

NEW DELHI SUNDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2020

**TABLOID | 16**

Aamir Khan is scouting for next generation actors to work in upcoming projects

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— AP

■ **More on Page 3**

■ **More on Page 4**

■ **More on Page 4**

Forecast: Sunny

SUNSET TODAY 1.12 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.50 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 2.21 PM
MOONSET TODAY 11.30 AM

— MEA

■ **More on Page 3**

"Fortunately the incident has no casualty and

— PT

■ Turn to Page 4

■ **More on Page 3**

■ **More on Page 3**

SHORT TAKES

Bus rams into tree, 20 injured

New Delhi: At least 12 people were injured after an Uttar Pradesh roadways bus collided with a tree on Mathura Road in the national capital in the early hours of Saturday. The police said that the driver fled after the accident and efforts are underway to nab him. According to DCP (Southeast district) R.P. Meena, a police control room (PCR) call regarding the accident near Sukhdev Vihar was received at around 3.22 am. Following this, emergency response vehicle (ERV) was dispatched to the spot. "When the police team reached the spot, it found that 12 passengers had sustained minor injuries who were then shifted to the AIIMS Trauma Centre. Meanwhile, 10 more were given first-aid at the spot by the CATS ambulance staff," said the DCP. "During initial investigation, it was revealed that the crash took place in front of the Central Road Research Institute near a CNG pump. The bus was coming from Bah in Agra and was headed for ISBT Sarai Kale Khan," said the DCP. "A case of accident has been registered and an investigation is in progress. The police has informed the Agra depot officials regarding the accident," said the DCP.

2 held for robbing taxi from in Govindpuri

New Delhi: Two men were arrested for allegedly robbing the vehicle of a taxi driver, the police said on Saturday. The accused, Akshay (20) and Shantanu Kumar Pandey (29), along with their associate Vineet Singh, were planning to sell the robbed vehicle but failed to do so, it said. Singh, who works in a steel factory in Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh, is yet to be arrested in the case, the police said. The incident took place on the intervening night of November 17 and 18 in Southeast Delhi's Govindpuri area, the police said. According to the police, the driver picked up a female passenger from Tughlakabad Extension. On the way, he stopped the car near a traffic signal when the accused, who also came in a taxi, forcibly entered into his car. They evicted the driver and the passenger from the car and fled with the vehicle. DCP (Southeast) R.P. Meena said that based on manual intelligence and after analysing CCTV footage, several raids were conducted and the accused duo, Akshay and Shantanu Kumar Pandey, were arrested from Masoodpur with the stolen taxi.

Gr Noida: 3 criminals held after gunfight

Noida: Three suspected criminals were arrested in Greater Noida after a gunfight in which two of them sustained injuries, police said on Saturday. The accused were held near the Maicha underpass on the Eastern Peripheral Expressway late Friday night, a senior official said. Deputy commissioner of police, Greater Noida, Rajesh Kumar Singh said the trio was involved in cases of loot in the region, and most recently, they had robbed two tractors from a showroom by holding it's security guard hostage. "On November 16, they had fled with two tractors after holding the showroom's security guard hostage. One of the tractors has been recovered now, while search is on for the other," Mr Singh said.

Crompton Greaves launches new range

New Delhi: Electrical company Crompton Greaves has launched its latest range of ceiling lights called Star Lord—a range with high brightness and stylish ultra slim rims. Bringing its skilful guidance of design for a sleeker ceiling, brighter illumination, and with a strong momentum of providing functional benefits, the latest offering by the company ensures its consumers "maximum brightness with maximum style." Lighting has become an essential part of our lives where it can augment the space we are living in and completely transform the mood and ambience of the house. This is also emphasised in the perception of LED lighting where the need for basic illumination has now shifted to improving and complementing the home décor.



A health worker wearing PPE kit collects sample from a girl for coronavirus test at a Childrens Home in New Delhi on Saturday.

— PTI

Manoj Tiwari warns of legal action against AAP leaders

New Delhi, Nov. 21: BJP MP Manoj Tiwari on Saturday warned of legal action against AAP leaders, a day after the ruling party in Delhi levelled allegations of corruption against him in the purchase of e-carts for the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC).

At a press conference on Friday, senior AAP leader and MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj alleged that Tiwari and former East Delhi MP Mahesh Giri bought 200 e-carts at three times higher price through their MPLAD funds two years ago for EDMC.

Mr Tiwari, who represents northeast Delhi Lok Sabha constituency, blamed AAP supremo and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal for dishing out "lies" through his party MLA. "Kejriwal was anguished that I exposed him over the ban on Chhath. So he is using his MLA to spread lies. They should either prove the charge or be prepared to face legal action," Mr Tiwari said.

Mr Bhardwaj had challenged Mr Tiwari and Mr Giri to disclose why did he bought the vehicles at a higher price and asked who was financially benefitted from this transaction.

"Both of them bought these vehicles from their MPLAD funds. These vehicles have not been used for the past two years. We all know that such e-carts come with in ₹60,000-70,000 but they bought at ₹2.25 lakh each," he had claimed.

— PTI

411 ICU beds added in 5 days for Covid patients

New Delhi, Nov. 21: Over 400 ICU beds have been added in hospitals run by the Centre and the Delhi government in the city over the last five days amid a surge in coronavirus cases, officials said on Saturday.

The ICU beds have been added in both Delhi government and Centre-run hospitals following chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's order, an official said.

"As many as 411 ICU beds have been added in government hospitals in Delhi over the last five days after chief minister Arvind Kejriwal issued directions in this regard," the official said.

Twenty-nine beds were added on Tuesday, 100 on Wednesday, 76 on Thursday and 206 on Saturday, the official said.

"Several private hospitals have also added more ICU beds after they were told to reserve 80 per cent of them for Covid patients," he said.

The AAP government had on Thursday directed private hospitals to increase the percentage of non-ICU Covid beds from 50 per cent to 60 per cent.

It had also order 42 private hospitals to reserve 80 per cent of ICU beds for coronavirus patients with immediate effect.

Delhi recorded 6,608 fresh Covid cases in a day taking the infection tally on Friday to over 5.17 lakh, while 118 more fatalities during the same period pushed the death toll to 8,159, authorities had said.

The positivity rate was 10.59 per cent, according to a bulletin issued by the Delhi health department on Friday. The city reported 7,456 Covid cases on Thursday and the positivity rate was 12.09 per cent.

The highest single-day spike in cases till date in Delhi was 8,593 which was recorded on November 11.

— PTI

Delhi riots: Court grants bail to Gulfisha Fatima

New Delhi, Nov. 21: A Delhi court on Saturday granted bail to student activist Gulfisha Fatima in a case related to communal violence in north east Delhi in February.

Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat granted the relief to Fatima on furnishing a bail bond of ₹30,000 with one surety of like amount in the case related to rioting in Jafrabad area in which one Aaman died due to gunshot injuries.

The court granted her bail on the ground of parity as co-accused JNU students and Pinjra Tod members Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal have already been granted the relief in the case.

Fatima was in custody in the case since June 3.

"The co-accused Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal have been granted bail in this case and their role is stated to be similar to the present applicant/accused (Fatima). The witnesses for all of them are almost the same. "Considering the period of the custody of the applicant/accused in the present case, the ground of parity as regards co-accused Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal and in the totality of the facts and circumstances of the case, the present bail application of applicant/accused is allowed," the court said in its order. It further said there was nothing to suggest that the witnesses were under threat from Fatima.

— PTI

Student suicide: LSR to cut fee, to provide laptops on need basis

New Delhi, Nov. 21: Following the suicide of a student allegedly over financial constraints, the Lady Sri Ram College has announced reduction in fee for a few courses, setting up a committee to provide laptops and allowed some second-year students to reside in hostels.

"Given the fact that students are not able to avail certain facilities of the college due to being off-campus, the college has removed such charges from the fees this year. This has led to a substantial reduction in the fee. In addition, it is possible to pay the fee in installments.

"Keeping in mind the exceptional circumstances of the Covid pandemic, current second year students upon fresh application and on the basis of need will be allowed to stay in the hostel after the commitments to incoming first years and the current third years, who already are in the hostel, have been met," the college said in an official order.

The college administration has also decided

that when the pandemic recedes, the situation normalises and hostel seats are once again 288 in number, it would look into accommodating some more students of the second and third year in the hostel, on the basis of need, during their remaining years of study.

The college also said it would be removing a sentence which says a student "will not participate in any activity seeking to prolong my/her tenure at the hostel" from the hostel registration form, as it has been "misquoted as preventing students from participating in all protest".

"A committee has been constituted to ensure that each student who needs a device is provided one and each department is in the process of creating a list of students requiring devices and their addresses," the college said.

"The college committee will ensure that these are procured and distributed to all students who need these at the earliest possible," the college added.

— PTI

Woman robbed at gunpoint by 2 men

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 21

A woman was allegedly robbed at gunpoint by two unidentified men in east Delhi's Vinod Nagar area, police said on Saturday.

The incident took place on Friday afternoon, they said.

According to the police, the woman was walking in Vinod Nagar's market area when two men on a two-wheeler allegedly robbed her gold chain.

When she raised an

alarm, they threatened her with a county-made pistol and fled the spot. She was accompanied by another woman at the time of the incident.

Deputy commissioner of police (East) Jasmeet Singh said, "We have registered a case of robbery at Kalyanpuri police station and the matter is being probed."

The CCTV cameras installed in and around the crime scene is being scanned and efforts are underway to identify them, police said.

City records cold morning as min temp drops to 8.5°C

New Delhi, Nov. 21: The national capital recorded a minimum temperature of 8.5 degrees Celsius on Saturday, a day after the city witnessed its coldest November morning in 14 years. The minimum temperature was four notches below the normal, according to India Meteorological Department (IMD) data.

Kuldeep Srivastava, head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre, said the minimum temperature was likely to increase Monday onwards under the influence of a fresh

western disturbance. At 7.5 degrees Celsius, Delhi on Friday recorded its lowest minimum temperature in the month of November since November 29, 2006, when the city recorded a low of 7.3 degrees Celsius.

For the plains, the IMD declares a cold wave when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or below and is 4.5 notches less than normal for two consecutive days.

"However, for a small area like Delhi, a cold wave can be declared if the criteria is fulfilled

Nigambodh to get 3 CNG-based furnaces

Delhi records 5,879 cases, 111 deaths

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, NOV. 21

Delhi recorded 5,879 fresh Covid cases on Saturday and a positivity rate of 12.90 per cent, while 111 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 8,270, authorities said.

These fresh cases came out of the 45,562 tests conducted on Friday, including 21,845 RT-PCR tests, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department.

On Friday, authorities had said 23,507 RT-PCR tests, the highest till date, were conducted a day before.

The highest single-day spike till date here — 8,593 cases — was recorded on November 11 when 85 fatalities were recorded.

As many as 111 fatalities were recorded on Saturday, pushing the toll in the national capital to 8,270.

This is the fourth time in the last 10 days that the daily number of deaths has crossed the 100-mark.

Authorities reported 118 deaths on Friday, 131 on November 18, the highest till date, and 104 fatalities on November 12.

The active cases tally on Saturday stood at 39,741 as compared to 40,936 on Friday.

The bulletin said that the total number of cases has climbed to 5,23,117 of which 4,75,103 have recovered.

The number of containment zones in Delhi rose to 4,633 on Saturday from

1 more death takes toll to 75 in Noida, total at 21,307

Noida, Nov. 21: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar recorded one more fatality linked to coronavirus on Saturday that pushed the death toll to 75, while the district's infection tally rose to 21,307 with 137 new cases, official data showed.

Active cases came down to 1,307, the third highest in the state, from 1,401, the previous day, according to the data released by the UP Health Department for a 24-hour period.

On the bright side, 234 more patients got discharged during the period, taking the the overall recoveries in Gautam Buddha Nagar to 19,925, the fifth highest in the

state, it showed.

With the death toll reaching 75, Gautam Buddha Nagar now has a mortality rate of 0.35 per cent. The recovery rate of patients reached 93.51 per cent, the statistics showed. Meanwhile, the number of active cases in UP rose to 23,471 from 23,357 on Friday, 22,757 on Thursday, 21,954 on Wednesday, 22,166 on Tuesday, 22,603 on Monday and 22,967 on Sunday, according to the data.

The overall recoveries in the state reached 4,93,228 as the death toll linked to coronavirus climbed to 7,524 on Saturday, the data showed.

— PTI

4,560 on Friday.

A government official said over 400 ICU beds have been added in hospitals run by the Centre and the Delhi government in the city over the last five days amid a surge in coronavirus cases.

On Friday, Health Minister Satyendra Jain had said the gradual reduction in the number of new Covid cases and the positivity rate is a "clear indicator" that the spread of the virus is decreasing in the national capital.

"The positivity rate was 15.26 per cent on November 7. It is less than 11 per cent now. The maximum number of cases

(8,593) were reported on November 10," he had said.

Amid a spike in Covid cases, Nigambodh Ghat, the biggest cremation facility in the national capital, is likely to get three more CNG-based furnaces from next week, officials said on Saturday.

In the last ten days, there were instances when the maximum daily cremation count of Covid victims reached 22, they said.

A total of 210 Covid victims were cremated at the Ghat from November 10 to November 21, said officials of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC).

