

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | FRIDAY 27 | NOVEMBER 2020

## WEATHER



**Max:** 30°C  
**Min:** 24°C  
**Rainfall:** 4 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Karthigai 12  
**Tithi:** Dwadashi/ Thrayodashi  
**Star:** Ashwini  
**Rahukalam:**  
10.30 am to 12 noon  
**Yamagandam:**  
3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 4.57 am  
**Zohar:** 12 noon  
**Asar:** 3.13 pm  
**Maghrib:** 5.39 pm  
**Isha:** 6.54 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY** 5.40 PM  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 6.14 AM  
**MOONRISE TODAY** 3.44 PM  
**MOONSET TOMORROW** 5.10 AM

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+40,249)	(+455)
93,06,946	1,35,716

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 1,464)  
TN: 7,76,174 11,669

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

6,10,65,842

### DEATHS

14,32,995

### COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info

## Estimated loss due to cyclone Nivar put at ₹400 cr: Pondy CM

**Puducherry:** The estimated loss to agriculture and other sectors due to cyclone Nivar has been tentatively put at Rs 400 crore and a full assessment is being made, Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy said on Thursday after visiting localities affected by the cyclonic storm when it made landfall in the early hours. Paddy crops over an extent of 820 hectares besides vegetables on 200 hectares, sugarcane on 170 hectares, 55 hectares of banana crop and betel leaf cultivated on seven hectares had been severely hit by the torrential rains, the chief minister said. Puducherry administration would seek an interim relief of Rs 50 crores from the Centre, he told reporters. A full assessment was being made by the departments on the total quantum of loss in farm and other sectors although it had been estimated tentatively that the loss would be ₹400 crore, Narayanasamy said. — PTI

## COUNTER POINT



**You should have bribed the survey agency for a positive rank!**

**KANIZA GARARI** |DC  
HYDERABAD, NOV. 26

A positive trend of decreasing new Covid-19 cases is being observed in southern states, which is indicative of well-planned activities and systematic control of cases, an analysis by Indian Medical Association (IMA) has shown. The daily rise in cases emerging from south Indian states is approximately just 5,000 per day. However, onset of winter, cyclone effect, and elections are three major concerns, which can lead to increase in active cases by December end, observe experts within

the IMA.

The analysis made by the association shows that overall supervision in states of Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala shows that surveillance, contact tracing and increased testing have been effective in these states. This has helped not only control Coronavirus cases but also bring down the number of active cases in these states. Testing has been the highest in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, which has helped them trace and track the virus better.

Compliance levels within people have been overall sat-

isfactory. Residents of rural areas have also been able to tackle the disease better due to their better immune response and natural social distancing. The diseased population has been in the age group of 30 to 50 years. This is because elderly people have not been moving out due to which senior citizens remain under protection.

Dr. J. A. Jayalal, national vice president-elect of IMA, says, "Healthcare systems and infrastructure in south India have been able to handle Covid cases and treat them well. Remedies have been used early. ■ P4

## STATE | 3

**Commissioner of police visits waterlogged areas in city**



**WORLD | 5**  
**Trump pardons Flynn, his ex-NSA who lied to FBI**

## SPORT | 8

**India-Australia first ODI today**



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# Nivar-shaken TN tries to get back on feet

■ 3 killed ■ Areas marooned ■ Power restored

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, NOV. 26

Three people were killed, over 1,000 trees uprooted and low-lying areas marooned due to water-logging following heavy rains across Tamil Nadu till Wednesday night. Thunder showers lashed the state, as well as Puducherry, as cyclonic storm Nivar made landfall in the early hours, leading to inundation and uprooting of trees.

Three people, including a woman, were killed in rain-related incidents such as tree and wall collapses in Ponnéri and Villupuram near here. In a few places, overhead electricity cables snapped as heavy trees fell over them.

In Chennai, citizens in many parts complained of disruption in Internet services. Low-lying neighbourhoods like those in suburban Irumbuliur, Mudichur and Urapakkam witnessed flooding. Reports said water entered several houses in these areas. Rescue personnel ferried cooked food to the people using inflatable boats and while some chose to shift to the homes of their relatives, others continued to stay put battling odds. In city areas, civic workers pumped out stagnant water from several localities.

Airport operations, metro rail and bus transport resumed on



Fire and rescue services personnel evacuate those marooned in Mudichur and Varadarajapuram to safer places on Thursday.

— DC

**Tamil Nadu is likely to receive another spell of very heavy rainfall as a fresh low pressure area is expected to form in the Bay of Bengal from November 29, the IMD said ■ P3**

Thursday. Meanwhile, the discharge from Chembarambakkam lake in the city was reduced to about 1,500 cusecs from the 5,000 cusecs on Wednesday. The quantum of discharge is likely to be brought further down to 500 cusecs to maintain the water level in the lake at 22 feet as against its full level of 24 feet, officials said.

# CM, OPS supervise relief operations

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, NOV. 26:

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam visited various places affected by Cyclone Nivar that crossed the coast past Wednesday midnight.

Mr Palaniswami was at Cuddalore district, which was one of the worst-affected districts, enquiring with the people about the damages caused by the cyclone at Reddichavadi Keelkumarmangalam villages, among other places.

He consoled the farmers who had lost their banana

plantations in the gusty winds, met people housed at the Devanampettai relief camps and distributed essentials. He also paid a visit to the Mudunagar harbor region in Cuddalore district where the boats of fishermen had been kept safely to prevent them from being tossed away by the cyclone.

The Chief Minister had a chat with the local fishermen, listening to their stories of woes, held discussions with officials and also personnel from the National Disaster Relief Force, who were stationed at the district.

■ P3

## GUV HAS LINKS WITH CRIMINALS, RECALL HIM: TMC

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI** |DC  
KOLKATA, NOV. 26

Ahead of the Assembly elections in West Bengal, the ruling Trinamul Congress has demanded governor Jagdeep Dhankhar's removal from his post by President Ram Nath Kovind after it accused him of having "connections with criminals of the BJP".

The TMC also sought Mr Dhankhar's prosecution by the Kolkata police on criminal charges over his alleged support on Twitter to two accused – Govind Agarwal, a chartered accountant, and Sudipta Roy Chowdhury, a businessman – after their arrests in two separate cases of financial offences involving several crores of rupees.

■ P4

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 26

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday pitched for his oft-repeated concept of "One Nation, One Election", saying it was not just a matter of debate but what the country needed. He also suggested that the Election Commission prepare a single voters' list for all elections -- Lok Sabha, Assembly and panchayats, saying separate lists were a "waste of resources".

"One nation, one election isn't just a matter of debate, this is the need for India. Elections are held at different places every few months. The effect it has on development work is known to all," Mr Modi said in a virtual address at the 80th All-India Presiding Officers Conference.

He said a single voters' list was desirable. "Only one voters' list should be used for the Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and other elections. Why are we wasting time and money on these lists?" he said.

Speaking on a day that marks the 71st anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution on November 26, 1949, Mr Modi said: "Our



Police personnel use tear gas on farmers to disperse them during 'Delhi Chalo' protest march against the new farm laws, at Shambhu border in Patiala District, Thursday.

— PTI

were especially intense in places like Kundli, near Sonipat, and on the Delhi-Gurgaon border at Sirhaul and Rajokri. However, despite the tight security measures, about 70-odd protesters, including some trade union members, managed to gather near Jantar Mantar, in the heart of Delhi, but were detained after refusing to vacate the area.

Amid huge protests, Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar appealed to the farmers to suspend their agitation and invited them for talks on December 3. "The government is committed to the welfare of farmers and we are ready for talks. Whether it's about minimum support price or infrastructure, we are ready for a discussion," he said.

The agitation saw Punjab Chief Minister

Capt. Amarinder Singh entering into a war of words on Twitter with Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar, who urged him to "stop inciting innocent farmers". Capt. Singh attacked the Haryana CM, saying: "Shocked at your response Manohar Lal Khattarji. It's farmers who've to be convinced on MSP, not me. You should've tried to talk to them before their 'Delhi Chalo'. And if you think I'm inciting farmers, why are Haryana farmers also marching to Delhi?"

The Punjab CM said: "As for endangering lives during Covid-19, have you forgotten it was the BJP-led Central government that pushed through those farm laws amid the pandemic, uncaring about the impact they'd have on our farmers? Why didn't you speak out then, Manohar Lal Khattarji?"

## MILITANTS KILL 2 SOLDIERS IN SRINAGAR

**YUSUF JAMEEL** |DC  
SRINAGAR, NOV. 26

Two Army jawans were killed in a sneak attack by three car-borne militants on Srinagar's outskirts on Thursday. The police and witnesses said the gunmen appeared at Aban Shah Chowk in Khoshipora area and opened fire on an Army quick reaction team, critically injuring two soldiers. Both succumbed to their injuries while being evacuated to a hospital at the nearby Shariyefabad Army cantonment, officials said.

The slain soldiers were identified as Sepoy Rattan Lal of 163 Territorial Army and Sepoy Deshmukh of 101 Territorial Army. They were attached to 2nd Unit of Rashtriya Rifles, the Army's counter-insurgency unit. One report said the assailants also decamped with the service rifle of one of the slain jawans.

Soon after the attack, the Army's 2 RR and the J&K police's Special Operations Group launched a search operation in the area, as the Army pressed a helicopter into service to hunt the militants and the Maruti car used to carry out the attack.

## REMEMBERING 26/11

## MUMBAI ATTACK NOW IMPOSSIBLE: RAJNATH

**Defence minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday that a 26/11-like terror strike in India is almost impossible as the national security architecture has been significantly bolstered in the last few years, even as the country remembered the victims of the deadly Mumbai terror attack on its 12th anniversary. Mr Singh asserted that the country is no longer a soft target for terrorists and India has "escalated the cost for those supporting terrorism".**



■ REPORT ON PAGE 4

# Cyclone, winter, polls could derail win against Covid: IMA

## Oxford vaccine data comes under cloud

**New York, Nov. 26:** AstraZeneca Plc and the University of Oxford are facing questions about their Covid-19 vaccine and whether regulators would quickly authorise its emergency use after the pharma company acknowledged an error in the vaccine dosage received by some participants and other irregularities and omissions, according to a media report.

AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford announced this week that their inexpensive, easy-to-produce coronavirus vaccine appeared effective, with the average efficacy of about 70 per cent.

## No scheduled intl flight this year

**Mumbai, Nov. 26:** India's aviation safety regulator Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Thursday extended the suspension of scheduled international commercial passenger flights to December 31.

The restrictions, however, will not apply on international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by the DGCA, an official circular said.

International scheduled flights, however, may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis, the circular by the regulator added.

PTI



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SHORT TAKES

## Suburban train services resume in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 26

The workmen/suburban train services in Chennai, suspended in view of Nivar cyclone, resumed operations on Thursday. There will be one EMU special train every one hour (up and down) from Chennai Moore Market complex – and Arakkonam. Similarly, one EMU special train will run every one hour (up and down) from Chennai Moore Market complex and Gummudipoondi. There will be one EMU special train for every one hour (up and down) from Chennai Beach and Chengalpattu.

The Southern Railway has resumed operation of Chennai Egmore – Sengottai special train on Thursday. The Chennai Egmore – Kollam special train is scheduled to leave on Thursday.

A one-way special train will be operated from Rameswaram to Manduadih from Thursday.

## TN likely to receive heavy rains again next week: IMD

**New Delhi, Nov. 26:** Slammed by the severe cyclonic storm Nivar early Thursday, Tamil Nadu is likely to receive another spell of very heavy rainfall as a fresh low pressure area is expected to form in the Bay of Bengal from November 29, the IMD said.

## Chennai may have rains for two days

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 27

The Regional Meteorological Centre said Tamil Nadu will continue to receive scattered heavy to very heavy rainfall with isolated extremely heavy rain in Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore, Chennai, Kanchipuram, Chengalpattu, Mayiladuthurai, Ariyalur, Perambalur, Kalakurichi, Villupuram, Tiruvannamalai districts of Tamil Nadu, Pudukkottai and Karaikal. Heavy rain is also likely to occur at a few places over Vellore, Ranipet, Tiruvallur, Tirupattur, Krishnagiri, Tiruchy, Salem and Dharmapuri districts, a release from RMC said. Chennai will receive rains for two more days till Friday. The skies are likely to be overcast with heavy to extremely heavy rain likely to occur at certain places on Thursday.



People being rescued in a boat in Vellore on Thursday. — K. Senthil Nathan

# Commissioner of police visits waterlogged areas

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 26

Cyclone Nivar wreaked havoc in Chennai and its suburbs with heavy rain and gusty winds damaging power and communication poles, destroying houses and leaving thousands in relief shelters.

City police commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal visited the waterlogged areas in Mudichur, Tambaram and distributed relief materials to the people living in relief camps.

