





## IN BRIEF

**Drug peddler held with 3.6kg of drugs**

**Noida:** A suspected drug peddler was arrested in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida after 3.6 kg cannabis was allegedly recovered from him, police said on Tuesday. The accused was held during a police checking at Labour Chowk in the Beta 2 police station area on Monday evening, the police said. "The arrested man has been identified as Bunty, a native of Gabhana town in Aligarh district. He was held after 3.6 kg of cannabis was recovered from his possession," a police spokesperson said. An FIR has been lodged in the case under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, and the accused has been sent to jail, the spokesperson added.

**Man suffers heavy loss after rent denied**

**New Delhi:** A man, who had leased out his property to a company, suffered heavy losses after the company denied payment and even damaged the property in Shahbad Dairy area. According to information, it was submitted that in July 2020, Sunil Bansal filed a complaint regarding alleged offence of cheating, theft, etc. by a company named Scholar Alley Pvt. Ltd. The owner upgraded the property according to the terms of the company and leased the property in May last year. Later, the company, which provided PG facilities to students, failed to pay the rent since February 2020. Subsequently, in July, it was revealed that the premise was lying open without locks and many articles including furniture, which was installed by the owner, were found missing and damaged. Further, it was also revealed that the alleged accused had sub-rented the property for which they had taken advance rent and security. Even the water and electricity bills were pending since a long time and ran into lakhs of rupees. The victim tried to get help from the police but nothing happened. Finally, an FIR was registered after the court intervened.

**MP law to ban 'love jihad', with 5-yr jail**

■ **Continued from Page 1** name of love would not be tolerated in Madhya Pradesh. The draft bill proposes to declare forced marriages and conversions null and void. It has provision to treat the collaborator in the forced marriage at par with the main accused. The district magistrate concerned has to be informed one month in advance for voluntary conversion for marriage by both the persons concerned and the conversant, the draft bill says. Madhya Pradesh is the third BJP-ruled state after Uttar Pradesh and Haryana that proposes to introduce a law to check what the BJP has been calling "love jihad" to curb alleged forced conversions of Hindu girls in some interfaith marriages, particularly with Muslim boys. Congress has slammed the move by the Shivraj government to bring legislation against 'love jihad', saying that the law would pave way for targeting and attacking a particular community. "Love is sacred and it is not proper to bring anti-'love jihad' law," former minister and senior Congress leader P.C. Sharma said.

**'Gupkar gang' going global, alleges Shah**

■ **Continued from Page 1** having double standards when it comes to elections. "Fighting elections in an alliance is also anti-national now. BJP can stitch as many alliances in its hunger for power but somehow we are undermining national interest by putting up a united front," Ms Mufti said in her tweet. "Love jihad, tukde tukde & now Gupkar Gang dominates the political discourse instead of rising unemployment & inflation," she further added. "Only in J&K can leaders be detained and called anti-national for participating in elections and supporting the democratic process. The truth is all those who oppose the ideology of the BJP are labelled 'corrupt & anti-national'," Mr Abdullah said in his tweets.

**Government to allow only 50 people in wedding functions, seeks permission from Centre Delhi plans to shut Covid hotspot markets**AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 17

Amid a spurt in coronavirus cases in the national capital, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, on Tuesday, sought power from the Centre to shut down those markets which may emerge as Covid-19 hotspots and decided to withdraw an order allowing 200 guests to attend wedding functions. Reacting to the Delhi government's decision, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri has said that the proposal of the chief minister to close some markets to control the corona pandemic will not be helpful. Mr Bidhuri, however, welcomed the decision to reduce the maximum number of people allowed from 200 to 50 in marriage func-

tions.

Addressing an online media briefing, Arvind Kejriwal said that the Delhi government has sent a proposal to lieutenant governor Anil Baijal to allow only 50 people to attend wedding ceremonies against the its previous limit of 200 people.

"As per directions and guidelines of the Centre, 200 participants were earlier allowed in wedding ceremonies due to decreasing number of coronavirus cases. Now, a proposal has been sent to Mr Baijal for his approval to withdraw the previous order and bring the number of guests for wedding ceremonies back to 50 from 200," he said.

The chief minister said the Centre and all agencies are making "double efforts" to control the Covid-19 situation in the

**Cong favours total lockdown of markets, public transport**

**New Delhi, Nov. 17:** The Congress on Tuesday sought immediate steps to check the spread of coronavirus in Delhi and favoured a complete lockdown of markets, public transport and government offices, instead of a partial one. Congress senior spokesperson Ajay Maken said the Covid situation in the national capital is

national capital.

"We are sending a proposal to the Centre to give power to the Delhi government to impose shutdown in market areas which may emerge as Covid-19 hotspots," he said.

Mr Kejriwal pointed out

"very bad" as "one in every five persons" infected is from Delhi.

He said there cannot be a worse decision than Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's proposal to impose partial lockdown in markets and hotspots in Delhi as it would lead to the virus spreading faster to other areas and markets. — PTI

that during Diwali it was seen that many people were not wearing masks and violating social distancing norms, due to which the virus spread.

"I hope the crowd in the markets will thin out and there will be no need to lock

them down. However, if violations of mask wearing and social distancing are witnessed and there is a chance of these markets becoming local coronavirus hotspots, these could be shut down as a preventive measure for some days," added Mr Kejriwal.

During a media briefing on Tuesday, Mr Kejriwal thanked the Central government for helping people of Delhi in such difficult times and appealed to Delhiites with folded hands to wear masks and follow social distancing norms.

The chief minister said availability of Covid-19 beds in government and private hospitals was satisfactory and thanked the Centre for its promise to arrange 750 ICU beds at a DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) facility.

"All stakeholders including the Delhi government, the Centre, and various agencies are making double efforts to bring Covid-19 under control, but people need to wear masks and maintain social distancing norms," he said.

"All this is being done for you and your family. So I appeal to you, please wear face masks and follow social distancing. Coronavirus does not differentiate between the rich and the poor and it can infect anyone, but some people think they will not contract the virus," he added.

Delhi has witnessed a spurt in novel coronavirus cases since October 28 when the daily rise breached the 5,000-mark for the first time and it crossed the 8,000-mark on Wednesday.

**Hindu Rao likely to be made Covid facility again**

**New Delhi, Nov. 17:** Civic-run Hindu Rao Hospital is likely to be converted into a dedicated Covid facility again, in the wake of a massive surge in coronavirus cases in the national capital in the last several days, sources said on Tuesday. The 980-bed hospital, which is the largest municipal hospital in Delhi, was designated as a Covid facility on June 14, when the city was under the first wave of infection. However, on October 13 it was removed from the list of such facilities.

With the city now under the third wave, the hospital is likely to be converted into a dedicated facility once again, sources said.

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash on Tuesday afternoon inspected the hospital and took stock of the situation there.

The Centre after a high-level meeting here recently had announced a slew of steps, including making available 300 additional ICU beds, doubling the number of daily RT-PCR tests and a house-to-house survey in the national capital, to check the spiralling numbers of cases in Delhi.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said that some of the hospitals under the municipal corporations of Delhi will be converted into dedicated Covid hospitals.

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

**City sees 1L cases & 1,200 deaths since Nov. 1**

**New Delhi, Nov. 17:** Delhi recorded over one lakh new coronavirus cases and around 1,200 deaths between November 1-16 while nearly 94,000 Covid-19 patients recovered during the same period, according to official data.

From October 1 to 15, 41,316 cases and 563 fatalities had been recorded in the city while 45,056 people had recovered from the virus. The national capital had recorded 65,675 coronavirus cases and 587 deaths between October 16-31.

Also, 54,974 Covid-19 patients had recovered during the same period, according to data.

The national capital has witnessed a sudden spike in coronavirus cases since October 28 when the daily rise breached the 5,000-mark for the first time and it crossed the 8,000-mark on November 11.

On November 12, 104 coronavirus-related deaths, the highest in over five months, were recorded in

the city.

According to the health department data, 1,01,070 coronavirus cases have been recorded so far this month.

Also, 1,202 people have died of Covid-19 while 93,885 coronavirus patients have recovered from the virus since November 1.

Delhi had recorded 5,664 cases on November 1 which increased to 8,593 on November 11, the highest-single-day spike till date.

The city had recorded 7,053 new cases on November 12, followed by 7,802 (November 13), 7,340 (November 14), 3,235 (November 15) and 3,797 (November 16).

From November 11-16, the fatality count stood at 85; 104; 91; 96; 95 and 99 respectively.

Similarly, 7,606 Covid-19 patients had recovered on November 15, the highest single-day recovery count this month.

On Wednesday, 7,264 people had recovered from the

**'Raising ICU beds among steps taken to tackle spike in cases'**

**New Delhi, Nov. 17:** Doubling Covid testing capacity to 1 to 1.2 lakh and increasing ICU beds to over 6,000 are among the decisions taken by the government to tackle the spike in coronavirus infections in Delhi, the Centre said on Tuesday.

A decision has also been taken to increase house to house surveillance of active cases in containment zones and other vulnerable pockets for which 7,000-8,000 teams will be

put on this exercise, a hike from the existing 3,000 teams that are currently involved. Addressing a press conference, Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said Delhi was testing very less in June at around 5,776 tests per day and that number rose to over 50,000 in September which after that plateaued out and the recent spike of Covid cases may be because many positive cases escaped the net. — PTI

virus while on Thursday, 6,462 people recovered. From November 13-16, the recovery count stood at 6,498; 7,117; 7,606 and 3,560.

On Monday, Delhi recorded 3,797 fresh Covid-19 cases, taking the infection tally in the national capital

to over 4.89 lakh, even as 99 new fatalities pushed the toll to 7,713.

These relatively low number of fresh cases came out of the 29,871 tests conducted on Sunday. The active cases tally on Monday stood at 40,128.

**Delhi BJP protests against Chhath ban**

**New Delhi, Nov. 17:** The Delhi BJP has intensified its demand for lifting of ban on Chhath Puja at river banks, temples and other public places in the city, with its Purvanchal Morcha staging a protest near Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence here on Tuesday.

Leading the protest, Purvanchal Morcha president Kaushal Mishra called the chief minister "anti-Purvanchali" and said that the ban has hurt the religious sentiments of the people from Bihar and Purvanchal settled in Delhi.

The AAP government should withdraw its

"Tughlaqi farman" (dictat) within the next 24 hours or Purvanchalis will teach it a lesson at the right moment, said Delhi BJP vice president Dinesh Pratap Singh.

Representatives of Chhath Puja committees and hundreds of Purvanchalis also took part in the protest, said Delhi BJP media cell head Navin Kumar.

Mr Kejriwal allowed opening of weekly markets, malls, liquor shops, permitted running DTC buses with full capacity, then why is he discriminating against lakhs of Purvanchalis by banning Chhath Mahaparv, Singh questioned. — PTI



Police stop BJP workers, who were staging a protest against the ban on Chhath Pooja events, outside Arvind Kejriwal's residence in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

**Delhi records 6,396 cases, total over 4.4L**AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 17

The national capital reported 6,396 new positive cases, 4,421 recoveries and 99 deaths in the last 24 hours, while the positivity rate climbed to 13.04 percent. The total number of coronavirus cases in Delhi stands at 4,95,598 including 42,004 active cases, 4,45,782 recoveries and 7,812 deaths.

These fresh coronavirus cases were detected from 49,031 tests conducted the previous day, the lowest since August 14, when 14,389 tests were done. Of the total tests conducted, 32,431 were rapid-antigen tests, and 16,600 were RT-PCR tests, the bulletin said.

On Monday, city recorded 3,797 fresh Covid cases taking the infection tally in the national capital to over 4.89 lakh, even as 99 new fatalities pushed the toll to 7,713, authorities said. The highest single-day spike till date here — 8,593 cases — was recorded on November 11 when 85 fatalities were also recorded.

Delhi has witnessed a spurt in coronavirus cases since October 28 when the daily rise breached the 5,000-mark for the first time and it crossed the 8,000-mark on Wednesday.

cantly reduced to around 98. "Boundary layer wind direction is North north-westerly. However, since the fire-related emissions have significantly reduced, a significant impact is not expected. Stubble burning share in PM2.5 in Delhi's air is almost negligible and estimated marginal three per cent for today," SAFAR said. It, however, said the significant AQI improvement will be short-lived.

"AQI is forecast to further deteriorate to the higher end of 'Poor' to the lower end of 'Very Poor' category on 19th and 20th November," it said.

**City's draft electoral roll sees rise of 1.5L voters**

**New Delhi, Nov. 17:** Delhi's draft electoral roll published Monday shows a rise of over 1.5 lakh in the total number of electors in the city compared to the last published roll this January.