Officials to visit patients in home isolation

▶ **AS MANY** as 411 ICU beds have been added in hospitals run by the Delhi government and the Centre in the last five days, a move that comes against the backdrop of the AAP dispensation announcing reservation of 80 percent of ICU beds in the city's private hospitals for Covid patients.

compared to 12,055 RT-PCR samples on 15 Nov. the spokesperson tweeted.

The Delhi government has directed district officials to visit Covid patients under home isolation and ensure that they follow isolation rules.

In an order, the health department said contact tracing should be paid proper attention. It should be ensured that the contacts traced are subjected to immediate testing and kept under effective isolation until the test result

comes. "Analysis of cases emerging from entertainment areas, markets, workplaces and metro-like services should be immediately conducted to identify possible clusters and immediate containment measures should be initiated," stated the order issued last week.

It stated that all cases of symptomatic negatives of rapid antigen tests should be re-tested with follow-up RT-PCR tests, which are considered the gold standard for Covid testing.

"Patients under home isolation should be regularly evaluated and physically visited by health teams to ensure proper adherence to isolation standards," the order stated.

There have been some instances where coronavirus patients under home isolation were found not following the norms.

— PTI



Devotees stand in tubs filled with water to perform Chhath Puja rituals outside their houses amid government restrictions on public social gatherings during Covid outbreak at Yamuna Bank in New Delhi on Saturday.

— PTI



SHORT TAKES

FUEL PRICE HIKED
FOR SECOND
DAY IN A ROW

New Delhi, Nov. 21: Petrol price on Saturday was hiked by 15 paise per litre and diesel by 20 paise, the second straight day of increase in rates after firming international oil rates broke nearly a two-month-long hiatus in price revision.

The price of petrol in Delhi was hiked to ₹81.38 per litre from ₹81.23, according to a notification from oil marketing companies.

Diesel rates went up from ₹70.68 to ₹70.88 per litre.

On Friday, petrol price was raised by 17 paise per litre and diesel by 22 paise.

This is the first revision in petrol prices since September 22. Diesel rates had not changed since October 2.

Public sector oil marketing companies - Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd - revise rates of petrol and diesel daily based on benchmark international oil price and foreign exchange rate.

They have, however, resorted to calibrating the rates since the pandemic broke out with a view to avoiding volatility in retail prices.

The 58-day hiatus in petrol price revision and the 48-day status quo on diesel rates were preceded by no change in rates between June 30 and August 15 and a 85-day status quo between March 17 and June 6.

In Mumbai, the petrol price on Friday was raised to Rs 88.09 per litre from Rs 87.92, while diesel rates went up from Rs 77.11 to Rs 77.34.

Rates vary from state to state depending on the incidence of local sales tax or VAT.

COVID CLAIMS
OVER 500 LIVES
IN 24 HOURS

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 21

With 46,232 fresh detections, India's overall tally of coronavirus crossed 90.5 lakh on Saturday morning. The death toll so far has been nearly 1.33 lakh out of which 564 fatalities occurred in the last 24 hours.

Delhi, Kerala, Haryana, West Bengal continue to remain areas of concern even as cases have started surging again in Maharashtra over the last two days.

Union Ministry of Health officials said an average of more than 10 lakh tests conducted daily have ensured that the cumulative positivity rate is sustained at low levels and is presently following a downward trajectory. The cumulative national Positivity Rate stands at 6.93%. The daily positivity rate on Friday was 4.34%.

"Higher volumes of testing eventually lead to low Positivity rate... The daily Positivity Rate is now 4.34% which points out that a comparatively huge volume was tested to detect these cases from the population. With a continuous surge in daily cases in European and the American countries, India is taking all precautionary steps to bring the trajectory of the disease under control. In view of the increase in cases of some of the north Indian States, the Centre has advised all states and UTs to ramp up testing," officials said.

As many as 12 States/UTs have lower tests per million than national average, and have been advised by the central government to substantially ramp up the levels of testing.

AGRA DOC KILLED
INSIDE HOME, KIDS
INJURED; 1 HELD

Agra, Nov. 21: A 38-year-old dentist was allegedly strangled to death here on Friday while the perpetrator was arrested within five hours of committing the crime, police said on Saturday.

The victim, Nisha Singhal's eight-year-old daughter and four-year-old son too were injured after being attacked with a knife by the accused identified as Shubham Pathak, they said.

Pathak, who had robbed Singhal's house, was caught following an encounter at Kalindi Vihar area. He was shot in the leg, a police officer said, adding that the stolen cash and jewellery was seized from him.

According to police, Pathak gained entry into Singhal's house in Kaveri Kunj Colony in Kamanagar on the pretext of recharging a TV set top box.

He was identified after the police analysed footage retrieved from a CCTV camera installed in front of the house.

— PTI

NCB arrests Bharati after
seizing cannabis from her

Bharati, hubby confirm that they had bought the banned substance

SAURABH JOSHI
MUMBAI, NOV. 21

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), on Saturday, arrested comedian Bharati Singh following search and seizure of cannabis, in connection with the ongoing probe into drugs consumption by stars of entertainment industry.

The NCB officials had taken Singh and her husband Harsh Limbachiya for questioning at the agency's office. The officials later confirmed that the seized item was cannabis.

A team of the NCB raided the residence of the comedian at Lokhandwala Complex in Andheri following a specific information of presence of banned substance.

The officials found 86.5 gram cannabis from the residence of the couple. The investigators were probing her after her name cropped up during the course of investiga-

tion. "One of the arrested actor Arjun Rampal in connection with the probe and after the NCB arrested his girlfriend Gabriel's brother over his alleged links with the international drug cartels.

The officials said that the accused were questioned about the consumption when they confirmed about having bought the banned substance and also consuming it.

They are being questioned further in connection with the same. The officials are verifying details of her husband Limbachiya and they would take further



Bharti Singh arrives at the NCB office for questioning after a raid at her residence by the agency in a drug related case in Mumbai on Saturday.

— PTI

decision based on the findings of the probe, officials said.

The officials recently questioned actor Arjun Rampal in connection with the probe and after the NCB arrested his girlfriend Gabriel's brother over his alleged

links with the international drug cartels.

The officials are now probing the links of the peddling of drugs to the entertainment industry, including Bollywood.

The NCB earlier questioned actors Deepika Padukone, Shraddha

Kapoor, Sara Ali Khan and Rakhul Preet Singh, after the agency found chat exchanges between some of them and manager Karishma Prakash. The larger drug probe started following the suicide of actor Sushant Singh Rajput on June 14.

25 tigers die in MP in 11 mths, highest in India

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, NOV. 21

Madhya Pradesh which has the highest number of 526 big cats as per the latest census has earned the dubious distinction of recording deaths of maximum tigers — 25 — in the country in the last 11 months.

According to tiger mortality updates provided by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, MP has witnessed death of

25 tigers, the highest among the states in the country, since January 2020 and majority of tiger mortalities were reported outside the reserve forests in the state.

Incidentally, it was the 6th year in a row that the state has topped the chart of tiger mortality among the states. Forest officers have attributed the high mortality of tigers in MP to congestions in reserves.

"The state is witnessing an increase in tiger population due to favourable habi-

tats. But, at the same time the growth of tiger population has left less than 10 sq km for each tiger in these reserves", a senior forest officer of the MP government told this newspaper requesting not to be quoted since he was not authorised to speak to the media.

"We need to learn from the conservation model of Karnataka where the tiger mortality is much lower", he added.

Karnataka has the second largest population of tigers (524) in the coun-

try. Principal chief conservator of forest (PCCF) of MP government Alok Kumar, however, said the tiger population in the state was increasing.

"Most tigers died of natural causes, while some deaths were a result of human-animal conflicts", he told the media here.

According to him, the Bandavgarh tiger reserve has encountered a severe problem of congestion and witnessed deaths of 9 tigers in the last 11 months.

While 4 tigers in the reserve died in territorial fights, one was killed in poachers and the reasons for the death of 4 others were yet to be ascertained, a senior forest officer said.

The PCCF has recently written letters to all chief conservators of forest, field directors of tiger reserves, directors of national parks and divisional forest officers seeking urgent measures to strengthen conservation, protection and safety of wildlife.

Custodial death issue
rocks Odisha House

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 21

Turmoil reigned supreme in Odisha Legislative Assembly on Saturday as the Opposition Congress and BJP strongly condemned custodial deaths of two youths — K. Ramesh of Puri and Tarique Salim of Kuanarmunda police station in Sundergarh district — and sought judicial probe into them.

The transfer of Puri superintendent of police Akhileswar Singh and suspension of the Kuarnmunda police inspector Suprabha Pradhan and two other sub-inspectors for their alleged role in custodial deaths on Friday night failed to pacify the Opposition lawmakers.

Two youths who were picked up by the police on different criminal charges on Thursday died under mysterious circumstances. Their families alleged unbearable physical assault by the cops during the custody led to their deaths.

The Opposition lawmakers, while participating in a special debate on law and order situation in the House, repeatedly rushed to the well of the House to press for their demand. Unable to conduct the legislative businesses, the Speaker Dr S.N. Patro adjourned the thrice.

▶ **TWO YOUTHS** who were picked up by the police on different criminal charges on Thursday died under mysterious circumstances

The Speaker also convened an all-party meeting to resolve the impasse. However, no consensus was reached at the all-party meeting as Opposition members remained firm on the demands for lodging criminal cases against the superintendents of Police of Puri and Sundergarh districts and judicial probes into the two custodial deaths in the two districts. With no solution in sight to end the deadlock, Speaker adjourned the House till Sunday (Sunday has been included in Odisha Assembly calendar as a working day). "We have very firm on demands to book the Puri SP on murder charge and disciplinary action against Sundergarh SP. Besides, judicial probes must be ordered into the two custodial deaths that happened in the two districts in the last 48 hours," said the Leader of Opposition.

BJP lawmakers — Lalitendu Bidyadhar Mohapatra and Jayant Kumar Sarangi — also came down on the ruling BJD heavily on the custodial deaths.

Shah walks on TN road, greet supporters

Chennai, Nov. 21: Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday sprang a surprise here when he virtually broke protocol to get out of his vehicle and walk on the busy GST Road outside the airport to greet supporters, minutes after he landed here for a two-day visit of the city.

Mr Shah, who thanked the metropolis for its love, said it was "great" to be in Tamil Nadu.

Mr Shah is slated to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for projects worth over ₹67,000 crore, including phase II of Chennai Metro Rail.

Soon after his arrival from Delhi, Mr Shah was received by Tamil Nadu chief minister K. Palaniswami, his deputy O. Panneerselvam, senior Cabinet members and



Union home minister Amit Shah waves at supporters in Chennai.

— PTI

BJP state chief L. Murugan among others, before proceeding to a city hotel where he will be put up.

However, after exiting the airport, Mr Shah's car suddenly stopped and the BJP veteran got out, before walking a short distance, waving at scores of BJP and AIADMK work-

ers who had gathered to receive him with their respective party flags.

Accompanied by BJP National General Secretary and party in-charge of poll-bound Tamil Nadu, C.T. Ravi, and Murugan, with his security detail in tow, the Home Minister warmly waved at the overjoyed

supporters who had thronged the airport since the morning.

A heavy security cover has been provided in the city following Mr Shah's visit, during which he will meet state BJP functionaries and possibly discuss Tamil Nadu elections, due next April-May, before leaving on Sunday morning.

Meanwhile, Mr Shah took to Twitter to thank the city for its love and support. "It is always great to be in Tamil Nadu. Thank you Chennai for this love and support," he said in a tweet accompanying a video clip of his walk on GST Road.

Mr Shah had earlier been here in August 2019 to release a book on vice-president M. Venkaiah Naidu's two years in office then.

