new Fund of Funds to be managed by the State Bank of India (SBI) group in order to route the U.K.'s future capital investments into India.

India and the U.K. also signed off on a new infrastructure finance and policy partnership to help India execute its National Infrastructure Pipeline that envisages investments worth \$1.4 trillion, at the 10th Economic and Financial Dialogue between the two countries



Two to tango: The two nations announced initiatives across trade, infrastructure and sustainable finance. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

steered by U.K. Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday.

"As we seek to recover from the profound impact of COVID-19, we can only do so in partnership and co-operation," Mr. Sunak said soon after the conclusion of the dialogue, introduced in 2007 and last held in 2017.

"We have been able to announce a series of ambitious initiatives across trade, infrastructure, sustainable fi-

nance and research [including] a new strategic partnership to develop the GIFT city, an opportunity to drive international capital flow from London to India," Mr. Sunak added.

Second-largest source

Bilateral trade between India and the U.K. stood at £24 billion in 2019. India is now the second-largest project investment source for the U.K.

To help combat the pandemic, the U.K. and India announced a joint investment of £8 million for research to understand and address the factors leading to the severity of the novel coronavirus in South Asian populations in the U.K. and in India.

U.S. investors want more reforms in IPO rules: SEBI

Are keen to take part in sandbox set-up

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Investors from the U.S. have emphasised the need for early finalisation of direct listing proposals, development of the corporate bond market and reforms in IPO regulations, said SEBI.

In an interaction with top Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) officials, they have also shown interest in taking part in innovative ideas under the regulatory sandbox framework, the regulator said.

Ajay Tyagi, Chairman, SEBI, along with other officials, held an e-interaction with stakeholders from the U.S. "We briefed them about key developments in the In-

dian economy as well as recent trends in the securities market, especially in this COVID era," he said.

As the largest number of FPIs and about a third of the total assets under FPIs' custody are from the U.S., the importance of U.S. investments into India was emphasised, Mr. Tyagi added.

Titan Q2 profit plunges 38% to ₹199 crore

India seeing its biggest content revolution'

Viewing habits shifting: Google's Gupta

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Titan Company on Wednesday reported a 38% plunge in net profit to ₹199 crore for the second quarter ended September 30 from a year earlier.

Total income fell 1.7% to ₹4,389 crore.

For the first half, total income stood at ₹6,290 crore, a decline of 34% from the year-earlier period. The company posted a loss of ₹71 crore against a profit of ₹691 crore.

During the quarter, the company sold gold to the extent of ₹391 crore, posting a decline of 11% in bullion sales.

"E-commerce is leading the recovery with absolute growth but the trade channel continues to pose challenges primarily due to destocking," Titan said in a regulatory filing.

Bengali and others," he said.

In a statement, the online video platform said that YouTube in India now reaches over 325 million monthly active viewers who are over 18 years of age, as per Comscore (May 2020), and that watchtime of gaming videos in India grew by two times as compared with Q2 2019 and baking videos grew by three times during the same duration.

decreasing every quarter.

Asked if there were any plans to introduce affordable low-cost smartphones, similar to what Jio was working on, Mr. Vittal said Bharti was studying the space.

On tariffs, Mr. Vittal reiterated that there was a need to raise prices. "We have signaled that we want tariffs to go up. We're at a premium already, and we'll be happy to follow the same day if tariffs sort of go up."

The current tariff levels were not sustainable in the long term for the industry, Mr. Vittal added.

Bharti would also consider whether it needs to bid for spectrum in the 1,800 MHz band as the amount of spectrum being used for 2G was

'Will examine need for 1,800 Mhz as usage is coming down'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel on Wednesday indicated that it would refrain from bidding for 5G spectrum at the auctions, which were likely to be held early next year, given the current reserve prices.

The company may look at radio frequencies below 1,000 megahertz (Mhz) to improve network availability inside buildings and in rural areas, Gopal Vittal, MD and CEO, India & South Asia, said in a post-earnings call.

"We are hearing from the department that there may be an auction early next year... any time between January and March," Mr. Vittal said. "Given that the reserve price of 5G is as high as it is,

Gopal Vittal

we will not buy it because we won't be able to afford it. I can't comment on what others will do, but from our perspective, it will not make sense," he added.

Bharti would also consider whether it needs to bid for spectrum in the 1,800 Mhz band as the amount of spectrum being used for 2G was

Hero Q2 profit climbs 9% to ₹963.82 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Hero MotoCorp on Wednesday reported a 9% increase in consolidated net profit to ₹963.82 crore for the quarter ended September 30.

The company had registered a net profit of ₹883.78 crore in the July-September 2019 quarter. The consolidated revenue from operations rose nearly 24% to ₹9,473.32 crore compared with ₹7,660.60 crore in the year-ago period.

"The earnings in the second quarter of FY21 reflects a strong performance, signalling a gradual revival from the negative impact of the global pandemic," Niranjan Gupta, chief financial officer (CFO), Hero MotoCorp, said.

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Mr. Sunak added.