The total number of electors in Delhi stands at 1,48,43,859 in the draft roll and there is an increase in the number of both male and female voters vis-a-vis the one published on January 6, according to the Delhi CEO Office.

With the release of the draft electoral roll, the

Election Commission has also begun the process to induct new voters in the electoral list who have either turned 18 or will complete that age by January 1 next year, officials said.

"Special Summary Revision of Electoral Roll with respect to January 1, 2021 as the qualifying date, has been commenced in all 70 Assembly constituencies of Delhi, with draft publication of electoral roll on November 16, 2020," the CEO Office said

in a statement.

The total number of electors in Delhi is 1,51,723 more than the figure published in January, as per data shared by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) here.

The number of male, female and third gender electors are: 81,33,440; 67,09,508; and 911, respectively, according to the latest draft roll. The numbers for the January 6 roll were -80,55,686; 66,35,635 and 815. Besides, including new voters, another objective

for the summary revision exercise is to give opportunities for correction in electors' particulars and also to invite objections against any wrong inclusion in the electoral roll.

People can file claims and objections by January 5, 2021. "Special camps in senior secondary schools, colleges, polytechnics and ITIs would be held in November and December," a senior official said.

Final electoral rolls would be published on January 15. — PTI

**Air quality improves in Delhi, returns to 'moderate' levels**AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 17

The national capital's air quality improved significantly to the 'moderate' category on Tuesday as rain and stronger winds helped bring down pollution levels, authorities said.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board's mobile application SAMEER, the city recorded an air quality index of 168, which falls in the 'moderate' category, much better than Monday's AQI of 221, which falls in the 'poor' category. However, ministry of earth sciences' air quality monitor, SAFAR, said the

improvement will be short-lived and the AQI is likely to slip back into the 'poor' category on Thursday.

The city's 24-hour average AQI was 435 on Sunday and 414 on Saturday. An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

According to SAFAR, the overall air quality of Delhi is in the 'moderate' category as of Tuesday morning. "Surface winds are west-southwesterly and energetic, very favourable for pollutant dispersion. Rainfall along with

**NCR's air improves as rainfall brings down Diwali pollution**

**Noida, Nov. 17:** The air quality improved further to reach 'moderate' levels at Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad and Faridabad, while it stayed in the 'poor' category in Gurgaon on Tuesday, according to a government agency.

stronger winds under the influence of western disturbance helped clean the pollution in the Indo-Gangetic Plain," it said.

According to the CPCB) Sameer mobile application, the average 24-hour air quality index (AQI) was 166 in Ghaziabad, 172 in Faridabad, 178 in Noida, 186 in Greater Noida and 204 in Gurgaon at 4 pm.

It also said effective stubble fire counts with sufficient potential estimated from SAFAR-multi-satellite products are significantly

— PTI



SHORT TAKES

VEHICLE OWNERS  
AWAIT PAYMENT  
FOR COVID DUTY

GURURAJ A. PANIYADI  
MANGALURU, NOV. 17

Owners who had provided their vehicles for Covid-19 duty are waiting for the payment of their bills.

“The district administration had asked our vehicle for Covid duty in July. They wanted about 10 vehicles to take patients and officials. When we demanded ₹2,000 per day, the district administration asked us to reduce it and finally we agreed for ₹1,800,” Harish Putran, owner of a car, told *Deccan Chronicle*.

“For three months we worked round the clock. There were days when our vehicles covered about 200 km per day. As I am the driver, I have personally taken many patients. In case of death, we helped the ambulance driver to take the body. There were cases where family members hesitated but we worked on. Despite this, we have not got our payments,” he said.

“The district administration assured us of ₹1,800 per day. They did not agree to pay for fuel. We had to manage everything in the money, which was difficult. But we have failed to get this money too,” he said.

Harish knows about 10 vehicles which have not received payment in Mangaluru Taluk.

PATNAIK DECLARES  
₹100CR RELIEF TO  
MAOIST-HIT DIST.

AKSHAYA  
KUMAR SAHOO  
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 17

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday announced ₹100 crore package for the development of Swabhimana Anchal in Malkangiri district. The Chief Minister made the announcement after an interaction with the residents of Swabhimana Anchal via video conferencing from Lok Seva Bhawan here. He said, “The amount will be spent for construction of roads for better connectivity and electrification in the remote area. Besides, steps will be taken to improve irrigation through bore-wells.” The CM made an appeal to the Maoist cadres to give up violence and join the social mainstream.

Patnaik also announced that the Odisha government will provide free smartphones to all families in the Swabhimana Anchal.

While launching the mobile phone distribution programme, the CM said, “I am very happy to start the distribution of the mobile phones in the area from today as it would help people of the area to connect to other areas and would also help children study online, especially during pandemic times.”

The CM said three mobile phone towers would be installed in the area for seamless connectivity and internet access. He said every household will be provided with smart phones. On the occasion, Patnaik urged the Left-wing extremists to shun violence and return to the mainstream.

CIRCUS: HC  
SHOCKED BY  
AWBI NUMBERS

**New Delhi, Nov. 17:** The Delhi High Court on Tuesday termed as “serious” and “shocking” that there was a huge gap in the number of animals found by the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), as against those registered with it, when it inspected circuses across the country.

The high court also asked AWBI and the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) to find out what happened to the missing animals. A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rajnesh Bhatnagar directed the AWBI and CZA to file an affidavit disclosing the status of the circus animals registered with the Board and listed the matter for further hearing in January 2021.

The direction was issued after the court was informed by the Federation of Indian Animals Protection Organisation (FIAPO) that according to the survey report filed by AWBI, around 740 circus animals were registered with it, but in the survey only 28 were found. “It is a serious issue. Out of 740 registered with you (AWBI), you have only 28 to answer for. What happened to the rest of them,” the high court asked AWBI during the hearing.

It further said, in its order, that “One shocking state that has been revealed is that of the 740 animals registered with AWBI, information is available only available with regard to 28, leaving a massive gap.”



A professor takes a class for a lone student amid low footfall due to the coronavirus pandemic after authorities allowed re-opening of colleges after a gap of nearly eight months in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

— PTI

# At 29,000 fresh cases, national Covid surge lowest in 4 months

Delhi records 6,396 new cases of Covid after 2 days of fewer +ve reporting

VINEETA PANDEY with  
agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 17

The number of new Covid-19 infections reported in a day across India dropped below 30,000 (29,163) after four months taking India’s Covid-19 caseload to 88.74 lakh, while the number of people who have recovered from the disease surged to 82.90 lakh, according to the Union health ministry. The last time Covid-19 cases dipped below 30,000 was on July 15 when the country registered 29,429 cases.

The number of active cases has remained below 5 lakh for the seventh consecutive day now and there are 4.53 lakh active cases in the country as on date which comprises 5.11 per cent of the total caseload, health ministry said. The total recoveries have surged to 82.90 lakh taking the national recovery rate to 93.42 per cent while the Covid-19 fatality rate stands at 1.47 per cent. Till Tuesday, little over 1.30 lakh fatalities were

## WHO praises UP govt for Covid-19 management

**Lucknow, Nov. 17:** The World Health Organisation (WHO) has praised the Uttar Pradesh government for its Covid-19 management strategy terming it as a good example for other states, an official spokesperson of the government said.

Over 70,000 front-line health workers worked across the state to reach out to high-risk contacts of Covid-19 positive cases, he said. Acknowledging contact tracing as an essential public health tool for controlling the pandemic, Ofriin, WHO Country Representative, said in a statement issued here by the state government. The global health body

recorded due to Covid out of which 449 deaths were in the last 24 hours. Keeping in mind the fe-

appreciated the efforts made by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and his government for the management of Covid-19, especially in tracking high-risk contacts, an official spokesperson of the government said.

recorded due to Covid out of which 449 deaths were in the last 24 hours. Keeping in mind the fe-

well-trained health workforce to implement the surveillance activities.

The WHO team provided technical support to the state government to boost contact tracing efforts and strengthen the capacity of field teams through training.

Field monitors assessed the quality of contact tracing of 58,000 Covid-19 positive cases in 75 districts and found that 93 per cent of the high-risk contacts were traced and tested, said Madhup Bajpai, Regional Team Leader, Uttar Pradesh Region, WHO-NPSP (National Police Surveillance Project). — PTI

Bihar and other states, Durga Puja, Diwali may be seen in the coming weeks. “We have to keep

watching new cases very carefully. Strictly following all the precautionary measures like not visiting crowded places, taking extra care of vulnerable sections of the society and maintaining 2-feet distance are still very important. Do not be hesitant to get yourself tested in case of symptoms.” Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said. In view of rising cases of coronavirus in the national capital, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has sought special powers from the Centre to impose localised “lockdown” in specific areas which may emerge as hotspots and shut down those markets that may be aiding to the spread of virus in the city through crowding. The national capital reported 6,396 new positive cases, 4,421 recoveries and 99 deaths in the last 24 hours, while the positivity rate climbed to 13.04 percent. The total number of Covid cases stands at 4,95,598 including 42,004 active cases, 4,45,782 recoveries.

## SC asks govt to find solution for complaints against media

PARMOD KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 17

The Supreme Court on Tuesday told the Centre to evolve a mechanism to address the grievances against the media — particularly the visual media — for airing allegedly fake news or news with a slant that may be detrimental to a section of people or a community.

“If it (mechanism) does not exist, you create one, otherwise we will hand over the complaints to a private agency,” Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a three-judge bench also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and

Justice V. Ramasubramanian told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta.

As Mehta told the court that they had taken action against channels in the past, CJI Bobde asked under which section of the Cable TV Networks Regulation Act had the government acted in the past, and why can’t the matter currently before the court be acted upon similarly.

The court said this in the course of the hearing of petitions by Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind and others seeking action against news channels for giving a communal twist to the Nizamuddin Markaz congregation.

The court in an earlier

hearing had said that it will get the issue raised by the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind and others examined by News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) — a body set-up by some news channels that is headed by a former top court judge Justice A.K. Sikri.

At the outset of the hearing, CJI Bobde expressed disapproval of the second affidavit filed by the information and broadcasting ministry and said, “Mr Solicitor General we are not satisfied with your affidavit. First you did not file a proper affidavit and then you filed an affidavit which did not deal with the two important questions”.

## Bodies of 2 dalit sisters found

Fatehpur (UP), Nov. 17:

The bodies of two Dalit sisters were found with eye injuries in a pond in a village in Uttar Pradesh’s Fatehpur district, with their families alleging that they were killed after an unsuccessful rape bid, police said.

The bodies of the girls, aged 8 and 12, were retrieved from the pond late Monday evening, ASP Rajesh Kumar said. Both the bodies had injury marks on the eyes, he said.

The girls had gone to the field in the afternoon to get vegetables

● **THE BODIES** of the girls, aged 8 and 12, were retrieved from the pond late Monday evening, ASP Rajesh Kumar said. Both the bodies had injury marks on the eyes, he said

but did not return, the police said. The family members of the minors have alleged that the assailants killed the girls after an unsuccessful attempt to rape them, the officer said. The bodies were sent for post-mortem and the report is awaited, police said. — PTI

# Six-year-old girl gangraped, lungs taken out

**Kanpur (UP), Nov. 17:** A six-year-old girl, who was found dead in a forested area in this Uttar Pradesh district on Sunday, was gangraped, killed and her lungs were then taken out of the corpse by the killers, police said on Monday.

The lungs were removed to perform black magic, believing that it will help a woman give birth to a child, they said.

The girl had gone missing on the night of Diwali from the Ghatampur area. The killers — Ankul Kuril (20) and Beeran (31) — who were arrested on Sunday, had removed her lungs and delivered those to key conspirator Parshuram Kuril to perform black magic, assistant superintendent of police (Rural) Brajesh Srivastava said.

Parshuram was arrested on Monday and his wife was also detained due to the apprehension that she knew about the incident, but did not talk about it to anyone, the officer added.

Parshuram initially tried to mislead the police, but facing intensive interrogation, broke down and confessed to his crime, the ASP said.

Parshuram told the police that he got married in 1999 but not had a child so far, he said.

He persuaded his nephew, Ankul, and his friend Beeran, to kidnap the girl and remove her lungs, the ASP said.

Ankul and Beeran, who were heavily drunk, abducted the girl while she had gone out of her home in Bhadras village on Saturday night to buy fire-crackers, he added.

They took her to a nearby jungle, where they raped the girl before killing her.