— PTI

Government of Jammu & Kashmir Jal Shakti Department State Mission Directorate, Jal Jeevan Mission J&K Civil Secretariat, Srinagar/Jammu (email: info.jjmjk@jk.gov)				
NIT No: 03 of 2020		Dated 19/11/2020		
Subject: Notice Inviting Tender for engagement of Project Management Consultant (PMC) for implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission in UT J&K				
The Jal Shakti Department of UT of Jammu & Kashmir through its recently constituted State Mission Directorate, Jal Jeevan Mission J&K intends to implement the Jal Jeevan Mission launched by Government of India with an aim to connect each and every rural household with pipe drinking water supply facility in a time bound manner. The Govt of J&K aims to achieve this goal by raising adequate infrastructure for creation of new water supply schemes and augmentation/retrofitting of existing water supply schemes through active participation of Gram Panchayats/Panchayat Pani Samitis (Constituted for the purpose) in an effective and time bound manner. Keeping in view the volume of work and limited time frame available, the State Mission Directorate (JJM) Jal Shakti Department J&K (Hereinafter called "Client"), invites proposals to provide the following Project Management Consultancy Services (hereinafter called "Services"), from the registered and reputed consultancy firms.				
S. No	Name of Work	Cost of Tender Form (INR)	EMD (INR Lakh)	Time Duration (Year)
1	Providing of Project Management Consultancy (PMC) for implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission in the UT of Jammu & Kashmir.	10000	25.00	2 1/2 Years
Interested and eligible consultancy firms may submit the complete proposals, both technical and financial in prescribed formats, along with requisite Earnest Money Deposit (Bid Security) in the form of Demand Draft/Bank Guarantee in favor of Director Finance Jal Shakti Department, J&K payable at Civil secretariat Srinagar/Jammu and proof of receipt of requisite document fee, on line on https://jktenders.gov.in. The detailed Notice for RFP containing Terms of Reference (TOR) and formats of proposal (Technical as well Financial) shall be available on e-procurement portal of J&K Govt. i.e. https://jktenders.gov.in with the schedule of critical dates as below				
S.No	Particulars	Schedule Date & Time		
1.	Date of issue of Notice for RFP	19/11/2020		
2.	Document download start Date & Time	20/11/2020, 10.00 AM		
3.	Last Date for receipt of requests for clarifications	24/11/2020, 05.00 PM		
4.	Last Date for booking of pre-bid meeting (VC)	27/11/2020, 05.00 PM		
5.	Pre-Bid meeting Date & Time	01/12/2020, 02.00 PM		
6.	Bid Submission Start Date & Time	02/12/2020, 10.00 AM		
7.	Bid Submission End Date & Time	16/12/2020, 05.00 PM		
8.	Technical Bid Opening Date & Time	17/12/2020, 03.00 PM		
9.	Price Bid Opening Date & Time	To be intimated separately.		
Addl, Mission Director State Mission Directorate, JJM (J&K)				
DIPK-9277/20 Dated 21.11.2020				

Government of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR Telefax:- 0194-2496089, Email ID:- xenmhchcdk@yahoo.in Gist of e-tender Short term					
NIT No: MHCHD/TS /2020-21/195/e-tendering		Dated: 17.11.2020			
For and on behalf of LT. Governor, J&K UT e-tenders are invited from Reputed and experienced firms for the below mentioned work:-					
Name of Work	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees)	Earnest Money (Rs)	Time of completion (in Days)	Position of AAA/funds
1	2	3	4	5	6
Servicing ,Repairs/Replacements of various items and Comprehensive Maintenance Contract of Central Heating System at Sales Taxes Department, Srinagar for winter season 2020-21.	6.59	500	13200	05	Available
1. Downloading of Bids:- The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from 17.11.2020 (18.00 hrs) and can be downloaded from 17.11.2020 (18.00 hrs). 2. Uploading: The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 18.11.2020 (10.00 hrs) to 23.11.2020 (14:00hrs) in two (02) covers. 3. Opening of Bids:- The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on 23.11.2020 at 16.00 hrs or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.					
Sd/- Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar					
DIPK-9185/20 Dated 19.11.2020					

SHORT TAKES

Temple gets back idols after 42 years

Nagapattinam: The ancient Rajagopalaswamy temple at Ananthamangalam in Nagapattinam district got back three of its idols stolen 42 years ago, authorities said. The idols, which were recovered in London, reached the temple on Saturday from Chennai. In 1978, four bronze idols — that of Lord Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman belonging to this 15th century temple were stolen. Porayar police had registered a case and even arrested three people, but the idols couldn't be traced. Following information from a Singapore-based voluntary organisation which monitors the trade of artefacts in the international market, three of the four stolen idols were recovered from an antique collector in London in September this year, authorities said. The London police handed over the three idols to the Indian embassy. — PTI

'Confusion in Maha over school exams'

Mumbai: Former Maharashtra school education minister and BJP leader Ashish Shelar on Saturday criticised the state government, saying it is doing little to minimise the confusion among parents over reopening of schools from November 23. On Thursday, the Shiv Sena ruled Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) decided to close the all schools including private till December 31st. While the state government had allowed reopening of schools for classes 9 to 12 depending on the Covid-19 situation in local areas. Earlier, the Maharashtra government had planned to open the school from November 23. Former school education minister has slammed the Maharashtra government over confusion and chaos over conducting the exam and school reopening.

17-yr-old girl axed to death in UP

Banda, UP: A 17-year-old girl was allegedly axed to death by a brother-in-law of her elder sister in the Atrara area here on Saturday evening, the police said. The police are suspecting rape and murder. Circle officer Satyaprakash Sharma said the deceased was a resident of Madhya Pradesh and had come to her elder sister's place. "On Saturday around 6 pm, the brother-in-law of her elder sister killed her using an axe and then fled. At the time of the incident, the accused and the girl were alone in the house," Sharma said, adding that a case has been registered against the accused. He said teams have been formed to nab the accused who is absconding. The officer said prima facie it seems that the girl was raped and then murdered but nothing could be said officially before the post-mortem report arrives. — PTI

PRESIDING OFFICERS' MEET IN GUJ NOV. 25

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV 21

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Saturday said that the 80th All India Presiding Officers' Conference (AIPOC) will be held on November 25 and 26, 2020 in Kevadia, Gujarat. President Ram Nath Kovind will inaugurate the conference, while vice-president M. Venkaiah Naidu and Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani will also be present on the occasion. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the valedictory session of the conference on November 26, 2020. Mr Birla further informed that the All India Presiding Officers' Conference was launched in the year 1921 and since then, this conference has been ceaselessly striving to strengthen the democratic way of life and promoting a sense of unity and oneness in the Indian Legislatures. He also said that this year marks the centenary year of the conference and the celebrations began on September 14-15 September 2020, which will continue till September 14-15, 2021. This conference provides a platform to share new ideas, views, and experiences with all the Presiding Officers in India, Mr Birla told mediapersons.



Crowd at Chandpole Bazar amid rise in the Covid-19 cases in Jaipur on Saturday. — PTI

Soldier killed, another hurt in Pak firing in Rajouri

Jammu, Nov. 21: A havaldar in the Indian Army was killed on Saturday in unprovoked firing by Pakistan on forward posts and villages in two sectors along the Line of Control and the International Border in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

The casualty comes barely a week after multiple ceasefire violations by Pakistani troops in north Kashmir left 11 people, including five security personnel, dead on November 13. Havaldar Patil Sangram Shivaji, who was manning a forward post, was critically injured in the Pakistani firing in the Lam area of Rajouri district's Nowshera sector around 1 am. Another soldier also sustained injuries and is currently undergoing treatment at a military hospital, they said.

The Indian Army retaliated effectively to silence the Pakistani guns, and the cross-border firing between the two sides continued for quite some time.

Taking to Twitter, the general officer commanding of the Jammu-based White Knight Corps and all other ranks saluted the soldier and offered their condolences to his family. — PTI



Farmers raise slogans as they stage a protest on the NH 54 over non-supply of Urea in Bathinda. — PTI

False impotency allegation amounts to cruelty, says HC

Delhi court upholds couple's divorce

New Delhi, Nov. 21: Levelling false allegation of impotency against a spouse amounts to cruelty, the Delhi high court has held while upholding the divorce granted to a man, whose estranged wife had claimed that he was incapable of sexual intercourse.

The high court agreed with the submission of the husband's counsel that the allegations levelled in the written statement filed by the wife were "grave and serious", and likely to impact the man's self-image and adversely affect his mental wellbeing.

"Thus, having regard to the law on the subject, we find no infirmity in the findings and observations of the trial court that the allegation of the appellant (wife) in the written statement with respect to the impotency clearly falls within the concept of cruelty as defined under law," a bench of Justice Manmohan and Justice Sanjeev Narula said.

The high court's verdict came while dismissing the woman's appeal

India aims to cut carbon footprint by 30-35%: Modi

Gandhinagar, Nov. 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the country was moving forward with the goal of reducing its carbon footprint by 30 to 35 per cent.

He also said that efforts were on to increase the use of natural gas by four times in this decade and to double the oil refining capacity in the next five years.

The Prime Minister said this while addressing the eighth convocation of Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University (PDPU) here via video conference.

"Today, the country is moving forward with the goal of reducing its carbon footprint by 30 to 35 per cent. When I told this to the world, it expressed surprise and wondered if India could achieve this," he said.

"Our effort is to increase the share of natural gas in our energy needs by four times in this decade. Work is also on to nearly double the oil refining capacity in the coming five years," he added.

He also expressed confidence that the country will achieve its renewable energy generation target "before time".

"Today, per unit cost (of solar power) has come



Narendra Modi

down to less than ₹2 from ₹12-13 earlier. Today, solar power has become the country's priority. We have made a commitment to generate 175 gigawatt renewable energy and I am confident that we will achieve this before 2022," he said.

"Also, our renewable energy target of 450 gigawatt by 2030, a big aim, will be achieved before time...I am confident of that," he said.

Mr Modi said that the oil and gas sector will see an investment of crores of rupees in this decade, which will create opportunities for the graduating students of the university in the fields of research, manufacturing and others.

He also said that work is underway to strengthen the start-ups ecosystem related to the energy security sector, and a special fund has been allocated for the purpose. —PTI

Violence erupts after cops fire at picketers blocking NH 1 killed, 23 hurt in police firing at protest over Bru settlement

Agartala, Nov. 21: One person was killed and at least 23 others were injured when police opened fire at the picketers, who blocked the Assam-Agartala National Highway at Panisagar in North Tripura district Saturday in protest against resettlement of Bru migrants from neighbouring Mizoram, police said.

A large number of people had gathered on the NH 08 at Panisagar and blocked it, demanding to call off the resettlement planning of the government.

The Joint Movement Committee (JMC) comprising Bengalis and local Mizos had observed five days strike from Monday on the issue and blocked NH8 Saturday.

The Bru issue had started in September 1997 following demands of a separate autonomous district



A fire brigade personnel lying unconscious after clashes with the members of Joint Movement Committee in Kanchanpur sub-division at Panisagar in North Tripura district on Saturday. — PTI

council by carving out areas of western Mizoram adjoining Bangladesh and Tripura.

About 30,000 Bru tribals had then fled Mizoram due to the ethnic tension there and took shelter in refugee camps in Tripura.

The first attempt to repatriate the Brus was made in November 2009 by the Centre along with the governments of Tripura and Mizoram.

However, the effort had met with little success. The Centre signed a

fresh agreement in January this year according to which the Brus who stayed back in Tripura relief camps will not be forced to return.

The Centre sanctioned ₹600 crore as rehabilitation package for the displaced Brus as a final solution to the vexed problem after the agreement.

JMC chairman Zairemthiama Pachau had told newsmen recently that the North Tripura district magistrate had assured that 1,500 families would be settled in the area.

"But now the government is trying to settle 6,000 families," he said.

Trouble started, when large contingent of police and paramilitary, including Tripura State Rifles (TSR), were involved in a scuffle following altercation over withdrawal of the road blockade. — PTI

Inter-caste and inter-faith U'khand couples get ₹50K

Dehradun, Nov. 21: Amid several BJP-ruled states contemplating to enact a law to check the alleged religious conversion of women in the name of marriage, the Uttarakhnd government is paying ₹50,000 to inter-caste and inter-faith couples to encourage such alliances.

The cash incentives are given to all legally registered inter-faith Indian couples, said officials of the state social welfare department.

In cases of inter-caste marital marriages, one condition for availing the cash incentive is that one of the spouses should be from the scheduled caste as defined by Article 341 of the Constitution, they said.

The amount given as inter-caste and inter-religious marital alliances can be extremely helpful in promoting the spirit of national unity, said Tehri's social welfare officer Dipankar Ghildiyal said.

On lines of Yogi govt, Maha BJP wants law on 'love Jihad'

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, NOV. 21

On the lines of Yogi Aadityanath government, which is planning to bring a law against unlawful conversions in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP has demanded a similar act in Maharashtra. The BJP will propose to bring such an act against "love jihad" in Maharashtra, said senior BJP leader Kirit Somaiya. "We support the move of the UP government, which has decided to bring a law against love jihad. There should be a similar law in

Maharashtra. The BJP will table a proposal in Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha in this regard," he said.

The BJP leader accused chief minister Uddhav Thackeray of supporting Congress minister Aslam Shaikh who has ruled out bringing such a law in Maharashtra. Mr Shaikh had said, "The governments which want to hide their inadequacies are bringing in such laws. Maharashtra government is doing its work efficiently and it does not need to bring such law."

The eligible couples can apply for the cash incentive till one year after the marriage, he said.

The amount being given jointly to such couples was increased from ₹10,000 to ₹50,000 in Uttarakhand in 2014

through an amendment in the Uttar Pradesh Antarjatiya/Andarharmik Vivah Protsahan Niyamawali, 1976 which had been adopted as it was when Uttarakhand was carved out of Uttar Pradesh in 2000. — PTI

BJP's Bengali cells in all state units

Aims to reach out to Bengali intellectuals to drum up support in Bengal

YOJNA GUSAI
NEW DELHI, NOV. 21

With a ramped up organisational base and also the support base in West Bengal, the BJP has now asked its state units in other states to constitute a "Bengali prakoshth (cell)" to reach out to Bengali intellectuals and influencers in various fields to drum up support for it for the coming electoral battle in Mamata Banerjee led TMC ruled state.

While its "Save Bengal" campaign has already made a "massive inroads" among "probashi Bengalis", who played a key role in the party's stunning performance in the last Lok Sabha polls, the party now wants to

counter the TMC's allegation of being a "non-Bengali party" at the national level by roping in Bengali intellectuals through such "prakoshths" in its state units while seeking their support in West Bengal to take on Banerjee-led government, who the BJP often accuses of playing appeasement politics and political killings of its workers and supporters.