Due to the downpour, several streets in Guduvanchery, Maraimalai Nagar, Tambaram, Mudichur, Varadharajapuram were flooded. Chennai: Trichy national highway was completely waterlogged, disrupting traffic. Police and fire service personnel pitched in with relief work in coordination with other departments in several parts of the city and suburbs, which were affected due to incessant rain.

# Cops save man stuck in crumbling house

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 26

The city police on Wednesday night saved the life of a man who was stuck inside a crumbling house in Chennai's Otteri.

According to police sources, at 11:30 pm on Wednesday, police personnel from the Secretariat colony police station, who were on patrol duty near Swamy Dasarapu-

ram in Otteri, led by head constable Jalaja and constable Elango, found the front portion of an old house had collapsed due to rain.

The team tried to find out if anyone was present inside the dilapidated house. The police officers shouted, but there was no response. However, they informed the station Inspector about the condition of the house and reportedly entered through a

small opening in the collapsed portion. The police team saw a man sitting inside the house drunk. The man identified as Ganesh, 33, a painter, had a pet cat and didn't want to leave without it. The police team, amidst the downpour, started to search for the cat along with Ganesh and found it after some time.

With the help of some volunteers, the cops managed to bring Ganesh out of the house. Within a short while, the thatched roof of the house collapsed, police said.

Police took Ganesh to a relief camp. Police said he had lost his job due to the pandemic lockdown and lived with his elderly mother, who became sick recently and was admitted to a government hospital in the city.

# Corpn, police teams lead restoration work in city

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 26

Following cyclone Nivar, the restoration work led by the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) and city police teams is in full swing in the city. The teams of rapid action force armed with equipment hit the streets early morning itself to clear the damages caused by Nivar.

According to the GCC, as many as 288 lamp posts collapsed in the heavy winds that lashed the city. As many as 246 posts were replaced. Meanwhile, 12 rescue teams led by police commissioner Mahesh Kumar Agarwal cleared 102 uprooted trees in 80 police station boundaries with the support of GCC staff. Seven cars and two autos damaged after falling of trees were disposed.

The teams cleared water stagnation in Vadapalani, Virugambakkam, Kodambakkam, Ashok Nagar, Perambalur, Egmore, Abiramapuram, Yanagavuni, Kodungaiyur, Korukkupettai, Valasaravakkam, Korattur, Nungambakkam, Kilpakkam, Choolaimedu, Mylapore, Vepery, Arumba-



People being rescued from Pattalam area in Chennai on Thursday.

— DC

kkam Sand, Kodambakkam, Rayapettai, Puhai, Madhavaram, Tiruvallikeni, Denampet, Annasatukkam, Aminthakarai, and Nandambakkam. A temporary control room continues to be operational. People can contact on 94981-81239. The parks department of GCC said that as many as

267 tree uprooting cases were reported from 8am on Wednesday till Thursday 8 am. All of them were cleared by noon with the support of local people. Kodambakkam (Zone X) reported highest number of tree falling cases, 60, followed by Adyar (Zone XIII) (59) and Royapuram (Zone V) (31).

As per the talukwise rainfall data published by GCC, the city received 1497.60 mm rainfall. Mylapore topped with 263.60 mm rainfall while Sholinganallur came second with 220mm followed by Ambathur (159), Guindy (139), Mambalam (135.50) and Alandur (132.70).

## Chennai airport, metro services resume

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 26

The flights which were suspended as a precautionary measure in view of cyclone Nivar resumed at Chennai airport on Thursday. Chennai metro services also resumed on Thursday.

According to airport sources, operations at the Chennai airport resumed at around 9:30 am.

The airport was scheduled to start operations at 7 am, but due to adverse weather conditions, two flights were diverted to Bengaluru and one flight was delayed for at least an hour and made a landing. As many as 79 flights were cancelled on Thursday.

The Chennai metro also resumed its services on Thursday.

"In connection with Nivar cyclone, Metro train services will start by today (26.11.2020) 12.00 pm, will run with holiday train services time table with the headway of 10 mins," the official handle of the Chennai Metro Rail said on Twitter.



# No internet connectivity for hours in the city

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 26

After cyclone Nivar made a landfall in the early hours of Thursday leaving a trail of destruction in various parts of Chennai, the internet connectivity went down for many hours leaving users in a spot.

In Ramapuram, the technicians with ACT Fibernet service provider were working since early morning to repair the damages caused by Nivar. Many residents in the area struggled without net connectivity for hours.

Senthil Kumar, an ACT net user, said that he lost connectivity on Wednesday evening and was complaining with

the service provider throughout the day.

Another user of ACT net at Thiruvannmiyur said she also lost connectivity on Wednesday evening, and was struggling throughout Thursday.

Narayan Kumar, a Jio user, said that he lost connectivity for seven hours on Thursday and later it was reconnected. Karthik, a technician with ACT, said their cables were cut by Tangedco workmen as part of their operations. "As a result, we had to replace the cables with new ones. An army of workmen had been working throughout the day. Many areas have been cleared. All issues will be cleared by Friday," he says.

## Political leaders want govt to expedite relief

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 26

Several political parties urged the government to expedite relief to the victims of cyclone Nivar, pointing out the ravages of the cyclone, rains and floods in various places across the state, including Chennai.

Regretting that the AIADMK government had not learnt any lessons despite the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on the 2015 floods pointing to a lot of mistakes by the administration, Stalin wanted the government to pay a compensation of ₹5000 to each of the families affected by the devastation brought about by Nivar.

He said that he had visited several Assembly constituencies in Chennai in the past two days and distributed food packets and other essentials to the people displaced from their homes and living in camps.

The people affected by the cyclone feel that the AIADMK government had not learnt anything in the past 10 years and not done anything to prevent waterlogging. Stalin said adding that if the storm water drains had been cleared properly, water logging on Chennai roads could have been avoided.

He recalled that the CAG report given in 2016 on the floods of 2015 was not tabled in the Assembly for two years and was brought out only after he had put pressure on the government. None of suggestions, recommendations and advice given in the report had been taken into consideration by the government, he alleged.



Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam visiting a cyclone affected area in Chennai on Thursday.

— DC

# OPS holds meeting with officials on providing relief

From P1

Mr Panneerselvam on his part visited some localities in Chennai in Velachery, Taramani and Periyar Nagar, meeting people at relief camps and slum clearance board tenements. He held a meeting, through video conference, with officers and engineers of the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board and gave instructions on providing relief to the urban poor.

He urged the officials to clear all the water logging, remove the piled up garbage, sanitise the habi-

tations, provide drinking water and continue the work till the rains stopped completely and normalcy returned.

Electricity minister P. Thangamani told the media that the precautions taken by the department in disconnecting power at places prone to water logging prevented loss of life during the rains. Power had been restored in most of the places and work was on in restoring it in the other places, where water logging was still on, he said.

All fishermen in the State were safe, said Revenue Minister R.B. Udhayakumar, who spoke to the media at the round the clock control room set up at the Ezhilagam office complex to monitor the movement of the cyclone and coordinate relief and rescue operations.

He said 2,27,317 camps were set up in all the affected districts and that normalcy was returning to many places affected by the cyclone. There was indications on the formation of another cyclone and the government was keenly watching it to respond

appropriately, he added.

Cyclone Nivar brought 23 cm of rainfall to Chennai in 36 hours benefitting 210 water bodies and increasing the ground water table but the instances of water logging was less than in 2015 because the Corporation had set up and cleared storm water drains running to about 1000 km. Commissioner G. Prakash told the media at Ripon Building.

During the time of the floods, 302 complaints were received, most on water stagnation, he said, adding that 135 complaints

were addressed immediately, while the rest were being looked into. He said all subways other than the one in Vyasarpadi did not see inundation because the water was pumped out regularly.

The flooding of Vyasarpadi subway was due to the water from the Otteri nullah overflowing due to the incessant rains and entering the areas on both sides and thus filling up the subway. Of the 387 trees that Nivar felled, 350 had been removed from the roads and the rest were being taken away, he said.

The Corporation had opened 200 relief camps but only 68 of them attracted displaced people. While 3738 people came to the camps, most of them had returned home after a short stay, Prakash said. Besides medical camps, Coronavirus testing was also done at the camps.

In the entire relief operations undertaken by the Corporation all over the city, 23,000 personnel at various levels were involved in providing succor to the people affected by the cyclone, the rains and the floods, he said.

Minister for Animal Husbandry Udumalai K. Radhakrishnan and Tiruppur District Collector K. Vijayakartheayan flag off 5 new 108 ambulances for Udumalaipettai government hospital. — DC



# Timely action, concerted efforts help Tamil Nadu weather Nivar

B. Vijayalakshmi

## Viewpoint

Even while Chennai and other districts breathed a sigh of relief on Thursday after cyclone Nivar made a landfall on Wednesday night near Puducherry, thousands had lost their sleep after their areas were flooded. Also, there were others, especially in apartments, haunted by 2015 floods, who were worried that water might enter their ground floor houses due to incessant rains.

Inundated streets, peo-

ple wading in knee-deep water and being rescued in boats were among the several frightening scenes witnessed in Chennai as heavy rains lashed the city. Besides, several areas faced a power cut with Tangedco cutting power supply as a precaution in the wake of the cyclone.

However, the state government must be commended for taking the lead, drawing up a disaster management action plan, spurring various departments, especially the civic body and the police, to action and launching precautionary measures. Timely action and concerted efforts mitigated the destructive impact of cyclone Nivar on the capital city.

This time, the sluices of Chembarambakkam reservoir were opened in time to let out the excess inflow of water as a precautionary measure. Delayed opening of the reservoir was said to be the trigger for the devastating 2015 Chennai floods. Flood warnings were also issued to people living on the banks of Adyar and villages in Chengalpet and Kanchipuram districts due to the opening of Chembarambakkam reservoir. The Chief Minister also kept a close track of emergency measures taken for the last two days.

State ministers camped in districts to oversee relief operations. In places like Varadharajapuram, Mudichur and

Ram Nagar in Velachery where water entered homes, people were evacuated and lodged in relief camps. Arterial roads and the airport remained closed for several hours.

By Thursday evening, power was restored in almost all areas and hundreds of uprooted trees removed from roads and parks. No major lakes or water bodies, which were brimming, suffered breaches. While waterlogging in several areas was cleared, some locations remained marooned. A majority of the subways were unaffected. Probably, Chennai will be free of waterlogging only after the completion of a comprehensive and pragmatic stormwater drain network.



## SHORT TAKES

**'CYCLONE, POLLS MAY AFFECT WAR ON COVID'**

Turn from Page 1

This has had a good outcome in many patients. The second wave will depend on behaviour of people and following of protocols."

Owing to economic and political activities, there has been movement of people in different parts of the country and the world. This is a matter of concern as following protocols of rest and quarantine are not as earlier. For this reason, there is worry that there can be a spike in Coronavirus cases in the months of December and January.

Dr Prabhu Kumar C., senior general physician says, "We are seeing increasing number of cases in north India, particularly Delhi. This is an indication that there will be a rise in Covid-19 cases if people do not follow safety protocols. SARS Cov 2 virus is around and it is virulent. Preventive measures must not be given up at any cost," the doctor underlined.

Immunity is higher among people of south India owing to their food, culture and less polluted environment.

**GROOM ARRESTED FOR LINK IN IIFL LOOT CASE**

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 26

A 30-year-old youth serving as manager in a private gold loan firm was on Thursday arrested in the middle of his marriage rituals by the Crime Branch in connection with dacoity at the IIFL Finance Ltd branch office in Cuttack city.

The arrested youth was identified as Pitambar Sahoo of Nischintakoli, Cuttack. Following Pitambar's arrest, the police seized a large quantity of stolen gold and investigation is underway to ferret out more information on the IIFL Finance loot case, said Prateek Singh, deputy commissioner of police, Cuttack.

Following the manager's arrest, the bride and her family who were waiting at a hotel had to pack up and cancel the event.

According to reports, the police had obtained the custodial remand of five accused persons in the loot case. Their preliminary questioning revealed that more than 10 employees of IIFL Company had direct links with the crime that took place on November 19. According to sources, the interrogation of other suspects was on and many more are likely to be arrested.

On the other hand, people who had deposited gold in IIFL Company Ltd with the hope to get more returns have become skeptical whether they would get their deposits back in view of scam and police action.

**'NO AUCTION OF NIRAV PENTHOUSE BEFORE DEC. 14'**

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, NOV. 26

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday made it clear before the Bombay High Court that it will not auction a luxurious penthouse — Samudra Mahal belonging to Nirav Modi — before December 14.

The HC was hearing a petition filed by Modi's son Rohin challenging ED's move to confiscate Samudra Mahal property. In his petition, Rohin informed the court that his father is nowhere concerned with the said property and it belonged to a trust set up by him.

Few months back, the ED had filed an application before the special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court. The agency had brought to the notice of the court that as per provision under Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEO) Act 2018, it can confiscate immovable and movable properties belonging to Nirav Modi. According to the ED, Modi has properties worth ₹1,396 crore in India, England and UAE.