The accused have been charged under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Kanpur’s Deputy Inspector of General of Police Preetinder Singh had said forensic experts and sniffer dogs were pressed into service to gather scientific evidence to confirm if the

● **THE GIRL** had gone missing on the night of Diwali from the Ghatampur area. The killers — Ankul Kuril (20) and Beeran (31) — who were arrested on Sunday, had removed her lungs and delivered those to key conspirator Parshuram Kuril to perform black magic, ASP (Rural) Brajesh Srivastava said. Accused was arrested on Monday and his wife was also detained due to the apprehension that she knew about the incident, but did not talk about it to anyone

● **THE GIRL** had gone missing on Saturday evening while her family was preparing for Diwali prayers. The family looked for her in the nearby areas, including the jungle, using flashlights, but failed to locate her during the night, Singh had said, adding that her body was found by some villagers passing through the jungle on Sunday morning. UP CM directed the officials to extend a financial help of ₹5 lakh to victim’s family.

girl was killed in an act of black magic.

The girl had gone missing on Saturday evening while her family was preparing for Diwali prayers.

The family looked for her in the nearby areas, including the jungle, using flashlights, but failed to locate her during the night, Singh had said, adding that her body was found by some villagers passing through the jungle on Sunday morning, the deputy inspector-general of police said.

The girl’s belongings, including her slippers and clothes, were found near a tree. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has taken note of the heinous crime and directed officials to take strict action against the accused. He has also directed the officials to extend a financial help of ₹five lakh to the victim’s family. — PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY		
1 <sup>st</sup> corrigendum to the Tender Notice No.		
476-Acs-Design & Drawing-ROBs/RUBs-CSB Dated 17.11.2020		
Name of work: “Design and drawing of test piles, foundation (open/piles), substructure & super structure (PSC/Steel) in connection with construction of 07 nos. Road over Bridges on Jind-Panipat, Jind-Sonepat, Rohtak-Panipat and Delhi-Ambala section of Northern Railway”.		
Due to administrative reasons, Tender for the above sited work, which was scheduled to be opened on 19.11.2020 has been cancelled. Fresh tender shall be notified later on.		
No. 476-Acs-Design & Drawing-ROBs/RUBs-CSB Dated : 17.11.2020 2568/2020		
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE		

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority		
noida		
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida - 201301 (U.P.) Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com		
E-TENDER NOTICE		
E-Tenders are invited from firm/contractors registered with for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on noida authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & http://etender.up.nic.in. Please ensure to see these website for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.		
(a).		
S.no.	Job no/Work name	Amount
1.	106 /D/(H)/DD/(H)-III/20-21. Two year M/o Park Primary School & Barat Ghar Village Momnathal	Cost Rs. 8.76 Lacs
Which can be uploaded by date 25.11.2020 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 26.11.2020 at 11.00AM.		
(b).		
S.no.	Job no/Work name	Amount
1.	165/D/(H)/DD/(H)-II/20-21. M/o Park (R/o Gazebo hut & Painting work in different parks) in sector-61.	Cost Rs. 13.09 Lacs
2.	205/D/(H)/DD/(H)-III/2020-21. M/o Park (Repair & Painting work of MS Grills/Gates & washed stone Grit Plaster on Boundary wall from B Block Park in Sector-48) Noida.	Cost Rs. 11.70 Lacs
3.	206/D/(H)/DD/(H)-II/2020-21. M/o Park (Construction of Pathway on Park C-Block in Sector-48) Noida	Cost Rs. 14.21 Lacs
4.	131/D/(H)/DD/(H)-III/2020-21. M/o Park (C/o of 02 Nos. Gazebo Hut in Park Near B-66, Sector -80) Noida	Cost Rs. 21.26 Lacs
5.	134/D/(H)/DD/(H)-III/2020-21. D/o Village (Two year maintenance of Village Salarpur Kabristan, Village Bhooda Primary School & Barat Ghar Park)	Cost Rs. 8.48 Lacs
6.	135/D/(H)/DD/(H)-III/2020-21. Two year M/o Green belt, Express Highway in front of Sector -146, L.H.S. Near Mohiyapur & Safipur Under Pass	Cost Rs. 20.67 Lacs
Which can be uploaded by date 03.12.2020 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 04.12.2020 at 11.00AM.		
Director (Hort.) Noida		
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA		



SHORT TAKES

NON-MUSLIM TOPS ISLAMIC ENTRANCE LIST

**Jaipur:** In a break from the past, a non-Muslim candidate from Rajasthan has topped the all-India entrance exam for a master's course in Islamic studies at the Central University of Kashmir. "Islam is portrayed as a radical religion and there is lot of misconception about it. The division in the society is growing today and it is really very important to understand each other's religion," said Shubham Yadav, who would join the course in Kashmir for two years. The result of the common entrance test, held on September 20, was declared on October 29. The university, which had set up the religious studies department, which oversees the course, in 2015, confirmed that Yadav is the first non-Muslim candidate to top the exam. "This is the first time a non-Muslim has topped the entrance exam. We've had non-Muslim scholars in the past," Prof. Hamid Naseem Rafiabadi said. Yadav (21) has done BA honours in philosophy from the Delhi University and hails from Alwar where two lynching cases of Pehlu Khan in 2017 and Akbar alias Rakbar Khan in 2018 took place. "Such kind of incidents also made me think and gave motivation to read about the religion (Islam). I convinced my parents to pursue Islamic studies by making them understand that it will be about Islamic history and culture and they agreed," he said.

BISWAJIT RAY RESIGNS FROM CONGRESS

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, NOV. 17

In what is said to be a major setback for the party, Assam PCC general secretary and Koch Rajbongshi leader Biswajit Ray resigned from the party after he was served a show cause notice allegedly for sharing the poll campaign stage with BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma in the round up to the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) polls on November 12. Amidst indication of several Congress leaders including few former ministers set to resign from the party, Ray, in his resignation letter sent to APCC president Ripun Bora, said, "For my personal inconvenience and for the sake of serving the Koch Rajbongshi community unbiasedly, I have resigned from the post of Assam Pradesh Congress Committee general secretary and primary membership of Indian National Congress." Ray admitted that he went to meet Himanta Biswa Sarma to raise the issue of expediting the process of granting Scheduled Tribe status to Koch Rajbongshis of Assam and several other issues concerning the indigenous community of the state.

2 MORE HELD IN CONNECTION WITH KANPUR CLASH

**Kanpur:** Police arrested two more people in connection with the clash between two communities at Wajidpur's Chakeri locality here as no fresh incident of violence was reported from the area, a senior official said on Tuesday. A 25-year-old youth was killed and several injured here in the clash that erupted after a man was accidentally splashed with water. Security personnel in large numbers were deployed to ensure normalcy. "The situation is normal and under control. Heavy police force has been deployed in the area to maintain law and order. Two more arrests were made on Tuesday in connection with the brawl, which had led to communal tensions in the area," Kanpur DIG Preetinder Singh said. He said so far six people have been arrested in connection with the violence and more arrests are likely to be made soon. Senior police officers, including the Superintendent of police (East) Raj Kumar Agarwal, have been asked to camp in the area to monitor the situation. Meanwhile, Union minister Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti and UP minister Satish Mahana paid a visit to the family of Pintu Nishad (25), who had died in the incident. They handed over a cheque for ₹ 5 lakh to the victim's kin, district magistrate Alok Tiwari said.

Omar, Mehbooba hit back at Shah

NC says attack shows his frustration ■ Cong says is not part of Gupkar Alliance

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, NOV. 17

J&K parties sharply reacted to Amit Shah's terming the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) an "unholy gathbandhan" against the national interest. National Conference (NC) vice president and former chief minister Omar Abdullah in a series of tweets said Shah's remarks clearly revealed "frustration". He said, "I can understand the frustration behind this attack by the Hon'ble Home Minister. He had been briefed that the People's Alliance was preparing to boycott elections. This would have allowed the BJP & newly formed King's party a free

run in J&K. We didn't oblige them." Mr Abdullah said those who oppose BJP ideology were labelled as anti-nationals. "Only in J&K can leaders be detained & called anti-national for participating in elections & supporting the democratic process. The truth is all those who oppose the ideology of the BJP are labelled "corrupt & anti-national". People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti tweeted, "Fighting elections in an alliance is also anti-national now. BJP can stitch as many alliances in its hunger for power but somehow we are undermining national interest by putting up a united front."

● CONGRESS CRITICISED Shah for his 'unsavory remarks' and asked him to explain the BJP's alliances with the PDP, NC in the past.

In another tweet, she said, "Old habits die hard. Earlier BJP's narrative was that the *tukde tukde* gang threatened India's sovereignty & they are now using 'Gupkar Gang' euphemism to project us as anti nationals. Irony died a million deaths since it's BJP itself that violates the constitution day in & day out." She also wrote, "BJP's stale tactic of dividing India by projecting themselves as saviours & political opponents as internal

& imagined enemies is far too predictable now. Love jihad, *tukde tukde* & now Gupkar Gang dominates the political discourse instead of like rising unemployment & inflation." The Congress criticised Shah for his "unsavory remarks" and asked him to explain the BJP's alliances with the PDP and NC in the past. It also said that it is not part of the PAGD. "Congress has entered only seat sharing at certain places at local district level (for the district development council elections in J&K)," the party said in a statement here. The Congress while strongly condemning the "propaganda and allegations" of Mr Shah urged

him "to refrain from doing such dirty politics." The statement further said, "BJP leaders are in habit of indulging in rumour mongering aiming to gain political mileage. Eyeing DDC elections in J&K, he (Mr Shah) seems desperate enough about the poll outcome which is certainly going to be unfavourable to BJP." The home minister had earlier in a series of tweets slammed the PAGD, accusing it of seeking the intervention of foreign forces in J&K and disrespecting the tricolour. He had asserted that J&K will always remain an integral part of India and warned the PAGD for "going against the national interest". He said, "Indian people

will no longer tolerate an unholy 'global gathbandhan' against our national interest. Either the Gupkar Gang swims along with the national mood or else the people will sink it." He had also targeted the Congress party for forging an alliance with the PAGD, accusing it of siding with entities that want to take J&K back to the era of terror and turmoil. "Congress and the Gupkar Gang want to take J&K back to the era of terror and turmoil. They want to take away the rights of Dalits, women and tribals that we have ensured by removing Article 370. This is why they're being rejected by the people everywhere," he wrote on the micro-blogging site.

RITA BAHUGUNA'S GRANDDAUGHTER DIES OF BURNS

**Allahabad, Nov. 17:** The granddaughter of Allahabad MP Rita Bahuguna Joshi has died of burns received during bursting of crackers, a close aide of the BJP leader said on Tuesday. She was six-year-old. The MP's aide said Kiya died around 2 am on Tuesday at the city hospital where she was admitted following the incident on Monday afternoon. He said the Bahuguna's granddaughter was bursting crackers with a couple of other children when the accident took place. A spokesman said the MP's son Mayank was in Lucknow at the time of the incident and had booked an air ambulance to take Kiya to Delhi for treatment. Kiya was to be taken to Delhi on Tuesday. Kiya will be cremated at Allahabad's Daraganj on his father's arrival from Lucknow. —PTI

MAN HELD FOR RAPE, MURDER OF 5-YEAR-OLD

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 17

Odisha police on Tuesday arrested a man who allegedly raped and murdered a 5-year-old girl in Dhenkanal district. The accused was identified as Sankarshan Dehury of Kaliapani village in Jajpur district. He is a relative of the deceased girl, the local police said. The body of the girl was found in a drain near a market at Kharkhari village under Kankadahad police limits in Dhenkanal district on November 13. It was alleged that the child was raped and then murdered while the body was dumped in the drain. "During the course of investigation, police apprehended Dehury. He has confessed to the crime during questioning," the police said.