The party is also hoping that such "prakoshth" would help the organisation in grooming "future Bengali leaders," both in the central team and state, units where the BJP is currently facing a leadership crisis when it comes to taking on Ms Banerjee. Through the 'Save

Bengal' campaign, the BJP had reached out to many influencers and intellectuals within West Bengal also and the party claims that "Save Bengal" campaign's team is now present in every district of the state while there are around 34 chapters functioning across the country. With these 'Bengali prakoshths,' the party leadership hopes to make more inroads among the Bengali community within West Bengal and nationally.

The idea of "Bengali prakoshth" was suggested by BJP's national joint general secretary (organisation), Shiv Prakash, who is one of the key strategists for West Bengal and the party's

Rajasthan unit has already set up the 'prakoshth' under the guidance of the state's general secretary (organisation) Chandrasekhar.

The 294-member West Bengal assembly will go to polls in April-May and the party has already constituted a team, including senior leaders and MPs including Sunil Deodhar, Vinod Tawde, Dushyant Kumar Gautam, Harish Dwivedi and Vinod Sonkar to carry out its election blueprint in the state. Also to keep the cadre's morale high, BJP top brass including party president JP Nadda and Union home minister Amit Shah will be visiting the state every month till the elections.

Alliance with BJP...

Continued from page 1

The Narendra Modi government at the Centre has fought against corruption, dynasty and caste politics all these years, Mr Shah said and urged the people of Tamil Nadu to teach a lesson to those practicing dynastic politics, like the people of some other states have done.

Praising the chief minister and deputy chief minister of Tamil Nadu for their handling of the Covid-19 pandemic and their performance in other areas like water management, Mr Shah said, "To the DMK leaders who have been accusing the Centre of doing injustice to Tamil Nadu, I want to ask what they had done to the state in the 10 years of Congress rule when they were in an alliance with that party."

Mr Palaniswami, in his speech, urged the Centre to give permission for its project to link rivers within the state.

Describing the home minister as a modern day "Chanakya", Mr Panneerselvam said the state was able to implement many developmental schemes because of the cordial relationship it had with the Centre. The present electoral alliance will continue and the AIADMK will sweep the next Assembly elections, he added.

Assam ex-CM Gogoi's health worsens

Guwahati, Nov. 21: Former chief minister Tarun Gogoi's health condition deteriorated with multi-organ failure and he has become unconscious with difficulty in breathing, Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday.

The 86-year old veteran Congress politician, who was on non-invasive ventilation since he was admitted at Gauhati

Medical College and Hospital on November 2 due to post-Covid complications, was put under invasive ventilation, the minister said.

"Around afternoon today, his condition deteriorated with difficulties in breathing. So, doctors started an intubation ventilator, which is machine ventilation," said Mr Sarma, who rushed to the GMCH to inquire Mr



Gogoi's health. Mr Gogoi is "completely unconscious" and has suffered from multi-organ failure, the minister added. "Efforts are on to

revive his organs with medicines and other means. The doctors will also attempt a dialysis. However, the next 48-72 hours are very critical and we are doing everything possible," he said.

Mr Sarma said doctors of GMCH are in constant touch with experts from the AIIMS in Delhi and ruled out any possibility of shifting him to outside the state in this condition. — PTI

Akbar, Priya for 'chances of settlement'

Continued from page 1

Bhavook Chauhan, said there was less chance of any settlement since the facts of the case were peculiar. The court asked both the parties to respond on the point of settlement and get back on November 24, the next date of hearing. The previous judge,

ACMM Vishal Pahuja, had started hearing the final arguments in the case on February 7 this year.

Mr Akbar had filed the criminal defamation complaint against Ms Ramani on October 15, 2018. He resigned as Union minister on October 17, 2018. Mr Akbar had earlier

told the court that Ms Ramani had defamed him. He has denied all the allegations of sexual harassment by women who came forward during #MeToo campaign against him.

Over 20 women came up with accounts of the alleged sexual harassment by Mr Akbar while they were work-

ing as journalists under him.

He termed the allegations "false, fabricated and deeply distressing" and mostly denied any memory of the various detailed accounts of sexual harassment and abuse that his victims recounted in stand in an open court. — Agencies

THE ASIAN AGE

22 NOVEMBER 2020



Ranjona Banerji

Off the beaten track

How I tweeted away my pandemic summer

I say this to sound like I have an all-round life, but I mean Twitter. Thanks to Mark Zuckerberg and his strange ideas of how threatening decapitation is not threatening decapitation, my interactions with Facebook have diminished. WhatsApp I have always abhorred because there are only so many “Good Morning” fake cups of coffee and bunches of flowers that you can receive without falling violently ill.

Aha, I hear you thinking, this means you are in favour of “fake news” and are actually a secret WhatsApp addict. You could imagine that but you could also imagine that I ruthlessly block anyone who bores me with endless rightwing rubbish.

It is true that I have another Zuckerberg product or acquisition on my phone and that is Instagram. This I like. I haven’t fully grasped its purpose other than the purpose of all social media which I understand is to sell me as “data”. But I do enjoy the photographs. Especially of endless images of boiled eggs and avocados in such creative and innovative juxtaposition. The human mind is fabulous.

Is that it? There’s the Nasa app for the latest on space exploration, the Chirp app for the latest on gravitational wave detections, the free weather apps which are quite my favourite to waste time on, the Google map app which forces me to find geographical locations mentioned in every book I read. The tennis apps, well their purpose is obvious. If I can’t remember anything else after looking at my phone to check, well, this is it.

I don’t have much to do with the “gig” economy either and not just I live in a remote area where no one really wants to gig by. I am wary of using my phone to pay, transact, bank. And I do like humans and physical shops and such. And I don’t want to chat with my phone service provider on WhatsApp no matter how many annoying messages they send me!

So after this long detour, we reach Twitter. Or do we? Once, angry with Twitter for its Zuckerbergian refusal to stop toxicity and for suspending anti-toxic handles, a few of switched us to Mastodon. This was really sweet for a while. There were only like-minded people on it and you had lovely chats. But boy did it get hellishly boring after a while. There was no information you see, because there were no news sites, no information sites, no sports sites. No nothing, really. Bye-bye it was to Mastodon. I still get plaintive emails telling me what I’m missing, like from an old flame who hasn’t realised it’s over.

Now we reach Twitter. It’s got everything right with it and everything wrong with it. I’m not going to get philosophical and stuff and tell you it’s a microcosm of life blah blah. But it is compelling and it is negotiable. And I spend most of my day on it. Yeah, it sounds pathetic, but do I care?

You want the obvious: you interact with a wide range of people from all over the world. There is no endless procession of smiling cups of coffee. Fake news may proliferate but is easily called out. News itself is widely available with “real time” updates. You can take part in conversations or you can just watch.

Trolls? Yes. There are trolls. They can be putrid, vile, scary. You have to deal with them. For journalists, trolls have long been part of our lives. Earlier, trolls would write postcards and letters. Then they sent emails and wrote comments below your articles and columns. They made more or less the same threats of death and rape. It was just a question of scale and accessibility. There’s no one-size-fits-all answer. I don’t interact; they wither away.

It’s a great escape too from the real world and that’s why it’s an addiction. An ever-widening circle of information, entertainment, interaction, annoyance, humour, joy and so on. People you might never have known existed otherwise. People you never would have met. And yes, I have met some Twitter friends in real life. And sometimes, especially since Covid, have interacted more with real friends on Twitter than in real life!

I get that it’s not for everyone. It can be too political, too in-your-face, too demanding of responses. It can force you to fall into weird rabbit holes. Words, phrases, ideologies you don’t understand. I feel my age on Twitter at all times and have to use online dictionaries to understand what people, young people, say and mean. There are worlds within worlds revealed. If I were a proper psycho-babbler, I would have more insights to offer into human nature and the infinite spirals we can traverse!

I get that some people prefer cat videos and holiday snaps. Either way, we are part of this grand social media exercise. If you’re up for a fight, you know where to find me!

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.

Subhani



Get priorities straight in time of a pandemic



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dec 360

The number of Indians infected by Covid-19 has crossed 90 lakhs. Over 1.3 lakhs have died of the virus. The economic distress in the wake of the pandemic is palpable. Millions have seen their earnings drop.

Amid the deaths, disease, debt and despair, guess what some state governments in India are concerned about? They are worrying about who one marries, whether the person is of the same faith or a different one, and if there is any hint of conversions, forced or otherwise.

In the last few weeks, several BJP-ruled state governments have been ratcheting up tension by publicly announcing their plans to bring about legislation to outlaw what they describe as “love jihad”.

Last week, it was the turn of Madhya Pradesh, where night curfew has now been imposed in Indore, Bhopal, Gwalior, Vidisha, and Ratlam districts from November 21 as Covid-19 cases surge. In the middle of all this, Madhya Pradesh home minister Narottam Mishra found time to declare that a “love jihad bill”, which intends imposing five years of rigorous imprisonment for “violators”, will soon be introduced in the state Assembly.

Madhya Pradesh is not the only state stoking sentiments around the “love jihad” conspiracy theory, which pivots around the belief that Muslim men in India are part of some organised campaign to convert Hindu women to Islam. Four other BJP-ruled states — including Uttar Pradesh and Haryana — are following

the same playbook.

At an election rally in Jaunpur last month, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath warned of dire consequences to those found guilty of “love jihad”.

Earlier this month, Haryana home minister Anil Vij announced that his state was planning to bring in a strict law to control “love jihad” cases and soon a committee would be constituted to draft the law. The tourism minister of Karnataka, also BJP-ruled, has tweeted that the southern state would bring in a “a law banning religious conversions for the sake of marriage”. Assam minister and BJP Northeast point-person Himanta Biswa Sarma has joined in the chorus against “love jihad”.

What is behind this rush for laws to outlaw “love jihad” in the time of a pandemic? It is clearly a rallying cry to mobilise BJP supporters. But that is only part of the story. Think of all the issues and questions that gets pushed off the news cycle each time “love jihad” grabs headlines. Public health experts like Anant Bhan and Hemant Shewade point out that India is far from being on the top of the pandemic and governments at the Centre and in states must focus on addressing the needs of those with Covid-19 and those who have other diseases. There is literally no time to waste.

Why then this noise about “love jihad” when in February this year, G. Kishan Reddy, Union minister of state for home in the Narendra Modi government, said: “The term ‘love jihad’ is not defined under the extant laws.” He also said: “No such case of ‘love jihad’ has been reported by any of the Central agencies.” Mr Reddy was replying to a question by Congress MP Benny Behanan in Parliament on “whether Central agencies have reported any case of ‘love jihad’ from Kerala during the past two years and if so, the details thereof?” Mr Reddy also noted that Article 25 of the Constitution provides for the freedom to profess, practice and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health. “Various courts, including the Kerala high court, have upheld this view,” he said in a written reply.

All this high-decibel talk about an imagined ‘love jihad’ and the rush for laws to stop something that does not exist is worse than tilting at windmills — it is helping divert attention from far more pressing issues surrounding the pandemic

In India, there is no law barring couples from different faiths from getting married. Couples, including interfaith ones, can get married under a Special Marriage Act without changing their religion. The law, however, requires the registrar to post a notice about the intended marriage 30 days before the wedding and this has triggered many problematic situations, with families and right-wing groups trying to stir the pot if it the couple are from different faiths.

The All India Lawyers’ Association for Justice, a national lawyers’ collective, has condemned the announcements made by the BJP-ruled states to pass a law against “love jihad”.

In a statement, the association said that it “believes that every person has the right to marry or not, and to select their partners as per their will and desire... Governments, instead of pursuing a communal agenda that penalises those who exercise their constitutional freedoms, must take immediate steps to enact a law that would specifically cover the field of so-called ‘honour’ crimes.”

It is clear that charges of “love jihad” may not stick in court. It is also clear that the “love jihad” bogey is more a marker of the politics of intimidation than anything else. All this high-decibel talk about an imagined “love jihad” and the rush for laws to stop something that does not exist is worse than tilting at windmills — it is helping divert attention from far more pressing issues surrounding the pandemic.

We can neither afford deepening of fissures nor diversions.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

LETTERS NEW FRONTIER

It seems that the reverberations of BJP’s success in Bihar and its gradual firming of foothold in West Bengal have started getting echoed in the southern State of Tamil Nadu, too. DMK leader M.K. Azhagiri is reportedly launching a new party which will ally with the BJP. Until a few months ago, both these states were once a no-entry land for the saffron party.

Arun Malankar
Lucknow

INDIA MUST WAIT

THE REPORT that the Pfizer vaccine will come soon may not spell good news as far as India is concerned. The vaccine requires a -70 degree Celsius temperature for storage and a large number of cold chains. India does not have such a large number. Hence storage and transportation of the Pfizer vaccine will prove insurmountable. In addition to this, the United States and European counties have already placed large numbers of orders. As the company may not be able to fulfill the global demand, India as such has to wait for its own vaccine.

