

IN BRIEF

Home guard killed
in road accident

New Delhi: A 41-year-old home guard died after a speeding car rammed into barricades and one of them hit him in Shakarpur area, police said on Sunday. The incident took place in the early hours of Saturday. The accused has been arrested and his car seized, they said. Delhi Police head constable Niranjn, who was on picket duty at Vikas Marg with Home Guard Naresh Kumar and civil defense personnel, has lodged a complaint in the matter, the police said. Niranjn saw that a speeding car came from ITO side around 2:30 am and hit the barricades. One of the barricades hit Naresh Kumar, deputy commissioner of police (East) Jasmeet Singh said. The driver sped away in his Innova towards Nirman Vihar. Niranjn took Kumar to Hedgewar Hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead, he said. On the basis of the complaint lodged by Niranjn, a case was registered at Shakarpur police station, the DCP said. During investigation, the car was traced and seized. Later, the accused was also arrested.

Man arrested for
duping businessmen

New Delhi: A 51-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly cheating businessmen in Delhi and other regions, police said on Sunday. The accused has been identified as Manoj Kumar, a resident of Palam Colony in south west Delhi, they said. According to police, Kumar and his associates used to give 25 per cent advance payment to the traders and take away the goods. The accused, however, never paid the remaining amount. A case was registered at the Moti Nagar Police Station against the accused following a complaint by one Parag Pahwa who alleged that on January 12, 2018, the firm Sri Balaji Overseas ordered 500 pieces of LED television and the same was delivered, police said. A part payment was made by the company and post-dated cheques (PDCs) of ₹34.50 lakh were issued, a senior police officer said, adding that there was no balance in the account of the accused at the time of issuing the cheques.

Greater Noida: Man
dies of electrocution

Noida: A 26-year-old man died after he came in contact with a high tension power transmission line passing through the terrace of his house in Greater Noida, police said on Sunday. The incident took place late on Saturday under the Dadri police station area, they added. "An 11 KV power transmission line passes through his (Rahul's) terrace. He got in contact with the line and died on the spot," a police spokesperson said. The family of the deceased has blamed the power distribution company of negligence that led to the incident. The body has been sent for post-mortem and further proceedings are underway, the spokesperson said.

Health checkup camp
for female Noida cops

New Delhi: The gynaecologists at Motherhood Hospital organised a health check-up camp for female police officers and constables in association with Young Indian (YI), a commonwealth alliance for young entrepreneurs, and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) at Noida Commissionerate in Sector 128. A team of senior gynaecologists consisting of Dr Sandeep Chadha and Dr Manisha Ranjan were present at the venue and educated the female cops about the importance of female health besides performing the routine examination of their genitals. In this one-on-one consultation, they were offered free gynaecological consultations, Pap smear test, and breast examination. More than 80 female police officers and constables (between the age group of 22 years and 50 years) were screened. Dr Sandeep Chadha, a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at Motherhood Hospital in Noida, said: "Today, the number of women suffering from breast cancer, cervical cancer, and gynaecological issues such as endometriosis, uterine fibroids, and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) have surged. It is the need of the hour to educate women about these deadly diseases with the help of early detection."

Says cases to come down soon
3rd Covid-19 wave in
city worst so far: Jain

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, NOV. 8

The national capital has hit the peak of the third wave of Covid, and the number of cases suggests that it has been the worst since the pandemic arrived in the city, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain said on Sunday.

He said the government had no plans yet to rope in hotels and banquet halls to augment the bed capacity for Covid patients as the AAP dispensation had increased the number of beds in hospitals of Delhi.

City has been witnessing a fresh surge in coronavirus cases amid the festive season and rising air pollution. On Friday, Delhi recorded over 7,000 Covid cases for the first time. The city on Saturday reported 79 deaths, the highest number of fatalities in over four months.

Mr Jain, who is on an official visit to Rajasthan's Dungarpur, said the first wave had hit its peak around June 23 and the second on September 17.

"The third wave of Covid is at its peak in Delhi. The number of cases suggests it is the worst wave so far. But the cases will come down soon," Mr Jain told reporters here.

Delhi reported its first case on March 1, when a

Noida reports 1 more corona
death, 135 cases in 24 hours

Noida, Nov. 8: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar recorded one more fatality linked to Covid as the death toll reached 69 on Sunday, while 135 new cases pushed the district's infection tally to 19,250, official data showed.

Active cases came down to 1,337, the fourth highest in the state, from 1,439 the previous day, according to the data released by the Uttar Pradesh Health Department for a 24-hour period. On the brighter side, 189 more patients got discharged during the period with the overall recover-

ies reaching 17,844, the sixth highest in the state, it showed.

With a death toll of 69, Gautam Buddha Nagar now has a mortality rate of 0.35 per cent. The recovery rate of patients reached 92.69 per cent, the statistics showed. Meanwhile, the number of active cases in Uttar Pradesh rose to 23,249 on Sunday from 22,991 on Saturday. The overall recoveries in the state reached 4,67,108, as the death toll linked to Covid climbed to 7,206 on Sunday, according to the data.

—PTI

businessman in East Delhi was diagnosed with Covid after returning from Italy.

The minister cited aggressive testing and contact-tracing among reasons for the sudden spike in the number of cases being reported. Mr Jain, however, said laxity on the part of the people has also been a major reason behind the surge. "Some people think nothing will happen to them if they don't wear a mask. They are wrong. Mask is the only medicine for Covid till a vaccine is developed," he added.

The National Centre for

Disease Control, in a report drafted recently, had warned that Delhi needed to be prepared for about 15,000 fresh Covid cases daily taking into account the winter season-related respiratory problems, large influx of patients from outside and festive gatherings.

On Friday, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that like the previous two waves of coronavirus, the third one would end soon in Delhi as he urged Delhiites to take wearing masks a movement to arrest the spread of Covid.

DDMA allows public buses
with full capacity till Nov. 30

New Delhi, Nov. 8: The DDMA has allowed running of public transport buses in the city with full seating capacity till November 30, officials said on Sunday.

An order issued by the chief secretary on Sunday stated that Delhi Disaster Management Authority's (DDMA) previous order allowing running of DTC and cluster buses with full capacity on trial basis will remain in force up to November 30.

The DTC and cluster buses had resumed plying with full seating capacity from November 1.

The DDMA in its order on October 31 permitted movement of buses with

full seating capacity on a trial basis up to November 8. Permission was granted subject to the condition that no passenger would travel without a face mask or in standing position as well as observe the standard operating procedures.

The Delhi government on May 20 directed for maximum 20 passengers in public transport buses in view of maintaining proper social distance to check the spread of coronavirus. The DTC and cluster buses seat up to 40 passengers. There are around 3,800 Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and over 2,600 cluster buses in the city.

—PTI



Activists of Vishva Hindu Mahasangh stage a protest against 'Love Jihad' and religion conversion at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Sunday.

28-yr-old killed in brawl after man
urinates in front of grocery shop

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 8

A 28-year-old man died and several others were injured in a scuffle that broke out after one of them urinated in front of a grocery shop in south-east Delhi, police said Saturday.

The deceased has been identified as Amandeep Singh, who earlier worked at a travel company but recently lost his job, they said.

According to police, the incident took place at C-Block market in East of Kailash late Friday night, when 34-year-old Jagjeet Singh urinated in front of a grocery shop run by two brothers — Vinay and Vimal.

They had closed their shop and were sitting outside when an argument broke out between them

► **ACCORDING TO** police, the incident took place at C-Block market in East of Kailash late Friday night, when 34-year-old Jagjeet Singh urinated in front of a grocery shop run by two brothers

and Singh over him urinating in front of their shop, said R.P. Meena, deputy commissioner of police (Southeast).

Jagjeet left the place and returned with his friends — Amit, Ramanand, Gurvinder, Jaspreet, Jagat Singh, Karan and Amandeep. They started fighting with Vinay and Vimal following which people gathered at the spot, the officer said.

Meanwhile, both Vimal and Vinay along with some others caught hold

of Jagjeet while his friends started fleeing from the spot, he said.

"While fleeing, Amandeep fell and became unconscious. He was rushed to a nearby hospital by his friends but was declared brought dead by the doctors," the officer said.

While no visible injuries were seen on his body, during post-mortem an injury with a sharp object was found on the back of his body, Meena said.

During the fight, besides the two shopkeepers, one Surjeet and Jagjeet who urinated in front of the grocery shop sustained injuries, he said.

A case has been registered. Both Vinay and his brother Vimal have been apprehended and are being interrogated, police said.



People at India Gate lawns amid hazy weather conditions in New Delhi on Sunday. Pollution level in the national capital remains in the 'severe category' as air quality was recorded at 426 today.

—PTI

Safar: Farm fires continue to
deteriorate Delhi air qualityAir remains 'severe' in Noida,
Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Gurgaon

New Delhi, Nov. 8: The national capital's air quality was recorded in "severe" category on Sunday as stubble fires continued to be reported in Punjab and nearby regions.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) mobile app Sameer, Delhi's overall air quality index (AQI) was recorded at 426 which falls in the "severe" category.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences' air quality monitor System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (Safar) said the situation was unlikely to improve unless a drastic reduction takes place in stubble fire counts.

"Surface winds have become calm, which were moderate so far, and are forecasted to stay low in magnitude for the next two days. This is the major factor due to which no quick recovery is expected unless a drastic reduction in fire counts takes place," SAFAR said.

According to Safar, stubble fire counts over Punjab, Haryana, UP, Uttarakhand and neighbouring areas stood high at 3,780 on Saturday and its share in PM 2.5 in Delhi's air was

estimated as 29 per cent for Sunday. It was estimated as 32 per cent for Saturday. Safar stated the air quality was likely to marginally deteriorate and stay at the "severe" to the higher end of "very poor" category for the next two days.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and

300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

The average 24-hour AQI at 4 pm on Sunday was 434 in Gurgaon, 456 in Ghaziabad, 440 in Greater Noida, 428 in Noida and 426 in Faridabad, according to the CPCB's Sameer app.

It was 439 in Gurgaon, 436 in Ghaziabad, 428 in Greater Noida, 426 in Noida and 414 in Faridabad on Saturday.

PM 2.5 and PM 10 were the prominent pollutants in these satellite cities of Delhi, where the average AQI remained at 416 on Sunday, according to the app.

—PTI

and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

Out of 35 monitoring stations in Delhi, 31 recorded "severe" AQI. The only stations with AQI in the "very poor" category were Lodhi Road at 333, NSIT Dwarka at 377 and Pusa at 374.

—PTI

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—PTI

Delhi riots: Ex-FB employee
summoned for deposition

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 8

The Delhi Assembly's committee on peace and harmony will on Tuesday examine digital strategist and former journalist Mark S. Luckie, a key witness in continuation of the proceedings against Facebook. The proceedings of the committee will be streamed live to get new points against Facebook over its alleged inaction in tackling harmful content on its platform. There were allegations against Facebook over its conduct

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on various instances, including the conduct of free and fair elections, and the Delhi riots.

The committee has sent a formal notice to Luckie to appear before it on Tuesday. The move is in continuation of the previous proceedings of the Committee under the

chairmanship of Raghav Chadha.

An employee at Facebook 2017-18, Luckie has led media partnerships for some of the influential social platforms in the world, including Facebook, Twitter and Reddit — an American social news aggregation, web content rating, and discussion website. He had left Facebook in November 2018 after claiming that it inculcates a "misguided work system" which has led to division in communities, especially by the actions and inactions of the company.

Fitting of HSRPs, colour-coded stickers
on vehicles at homes of owners begins

New Delhi, Nov. 8: Fitting of high security registration plates (HSRPs) and colour-coded stickers on vehicles at homes of owners began on Sunday, with 349 online booked orders handed on day one, said a spokesperson of Rosmerta Safety Systems Private Limited.

In Delhi major vehicle manufacturers have awarded the rights to support their dealers with HSRPs and colour-coded stickers to three suppliers, including Rosemarta.

The process for fitting HSRPs and colour-coded stickers on vehicles at homes of owners, and by dealers has been started, the spokesperson said.

Orders for 500 home fittings per day are being processed and the number will increase in the com-

► **IN DELHI** major vehicle manufacturers have awarded the rights to support their dealers with HSRPs and colour-coded stickers to three suppliers, including Rosemarta

► **ORDERS FOR 500** home fittings per day are being processed and the number will increase in the coming days, he said, adding that approximately 2,500 orders for have been received.