Malabar navy exercise



Navies of India, US, Australia and Japan during the second phase of the Malabar naval exercise in the northern Arabian Sea on Tuesday. The exercise involved two aircraft carriers and a number of frontline warships, submarines and maritime reconnaissance aircraft. —PTI

Accused filmed act, sold it ■ Victims were kids in age group of 5 to 16 yrs

UP engineer abused 50 kids, arrested

**New Delhi, Nov. 17:** The Central Bureau of Investigation has arrested a junior engineer of Uttar Pradesh irrigation department for alleged sexual exploitation of children for last 10 years and selling videos and photographs of his nefarious acts on dark web to other paedophiles across the globe, officials said Tuesday. He is alleged to have victimised about 50 children in the age group of 5-16 years in the districts of Chitrakoot, Banda and Hamirpur, they said. A resident of Chitrakoot district, the junior engineer was arrested from Banda. He was produced before a court which sent him to one day of judicial custody. He is believed to have told that he was silently operating in the adjoining

districts of Hamirpur, Banda and Chitrakoot for last 10 years preying upon poor children between 5-16 years of age, the officials said. He used to buy their silence using cash and gifts of electronic gadgets such as mobile phones, they said. The modus operandi adopted by the accused helped him to keep away from the radar of investigating agencies. The newly-set up special CBI unit handling online child sexual abuse has started tracking and apprehending paedophiles operating on the Internet and busted his alleged activities after trailing him for days, the officials said. The junior engineer, a resident of Chitrakoot district, was arrested from Banda by the special unit

● IT IS alleged that he was selling, circulating and sharing child sexual abuse material with other paedophiles globally using dark web and cloud services having servers abroad. He was produced before a court which sent him to one day of judicial custody.

of the CBI specialising in Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention/ Investigation (OCSAE) in one such operation. "The accused allegedly used these electronic items and gadgets to lure children falling in the age group of 5-16 years. The scrutiny of the emails of the accused has revealed that he was allegedly in constant touch with several individuals (both Indian and foreign nationals) for

the purpose of sharing child sexual abuse material," Mr Gaur said. "Apart from the physical abuse of these children, the accused also allegedly recorded their acts using their mobile phones, laptops and other electronic devices. It was further alleged that these photographs and video films containing child sexual abuse material were published and transmitted by the accused using the Internet," CBI spokesperson R.K. Gaur said. "Searches were conducted at the residence of accused which led to recovery of cash of ₹8 lakh (approximately), mobile phones, laptops, web-camera and other electronic storage devices including pen drives, memory cards and several sex toys," Mr Gaur said. It is alleged that he was

selling, circulating and sharing child sexual abuse material with other paedophiles globally using dark web and cloud services having servers abroad, the officials said. Dark web are Internet websites, pages and material which are specially encrypted and remain hidden from search engines. "The scrutiny of the emails of the accused has revealed that he was allegedly in constant touch with several individuals (both Indian and foreign nationals) for the purpose of sharing child sexual abuse material. The accused has allegedly created and shared huge quantity of child sexual abusive material, over the years, through the Internet using various social media platforms and websites over dark web," Mr Gaur said. —PTI

Ex-Mayor held for B'luru riots

VINAY MADHAV BENGALURU, NOV. 17

Former Bengaluru Mayor Sampath Raj, who was on run for the last one month after being accused of instigating riots at KG Halli and DJ Halli areas on the night of August 11, has been arrested by CCB police. On August 11, following a Facebook post by BJP activist Naveen, who happens to be nephew of Pulikeshinagar Congress MLA Akhanda Srinivas Murthy, communal violence had erupted. The rioters had tried to set fire to the KG Halli and DJ Halli police stations and burned down the house of Akhanda Srinivas Murthy. Police had to struggle for over 12 hours to bring the situation under control, as the rioters were targeting

police also. However, during the course of investigation, it was revealed that the riot was not a spontaneous reaction, but was instigated by some of the Congress members. Targeting Congress MLA houses by members of minority communities was something that baffled police. After intercepting a number of telephones in the area, police traced that mobile phone belonging to close associate Sampath Raj was in constant touch with the rioters, giving out instructions to torch Akhanda Srinivas Murthy house and attack the police station. Akhanda Srinivas Murthy migrated to Congress from JD(S) during the last general elections and is a supporter of Siddaramaiah.

DEOBANDI | FACTION

Police say the duo was also planning to cross the border and go to Pakistan for training

Two suspected JeM terrorists from J&K arrested in Delhi

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA NEW DELHI, NOV. 17

The special cell of Delhi police has apprehended two suspected Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists from Sarai Kale Khan area in Southeast Delhi. The duo was apprehended by the police on Monday night. The police said that the duo was also planning to cross the border and go to Pakistan for training. The duo has been identified as Abdul Latif Mir (22), a resident of Doru village in Baramulla district, and Mohammad Ashraf Khatana (20), a resident of Hat Mulla village in Jammu and Kashmir's

Kupwara district. According to DCP (special cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav, on November 16 specific inputs were received that Abdul and Asraf would go near Sarai Kale Khan and then go to Nizamuddin area and would stay for a short period in Delhi for their onward journey to Uttar Pradesh for the purpose of training. "Acting on the specific inputs, a trap was laid and they were nabbed in the late hours. During interrogation, it was revealed that both the terrorists follow the 'Deobandi' faction of the community and their role model is Maulana Masood Azhar, the leader

of JeM. "Abdul has a Facebook account in the name of Mir Latif and has displayed the picture of Maulana Masood Azhar in his display picture. He used to listen to Maulana Masood on social media and wanted to join them for the freedom of J&K and to spread Islam all over the world," said the DCP. "Abdul used to listen to news of brutality with the Muslims all over the world on news channels and the lectures delivered in Deobandi by Arhsad Madani, Maulana Mufti Faizul Waheed Sahab, and J&K by Mufti Muzaffar Hussain and Nazir Ahmad Shah Kashmiri.

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, NOV. 17

The families of two Kashmiri youth arrested by Delhi police's special cell on charges of being Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM) operatives have pleaded their innocence and claimed that they travelled to the Union capital from the native villages in northwestern Valley's Kupwara and Baramulla districts earlier this month for personal reasons. "My son was scheduled to tie the nuptial knot on

November 12. He went to Delhi along with his friend to buy some clothing and personal material for his wedding. They left the Valley on November 4 and the last time my son spoke to us from an unknown number was on November 5 to inform he would be returning home the next day," Bashir Ahmad Khatana, father of accused Muhammad Ashraf, told reporters. He insisted, "My son has no militancy links which you can get confirmed from local police as well.

He is a religious person and would lead prayers in a masjid (mosque)," Khatana, a resident of frontier Kupwara district's Hathmulla village, said that his son's arrest has shocked him and also his (Ashraf's) in-laws who were preparing for the wedding of their daughter. Khatana said that he after learning about the arrest of his son spoke to the area deputy superintendent of the police and some other police and administration officials back home to plead the

innocence of his son. Sanaulah Mir, father of the other accused Abdul Latif, said that barely two days after his 22-year-old son went to Delhi on Nov. 4 the family lost contact with him. "Today, I was shocked to know through a TV news channel that he along with another Kashmiri youth has been arrested on the pretext of being militants. The allegation is totally false. I vouch for my son's innocence," Mir, a resident of Duroo suburb of Valley's northwestern Sopore city, said.





## THE ASIAN AGE

18 NOVEMBER 2020

# Nitish weakened, will his govt survive?

**J**D(U)'s founder-leader Nitish Kumar was sworn in chief minister of Bihar for the fourth straight term last Monday, courtesy his alliance partner BJP which won 31 seats more than Mr Kumar's relatively meagre 43, but it is far from clear if the NDA alliance, principally a BJP-JD(U) show, can offer stable governance or indeed even cohere with any sense of certainty.

The relationship between the key coalition partners has been prejudiced. There is a widespread feeling in the state and in political circles more broadly that the BJP had tried to undermine JD(U) from the start by propping up LJP's Chirag Paswan, and this was an important consideration for the less than satisfactory showing of Mr Kumar's party. Purportedly, the reason for this move was BJP's own ambition to be in the driver's seat to the extent of seeking to have its own CM instead of Mr Kumar.

**Upon Mr Modi's removal, two new deputy CMs have been foisted on the CM by the BJP. It is a strong likelihood that Patna will be run from Delhi, possibly in tandem with Nagpur.**

The game came unstuck because the safron party, while improving its performance, could not reach a zone of comfort in number terms that may have enabled it to cobble together a government through the use of unconventional methods. The BJP could not choreograph a situation in which both the JD(U) and the RJD, the main Opposition force led by the very young Tejashwi Yadav, could be pushed down electorally at the same time. In the event, the RJD has done exceedingly well, arriving on the scene yet again as the number one party in the Assembly, ahead of BJP.

Having failed to reach its first objective, the BJP, being the bigger ally, looks to be aiming to call the shots more directly in the governance of the state. This can only be done by pushing down the CM and making him as redundant as possible. Ideally, from the BJP's perspective, the CM should be seen but not heard. In furtherance of this, the saffron party has taken their suave and veteran Bihar leader Sushil Modi, who had been deputy CM with Mr Kumar for 13 years, out of the equation. Mr Modi was known to enjoy a special relationship with Mr Kumar, sometimes to the chagrin of the state BJP.

Upon Mr Modi's removal, two new deputy CMs have been foisted on the CM by the BJP. These are politicians not known to possess their own personality. Consequently, it is a strong likelihood that Patna will be run from Delhi, possibly in tandem with Nagpur, the RSS headquarters. The NDA parties had not advanced any particular agenda for the state in their election campaign, which was centred on attacking RJD and Congress and not on defending its poor record or projecting a viable future. It does look as if they have run out of ideas. Getting investment rolling in the state, the need of the hour, is a tall order.

Mahagathbandhan, the NDA's principal opponent led by Mr Yadav, has secured only 12,000 votes fewer than the ruling side. Seats have been won or lost by double-digit margins, leading the Opposition to cry foul. The Opposition boycotted the government's swearing-in and could be in attack mode from the start. There could be unsettling times ahead in a key Hindi-belt state.

## Two cheers for Suu Kyi

**I**t was a vote for continuity. In winning what was only the second election in Myanmar since the end of five decades of military rule in the country, convincingly, the crafty National League for Democracy (NLD) head and incumbent state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi has effectively consolidated her people's democratic ambitions. However, in trying to avoid 'criticism' that she is favouring Rohingyas from the military-backed Opposition Union of Solidarity and Development Party, she delayed decision-making vis-à-vis the crisis. Over 40,000 Rohingyas are stranded in India and eight lakh in Bangladesh awaiting repatriation. The estimated six lakh who remain in the conflict-rife Rakhine state are severely persecuted and were disenfranchised in these elections.

Alarming, the Islamophobic and anti-Rohingya Arakan National Party has won the largest bloc of seats in the regional parliament, even flipping a few previously held by the NLD. The NLD has reached out to them, so a prolonging of the crisis is on the cards. Reforming the 2008 military drafted constitution in which the Army had written in a role for itself in government and politics is another less urgent, but equally important, challenge before Ms Suu Kyi.

For India, Ms Suu Kyi's win spells both diplomatic comfort and continuity. Aside from trying to thwart China's expansionist and encirclement moves around India, New Delhi must be on good terms with all neighbours to maximise trade, market and investment opportunities as well as to bolster our strategic ingredients. Besides, Myanmar is important for its own sake - it is India's gateway to Southeast Asia. Facing charges of Rohingya genocide at the International Court of Justice and chastened, thereafter, by the world community, Ms Suu Kyi has been seen leaning towards China lately. But India has not been idle. Foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and Chief of Army Staff Gen. M.M. Naravane met the leader recently to discuss Covid cooperation and review progress of India-assisted projects in Myanmar. New Delhi needs to further strengthen its relationship with Yangon, possibly by identifying more areas of mutual cooperation as well as brainstorming solutions to Myanmar's problems, so that it is effectively weaned off its Beijing dependencies.

### THE ASIAN AGE

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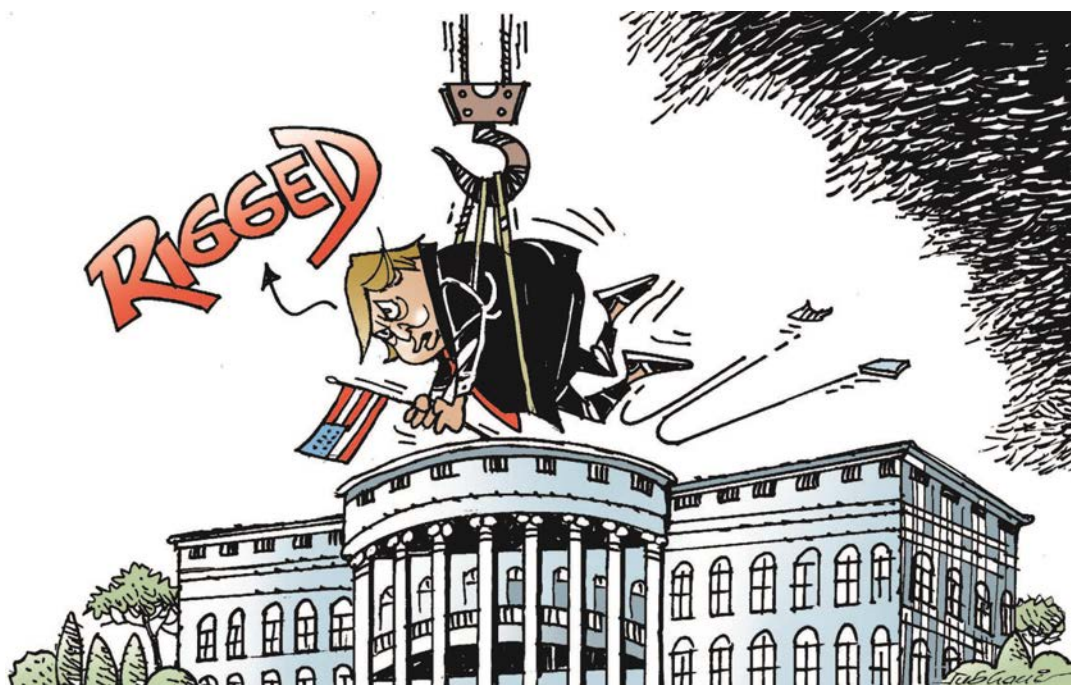
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Subhani



# Beyond Covid: Towards a 'new normal' at work



Shashidhar Nanjundaiah

**L**ast month Microsoft joined the new-age league — Facebook, Twitter, Google and Salesforce — in bringing forth an extended work-from-home policy. But the Redmond-based tech giant went further and announced that Microsoft employees all over the world can now opt to work from home permanently, embedding the concept of the hybrid workplace in the system. When a company's product is virtual, the processes can also be virtual, it would seem. No doubt there is the inevitable fine print about approvals and proportions. Still, is it a feasible proposition?