D.B. Madan
New Delhi

GHAR WAPSI

THOSE WHO DON’T understand a bit about love and are totally ignorant about the actual meaning of jihad have mixed the two so perfectly that they together make a deadly communal capsule of hate. True love itself is no less than a jihad where the couple has to strive to counter social, religious and caste hurdles. The logic served to make the majority community gulp the capsule is that its girls are lured by boys of the minority community into conversion and subsequent exploitation. If the well-wishers of exploited and victimised girls are really concerned about the women of their society they should look into each case where they are exploited, and not confine themselves to a narrow section of people. By the way there is already a law in place to protect women from such exploitation. Why is it not being used to give justice to them? Cases of cheating and fraud exist in society cutting across social, religious and caste lines. One final question, if the situation is reversed in the so-called ‘love jihad’ cases will the same rigorous punishment be applied or will it be considered a case of *ghar wapsi* and rewarded accordingly?

Syed Abdul Monim
Navi Mumbai

STUBBLE TROUBLE

IF ONLY SONIA and Rahul Gandhi were to show as much due diligence on the issue of stubble burning in a state ruled by their party, Punjab, it would have prevented them from having to escape the gas chamber that the national capital region has become. The indifference of the Congress high command complemented by the fact that Captain Amarinder Singh is doing almost nothing to prevent stubble burnings in his state has made lives miserable for those living in Delhi and surrounding areas. A stern nudge from Sonia Gandhi would have perhaps made Captain work, and bring the menace under control.

C.K. Subramanian
Navi Mumbai

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Kurt Jacobsen and Sayed Hassan Khan

The real social distance in US: Can Joe, Kamala ensure change?

Be jubilant, but keep it short. Donald Trump clings to the White House but it’s a pretty good bet that he will depart, kicking and tweeting, on January 20. He nonetheless garnered 72 million votes, so his long-anticipated exit may not be permanent. The Democratic Party failed to cut into his support because they were loath to say one word that smacked of the visionary aspirations of FDR’s New Deal or LBJ’s Great Society, regarded as hideously socialist by their big donors.

Wall Street injected millions of dollars into Joe Biden’s campaign, and awaits Cabinet appointments and more, which will be duly granted given that some 40 former lobbyists populate his transition team. So we are a long way from Mr Biden posing credibly as a humble man of the people. It was truly bizarre listening to affluent Democrats dismissing Bernie Sanders as not a “real” party member when he and Elizabeth Warren were the only candidates who stuck to the values of traditional FDR Democrats.

After fending off the left-liberal

platforms of Mr Sanders and Ms Warren, complacent Democrat officials are determined to revert to the same stale economic policies that bred Mr Trump’s resistible rise to power in the first place. Throughout his lacklustre campaign, Mr Biden avidly played the Covid-19 card of extreme lockdown, pleasing perhaps a third of the populace who can afford a Zoom lifestyle but far less so a hard-pressed majority who plead that the economy (jobs, wages, small businesses and housing stability) is their foremost worry.

Lockdown proponents like to claim that disobeying their rules means you will murder your granny. They don’t like to hear that lockdowns mean condemning multitudes to poverty, homelessness and early deaths (from untreated illnesses) in order to protect their privileged selves. The anti-Covid measures in the United States simply managed to shift the risks from the upper class to the poor, and is no small part of the reason for the boosted Trump vote. A loss of seats in the House of Representatives and

an inability to gain a Senate majority should alert the Democratic Party lords that something essential is missing in their economic programmes, but all they do is blame the left for their own shortcomings.

Mr Biden’s popularity was only modestly higher than Mr Trump’s. The bulk of Democrats voted for Joe Biden out of distaste for Mr Trump, not enthusiasm for he who has little to offer those outside his high-income social orbit. Mr Biden has a track record any conservative can cherish — servant of the credit card industry in his home state of Delaware, passing a 2005 law stripping people of bankruptcy relief; tormentor of Anita Hill during a 1991 Supreme Court nomination event, installing a judge who became a reliable rubber stamp for reactionary views; pushing a 1994 crime bill that sent the incarceration of minorities skyrocketing; and blithely offering several times, including as Barack Obama’s vice-president, to slash social security and Medicare to make foolish compromises with crafty Republicans.

Mr Biden’s good manners will be a relief, but only for a short spell.

Kamala Harris praised Mr Biden for his “audacity” in choosing her as running mate when nothing was more obvious than the careful political calculations involved in the choice. In mainstream American politics, “identities” of race, creed, ethnicity and gender are are allotted to flourish instead of class interests, which are not supposed to exist. One hopes that Ms Harris’ shattering of race and gender barriers puts those symbolic goals behind us, because Barack Obama’s presidency gave black voters who weren’t already prosperous nothing but a vicarious thrill. Canny elites can always pick useful opportunists to do their bidding, on the assumption that all that people crave is to become part of the establishment. Too often, they’re right about that. Ms Harris is a dedicated careerist who played her cards right as a public prosecutor with a merciless approach to the poor, even threatening to jail parents of truant children.

The US isn’t centre-right, but the

people who run it are. A New York Times poll attests two-thirds of US citizens want a wealth tax, national healthcare, free college tuition and a Green New Deal, just for starters. A recent Fox News poll put those figures even higher.

Mr Biden and Ms Harris became Democratic candidates because they are “safe hands” who enable Wall Street, mega corporations, and too-big-to-fail banks to go on bilking average citizens. The top 10 per cent in the US now own 78 per cent of the wealth. At this rate, the top 10 per cent should own everything in another lifetime, but something has to give. The real social distancing that the US has practised since the 1970s is the ever-yawning gap between the wealthy and the rest. Mr Biden is by no means a remedy, unless the social justice movements arising during Trump’s era pressure him ever so reluctantly into the role.

By arrangement with Dawn. The writers are the authors of No Clean Hands and Parables of Permanent War.

IN BRIEF RESIGN WITH ME, GUATEMALA VP URGES PREZ

Guatemala City, Nov. 21: Guatemala's vice president told President Alejandro Giammattei that both men should resign their positions "for the good of the country" following the approval of a budget cutting educational and health spending that caused a public outcry. "We both resign," Vice President Guillermo Castillo said he told Giammattei Friday. He had suggested vetoing the approved budget, firing government officials and attempt more outreach to various sectors around the country.

Giammattei had not responded publicly and Castillo did not share the president's reaction to his proposal.

Castillo said he would not resign alone. Discontent had been building over the new 2021 budget on social media and then generated clashes with police Friday in front of the congress. The spending plan was negotiated in secret and approved by the congress.

JAN MORRIS, AUTHOR, PASSES AWAY AT 94

New York, Nov. 21: Jan Morris, the celebrated journalist, historian, world traveller and fiction writer who in middle age became a pioneer of the transgender movement, has died at 94.

Morris died in Wales on Friday morning, according to her literary representative, United Agents. Her agent Sophie Scard confirmed her death. Morris had been in failing health. Additional details were not immediately available. The British author lived as James Morris until the early 1970s, when she underwent surgery at a clinic in Casablanca and renamed herself Jan Morris.

Her best-selling memoir "Conundrum," which came out in 1974, continued the path of such earlier works as Christine Jorgensen's "A Personal Autobiography" in presenting her decision as natural and liberating. "I no longer feel isolated and unreal," she wrote. Morris was a prolific and accomplished author and journalist who wrote dozens of books.

BOB DYLAN DOCUMENTS SELL FOR \$495K

Boston, Nov. 21: A long-lost trove of Bob Dylan documents including the singer-songwriter's musings about anti-Semitism and unpublished song lyrics has sold at auction for \$495,000.

Boston-based R R Auction said Friday the collection privately held by the late American blues artist Tony Glover, a longtime Dylan friend and confidante, was sold Thursday to a bidder whose identity was not made public. The collection included transcripts of Glover's 1971 interviews with Dylan and letters the pair exchanged.

The interviews reveal that reveal that Dylan had anti-Semitism on his mind when he changed his name from Robert Zimmerman, and that he wrote "Lay Lady Lay" for Barbra Streisand. Dylan, 79, was close with Glover, who died last year. The two men broke into music in the same Minneapolis coffeehouse scene. Glover's widow, Cynthia Nadler, put the documents up for auction online.

HURRICANE IOTA: MORE BODIES FOUND

Tegucigalpa/Mexico City, Nov. 21: Authorities in Central America recovered more bodies on Thursday from landslides triggered by hurricane Iota, which battered the impoverished region this week, the second deadly storm to roar through this month.

The number of reported deaths rose to more than 40 across Central America and Colombia, and the toll is expected to rise as rescue workers reach isolated communities.

Most of the deaths occurred in Nicaragua and Honduras. Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez issued an urgent plea for international help. "We are in a situation of great calamity and we need the world to help us rebuild our country," he said while speaking at a news conference.

The strongest storm on record to hit Nicaragua, Iota struck the coast late on Monday as a Category 4 hurricane. It inundated low-lying areas still reeling from the impact two weeks ago of Eta, another major hurricane that killed dozens of people in the region.

Daily US virus deaths highest since May

Country now averaging over 1,300 Covid deaths per day, daily infections at a record high of 188,000

Washington, Nov. 21: The surging Coronavirus is taking an increasingly dire toll across the US just as a vaccine appears at hand, with the country now averaging over 1,300 Covid-19 deaths per day — the highest since the calamitous spring in and around New York City.

The overall death toll has reached about 253,000, by far the highest in the world. Total confirmed infections have eclipsed more than 11.7 million, after the biggest one-day gain on record Thursday — almost 188,000. And the number of people in the hospital with Covid-19 hit another all-time high at more than 80,000.

With health experts deeply afraid Thanksgiving travel and holiday gatherings next week will fuel the spread of the virus, many states and cities are imposing near-lockdowns or other restrictions. California ordered a 10 pm to 5 am curfew starting Saturday, covering 94% of the state's 40 million residents.

The Texas border county of El Paso, where more than 300 people have died from Covid-19 since October, is advertising jobs for morgue workers capable of lifting bodies weighing 175 pounds or more. Officials are offering more

DON ELDEST SON DONALD TRUMP JR. TESTS +VE

Washington, Nov. 21: Donald Trump Jr, the eldest son of US President Donald Trump, has tested positive for Covid-19, his spokesperson said, latest in the First Family to have been infected by the deadly virus. Trump Jr tested positive at the start of the week and has been "quarantining out at his cabin since the result," the spokesman said on Friday. "He has been asymptomatic so far and is following all guidelines," the spokesman added. — PTI

than \$27 an hour for work described as not only physically arduous but "emotionally taxing as well." The county had already begun paying jail inmates \$2 an hour to help move corpses and has ordered at least 10 refrigerated trucks as morgues run out of room. Covid-19 deaths in the US are at their highest level since late May, when the Northeast was emerging from the first wave of the crisis. They peaked at about 2,200 a day in late

Russia Covid-19 toll hits new high

Moscow, Nov. 21: Russia on Saturday registered record numbers for daily infections and deaths from the Coronavirus, two days after having passed two million cases.

Health officials reported 24,822 new infections and 476 deaths, bringing the national total to 2,064,748 million cases and 35,778 fatalities since the beginning of the year.

While those figures suggest a lower death rate

than elsewhere in the world, they need to be treated with caution. The official Russian death toll only includes those in which Covid has been established as the primary cause of death after an autopsy.

Data published by Russia's federal statistics service earlier this month indicated excess deaths of more than 117,000 year-on-year between March and September, suggesting that virus fatalities could

be much higher.

Most of the new cases announced Saturday were recorded in Moscow (7,168) and in the country's second city, Saint Petersburg (2,476), with other regions recording figures in the tens or hundreds.

"We are getting a lot of calls at the moment," Dmitri, a Saint Petersburg ambulance driver, told AFP. "The number of sick people is growing." The medical team he worked

with collecting samples to identify cases visited around 20 addresses every day, he said.

"People are scared, and they are calling for a doctor as soon as they get a little cough," said Lyudmila, one of the two nurses on the team.

On Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the surge in infections and deaths as "alarming".

— AFP

PORTUGAL EXTENDS VIRUS EMERGENCY

Lisbon, Nov 21: Portugal on Friday extended until December 8 the state of emergency it imposed to bring down the Coronavirus infection rate as the second wave of the disease spreads.

President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa announced he had signed the decree extending the emergency measures which had been due to lapse on Monday, warning that a further extension remains a possibility.

"The state of emergency will last as long as is necessary to fight against the pandemic" he said in a televised address.

While the second wave of the virus should reach its peak in late November or early December, a third wave will "probably" follow early next year, the president added. More than 80 percent of Portugal's population has been under partial lockdown.

The announcement came after the socialist government held an emergency cabinet meeting to decide on the virus restrictions. — AFP

Warangal doc finds possible cure for Covid-19 issues

Washington, Nov. 21: An Indian-American scientist has discovered a potential strategy to prevent life-threatening inflammation, lung damage and organ failure in patients diagnosed with Covid-19.

Published online in the journal Cell, the research coming from the lab of Dr Thirumala-Devi Kanneganti, an Indian-born researcher working at St. Jude Children's Research Hospi-

tal in Tennessee, identified the drugs after finding that the hyperinflammatory immune response associated with virus leads to tissue damage and multi-organ failure in mice by triggering inflammatory cell death pathways.