On Sunday, 349 orders, including 336 for HSRPs and 13 for colour-coded stickers, were processed,

the spokesperson said.

The online booking for installing of HSRPs and colour-coded stickers started on November 1.

The online booking was suspended last month by transport minister Kailash Gahlot who had said that the process must be started after putting in place a system to address the issues being faced by vehicle owners.

Mr Gahlot had earlier this month directed manufacturers and dealers of HSRPs not to take new bookings unless a system was put in place to address the issues being faced by vehicle owners.

The HSRPs and colour-coded stickers are mandatory for all vehicles registered before April 2019. Vehicles registered after April 2019 come equipped

with the HSRP and the stickers.

The transport department had issued a public notice asking vehicle owners to get HSRPs and colour-coded stickers, saying it would launch a drive to check violations.

There are around 30 lakh vehicles registered in Delhi that have to get the HSRP and the colour-coded stickers.

The online booking was stopped by the Transport department after receiving complaints from vehicle owners over delays and problems in logging in.

The sources said if the home delivery of HSRPs and colour-coded stickers is successful, it will be implemented across the city in the next one or two months.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

TEENAGED GIRL
BURIED ALIVE
UNDER MOUND

Badaun: A 17-year-old girl was buried alive on Sunday while digging soil near a dam in Badaun district when a mound of earth collapsed on her and three other girls, police said.

The incident occurred in Ushait area of the district where the four had gone to dig soil near the dam, said Badaun Senior Superintendent of Police Sankalp Sharma.

He said as the girls were doing their work, a portion of the loose soil caved in on them, trapping them beneath it.

On hearing their cries, the local people managed to extricate three of them but the fourth one, Priyanka, died on the spot.

The three other girls suffered injuries and have been admitted to the district hospital, he said. —PTI

NDA SCEPTICAL
ABOUT BIHAR EXIT
POLLS PREDICTION

Patna: The ruling NDA in Bihar on Saturday reacted with scepticism over exit polls predictions of a clear win for the opposition Grand Alliance, asserting that surveys of the kind often failed to take into account a large "silent voters".

Leaders of the RJD and the Congress, which helm the Grand Alliance, reacted with predictable glee while Chirag Paswans Lok Janshakti Party insisted that its rebellion against Chief Minister Nitish Kumars JD(U) stood vindicated as the exit polls suggested that the "anti-incumbency" was very strong.

"Exit polls have often gone wrong in the case of Bihar.

These had predicted a loss for us in 2015 while our opponents were shown ahead. We secured a two-third majority.

"Such discrepancies occur because silent voters, who comprise a bulk of our supporters, are not very vocal

ARNAB SHIFTED
TO TALOJA JAIL
FOR USING PHONE

SAURABH JOSHI
MUMBAI, NOV. 8

The Raigad police shifted Arnab Goswami, editor-in-chief of *Republic TV*, to Talaja prison on Sunday, after his arrest on November 4 in connection with suicide of architect Anvay Naik and his mother Kumu in 2018 over alleged unpaid dues of ₹83 lakh.

The police said that Goswami was put up at a Covid-19 centre, a school, where he was found to be using a mobile phone. The police said that the transfer was made after Goswami was found to be active on social media via a phone that did not belong to him.

The officials also confirmed that Goswami's phone was seized when he was arrested and hence they did not suspect him to possess one.

The Alibaug police are trying secure custody of Goswami to question him in the case; the journalist has been remanded to judicial custody. "The probe in the case against Goswami, Feroz Shaikh and Nitish Sarda is underway," said a police officer.

UP GOVT WEBSITE
TO HELP DEVOTEES
LIGHT VIRTUAL LAMP

Lucknow, Nov. 8: Apart from the around 5.50 lakh earthen lamps that will be lit during the Deepotsav in Ayodhya on November 13, the Uttar Pradesh government is building a website to allow devotees light a virtual lamp on the occasion.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in the Deepotsav virtually, according to statement for the state government. "After a long and agonising wait of some 492 years, now when the dream of a grand Ram temple is being fulfilled, the state government is ensuring that no one is deprived of the joy of lighting up a lamp of faith in the 'Darbaar' of Ram Lalla.

"At the special instructions of the UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the government is getting a portal made, where virtual lamps can be lit," it said.

The portal will have a portrait of Shri Ram Lalla Virajman before which the virtual lamps will be lit. The portal will have a facility to pick up the lamp stand of one's choice, steel-coloured, brass-coloured or any other. After the lamps are lit, based on the details of the devotees, a 'thank you' digital letter from the chief minister, carrying the picture of Ram Lalla, will be issued. —PTI

Light in the darkness



Visually impaired workers make candles for Diwali in New Delhi on Sunday. The festival which falls on November 14 this year, will see more demand for lights as many states have banned firecrackers.

— PTI

Modi looks forward to working
closely with Biden, hails Harris

India might have to step up its focus on human rights, CAA issues

**SRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI**
NEW DELHI, NOV. 8

Getting ready to work with the Democrat-led administration in Washington that will assume office in January next year, India on Sunday congratulated President-elect Joe Biden who defeated President Donald Trump in the US Presidential polls. New Delhi also congratulated Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted congratulatory messages on Twitter to Biden and Harris shortly after midnight on Sunday after the Democrat challengers were declared winners.

Modi said he looked forward to strengthening

Indo-US ties by "working closely together once again" with Biden who was US Vice-President in the Barack Obama administration when Modi had become Prime Minister in 2014. Modi also hailed the success of Kamala Harris — who is partly of Indian origin — as "pathbreaking", and a matter of "immense pride for all Indian-Americans".

It may be recalled that India had on Friday said the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership between both nations has "very strong bipartisan support" in the US, thereby hinting that bilateral ties would continue to grow stronger. At his weekly media briefing two days ago, MEA spokesper-

son Anurag Srivastava had also said that Indo-US bilateral ties "rest on strong foundations" and that this "encompasses cooperation in every possible sphere" ranging from strategic ties to the defence sector, trade and investment as well as people to people ties.

India may well have to deal with an increased focus on human rights from Washington during the tenure of Biden and Harris on the Kashmir issue and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). However, bilateral ties are expected to remain strong especially in the defence and strategic sectors.

Biden's stand on China in the Indo-Pacific region and on Pakistan in the context of both cross-border terrorism and the Afghan situation will also be watched closely by New Delhi as it will have major implications for India.

In a statement on Sunday morning, the Prime Minister's Office said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has congratulated Joe Biden on winning the US Presidential election," adding also that the PM "has congratulated US Vice President-elect Kamala Harris."

Modi tweeted, "Heartiest congratulations Kamala Harris! Your success is pathbreaking, and a matter of immense pride not just for your 'chittis' (aunts in Tamil), but also for all Indian-Americans. I am confident that the vibrant India-US ties will get even stronger with your support and leadership." Harris' mother was from Tamil Nadu.

President Kovind said in his Twitter message: "My sincere felicitations to Joseph R. Biden on his election as President of the United States of America and @KamalaHarris, as Vice President. I wish @JoeBiden a successful tenure and look forward to working with him to further strengthen India-US relations."

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Besides purchasing about 11,000 sets of extreme cold weather clothing from the US, lakhs of sets have been

procured from multiple suppliers to ensure each soldier has more than one set. The use of special clothing began with the arrival of the snow. In winters, frostbites, chilblains, blood clots, lung infection and even memory loss is a regular affair and keeping this in mind medical supplies too have been doubled.

With unpredictable weather throwing a major challenge, large quantities of kerosene, canned food, repair equipment for uninterrupted communication, vehicles among other logistics have been supplied to the strategic locations. Supplies have been divided among all the Army posts, which, in the event of getting cut off due to the harsh weather, can sustain themselves.

High altitude warfare is nothing new for the Indian Army who have battled the elements at Siachen glacier, Ladakh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and several points along the Line of Control with Pakistan. Across the Pangong Tso and Chushul, most of the hilltops and ridges are located at an altitude of over 15,000 feet.

Unlike China, officers in the Indian Army are compulsorily posted at high altitudes for five to six years which gives them all the exposure they need to work in harsh weather.

Indian troops at
LAC stock up to
sustain for 1 year

VIKRAM SHARMA
HYDERABAD, NOV. 8

With the beginning of the harsh winter, Indian troops deployed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh are stocked up to sustain for a year. From provisions, arms and ammunition, warm clothing to medical supplies, among other essentials, they have double what is required.

With snowfall being reported in the upper reaches over the last few days, soldiers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China are mostly huddled in and there is hardly any activity visible on their side.

Top sources told *Deccan Chronicle* that the Indian troops have been "all stocked up" to keep them going for a year, if not more. Once the winter gets harsher towards December, when Ladakh witnesses heavy snowfall, all supply routes will be hit.

On the hilltops and ridges at more than 15,000 feet, the temperatures plummet to -25° Celsius and even lower while the windchill factor makes the situation worse, even leading to deaths.

"The ration, medical supplies, arms and ammunition and winter clothing have been provided two-three times more than what had been requested for. So much so that we have exhausted the space to stock up. It is only after a year that we may require anything, if at all," sources said.

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procured from multiple suppliers to ensure each soldier has more than one set. The use of special clothing began with the arrival of the snow. In winters, frostbites, chilblains, blood clots, lung infection and even memory loss is a regular affair and keeping this in mind medical supplies too have been doubled.

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— PTI

Himanta to work
out Naga accord

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, NOV. 8

With ongoing Naga peace talks in an advanced stage, the Union home ministry has tasked senior BJP leader and Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma with working out a consensus formula on the demand of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) for a separate flag and constitution for Nagaland. The Centre has rejected the demand.

Security sources pointed out that NSCN (I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah had backed out from his position of October 31, 2019, the day formal negotiations between the NSCN (I-M) and R.N. Ravi, interlocutor for Naga talks, had concluded; he was now insisting that the Nagas will never be part of the Indian Union nor will they accept India's

Constitution. The sources told this newspaper that Sarma has been asked to make a last attempt to bring all stakeholders including the NSCN (I-M) on board.

Informing that Sarma was in Kohima on Sunday to hold talks with Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio and Leader of Opposition T.R. Zeliang, who is leading the political affairs mission (PAM) to expedite the peace process, security sources indicated that the Union home ministry had not diluted its stand on the NSCN (I-M) demand. The home ministry affairs was set to take a call on deciding the date for signing of the peace accord soon after the electoral process is over in Bihar, the sources said.

Sources indicated that the state may be allowed to adopt its own flag through some executive decision at the state level.

COVID CURE MAY REACH COMMON
MAN ONLY IN 2022: AIIMS DIRECTOR

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, NOV. 8

Amid the rising coronavirus cases in the country, Delhi-AIIMS director Dr Randeep Guleria, has said that common man will have to wait till 2022 to get the Covid-19 vaccine.

Dr Guleria, who is also a member of the national task force on Covid-19 management, asserted that it will take "more than a year" for an authentic vaccine to hit the Indian market.

"In our country the population is large; we need time to see how the vaccine can be bought from the market like a flu vaccine and take it.

That will actually be the ideal situation. So it could be by the end of 2021 or the beginning of 2022", he said in an interview to a news channel.

Asked about the challenges India would have after the vaccine is available, the AIIMS director said that the prime focus would be on its distribution so that it reaches every part of the country.

"Maintaining the cold chain, having adequate syringes, adequate needles and being able to deliver it to the remotest part of the country in a seamless manner is the biggest challenge," he said.

Another TMC legislator
revolts against Mamata

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, NOV. 8

After state transport minister Shubendu Adhikari, Mihir Goswami, another key Trinamul Congress MLA, has revolted against party supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in what appeared to be growing dissent over her style of leadership ahead of the Assembly elections in West Bengal next year.

The two-time legislator of Coochbehar South in North Bengal also called election strategist Prasant Kishor's firm Indian Political Action Committee a "contractor" and accused it of "destroying" the TMC amid the Chief Minister's "silence."

"Today when I see a contractor think-tank company destroying the home after entering Didi's party while insulted public representatives are protesting but Didi remains in dark and silent, is it not natural for long-standing faith for



Mihir Goswami

Didi to get destroyed like that home? (sic)," Goswami posted on Facebook on Friday.

On Saturday he alleged neglect of development in North Bengal by the Mamata Banerjee government as was done by the previous administrations. "Did we ever imagine a Deputy CM from North Bengal," asked the TMC MLA before warning his party of "suffering the outcome in future for creating a division and distance between the north and south."