Subsequently, in June 2020 PMLA court had passed order to confiscate Modi's properties. Petitioner Rohin's counsel Amit Sibal argued that property belongs to Rohin Trust and not any individual. He also argued that as per FEO Act, a notice must have been issued to Rohin if ED wants to auction the property and he must be heard before the auction, but no notice was issued to Rohin.

**Farmers are up in arms**

Members of various farmers organisations try to cross Shambu Border in Patiala district on Thursday during the 'Delhi Chalo' protest march by farmers against the new farm laws. Farmers faced water cannons and broke police barriers at the state's border with Haryana and by late evening, a large group of them had reached the road toll plaza at Panipat, about 100 km from Delhi.

— PTI

**ANOTHER 26/11 ATTACK IS NEAR IMPOSSIBLE, SAYS RAJNATH**

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, NOV. 25

Defence minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday that a 26/11-like terror strike in India is almost impossible as the national security architecture has been significantly bolstered in the last few years, even as the country remembered the victims of the deadly Mumbai terror attack on its 12th anniversary.

Mr Singh asserted that the country is no longer a soft target for terrorists and India has "escalated the cost for those supporting terrorism".

Without taking the name of China, Mr Singh said that like Pakistan there is another neighboring country which keeps on creating trouble regarding the border issue. "Our government has given full freedom to the army to oppose any attempt to change the line of actual control (LAC)." He said that in the Galwan Valley Indian soldiers forced the Chinese troops to go back. Mr Singh said India wants to resolve the issues with China through dialogue. "But I want to assure everyone that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, there will be no compromise on India's self-respect, sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said.

Referring to the Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people including 28 foreigners from 10 nations were killed, Mr Singh said that it forced the country to think to permanently change its 'national security strategy'. "We can assure all the countrymen that now India has strengthened its internal and external security cycle so much that it is now almost impossible to execute another 26/11 attack on Indian soil," he said.

**Phase III trial of India-made 'Covaxin' begins at AIIMS**

Around 15,000 volunteers will receive the shot over the next few days

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, NOV. 26

With 44,489 new confirmed cases in the last 24 hours, India's Covid-19 caseload crossed 92 lakh, while the number of recoveries surged to 86.42 lakh.

The number of total Coronavirus cases rose to 92,22,216, while the death toll due to the disease climbed to 1,34,699 with 481 new fatalities.

Phase three trial of India-made Coronavirus vaccine Covaxin, meanwhile, began at AIIMS in New Delhi on Thursday with Dr M.V. Padma Srivastava, the chief of Neurosciences Centre at the premier institute, and three other volunteers receiving the first dose.

Dr Srivastava was the first one to receive the shot, which would be given to around 15,000 volunteers at the medical institute over the next few days.

The first dose of 0.5 ml Covaxin intramuscular injection was given to four volunteers. They were under observation for two hours and will be monitored for the next few days.

Dr Srivastava said, "Covaxin is the first indigenously-developed anti-coronavirus vaccine and on top of that, my institute is participating in the trial. I am honoured to be the first volunteer to receive the shot. I am happy to be a part of such a great cause. I am perfectly fine and I'm working."

As part of the trial application, a dose of 0.5 ml would be given on day 0 and on day 28.

The phase three randomised double-blind placebo-controlled multicentre trial would cover around 28,500 subjects aged 18 years and above.

It would be conducted in around 25 sites across 10 states. The trial has already started at a few sites.

Bharat Biotech has been

given the permission for conducting phase 3 human clinical trials of the Covaxin from the Drugs Controller General of India.

According to the Union health ministry, the active caseload shot up to 4,44,746, an increase of 6,079 cases from Tuesday, even though it remained below five lakh for the 15th consecutive day, accounting for 4.82 per cent of the total cases.

The number of people who have recovered from the disease surged to 86,42,771, pushing the national recovery rate to 93.72 per cent, while the Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.46 per cent.

Of the 1,34,699 deaths reported in the country so far due to the disease, Maharashtra accounts for 46,683, followed by Karnataka (11,695), Tamil Nadu (11,639), Delhi (8,621), West Bengal (8,121), Uttar Pradesh (7,615), Andhra Pradesh

(6,956), Punjab (4,653) and Gujarat (3,892).

The Union health ministry on Thursday said 60.72 per cent of the 44,489 fresh cases registered in a span of 24 hours have been contributed by six states and UTs, with Kerala leading the tally followed by Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

It said 60.50 per cent of the 524 latest fatalities are concentrated in six states and Union territories — Delhi, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

Kerala leads the tally with 6,491 new Covid-19 cases registered in a span of 24 hours, while Maharashtra has reported 6,159 new cases followed by Delhi with 5,246 new cases.

Delhi with 99 deaths reported the maximum new fatalities. Maharashtra saw a fatality count of 65 followed by West Bengal with 51

deaths, the ministry said.

According to the ministry, 65 per cent of the active cases are in eight states and UTs which have contributed to the maximum daily new cases and deaths.

It said 61 per cent of the total deaths are concentrated in these eight states/UTs.

The case fatality rates of Punjab (3.16 per cent), Maharashtra (2.60 per cent), West Bengal (1.75 per cent) and Delhi (1.60 per cent) are higher than the national average of 1.46 per cent, the ministry said.

Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Kerala have a case fatality rate of 1.43 per cent, 1.02 per cent, 0.87 per cent and 0.37 per cent, respectively.

Delhi has 29,169 Covid-19 cases per million followed by Kerala with 16,201 cases, Maharashtra with 14,584 and Haryana with 7,959 cases per million population.

**TMC wants Guv sacked**

From page 1

On Thursday, Sreerampore TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee claimed at Trinamul Bhavan:

"The governor, as a public servant, is creating obstruction to the ongoing investigation against the two accused. He is trying to indulge criminals of the BJP with whom he has connections. The way Mr Dhankhar is giving threats to the Kolkata police and the Bidhannagar police through his tweets, he is liable for prosecution under Sections 186 and 189 of the Indian Penal Code. The police must initiate a criminal case against him. No sanction is required for this."

He added: "The President must intervene in the matter to see if the two IPC sections were violated by the governor or not. If so, Mr Dhankhar should be removed by the President as governor with immediate effect. He is not entitled to remain as governor. According to my reading of the statute, since the governor has violated two IPC sections, the President should not allow him to continue in his chair further after considering all aspects."

Asked if the TMC has

planned to present any memorandum to President Kovind for Mr Dhankhar's removal as governor, Mr Banerjee said: "It will be decided later."

Countering the TMC's demand, Mr Dhankhar, who is now in North Bengal, said: "My attention has been drawn to press release and a press conference by a ruling party leader. To the extent the governor's role or actions are concerned, the reflections are wide off the mark, betraying ignorance of elementary constitutional and legal aspects and factually untenable."

**Oxford vaccine data comes under cloud**

From page 1

However, AstraZeneca has acknowledged a key mistake in the vaccine dosage received by some study participants, the New York Times said in a report. This admission has added to questions about whether the "vaccine's apparently spectacular efficacy will hold up under additional testing".

Along with the error, scientists and industry experts said a series of other irregularities and omissions in the manner in which AstraZeneca initially disclosed the data have also eroded confidence in the reliability of

their results. As it came to light that the vaccine's most promising results did not reflect data from older people, it appears difficult that regulators in the US and elsewhere will quickly authorise the emergency use of the vaccine.

The NYT quoted Michele Meixell, a spokeswoman for AstraZeneca, as saying that the trials "were conducted to the highest standards."

"I think that they have really damaged confidence in their whole development program," an analyst for the investment bank SVB Leerink Geoffrey Porges said. *PTI*

**BJP FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST LALU YADAV**

DC CORRESPONDENT PATNA, NOV. 26

A complaint case has been registered against RJD Chief Lalu Yadav at the vigilance police station in Patna.

BJP MLA Lalan Paswan who had accused Lalu Yadav of making strategies to topple the newly elected NDA government in Bihar filed the complaint on Thursday under the prevention of corruption act.

On Wednesday, BJP leader and former deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi had released an audio clip in which Lalu Yadav was heard talking to Lalan Paswan and asking him to abstain from the voting during the speaker's election.

Sources said that the Jharkhand administration has also asked the officials to ascertain the veracity of the audio clip which was released by the BJP on Wednesday.

Amid the political turmoil in Bihar and Jharkhand over the issue, Lalu Yadav who is serving his jail term after being sentenced in several fodder scam cases has been sent back to the paying ward of Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences, Ranchi.

He was shifted to the director's bungalow last month due to Coronavirus.

"This is an attempt to stop the opposition RJD from raising questions against the NDA. The allegation against Lalu Yadav is baseless and the NDA leaders cannot prove anything. The opposition parties in Bihar would continue to expose the failures of the NDA government in Bihar", RJD spokesperson Chitranjan Gagan told this newspaper.

Sources, however, said that the RJD is concerned as Lalu Yadav's bail hearing in the fodder scam case is also scheduled on Friday.

**INDIA, NEPAL TO ADVANCE MUTUAL COOPERATION**

Kathmandu, Nov. 26:

India and Nepal on Thursday agreed to step up efforts to advance mutual cooperation during a "productive" meeting between Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and his Nepalese counterpart Bharat Raj Paudyal. Shringla began his two-day official visit to Nepal on Thursday.

He was accorded a warm welcome on his maiden visit to Nepal which is happening at the invitation of Nepal Foreign Secretary Paudyal, amid a strain in bilateral ties following a bitter border row between the two countries.

"FS @harshvshringla had a productive meeting with @PaudyalBR during which they took stock of bilateral cooperation and discussed issues of mutual interest," the Indian embassy in Kathmandu said in a tweet.

"Both sides appreciated the progress made on the numerous bilateral initiatives and projects. It was agreed to take further steps to advance mutual cooperation," it said in another tweet.

Shringla arrived at Tribhuvan International in Kathmandu on Thursday morning.

While interacting with local journalists, he said, "I have wanted to come here earlier also, but because of Covid-19, I couldn't do so. I am very happy to be here. I was here in Kathmandu earlier too, though this is my first visit to Nepal as a Foreign Secretary. We have very strong relationship. Our endeavour will be to see how we can take that relationship forward".

Shringla's visit will be a continuation of the regular exchange of high-level visits between the two friendly neighbour.

— PTI

## TI | FINDINGS

**The survey was conducted between June 17 and July 17 in India****India has highest bribery rate in Asia: Report**

New Delhi, Nov. 26: India has the highest bribery rate in Asia and the most number of people who use personal connections to access public services, according to a new report by corruption watchdog Transparency International.

The Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) Asia, found that nearly 50 per cent of those who paid bribes were asked to, while 32 per cent of those who used personal connections said they would not receive the service otherwise.

The report is based upon the survey which was conducted between June 17 and July 17 in India with a sample size of 2,000.

"With the highest bribery rate (39 per cent) in the region, India also has the highest rate of people using personal connections to access public services (46 per cent)," the report said.

Bribery in public services continues to plague India. Slow and complicated bureaucratic process, unnecessary red tape and unclear regulatory frame-

works force citizens to seek out alternate solutions to access basic services through networks of familiarity and petty corruption, the report said.

"Both national and state governments need to streamline administrative processes for public services, implement preventative measures to combat bribery and nepotism, and invest in user-friendly online platforms to deliver essential public services quickly and effectively," the report said.

Although reporting

cases of corruption is critical to curbing the spread, a majority of citizens in India (63 per cent) think that if they report corruption, they will suffer retaliation, it said.

In several countries including India, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, sexual extortion rates are also high and more must be done to prevent sextortion and address specific gendered forms of corruption, the report said.

Sextortion is extorting money or sexual favours

from someone by threatening to reveal evidence of their sexual activity through means like morphed images.

In India, 89 per cent think government corruption is a big problem, 18 per cent offered bribes in exchange for votes and 11 per cent experienced sextortion or know someone who has.

About 63 per cent of surveyed people think the government is doing well in tackling corruption while 73 per cent said their anti-corruption agency is

doing well in the fight against corruption, it said.

Based on fieldwork conducted in 17 countries, the GCB surveyed nearly 20,000 citizens in total.

The report said the results showed that nearly three out of four people think corruption is a big problem in their country and the survey also found that nearly one in five people who accessed public services, such as health care and education, paid a bribe in the preceding year.



## IN BRIEF

### 40 miners stuck at Zimbabwe mishap

**Harare:** At least 40 informal miners in Zimbabwe have been trapped underground after a shaft in a disused gold mine collapsed, the country's miners' federation said on Thursday. The incident occurred late Wednesday in the town of Bindura, around 70 kilometres (43 miles) north of the capital Harare, said Wellington Takavarasha, head of the Zimbabwe Miners Federation. Takavarasha said the miners were working inside the disused Ran Gold Mine when a shaft caved in. Six miners have since been pulled from the rubble and taken to hospital.