The researchers detailed how the inflammatory cell death signaling pathway worked, which led to potential therapies to disrupt the process. "Understan-

ding the pathways and mechanism driving this inflammation is critical to develop effective treatment strategies," said Kanneganti, vice chair of the St Jude Department of Immunology. Kanneganti was born and raised in Telangana. She received her undergraduate degree at Kakatiya University in Warangal, where she majored in Chemistry, Zoology, and Botany. — PTI

WH: Trump admin did everything for transition

Washington, Nov. 21: The Trump administration has done "everything statutorily required" to do in the event of a transition, the White House has said, asserting that a constitutional process is being played out to determine the winner of the November 3 presidential election.

Incumbent US President Donald Trump, a Republican, has refused to concede the election to 78-year-old Joe Biden, a Democrat, and has filed multiple lawsuits challenging the poll results in several states. Trump, 74, has made allegations of widespread electoral fraud, without providing any evidence.

Former US vice president Biden was declared the winner of the closely-fought US presidential election on November 7. Biden now has 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232 votes. To win the race to the White House, the successful candidate should have at least 270 electoral votes out of the 538-member Electoral College.

His lead in the public vote overall stands at more than 5.9 million. Backing President's Trump's stance, White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany refused to acknowledge President-elect Biden's victory on Friday — her first press briefing since October 1. "The president's been very clear, he wants every legal vote to be counted," she said. — PTI

GEORGIA GOV CERTIFIES VOTES FOR BIDEN

Atlanta, Nov. 21: Georgia's governor and top elections official on Friday certified results showing Joe Biden won the presidential race over Republican President Donald Trump. The certification brings the state one step closer to wrapping up an election that has been fraught with unfounded accusations of fraud by Trump and his supporters. Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger certified results. The results show Biden with 2.47 million votes, President Donald Trump with 2.46 million votes and Libertarian Jo Jorgensen with 62,138. — AP

BIDEN CABINET PICKS AS SOON AS NEXT WEEK

Washington, Nov. 21: President-elect Joe Biden is moving quickly to fill out his administration and could name top leaders for his Cabinet as early as next week. Biden told reporters on Thursday that he's already decided on who will lead the Treasury Department.

That pick, along with his nominee for secretary of state, may be announced before Thanksgiving. The Cabinet announcements could be released in tranches, with groups of nominees focused on a specific top area, like the economy, national security or public health, being announced at once. — AP

@POTUS A/C TO GO TO BIDEN JAN 20 EVEN IF TRUMP DOESN'T CONCEDE

Los Angeles, Nov. 21: Micro-blogging site Twitter will hand control of the presidential @POTUS account to President-elect Joe Biden the moment he is sworn in on inauguration day on January 20, even if President Donald Trump has not conceded his election loss, the company has said. The @POTUS account is

the official account of the President of the United States and is separate from the @realDonaldTrump account that Trump uses to tweet. Biden, 78, will be the 46th US President when he is sworn in. The handover requires no sharing of information between the outgoing Trump team and the incoming Biden team. — PTI

Sea of mourners



Activists and supporters of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) gather around an ambulance carrying the coffin of hardline Pakistani cleric Khadim Hussain Rizvi, founder of TLP, during his funeral in Lahore on Saturday. — AFP

Eight killed, 31 injured as mortar shells hit Kabul residential areas

Kabul, Nov. 21: About 23 mortar shells slammed into different parts of the Afghan capital on Saturday, killing at least eight people and wounding 31 others, an official said. The shells were fired from two cars, Interior Ministry spokesperson Tariq Arian said.

No one took immediate responsibility for the early morning attack that also targeted the posh Wazir Akbar Khan area of Kabul, which houses

diplomatic missions. The Taliban issued a quick statement denying any responsibility for the attack. The Islamic State group affiliate also operates in the area and has claimed responsibility for recent assaults in Kabul including two devastating attacks on educational institutions that killed more than 50 people, many of them students.

As well as insurgent groups, there are several heavily armed warlords

with militias living in Kabul with long-standing animosities against each other. The mortar barrage comes as representatives of the Afghan government and the Taliban continued to hold talks in Qatar, though progress has been slow. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is expected to press for a reduction in violence in his meetings with both Taliban and government negotiating teams later Saturday during a daylong stop in Doha.

The Taliban have mostly ignored such previous requests. Hours before the attack rattled Kabul, a bomb attached to a car killed one security personnel and wounded three others in an eastern neighborhood of the capital, said Kabul police spokesperson Ferdaws Faramarz. Violence in Afghanistan has spiked in recent months with increasingly horrific attacks often claimed by the Islamic State group affiliate. — AP

Terror financing: 2 Hafiz Saeed aides jailed

Lahore, Nov. 21: A Pakistani court has jailed two more aides of Mumbai attack mastermind and Jamat-ud-Dawah (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed in a terrorism financing case. The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) of Lahore on Friday

handed down six and five-and-a-half years of imprisonment to JuD leaders Muhammad Ashraf and Lucman Shah, respectively. ATC Judge Arshad Hussain Bhutta also imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on each of them. On Thursday, the 70-

year-old JuD chief was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment in two terrorism cases by ATC Lahore.

Saeed's two close aides — Zafar Iqbal and Yahya Mujahid — were sentenced to 10 and a half years each, while his brother-in-

law Abdul Rehman Makki was sentenced to six months of imprisonment in the same cases.

Saeed, a UN designated terrorist whom the US has placed a \$10 million bounty on, was arrested on July 17 last year in the terror

financing cases. He was sentenced to 11 years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in February this year in two terror financing cases. The JuD chief is lodged at Lahore's high-security Kot Lakhpat jail. — PTI

Tibetan leader in WH: 1st in 60 yrs

Washington, Nov. 21: The head of the Tibetan government in exile has visited the White House for the first time in six decades and met the newly appointed senior US official on Tibetan issues, the Central Tibetan Administration said on Saturday, a development that could enrage Beijing, which has accused the US of trying to interfere in China's internal affairs. Dr Lobsang Sangay entered the United States White House on Friday — a historic feat.

This is the first time in the last 60 decades the head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has been invited into the White House, the CTA said in a statement. "It is a great honour to be the first political head of the Central Tibetan Administration to formally enter the White House," Sangay said in a tweet. "Today's visit amounts

to an acknowledgement of both the democratic system of the CTA and its political head... This unprecedented meeting perhaps will set an optimistic tone for CTA participation with US officials and be more formalised in the coming years," said the CTA, which is based in Dharamshala in India.

Sangay, the President of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), was invited to the White House to meet the newly appointed US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Robert Destro, on Friday, it said.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on October 15 named senior diplomat Destro as Special Coordinator for Tibetan matters, who, among other matters, would focus on advancing dialogue between the Communist government in China and the Dalai Lama. — PTI

2020 | LIST

It also includes US ex-Prez Barack Obama's 'A Promised Land'

3 Indian writers in '100 Notable Books'

New York, Nov. 21: Critically-acclaimed books by three Indian writers have featured among this year's '100 Notable Books' list of *The New York Times* that also includes former US president Barack Obama's newly released memoir 'A Promised Land'.

Editors of *The New York Times* Book Review selected 100 "notable fiction, poetry and nonfiction" works from around the world. The prestigious list also includes the work of

fiction 'A Burning' by India-born Megha Majumdar. "A brazen act of terrorism in an Indian metropolis sets the plot of this propulsive debut novel in motion, and lands an innocent young bystander in jail.

With impressive assurance and insight, Majumdar unfolds a timely story about the ways power is wielded to manipulate and crush the powerless," the report said of the book. 'Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line' by Deepa

Anappara, who grew up in Kerala, also features on the list.

"This first novel by an Indian journalist probes the secrets of a big-city shantytown as a 9-year-old boy tries to solve the mystery of a classmate's disappearance.

Anappara impressively inhabits the inner worlds of children lost to their families, and of others who escape by a thread," the leading daily said. Samanth Subramanian's 'A Dominant Character:

The Radical Science and Restless Politics of J. B. S. Haldane' is a nonfiction work. "Haldane, the British biologist and ardent communist who helped synthesise Darwinian evolution with Mendelian genetics, was once as famous as Einstein.

Subramanian's elegant biography doubles as a timely allegory of the fraught relationship between science and politics," the report said. Subramanian is a journalist and lives in London.

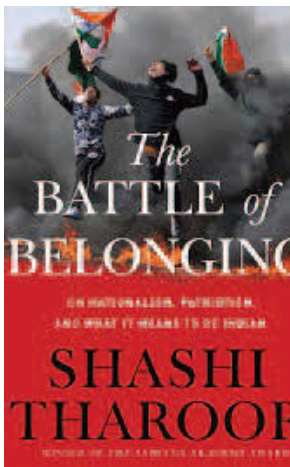
'Red Pill' by British-Indian author Hari Kunzru also features in the list. "A fellowship at a study center in Germany turns sinister and sets a writer on a possibly paranoid quest to expose a political evil he believes is loose in the world.

Kunzru's wonderfully weird novel traces a lineage from German Romanticism to National Socialism to the alt-right, and is rich with insights on surveillance and power," the report said. — PTI

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

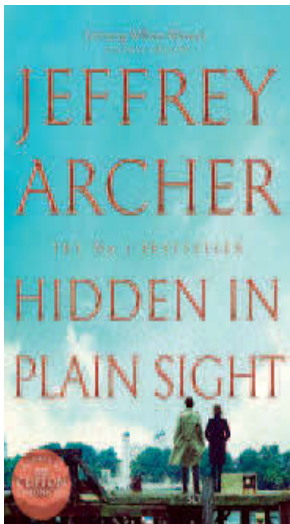
NON-FICTION

- 1 **THE BATTLE OF BELONGING**
Shashi Tharoor
Aleph, ₹799
- 2 **PORTRAITS OF POWER**
N.K. Singh
Rupa, ₹595
- 3 **THE INDIA WAY**
S. Jaishankar
HarperCollins, ₹699
- 4 **REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹599
- 5 **JINNAH HIS SUCCESSES, FAILURES AND ROLE IN HISTORY**
Ishtiaq Ahmed
Penguin, ₹999
- 6 **THE ULTIMATE GOAL**
Vikram Sood
HarperCollins, ₹699
- 7 **THE KHALISTAN CONSPIRACY**
G.B.S. Sidhu
HarperCollins, ₹599
- 8 **VOICES OF DISSENT**
Romila Thapar
Seagull Books, ₹499
- 9 **HONOUR AMONG SPIES**
Asad Durrani,
HarperCollins, ₹499
- 10 **DEEPAWALI SPOOJA-VIDHI**
Pawan Kumar Mishra
Tara-India Research Press, ₹299



FICTION

- 1 **HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹450
- 2 **A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham
Hodder & Stoughton, ₹699
- 3 **THE DISCOMFORT OF EVENING**
Marieke Lucas
Rijneveld
Faber & Faber, ₹499
- 4 **PRIVATE MOSCOW**
James Patterson & Adam Hamdy,
Century, ₹699
- 5 **HAMNET**
Maggie O' Farrell,
Tinder Press, ₹699
- 6 **GIRL IN WHITE COTTON**
Avni Doshi,
Harper, ₹599
- 7 **THE LYING LIFE OF ADULTS**
Elena Ferrante,
Europa Editions, ₹699
- 8 **THE SHADOW KING**
Maaza Mengiste,
Canongate, ₹799
- 9 **PIRANESI**
Susanna Clarke,
Bloomsbury, ₹699
- 10 **WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS**
Shauna Singh Baldwin,
Tara-India Research Press, ₹599



Bahrison, New Delhi

How the 'republic of fear' has become a reality!



Shashi Tharoor

excerpt

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks of a 'New India', and defines it as an India free from the shackles of casteism and communal tension, an India that successfully solves its endemic problems of corruption, nepotism, and terrorism, an India where every woman, man, and child would be given an empowered and dignified standard of living, thanks to a society that harnesses India's entrepreneurial spirit to become an economic powerhouse, he is not wrong. Rather, he is merely reiterating a historic commitment to the freedoms that were preserved and guaranteed in the Old India.

But, as usual, between the rhetoric and the reality there falls a great shadow. For all these statements and ideals (which one can find very little to disagree with), one is struck by the complete lack of any idea of how our country is going to achieve any of this. And, on the contrary, plenty of evidence of the opposite: whether it is the 'Achehe Din' of 2014 or the 'New India' of the present, under the BJP government, these phrases appear to be a mere smoke-screen for the real agenda that this government has pursued since coming to power. The road to New India appears littered with the wreckage of all that was good and noble about the Old India.

In its place, an ugly distortion of the Indian idea is rising, an India where an especially dan-

gerous and perverted form of ethnonationalism is being fostered; and, in this India that is being sought to be created, a narrow-minded majoritarianism prevails, where incidents of communal violence proliferate, driven by mob-lynching zealots, and gau rakshak vigilantes. In this grotesque New India, driven by Hindu zealots, *Bharat Mata ki Jai* and *Jai Shri Ram* have become rallying cries of bigotry rather than the beautiful slogans Indians are free to use or not as they wish. As Pratap Bhanu Mehta fittingly asked: 'How did this fantasy of hope, painted in the colours of a nation marching to one tune and one purpose, completely blanket out the actual republic of fear?'