Rattled by his attacks, the TMC dared him to quit his Assembly seat and the party. "Criticism of Ms Banerjee while

staying in her party is not suitable. We also have not got anything. But we do not have the guts to criticise her. Goswami should quit the MLA post and the party," said TMC Coochbehar district general secretary Abdul Jalil Ahmed.

On Sunday, Goswami, whom BJP MP of Coochbehar Nisith Pramanik met recently, did not hide his desire to leave the TMC.

Without naming the BJP, he wrote on Facebook, "Requests from well-wishers to me to join another party is true. I will inform all about my visit to New Delhi if there is time and opportunity. I know the people will be divided with the news of my entry to another party in future. One section wants me to join the new camp soon, another feels sad. But all can not be made happy simultaneously. In that case, working for the people with honour will be my only condition (sic)."

WILDLIFE | PROTECTION

Move to save endangered species under consideration

Purple frog to be Kerala's state amphibian

Kochi, Nov. 8: The purple frog, one of the rarest frog species endemic to the Western Ghats, would soon be declared as Kerala's official amphibian.

A senior forest officer said a proposal for declaring the purple frog, also known as pignose frog, as state's amphibian, is in the active consideration of the state government.

"The proposal is in the active consideration of the government and soon it will be declared as the state's amphibian,"

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) & Chief Wildlife Warden Surendrakumar said.

The matter will be discussed in the next meeting of the state wildlife board.

Official sources said the move to declare it as the state's amphibian as it was mostly endemic to Kerala region of Western Ghats.

According to Delhi University professor S.D. Biju, who discovered the frog a few years ago in the Idukki district, said it is not only a rare frog species



Pignose frog

but is also one of the unique amphibians.

Biju said the purple frog, which remains underground most of the year, is found mostly in the Kerala part of the Western Ghats.

The frog was found in one forest area of Tamil Nadu

also, Biju said. The purple frog, scientifically called "Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis" is listed as endangered in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as its "Extent of Occurrence is less than 5,000 km, all individuals are in fewer than five locations, and there is continuing decline in the extent and quality of its habitat in the Cardamom Hills."

According to WWF, the leading organisation in wildlife conservation and endangered species, purple

frog has been acknowledged by bio-geographers all over the world as one of the rarest kinds and a "once in a century find."

It said the purple frog has a bloated body with short stout limbs and is dark purple to greyish in colour. "Reaching to about 7 centimetres, it has a small head in comparison to the body length, and an unusually pointed snout. Its short and muscular forelimbs with hard palms help it to burrow underground."

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Bihar's Darbhanga airport begins ops

Darbhanga: The Darbhanga airport in north Bihar began operations on Sunday, meeting the long-standing demand of the people of the Mithila region who had to travel for hours to Patna to catch a flight. As the first flight, operated by Spicejet, landed at the airport from Bengaluru, it was given the customary water salute, while the passengers were greeted with 'Mithila Paags' (a traditional cap) and garlands. The plane then took off for Delhi with 180 passengers, including Darbhanga's BJP MP Gopaljee Thakur, Darbhanga Town legislator Sanjay Saraogi and MLC Dilip Chaudhary. Darbhanga will be connected by flights to Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, officials said. People of the region will save at least four-five hours travelling to and from Patna with the airport beginning operations, they said. — PTI

Hansraj to write another kids' book

New Delhi: Actor-director Jugad Hansraj will in 2021 come out with his second book for children which is a journey of a timid young prince as he learns that true bravery lies within one's own heart and should be used to create peace, not war. "The Coward and the Sword" will be published by HarperCollins India. Hansraj is thrilled about this venture. He said he is looking forward to his novel being published under HarperCollins' umbrella and to his association with them. The book talks about the peaceful kingdom of Kofu, ruled over by a benevolent and brave King Rishso and his charming wife Queen Kanito. Its people are resourceful, and more importantly, just like their king, courageous. — PTI

Sudha Murty writes new book for kids

New Delhi: During the coronavirus lockdown, acclaimed author Sudha Murty did what she does best — create stories — and came up with a collection of tales for children that inculcate values of compassion, resilience and sharing. "It was a joy to create something memorable and positive for the children, especially in this unprecedented time when most of us are restricted to home. Writing this book was a delight and took me on a trip down memory lane," she says about her latest book. "My imagination ran wild and free and the stories seemed to flow seamlessly, almost as if this book was meant to be written," he said. — PTI

2 killed in car accident in UP

Unnao (UP): Two people were killed and three others critically injured after the car they were travelling in burst a tyre and fell into a pit on a highway in Unnao district of Uttar Pradesh on Sunday, police said. Circle Officer of Bangarmau Anjani Kumar Rai said the deceased were identified as Meera Devi (53) and Jaiprakash (40), both residents of Samastipur district in Bihar. The incident happened in the morning on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway under Behta Mujawar police station area, police said. The ill-fated car was going from Delhi to Samastipur, when one of the front tyres of the vehicle burst, collided with the divider, overturned and fell into a deep pit. The injured persons were admitted to the district hospital, while the bodies of those who died were sent for a post-mortem, police added. — PTI

Out on bail, UP man rapes, kills 7-yr-old

Sant Kabir Nagar: A man was arrested here on Sunday in connection with the alleged abduction, rape and killing of a 7-year-old girl, police said. Superintendent of Police Brijesh Singh said the girl had gone missing on November 4 and her body was recovered on Saturday. During post mortem, rape was confirmed, he said. The arrested accused has confessed to his crime. He told police that on November 4 when he saw the girl all alone, he abducted her. The man then took her to a jungle, raped and then killed her, the police officer said. Singh said the accused was recently released from jail on bail in a case of having unnatural sex with a boy.

MP: Boy stuck inside borewell for 90 hrs dies, body taken out

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, NOV. 8

A 5-year-old boy, who remained stuck at a depth of 60 ft inside a 200-ft borewell in a Madhya Pradesh village, was on Sunday pulled out after a 90-hour rescue operation. But, he could not be saved.

Prallhad Kushwaha, who fell into the borewell while playing in his family's farmland in the village of Saipura in Niwari district on Wednesday, was retrieved at around 3 am on Sunday and rushed to the local district hospital where doctors declared him dead.

"The child showed no movement for the past 3 days", Niwari district collector Ashish Bhargav said.

Hundreds of people waited with bated breath the whole night hoping that the child would be rescued alive. They cheered when the kid was pulled out of the borewell by the rescue team who dug a 52-ft-long tunnel to reach him.

A pall of gloom descended on the village when the villagers learnt that the boy could not be saved.

Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan expressed shock and sorrow over the death of the child and announced an ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh to his family.

Madhya Pradesh govt razes ashram of 'Computer Baba'

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, NOV. 8

The local administration in Indore on Sunday demolished the ashram of Namdeo Das alias Computer Baba, the self-styled religious leader who enjoyed the patronage from both BJP and Congress in Madhya Pradesh at various points of time, while freeing a large patch of land of 'encroachment'.

The Indore district administration said 46 acres allotted to the Jamburdi Hapsi panchayat in 2000 for development of cow shelter was encroached by Computer Baba. The ashram was built in a 2-acre land in the 'encroached' patch.

Namdeo along with 6 of his associates were taken into preventive custody by police.

No response was given to the notice issued by the administration to remove encroachment leading us to launch the anti-encroachment drive, local sub-divisional magistrate Sashwat Sharma said.

The Indore district administration announced plans to build a temple and a modern cow shelter in the land.

Incidentally, the drive comes days after Namdeo launched the 'save democracy' campaign targeting BJP in the just-concluded by-elections to 28

STATE BJP president Vishnu Dutt Sharma, however, justified the demolition saying that the ashram was built on encroached land.

Assembly constituencies in the state.

Sources said a rifle and an air gun were recovered from the ashram during the demolition drive.

Computer Baba had shot into the news when he performed 'yagna' here in 2019 to ensure the victory of Congress leader and former chief minister Digvijay Singh in the last Lok Sabha elections.

Mr Singh, however, lost to BJP candidate Pragya Singh Thakur by a margin of over 3.60 lakh votes.

Mr Singh slammed the state government for demolishing the ashram without giving notice to him. He described the action by the state government as 'political vendetta'.

State BJP president Vishnu Dutt Sharma, however, justified the demolition saying that the ashram was built on encroached land.

Computer Baba had campaigned for Congress in the 2018 Assembly elections and was later rewarded with the post of chairman of river conservation authority by the Kamal Nath government.

Rahul: Demonetisation helped PM's 'crony capitalist friends'

Note ban cut black money, boosted tax revenue: Modi

New Delhi, Nov. 8: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said demonetisation has helped reduce black money, increase tax compliance and given a boost to transparency as the BJP and the Congress sparred over its outcome on the fourth anniversary of withdrawal of high value currency notes.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that Modi's move was aimed at helping a few of his "crony capitalist friends" and had "destroyed" the Indian economy, prompting a strong response from the BJP which said the exercise was an "attack" on corruption and black money that were rampant during the "lost decade" of the Congress-led UPA government. Mr Gandhi and the Congress have been alleging that demonetisation was not in the interest of the people and had adverse

ON NOVEMBER 8, 2016, Modi announced on national television his government's decision to ban all currency notes of ₹500 and ₹1,000 from midnight on the same day

effects on the economy, a charge the government has dismissed repeatedly.

On November 8, 2016, PM Modi announced on national television his government's decision to ban all currency notes of ₹500 and ₹1,000 from midnight on the same day. Taking to Twitter, the PM listed the beneficial outcomes of demonetisation.

"Demonetisation has helped reduce black money, increase tax compliance and formalisation and given a boost to transparency," he said.

"These outcomes have been greatly beneficial

PM inaugurates Ro-Pax ferry service in Gujarat

Ahmedabad, Nov. 8: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated a Ro-Pax ferry service between Hazira near Surat and Ghogha in Bhavnagar district.

The service will reduce the 375-km road distance between Bhavnagar and Surat to 90-km by sea route, Modi said while flagging off the service via video conferencing.

It will save time and fuel and boost eco and religious

towards national progress," Modi said using the hashtag "DeMolishingCorruption".

Along with his tweet, the Prime Minister also shared a graphic on how demon-

tourism in the Saurashtra region of the state, a release issued by the Prime Minister's Office earlier said. The three-deck Ro-Pax Ferry Vessel "Voyage Symphony" connecting Hazira in Surat district of south Gujarat and Ghogha in Saurashtra's Bhavnagar has a load capacity of 30 trucks, 100 passenger cars, and 500 passengers plus 34 crew and hospitality staff, it said. — PTI

C'garh: Naxal dead, 2 jawans injured in encounter

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, NOV. 8

A Maoist was on Sunday gunned down while 2 security personnel injured in an encounter near Bhattiguda under Pamed police station in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar district of Bijapur.

According to a senior district police officer, the incident took place when a joint search party comprising district reserve group (DRG) and Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) personnel were attacked by a group of armed Naxals near Makrajgatta hill close to Bhattiguda.

An encounter ensued between them leading to the killing of a Naxal, the police officer said.

However, 2 security personnel, constables Sandip Ghosh and Chandu Katti of CoBRA 204th battalion sustained injuries when they stepped on an iron spike trap laid by the Maoists, he added.

Thackeray hints Maha temples may open soon

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, NOV. 8

Amid the apprehension of the second wave of Covid-19, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday indicated that places of worship including temples will be reopened after Diwali. Mr Thackeray said that an SOP (standard operating procedure) may be released after Diwali. He also accused the Centre of stalling development projects in Maharashtra.

Mr Thackeray said that the SOPs would include how to avoid overcrowding, maintaining physical distance and wearing masks. "I am being criticised for not opening temples. But I am not bothered by it as they would criticise me for four days and later if the situation worsens owing to the Covid, nobody would come up to take the responsibility for the same," he said.

The government is treading cautiously, as the temples are being visited by

senior citizens, he said.

Last month, a war of words broke out between Maharashtra governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and the chief minister over reopening of places of worship including temples in the state. Both the leaders had sent hard-hitting letters to each other. Mr Koshyari had questioned Mr Thackeray's commitment to Hindutva, while the CM had retorted saying he did not need the governor's certificate.

Appealing to the people to celebrate Diwali without firecrackers, the CM said that people should avoid bursting firecrackers in public places on their own, as he did not want to enforce "an emergency" on them.