## Flydubai lands 1st scheduled flight

**Tel Aviv:** A flight operated by budget airline flydubai landed in Tel Aviv on Thursday, the first scheduled commercial service between the two cities following the normalisation of ties between the UAE and Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on hand for the arrival of the inaugural flight after its nearly four-hour trip, called it "a moment of history." "As-salam alaikum (Peace be upon you)," he said to arriving passengers. "Come again and again and again." The United Arab Emirates in September signed a landmark US-brokered deal to formalise relations with Israel, the first such agreement by an Arab state in the Gulf.

## Greek oil tanker hit by blast at Saudi

**Riyadh:** An explosion rocked a Greek-operated oil tanker docked at Saudi Arabia's port of Shuqaiq on Wednesday, Greek officials said, in an attack that a Riyadh-led military coalition blamed on Yemeni rebels. The blast on the Maltese-flagged Agrari tanker follows a string of attacks by the Iran-linked rebels on Saudi oil infrastructure, highlighting the growing perils of a five-year military campaign led by the kingdom in Yemen. The tanker was "attacked by an unknown source" while it was preparing to depart from the Red Sea port of Shuqaiq, its Greece-based operator TMS Tankers said, adding that no injuries were reported. "The Agrari was struck about one meter above the waterline and has suffered a breach," TMS Tankers said in a statement. "It has been confirmed that the crew are safe and there have been no injuries. No pollution has been reported." An investigation was underway after Saudi authorities, including the coast guard, boarded the stricken vessel, it added.

## PALESTINIAN WHO WAGED 103-DAY FAST FREED

**Nablus, Palestinian Territories, Nov. 26:** Israel on Thursday released a Palestinian who waged a 103-day hunger strike to protest Israeli rules allowing his detention without charge, the Palestinian Prisoner's Club said. Maher al-Akhras, arrested over alleged membership of a militia group, was transferred from a Tel Aviv hospital to Nablus's Al-Najah University Hospital in the occupied West Bank, the prisoners' rights group said in a statement. A decision on releasing him to return home will follow "a medical assessment of his condition", Al-Najah hospital medical director Abdul-Karim Al-Bargawi said.

Akhras, 49, was arrested near Nablus in July and put in administrative detention, a policy that Israel uses to hold suspected militants without charge. He is suspected of links to the armed Palestinian group Islamic Jihad, labelled a terrorist group by Israel, the United States and the European Union. The father of six launched his fast to protest a four-month detention order, which had been due to end on November 26.

Akhras, who has been arrested by Israel several times previously, ended his hunger strike after Israeli authorities committed to not extending his detention beyond that date. Israel's administrative detention policy, inherited from the British mandate of Palestine, allows the internment of prisoners without charge for renewable periods of up to six months each time. Israel says the procedure allows authorities to hold suspects and prevent attacks while continuing to gather evidence, but critics and rights groups say the system is abused.

# Trump reiterates voter fraud allegations amid transition

## Calls into Pennsylvania Republican event to probe charges

**Washington, Nov. 26:** US President Donald Trump has baselessly claimed anew that he had won the election and uttered repeated falsehoods as he called into an event held by Pennsylvania Republicans to investigate unproven allegations of voter fraud. "This was an election that we won easily. We won it by a lot," Trump declared to the group gathered at a hotel in Gettysburg on Wednesday.

Trump, in fact, lost to President-elect Joe Biden by about 1,50,000 votes in the state, and Pennsylvania certified Biden as the winner on Tuesday. The Pennsylvania event was the latest attempt by Trump and his lawyer Rudy Giuliani, a former New York City mayor, to try to cast doubt on the results of the democratic election, even as the formal transition process has begun and a growing number of Republicans are recognising Biden as president-elect.

Similar events have been scheduled in Arizona and Michigan. State election officials across the country and international observers have said there is no evidence of widespread voter fraud, and Trump's legal team has lost repeatedly in court, in addition to making numerous elementary errors.

Wednesday's event, organised by local Republicans, including Pennsylvania state Sen. Doug Mastriano, an outspoken Trump supporter, came with trappings of an official hearing — flags, a gavel, and "witnesses" who "testified" in person and by phone. Among them was a special guest — the president — who at one point had been expected to attend in person, but did not after another member of his legal team announced that he had tested positive for the coronavirus on Wednesday morning. — AP



Two women pray on their knees as they gather with other supporters of President Donald Trump, most without masks, outside of the Wyndham Gettysburg hotel prior to a Pennsylvania Senate Majority Policy Committee public hearing to discuss 2020 election issues and irregularities with President Trump's lawyer Rudy Giuliani in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. — AFP

# Trump pardons Flynn, his ex-NSA who lied to FBI

**Washington, Nov. 26:** US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order granting pardon to his former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who had been charged with making false statements to the FBI over possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia during the 2016 presidential polls. Trump signed the executive order on Wednesday.

"It is my Great Honor to announce that General Michael T. Flynn has been granted a Full Pardon. Congratulations to Gen Flynn and his wonderful family, I know you will now have a truly fantastic Thanksgiving!" Trump said in a tweet.

White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said, "The President has pardoned General Flynn because he should never have been prosecuted. An independent review of General Flynn's case by the Department of Justice — conducted by respected career professionals — supports this conclusion."

In fact, the Department of Justice has firmly concluded that the charges against Flynn should be dropped, she said. "This Full Pardon achieves that objective, finally bringing to an end the relentless, partisan pursuit of an innocent man," she said. "General Flynn should not require a pardon. He is



Michael Flynn

an innocent man. Even the FBI agents who interviewed General Flynn did not think he was lying. "Multiple investigations have produced evidence establishing that General Flynn was the victim of partisan government officials engaged in a coordinated attempt to subvert the election of 2016," McEnany said. These individuals sought to prevent Trump from being elected, to block him from assuming that office on his election, remove him from office after his inauguration, and undermine his administration at every turn, she said. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in a statement said Trump's pardon of Michael Flynn, who twice pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his dealings with a foreign adversary, is an act of grave corruption and abuse of power. — PTI

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# Russia oil giant declares Arctic project open

**Moscow, Nov. 26:** Russian oil giant Rosneft on Wednesday announced the start of operations for its giant Vostok oil project in the Arctic, part of the country's strategic energy plan which has been criticised by environmentalists.

"It is with great pleasure that I inform you of the start of the practical implementation of the project," Rosneft chief executive Igor Sechin told President Vladimir Putin at a meeting in Moscow.

He thanked Putin, with whom he has close relations, for the adoption of a law facilitating Russian investments in the Arctic.

"The prospecting and exploration work are now underway, in accordance with our timetable," Sechin said, adding that the design work for a 770-kilometre (480-mile) oil pipeline and a port had

been completed. The strategic plan for Russia's mineral resources stretches to 2035 and is banking on growing global demand, though it does predict that natural gas will partially replace oil and coal.

"Mineral resources will remain a competitive advantage of Russia's economy, and will determine the place and role of the country in the world," it says.

Environmentalists urged the Russian government last year to stop granting licenses to exploit several Arctic deposits. The Vostok project, the cornerstone of Russia's Arctic ambitions, brings together several Rosneft activities in the Russian Far North, near the northern sea route that the company intends to exploit to deliver to Europe and Asia. — AFP

# Iran swaps Australian for 3 Iranians

**Tehran, Nov. 26:** Iran has freed a British-Australian academic who had been detained in the country for over two years in exchange for three Iranians held abroad, state TV announced.

The television report on Wednesday was scant on detail, saying only that the three Iranians freed in the swap had been imprisoned for trying to bypass sanctions on Iran. Kylie Moore-Gilbert, 33, was a Melbourne University lecturer on Middle Eastern studies when she was picked up at the Tehran airport as she tried to leave the country after attending an academic conference in 2018.

She was sent to Tehran's Evin prison, convicted of spying and sentenced to 10 years behind bars. Moore-Gilbert had vehemently denied the charges and maintained her innocence. Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne confirmed the release on Thursday, saying Moore-Gilbert would soon be reunited with her family.

"Dr. Moore-Gilbert's release has been an absolute priority for the government since her detention," Payne said in a statement. "The Australian government has consistently rejected the grounds on which the Iranian government arrested, detained and convicted Dr. Moore-Gilbert. We continue to do so."

Payne said the release

was achieved through "diplomatic engagement" with the Iranian government and was done in consultation with Moore-Gilbert's family. Moore-Gilbert was one of several Westerners held in Iran on widely criticised espionage charges that activists and UN investigators believe is a systematic effort to leverage their imprisonments for money or influence in negotiations with the West, which Tehran denies. — AP

swiftly followed by a fierce government crackdown spanning years and resulting in tens of thousands of arrests. Turkey's largest courtroom was packed with dozens of security personnel and the presiding judge ordered one protesting defendant to "Sit down!" several times before reading the verdict.

He issued multiple life sentences to 27 disgruntled air force pilots who bombed the capital

charges. A total of 251 people died and more than 2,000 were injured in what has turned into the defining moment of Erdogan's rule and contemporary Turkish politics. The chaotic attempt was

swiftly followed by a fierce government crackdown spanning years and resulting in tens of thousands of arrests.

Turkey's largest courtroom was packed with dozens of security personnel and the presiding judge ordered one protesting defendant to "Sit down!" several times before reading the verdict. He issued multiple life sentences to 27 disgruntled air force pilots who bombed the capital

widest variety of books to audiences," said Suzanne Nossel, the CEO of PEN America. "To the extent that efficiencies are garnered through consolidation, it is our hope that they are a catalyst to enable greater investment in authors, books, and outreach to readers."

Bertelsmann's rival News Corp., which owns HarperCollins, also slammed the deal. "Bertelsmann is not just buying a book publisher, but buying market dominance as a book behemoth," said News Corp Chief Executive Robert Thomson said in a state-

## FACEBOOK FIGHTS WITH ELECTION DISINFORMATION

**San Francisco, Nov. 26:** The US presidential election is finished: votes cast, the transition — though delayed — begun.

But on Facebook, the fight against election misinformation continues, thanks to "super spreaders" — accounts that disseminate rumours and fabrications, falsely spreading the idea that the 2020 election was beset by organised, extensive fraud by the Democratic Party.

The US non-profit Avaaz has identified 25 pages in particular, including those of Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump — the president's sons — White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany and combative conservative commentators Dan Bongino, Lou Dobbs and Rush Limbaugh, along with pro-Trump organizations such as Turning Point USA.

These are sowing doubt about the President-elect Joe Biden's White House win earlier this month — taking their lead from the building's current resident, who has also taken to social media to tweet that he will not "concede" and to outline his so-far unfounded claims that the election was "stolen." Unproven allegations of fraud from these accounts have been "liked," commented on and shared more than 77 million times since November 3, according to a study from Avaaz.

And that doesn't take into account the Facebook accounts of the "super-spreader" in chief, Donald Trump himself, nor that of his former adviser Steve Bannon, which was recently removed by the network.

— AFP

# ‘Infodemic’ risks jeopardising Covid vaccines

**Paris, Nov. 26:** As early as February, with the global pandemic spreading fast, the World Health Organisation issued a warning about an "infodemic", a wave of fake news and misinformation about the deadly new disease on social media.

Now with hopes hanging on Covid-19 vaccines, the WHO and experts are warning those same phenomena may jeopardise rollout of immunisation programmes meant to bring an end to the suffering. "The Coronavirus disease is the first pandemic in history in which technology and social media are being used on a massive scale to keep people safe, informed, productive and connected," the WHO said.

"At the same time, the technology we rely on to keep connected and informed is enabling and amplifying an infodemic that continues to undermine the global response and jeopardises measures to control the pandemic." More than 1.4 million people have died since the pandemic emerged in China late last year, but three developers are already applying for approval for their vaccines to be used as early as December.

Beyond logistics, though, governments must also contend with scepticism over vaccines developed with record speed at a time when social media has been both a tool for information and falsehood about the virus. The WHO defined an infodemic as an overabundance of information, both online and offline, including "deliberate attempts to disseminate wrong information." Last month, a study from Cornell University in the United States found that US President Donald Trump has been the world's biggest driver of Covid-19 misinformation during the pandemic.

In April, Trump mused on the possibility of using

## PANDEMIC OR NOT, PEOPLE MUST STAY ACTIVE, SAYS WHO

**Geneva, Nov. 25:** The Coronavirus pandemic is no excuse for not getting enough exercise, the World Health Organisation said on Wednesday, warning that even before the crisis many were getting too little physical activity.

In an update of its physical activity guidelines, the UN health agency stressed that exercise was vital to physical and mental health, while sedentary behaviour can have serious repercussions.

"WHO urges everyone to continue to stay active through the Covid-19 pandemic," the agency's head of health promotion Ruediger Krech told reporters. "If we do not remain active, we run the risk of creating another pandemic of ill-health as a result of sedentary behaviour." There are still no clear statistics on what impact the pandemic has had on physical activity, but lockdowns, movement restrictions, gym closures and other measures have clearly forced many people to stay home and have disrupted regular activities and exercise routines. — AFP

disinfectants inside the body to cure the virus and also promoted unproven treatments.