If this 'republic of fear' was only hinted at in the first term of Modi's BJP government, in its second term it has become a clearly illustrated reality... The British also ruled India as an 'empire of fear' for this very reason: as historians have shown, the colonial regime was constantly fearful, even paranoid, because they were unsure of whether or not they really understood what they were doing. The BJP government has begun showing similar symptoms. Their populism is built on the exploitation of fear: the nativist fear of foreigners (migrants, minorities, threatening neighbours), the middle-class fear of competition from rising socio-economic groups (OBCs, Dalits, Muslims,

migrants), the identitarian fear of demographic eclipse (from Muslim over-procreation, 'love jihad', and the like), the nationalist fear of territorial fragmentation (caused by a left-liberal-Kashmiri 'tukde-tukde gang', abetted by Pakistan, determined to break India into pieces), and the traditionalist fear of the unfamiliar ruptures of globalisation.

The 'Hindu nationalists' have an ideology they want to implement but the resistance they have run into — from the anti-CAA protests to unruly, suffering but defiant migrant workers — causes doubts and prompts them into exaggerated counter-reactions as a way of masking their confusion. It is ironic that in their strutting hyper-nationalism, bereft of any real understanding of the country's history and heritage and devoid of any commitment to the true idea of India, they most resemble the imperialist bluster of the British Raj.

The Covid-19 pandemic showed up the Modi government from the time the first cases began to be detected — its multiple failures in dealing with

the crisis, whether in terms of dealing with the catastrophic human cost of the disease or the collapse of the economy, were difficult to hide. At the same time the outbreak facilitated nationalist projects in many countries, including India. It has also convinced many (who needed little convincing) that foreigners are to be feared, that strict border and immigration controls are essential, that free trade should be restricted, and that national interests should trump international cooperation. To many, including those around Mr Modi, the answer lies in strong government, in putting the nation's needs over individual citizens' freedoms, and in dispensing with democratic niceties, from federalism to parliamentary oversight, in what the government deems to be the national interest.

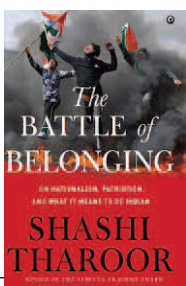
There have been signs of populism's inroads into people's psyches. Already this pandemic period seems to have ushered in an increased fear of the 'Other', as unfounded rumours and accusations against people blamed on the basis of their national, religious, ethnic, or regional identity have had a field day in many countries. In India, citizens from the Northeastern states have suffered racial discrimination because of their supposedly 'Chinese' features. Social media and nativist populism have amplified prejudices; the fact that a puritan Muslim sect, the Tablighi Jamaat, had held a major gathering just before the lockdown, whose attendees spread the infection to many states when they returned home, was used to justify open bigotry and discrimination against Muslims.

Another risk thrown up by the government's response to the pandemic, that may further its nationalist project, is the

increasing reach of the surveillance state. Already the BJP government had expanded the reach of the Aadhaar scheme — initially conceived by its predecessor UPA government as a means of providing verifiable secure identities to the poor to permit the direct transfer of government benefits to them — as an all-embracing mandatory means of amassing biometric information on every citizen, even linking it to people's mobile phone numbers and bank accounts. Though the Supreme Court partially put the brakes on this digital overreach, the government was undeterred... During the coronavirus outbreak, concern about the inadequacies of existing data systems to monitor and track the spread of the virus's transmission was used to justify the development of dedicated apps and tools to track, along with GPS, Bluetooth, and cell phone towers, people's data, their travel history, contact with other individuals and possible proximity to known carriers of the virus. The government has already made its Aarogya Setu app, reliant on these tools, compulsory for every government employee and is trying to extend its reach to every citizen.

Post-Covid-19 India is unlikely to give up these useful instruments of surveillance and control. China has already shown the way to a form of 'digital Leninism'; India's is heading towards 'digital nationalism'. India could well see an enhanced deployment of surveillance and data gathering under the guise of preventing a similar scenario in the future, despite the Supreme Court rulings on individuals' right to privacy.

Extracted with permission from Aleph, the publishers, from Shashi Tharoor's The Battle of Belonging (448 pages)



THE BATTLE OF BELONGING

By SHASHI THAROOR
Aleph
₹799

PREACHY TONE MARS THIS QUIRKY HISTORY OF PILGRIMAGES

Kushalrani
Gulab
review

Whatever your political affiliation, your idea of religion, your stand on history, and your attitude to learning, it's safe to say that you will be offended — or at least made a bit unhappy — by mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik's latest book, *Pilgrim Nation: The Making of Bharatvarsh*.

If you do not like the concept of secularism, you'll be purple-faced with rage at the syncretism of various places of worship around the country.

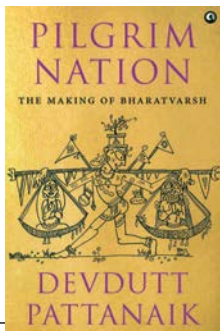
If you do not like the idea of using the past to justify the present, you'll be distressed by the many reiterations of how invaders looted and destroyed temples. If you think faith must be single-minded and you must worship in one particular manner, you'll be incensed by the myriad ways in which human beings make their own mythologies to suit their own needs.

If you don't take kindly to lessons on being a good person, you'll probably throw the book at the wall and then tear out the pages and use them to mop up noxious excretions.

But if you can manage to put your beliefs aside for a short while, you might find yourself a teensy bit charmed by a book that takes you through 32 places of pilgrimage in the country, across all major religions, complete with stories of how and why these places came to summon worshippers and the kind of worshippers who answer the call.

Pattanaik's premise in this book is that from times way back when borders were fluid and India did not exist as a national entity, the subcontinent was still perceived as a single unit because it was tied together by the threads of all kinds of pilgrim routes. Women and men

left their homes and travelled long distances to seek locations of piety that would lead to a darshan of God in one form or another, and thus purification from sins and a renewed joy in life.



PILGRIM NATION: THE MAKING OF BHARATVARSH

By DEVDUTT PATTANAİK
Aleph
₹499

As centuries passed, the idea that God has more than one form led the people of the subcontinent to accept as their own the gods of other faiths as well. And now in these modern times, while some attitudes to God seem to have become more single-minded, some gods are not associated with any particular faith: they may well be film stars as the last chapter of the book shows.

With this premise as his base, Pattanaik divides his book into ideas of devotion rooted in periods like the Vedic age, the Tantrik Age, the European Age and so on, covering the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Muslim, Christian and Sikh faiths, as well as local and tribal

iterations of the various stories and mythologies. Anyone who has read his earlier books will recognise the way he deals with each anecdote gently and thoughtfully, asking questions and providing different points of view on the same stories, ultimately expanding his theme to cover all sorts of worship and devotion.

However, if you are familiar with Pattanaik's earlier books, you will also note that this book is not quite in his usual style. For one, his tone of voice does not carry quite the same sense of understanding when he talks of imambaras, mosques, gurdwaras and churches as it does when he talks of shrines and temples — he usually writes on Hindu mythology. For another, Pattanaik never imparted obvious lessons in his earlier books; he merely presented several viewpoints that let readers see possibilities. In *Pilgrim Nation*, however, you get in-your-face lectures on how to be a good human being. This detracts so greatly from the charm of the book that I cannot re-read it ever.

Kushalrani Gulab is a freelance editor and writer who dreams of being a sanyasi by the sea

Marwari wife's sexcapades end on surprisingly flat note



Rupa Gulab

review

Born into a wealthy Marwari family in Kolkata, Srilaa has everything a girl could ask for, apart from love and attention from her parents. Her father is far too immersed in work to be anything but vaguely interested in her — she has to make do with the occasional pat on the head. Her beautiful mother is very sweet but very distant — she's a mystery that is never properly explained. She avoids her daughter and backs away nervously when Srilaa wants to talk to her. Besides, she spends most of her waking hours away from home doing "some charity work".

Srilaa often wonders why the house-help refers to her mother as "Madamji" rather than "Bhabiji", the traditional Marwari title for a housewife. The actual "Bhabiji" at home is her bua who keeps traditional Marwari customs alive and the large domestic staff in shape. It is left to her bua and a maid to actually bring Srilaa up, and between the two of them they don't exactly do a fantastic job.

Perhaps it's because of this affection-less upbringing that Srilaa falls back on fantasies — sexual fantasies, to be precise. Or perhaps she just has a healthy sexual appetite. When we first meet her, she's fantasising over a painting in her bedroom — an English duke astride his horse. An assault by her cousin's boyfriend is her very first sexual experience — she enjoys it so much, she wants to tell everyone she meets about it, including her fiancé.

Marriage and children don't dampen Srilaa's enthusiasm for sex. Fortunately, her husband is as understanding as a good friend would be, and they have what would be called an "open marriage".

We get brief respites when De shifts her focus to the subtitle of the book: "The gilded life and longings of a Marwari goodwife." The occasional glimpses of life in a Marwari joint family are interesting. The Maharaj (cook) has pride of place in their kitchens, and Marwari women have no qualms about luring really good ones from friends. Being associated with charities is seen as a great asset: the women look saintly, and all that goodwill rubs off on the family business as well. De is beautifully tongue-in-cheek about this obsession with charity, as Srilaa cynically tries her hand at it too.

Srilaa discovers her most precious Marwari genes along the way: Business acumen. Every venture she tries her hand at flourishes, till she gets distracted by yet another man.

This book started out with promise, if only because of the dysfunctional family Srilaa grew up in. However, don't expect the Tolstoy maxim to kick in here: "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Srilaa's childhood doesn't appear to have cast any shadow on her future. All she's interested in is sex, and nothing else matters. Her breasts are the only things that developed in the book, and while they may be stunningly globular, she is completely flat — just like all the other characters.

Rupa Gulab is a freelance writer and the author of Girl Alone, Chip of the Old Blockhead and The Great Depression of the 40s

Profile of a Punjabi queen

New Delhi: Indian-American author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's new novel will bring alive one of the most fearless women of the 19th century — the legendary warrior queen Jindan Kaur.

The Last Queen will be released by HarperCollins India in January 2021, the publishers announced on Tuesday.

Daughter of the royal kennel keeper, the beautiful Jindan was Maharaja Ranjit Singh's youngest and last queen besides his favourite. She became regent when her son Dalip, barely six years old, unexpectedly inherited the throne and went on to become a legendary warrior queen.

Passionate and dedicated to protecting her son's inheritance, Jindan distrusted the British and once fought hard to keep them from

annexing Punjab. Defying tradition, she stepped out of the zenana, cast aside the veil and conducted state business in public. Addressing her Khalsa troops herself, she inspired her men in two wars against the British. In the end, she was imprisoned and exiled by the British. Her son, Dalip Singh, was

exiled, too. Though he never ruled, he is often referred to as the last Maharaja of the Sikh empire.

The Last Queen is being described by the publishers as an exquisite love story of a king and a commoner, a cautionary tale about loyalty and betrayal. The novel has already been optioned for film rights. Houston-based Divakaruni has authored books like *The Forest of Enchantments, Before We*

Visit the Goddess, Oleander Girl, The Mistress of Spices, Sister of My Heart, Palace of Illusions and One Amazing Thing.

— PTI



Queen Jindan Kaur; (inset) Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

SHORT TAKES

A special hundred for Chandorkar

New Delhi: Former first class cricketer Raghunath Chandorkar on Saturday turned hundred years old, becoming only the third Indian cricketer to complete a century of birthdays. Chandorkar played seven first class games, representing Maharashtra (1943-44 to 1946-47) and Bombay (1950-51). The wicket-keeper batsman had scored 155 runs in seven games. He also effected three catches and two stumpings. Prof. D.B. Deodhar (1892-1993) and Vasant Raiji (1920-2020) are the only other Indian cricketers to celebrate 100 birthdays. — *PTI*

Kosgei, Yeshaneh to run at DHM

New Delhi: The Delhi Half Marathon on Saturday announced the entries of world record holders Brigid Kosgei and Ababel Yeshaneh for the upcoming event. At the Chicago Marathon in October 2019, Kenya's Kosgei stunned the world when she broke the long-standing women's world marathon record by more than a minute, clocking 2:14:04. Yeshaneh was a distant second on that occasion but still ran a superb personal best of 2:20:51. However, the tables were turned at the Ras Al Khaimah Half Marathon in February this year when a contest between the pair in the final stages of the race saw Ethiopia's Yeshaneh prevail in a world record 64:31 with Kosgei second in 64:49.

Gangjee shoots even par in Japan

Miyazaki, Japan: Rahil Gangjee staged a superb comeback on his back-nine to card an even par 71 in the third round of the Dunlop Phoenix Open, here. Gangjee now has rounds of 71-72-71 and at one-over for 54 holes he is Tied-49th in only his second event in Japan in 2020. Almost 20 events have been cancelled in Japan this year due to the pandemic. "I began finding my rhythm finally in the second nine and also putted well and made no three-putts," said Gangjee. Former world number one Amateur, Takumi Kanaya, playing only his fourth event as a Pro, is once again in contention as he shot a third straight round in 60s and moved into sole third place. Kanaya is one shot behind co-leaders, Tomoharu Otsuki (66) and Tomohiro Ishizaka (68), who are both at 11-under. — *PTI*

Govt to introduce fitness app in Jan.