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Bumrah and Suryakumar dominate RCB, put MI in the clear

Quick's fantastic spell and No. 3 batsman's imperious 79 n.o. fetch defending champion its eighth win; Padikkal's sparkling 74 goes in vain

IPL 2020

SPORTS BUREAU

Suryakumar Yadav showed what the Indian side may miss in Australia, coming up with a superlative batting effort (79 n.o., 43b, 10x4, 3x6) to lead Mumbai Indians to a five-wicket win over Royal Challengers Bangalore at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

MI is now up to 16 points and has two games left. No team with as many points has missed out on a top-four spot in an eight-team IPL.

Jasprit Bumrah (4-1-14-3) played no less a part than Suryakumar, bowling a superb 2-1-5-2 spell at the death to restrict RCB to just 164 after the latter was i29 for two after 15 overs.

Taking charge

During the chase, MI, sans Rohit Sharma, was lumbering, scoring at a rate of just over six in the first nine overs. It was then that the prolific Suryakumar took over, sweeping Yuzvendra Chahal for a six and a four in the 10th. Saurabh Tiwary fell to a stunning catch by Devdutt Padikkal at mid-off, but Suryakumar was unaffected, hitting Chahal over cover for six and then smashing three



Special day: Jasprit Bumrah claimed his 100th IPL wicket while Suryakumar Yadav took MI home in style. ■ BCCI/IPL



Special day: Jasprit Bumrah claimed his 100th IPL wicket while Suryakumar Yadav took MI home in style. ■ BCCI/IPL

fours off Dale Steyn.

With 48 required from five overs, Suryakumar slammed three more boundaries, this time off Mohammed Siraj, with a flick, a drive and an upper-cut.

Perhaps bored at the other end, Hardik Pandya hit a six,

engaged in a verbal duel with Chris Morris and was dismissed before Suryakumar finished things off by lifting Siraj over the infield.

Earlier, after being put in

to bat, RCB rode on Padikkal's fine half-century (74, 45b, 12x4, 1x6). Josh Philippe (33, 24b, 4x4, 1x6) joined Padikkal at the top after Aaron Finch was dropped, and the two scored at nine an over in the PowerPlay.

However, the cheap dismissals of Kohli and A.B. de Villiers hurt RCB. The skipper tried to pull a short ball from Bumrah, but connected with it too high on the bat. Tiwary completed a fine run-

ning catch from short mid-wicket for the speedster's 100th IPL wicket. de Villiers, after warming up with a scooped six, fell to a wobbly full toss from Kieron Pollard. Bumrah pinned RCB

down with a double-wicket maiden (17th over) that included the prized scalp of Padikkal. RCB barely raised its head thereafter.

RCB 47 Dots 48
21 Fours 15
3 Sixes 7
54/0 PP 45/1
8.20 RR 8.66

Innings scan

RCB	M	W	L	PTS	NRR
47	Dots	48			
21	Fours	15			
3	Sixes	7			
54/0	PP	45/1			
8.20	RR	8.66			

After the MI-RCB match on Oct. 28

SCOREBOARD

ROYAL CHALLENGERS

Josh Philippe st. de Kock b Rahul Chahar 33 (24b, 4x4, 1x6), Devdutt Padikkal c Boulton b Bumrah 74 (45b, 12x4, 1x6), Virat Kohli c Tiwary b Bumrah 9 (14b), A.B. de Villiers c Rahul Chahar b Pollard 15 (72b, 1x4, 1x6), Shivam Dube c Suryakumar b Bumrah 2 (6b), Chris Morris c Pattinson b Boulton 4 (2b, 1x4), Gurkeerat Mann (not out) 14 (11b, 2x4), Washington Sundar (not out) 10 (6b, 1x4), Extras (w-3); Total (for six wkts in 20 overs): 164.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-71 (Philippe, 7.5 overs), 2-95 (Kohli, 11.2), 3-131 (de Villiers, 15.2), 4-134 (Dube, 16.3), 5-134 (Padikkal, 16.5), 6-138 (Morris, 17.2).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING

Bout 4-0-40-1, Bumrah 4-1-14-3, Krunal 4-0-27-0, Pattinson 3-0-35-0, Rahul Chahar 4-0-43-1, Pollard 1-0-5-1.

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RCB BOWLING

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RCB BOWLING

'We have to change things quickly'

Delhi Capitals coach Ponting says the team has got some work to do on its all-round game



Failed experiment: The decision to promote Shimron Hetmyer did not bear dividends and Delhi Capitals fell well short of a big target. ■ BCCI/IPL

IPL 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting conceded that chasing is an area of concern for his team and it needs to hit the "reset" button to seal an IPL playoff spot in the remaining two league games after enduring a third straight loss, this time to Sunrisers Hyderabad, on Tuesday.

"It's been a concern. When we decide to bowl first, we've given away big totals. We have to get better at that, we need to be better at bowling first and at chasing totals because so far, it hasn't worked for us," said Ponting during the post-match press conference.