Giving examples of rising numbers of Covid cases in Delhi owing to pollution, Mr Thackeray said, "Let us have self-control and restrain. Let us not waste nine months' of hard work against the pandemic in four days of Diwali celebrations."



Firoz Nadiadwala

Nadiadwala's wife arrested by NCB in drug case

SAURABH JOSHI
MUMBAI, NOV. 8

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Sunday arrested the wife of movie producer Firoz Nadiadwala after they found 10-gram cannabis from their Juhu residence. The officials said this arrest was made following four peddlers, nabbed earlier, revealed about the sale of narcotics substance to her.

Shabana Saeed was arrested following the search carried out by the NCB officials at their residence at Gulmohar Crossroad. "The seized 10 gm cannabis was procured by her from earlier arrested accused Wahid Abdul Kadir Sheikh alias Sultan. Shabana Saeed was issued notice and after recording her statement, she was placed under arrest," said an NCB officer.

The NCB had earlier seized a total of 727.1 gm of cannabis, 74.1 gm marijuana and 95.1 gm mephedrone along with ₹3.58 lakh in connection with the case, arresting five persons including Shabana Saeed.

The case, filed as per the provisions of the NDPS Act, is the extended probe in the drugs angle pertaining to the suicide of actor Sushant Singh Rajput. The officials had been probing the narcotics angle and drugs consumption in Bollywood and had questioned actors Deepika Padukone, Shraddha Kapoor, Sara Ali Khan and Rakul Preet Singh during the course of the investigation.

Woman arrested outside Ranaut's house, gets bail

SHAHAB ANSARI
MUMBAI, NOV. 8

A Sessions court has granted bail to a lady arrested for being part of the crowd that had gathered outside Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut's house and causing disturbance in the demolition process of Ranaut's office.

The lady was arrested after police watched News channels. However, the lady had sought bail on the ground that she has nothing to do with the actress, she is not linked to any political party and she was only an onlooker. Sapna Hilari Parera (51) a resident of Vile Parle had filed the bail



Kangana Ranaut

application through advocate Shriganesh Sawalkar. The police had arrested her in connection with an

Information Report registered on the complaint of a police constable attached with Khar Police Station. The police personnel from this police station were deployed outside the office of actress Kangana Ranaut when the Bombay Municipal Corporation officials were carrying out demolition work of illegal portion at her office.

'PM Modi & Biden will take ties forward to next level' Cong hails Biden-Harris, slams BJP

New Delhi, Nov. 8: Several senior Congress leaders have hailed Joe Biden and Kamala Harris' triumph in the US elections, with some attacking the BJP alleging that it appeared to side with Donald Trump not following bipartisanship in foreign policy.

Mr Biden defeated incumbent President Trump in a bitterly fought presidential election that attracted a record number of Americans to cast their votes. Asked about the slogan "Ab ki baar, Trump sarkar" at the Howdy Modi event in Houston and whether such things

MEANWHILE, BJP leaders on Sunday said Indo-US relations are based on the principles of democracy, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Biden will take the ties forward to the next level.

could affect ties, Congress general secretary Ajay Maken at a media briefing seemed to take an indirect swipe at the PM Modi dispensation, saying the Congress has always believed that the country, its leaders and political parties should not directly or indirectly interfere in the politics of other countries.

"We have always believed in this and whenever we were in government, we never interfered in the politics of other countries directly or indirectly because we don't consider it right," he said. "Our leaders never tried to give a message that one candidate in the (US) elections there is more liked than the other. The congratulatory message by Congress president (Sonia Gandhi) and Rahul Gandhi is not to any party leader but to the president-elect, this is our tradition," Mr Maken said while answering a question on whether his party sees the US election

results as a victory of one ideology.

Meanwhile, BJP leaders on Sunday said Indo-US relations are based on the principles of democracy, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Biden will take the ties forward to the next level.

"The US and India stand on a strong bipartisan bilateral relationship based on the principles of democracy, mutual benefits and global peace. I am sure under the new leadership of Biden-Harris, US-India ties will continue to progress as strong as they have been," BJP leader Ram Madhav said. — PTI

Biden vows to unite America

Continued from Page 1 refused to concede the election that attracted a record number of Americans to cast their votes amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

He has announced filing multiple lawsuits against the election results in key battleground states like Pennsylvania, where Biden was born and gave him the crucial 20 electoral votes to cross the magic figure of 270 he needed to win. He also reached out to Trump voters, saying he would act as their president as much as he would for those who voted for him.

"I understand your disappointment tonight. I've lost a couple times myself. But now, let's give each other a chance," Mr Biden said, adding that, "This is the time to heal in America."

He struck a familiar chord in his speech, calling for unity and implicitly rebuking president Trump for his divisive politics.

"I sought this office to restore the soul of America, to rebuild the backbone of this nation, the middle class and to make America respected around the world again, and to unite us here at home," the President-elect said. In her address, Harris, who scripted history as she broke the glass ceiling in the world's oldest democracy to be elected America's first Black and Indian-origin woman vice president, said, "You chose hope, and unity, decency, science and yes truth."

"You chose Joe Biden as the next president of the United States," said the Vice President-elect, draw-

ing applause and honks from the supporters.

"Joe's a healer," she said. "A person whose own experience of loss gives him a sense of purpose that will help us as a nation reclaim our own sense of purpose."

Observing that he has long talked about the battle for the soul of America, Biden sought to restore it.

"Our nation is shaped by the constant battle between our better angels and our darkest impulses. It is time for our better angels to prevail," he said.

Asserting that the whole world is watching America, Biden said he believes at best America is a "beacon for the globe."

Mr Biden assured Americans that his first task as President-elect is to get the coronavirus pandemic under control with

a definite plan.

The Covid-19 pandemic has killed more than 237,000 Americans and infected over 9 million others. The pandemic was a major topic of debate during the campaign. Biden has repeatedly attacked Mr Trump's response to the pandemic. "On Monday, I will name a group of leading scientists and experts as transition advisers to help take the Biden-Harris Covid plan and convert it into an action blueprint that will start on January 20, 2021," Biden said. "That plan will be built on bedrock science," he added.

"I will spare no effort" to turn the Covid-19 pandemic around, he added.

Mr Biden and vice president-elect Kamala Harris were joined on stage following their speeches by their families. — PTI

TN village celebrates Kamala's win

Continued from Page 1 she should feel about her victory? I feel very happy," a proud Dr Gopalan, a senior consultant at the Voluntary Health Services here, said. "I was waiting for the announcement till late in the night... I felt tired and had to retire for the night," she added. "Hopefully," was her

response when asked if she would attend the swearing-in ceremony of her niece in the US.

Asked if she visited the Varasiddhi Vinayagar Temple at Besant Nagar here and offered prayers for Ms Harris' victory, she said: "Normally whenever I visit Varasiddhi Vinayagar temple I break

coconuts... But this time I couldn't visit the temple due to Covid-19." Dr Gopalan, however, said her prayers were always with Ms Harris. A few years ago, after Ms Harris called her up with a request, Dr Gopalan broke 108 coconuts at the temple in keeping with the traditional practice.

Army officer, 3 jawans slain at LoC

Continued from Page 1 The Army initially refused to disclose the names and other particulars of the slain officer and jawans as they have to inform their families first. But later Army, BSF and J&K police sources identified them as Lt. Asutosh Kumar, Havildar Parveen Kumar and Sepoy Radev of the Army and Constable

Sudeep Sarkar of the BSF's 169th Battalion.

The sources also said two AK assault rifles with magazines and about 60 rounds of live ammunition, one pistol with two magazines and 29 rounds of ammunition, one radio set and ₹50,000 cash in Indian currency were found on the slain men. J&K lieutenant-governor

Manoj Sinha, paying tribute to the slain men, said he saluted their supreme sacrifice and lauded their courage and valour while protecting the integrity and sovereignty of the country.

"The nation will always remain indebted to the bravehearts who laid down their lives," he added.

THE ASIAN AGE

9 NOVEMBER 2020

Biden offers US healing touch, world is relieved

The contrast couldn't have been starker. The statesmanlike address by Joseph R. Biden hours after his clear victory in America's presidential elections late Saturday night, soon after he won in Pennsylvania and got a majority in the Electoral College, signalled that the ugliness and friction of the Donald Trump years would soon be over, and the United States would once again try to be a "beacon for the globe" and "lead by the power of our example". Urging an immediate end to the "grim era of demonisation in America", President-elect Biden said it was a "time to heal" and reached out to all, including those who voted for Mr Trump, and vowed that he would be their President too.

Mr Biden will have to work particularly hard, as in the four years since Mr Trump came to power and encouraged the rise of divisiveness and hate-filled politics, opponents were perceived as enemies, not rivals

The spontaneous celebrations across America since Saturday night, with scenes of jubilation in cities like New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, show a nation that has received deliverance from four years of darkness, with rising hope that better days lie ahead. Saying he wanted to "restore the soul of America", Mr Biden

pledged to get down to work right away, in a bid to get the Covid-19 pandemic (where the US tops the world, and Mr Trump had largely ignored) under control from Day 1. He said he will name a transition team with top scientists Monday to work out a strategy in this regard.

History has been made with the election of Kamala Devi Harris, the first woman, the first black and the first person of Indian origin to reach the second-highest office in America. "While I may be the first woman in this office, I won't be the last," she said, saluting generations of women who fought for equality and paying tribute to her mother Shyamala Gopalan, who came to the US as a 19-year-old to study; and hailed Mr Biden as a "healer, a uniter and a tested and steady hand". The outpouring of joy in her maternal grandfather's ancestral Tamil Nadu village knew no bounds and indicated her continuing links with her Indian roots.

Mr Biden said he wants to make America "respected around the world", and the sigh of relief in major capitals was palpable. In his message of congratulations to the President-elect, Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted how he had been a strong supporter of close India-US ties, and hoped to build on that, and in a separate message to Ms Harris hailed her pathbreaking success. Mr Biden had, in fact, pushed stronger India-US ties even before becoming vice-president in 2009, having played a key role as Senate majority leader in clearing the India-US civil nuclear deal a year earlier. New Delhi will now have to build on that.

Health before festivity

The daily Covid-19 caseload is inching up after reporting a steady decline weeks ago, and now hovers around 45,000, with Delhi taking the stop slot, followed by Maharashtra and Kerala. Maharashtra has been reporting big numbers from the beginning but the cases of Delhi and Kerala, states that have both successfully reined in the pandemic in the past, call for careful study. One common factor was the failure of the people and the governments in ensuring that the Covid protocols were strictly followed during festivals.

It is a fact that governments and experts had warned of a spike in the numbers during and after the festival seasons, but there was little follow-up. People in most states are now getting ready for another major festival, Diwali. Bursting crackers is a community celebration in many parts of the country on Diwali. Anticipating their potential to become super-spreader events, and considering the impact the air pollution it causes can have on the Covid-19 patients with impaired lungs as well as others, some state governments, including Delhi, Odisha and Rajasthan, have banned the sale of crackers for this season. The Karnataka government has changed tack and now requested people to go in for "green crackers".

Many state governments, however, have not even given the idea a thought. The governments at the Centre and the states must realise that it is their duty to take pre-emptive measures to protect public health. Two Constitution-backed fundamental rights, the freedom of speech and expression and the right to practise and profess religion, come with reasonable restrictions and public health is one among them. In other words, it is incumbent upon governments to put public health ahead of these two rights. The Union government, which in the beginning micro-managed the Covid fight, must take the lead and advise the state governments to restrict festivities and save lives. Health concerns brook no excuses.