New Delhi: Sports secretary Ravi Mittal on Saturday said the government is planning to launch an application in January next year to help people check and improve their fitness level. "We are developing a fit India app next year, it will be like other health app but the main thing will be that everyone will be able to evaluate their fitness," Mittal said during a Delhi Half Marathon press conference. "We will be launching this app sometime in January. I would like to request all the participants in the event to come to this app and check their fitness. If you check your fitness every month, it will improve your fitness."

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Melbourne Stars vs Sydney Sixers from 8.15 am on Sony Six, HD

TENNIS

ATP Finals: Final from 11.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: FC Goa vs Bengaluru FC from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: Fulham vs Everton from 5.30 pm; Sheffield United vs West Ham from 7.30 pm; Leeds United vs Arsenal from 10 pm; Liverpool vs Leicester City from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Italian league: Fiorentina vs Benevento at 5 pm on Sony Ten 2; Roma vs Parma from 7.30 pm on Sony Six; Inter Milan vs Torino from 7.30 pm; Udinese vs Genoa from 10.30 pm; Napoli vs AC Milan from 11.55 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2

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Chelsea's new castle

Blues take top spot for first time in over two years

Newcastle, Nov. 21: Frank Lampard warned Chelsea to stay humble after they climbed to the top of the Premier League for the first time in more than two years with a convincing 2-0 win at Newcastle on Saturday. Lampard's side moved above Leicester on goal difference thanks to Federico Fernandez's first half own goal and Tammy Abraham's strike after the interval. Chelsea are unbeaten in nine games in all competitions and haven't lost in their last six league matches.

With five clean sheets in their last six matches in all competitions, Chelsea's third successive league victory was the perfect way to start a hectic period leading up to Christmas.

Maurizio Sarri was in charge the last time Chelsea were in pole position in the Premier League in September 2018.

But Lampard's squad are more formidable than his predecessor's fragile team and a serious title challenge looks increasingly possible.

"It's not an easy game. We played well in patches and the result is key in these games," Lampard said. "The Premier League is tough, relentless, and we dealt with the challenge of the game very well."

"I won't get excited about being top of the table for five minutes. It's important to be humble and know it's a long race."

Chelsea could surrender top spot before the end of the day, with both Aston Villa and Tottenham able to go above them depending on their results.

"We can't have it all our own way, but we put the game away with a professional performance."



THE RESULT

Newcastle 0
Chelsea 2
(Fernandez 10-gg, Abraham 65)

Lampard said.

"First 20 minutes we were great, we had control and all the possession. I always felt that the real danger from us would be on the counter."

"You saw that with Timo Werner on the break and then setting up Tammy's goal."

Lampard had complained about having to play in the Saturday early kick off when several of his players had only returned from international duty on Thursday.

— *AFP*

Chelsea's Tammy Abraham (left) scores against Newcastle United in their English Premier League match at the St. James' Park in Newcastle on Saturday.

— *AP*

Huesca's winless streak continues after 1-1 draw

Pamplona, Nov. 21: Osasuna came from behind to draw with Huesca 1-1, keeping the visitors winless since their return to the Spanish league.

Huesca dominated early at El Sadar Stadium. Sandro Ramirez finished off a poor clearance by Osasuna goalkeeper Sergio Herrera to open the scoring in the fifth minute.

After not creating any scoring chances in the first half, Osasuna improved with substitutes made at the restart. Defender David Garc scored an equalizer in the 68th. Huesca have

drawn seven and lost three games since returning to the spotlight after one season in the second division. The point lifted it from last place to out of the relegation zone in 17th place.

"We were not able to play our game, but it was always positive to get a point, especially at a tough ground like this," Ramirez said.

"Victory still eludes us, but I think if we keep doing things well it will come."

Osauna was in 10th place after a third consecutive round without a win. — *AP*

MONACO COME BACK TO STUN LEADERS PSG

Paris, Nov. 21: Kylian Mbappe's two goals against his former club were not enough as French league leaders Paris Saint-Germain wasted a 2-0 lead and lost at Monaco 3-2.

Mbappe's first-half brace took him to 99 goals for PSG since joining from Monaco three years ago in a deal worth a staggering 180 million euros.

But lively German forward Kevin Volland netted twice after the break, and was fouled by center half Abdou Diallo for a penalty converted by former Spain and Barcelona midfielder Cesc Fabregas in the 83rd.

Diallo was sent off to leave PSG with 10 men in the closing stages.

The defeat was PSG's third of the season and ended a run of eight straight wins after losing the first two games.

Monaco moved up to second place, and four points behind PSG, despite being without top scorer Wissam Ben Yedder as he recovers from the coronavirus.

Another comfortable PSG win looked on the cards when Mbappe latched on to a fine pass from winger Angel Di Maria and finished confidently in the 24th minute.

The France striker then beat goalkeeper Vito Mannone from the spot in the 36th after midfielder Youssouf Fofana gave away a penalty.

Striker Moise Kean and Mbappe had goals ruled out for offside shortly before the break, and Monaco pulled one back in the 51st when Volland turned in Fofana's cross from the right. — *AP*

Thiem edges past Djokovic in semis

London, Nov. 21: Dominic Thiem recovered from squandering four match points in a dramatic second-set tie-break to beat Novak Djokovic in the last four at the ATP Finals on Saturday.

The US Open champion won 7-5, 6-7 (10/12), 7-6 (7/5) and will face either Rafael Nadal or Daniil Medvedev in Sunday's final at the elite eight-man event.

The world's top four players all made it through to the semi-finals for the first time at London's O2 Arena, which is hosting the season-ending event for the 12th and final year.

Thiem forced the only break to take a tight first set 7-5 but neither player could make the breakthrough in the second set, which went to a tie-break.

Thiem had four match points but agonisingly watched them all slip away as 17-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic levelled.

It was a similar story in the third set, with both players rock-solid on serve and the match came down to a deciding tie-break.

The Serbian world number one raced into a 4-0 lead and looked certain to win but Thiem stormed back, winning six points in a row to earn two more

match points.

He was unable to capitalise on the first of those but won the second to take the match.

BULGARIAN PLAYER GETS LIFETIME BAN

In London, the Tennis Integrity Unit has banned Bulgarian player Aleksandrina Naydenova for life and fined her \$150,000 for match-fixing offenses.

Naydenova "had partaken in match-fixing activity multiple times between 2015 and 2019," the anti-corruption body said in a statement Friday.

The 28-year-old, whose highest WTA singles ranking was 218, had been provisionally suspended Dec. 27 last year prior to a disciplinary hearing.

The TIU said Naydenova committed 13 breaches of the Tennis Anti-corruption Program with 12 of them relating to match-fixing and one relating to "several incidents of non-cooperation" with the investigation.

The sanction means that Naydenova "is permanently prohibited from playing in or attending any tennis event authorized or sanctioned by the governing bodies of tennis."

— *Agencies*



Austria's Dominic Thiem celebrates after winning the first set during the semifinal against Novak Djokovic of Serbia at the ATP World Finals at the O2 arena in London on Saturday.

— *AP*

BEREAVED SIRAJ DECIDES TO STAY BACK WITH TEAM IN OZ

Kolkata, Nov. 21: BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Saturday said that pacer Mohammed Siraj, who has lost his father, was given the option of flying back home to be with his grieving family but he decided to stay back in Australia for "national duty".

Ghouse, who was suffering from a lung ailment, died on Friday. He was 53.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had a discussion with Siraj and he was offered the option of flying back home to be with his family in this hour of grief," Shah was quoted as saying in a BCCI media release.

"The fast bowler has decided to stay with the Indian contingent and continue performing his national duties. The BCCI shares his grief and will be supportive of Siraj in this extremely challenging phase," Shah added.

Board president Sourav Ganguly took to twitter to laud the Hyderabad pacer

● **Board president Sourav Ganguly took to twitter to laud the Hyderabad pacer for his resilience and mental fortitude in this hour of tragedy.**

for his resilience and mental fortitude in this hour of tragedy.

"May Mohammed siraj have a lot of strength to overcome this loss. Lots of good wishes for his success in this trip... Tremendous character," Ganguly tweeted.

Ghouse, who was an auto rickshaw driver, was the biggest influence in Siraj's life, as he encouraged him to take up cricket as a career.

Siraj first came into limelight with 41 wickets for Hyderabad in Ranji Trophy, followed by a record ₹2.6 crore IPL deal from Sunrisers Hyderabad as an uncapped player. — *PTI*

Appiah wins it for NorthEast Utd

Vasco, Nov. 21: Kwesi Appiah scored from the spot as NorthEast United FC began their Indian Super League campaign with a 1-0 win over Mumbai City FC here on Saturday.

A red card and a penalty turned a game, that Mumbai were otherwise dominating, on their head and handed NorthEast United a winning start at the Tilak Maidan.

Appiah (49') scored the only goal from a penalty after the Islanders were reduced to 10-men following Ahmed Jahouh's red card just before the breather.

In the early stages, it looked like NorthEast were aiming for nothing more than a goalless draw, with extreme caution visible in their game plan.

Predictably, it was Mumbai who dominated the first half. The Islanders were neat and proactive for long spells, though they were unable



Mandar Rao Dessai (left) in action on his Mumbai City debut against NEUFC in an ISL-7 match at the Tilak Maidan Stadium in Vasco on Saturday.

— *ISL*

to find a cutting edge. Despite having players like Jahouh, Hugo Boumous, and Rowlin Borges, all capable of cre-

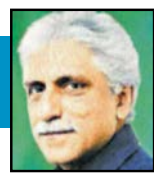
ating magic on their day, Sergio Lobera's side failed to get a single shot on target in the first 45 minutes. — *PTI*

NEW-LOOK GOA READY TO FACE CHHETRI & CO.

Margao, Nov. 21: A new-look FC Goa, strengthened by the addition of fresh foreign players and a new head coach, will begin their ISL campaign with renewed vigour when they clash with formidable Bengaluru FC here on Sunday.

FC Goa have never won the ISL trophy and would be hoping that this time around they go one step forward than 2018 and 2015 seasons, when they emerged as runners-up. On the other hand, BBFC who have won the ISL once, would also be hoping for a winning start and the contribution of star striker Sunil Chhetri would be the key. — *PTI*

Rohit will be sorely missed in white ball series



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

Going by the cricket played between the two teams in the past few years, India's tour of Australia promises rich and exciting cricket in all formats. But there are hardships for Virat Kohli and Co which can't be overwhelmed by hype.

In the ODIs and T20is, India will be without their best white ball batsman, Rohit Sharma. In Tests, the team will be without the services of their best batsman in red ball cricket

over the best part of a decade, Virat Kohli.

More than just irony, this is a serious setback to India. It leaves the batting vulnerable across the different formats, which the Aussies will be eager to exploit. Though he came back after a spell on the bench to play in the knock-out stages and led Mumbai Indians to the title, Rohit wasn't cleared by the BCCI's medical team for the ODIs and T20is. He is currently in rehab and recovery at the National

Cricket Academy in Bangalore.

Kohli will return to India after the first Test to be by his wife's side for the delivery of their first child. Australia's strict quarantine rules (14 days) has scuttled Kohli's prospects of returning back for the Tests, so he is available only for the first day/night pink ball affair at Adelaide.

The Test series are under greater scrutiny as the previous rubber — also played Down Under — was won by India: A wonderful achievement considering no Indian team had ever done this in Australia in over 70 years.

Obviously, the home team will be seeking revenge, and with the

return of Steve Smith and David Warner — both serving a ban in 2018 — it will be that much tougher for India to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Considering his massive success as opening batsman after his wondrous exploits in the World Cup, Rohit will be sorely missed. Though K.L. Rahul has shown superb form, it is in white ball cricket. How well he adapts to the longer format is now crucial for India.

Much of the pre-Test series conversation and debate has been around how good the current Indian pace attack is, even without Ishant Sharma (also in rehab in Bangalore) and Bhuvaneshwar Kumar.

In 2018, India's pace attack — Bumrah and Shami in particular — was outstanding, and the major factor in the series triumph. If they are in similar form this time, there is every chance of an encore.

However, former India captain Kapil Dev, has an interesting — and perhaps more pertinent — take on the matter. Kapil believes that the fate of the series does not hinge on the fast bowlers, but on the Indian batsmen, though for vastly different reasons than in his playing days.

"India's pace attack is superb," Kapil said when we chatted the other day. "I am confident bowlers will take 20 wickets. But will batsmen provide 350-400

runs for bowlers to win the match?"

Moot question. Before the pace bowling got teeth and edge to bundle out rivals, India's batting was seen as it strength playing overseas. Now there is doubt whether the batsmen can do enough to support bowlers!

The Test series begins after the ODIs and T20is are completed, which should give the Indian players enough time to settled down and acclimatize to Australia conditions.

But this does not mean that the next couple of weeks is a slack period. White ball cricket has its own huge significance in the sport today which players and teams will ignore at their own peril.

This will be a particularly testing period for Kohli. His success as captain in the shorter formats does not quite match up to the terrific win percentage he has in Tests.

There has been wide debate whether the captaincy should not be bifurcated between him (Tests) and Rohit (ODIs and T20is). England, Australia and South Africa for instance follow the split captaincy theory, Pakistan (now) and New Zealand (for the most part) don't.

There are pros and cons to the theory, but what's clear is that in the Indian context, the debate will intensify and Kohli placed under even further scrutiny if results are not favourable.