Microsoft's communiqué is compelling and competitive, and the narrative is bold — rather than making it about lockdowns and Covid-19 compliances, it indicates to us what it has learnt from and developed during the pandemic, to that extent embodying the concept of "the new normal". But more important, could this be the beginning of a new era of trust and partnership between employer and employee? That's the question managers are struggling with.

Undoubtedly, the transition to that virtual partnership will be less arduous for the technology and consulting companies. The tech industry has been responsible for systematising work flow and work processes in new ways. The "water-fall" process in management of software development process, for example, entailed a process from brainstorming to delivery that depended on long periods of low communication and reporting. But the new "agile" systems stipulate more rapid dipstick project management sequences such as regular meetings and frequent stock-taking to ensure that processes don't go askew

and that projects are completed within defined timelines with measurable assessments. The deliverables in such cases are data-driven and immediately measurable, potentially eliminating the need for human evaluation.

Because virtuality entails the use of networks, security is an anxiety to overcome. In several industries, virtual private networks (VPNs) or other security systems are par for the course. Those at management levels of the tech industry point out that these kinds of systems make their development projects more failsafe and more or less agnostic of geography. It reduces the anxiety of silence while providing a solution for regular communication and stocktaking, enabling any course correction when needed. Assessment of a project could happen every two weeks, for example, feeding into a quantified framework of sprints (the period of assessment) and velocities (points awarded during each sprint). But cybersecurity applications also often serve as surveillance or monitoring systems. So, several of these measures are more than changes solely related to coronavirus-compliance.

Managers in American tech companies say these points per period have shown a consistent and significant upward trend after a work-from-home mandate. This means productivity has gone up, at least in that industry. Does this mean employees are happier, or more efficient, as a result of sharper processes? That's a good question. For the employee, it allows a better work-life balance. The employer enjoys a wider and deeper hiring catchment area because a Microsoft-like policy unlocks opportunities for talented people who are reluctant or unable to relocate for work. On the other hand,

even in the United States, remote locations come with bandwidth issues, and most tech companies pay employees an incentive each month so that the employee can afford a reliable network connection.

That problem is compounded in an Indian environment, where there is far more caution in extending the work-from-home arrangement beyond the least possible period. Tech clusters like those in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Gurgaon attract a diverse workforce. Many employees come to these hubs from smaller towns. In a lockdown work-from-home scenario, a significant proportion of them choose to work from their native towns, where the necessary infrastructure — including power supply, connectivity and bandwidth — is often suspect. This unreliable infrastructure has compelled many employers to dissuade employees from travelling or to provide portable connectivity devices such as dongles.

That is why it does not come as a surprise that the heads of even technology companies in India do not believe that virtual working — even for non-administrative functions — can be a permanent arrangement. Most of them hanker to go back to the old normal. Employers have calibrated their processes to better quantify the output, but in the absence of qualitative evaluation, they may not be entirely comfortable with an artificial adjustment. On the other hand, strict quantification of processes and output also sets up an alluring case for using artificial intelligence (AI). Already, there have been layoffs and consolidation or restructuring of processes. While the ongoing cutting-edge research on AI as a sup-

plement to human tasks is well-documented, techies worry — thanks to the pandemic — about the enhanced possibility that automation could replace some human processes.

Work-from-home policies are essentially policies of space and time. Employers are having a hard time grappling with them because what was meant to be a temporary fix has unearthed more challenges than they had bargained for. Most technology employers allow employees to work at their own pace, although filling out time sheets is still the norm among Indian companies. So, for many human resources (HR) managers, the new issue is as much about the process as about the theory. On one hand, HR managers are now grappling with effective ways of monitoring. Without it, they find it difficult to fit the existing matrix of periodic assessments and suchlike. On the other, should they continue the surveillance-like monitoring, or should they simply trust the employee more?

Psychological impacts of a protracted work-from-home situation have been well-documented, but Indian companies face additional challenges. The more traditional HR systems among them are accustomed to ways of monitoring their employees' time and space. The work-from-home situation's best and worst feature may be the flexibility of time and space. Redefined office space is a major reason many youngsters hanker to work at the New Age "cool" technology companies. Yet the Covid-19 pandemic is forcing these very companies to redefine their offices as post-Covid workplaces. Home is the best place to work from, some employers seem to be saying. For now, the space to watch over the next few months will be whether systems manage to build on their current success, or the compulsion of human communication and physicality render them unviable.

*The writer is a communications expert and has launched and headed a number of reputed institutes of higher education*

### LETTERS

#### NEW VACCINE HOPE

After months of gloom and distress, there are positive developments on the Covid-19 front. US biotech firm Moderna has announced that its experimental vaccine against Covid-19 was almost 95 per cent effective marking a second major breakthrough to end the pandemic. Earlier, American pharma company Pfizer and its German partner had said that their vaccine was 90 per cent effective though India unfortunately doesn't have the infrastructure to store it. But the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech has now said that its Covaxin is now undergoing phase III trials and the company is also working on another anti-Covid vaccine which will be in the form of nasal drops.

M.C. Joshi  
Lucknow

#### BLOATED EGOS

**ALL THE 22 CONSTITUENTS** of the Congress-led Mahagathbandhan are firmly of the view that the BJP is not invincible. They may be right, but the question is, where is the surest remedy? The only and foremost prerequisite necessary for successfully taking on the BJP during the 2024 general elections is to have a one-on-one contest in a minimum of 500 Lok Sabha seats, so as to avoid the division of the anti-BJP votes; a Herculean task given the bloated egos possessed by each of the 22 disparate elements in the "secular" alliance.

Arun Malankar  
Mumbai

#### AN AWARE CITIZEN

**THIS REFERS TO** the editorial, "Farewell to a legend" (Nov 17). Soumitra Chatterjee's acting career is characterized by a diversity of roles that was the handiwork of several filmmakers alongside Satyajit Roy. In the second half of his career, he also emerged as a popular elocutionist. He never abandoned his first love, the theatre, and remained, till the end, a man of many parts: A fine poet and playwright, long-time editor of a magazine, and, most importantly, an aware citizen. With his passing, the world lost a true legend.

Sankar Paul  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: [asianage.letters@gmail.com](mailto:asianage.letters@gmail.com).





## IN BRIEF

## MCBRIDE AMONG FINALISTS FOR CARNEGIE MEDAL

**New York, Nov. 17:** James McBride's latest novel and nonfiction by poets Claudia Rankine and Natasha Trethewey are among the finalists for the Andrew Carnegie Medals for fiction and nonfiction.

The American Library Association announced Tuesday that McBride's "Deacon King Kong" was a fiction nominee, along with Ayad Akhtar's novel "Homeland Elegies" and an acclaimed debut novel, Megha Majumdar's "A Burning." The nonfiction finalists are Trethewey's "Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir," Rankine's "Just Us," which combines poetry, prose and photography, and Rebecca Giggs' "Fathoms: The World in the Whale."

Winners in each category will be receive \$5,000, and will be announced Feb. 4, 2021. The awards are supported, in part, by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

## MCCANN SUSPECT HURT IN CUSTODY

**Berlin, Nov. 17:** A suspect in the disappearance of Madeleine McCann, the British toddler who vanished from a Portuguese resort 13 years ago, suffered two broken ribs in an incident at a German court, authorities said Tuesday.

The incident occurred after Christian Brueckner, who is serving time on a drug conviction, was taken to Braunschweig state court on Monday for a routine hearing on that case. Court spokeswoman Jessica Knab-Henrichs told *The Associated Press* that he was briefly treated in a hospital for two broken ribs, and was then returned to the court where the hearing was carried out. The incident is under investigation and further details on what happened at the court were expected to be released later in the day, she said. Although Brueckner is a suspect in the McCann case, prosecutors have said they do not yet have enough evidence to hold him on the McCann case alone.

In addition to the drug trafficking sentence, which Brueckner will have finished serving in January, he was convicted in 2019 of the 2005 rape of a 72-year-old American woman in Portugal and sentenced to another seven years.

That conviction is under appeal. McCann was 3 at the time of her 2007 disappearance from an apartment while her family vacationed in the seaside town of Praia da Luz.

## CHINA POSITIONS ROCKET FOR LUNAR MISSION

**Beijing, Nov. 17:** China on Tuesday moved a massive rocket into place in preparation for launching a mission to bring back materials from the moon for the first time in four decades.

The Long March-5 was transported by tractor from its hangar to the nearby launch site at the space base in Wenchang along the coast of the southern island province of Hainan. The Chang'e 5 mission it will carry is scheduled to launch early next week, placing a lander on the moon that will drill 2 meters (almost 7 feet) beneath the surface and scoop up rocks and other debris to be brought to earth.

That would allow scientists to study newly obtained lunar materials for the first time since the American and Russian missions of the 1960s and 1970s.

The mission, named for the Chinese moon goddess, is among China's most ambitious as its space programme continues to build steam since it first put a man in space in 2003, becoming only the third nation to do so after the US and Russia. China currently has a mission on the way to Mars, along with a rover on the moon's far side that is providing the first full measurements of radiation exposure from the lunar surface, information vital for any country that plans to send astronauts to the moon.

China has increasingly engaged with foreign countries on missions, although US law still prevents collaboration with NASA, excluding China from partnering with the International Space Station.

That has prompted China to work on its own space station and launch its own programmes that have put it in a steady competition with Japan and India among Asian nations seeking to notch new achievements in space. The space programme has progressed cautiously, with relatively few setbacks in recent years.

## Chemical-laced water on Thai protesters



Pro-democracy protesters take shelter as police use chemical-laced water cannons to disperse them during an anti-government rally in Bangkok on Tuesday.

— AFP

## More virus deaths if Trump impedes transition: Biden

Trump has not conceded defeat but alleged poll fraud without any evidence

**Washington, Nov. 17:** President-elect Joe Biden has warned that many more Americans "may die" if incumbent President Donald Trump does not cooperate with the transition process and hamper the incoming administration's ability to tackle the deadly coronavirus pandemic. According to media projections, Democrat Biden has won the November 3 presidential election.

Biden has 306 votes in the electoral college, surpassing the 270 threshold needed to win. However, Trump, a Republican, has not conceded and instead alleged election fraud without presenting any significant evidence. The Trump campaign has also mounted legal fights in a number of battleground states where he lost.

"More people may die if we don't coordinate," Biden said in his home state of Delaware on Monday, responding to a question on President Trump refusing to concede the election and the outgoing administration not co-operating in the transition process.

The US government agency that launches transition process — the General Services Administration (GSA), headed by a Trump appointee — has

yet to recognise Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris as winners. The Trump-appointed administrator of the General Services Administration has so far refused to take the legally necessary step to begin the transition process, which would give Biden's team a budget, intelligence briefings and access to federal agencies.

"A vaccine is important. It's of little use until you're vaccinated. So, how do we get over 300 million Americans vaccinated? What's the game plan? It's a huge, huge, huge undertaking to get it done, prioritise those greatest in need and working our way through, and also cooperate with the World Health Organization and the rest of the world in dealing with this," he said.

"So they (Trump administration) say they have this 'Warp Speed' programme that not only deal with getting vaccines, but also how to distribute this. The number of Covid-19 infections in the US has reached new heights in recent days, surpassing 160,000 cases in one day for the first time since the outbreak began. More than 247,000 people have died in the US.

## Sputnik V vaccine can be made in India: Putin

**Moscow, Nov. 17:** President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday called for a joint effort by the BRICS countries on the development of the Coronavirus vaccines as he suggested that Russia's Sputnik V vaccine against Covid-19 could be produced in China and India, which are members of the five-nation bloc.

"We believe it is important to speed up the establishment of the centre for development and research of BRICS vaccines, which we agreed to do two years ago, upon the initiative of our South African friends," Putin said while addressing the 12th BRICS summit via videoconferencing.