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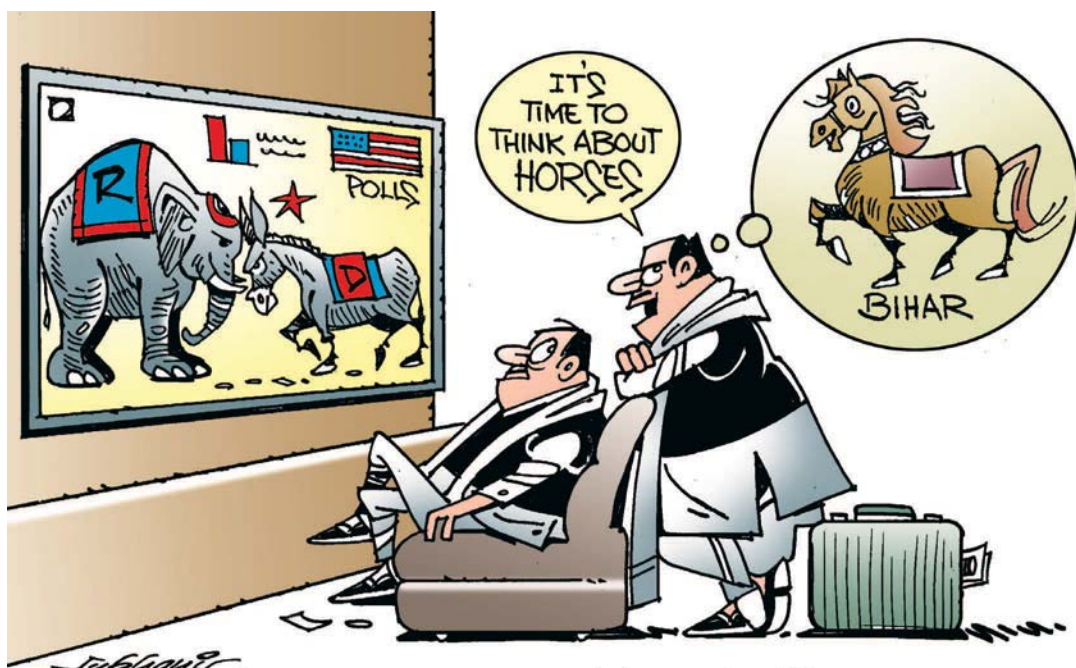
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Subhani



The new Cold War



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

In the dying days of the Second World War as the Allied Expeditionary Force under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower closed in on Germany from the West, the Soviet Red Army under the leadership of marshals Georgy Zhukov and Ivan Konev did so from the East and they set the stage for the next conflict — namely who would dominate Europe post the end of that war. The ideological contest that ensued between democratic liberalism and Soviet communism would consume Europe for the next four-and-a-half decades till the Berlin Wall finally fell on the 9th of November, 1989.

In those momentous days following the end of the bloodiest conflict of the 20th century, Winston Churchill, the wartime Prime Minister of Great Britain, prophesied at Fulton falls in the United States on March the 5th, 1946, "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of central and eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow..." This was perhaps the first detailed quantification of the Cold War.

The term "cold war" however, was first used only 13 months later on April 16, 1947, by Bernard Baruch, a multimillionaire financier and adviser to US Presidents from Woodrow Wilson to

Harry S. Truman at the South Carolina House of Representatives. "Let us not be deceived," Baruch said. "We are today in the midst of a Cold War. Our enemies are to be found abroad and at home. Let us never forget this."

The term soon caught the fancy of the world after it was given a fresh lease of life by the legendary columnist Walter Lippmann in his *New York Herald Tribune* piece in September 1947. Soon thereafter, this proxy war was fought for 40 five years across distant theatres of the world ranging from Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Cuba, countries of South and Latin America, Africa and finally Afghanistan.

The Western Allies nevertheless secured the pre-eminent battlefield of Europe by creating the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on April 4, 1949. At its core lay Article 5 that stated: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all..." The Soviets followed it up with their own collective security architecture called the Warsaw Pact on May 14, 1955. These opposing compacts kept the "peace cold" underpinned by the nuclear doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD).

The Warsaw Pact was formally dissolved on July 1, 1991, and the

The Cold War with China will encompass all dimensions — economic, military, cyber, space, cultural and civilisational. It would be the defining conflict of the next three decades.

A still-born quad — consisting of the US, Japan, Australia and India — has been resurrected in Asia. However, it is still amorphous even in its latest avatar.

Soviet Union disappeared into the sands of time on December 26, 1991, taking with it the erstwhile communist states of East Europe. Just as the Allies were celebrating the end of history as characterized by Francis Fukuyama earlier in the February of 1989 a new power was emerging on the horizon — China. For, nature abhors a vacuum.

In 1979, China started transforming its governing model from Mao Tse Tung's communism to Deng Xiaoping's totalitarian capitalism and in a span of three decades emerged as a player on the global stage with great power aspirations. However, it was only after Xi Jinping ascended to office in November 2012 that China started baring its fangs. At the centre of the strategy for global dominance lay the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) formally kicked off by President Xi on September 7, 2013, at Astana the capital of Kazakhstan. In its earlier avatar it was called the One Belt One Road (OBOR) enterprise.

However it was only seven years later after financing 2,951 projects valued at \$3.87 trillion involving 2,630 companies across 138 countries encompassing the wider silk road region that China unveiled its mailed fist in April 2020 taking full advantage of the virus warfare it has unleashed through the inaccurately labeled Covid-19 pandemic. It deserved to be called the China Virus.

It created three inflection points, first on the April 18 in the South China Sea by announcing two administrative districts — the Xisha district, covering the Paracel Islands and Macclesfield Bank, and

the Nansha district, covering the Sparty Islands, both of which are also claimed by Vietnam. It simultaneously transgressed at various places across the Line of Actual Control that separates India from China, especially in Eastern Ladakh around the same time, and moved on the political sovereignty of Hong Kong with a new security law in the May of 2020.

It is now only a matter of time that China would translate its new-found economic alliances into pro-forma military pacts across different continents subterfuged and packaged as arrangements for protecting Chinese investments overseas. In South and North Asia it already has two nuclear-armed allies, Pakistan and North Korea. Both have heavy Chinese investments. In Pakistan it is in the form of the 70 billion USD China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, despite window dressing in the wake of North Korea's nuclear tests, is virtually sustained and nourished by the Chinese.

The Cold War with China will encompass all dimensions — economic, military, cyber, space, cultural and civilisational. It would be the defining conflict of the next three decades of the 21st century as China attempts to resurrect the grandeur of the Middle Kingdom by 2047 to avenge its century of humiliation. The global response so far has been feeble. A still-born quad — consisting of the US, Japan, Australia and India — has been resurrected in Asia. However, it is still amorphous even in its latest avatar. Nations that believe that democracy, liberalism and a rules-based global order is the way people and nations should continue to live must wake up and smell the coffee. The dragon is upon us.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

UNLIKELY PAIR

The victory of the unlikely duo of the gentlemanly centre-of-left Joe Biden and the scrappy far-libber Kamala Harris has filled Indians with enthusiasm, what with Ms Harris' ethnic Tamilian origins. But their win also bodes well for India in terms of H1B visa relaxations and investments in India's renewable energy initiatives seeing as Mr Biden has promised to rejoin the Paris deal. Let's see what the future brings us.

Ravi Teja Kathuripalli
Hyderabad

TEACH BIZMEN LESSON

IT IS INDEED music to our ears that a leisurely walk, without any hindrance on the Mada Streets around Kapaleeshwar Temple in Mylapore, may soon become a reality. But it is not going to be easy as most of the footpaths are occupied by hawkers, who should be provided with some other place to do their decades-old business and earn their bread. In fact, more than the hawkers, it is the shops and restaurant owners are occupying the footpaths for exhibiting their wares and even parking vehicles. Some even block their entrances with iron railings. They should be taken into task.

N. Mahadevan
Chennai

WRITING ON THE WALL

IT APPEARS that the writing is on the wall for the Nitish Kumar government in Bihar. The exit polls have unanimously predicted a clear edge for the Mahagathabandhan led by Rashtriya Janata Dal's Tejashwi Yadav. Three out of seven exit polls also indicated that the RJD would call the shots and its leader will emerge as the Chief Minister in the 243-member Assembly. But the BJP is likely to retain its 2015 tally, with some polls predicting it could even make a few inroads. The counting of votes will begin on November 10, and the people of Bihar could see a new dawn.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to S. Abdul Monim (Nov. 7). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Kishwar Desai
London Diary



Locked down yet again, UK knows the rules but likes them less and less

The only advantage of having Donald Trump in situ across the pond was that he made Boris Johnson look like a genius. But now that Trump has gone, Boris remains the only blonde leader who is raising temperatures, even at the outset of winter. Not sure if that is something the British want, while many struggle with yet another lockdown, waiting for the vaccine to miraculously arrive on Santa's sleigh.

For some of us (such as writers like me) who have working from home for years now, the lockdown has actually been a boon — and my latest book on Devika Rani, completed during this period, will soon be in bookshops and virtual stores. But for those whom going to office was an essential part of the job, this has been an extremely difficult year. So one hopes that we will not end it on a note of despair.

The second lockdown, in fact, has evoked greater anger among the public and much less support for the government, alas. There is a division even within Boris's own backbenchers. Travel is banned;

pubs and restaurants are shut. We know the rules but we like them less and less. Even the Queen rushed back to Windsor from her Scottish home last Wednesday so she could spend the lockdown near London. Of course, her convoy of cars got stuck in a traffic jam but then help was at hand and her party escaped by driving on the wrong side of the road.

Halloween, the American festival with pumpkins and children in scary makeup going from door to door asking for "trick or treat" comes on the same day as Guy Fawkes Night in England. In the past, the "Guy" effigy was usually burnt in a large bonfire. Many local municipalities organised large public bonfires in open parks where families could gather to watch the effigies go up in smoke. But then, in politically correct England the burning has been banned. And of course, all gatherings are off the calendar.

And so, one thought, at least Halloween would provide a bit of fun for the kids. "Lockdown" Halloween turned out to be a muted affair: there were a few crackers but no children

wandering from door to door.

Strange isn't it that so many of these harvest festivals have lights and firecrackers associated with them? Though fewer are being celebrated with fire and fervour, and soon these may become part of history.

Diwali is being celebrated at a distance as well. Now of course, PIOs (People of Indian Origin) are valuable voters. So the leaders of the major political parties were part of a digital Global Diwali Festival lasting from Friday to Sunday, organised by the energetic Manoj Ladwa. The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, also made a speech in which he managed to get Rama, Sita and Ravana into his message (without for once making any mistakes) along with a mention of *samosa* and *gulabjamun* and then connected it all with a conquest over Covid. Now we are waiting for Kamala Harris to do the same.

It was bound to happen. Rishi Sunak became the Chancellor of the Exchequer just days before we became aware of the

coronavirus epidemic. He presented a budget in mid-March and soon he was presenting one supplementary giveaway after another. His popularity led to his being talked about as substitute for Boris. And why not? He is young, intelligent and capable!

Now for the first time there is a somewhat negative biography written by a Conservative grandee, Lord Ashcroft, titled *Going for Broke: The Rise of Rishi Sunak*. It is ironic that Lord Ashcroft, no stranger to controversy himself criticises Rishi for being successful in making money! There are also a few unpalatable remarks in it about the Infosys chairperson, and Rishi's father in law, Narayan Murthy. Strange, isn't it, success has its critics, all over the world?

A complete contrast is provided by a new biography of Shapurji Saklatwala who was Labour MP for Battersea North during the 1920s and a Communist as well. *Comrade Sak* has been written by Mark Wadsworth, himself the child of a

Jamaican father and a Finnish mother who has been in the Labour Left for a long while. Saklatwala was the third Parsi MP following Dadabhai Naoroji and Mancherji Bhownagari in the 1890s. Like them he was actively interested in fighting for Indian Independence.

It is a sign of how far we have come that two books on Saklatwala and Rishi Sunak can be out at the same time.

And I am happy to say that Marina Wheeler's book on her family will also be out soon. And because it contains information on the Partition, she had been in touch with us for material on Sargodha from the Partition Museum. Marina is, of course, the Prime Minister's former wife, and is also related to the late author Khushwant Singh. She has kindly invited me for the virtual launch. Looking forward to it!

Kishwar Desai is an award-winning author. Her book The Longest Kiss: The Life and Times of Devika Rani will be published next month.

IN BRIEF

DOGS SET FOR WHITE HOUSE COMEBACK

Washington, Nov. 8: Joe Biden promises to bring many things back to America now that he's in and President Donald Trump's out. Unity, accountability, compassion -- and a dog in the White House.

Not just one, but two German shepherds, one a rescue.

One is Champ, who has been with the Bidens since 2008. The other is Major, who the Bidens fostered and then adopted in 2018.

Canines sniffing around the lawns of the presidential mansion are a long-standing staple in America.

Barack Obama muzzled playfully with one Bo, a black Portuguese water dog. George W. Bush had a Scottish terrier, Barney. Bill Clinton? A chocolate Labrador retriever called Buddy.

Enter Trump, a famously finicky germophobe, and the first president in over a century to not have a dog.

"How would I look walking a dog on the White House lawn," Trump asked, with a grimace, in a video included in a Biden campaign ad.

Now, make way for team Biden's canine crew.