Since January, AFP has published more than 2,000 fact-checking articles dismantling false claims about the Coronavirus.

"Without the appropriate trust and correct information, diagnostic tests go unused, immunisation campaigns (or campaigns to promote effective vaccines) will not meet their targets, and the virus will continue to thrive," the WHO said. — AFP

## BRITAIN FUNDS ANTI-TERROR ESTABLISHMENT

**London, Nov. 26:** UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak has announced to set aside millions of pounds to establish a "world-leading" Counter Terrorism Operations Centre (CTOC) based in London. As part of a Spending Review for the next year's budgetary plans tabled in Parliament on Wednesday, the finance minister said he would allocate an additional 400 mn pound to help recruit 20K more police officers by 23.

## PUBLISHING | GIANT

## Bertelsmann's rival News Corp., which owns HarperCollins, slammed the deal

# Penguin to buy Simon & Schuster for \$2bn

**Berlin, Nov. 26:** German media giant Bertelsmann said on Wednesday that its Penguin Random House division is buying rival Simon & Schuster in a megadeal that would reshape the US publishing industry.

Penguin Random House, already the largest American publisher, will buy the New York-based Simon & Schuster, whose authors include Stephen King, Hillary Clinton and John Irving, from TV and film company ViacomCBS for \$2.17 billion in cash.

"Simon & Schuster strengthens Bertelsmann's footprint globally,

and (particularly) in the US, its second-largest market," the Guetersloh, Germany-based company said in a statement.

The purchase of Simon & Schuster would reduce the so-called Big Five of American publishing — which also includes HarperCollins, Hachette Book Group and Macmillan — to four. The companies said the deal is expected to close in 2021, subject to regulatory approval.

No US publisher in modern times would approach the power of the new company. ViacomCBS said Bertelsmann will pay a

● **PENGUIN RANDOM** House Chief Executive Markus Dohle said on Wednesday that Simon & Schuster would retain its editorial independence and that individual imprints within Penguin Random House and Simon & Schuster could continue to compete with each other for book deals.

termination fee if the deal fails due to regulatory reasons.

Agents and authors often worry that a concentration of power in publishing could mean less com-

petition for book deals, and lower advances.

The Authors Guild, a writers' organisation, said Wednesday that it opposed the sale because it would hurt competition, making it more difficult for authors and agents to negotiate with publishers. It said the U.S. Department of Justice should challenge it.

The department did not immediately return a request for comment.

"As an organisation of writers it's important to us that the publishing industry (thrives), and that there be multiple, robust outlets to bring the

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY	
E-TENDER NOTICE No. S6/SWR/PgJUB/20 LC Gates	
Dated: 16-11-2020	
The undersigned, on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders for the following work:	
Name of Work	Approx. Value
Provision of Mini Integrated Supply System and Remote Terminal Unit (RTU) for mid-section interlocked LC gates (Total 30 LC gates) over Hubballi Division.	Rs. 2,51.65,068/-
Last date for submission of bids: Upto 15.00 Hrs. of 14-12-2020	
For details log on: <a href="http://www.irops.gov.in">www.irops.gov.in</a>	
Deputy Chief Signal & Telecomm Engineer / Project, Hubballi	
PUB/194/AAS/PBS/SWR/2020-21	

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY	
E-TENDER NOTICE	
Kota Division	
Dy. Chief Engineer (Bridge Line), West Central Railway, Kota for and on behalf of President of Union of India invites following open E-Tender for Bridge-Line/Kota.	
Sr.No.1 Tender No.: BrLine-Kota-10-2020 Description of Work: Provision of RCC boundary wall along the railway track for raising of speed upto 160 Km/h in Sawai Madhopur-Hindaun City section of Kota division. Cost of Work: 832478756.06	
Sr.No.2 Tender No.: BrLine-Kota-11R-2020 Description of Work: Provision of RCC boundary wall along the railway track for raising of speed upto 160 Km/h in Hindaun City-Mathura section of Kota division. Cost of Work: ₹ 779919478.26	
Date of Closing of Tender For All Tenders : 18.12.2020 Complete details are available in the E-Tender notice uploaded on the railway website <a href="http://www.irops.gov.in">www.irops.gov.in</a> and also placed on the notice board of the Dy.CE/Br.Line/Kota, DRM Office, West Central Railway Kota's office. Offers are acceptable through E-procurement only, off line/Manual offer will not be accepted in any condition.	
XEN (Br.Line) Kota	



DECCAN Chronicle

27 NOVEMBER 2020

Ahmed’s passing leaves crisis-hit Cong in trouble

Although he had been down with Covid, the unexpected and premature death of Ahmed Patel on Wednesday leaves the Congress Party ill-prepared to take on the key challenge that upcoming Assembly polls in five states are likely to pose. Before that the party faces a major internal challenge — the holding of an election for the Congress president, for which the party’s interim chief Sonia Gandhi has already set up a central election authority after 23 prominent Congress figures wrote to Mrs Gandhi in early August asking for proper party elections, and in particular, the election of a new president to direct functioning on a structured basis since Rahul Gandhi had resigned as chief after the Lok Sabha election defeat in May 2019.

These events may be expected to pose a particular challenge principally on account of the fact that the Congress had become more or less wholly reliant on the organisational resources and skills that the late Mr Patel brought to the table. The rest of the party structure does exist in a nominal sense, but it is based on nominations and lacks substance. Ahmed Patel, too, was a nominated member of the Congress Working Committee but he used to win CWC elections until these stopped being held. Besides, he had vast experience.

He knew his own party inside out and had viable contacts across parties, especially in the non-BJP universe. He had entered Lok Sabha as far back as 1977 and served as parliamentary secretary to late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Later, he was made political aide to Sonia Gandhi when she became party chief more than two decades ago and served in that capacity even after Rahul Gandhi formally took over as Congress president in late 2017. Mr Patel was also made the party’s treasurer in 2018, a position he had held earlier.

Without exception, the late Mr Patel was the only Congress stalwart who could phone any senior non-Congress leader in any state to discuss poll alliances and adjustments or any political matter. He derived this special authority by virtue of holding — on account of his abilities and conciliator personality — the trust of Mrs Gandhi who herself commands great personal regard and political respect across parties since it was under her leadership that the Congress was able to constitute and head two consecutive coalition governments at the Centre.

Mrs Gandhi is in frail health and there is no Ahmed Patel now. It will be interesting to see how much real weight the central election authority can bring to bear on the internal party poll, which ought to be completed by February. Rahul Gandhi may be well-advised to steer clear of the process guiding the party’s internal elections — lest that be misunderstood — even if he is not going to be a candidate. In the absence of Mrs Gandhi playing an effective role day-to-day, and with Mr Patel gone, only a duly elected Congress president can carry weight with other parties when it comes to holding viable political and electoral consultations in the context of Assembly polls in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala in the coming months. This is more the reason why the upcoming election of the Congress chief must be a clean and fair process in which the whole party is invested.

Farewell, Diego

Diego Armando Maradona was the “Golden Kid” who never really grew up. From the streets of Latin America to soccer riches is not too unusual a story except that Maradona was arguably one of the greatest players of all time with a talent so natural as to be defined as a divine gift. It was, however, coincidental that he became associated with the “Hand of God” for the controversial goal he scored with the “head of Diego and the hand of God” as he impulsively put it. However, it would be unfair to define him only by that accidental goal. Such is the duality of Maradona that only minutes later he produced one of the finest field goals ever seen at a World Cup.

The brilliance of Maradona which came through in that coruscating run of 1986 from the Argentine half, twice feinting past pairs of defenders and beating one more before curling the football in past the England goal-keeper will remain etched in memory forever as the most aesthetic exhibition of the art of football. Even the memory of his virtually single-handed triumph for Argentina in that World Cup final (against West Germany) might fade when compared to the pristine beauty of the movement of the 5 foot 5 inch, low centre of gravity genius, the magical ball at his magnetic feet.

To say he was the most human of sport’s immortals would be an understatement. His flawed genius illustrated how the loss of moral compass can affect man. Success went on to ravage him, his addictions to cocaine and liquor and women — he sired five children from four women — proving a pervasive cocktail. Judging others might seem incongruous as there is no such thing as a perfect human being. But, as a sporting icon whose millions of fans worshipped the very ground he walked on, Maradona had a responsibility to fulfil, which his bacchanalian lifestyle and attitude precluded. Comparisons can be odious but one must be done with Pele to illustrate what Maradona would have been if only...

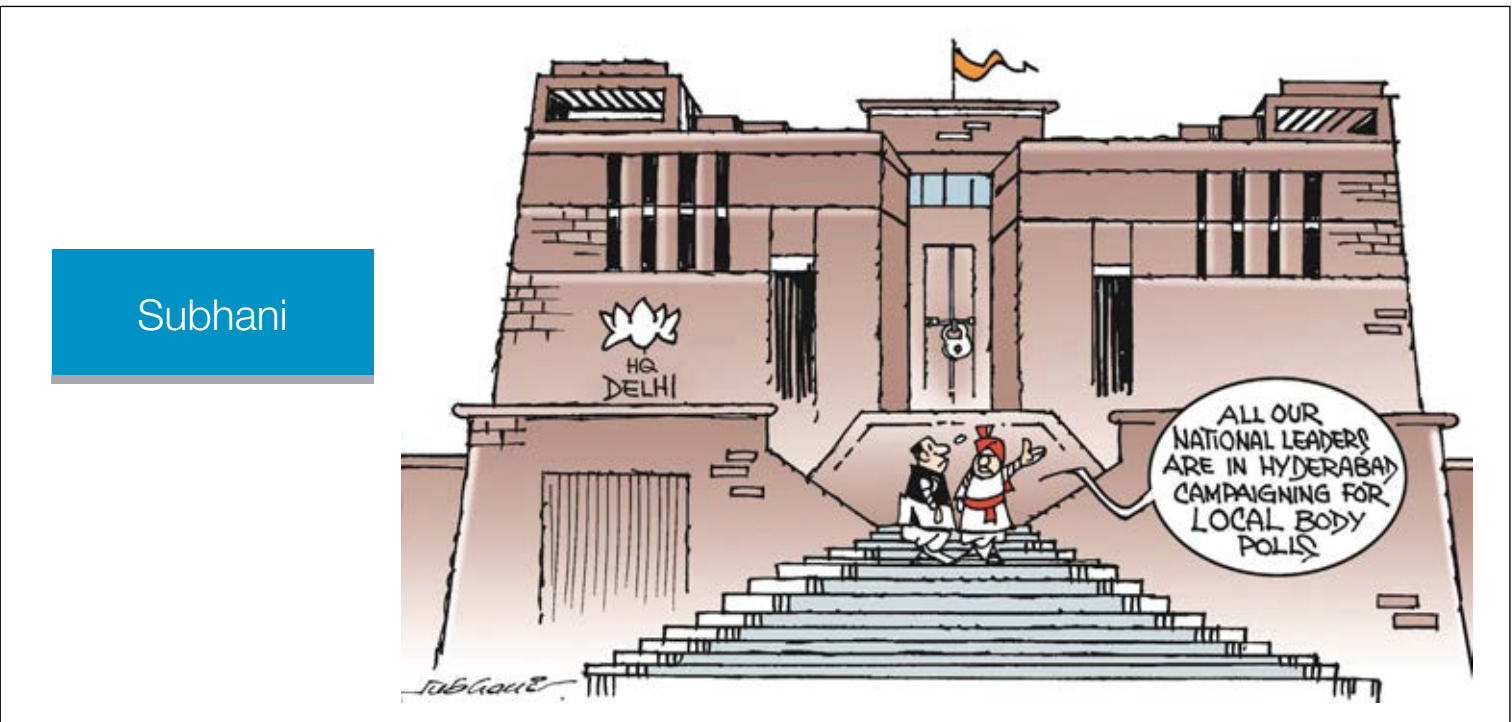
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Subhani

‘Contempt of court’: A relook may be needed



Karan Thapar

As I See It

Once again contempt of court is in the news. In September, the human rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan was tried and found guilty on this count. Now the stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra faces a similar charge, this time endorsed by the attorney general. While the Supreme Court will no doubt focus on what’s been said about its judges, many others will ask whether judges need to accept satire and criticism with good grace rather than seek the protection of the law of contempt and use it to punish their attackers.

Let’s start with the case against Kumal Kamra. The attorney general has found his tweets and two-finger gesture contemptuous. “This is a gross insinuation against the entirety of the Supreme Court of India that ... (it) is not an independent and impartial institution ... (but) is a court of the ruling party, the BJP, existing only for the BJP’s benefit. All this in my opinion constitutes criminal contempt of court”, Mr Venugopal declared.