Dr Anthony Fauci, the top US infectious diseases expert, has warned that the country faces "a very challenging and ominous situation" as it approaches winter. Calling nationwide vaccine distribution a "huge undertaking", Biden said that if his team had to wait until 20 January — his presidential inauguration

— until they could begin work on the distribution programme, they would be behind by "over a month, month and a half". Biden said coordination is important "now, or as rapidly as we can get that done," and said that "it would make it a lot easier if the President were to participate."

## ONE YEAR AGO, COVID INFECTION BEGAN IN WUHAN

**Wuhan, Nov. 17:** The dangerous coronavirus pandemic has changed the complete situation of the world. People are facing different problems till date due to Covid-19 pandemic. SARS-CoV-2 caused Covid-19 infection. A total of 1.33 M people died due to COVID-19 infection in the world with cases surpassing 50 million in 190 countries. Exactly a year ago on November 17th, 2019 the first case of coronavirus was reported in Wuhan.

According to the South China Morning Post, it was a 55-year-old person from China's Hubei province who first contracted the virus and the case dates back to November 17th, 2019.

According to the reports, the Chinese doctors realised that they have been dealing with a new disease in December and the initial reports suggested that the virus responsible for the pandemic has stemmed from a live market.

## France mulls police image ban

**Paris, Nov. 17:** France's lower house of parliament is opening debate Tuesday on a security bill that would permit the imprisonment of people who publish images of police officers with intent to cause them harm.

Critics, including France's human rights ombudsman, say the measure would hurt press freedoms.

Offenders would face up to one year in prison and a 45,000-euro (\$53,000) fine under the proposed law championed by lawmakers of President Emmanuel Macron's party, which has a majority at the National Assembly.

The bill's most controversial measure would make it a new criminal offense "to disseminate,

by whatever means and on whatever media, with the intent of causing physical or psychological harm, an image of the face or any other element that could identify a police officer."

The measure's backers include Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin. He said it is needed because officers "are constantly threatened". — AP

## Peru: Sagasti is third Prez in a week

**Lima, Nov. 17:** Peru's political crisis appeared on the verge of resolution Monday as Congress cleared the way for an elder statesman and consensus candidate to become the country's third president in a week.

Jubilant people waved the nation's red-and-white flag and blared horns on the streets of Peru's capital as Francisco Sagasti of

the centrist Purple Party was selected as the new president of Congress. The 76-year-old engineer has not yet been sworn into office, but as head of Congress becomes the nation's chief of state by default. Peru currently has no president or vice president, making him next in line.

It will now fall on Sagasti to heal a nation bruised by

a week of upheaval. "What's at stake is taking a step toward rebuilding confidence between the people and the state," said Samuel Rotta, president of the Peruvian chapter of Transparency International.

Applause erupted in the legislative palace as Sagasti clinched the required majority vote. A respected academic, he has also spent decades consulting

## UNSC impaired organ, says India

**United Nations, Nov. 17:** A handful of countries are using the Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) as a "smoke-screen" and stopping progress on reforming the Security Council, which has become "impaired", India has said, asserting that it is time for a "decisive movement" to achieve the long-delayed reform of the powerful UN body. India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti, speaking in the UN General Assembly on "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council", lamented that nothing has moved for more than a decade in the IGN except hearing passionate statements on the need for reform.

"Today's Security Council is an impaired organ. It has been unable to act with credibility essentially due to its unrepresentative nature. But then, what is happening inside the IGN process, which we seem to be wedded to?" Tirumurti said on Monday. Criticising the absence of even a single negotiating text, Tirumurti said that the IGN has become like a "platform

for debate in a University rather than a serious result-oriented process in the United Nations consisting of sovereign member states".

"And why have we come to this pass? because just a handful of countries don't want us to proceed. They have stopped the IGN from progressing. They are using the IGN as a smoke-screen to stop themselves from being identified by paying lip-service to Security Council reform.

"The conditions they are laying out are impossible to fulfill — which is a full consensus of all member states. Ironically, this is happening at a time when we were in a tearing hurry last week to give ourselves e-voting rights. But for IGN, they want no voting, leave alone e-voting, but only full consensus!" he said.

Asserting that there is a need for a decisive movement this year in the UNSC reform process, Tirumurti said: "Without decisive movement, I feel that those who support real reform and who wish to deliver on the commitment made by our leaders, will be forced to look beyond the IGN."

— PTI

## Pak military, Qaeda had links: Obama

**Washington, Nov. 17:** Barack Obama has said that he had ruled out involving Pakistan in the raid on Osama bin Laden's hideout because it was an "open secret" that certain elements inside Pakistan's military, and especially its intelligence services, maintained links to the Taliban and perhaps even al-Qaeda, sometimes using them as strategic assets against Afghanistan and India. Giving a blow-by-blow account of the Abbottabad raid by American commandos that killed the world's most wanted terrorist on May 2, 2011 in his latest book "A Promised Land", the former US president said that the top secret operation was opposed by the then defence secretary Robert Gates and his former vice president Joe Biden, who is now the President-elect.

In the book that hit the stands globally on Tuesday, America's first Black president described the various options of killing bin Laden once it became increasingly clear that the elusive al-Qaeda chief

was living in a safe hideout on the outskirts of a Pakistani military cantonment in Abbottabad.

"Based on what I'd heard, I decided we had enough information to begin developing options for an attack on the compound. While the CIA team continued to work on identifying the Pacer, I asked Tom Donilon and John

## PAK'S EXTREMIST GROUP LIFTS SIEGE TO CAPITAL

**Islamabad, Nov. 17:** Hundreds of activists of an extremist religious group in Pakistan have ended their protest following their talks with the government, two days after they laid a partial siege to the national capital to denounce the publication of blasphemous cartoons in a French magazine and force the government to expel the French ambassador, official said on Tuesday.

Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) of firebrand cleric Khadim Hussain Rizvi started the protest march on the Murree Road of the garrison city of Rawalpindi on Sunday. Riot police had to resort to teargas shelling on Monday against the stone-pelting TLP protesters who succeeded to reach the Faizabad interchange connecting Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

— PTI

Brennan to explore what a raid would look like," Obama writes in his memoir. The need for secrecy added to the challenge; if even the slightest hint of our lead on bin Laden leaked, we knew our opportunity would be lost.

— PTI

## SPACEX CAPSULE DOCKS WITH SPACE STATION

**Cape Canaveral, Nov. 17:** SpaceX's newly launched capsule with four astronauts arrived Monday at the International Space Station, their new home until spring.

The Dragon capsule pulled up and docked late Monday night, following a 27-hour, completely automated flight from NASA's Kennedy Space Center.

The linkup occurred 262 miles (422 kilometers) above Idaho.

"Oh, what a good voice to hear," space station astronaut Kate Rubins called out when the Dragon's commander, Mike Hopkins, first made radio contact.

"We can't wait to have you on board," she added after the two spacecraft were latched together. This is the second astronaut mission for SpaceX. But it's the first time Elon Musk's company delivered a crew for a full half-year station stay. The two-pilot test flight earlier this year lasted two months.

— AP

## NEW | STUDY

## Comets are the most pristine material in our Solar System, find scientists

## Building blocks of life can form long before stars

**London, Nov. 17:** Scientists have shown that glycine, an important building block of life, can form under the harsh conditions that govern chemistry in space, indicating that the molecule may form in dense interstellar clouds well before they transform into new stars and planets.

The study, published in the journal *Nature Astronomy*, detected glycine in the comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, and in samples returned to the Earth from NASA's Stardust mis-

sion which was the first to return extraterrestrial material from outside the orbit of the Moon to the Earth.

According to the researchers, including those from the Queen Mary University of London in the UK, comets are the most pristine material in our Solar System and reflect the molecular composition present at the time our Sun and planets were just about to form. While until recently, scientists thought that the formation of amino acids like glycine

required energy, setting clear constraints to the environment in which it can be formed, the current findings suggest that these protein building blocks can form long before stars.

The researchers showed that it is possible for glycine to form on the surface of icy dust grains of comets, in the absence of energy, through 'dark chemistry'. "Dark chemistry refers to chemistry without the need of energetic radiation," explained Sergio Ioppolo, lead author

of the study from Queen Mary University of London. The findings contradicted previous studies which suggested that ultraviolet (UV) radiation was required to produce this molecule.

"In the laboratory we were able to simulate the conditions in dark interstellar clouds where cold dust particles are covered by thin layers of ice and subsequently processed by impacting atoms causing precursor species to fragment and reactive interme-

diates to recombine," Ioppolo said.

The researchers first demonstrated that methyllamine, the precursor molecule of glycine which was detected in the coma of the comet 67P, could form. Then, using a unique ultrahigh vacuum setup, equipped with a series of atomic beam lines and accurate diagnostic tools, the scientists confirmed that glycine could also be formed, and that the presence of water ice was essential in this process.

Further investigation using chemical simulations confirmed the experimental results and allowed the researchers to extrapolate data obtained on a typical laboratory timescale of just one day to interstellar conditions, bridging millions of years.

"From this we find that low but substantial amounts of glycine can be formed in space with time," said Herma Cuppen, a co-author of the study from Radboud University in the Netherlands. — PTI



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	43,952.71	0.72
Nifty 50	12,874.20	0.74
S&P 500*	3,617.83	-0.25
Dollar (₹)	74.44	0.23
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.47	0.23
Euro (₹)	88.35	0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,114.43	0.005
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	43.49	-0.33
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.877	-0.001
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.873	-0.033

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Embassy REIT to acquire biz park for ₹9,780 crore

Embassy Office Parks REIT said it has agreed to acquire a large business park 'Embassy TechVillage' in Bengaluru from Embassy group, Blackstone and some other investors for Rs 9,782.4 crore. Embassy REIT is India's first publicly listed Real Estate Investment Trust sponsored by Blackstone and Embassy group. It got listed on stock exchanges last year. The deal is subject to unitholders' and regulatory approvals.

Tata Steel eyes assets of Neelachal Ispat



Tata Steel evinced its interest for acquiring stake in Odisha-based steel maker Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd. "NINL plant is something we will look at whenever it is available," Tata Steel EO & MD T. V. Narendran said in a conference call. NINL is a joint venture in which four central PSUs—MMTC, NMDC, Bhel and Mecon—and two Odisha state companies Ipicol and Odisha Mining Corporation are shareholders.

Kris G'krishnan to head RBI Innovation Hub

Senapathy (Kris) Gopalakrishnan, former co-chairman of Infosys, has been appointed the first chairperson of the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub, which aims to promote innovation across the financial sector. Members of the council include CEO-designate Ashok Jhunjhunwala (IIT, Madras), H. Krishnamurthy (IISc-B), Gopal Srinivasan (TVS Capital) and K. Nikhila (Institute for Development & Research in Banking Technology, H'bad).

Karvy case: Funds, securities worth 2,300 crore settled

The NSE said funds and securities worth Rs 2,300 crore belonging to 2.35 lakh investors of Karvy Stock Broking Ltd have been settled so far. The case pertains to Karvy unauthorisedly transferring securities of clients into one of its Demat accounts by misusing the power of attorney given by its clients. Investors with fund balances up to Rs 30,000 due from Karvy Stock Broking have been settled, the NSE said.

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RBI proposes merger with DBS Bank Lakshmi Vilas put under moratorium

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, NOV. 17

Minutes after placing beleaguered Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) under moratorium and superseding its board of directors, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday announced a draft scheme of amalgamation to merge the ailing lender with DBS Bank India Ltd (DBIL).

RBI has placed the Tamil Nadu-based LVB under moratorium for 30 days that would end on December 16, according to statements from the regulator and the government on Tuesday. As part of this, the regulator has capped deposit withdrawals by customers at Rs 25,000. Depositors can withdraw above Rs 25,000 only for unforeseen expenses, including medical treatment, education, etc, the central government said in a statement.

This is the third such instance in the banking sector as the RBI had placed Yes Bank under moratorium for two weeks on March 5, which was later rescued by an SBI-led consortium while PMC Bank was also placed under moratorium.

Proposing the scheme of amalgamation, the central bank said that DBIL is well-capitalised and will bring in additional capital of Rs 2,500 crore upfront, to support the credit growth of the merged entity.

Owing to a comfortable level of capital, the combined balance sheet of DBIL would remain



healthy after the proposed amalgamation.

DBIL is a wholly owned subsidiary of DBS Bank Ltd, Singapore (DBS), which in turn is a subsidiary of Asia's leading financial services group, DBS Group Holdings Limited and has the advantage of a strong parentage. It had been issued a banking licence in October 2018.

In a statement the central bank said, "LVB has undergone a steady decline with the bank incurring continuous losses over the last three years, eroding its network. In absence of any viable strategic plan, declining advances and mounting non-performing assets (NPAs), the losses are expected to continue. The bank has not been able to raise adequate capital to address issues around its negative net-worth and continuing losses. Further, the bank is also experiencing continuous withdrawal of deposits and low levels of liquidity. It has also experienced serious governance issues and practices in the recent years which have led to deterioration in

its performance."