Biden officials say Major will become the first rescue dog to live in the White House.

"Choose your humans wisely," says the Biden ad about presidential pooches.

TRUMP FAIR GAME FOR SM RULES

San Francisco, Nov. 8: When US President Donald Trump departs the White House, he also leaves behind any immunity he might have from social media rules. Efforts by Twitter and Facebook to balance letting political leaders speak to the people unfettered with enforcing rules about hateful and misleading posts have afforded Trump leeway not given to regular users.

But any special treatment that Trump has enjoyed ends with his presidency.

"Twitter's approach to world leaders, candidates and public officials is based on the principle that people should be able to choose to see what their leaders are saying with clear context," a spokesman for Trump's go-to messaging platform said.

The winner: Biden vows virus action on 'day one'.

Ethiopia vows to replace Tigray government

"This policy framework applies to current world leaders and candidates for office, and not private citizens when they no longer hold these positions," So, Trump posts masked by warnings or amended with labels could qualify to be deleted instead. "I assume that the argument around not completely removing content from world leaders is because what they say is important for us to know," said Casey Fiesler, a professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

BUBBLY MOOD: RUSH FOR CHAMPAGNE

Washington, Nov. 8: Joe Biden's election as US president on Saturday sparked a scramble for champagne in the capital Washington and some stores were already close to running out of stock in the Democratic stronghold. It seemed many were ready to toast an end to a tumultuous four years under President Donald Trump.

Calvert and Woodley, known for its selection of wines from around the world, sold up to 75 percent more bottles than a usual Saturday.

Store salesman Mark, who did not provide his last name, said hundreds of bottles had been sold. "People want to celebrate," he said.

His colleague Janis said "I bought 20 for myself." Dressed in a Biden-Harris t-shirt and with a Biden-Harris sign in her hand, Juanita was one of the many customers in search of the bubbly.

"I'm so happy. It's an amazing day for democracy," she said while choosing a bottle.

At Magruder's, a wine shop in the residential district of Chevy Chase in business since 1845, the shelves were emptied quickly and employees had to fetch reserve cases of champagne. "People buy two or three bottles. It's very unusual," said a cashier.

"People are so happy today." And they were obviously not concerned with the price. Bottles of champagne typically sell for around \$40 dollars (33 euros) to start.



US President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris deliver remarks in Wilmington, Delaware, on Saturday, after being declared the winners of the presidential election. — AFP

After poll win, Biden pledges to unite US

Prez-elect seeks an end to the 'grim era of demonisation'

Washington, Nov. 8: Pledging to be the president of all Americans, Joe Biden has sought an immediate end to the "grim era of demonisation" in the deeply-polarised nation, as he and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris celebrated their historic triumph over Donald Trump in a bitter and closely-fought presidential election.

Biden has also said that America is a "beacon for the globe" and that efforts must be made to "restore the soul" of the country.

"Tonight the whole world is watching America, and I believe that at our best, America is a beacon for the globe. We will lead not only by the example of our power, but by the power of our example," Biden said while addressing the nation for the first time as president-elect.

"I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide, but to unify; who doesn't see red states and blue states, only sees the United States," Biden, 77, said in his victory speech before a drive-in audience in his hometown, Wilmington, Delaware on Saturday night, nearly ending the uncertainty over the out-

Joe recites deceased son's favourite hymn

Washington, Nov. 8: US President-elect Joe Biden concluded his victory speech by reciting his deceased son Beau's favourite popular Catholic hymn "On Eagles' Wings", hoping that the carol will give comfort to many Americans grieving the loss of their loved ones due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Biden, 77, who is a practising Catholic, said the hymn has inspired him through the final days of his election campaign. He would be the second Catholic to hold the office of the President after John F. Kennedy in 1960. The Democrat leader lost Beau, an Iraq war veteran

who had served as Delaware's attorney general, in 2015 to a brain tumour at the age of 46.

Biden defeated Donald Trump in a bitter and closely-fought presidential election. He gave his victory speech before a drive-in audience in his hometown, Wilmington, Delaware on Saturday. On Eagles' Wings "captures the faith that sustains me and which I believe sustains America, and a hope, and I hope it can provide some comfort and solace to the 230,000 Americans who have lost a loved one due to this terrible virus this year," said Biden.

— PTI

delivered us a clear victory, a convincing victory, a victory for 'We the People'," he said, referring to more than 74 million voters who backed him. Biden ran twice unsuccessfully for president - in 1988 and 2008. Noting that he ran as a proud Democrat, Biden said that he will now be an American president. "I will work as hard for those who didn't vote for me - as those who did. Biden criticised Trump without naming him in his nearly 15-minute address, saying that he wanted to end "this grim era of demonisation in America here and now."

"Let this grim era of demonisation in America begin to end - here and now. The refusal of Democrats and Republicans to cooperate with one another is not due to some mysterious force beyond our control," he said. Trump has so far refused to concede the election that attracted a record number of Americans to cast their votes amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. He has announced filing multiple lawsuits against the election results in key battleground states like Pennsylvania.

— PTI

ful to Joe and Jill for welcoming our family into theirs on this incredible journey," she said.

"And to the woman most responsible for my presence here today — my mother, Shyamala Gopalan Harris, who is always in our hearts. When she came here from India at the age of 19, maybe she didn't quite imagine this moment. But she believed so deeply in an America where a moment like this is possible. "So, I'm thinking about her and about the generations of women — Black Women," Harris, the first-ever woman vice president-elect of the United States, said.

She will also be the first-ever Indian-origin vice president, first-ever black and first-ever African-American vice president of the US. In her speech, she thanked Asian, White, Latina and Native American women throughout America's history who paved the way for this moment. "Women who fought and sacrificed so much for equality, liberty and justice for all, including the Black women, who are too often overlooked, but so often prove that they are the backbone of our democracy."

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quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	41,893.06	1.34
Nifty 50	12,263.55	1.18
S&P 500*	3,509.44	-0.03
Dollar (₹)	74.19	0.27
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.54	-0.71
Euro (₹)	87.86	0.00
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,717.791	1.52
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	39.52	-1.41
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.871	0.013
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.827	0.049

* As of Friday/Saturday

FPIs invest over ₹6,500 in equities in five sessions

Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) have put in a net Rs 8,381 crore into Indian markets in first five trading sessions of November. As per depositories data, FPIs invested a net Rs 6,564 crore into equities and Rs 1,817 in the debt segment, taking the total net inflow to Rs 8,381 crore during November 2-6. In October, overseas investors were net buyers with Rs 22,033 crore investment in Indian markets.

IOB seeks about ₹1,000 cr capital support from govt



Indian Overseas Bank has sought a capital support of about Rs 1,000 crore from the Centre to create a buffer for any exigency. IOB, which has posted profit for the last three consecutive quarters, expects to continue the trend in the remaining part of the current fiscal year. "We expect the trend to continue and book profit quarter after quarter aided by prospects of better recovery," managing director P. P. Sengupta said.

IOC director Singh to head Petronet LNG



Indian Oil Corp director-pipelines Akshay Kumar Singh will be the new managing director and chief executive of the country's biggest gas importer, Petronet LNG Ltd. Singh replaces Prabhat Singh who completed his five-year term on September 13.

IMFL sales down 9% in Q2; H1 sales dip 29%

The liquor industry has reported a decline of 8.98 per cent in Indian-made foreign liquor (IMFL) sales at 78 million cases in Q2 against 85.7 million cases (9 litres each) in the year-ago quarter, the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies. But sales increased from the June quarter, which had a de-growth of 48.9 per cent. For April-September, sales volume was down 29.06 per cent at 122 million cases.

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■ Risk-reward less attractive after recent rise in stocks Economy holds key to new Samvat fortunes

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, NOV. 8

The equity market has had a historical journey in Samvat 2076, as it marked a year of huge volatility, unpredictability, pessimism, divergence and optimism. All in all after a turbulent past year, investors can look forward to a relatively sedate but selectively rewarding year, said brokerages in their outlook for Samvat 2077 which is dawning on this Diwali on November 14, according to the Gujarati Vikram Samvat calendar followed by Dalal Street.

The Nifty-50 touched an all-time high of 12,431 in January 2020 and then hit a three-year low of 7,511 in March'20 as the Covid-19 pandemic gripped the whole world, threatening the global economy.

However, the recovery has been quite sharp as Sensex and Nifty-50 are once again back to close to their all-time-high mark.

The pandemic has accelerated the shift towards a digital economy. In Samvat 2076 the leadership shifted from banking to the technology sector.

USA's Nasdaq Composite Index went up 33 per cent while the Dow Jones Industrial Average Index has remained flat. When other economies went for massive fiscal stimulus India went tight-fisted, which impacted India's GDP in the June quarter.

Now, when most European nations are going in for fresh lock-



Brokerages Diwali Pick

HDFC Securities
(Large-cap) Bharti Airtel, Cadila Healthcare, ICICI Bank, Infosys, United Spirits. (Mid-cap) Alembic Pharma, Credit Access Gramene, Gujarat Gas, Mphasis, Radico Khaitan

Kotak Securities
Axis Bank, Bajaj Auto, Larsen & Toubro, Ambuja Cements, ITC, Bajaj Finserv, SBI Life Insurance, Infosys, Hindustan Zinc, Bharti Airtel

Motilal Oswal
Bharti Airtel, SBI, Hero Motocorp, Infosys, UltratechCement, ICICI Bank, Crompton Consumer, Dabur India, PI Industries, Divis Laboratories

downs, the Indian economy is recovering fast and returning to normalcy. India has a chance to come out stronger and report healthy growth in CY21/Samvat 2077, provided it doesn't see a big second wave of Covid cases.

"We think markets could face some profit taking after the final results of the US Presidential elections sink in. This period also coincides with calendar year-end when tax selling by investors happen. This corrective period could last a few months... In the second half of 2021, we may witness some sustained rise in the indices," said HDFC Securities.

"The overall structure of the market remains positive. At 18 times FY22 earnings, Nifty-50 valuations is also not very expensive as it is trading closer to its long-period averages. With

the economic activity recovering fast, more earnings upgrade cannot be ruled out," said Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

"Further strong global markets can keep the liquidity abundant in the system, thus providing support to the overall market. However, intermittent corrections cannot be ruled out as there is a risk of a second wave of Covid-19 and thus sustenance of economic recovery holds the key," Motilal Oswal added.

"From a next 12-months perspective, we are positive on IT, healthcare, rural-agri, telecom, consumer along with select financials. We believe another round of fiscal stimulus could help elevate sentiment further," Motilal Oswal said.

"As we advance towards getting the vaccine (by

middle of next year) and the economy gets back to normalcy, we can expect the economy-driven sectors to outperform the defensives in Samvat 2077. Banks, NBFCs, automobiles, oil & gas, telecom, utilities, capital goods, cement and metals could come into focus in Samvat 2077," said Rasmik Oza, head of fundamental research, Kotak Securities.

"The potential upside in most of these sectors based on one-year price targets ranges between 20 and 39 per cent (vs single digit potential upside in Nifty-50). Since most of the economy-driven sectors are prone to market correction one should have an accumulation strategy in them rather than investing at one go," Oza said.

The risk-reward balance is less attractive after the recent recovery in stock prices. The earnings yield of Nifty-50 works to 4.5 per cent which is way below the 10-year government securities yield of 5.9 per cent. However, the very low global bond yields are supporting flows into risky assets like equities that are keeping valuations at elevated levels, Kotak Securities said.

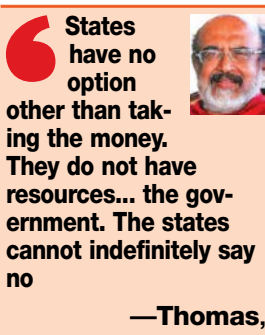
According to HDFC Securities, "Key worrying points remain—asset quality at lenders, stress in MSMEs, fiscal deficit, inflation, job creation etc. However, a bull market never requires all worrying points to be eliminated."

Kerala too may accept GST compensation option

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, NOV. 8

Kerala will have one more round of discussions with some of the states that have been opposing the Centre's stance in the GST compensation issue, before accepting the borrowing option. However, it will continue to question the legality of the Union government taking a decision outside the GST Council.

"States have no option other than taking the money. They do not have resources... the government. The states cannot indefinitely say no



—Thomas,

over, we will talk to them and take coordinated action," he said.