If true, the attorney general’s finding is indeed grave. But do the two Kamra tweets that Mr Venugopal cites amount to this? The first says: “Honour has left the building (i.e. the Supreme Court) long back”. The second says: “The Supreme Court of this country is the most supreme joke of this country”. Frankly, the attorney general has invested more meaning in these tweets than exists in them.

The tweets are an attempt at satirical humour and, admittedly,

not a particularly witty one. They are not meant to be kind or polite. The intention is to lampoon or, even, lacerate. But is this “gross insinuation”? Do they suggest that the Supreme Court “is a court of the ruling party, the BJP, existing only for the BJP’s benefit”? Actually, to ask the question is to answer it. And it’s “NO”.

The two-finger gesture is more tricky. It’s both more clever and questionable. At one level, the raised index and middle finger of Kamra’s left hand is a V signal. However, the accompanying message — “one of these two fingers is for CJI Arvind Bobde ... ok let me not confuse you it’s the middle one” — could convert this into a rude gesture. Actually, crude might be a better word. It’s telling the Supreme Court where to get off. But is that contempt? Even if it is, it’s too immature to take seriously. Judges —and not just because of their age — should rise above it.

This brings me to a more important and wider question about the law of contempt. Has it outlived its utility? And how should we handle cases that could amount to contempt today? Let’s go back to its origin to understand its purpose.

The concept of contempt is centuries-old British law which was abolished by Britain in 2013. At the time the country’s Law Commission said the purpose was not just “preventing the public from getting the wrong idea of judges ... but where there are shortcomings it’s equally important to prevent the public from getting the right idea”. In

other words, one intention was to hide judicial corruption. The concept, therefore, ab initio, clashed with the need for transparency and, of course, freedom of speech.

So no wonder enlightened British judges have ignored it. As far back as 1968, Lord Denning, Britain’s former Master of the Rolls, had this to say of the law of contempt: “Let me say at once that we will never use this jurisdiction as a means to uphold our own dignity ... nor will we use it to suppress those who speak against us. We do not fear criticism, nor do we resent it. For there is something far more important at stake. It is no less than freedom of speech itself. It’s the right of every man, in Parliament or out of it, in the press or over the broadcast, to make fair comment, even outspoken comment, on matters of public interest ... we must rely on our own conduct itself to be its own vindication.”

In 1987, after the *Spycatcher* judgment, when the *Daily Mirror* called Britain’s Law Lords “You Old Fools” or, in 2016, after the Brexit ruling, when the *Daily Mail* called three judges “Enemies of the People”, the British judiciary consciously and sensibly ignored the headlines and did not consider contempt prosecution. In fact, Lord Templeton’s comment on the *Spycatcher* headline is worth recalling: “I cannot

deny that I am old; it’s the truth. Whether I am a fool or not is a matter of perception of someone else ... in initio, there is no need to invoke the powers of contempt.”

Some of our own judges have shown similar wisdom. In a 2008 lecture, Justice Markandey Katju had this to say: “If a person calls me a fool, whether inside court or outside it, I for one would not take action as it does not prevent me from functioning, and I would simply ignore the comment or else say that everyone is entitled to his opinion. After all, words break no bones”.

More important, Justice Katju was crystal clear about when contempt could apply and when it would not. “The test to determine whether an act amounts to contempt of court or not is this: does it make the functioning of judges impossible or extremely difficult? If it does not, then it does not amount to contempt of court even if it’s harsh criticism ... the only situation where I would have to take some action was if my functioning as a judge was made impossible ... after all, I have to function if I wish to justify my salary.”

I think that answers the questions I began with. While justice is important, judges must not take themselves too seriously. Even if their amour propre is offended it does not mean the institution has been questioned or justice brought into disrepute. Judges deliver justice, they do not embody it. They should never forget that their court is supreme because it’s final, not because it’s infallible. When they lapse, they can be criticised or satirised. And it does not have to be polite or, even, fair.

I hope the Supreme Court will bear this in mind when it pronounces on Mr Kamra’s case.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

NEED WATER PANEL

Reference to the report, NGT: Form agency to protect water bodies. Emphasising the need to protect water bodies so as to ensure availability of water for the present and future generations, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued directives to the states and Union Territories to appoint a nodal agency to monitor and take suitable steps. But back home in Chennai, CMDA continues to encourage re-classification of water bodies to other zones such as residential, commercial, institutions, etc with the result that our precious water sources get completely depleted. It is high time, the NGT takes suo moto notice of this and issues directions to the state.

V.S. Jayaraman, Chennai

CONVERSION MATTERS

Apropos report, HC upholds right to choose partner, faults earlier verdict. Art. 25(1) is emphatic that ‘it gives each member of every religion to the right to spread or disseminate the tenets of his religion but it would not include the right to convert another because each man or woman has the same freedom of conscience guaranteed by the same provision in the above Art.25(1). In other words, one can hold any faith of his choice but not to be converted into another religion either by force or allurement or fraud. The moot question is how it could be morally, legally tenable if a Hindu boy seduces or induces one Muslim girl who has attained marriageable age? Will not the cited Art.21, which guarantees personal liberty, contravene the very Art. 25(1), which calls such conversion by seduction or inducement a penal offence? It is time that such contradictory verdicts are not pronounced by the same court on the same issue at different times confusing the public.

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

MARADONA NO MORE

The demise of the football legend Diego Armando Maradona has saddened not only his large fans but also other personalities from other sports too. The BCCI President and former Indian Cricketer Sourav Ganguly has endorsed that Maradona was his hero whom he cherished as a spectator. For all his gifts he received from the almighty as a fabulous player, his health got a setback after his personal life was on the rocks due to the usage of drugs which affected his larger than the game image. Though many were disappointed by the other side of his life, a legend has missed his goal of living long for the sake of his fans and the game.

A.P. Thiruvadi, Chennai

Saeed Naqvi Wide Angle



Does a ‘liberal’ Muslim leader have a future in India’s politics?

The quest for a liberal Muslim was always a contradiction in terms. But a search for a liberal Hindu, dalit, Christian or Sikh leader would also be a bogus one. As RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in their Hindutva chariot, hurtle towards Hindu Rashtira say, by 2025, the RSS’ centenary, the very notion of a liberal Muslim in public life seems out of place. What would be the acceptable contours of a Muslim leader who is neither mute nor abrasive?

The enigma of Asaduddin Owaisi acquires new salience after his success in Bihar. Speculation centres on how he might fare in West Bengal, with a 30 per cent Muslim population, which is the backbone of Mamata Banerjee’s support. As they are Mr Owaisi’s hunting ground too, will the Muslim voter be confused? If Amit Shah hadn’t made it his life’s mission to oust or substantially diminish “Didi” and her TMC, Muslims may well have risked a breach in their absolute support for her. But now, any bid by Mr Owaisi to fish for a small catch, just to open an account in Bengal, will expose him to the slur that he’s a “vote katua”, a vote divider which

is what parties, particularly the Congress, cast him as. This allegation of communalism against Mr Owaisi helps the Congress sustain the delusion it’s still with the secular lineup. The Congress doesn’t like the refrain: Congress and BJP, tweedledum and tweedledee. It must be admitted, of course, that there are differences between the two corporate-supported parties. Former Madhya Pradesh CM Digvijay Singh was, admittedly, drink a litre’s cow urine daily, but his drinking habits don’t come into conflict with the secularism a handful of Congressmen swore by earlier.

To fast forward the narrative, there were no cow vigilantes, no lynchings in the name of the cow, no “love jihad” bar. The Congress can’t be blamed for such trends. The charge against them is different: extreme cowardice. When these shameful events happen, the Congress, instead of going for their opponents’ jugular, just shuts up — in case taking sides leads to a loss of Hindu votes. No wonder the tag of “BJP’s B team” has stuck on the Congress.

Take Amit Shah’s latest fusillade directed at the “Gupkar gang” for “international

Randeep Surjewala’s tepid response says nothing. Why doesn’t the Congress make its stand clear on Article 370?

Sheikh bhi khush rahey / Shaitaan bhi naraaz na ho (Keep the agents of God and Satan equally happy).

How can the Congress point fingers at Mr Owaisi’s “pro-BJP stand” when it reduced senior leader Ghulam Nabi Azad to tears during the 2019 election: “Even district committees don’t invite me to address rallies”. Ahmed Patel, whose death we mourn today, was kept away from the campaign in Gujarat.

This is the pincer in which Mr Owaisi holds the Congress. He taunts the Muslims: “Congress has brought you down to the level described in the 2005 Sachar Committee report.”

The thrust of Mr Owaisi’s argument is that Muslims have been tricked into supporting “pseudo-secular” parties like the Congress, and caste parties in UP, Bihar, etc.

Muslims have been frightened into supporting these parties. The ogre that frightened them is obviously the RSS-BJP. Mr Owaisi’s argument is that these so-called secular parties seek Muslim support

not to defeat the BJP (of which they are incapable), but to enlarge their power base, a delusion at best, and end up doing nothing for Muslims.

With a population of 200 million, or 14 per cent of the total, there are 27 Muslims in a 543-strong Lok Sabha. The ratio in state Assemblies is even more embarrassing. Mr Owaisi’s argument is simple: seven seats in Telangana, two in Maharashtra and now five in Bihar is 14 seats. Supposing Muslims pick up an average of even one seat in 28 states and eight Union territories, the figure 36 will not look so negligible.

The electoral weakness of India’s Muslims is precisely this: though substantial in an overall sense, they are scattered all over. Ironically Covid-19, by linking schools, colleges, businesses and international conferences, the magic of virtual reality will come into play. Members of Assemblies can be in instantaneous contact.

The danger, of course, is that the growth of a Muslim entity might help accelerate Hindu consolidation. How does one obviate that emergency? By allowing the Muslim vote to habitually occupy frayed mattresses in parties like the Congress which are in fatal decline?

The durability of Mr Owaisi in public life denotes the failure of all parties to paint him in lurid, communal colours, much as they tried. Such a moment did come in 2013 when his younger, more firebrand brother, Akbaruddin Owaisi, made a provocative reference to police support for violence against Muslims. “Remove the police for 15 minutes and let’s see.” The speech smacked of a sort of Muslim macho, causing the media to go into convulsions.

Since then, Akbaruddin was clearly restrained. Asaduddin, a barrister, a restrained and skilful speaker, once a medium pacer for the South Zone cricket team, and one who anchors his political stance unerringly to the Constitution, is an uncommon phenomenon in public life. For the right, left and centre, Asaduddin is the exasperating opponent who doesn’t deviate from good manners, logic, the Constitution and, woe of woes, is a Muslim. If he does have such qualities of heart and mind, why will sensible non-Muslims not turn to him some day?

The writer is a senior journalist and commentator based in New Delhi



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	44,259.74	0.98
Nifty 50	12,987.00	1.00
S&P 500*	3,629.65	-0.16
Dollar (₹)	73.87	0.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.72	-0.11
Euro (₹)	87.94	0.03
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,257▲17	0.03
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	47.79	-0.82
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.872	-0.014
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.882	0.00

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Import duty on crude palm oil slashed to 27.5%

The government cut the basic customs duty on crude palm oil to 27.5 per cent. The duty cut would help cool off rising edible oil prices. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) in a notification said the basic customs duty rate on crude palm oil has been revised to 27.5 per cent with effect from Nov. 27 from 37.5 per cent currently. Palm oil constitutes over 40 per cent of India's edible oil consumption.

## Bombay HC refuses to stay LVB-DBS merger



The Bombay High Court refused to stay Lakshmi Vilas Bank's (LVB) merger with DBS Bank India Ltd. A division bench of Justices Nitin Jamdar and Milind Jadhav was hearing petitions filed by a group of promoters of LVB and Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd, a shareholder, challenging the merger. "We are refusing the interim relief... The petitions shall be placed for hearing on Dec. 14," the court said.

## Infotech sector visionary F.C. Kohli dead

Faqir Chand C. Kohli, considered the father of the IT industry, passed away on Thursday. Kohli, the founding CEO of TCS, was 96. TCS said it was JRD Tata's insistence that had got Kohli to join the Tata Group in 1969. "He pivoted first into management consultancy, and then over the next two decades, into software development."



## Google India FY20 revenue rises 35% to ₹5,600 cr

Tech giant Google saw its India revenues grow 34.8 per cent to about Rs 5,593.8 crore in 2019-20 over the previous financial year against Rs 4,147 crore in the previous fiscal, according to Registrar of Companies filing shared by market intelligence firm Tofler. The net profit was higher by about 23.9 per cent at Rs 586.2 crore in FY20. Google India's total expenses rose 30.4 per cent to Rs 4,455.5 crore in FY20.