LVB was placed under the RBI's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework in September 2019.

RBI said "the bank's efforts to enhance its capital through amalgamation of a Non-Banking Financial Company with itself appears to have reached a dead end."

In October, non-bank lender Clix Capital had submitted a non-binding offer for LVB. In an unprecedented move, shareholders at the last AGM voted against the appointment of the bank's top brass.

The RBI said it has superseded the board of the lender for a period of 30 days as any effort to revive the bank "will be in vain" with the present board steering its affairs. It appointed T.N. Manoharan, former non-executive chairman of Canara Bank, as LVB's administrator.

C.H. Venkatachalam, general secretary of bank union Aibea, said the RBI decision would create doubt in the minds of people about the stability and dependability of banks.

AirAsia hints at possible India exit

Kuala Lumpur, Nov. 17: Malaysia's flagship budget carrier AirAsia Group Bhd has given its strongest indication to date that it could exit India, saying on Tuesday it was reviewing its investment in a joint venture airline there.

The group said in a statement that its operations in India, like those of its now-shuttered Japan business, have been draining cash and adding to the group's financial stress.

"Cost containment and reducing cash burn remain key priorities evident by the recent closure of AirAsia Japan and an ongoing review of our investment in AirAsia India," it said.

AirAsia shut its operations in Japan, the smallest of its foreign offshoots,



last month.

The airline owns 49 per cent of AirAsia India, a joint venture with Tata Sons.

News reports said that the Tatas are in discussions to buy AirAsia Group's stake.

AirAsia Group chief executive officer Tony Fernandes told Reuters in September that the group intends to consolidate and

strengthen its Asean foothold, which could mean one day exiting both Japan and India.

AirAsia Group said it remains confident of returning stronger, more robust and faster than many competitors, given strong signs of recovery in its key domestic markets due to pent-up demand and numerous Covid-19 vaccines in near

final stages of testing. "The general outlook is that air travel will be bouncing back real soon; we expect to get back to pre-pandemic levels on many routes across the Group by mid-2021, if not earlier," president for the group's airlines, Bo Lingam said.

AirAsia Group's share price touched its highest since June 29 on Tuesday in a second consecutive day of sharp gains, likely buoyed by news that US vaccine maker Moderna Inc's experimental vaccine is 94.5 per cent effective in preventing Covid-19 based on interim data from a late-stage trial.

Shares in its long-haul arm AirAsia X Bhd increased as much as 14 per cent.

—Reuters

Huawei sells off Honor business

Nov. 17: Huawei Technologies Co sold its Honor smartphone business to a Chinese government-backed consortium for an undisclosed amount, hiving off the entry-level devices arm after the Trump administration cut off its access to American technology.

The consortium was jointly founded by Shenzhen Smart City Technology Development Group Co Ltd and more than 30 of Honor's agents and dealers. Huawei will no longer hold any shares in Honor.

"This acquisition represents a market-driven investment made to save Honor's industry chain," said the statement, without explaining how the deal would bypass the

sanctions.

Honor was an integral part of Huawei's smartphone business, once larger than Samsung Electronics Co's but now struggling to secure enough crucial components and software for production. The sale illustrates the uneven impact of White House sanctions on China's largest technology company, whose consumer business is ailing even as its networking unit soldiers on. Shenzhen-based Huawei is said to have safeguarded its core telecom equipment business by stockpiling critical components to continue supplying its home country's 5G rollout through at least 2021.

Citing national security

concerns, the US has waged a far-ranging campaign against Huawei since 2018. The White House enacted sweeping restrictions against suppliers this year, closing off loopholes that let Huawei procure ready-made semiconductors to keep its consumer business afloat.

It's unclear if the Honor spin-off would lead to an automatic resumption of American chip supply to its new owners.

Huawei's smartphone shipments plummeted 22 per cent in the September quarter because of the US sanctions, according to research firm IDC. It now has to defend its No. 2 position against fellow Chinese players from Vivo to Xiaomi Corp,

which recorded a 42 per cent jump in third quarter shipments, IDA data show.

Honor has been operating as a budget phone brand alongside mainstream phones like the Mate series, and doesn't compete directly with the best offerings from Apple Inc or Samsung. Honor-branded phones are sold as low as 899 yuan (\$137) and go up to around 4,000 yuan. The most expensive Huawei phones go for as much as 17,000 yuan—surpassing the most expensive iPhone 12 Pro Max. Honor also competes with its own parent in a range of consumer electronics from gaming laptops to smart watches.

—Bloomberg

Global majors see upside to Indian stocks

ERIC LAM NOV. 17

Record highs in Mumbai are stoking the enthusiasm of strategists calling for further upside for Indian stocks, with companies poised to take advantage of a post-pandemic economic recovery in Asia through next year and beyond.

Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs Group Inc and JPMorgan Asset Management are among a number of prominent names talking up prospects for the country's shares in recent days. India traders marked Diwali by watching the S&P BSE Sensex Index rally to record highs last week, helped in part by a solid third-quarter earnings season.

About 86 per cent of reporting firms in the benchmark posted a sales beat while more than 70 per cent topped earnings expectations, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The benchmark is up 10 per cent this month and has narrowed its year-to-date underperformance against the MSCI Asia Pacific Index to about 5 percentage points from over 10 percentage points earlier this year.

"India's earnings revisions trend has improved sharply and valuations are on the cheaper side of their historical relation-

SENSEX BREACHES 44K-MARK INTRADAY

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, NOV. 17

The Sensex crossed the 44,000-mark in early trade, driven by the bullish trend in global stock markets. The benchmark index touched a new all time high of 44,161.16 before closing at 43,952.71, gaining 314.73 points.

The broader Nifty-50 also inched closer to the 13,000-mark as it closed at 12,874, up 93.95 points.

Heavyweight financials outperformed again with the BSE Bankex up 1.88 per cent and the Nifty Bank gaining 2.05 per cent. Some beaten down sectors like capital goods, Metals, realty and automobile also gained.

The Sensex gained close

to 1,000 points in just six sessions as it had closed above 43,000 for the first time on November 10.

With stocks surging ahead BSE's market capitalisation soared to an all time high of over Rs 170.56 lakh crore.

Analysts expect now the broader market to gain momentum after the sharp run-up in the large cap stocks. "With index regaining new peaks, we expect broader markets to participate, going forward, with small cap, mid-cap space to relatively outperform their large cap counterparts," said ICICI Securities.

FPIs were net buyers of equities worth Rs 4,905.35 crore while domestic institutions booked profit.

ship with Asia and emerging markets." Morgan Stanley strategists, including Jonathan Garner, wrote in a November 15 note. The firm upgraded its recommendation for the MSCI India Index to overweight, naming it one of the top trades for their 2021 outlook.

India's economy will benefit from easy global financial conditions as well as increased foreign direct

investment following broad structural reforms delivered through 2020, according to the strategists.

Goldman Sachs strategists have also upgraded Indian stocks to overweight, with the market seen as the most sensitive to vaccine optimism. The firm had cut their recommendation to market weight in April amid a nationwide shutdown and

rising infections.

"The investment case for India has improved now," a team including Timothy Moe wrote in a note last week. "We expect a 'catch up' laggard rally given the positive news flow on the vaccine front, which could spur a faster than expected recovery"

Goldman forecasts real economic growth to bounce back strongly over the next two years, fuelling a corporate profits rebound of 27 per cent in 2021 that's ahead of its projected 23 per cent increase for the MSCI Asia Pacific ex-Japan Index.

The team expects the NSE Nifty 50 Index to hit 14,100 by the end of next year, implying about 10 per cent upside from last week's close.

Looking further ahead, JPMorgan Asset Management projects strong long-term average annualised returns for Indian stocks of 8.9 per cent over the next 10-to-15 years.

"We see broad potential in India from a macro perspective," said Sylvia Sheng, global strategist with the firm's multi-asset solutions team in a press briefing last week. Bullish factors include population growth as well as room for productivity to grow, she said.

—Bloomberg

Textile industry finds PLI criteria tough to meet

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 17

The textile industry feels that the incremental growth proposed under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme is difficult to achieve.

The PLI scheme for man-made fibre products and technical textiles has set high eligibility criteria in terms of turnover growth for the units.

As per the scheme outlined for the sector, firms with a minimum turnover between Rs 100 crore and Rs 500 crore will have to increase the turnover by 50 per cent every year for five years. A company with a turnover of Rs 300 crore will have to make incremental revenue of Rs 150 crore in the first year in order to receive 9 per cent of Rs 14 crore incentive. In the second year, the incentive will be 8 per cent of the incremental revenue of Rs 224 crore, or Rs 24 crore.

While the incremental turnover growth would remain 50 per cent in subsequent years, the incentive will be 7 per cent in the third year, 6 per cent in the fourth year and five



per cent in the fifth year.

For companies with a turnover above Rs 500 crore, the incremental growth expected is 50 per cent for the first year and the incentive will be 7 per cent of the incremental turnover. In the subsequent years, the incremental turnover growth expected from the company is 25 per cent. However, the incentive will be 6 per cent, 5 per cent, 4 per cent and three per cent in the subsequent years.

In order to receive the additional incentive for greenfield projects with a minimum investment of Rs 500 crore, the company will have to achieve a turnover of Rs 1,500 crore in the first year and 25 per cent in the subsequent years. In the first year, it

will receive an incentive of 11 per cent and it will come down to 10 per cent, 9 per cent, 8 per cent and 7 per cent in the subsequent years.

"I don't think the incremental growth target is achievable, at least for the next two to three years. The export market has been stagnating and the domestic sales too are not improving. Further, the pandemic has hit both domestic and export markets. The stimulus packages have largely skewed towards providing funding. But that will not improve the demand situation. Without an assurance on return on investment, companies will hesitate to invest," said D. K. Nair, an industry veteran.

Sidharth Rajagopal, executive director of Texprocil, hopes that the government will tweak the eligibility criteria. "There is a challenge. It is a tall task to achieve the targets considering that the demand is sluggish, retail is not doing well, the clientele is price-conscious and earnings are going down. We hope that the government will tweak the criteria."

CROP | INSURANCE

Agri ministry seeks DGCA nod for aerial survey of rice fields

It's a bird, It's a plane, It's govt drone

LAXMI DEVI NEW DELHI, NOV. 17

The agriculture ministry has sought civil aviation regulator DGCA's nod for allowing shortlisted private agencies operate drones to capture images of rice fields in 100 districts to assess crop yields at gram panchayat level under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), a senior government official said.

This is the second year the ministry has hired private agencies for a pilot study of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) based remote sensing data col-

lection in agricultural areas of 100 districts for assessing gram panchayat level under the PMFBY. "Since harvesting in selected 100 rice growing districts is in full swing currently and will be completed shortly as per the crop season, we have requested the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to give approval for flying drones over selected regions," the official said.

A letter to the effect has been sent to the DGCA seeking permission for agencies such as Amnux, Agrotech, RMSI Pvt Ltd and Weather Risk Management Services



Private Ltd to operate drones for two months till December 31, he said.

The official mentioned that the drone-based images are one of the important inputs in the

models for crop yield estimation and validation. The shortlisted agencies have already started the study in their assigned regions as per the time schedule.

The drone-based images will be captured in 10 states—Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.

On benefits of using drones for the PMFBY, the official said crop damage valuations have traditionally been difficult to make as it is carried out manually after an insurable

event such as floods, drought or pest infestation.

However, the remote sensing data captured through drones will help get the accurate information on crop conditions and losses to farmers, and shorten timelines for crop insurance claims, he explained.

"After the success of pilot studies, it will be scaled up," the official added.

As per the official data, about 241.7 lakh hectare farm land has been insured in the 2020 kharif season.

—PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Olympian hurdler Jagmohan dead

**Patiala:** Olympian hurdler and multi-faceted sports personality Jagmohan Singh, who introduced scientific fitness training methods in athletics and other sports during his long stint at the NIS-Patiala, died of heart attack here on Tuesday.

He was 88. Jagmohan, who had also served as joint director general of Sports Authority of India, represented the country in 110m hurdles in the 1960 Rome Olympics. He was the national champion in this event from 1958 to 1960. He also had held national records in 110m hurdles and decathlon.

Not only he was a top athlete of his time, Jagmohan had served Indian sport as teacher, coach, administrator and physical trainer. After completing his B.Sc. degree, Jagmohan served in Punjab Police for nearly 10 years before joining NIS Patiala as a teacher in 1962. — PTI

## Athletes should be vaccinated: Bach

**Tokyo:** IOC president Thomas Bach has said during this week's trip to Tokyo that he is encouraging all Olympic participants and fans to be vaccinated if one becomes available if they are going to attend next year's Tokyo Olympics.