Do a reset

"We had a rough idea from the start of the game on how many points one might need to qualify. We go to seven wins quite quickly, and now lost three in a row. We have to reset right now," Ponting said.

"We play MI next and RCB

in the last match and if we keep playing the way we are, we will find it hard to win those games. So we have to change things and change them quickly," said Ponting.

"We've got some work to do on our all-round game. Out-fielding has been a bit sloppy and our batsmen have struggled to find any sort of rhythm."

Chasing a big target, DC had promoted Marcus Stoinis and Shimron Hetmyer up the order ahead of skipper Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant.

Rationale

"Chasing 220, with Rahane and Shikhar at the top, we thought if we lost an early wicket, we would have to match them (SRH) in the PowerPlay and get to 65 or 70," the former Australian captain said.

"Stoinis has been in sensational form so far, he was dying for an opportunity at the top-order. It didn't come off today but it was all circumstantial because we were chasing such a big total. It was a bit of experimentation."

SRH expected to adopt a cautious approach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

Wridhiman Saha's groin injury is "not serious" but his IPL franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad is expected to adopt a cautious approach after consultation with the BCCI's medical team as the senior wicketkeeper-batsman is Australia-bound after the tournament.

Saha had picked up the niggle during his match-winning knock of 87 off 45 balls against Delhi Capitals on Tuesday and didn't keep wickets with substitute Shreevats Goswami replacing him. "Unfortunately, he's got a little groin niggle but hopefully it isn't too bad," SRH skipper Warner said.

A senior BCCI source said that all the franchises have been told to be a bit cautious with regards to fitness of national team players.

"It doesn't look very serious at the moment but there is a three-day gap before Sunrisers' next game. Let's keep our fingers crossed," the official said.

There is a possibility that Saha may be advised to skip the next two games and in case Sunrisers makes it to



Keeping fingers crossed: There is a possibility that Saha may be advised to skip SRH's next two games. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

play-offs, he would be fully fit.

Praise from Tendulkar and Shastri

Sachin Tendulkar lauded Saha's "under-rated" shot-making while the Indian team's head coach Ravi Shastri felt his 45-ball 87 was simply "outstanding".

Saha smashed 12 fours and two sixes for SRH in its 88-run victory over Delhi Capitals, showing his batting skills which have largely gone unnoticed over the years.

"Very smart batting," Tendulkar tweeted. "I also feel that @Wridhipops quick scoring ability is invariably underrated," he also said.

He loved the manner in which Saha was able to improvise his shots. "There was no slogging at all. Played a fantastic innings which I thoroughly enjoyed watching."

Shastri once again termed him as the world's best wicketkeeper and praised his batting effort. "To the best Glove Man in the world. Outstanding performance tonight," Shastri said.

Delighted to have the ball rolling again: Sharath Kamal

Champion paddler 'looking forward to getting back the focus' in the 42-day National camp

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

After a seven-month layoff forced by the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the country's leading table tennis players arrived at Sonepat on Wednesday for a 42-day National camp aimed at the Olympic qualification next year.

Nine-time National champion Sharath Kamal, and Anusha Kutumbale, both part of the 11-player group, will reach on Thursday.

All the campers were required to clear a COVID-19

test three days prior to their travel to Sonepat. After six days of mandatory quarantine, the players will start training.

Sharath, instrumental in pushing for this camp since August in keeping with Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI)'s plan and the requirements laid down by the Sports Authority of India (SAI), was "delighted to have the ball rolling again".

"I am looking forward to getting back the focus and concentration which is not

possible to experience when you are training at home.

"There will be some young, quality players in the camp, like Manav Thakkar and Sudhanshu Grover, and we all can gain from each other's presence," Sharath told *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

From those missing from the camp, G. Sathiyan is training in Germany and currently playing in France. On his return, Sathiyan is due to play in Japan. Harmeet Desai is training in Poland while A.

Amalraj is recovering from COVID-19.

Manika Batra and Madhuri Patkar have expressed satisfaction with their training routine in Pune and Thane, respectively.

In contrast to the initial apprehension expressed by several players, the news of Sharath's presence at Sonepat has prompted many of them to enquire about joining the camp later.

The TTFI is not in favour of such staggered arrivals of the players that could raise

the risk of COVID-19 for the campers. The camp ends on December 9.

TTFI secretary M.P. Singh said "the camp will help them come into good shape, kind of match-ready fitness, before the Olympic qualifiers next year."

The campers: Men: A. Sharath Kamal, Manav Thakkar, Manush Shah, Sudhanshu Grover and Jubin Kumar. Women: Sutirtha Mukherjee, Archana Kamath, Anusha Kutumbale, Takeme Sarkar, Kaushal Nath and Diya Chitale. **Coaches:** Arup Basak, Sunil Babras and Sachin Shetty.



Mutually beneficial: Sharath Kamal feels the campers can gain from each other's presence.
■ FILE PHOTO: G. RAMAKRISHNA

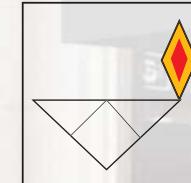
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