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## It's a process than an event: RBI Gov Full capital account convertibility far off

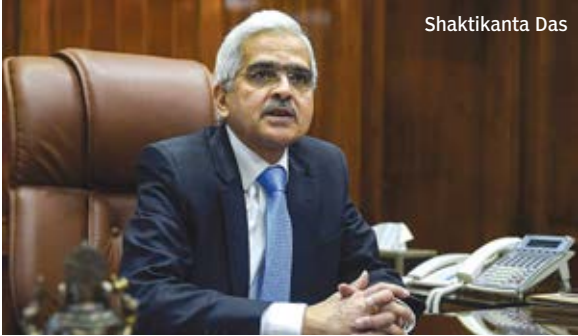
FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, NOV. 26

India will continue to approach capital account convertibility as "a process rather than an event", Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das said on Thursday.

"Capital account convertibility will continue to be approached as a process rather than an event, taking cognizance of prevalent macroeconomic conditions. A long-term vision with short- and medium-term goals is the way ahead," Das said at an event of the Foreign Exchange Dealers' Association of India.

Though tremendous capital account liberalisation measures have been taken since the launch of economic reforms in the early 1990s, introduction of full capital account convertibility is yet to be implemented in India. There is partial capital account convertibility (CAC) in India. CAC refers to the freedom of foreign investors to purchase Indian financial assets such as shares, bonds, and that of the domestic citizens to purchase foreign financial assets. It provides rights for firms and residents to freely buy into overseas assets such as equity, bonds, property and acquire ownership of overseas firms besides free repatriation of proceeds by foreign investors.

"Over the last three decades, India has under-



Shaktikanta Das

gone a transformation from being a virtually closed economy to one that is globally connected and open to a much larger volume of international transactions and capital flows than before. Today, the capital account is convertible to a great extent. Inward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is allowed in most sectors and outbound FDI by Indian incorporated entities is allowed as a multiple of their net worth. The external commercial borrowing framework has also been significantly liberalised to include more eligible borrowers, even as maturity requirements have been reduced and end-use restrictions have been relaxed," Das said.

Referring to economic growth, Das raised concerns over demand sustainability with the close of the festive season and rise in Covid-19 infections in India which pose downside risks to growth.

"Even as the growth outlook has improved, downside risks to growth con-

tinue due to recent surge in infections in advanced economies and parts of India. We need to be watchful about the sustainability of demand after festivals and a possible reassessment of market expectations surrounding the vaccine. The monetary policy guidance in October emphasised the need to see through temporary inflation pressures and also maintain the accommodative stance at least during the current financial year and into the next financial year," added Das.

"After witnessing a sharp contraction in GDP by 23.9 per cent in Q1:2020-21 and a multi-speed normalisation of activity in Q2, the Indian economy has exhibited stronger than expected pick up in momentum of recovery. The global economy has also witnessed a stronger than expected rebound in activity in Q3. The IMF has accordingly revised its assessment for global growth in 2020 to a less severe contraction than what was assessed in June 2020."

## LTC scheme: Insurance premium also eligible

New Delhi, Nov. 26: Premium paid for insurance policies purchased between October 12, 2020 and March 31, 2021 by central government employees will be eligible for reimbursement under the LTC cash voucher scheme.

Issuing the third set of FAQ, the Department of Expenditure under the finance ministry, also clarified that for purchases of goods like cars, employees can submit self-attested photocopy of bills instead of original bills as proof for availing the benefit under the scheme.

On October 12, the government announced the leave travel concession cash voucher scheme under which employees can purchase any goods or services with a GST rate of 12 per cent or above to avail of the benefit.

The expenditure department said payment of premium for existing insurance policies would not be covered under the LTC cash voucher scheme.

"However, payment of premium for insurance policies purchased during the period between October 12, 2020, and March 31, 2021, is eligible for reimbursement under the scheme," it said. Vouchers/bills for availing of the benefit under the scheme has to be submitted on or before March 31. —PTI

## Vedanta Resources sounds out bondholders on debt extension

BIJOU GEORGE & LUCA CASIRAGHI NOV. 26



Anil Agarwal

Vedanta Resources Ltd has begun sounding out debt holders about the possibility of extending maturities on some of its dollar bonds to reduce refinancing pressures.

The mining giant started approaching the investors to discuss possible debt extensions after the company's failed attempt to delist its India unit, Vedanta Ltd, people familiar with the matter said.

The company's bonds due in June next year, which are among notes under discussion with

holders, slumped as much as 7.7 cents after the news. That's set for the sharpest drop in more than six weeks, according to prices compiled by Bloomberg. London-based Vedanta Resources must repay \$670 million in outstand-

ing principal on those securities.

Pressures are mounting after the delisting flopped, given it would have helped the holding company more easily access cash at the unit. That's triggered warnings from credit rating firms about Vedanta Resources' debt pile.

Holding companies, including Vedanta Resources, which are controlled by energy-mining tycoon Anil Agarwal, face their highest debt repayments in years.

A spokesman for the Vedanta group declined to comment.

—Bloomberg

## Murugappa Group takes over CG Power, restructures board

New Delhi, Nov. 26: Chennai-based Murugappa Group on Thursday took over scam-hit CG Power and Industrial Solutions, infusing Rs 700 crore into the company and appointing directors on its board.

CG Power in a stock exchange filing said the company board at its meeting on Thursday issued 64.25 crore shares of Rs 2 at a price of Rs 8.56 per share aggregating to Rs 550 crore to Tube Investments of India Ltd (TII).

TII, a Murugappa Group firm, have been issued 1.52 crore warrants, each carrying a right exercisable

within 18 months, for an aggregate consideration of Rs 150 crore.

"Post the allotment of securities, TII has acquired a controlling interest in the company and holds 50.62 per cent of the paid-up equity share capital of the company," it said.

TII paid Rs 5.87 crore towards subscription of equity shares and 25 per cent upfront consideration for warrants.

TII will eventually hold a 56.61 per cent stake once all warrants are converted into equity.

In a separate filing, TII said, effective Thursday, TII has been classified as

the 'promoter' of the CG Power and the board of directors of CG Power has been reconstituted.

CG Power said its entire board, including non-executive chairman Ashish Guha and whole-time executive director Sudhir Mathur, have resigned.

Murugappa Group has appointed six members on the CG Power board, with Vellayan Subbiah, who currently is the managing director of TII, as its chairman. Natarajan Srinivasan, a director on Murugappa corporate board, has also been appointed as the new managing director. —PTI

## Companies can classify NPS contribution as 'biz expense'

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, NOV. 26

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has introduced a separate pension model for employers viz. corporate entities, PSUs, etc. to adopt the National Pension System (NPS) as a retirement benefit scheme for its employees. This is known as the NPS-Corporate Sector Model.

Besides other employer benefits the NPS-CSM provides tax benefits, since employers can claim tax relief on the amount

contributed towards NPS on behalf of employees.

"The employer can claim up to 10 per cent of the salary (basic and dearness allowance) contributed towards employees' NPS account as 'Business Expense' under Section 36(i)(iv)(a) of the Income Tax Act, 1961," the PFRDA said in a release.

It is cost-effective too, as employers extending NPS as a retirement benefit scheme to its employees need not establish and maintain a Trust, manage the funds or undertake recordkeeping activities, according to the PFRDA.

Also, it is not mandatory for the employer to contribute to employees' NPS account. Contributions to NPS depend on the employer's policy on compensation and retirement benefits extended to its employees. The NPS contribution can be either (i) equal contributions by both employer and employee (say, 10 per cent each) or (ii) unequal by employer and employee (say, 10 per cent by employee and 14 per cent by employer) or (iii) contribution by only employer or only employee, says the regulator.

## BMW X5 M Competition launched at ₹1.95 crore

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, NOV. 26

BMW, India's second biggest luxury carmaker, on Thursday launched its all-new BMW X5 M Competition SUV in India priced at Rs 1.95 crore to boost sales in Asia's third largest economy.

The BMW X5 M is being



imported by the German firm as a completely built-up unit (CBU) and competes with the likes of the

Audi RS Q8 and Porsche Cayenne Turbo.

"BMW M is driven by a single-minded passion for creating authentic motorsport functionality with everyday usability. The all-new BMW X5 M Competition inherits this DNA," Vikram Pawah, president at BMW Group India, said.

## Short-term rates crash with funds overflowing with cash

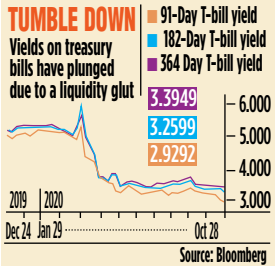
SUBHADIP SIRCAR NOV. 26

A glut of cash chasing assets in India has caused short-term rates to plunge.

A three-month treasury bill was sold at a record low yield on Wednesday, while the market repo clocked a trade at 0.01 per cent. Key borrowing costs like the weighted inter-bank call rate and collateralised money-market rates are way below the Reserve Bank of India's benchmark in recent days, indicating investors such as mutual funds are accepting returns lower than what RBI's deposit window would offer banks.

Governor Shaktikanta Das has pledged to stay accommodative well into 2021 as he tries to dig the economy out of an unprecedented technical recession. But a liquidity bloat is coming from the central bank's intervention in the foreign currency market, as it seeks to rein in the rupee and keep exports competitive.

"The RBI's dollar buying to prevent the rupee from appreciating has driven liquidity to a large excess," said Arvind Chari, head of



fixed income and alternatives at Quantum Advisors. "The RBI may have to act to suck out liquidity to maintain the sanctity of the reverse repo rate."

Banks have parked Rs 6.1 lakh crore (\$82.5 billion) of excess cash with the central bank at the reverse repo rate of 3.35 per cent, according to the Bloomberg Banking Liquidity Index. Mutual funds and other such investors don't have access to this window, and ICICI Securities Primary Dealership suggests the RBI should consider including them if it's worried about the depression of overnight yields.

"A weekly or fortnightly liquidity absorption window with wider participation could address the

skew in excess liquidity and reinforce the reverse repo rate as the floor," ICICI Securities economists including A. Prasanna wrote in a note. "A stronger option would be to introduce the Standing Deposit Facility at a rate slightly above reverse repo—say 3.5 per cent—so that money market rates reset."

The so-called SDF is a tool that would enable the central bank to take in money without offering collateral.

The State Bank of India, the nation's largest lender, warned that a sustained cash surplus may eventually push loan rates below similar-rated bonds, introducing policy unpredictability.

"Such type of irrational pricing, because of abundant liquidity, can impact banking sector profits and initiate asset liability mismatch, if the spread is more prevalent for lower-rated borrowers," according to Soumya Kanti Ghosh, group chief economic adviser at the lender. "A sure recipe for financial instability in the future."

—Bloomberg

## THERMAX PLANS ACQUISITIONS TO EXPAND BIZ

SHWETHA SUNIL NOV. 26

Thermax Ltd. is seeing most of its businesses bounce back to year-ago levels and is now focused on options for growth.

The maker of electricity-generation and pollution-control equipment will consider mergers and acquisitions, technological arrangements and geographic partnerships that are "small and easy to digest," chief executive officer Ashish Bhandari said in an interview on Thursday.

The company had Rs 1,703 crore (\$231 million) in cash, cash equivalents and short-term investments as of September 30, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Its shares have recovered about 20 per cent from a six-year low in March.

Thermax is betting on technology to provide solutions to problems arising from urbanisation, such as air and water pollution. The company sees coal continuing to be used as a fuel in some countries and is offering solutions to reduce its environmental harm. —Bloomberg

### CUTTING RISKS

## Company building assembly lines for iPad and MacBook

## Foxconn to shift some Apple production to Vietnam from China

YIMOU LEE TAIPEI, NOV. 27

Foxconn is moving some iPad and MacBook assembly to Vietnam from China at the request of Apple Inc, said a person with knowledge of the plan, as the US firm diversifies production to minimise the impact of a Sino-US trade war.

The development comes as the outgoing administration of US President Donald Trump encourages US firms to shift production out of China. During Trump's tenure, the United States has targeted made-in-China electronics for higher import tariffs, and restricted supplies of components produced

## 'India can beat China in low-cost mfg'

New Delhi, Nov. 26: India has the potential to surpass even China in low-cost manufacturing if the government and industry work in a cohesive manner, Maruti Suzuki India (MSIL) chairman R.C. Bhargava said on Thursday.

"India has the capability to become a lower cost country than China if the industry and the government work together," Bhargava said, sharing his views at an online event.

He said the only objective of government policies should be to increase the competitiveness of Indian industry so that it can make things at the lowest cost along with the best quality in the world.



R.C. Bhargava

using US technology to Chinese firms it deems a national security risk.

Taiwanese manufacturers, wary of being caught up in the tit-for-tat trade

war, have moved or are considering moving some production from China to

countries such as Vietnam, Mexico and India.

Foxconn is building assembly lines for Apple's iPad tablet and MacBook laptop at its plant in Vietnam's northeastern Bac Giang province, to come online in the first half of 2021, the person said. The lines will also take some production from China, the person said. "The move was requested by Apple," the person said. "It wants to diversify production following the trade war."