Nevertheless, the state will continue to raise the issues pertaining to the GST compensation decisions taken by the Centre. It feels that the decision taken outside the GST Council is illegal. He said decisions have to be taken and ratified at the GST Council. "Further, as there was a dispute, there should be a dispute

redressal mechanism," he said.

In August, the Centre had given all states two options of borrowing either Rs 97,000 crore or Rs 2.35 lakh crore to meet the GST compensation shortfall. The borrowing limit of the first option was later increased to Rs 1.1 lakh crore. Last month, 21 states and two union territories had gone with the first option. As some of the opposition-ruled states have been protesting, the Centre has agreed to borrow the money and give it to the states, ending the impasse with the states.

A few days back, among the opposing states, Rajasthan and Puducherry too accepted the first option. The Centre has released a total of Rs 12,000 crore for the states and union territories which have accepted the option.

Bigbasket's customer data stolen?

PRASOON SRIVASTAVA
NEW DELHI, NOV 8

Grocery e-commerce platform Bigbasket has faced a potential data breach which could have leaked details of its around 2 crore users, says cyber intelligence firm Cyble.

Bigbasket has filed a police complaint with the Cyber Crime Cell in Bengaluru and is verifying claims made by cyber experts.

Cyble said a hacker has put data belonging to

Bigbasket on sale for around Rs 30 lakh.

"In the course of our routine dark web monitoring, the research team at Cyble found the database of Big Basket for sale in a cyber crime market, being sold for over \$40,000. The leak contains a database portion; with the table name 'member_member'. The size of the SQL file is about 15 GB, containing close to 20 million user data," Cyble said in its blog.

It added the data put on sale includes names, email

IDs, password hashes, contact numbers, addresses, date of birth, location, and IP addresses of login among many others.

While Cyble has mentioned "passwords", Bigbasket uses a one-time password sent via SMS which keeps changing.

"The only customer data that we maintain are email IDs, phone numbers, order details, and addresses so these are the details that could potentially have been accessed," Bigbasket said.

—PTI

Divide between larger & smaller MFIs deepen in Covid times

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, NOV. 8

Covid-19 has deepened the divide between large micro-finance institutions (MFIs) and smaller ones. While large MFIs are likely to see growth in their assets in FY21, smaller ones might witness a contraction in their portfolios, finds Icrs.

The funding constraints faced by small MFIs over the last one-and-a-half years were accentuated by the Covid-19-led disruptions and the situation will continue near-term.

Based on data from 25 MFIs, Icrs found that MFIs raised Rs 11,200 crore in H1 FY21, largely from Nabard, Sidbi and bank TLTRO funding. Fund flow to the sector, however, remained skewed towards large MFIs, which have higher asset under management (AUM) than Rs 1,500 crore. Most large entities have been able to raise a higher proportion of funds in relation to their AUMs than the small MFIs with AUMs lesser than Rs 1,500 crore.



Hence, large MFIs have been able to improve their liquidity profiles. Large MFIs were carrying relatively higher on-book liquidity aided by the better availability of funding and relatively higher collection efficiency.

On the other hand, with relatively lower balance sheet liquidity and thin operating profitability, given the already high operational expenditure, the ability of small MFIs to absorb the expected rise in credit costs is lower. Icrs expects that the credit costs of MFIs will increase to 6-7 per cent till FY22 from 1.5 per cent in FY20 due to the moratorium.

"This makes the smaller MFIs more vulnerable than the large ones, as the latter enjoy strong balance sheet liquidity, better oper-

ating profitability and healthy financial flexibility. So the small MFIs could witness a contraction in their AUMs and report losses in FY21.

This could result in pressure on their credit ratings, especially the entities with high leverage and weak liquidity. But large MFIs are expected to witness some growth in their AUM in FY21.

Overall, there has been a significant decline in the quantum of equity raised in H1 FY21 by MFIs. They have raised just Rs 320 crore compared to Rs 3,600 crore in FY20. In H2 FY21 too, equity infusion in the industry is expected to remain limited and is likely to flow to large and well-established entities.

MSMEs claim over 50% recovery; services drag

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, NOV. 8

Driven by manufacturing enterprises, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have returned to more than 50 per cent of their pre-Covid level of operations. But the entrepreneurs are still unsure about the sustainability of demand beyond the festive season.

According to the Federation of Indian MSMEs (Fisme), the manufacturing sector has picked up quite well and operations are running close to 80 per cent of the pre-Covid level. "Some of the sectors like pharma have fully recovered," Anil Bharadwaj, secretary general of Fisme, said, adding that the rest of the sectors are mostly operating at 80 per cent of the pre-lock-down levels.

Rajive Chawla, chairman of IamSMEofIndia, said, "Manufacturing MSMEs have been witnessing a month-on-month growth in the last four months. Initially, organising working capital was a major challenge. Now those issues have



eased and almost 80 per cent of the manufacturing sector is doing better as reflected in the GST numbers."

Even among manufacturing, enterprises in the construction sector or those producing luxury goods are still behind. Fisme finds that unorganised enterprises in the manufacturing sector are still finding hardships. Overall the festive season demand and relaxation of restrictions have supported the manufacturers.

According to Bharadwaj, pent-up orders from the previous months, festive and wedding season demand and the increased

procurement by government agencies, like railways, defence and highways, has supported the recovery in the MSME sector.

However, the services sector is still at close to 35 per cent of prior level. "In sectors like travel, tourism, hospitality and aviation, there are enterprises which have not started recovering yet. They would take more time to recover," said Bharadwaj.

However, the MSMEs are still doubtful about the sustainability of the recovery. "We will have to see whether the demand sustains after the festive season. Further, a second wave of the pandemic in Europe can once again pull down the export orders," he said.

The new administration in the US under Joe Biden also poses a threat to the sustainability of export demand. "He has been talking about increasing capital gains tax and corporate tax. Slump in demand will hurt Indian exporters, as the US is the biggest market for several sectors," Bharadwaj added.

India Inc looks forward to stronger Indo-US ties



New Delhi, Nov. 8: India Inc on Sunday hailed the victory of Joe Biden in the US Presidential election, while hoping for enhanced ties and cooperation between India and the United States.

Congratulating president-elect Biden and vice president-elect Kamala Harris, CII president Uday Kotak said, "with rising trade and investment ties between the two countries, the health of our economies are inextricably linked and we must work together during this critical time to reinvigorate the bilateral economic agenda—facilitating economic growth, enhancing job creation, supporting small business and enabling cooperation in investment-related movement of professionals."

Assocham secretary general Deepak Sood said, "under the Biden-Harris leadership, the Indo-US economic ties would go from strength to strength, getting deeper into areas of advanced scientific research and development, business to business cooperation in strategic areas."

PHDCCI president Sanjay Aggarwal said, "We strongly believe that India-US partnership will be the defining relationship of the 21st century."

Nasscom welcomed Joe Biden's win and said the Indian IT industry looks forward to working with the new administration in pivoting technology, skills and digital transformation for the US.

Nasscom said its member companies have an important history in the US. "... they work with over three-quarters of the Fortune 500 companies in the US, providing them vital technology services and helping them innovate, compete, and grow."

—PTI

SHIFTING | ROADS The share of SUVs in domestic market doubles to 30% in the last five years Tata Motors aims for widest portfolio of SUVs

New Delhi, Nov. 8: Tata Motors aims to have the widest portfolio of sports utility vehicles (SUVs) in the domestic market, a move aimed at helping the company muster greater market share in the passenger vehicle segment, according to a top company official.

The auto major, which currently sells models like Nexon and Harrier in the SUV segment, is also looking to overhaul its entire sales, after-sales and service verticals to enhance the overall buying experience for customers.

"The move to shift to SUVs is very clear. There is a shift happening towards the SUV segment not only in India but globally also. In 2015 the share of SUVs in the domestic market used to be only 15 per cent but this year it is around 30 per cent," Tata Motors passenger

vehicles business unit president Shailesh Chandra told PTI. It is therefore imperative that whosoever has greater share of SUVs in the portfolio will have a greater pie, share of the market, he added.

"So we have taken note of that sometime back and accordingly targeted to have the widest SUV portfolio," Chandra said.

Both Nexon and Harrier were doing great in the market in terms of sales numbers, he noted.

"Harrier has seen a significant jump from what we were doing last year on the back of the new automatic version we have come out with. Nexon did its highest ever sales last month and I hope it continues to do well," Chandra said.

The company is now gearing up to roll out two new models in the portfolio.

Royal Enfield to roll out new bike every quarter

New Delhi, Nov. 8: Mid-sized motorcycle maker Royal Enfield plans to launch at least 28 new models in the next seven years, with one new bike to be introduced every quarter, as it seeks to strengthen its position both in domestic and international markets, according to a top company official.

The company is also planning to set up an assembly unit in Thailand in the next 6-12 months followed by Brazil in the near future.

"Going forward two additional models are going to come—Gravitas and Hornbill (code-names). Gravitas will be a seven-seater SUV while Hornbill will

"We have now got a product plan for the next five to seven years. We are looking at launching a new model almost every quarter and I am not even talking variants and colour options kind of stuff...28 models at least (in the next seven years) that's the bare minimum," Royal Enfield CEO Vinod K. Dasari told PTI. He further said, "All these (new models) will play in the mid segment — 250cc to 750 cc. That's our focus area." —PTI

be a sub compact SUV so we will have four SUVs in our portfolio which would be the widest portfolio," Chandra said.

Hornbill with a very aggres-

sive position at one end and Gravitas at the other end, the company with four products would be well poised to tap the growing trend towards SUVs, he noted.

The company plans to launch the Gravitas during the last quarter of this fiscal. It is yet to fix a date for the Hornbill introduction.

Chandra said the company is focusing a lot on improving the sales and after-sales experience for its customers.

"For us it is one of the key areas on our agenda to transform. A whole bit of work has started with focus on how we can enhance the whole experience. The employees are being imparted soft skills apart from technical training," he noted. The company is also focusing on the issues with its dealer partners. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Holding new MCC Foundation patron

London: West Indies pace legend Michael Holding has been appointed patron of the MCC Foundation.

The MCC Foundation is the charitable arm of the Marylebone Cricket Club, custodians of the game's laws, and was created with the aim of enhancing lives through cricket. The 66-year-old Holding is a passionate advocate for equality in cricket and the wider community. Throughout a professional career that spanned 15 years, Holding carved out a reputation as one of the best fast bowlers of all time. Since retirement, he has worked as a commentator on Sky Sports' cricket coverage and, more recently, has earned praise as a powerful and eloquent advocate for racial equality "both in the game and further afield".

Holding said he was "thrilled" by the opportunity to join the MCC Foundation. "I am thrilled to support the MCC Foundation and its work to make cricket a game that champions respect and equality for all." — PTI

Pak thump Zim to clinch T20 series

Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Pakistan proved too strong for Zimbabwe as they won the second Twenty20 international by eight wickets in Rawalpindi on Sunday, taking an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. Riding on half centuries from skipper Babar Azam (51) and 20-year-old Haider Ali (66 not out), Pakistan made short work of a modest 135-run target, achieving victory with 29 balls to spare. Zimbabwe, who were sent in to bat, never recovered from early strikes by paceman Haris Rauf (3-31) and spinner Usman Qadir (3-23) as they were restricted to 134-7 in 20 overs. Haider, playing only his third international match, cracked three sixes and six boundaries in a 43-ball knock and was declared man of the match.

Brief scores: Zimbabwe 134/7 (Rauf 32 not out, Qadir 3/23, Rauf 3/31) lost to Pakistan 137/2 (Haider Ali 66 not out, Babar Azam 51.)

Ex Pak skipper Sarfaraz fined

Karachi: Former Pakistan skipper Sarfaraz Ahmed has been penalised 35 per cent of his match fee for using "inappropriate language" during a Quaid-e-Azam Trophy match. The 33-year-old stumper, who is leading the Sindh First XI, admitted to the level 1 offence relating to use of inappropriate language during his side's match on Saturday. "Sarfaraz repeatedly made inappropriate comments against an umpiring decision during the day's play," the Pakistan Cricket Board said in media release. "He was reported by on-field umpires Faisal Afridi and Saqib Khan for the violation of article 2.21 of the PCB Code of Conduct for Players and Player support Personnel." — PTI

Ram settles for runner-up finish

Eckental, Germany: Indian tennis player Ramkumar Ramanathan yet again settled for a runner-up finish on the Challenger circuit, losing the final of the Eckental event to American Sebastian Korda on Sunday. Celebrating his 26th birthday, Ram lost the summit clash 4-6, 4-6 to his seventh seed rival, ranked 135, in one hour and 23 minutes. It is now the fifth time that Ramkumar has not won a final on the Challenger circuit. His previous runner-up finishes came at Tallahassee (April 2017), Winnetka (July 2017), Pune (November 2017) and Taipei (April 2018). — PTI

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL Women's T20 Challenge Final: Trailblazers vs Supernovas from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

WWE

Raw: Bouts from 6.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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DELHI STROLL IN SUN

All-round Capitals beat Hyderabad to book maiden final spot

SCORECARD

Delhi Capitals: M. Stoinis b Rashid 38, S. Dhawan lbw Sharma 78, S. Iyer c Pandey b Holder 21, S. Hetmyer (not out) 42, R. Pant (not out) 2. Extras (b-1, lb-2, w-3, nb-2) 8. **Total (for 3 wkts, in 20 overs) 189.** FoW: 1-86, 2-126, 3-178. **Bowling:** Sharma 4-0-30-1, Holder 4-0-50-1, Nadeem 4-0-48-0, Khan 4-0-26-1, Natarajan 4-0-32-0. **Sunrisers Hyderabad:** P.K. Garg b Stoinis 17, D. Warner b Rabada 2, M. Pandey c Nortje b Stoinis 21, K. Williamson c Rabada b

Stoinis 67, J. Holder c Dubey b Patel 11, Abdul Samad c sub (KMA Paul) b Rabada 33, Rashid Khan c Patel b Rabada 11, S. Goswami c Stoinis b Rabada 0, S. Nadeem (not out) 2, Sandeep Sharma (not out) 2. Extras (lb-1, w-5) 6. **Total (for 8 wkts, in 20 over) 172.** FoW: 1-12, 2-43, 3-44, 4-90, 5-147, 6-167, 7-167, 8-168. **Bowling:** R. Ashwin 3-0-33-0, K. Rabada 4-0-29-4, A. Nortje 4-0-36-0, M. Stoinis 3-0-26-3, A. Patel 4-0-33-1, P. Dubey 2-0-14-0.

Stoinis (3/26) shone with the ball for the winners.

It turned out to be a good decision to bat first as Dhawan and Stoinis (38) got the team off to a flying start with their 86-run stand.

Skipper Shreyas Iyer (21) could not do much but

Shimron Hetmyer, who was brought in for Sunday's match, chipped in with an unbeaten 42-run knock.

Dhawan, in his well-paced innings, hit six fours and two sixes. He added 52 runs for the third wicket with Hetmyer

before being dismissed by seamer Sandeep Sharma (1/30).

SRH's sloppy fielding also helped Delhi Capitals as they dropped Stoinis early in the innings and gave them a few free runs. SRH also dropped Dhawan towards the end, though it

did not cost them much.

Yet again, Afghanistan spinner Rashid Khan (4-0-26-1) was the most effective bowler though T Natarajan bowled well in slog overs.

Stoinis was asked to open the innings by the Delhi Capitals. After being dropped by Jason Holder off Sandeep at short mid-on, the Australian punished the SRH bowlers with a flurry of boundaries.

Stoinis, on three at that time, was nicely set up by Sandeep but the opportunity was not taken.

It was Holder, who was then taken to task by Stoinis, who creamed off 18 runs from the West Indian's over with three fours and a six. — PTI



Delhi Capitals players celebrate the wicket of Manish Pandey of Sunrisers Hyderabad during their IPL Qualifier 2 match at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Sunday. Capitals won by 17 runs. — BCCI

SAHA HAS HAMSTRING TEAR, ALL EYES ON BCCI

Abu Dhabi, Nov. 8: Senior wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha's saga of picking up injuries continued as he has been diagnosed with a hamstring tear which is sure to raise questions about his availability for the upcoming tour of Australia. It will now depend on what call BCCI mandarins take considering that physio Nitin Patel's medical reports have of late come under scanner due to divergent views of the IPL franchises.

Saha had stretched his groin while batting against Delhi Capitals in the second

leg of the IPL but then played against Mumbai Indians in the 14th and final round game where he must have picked up a tear while fighting the earlier niggle.

"Wriddhiman Saha has a hamstring tear," SRH skipper David Warner confirmed the nature of injury. However, the degree of the tear is still not clear.

It is understood that if Saha has a grade 1 tear, which normally takes four weeks of rest and rehabilitation, then he would be boarding the flight to Australia with the first Test starting on December 17. — PTI

Pollard credits his bond with Pandya brothers for success

Abu Dhabi, Nov. 8: West Indian swashbuckler Kieron Pollard says his relationship with the Pandya brothers — Hardik and Krunal — transcends the cultural boundaries, and explosive batting is just one of the many similarities they share.

Defending champions MI have made it to their sixth IPL final and the trio played a significant role in their campaign.

"As I always say there is Hardik Pandya and then there is the smarter Pandya (Krunal). For us the relationship that we have off the field, transcends onto the cricket field," Pollard, who has played over 150 games for MI, said in a video shared on their



Kieron Pollard

Twitter handle.

"We share some of the same sort of sentiments, the kind of people that we are in terms of just wanting to help, and just enjoying the moment and being thankful and grateful for whatever opportunities that is presented to us."

According to Pollard, being confident and back-

ing himself are the similar qualities he shares with Hardik. Both are known for their six-hitting prowess.

"They (Pandya brothers) are more open and loud, but they are not like that just off the field, when they go on to the cricket field, the flair that they show, Hardik especially, that aspect of it, he goes out, backs himself, he is confident. So these are some of the things that we share in common," said Pollard.

Pollard praised Hardik, who has scored 278 runs and plundered 25 sixes this season, for his confidence.

"The way that they are, they are like good people. And you will find it very difficult not to like these individuals." — PTI

WOMEN'S T20 | CHALLENGE

Harmanpreet & Co target third crown

Sharjah, Nov. 8: The momentum is with defending champions Supernovas as they eye a third straight Women's T20 Challenge title, with a determined Trailblazers standing in their way in the final here on Monday.

In the winners-take-all T20 final, the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side will have momentum behind them, having beaten Smriti Mandhana and company in the last round-robin game on Saturday.

Supernovas, champions in 2018 and 2019, just about managed to ward off their rivals in a last-over thriller.

The two-run win enabled the Supernovas to enter the final, while knocking the Mithali-Raj led Velocity out of the competition. For the defending champions, opener Chamari Atapattu (111 runs) has been in brilliant form. The Sri Lankan veteran is the top scorer for Supernovas this season. Against the Trailblazers, she played an aggressive innings (67 off 48-balls) to notch up the first fifty of the tournament.

Skipper Harmanpreet, who had scored two half-centuries including in the final last year, has been dismissed for 31 in both the matches and the big-hitting Indian T20 captain

● In the winners-take-all T20 final, Harmanpreet Kaur-led Supernovas will have the momentum behind them, having beaten Smriti Mandhana's Trailblazers in the last round-robin game on Saturday.

will look to get back to her destructive best in the final.

They will be up against Trailblazers, who started their campaign on a sensational note. Their bowlers, led by England's Sophie Ecclestone and veteran Jhulan Goswami, bundled out the Velocity for a paltry 47. However, they were unable to dish out a similar display on Saturday.

Skipper Mandhana, who has scored 39 runs in two games, has had an underwhelming tournament and will be keen on coming good with the bat.

Opener Deandra Dottin has also been among runs but will be keen to notch up a big one. Deepti Sharma (43 not out) and Harleen Deol (27 off 15 balls) almost led the Trailblazers to victory and the two will look to build on their performance. — PTI

Deepti worked on her game after lockdown

Sharjah, Nov. 8: Indian women's team all-rounder Deepti Sharma has said she has worked on her game after the coronavirus-forced lockdown and is executing her plans in the ongoing Women's T20 Challenge here.

Representing Trailblazers, Sharma scored an unbeaten 43 in their match against Supernovas on Saturday, but could not help her team to victory. "After the lockdown I worked a lot on lofted shots and inside-out shots and I was able to apply it here," she said at the post-match press conference.

"Obviously, the wicket is a bit different to Indian wickets. They are slow and

low but I don't think it should matter much. You just have to watch the ball and hit the ball," she added.

Sharma said the Trailblazers would work hard and rectify the mistakes when the two sides meet in Monday's final.

"Small mistakes... In fielding, bowling. We will work in our practice session and will look to rectify the mistakes we made today, in the next game. Overall we did well. Winning or losing is part of the game," she said.

She said 146 was a good score to chase as the ball was coming on to the bat even though some of them kept low. — PTI



Deepti Sharma of Trailblazers plays a shot en route to her unbeaten 43 against Supernovas during their Women's T20 Challenge match in Sharjah on Saturday. — BCCI

Pedro matches Italy legend Riva's 52-yr Cagliari record

Milan, Nov. 8: Cagliari's Joao Pedro scored for the fifth consecutive Serie A match to equal a 52-year-old club record set by Italy legend Gigi Riva in a 2-0 victory over 10-man Sampdoria on Saturday, as French forward M'Bala Nzola's brace gave Spezia breathing space at the bottom of the table.

Former European champion and World Cup runner-up Riva, who led Cagliari to their only Italian title in 1970, was the last player in the club to score five in the first seven league matches back in 1968.

Riva, Italy's all-time top scorer with 35 goals in 42 games and also Cagliari's with 164 goals in 315 league games, celebrated his 76th birthday on Saturday.

"I changed the system to favour Joao," said Cagliari coach Eusebio

● Former European champion and World Cup runner-up Riva, who led Cagliari to their only Italian title in 1970, was the last player in the club to score five in the first seven league matches back in 1968.

Di Francesco. "I wanted to wish a happy birthday to the great Gigi Riva, a symbol for Cagliari."

Sampdoria had to play over half the match a man down after Tommaso Augello was sent off for bringing down Nahitan Nandez five minutes before the break.

Brazilian Pedro opened the scoring two minutes into the second half

when he won and scored a penalty kick after colliding with Lorenzo Tonelli.

LEWANDOWSKI SCORES AS BAYERN LEAD TABLE

Robert Lewandowski scored his 11th goal in just his sixth Bundesliga game this season as Bayern Munich went top of the table on Saturday with a 3-2 win at Borussia Dortmund.

After Marco Reus put Dortmund ahead, David Alaba blasted home a free-kick to make it 1-1 at half-time behind closed doors at Signal Iduna Park.

Lewandowski gave Bayern the lead with a superb header early in the second half before Leroy Sane grabbed the visitors' third.

Erling Braut Haaland gave Dortmund hope with a late goal. — AFP

Atleti go top, Messi rescues Barca

Madrid, Nov. 8: Atletico Madrid jumped to the top of La Liga on Saturday with a 4-0 thrashing of Cadiz after Lionel Messi came on at half-time to rescue Barcelona against Real Betis.

Atletico claimed first place, ahead of Real Sociedad on goal difference, with the excellent Joao Felix scoring twice in another impressive victory for Diego Simeone's side.

Luis Suarez and Marcos Llorente were also on target as Atletico made it five wins and two draws from their opening seven games and underlined their status as genuine title contenders.

They have scored 17 goals and conceded just two in that time.

After the international break, Atleti play at home to Barcelona, when Suarez and Antoine Griezmann will be up against their former clubs.

But while Suarez has enjoyed a superb start for Atletico, scoring five goals already, Griezmann contin-



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (second from right) is challenged by Real Betis players during their La Liga match at Camp Nou in Barcelona on Saturday. — AP

ues to struggle in the shadow of Messi at Camp Nou.

Messi had been rested by Ronald Koeman but was thrown on with the game in the balance after Griezmann missed a penalty, before Betis' Antonio Sanabria cancelled out

off for a handball on the line.

DI MARIA BRACE IN RENNES STROLL

Angel Di Maria scored twice as Paris Saint-Germain made short work of Rennes despite a raft of absences in a 3-0 win that enables the champions to hold onto their lead at the top of Ligue 1.

Di Maria struck in each half, with Moise Kean scoring the other, to move PSG up to 24 points, five ahead of second-placed Lille.

Rennes stay third on 18 points — but can be overtaken by Nice should they beat Montpellier on Sunday — while Montpellier are a further point back in sixth after their 2-0 win at Bordeaux.

PSG's win was their eighth in a row in the French top flight and came as under-fire coach Thomas Tuchel battles with an injury crisis that has left him without the likes of Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Marco Verratti. — AFP