Bach says a reasonable number of fans should be able to attend the venues vaccine or no vaccine. And he said confidently that the postponed Olympics will open on July 23.

We want to convince as many foreign participants as possible to accept a vaccine, he said repeatedly on Monday, his first of two days in Tokyo lining up support for the Games and holding news conferences. Japan has controlled the virus comparatively well, with about 1,900 deaths attributed to Covid-19 in a country of about 125 million. — AP

## Suarez, Munoz are Covid positive

**Uruguay:** Luis Suarez and goalkeeper Rodrigo Munoz have tested positive for the coronavirus, the Uruguayan Football Association said.

They and national team staffer Matias Faral, also infected, will miss Uruguay's home match against Brazil on Tuesday in South American World Cup qualifying.

Besides missing Suarez and Munnoz, Uruguay are already without goalkeeper Martin Silva, defenders Sebastian Coates and Matias Vina, midfielder Federico Valverde, and striker Maxi Gomez for the match against Brazil. Suarez will miss not only the Brazil game, but also Saturday's Spanish league match between Atletico Madrid and his former club Barcelona. — AP

## Honda ready for year-end race

**Portimao, Portugal:** The Repsol Honda Team prepare for the final race of the unprecedented 2020 MotoGP World Championship as the series returns to Portugal.

126 days after the first race of the 2020 MotoGP season in Jerez, the curtain is set to come down. The impressive Algarve International Circuit will play host to the last dance of the year, many of the riders having sampled the circuit at a brief test on road bikes but few having raced there before. Alex Marquez arrives at the circuit looking to end the year on a high after a bruising weekend in Valencia.

The days between races have afforded the MotoGP rookie a chance to rest and recover after his 23.6g crash on Saturday and he is ready to face the new challenge of the Portimao circuit.

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Big Bash League:** Adelaide Strikers vs Melbourne Renegades from 9 am; Sydney Thunder vs Sydney Sixers from 1.35 pm on Sony Six

## TENNIS

**ATP Finals:** Matches from 7.30 pm and 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Six, HD

## WWE

**NXT:** Bouts from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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## Covid scare in Oz

## Aussie players airlifted to NSW in attempt to save series

**Sydney, Nov. 17:** Cricket Australia on Tuesday airlifted players, including Test skipper Tim Paine and star batsman Marnus Labuschagne, to New South Wales from Adelaide in an attempt to save the series against India as a coronavirus outbreak in South Australia threatened the upcoming summer.

As Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania closed their borders to South Australia on Monday, the country's cricket board brought players from Australia's white-ball, Test match and Australia A squads into Sydney from Adelaide to ensure that the upcoming fixtures of the \$300 million season remain unaffected.

"CA has taken a proactive approach and mobilised a number of people across the country over the past 24 hours to shore up our men's domestic and international schedules," CA's interim chief executive Nick Hockley was quoted as saying by *ESPNCricinfo*.

"I would like to thank the players and staff for their understanding regarding the changes to their travel schedules and for their commitment to ensuring the summer of cricket is a huge success," he said.

Besides Paine and Labuschagne, the list of players relocated include their colleagues Matthew Wade, Travis Head and Cameron Green among others.

Despite the spike in Covid cases and developments related to it, CA maintained that the Adelaide Oval will host the first Test of the summer against India from December 17.

Hockley added, "I would also like to thank the various leadership groups across Australian cricket for coming together over the past 48 hours and taking quick, decisive action-made possible by thorough, cross-department contingency planning."

Earlier, CA vowed that all possible measures would be explored to ensure that the series goes ahead as planned. — PTI

## Pucovski confident of making Test debut

**Sydney, Nov. 17:** Fast-rising Australian batsman Will Pucovski feels he has "earned the right" to be in the red-ball squad for the series against India and is better prepared to make his Test debut compared to a couple of seasons ago.

Pucovski, who was named in a 17-member extended Australian Test squad for the four-match series against India, is coming off back-to-back double hundreds in the Sheffield Shield.

Despite missing the opening two rounds of the competition, he has scored 495 runs so far this season in three innings and is currently the tournament's highest run-scorer. "This time it feels like I've earned the right to be here, and I'm pretty pumped to take the challenge on of playing India if I do get the



Indian cricketers Cheteshwar Pujara (left) and Deepak Chahar at a training session in Sydney.

## Virat &amp; Co. undergo Test simulation

**Sydney, Nov. 17:** The limited-overs competition awaits them first but Indian players, led by captain Virat Kohli, seemed focussed on next month's Tests against Australia as they practised in simulated long-format match conditions complete with pacers using red and pink balls here on Tuesday.

All the top batsmen and bowlers, who are in all the three squads, were seen taking part in the practice session. The likes of senior pacer Mohammed Shami and youngster Mohammad Siraj were seen bowling to Kohli in a video posted on Twitter by the captain himself.

"Love Test cricket sessions," the tweet from Kohli read. The star batsman will feature in just the opening day-night Test, starting December 17 in Adelaide, before flying back to India for the birth of his first child.

The video showed the players using the centre strip of the ground with proper Test match field and a batsman at the non-striker's end, which is a deviation from traditional net sessions.

Given that the players were kept busy by the IPL for the last two months, the white-ball training has taken a back-seat.

Opener K.L. Rahul facing the pink ball was an indicator that he is in line to be picked for the first Test. In another video, posted by the BCCI, Shami was seen bowling in tandem with youngster Siraj. Shami, who took 20 wickets from 14 matches for Kings XI Punjab, is a part of all the three squads. India will rely heavily on him during the four-match Test series starting with the day-night pink ball game in Adelaide.

Siraj, who is only in the Test squad, followed his senior team-mate and was seen sending down a few deliveries as other senior players watched him bowl. The 26-year-old, who has played one ODI and three T20Is, took 11 wickets from nine matches for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the recent IPL. "The master and his apprentice. When @MdShami11 and Siraj bowled in tandem at #TeamIndia's nets. Fast and accurate!," the BCCI tweet read. — PTI

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## ATP | FINALS

## Medvedev masters Zverev on Day 2

**London, Nov. 17:** Daniil Medvedev pulled off an underarm serve as he outlasted Alexander Zverev and joined Novak Djokovic as a winner at the ATP Finals on Day Two. Medvedev prevailed 6-3, 6-4 in an empty O2 Arena on Monday.

Djokovic and Medvedev meet on Wednesday to secure the group lead.

Medvedev led 4-3, 30-30 in the second set when he surprised Zverev with a quick underarm serve. It brought the German to the net and he lost the point when his backhand block volley flew long.

"My wide serve was not working as well as I would like and he was returning good. I see that he was five meters behind the baseline and I have the ball close to my racket, so I thought, 'Go for it,'" Medvedev said.

It actually worked. It's also smart.

Two games later, he served a love game to earn his first win at the ATP Finals in his fourth match going back to last year.

Medvedev went 0-3 in his first Finals, including a loss to Zverev which he avenged after an attritional opening set.

Zverev, the 2018 champion, earned a break in the first game but gave it straight back with three

● **Medvedev prevailed 6-3, 6-4 in an empty O2 Arena. He will now meet Novak Djokovic to secure the group lead.**

double faults. Another double fault by Zverev in the sixth game gave Medvedev a 4-2 lead, and the Russian finished the set with his first ace.

A weak forehand into the net cost Zverev the decisive break at 3-3 in the second.

Medvedev held with the underarm serve, and he beat Zverev again eight days after winning their Paris Masters final.

The top-ranked Djokovic smothered Schwartzman after conceding an early break and, despite no fans inside the 20,000-capacity O2 Arena, he gestured to each section as if to say thanks. "Why I celebrated? Because that's my celebration and that's also my gratitude to the court and to this opportunity to be able to compete," the Serb said.

"Even though there was no crowd in the stands, I know that there was a lot of people watching it on TV, so that was me sharing that emotion with them," Djokovic added. — AP



Russia's Daniil Medvedev returns to Alexander Zverev of Germany during their singles match at the ATP World Finals tennis tournament at the O2 Arena in London on Monday. Medvedev won 6-3, 6-4. — AP

## PARGAT, GURBUX ARE IN MASTERS PANELS

**New Delhi, Nov. 17:** Former captain Pargat Singh, Mir Ranjan Negi and Gurbux Singh have been included in the 'Masters Committees' constituted by Hockey India's state member units to promote and develop masters hockey in the country, the national federation said on Tuesday.

The initiative will provide opportunities for all age groups (both male and female) to continue their passion for hockey and remain active in the sport irrespective of any age barrier, the HI said in a release.

In March, HI had joined 38 other national associations from around the world as a member of the World Masters Hockey (WMH), which is the sole

masters entity recognised by the International Hockey Federation (FIH) and is responsible for organising international masters hockey globally.

To further carry out responsibilities at the state level, HI urged all the state member units to form working committees comprising of former national and international hockey players to lead the state level activity.

The committee's first responsibility will be to ensure all the masters athletes of various age categories are registered on the Hockey India member units portal.

The Masters Committee will be overseeing all matters related to these masters matches and tournaments at the national level in India. — PTI

## Man held for issuing a death threat to Shakib

**Dhaka, Nov. 17:** Bangladesh police on Tuesday arrested a man who allegedly issued death threats to cricket all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan for inaugurating a Kali puja pandal in Kolkata, even as the cricketer issued an apology and said he only joined the function briefly.

A joint team of the elite anti-crime Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and police arrested 28-year-old Mohsin Talukdar from south-eastern Sunamganj district after 24 hours of a massive manhunt.

"He is now in our custody awaiting subsequent legal procedures," a police officer familiar with the development



Shakib Al Hasan

said. After the cricketer's picture at the programme in Kolkata's Amra Sobai Club went viral, Talukdar went live on Facebook on Sunday night carrying a large machete in his hand and threatened to kill Shakib, saying he hurt his religious sentiments by inaugurating the Puja

event in the West Bengal's capital city. By early morning, Talukdar, however, withdrew the threat and apologised in another live video on social media and then went into hiding. He was later traced in neighbouring Sunamganj district.

The 33-year-old cricketer in a post on Facebook denied inaugurating the puja pandal. He said it was inaugurated by Kolkata mayor Firhad Hakim.

"Media, social media everywhere it was flooded that I went to Kolkata to inaugurate a puja ceremony which actually was not the reason behind my visit and I did not inaugurate puja. — PTI

some resources to support my family," Limardo said in a short break between food deliveries last week.

The 35-year-old athlete responds to orders that ping on his phone up to 12 times a day.

On his phone he also has photos of himself in competition and on top of the Olympic podium. He is training with his mind set on winning more Olympic medals in Tokyo and beyond for himself and for Venezuela.

"I don't want to leave the sport because I still have a dream,"

Limardo said. With a mask covering his face these days, fans of fencing have little chance of recognizing the Olympic gold medalist known for his modesty.

But some know about him and ask for selfies and take the opportunity to chat with the native of Ciudad Bolivar, who speaks perfect Polish.

Limardo moved to Poland, which has a long tradition in fencing, some 20 years ago as a teen to train on the p e, the heaviest of modern fencing weapons.

## Olympic champ turns delivery rider

**Lodz (Poland), Nov. 17:** Back home in Venezuela, Ruben Limardo Gascon is hailed as a national hero for winning a gold medal in fencing at the 2012 London Olympics.

In Poland, where he has lived for years, he's taken up delivering food for Uber Eats to support his family as he trains for the Olympics in Tokyo next summer.

Every day after intensive training, he jumps on his bike and with a green thermal bag on his back he crisscrosses the city of Lodz, where he lives with his wife and two children, delivering food to people's doorsteps.

With the global economic situation precarious amid the coronavirus pandemic and little chance for sponsorship, Limardo is grateful to have a job, particularly one that leaves him time for sports practice.

"There is no sponsorship now because there is no competi-

tion, but I still have to generate



**There is no sponsorship now because there is no competition, but I still have to generate some resources to support my family. I don't want to leave the sport because I still have a dream.**

— RUBEN LIMARDO GASCON  
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He has also won gold in individual epee at the 2007 Pan American Games and at the 2006 and 2008 championships in Poland.

His gold medal from London is the second Olympic win ever for a Venezuelan, making him a celebrity in his native land.

He competed in the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in the individual and team p e competitions, but failed to secure any medals.

From his home in central Poland, he continues to root for Venezuela, which has seen problems including political discontent exacerbated by hyperinflation and shortages of food and medicine.

He says he hopes that things will get sorted out soon in Venezuela. In the meantime, he seeks to represent his country with pride.

"Wherever I go, I'll lift the flag 100%, with a lot of pride, with a lot of ardour," Limardo said. — AP