Foxconn said, "As a matter of company policy, and for reasons of commercial sensitivity, we do not comment on any aspect of our work for any customer or their products." —Reuters

## 3 bn people live in water-scarce areas

MEGAN DURISIN NOV. 26

Roughly 40 per cent of the world's people live in farming areas facing large water shortages, and scarce supplies pose an increasing risk to food security, the United Nations said.

About 3.2 billion people live in agricultural areas with "high to very high" water shortages and competition over resources is rising, the UN's Food & Agriculture Organization said in a report. Many farms that depend on rain are at risk as severe droughts become more common, and bigger global incomes are spurring demand for water-inten-

sive foods like meat and dairy.

Of the total, 1.2 billion people—a sixth of the global population—are in areas with severely constrained water supplies, and the amount of freshwater available per person has dropped 20 per cent in the past two decades. Swathes of Asia and North Africa have been most affected, while small numbers of people in Europe and the Americas have seen extreme restrictions.

Agriculture accounts for 70 per cent of the world's freshwater withdrawals, and the UN called for better management to keep resources in check and boost agricultural yields. —Bloomberg



GAMES

DECCAN CHRONICLE | CHENNAI | FRIDAY | 27 NOVEMBER 2020

DATE OF BIRTH: October 30, 1960

PLACE OF BIRTH: Buenos Aires, Argentina

DATE OF DEATH: November 25, 2020

PLACE OF DEATH: Tigre, Argentina

HEIGHT: 1.65m

PLAYING CAREER

- Argentinos Juniors (1976-81)
- Boca Juniors (1981-82)
- Barcelona (ESP/1982-84)
- Napoli (ITA/1984-91)
- Sevilla (ESP/1992-93)
- Newell's Old Boys (1993)
- Boca Juniors (1995-97)

INTL GOALS: 34

Position: attacking midfielder/playmaker

INTL CAPS: 91

(1977-94)

DIEGO MARADONA

Honours

- FIFA World Cup winner (1986)
- FIFA World Cup Golden Ball (1986)
- UEFA Cup winner (1989)
- Italian champion (1987, 1990)
- Argentine champion (1981)
- Spanish Super Cup (1983)
- Spanish Cup (1983)
- Italian Cup (1987)
- Italian Super Cup (1990)
- Top scorer in Italy (1988), Argentina (1979, 1980)
- FIFA Player of the Century (2000)

pg | 8

Coaching career

- Textil Mandiyu (1994)
- Racing Club (1995)
- Argentina (2008-2010)
- Al Wasl (UAE/2011-12)
- Al-Fujairah (UAE/2017-18)
- Dorados (MEX/2018-19)
- Gimnasia Esgrima La Plata (2019-20)

# Uncontrollable Argentina cries

## Country mourns death of favourite son Maradona

  
“It is a very sad day for all Argentines and football. He leaves us but he does not go because he is eternal. I am left with many of the nice moments we shared and I want to send my condolences to all his family and friends.”  
— **Lionel Messi, six-time Ballon d’Or winner**

  
“Today I say goodbye to a friend and the world says goodbye to an eternal genius. One of the best ever. An unparalleled magician. He leaves too soon, but leaves a legacy without limits and a void that will never be filled. Rest in peace, ace. You will never be forgotten.”  
— **Cristiano Ronaldo, five-time Ballon d’Or winner and Juventus forward**

  
“RIP Legend. You will stay in the history of football forever. Thanks you for all the pleasure you gave to the whole world.”  
— **Kylian Mbappe, French World Cup winner and Paris Saint-Germain forward**

“What Diego has done for football, for making all of us fall in love with this beautiful game, is unique. It is, as he is, simply immense.”  
— **Gianni Infantino, FIFA president**

**Buenos Aires (Argentina), Nov. 26:** Impatient fans were confronting police as thousands lined up to say goodbye to Diego Maradona on Thursday at the Argentine presidential mansion staging the funeral of one of football’s greatest stars.

Fans threw bottles and metal fences at police near the Casa Rosada in the heart of Buenos Aires.

Open visitation started at 6.15 am local time after a few hours of privacy for family and close friends.

Maradona’s wooden casket was in the main lobby of the presidential office, covered in an Argentine flag and a No.10 shirt of the national team. Dozens of other shirts of different football teams were thrown in by visitors who passed by in tears.

Maradona died on Wednesday of a heart attack in a house outside Buenos Aires where he recovered from a brain operation on November 3.

The first to bid farewell were his daughters and close family members. Then came former teammates of the 1986 World Cup-winning squad including Oscar Ruggeri. Other Argentine footballers, such as Carlos Tevez of Boca Juniors showed up too.

The lines started outside the Casa Rosada only hours after Maradona’s death was confirmed. Among those present were the renowned barrabravas fans of Boca Juniors, one of his former clubs.

The first fan to visit was Nahuel de Lima, using crutches to move because of a disability. At the same time, a wave of people tried to get ahead and confronted police, who used tear gas to contain them.

Bodyguards were stopping fans from taking pictures and controlling access to the building. Many fans were breaking down as soon as they left.

Fans who walked past the casket blew kisses into the air, struck their chests with closed fists, and shouted ‘Let’s go Diego.’ Most, but not all, wore masks due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A giant black screen in front of the Casa Rosada was showing historic photos of Maradona as fans go.

Fans also gathered outside the humble home where Maradona was born and raised in the Villa Fiorito neighbourhood. They went to the stadium of Argentinos Juniors, where he started as a professional footballer in 1976. They stood at the historic La Bombonera stadium of his beloved Boca Juniors. More were at the headquarters of Gimnasia La Plata, the team he was coaching.

— *AP*

People react as they leave the presidential palace in Buenos Aires, Argentina, after paying tribute to football legend Diego Maradona's coffin.

In this photo released by Argentinas Presidency, the coffin with the remains of Diego Maradona lies in state inside the presidential palace as mourners file past in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on Thursday.

— *AP*

### GOA SET TO INSTALL MARADONA STATUE

**Panaji, Nov. 26:** The Goa government will install the life-size statue of late Argentine football legend Diego Maradona in the coastal belt of North district by early next year, a senior minister said.

Maradona’s statue is already under making with a Maharashtra-based artist working on the mould, Calangute MLA and state Ports Minister Michael Lobo said.

Lobo had announced installation of the statue of Maradona in 2018. “The statue would be installed somewhere at Candolim or Calangute to inspire the football playing youth,” he said.

Lobo said the mould of the statue is ready. “It is an actual-size statue as tall as late Maradona,” the minister said, adding that the 350-kg statue is part of the state government’s initiative to encourage football culture.

Lobo said a statue of another football legend Cristiano Ronaldo is also being prepared which will be installed in North district of the state.

— *PTI*

### KERALA DECLARES 2-DAY MOURNING

**Thiruvananthapuram, Nov. 26:** A day after Diego Maradona died of heart attack in Buenos Aires, the Kerala government on Thursday announced a two-day mourning in the state’s sports sector and appealed to everyone in the fraternity to join as a mark of tribute.

Considered the greatest footballer of all time alongside Brazil’s Pele, the Argentine player had a great fan following in the football crazy southern state.

Announcing the mourning, state sports minister E. P. Jayarajan said the demise of Maradona has saddened football fans around the world. “In Kerala also, lakhs of fans could not believe his departure,” he said.

“There is no cancellation of any event or anything like that as part of the mourning announced in the sports sector. It is just an appeal to the general public, sports buffs and those in the sports fraternity to mourn the death of the legendary footballer,” a staff in the minister’s office said.

However, no sporting events are scheduled due to Covid-19, he added.

— *PTI*

### WE’VE LOST A GENIUS IN MARADONA: KOHLI

**Sydney, Nov. 26:** “We have lost a genius and his void can never be filled,” India cricket team captain Virat Kohli said on Thursday, paying rich tributes to the departed Argentine football legend Diego Maradona.

Maradona died at the age of 60 on Wednesday at his residence in Buenos Aires after suffering a cardiac arrest, two weeks after being released from a hospital following a brain surgery. “It’s obviously a very sad day for football, it’s very sad for sports in general because we have lost a genius,” Kohli said in a message posted by BCCI.

— *PTI*

### STADIUM IN NAPLES AFTER MARADONA

**Naples (Italy), Nov. 26:** The mayor of Naples proposed that the Stadio San Paolo be renamed in honour of the city’s beloved footballer, Diego Maradona. “Let’s name the San Paolo Stadium for Diego Armando Maradona!!!” Mayor Luigi de Magistris wrote on Twitter.

The stadium on Wednesday was illuminated in honour of the former Napoli player who died of a heart attack at age 60, as fans gathered outside to mourn.

Maradona led Napoli to their only two league titles in 1987 and 1990, becoming a legend in the working-class city, where fans on Wednesday poured into the streets after hearing of his death.

— *AFP*

### WHEN MARADONA GRIPPED KOLKATA

**Kolkata, Nov. 26:** His promise to bring “big-time” football to India remained unfulfilled as Diego Maradona died after cheating death more than once, leaving a cricket-mad nation devastated in an appropriate reflection of his immortal status.

A lot many in the ‘City of Joy’ will recall how a little bulky version of Maradona huffed and puffed during a charity football game here three years ago.

The Argentine legend, who was 57 when he came here, had managed to dribble,

In this photo taken on December 6, 2008, Diego Maradona gestures as he attends a felicitation programme at Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata.

show glimpses of his deft left foot and even crooned Spanish songs, as he sweated it out with a bunch of school children and bid them adieu with a promise to “bring football” to India.

In December 2017, he turned up in shorts, enjoyed every bit of the maddening attention even though the gruelling session literally drained him as he was seen drenched in sweat, pouring water on his head. But he had no complaints and was eloquent in his three-minute Spanish speech.

— *PTI*

# India take on Oz in top ODI clash

**Sydney, Nov. 26:** India are promising to play “hard, aggressive” cricket when they emerge from coronavirus quarantine to face Australia in a blockbuster limited-over series beginning in Sydney on Friday.

The first of three ODIs, followed by three Twenty20s next week, comes after the visitors had to endure wrangling over quarantine requirements and an outbreak of the virus in Melbourne, which delayed confirmation of the tour until just weeks ago.

Virat Kohli’s squad have been in isolation since their arrival a fortnight ago, although they have been allowed to train with

in a bio-secure bubble.

It has been an equally odd build-up for Aaron Finch’s Australia, with the likes of David Warner, Steve Smith and Pat Cummins, who played in the Indian Premier League, also undergoing the mandatory 14 days of quarantine, which ended Thursday.

The lack of international cricket this year makes it hard to determine form, although Australia head into the white-ball series on the back of beating 50-over world champions England in September.

India haven’t played together since a tour of New Zealand in February, when they clinched the Twenty20 series but were

● **The first of three ODIs, followed by three Twenty20s next week, comes after the visitors had to endure wrangling over quarantine requirements and an outbreak of the virus in Melbourne, which delayed confirmation of the tour until just weeks ago.**

whitewashed 3-0 in the ODIs.

But they can take solace from winning their last Test and ODI series in Australia two summers

ago, although Smith and Warner were banned for ball-tampering.

India have separate squads for the one-dayers and T20s, both led by Kohli, but without Rishabh Pant, an explosive batsman who became a viral sensation on India’s 2018-19 tour with his banter behind the stumps.

Injured star opener Rohit Sharma and fast-bowler Ishant Sharma are also missing.

Shikhar Dhawan is likely to open the innings, potentially alongside Mayank Agarwal with wicketkeeper Rahul pushed down the order.

The potent combination of Mohammed Shami and

Jasprit Bumrah will spearhead a dangerous pace attack on expected lively pitches, with all six white-ball games either at the Sydney Cricket Ground or the Manuka Oval in Canberra.

Langer may pick highly-rated young in-form all-rounder Cameron Green, who was a surprise inclusion, but will largely stick with the side that beat England in September, minus the injured Mitch Marsh and with Smith returning after missing the series with concussion.

All-rounders Glenn Maxwell and Marcus Stoinis will complement the four frontline bowlers.

— *AFP*

# Six Pak players test positive for Covid

**Wellington, Nov. 26:** Six of Pakistan’s squad tested positive for Covid-19, hosts New Zealand Cricket said on Thursday, throwing preparations for their five-match tour into turmoil and causing a scare in a country that has largely eradicated the virus.

The squad’s “exemption to train while in managed isolation has been put on hold until investigations have been completed,” the governing body said, adding that the six positive players would be moved into strict quarantine.

New Zealand’s ministry of health said 53 team members passed a symp-

tom check before leaving Lahore and were tested on arrival in Christchurch on November 24.

— *PTI*

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Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia vs India: First ODI from 9.10 am on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

Lanka Premier League: Jaffna vs Galle from 8 pm on Sony Six, HD

South Africa vs England: First T20 from 9.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FORMULA ONE

Bahrain Grand Prix: Practice 1 from 4.25 pm; Practice 2 from 8.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: East Bengal vs Mohun Bagan from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: Crystal Palace vs Newcastle United from 1.30 am (Saturday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

WWE

Smackdown: Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD