



HC grants bail to man held in riots case

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has granted bail to a man, arrested in connection with alleged rioting and theft during the north-east Delhi riots, noting that there were no call detail records (CDR) to establish that he was at the site on the particular day.

Justice Suresh Kumar Kait granted bail to Saiyad Iftikhar keeping in view that he has been in judicial custody since he was arrested by the Delhi police on April 11.

The High Court directed Mr. Iftikhar not to directly or indirectly influence any witness or tamper with the evidence.

The police had arrested Mr. Iftikhar for the alleged offences of rioting, theft and causing mischief by fire or explosive substance with an intent to destroy a house. The case was lodged against him at Bhajanpura police station.

**Poor eyesight**  
The court noted in its order that it was not in dispute that Mr. Iftikhar's eyesight is weak, having a power of minus 3.75, and when he was arrested he was wearing spectacles.

The petitioner was arrested on the basis of CCTV footage along with co-accused Ali Hasan but the admitted fact is that in the CCTV footage, Mr. Iftikhar is not wearing spectacles.

"The alleged incident is dated February 24. It cannot be believed that a person having such poor eyesight would have clear vision at night without spectacles. Moreover, CDR is not on record, whereby it could have been established that the petitioner was at the site," the court said in its order.

## Court rejects bail plea of Delhi riots accused

'He may threaten witnesses if released'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has dismissed the bail application of a man who was arrested for his alleged involvement in rioting and vandalising a place of worship and burning houses of a particular community during the north-east Delhi riots in February.

Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav noted that in both the cases, the applicant, Johny Singh, has not only been categorically identified by the complainants, but he has also been categorically identified by other eyewitnesses.

The court also remarked that public witnesses in the case are residents of the same locality and "if released on bail at this stage, the possibility of applicant threatening or intimidating them cannot be ruled out".

### Two separate FIRs

"I do not find it to be a fit case for grant of bail to the applicant in both the aforementioned matters," the court said. Mr. Singh is facing two different FIRs in connection



Security forces flag march in violence-hit north-east Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO

with the riots. In the first case registered at Khajuri Khas police station, he is accused of vandalising, robbery and burning of houses.

In the other FIR, he is also named amongst the persons involved in destruction of 'Fatima Masjid'.

The counsel representing Mr. Singh said his client has been falsely implicated in both cases and that there is no CCTV footage to back the allegations. He contended that Mr. Singh was a victim and his house was severely damaged during the riots.

The special public prosecutor said that videos showing the burning of 'Fatima Masjid' have been received and are being analysed.

## Surface winds, dip in farm fires help improve Delhi's air quality

AQI likely to marginally deteriorate and move into 'very poor' category tomorrow

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The air quality of Delhi improved to 'poor' category on Monday, from 'severe' category a day earlier, due to stronger surface winds and less effect in Delhi of stubble burning in neighbouring States. The air quality of Gurugram and Noida also improved to the "poor" category, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

### Anti-pollution drive

Earlier in the day, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia along with Environment Minister Gopal Rai launched the second phase of the 'Red light on, Gaadi off' campaign.

Addressing reporters during the event, Mr. Sisodia said: "People flouting ban on bursting firecrackers were negligible in Delhi, but in the neighbouring States there were massive bursting of firecrackers."

The second phase of the campaign will run from No-



Clear sky over Rajghat thermal power station on Monday as the air quality improved due to rain in Delhi. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

vember 16 to November 30.

"According to our survey, nearly 1 lakh people per day switched off their engines and participated in the red light campaign.

Looking at the situation and the massive participation of the people, the Delhi government is launching the second

phase of this campaign from today," Mr. Rai said.

"The Air Quality Index (AQI) is likely to improve and 'poor' category is forecast for Tuesday. AQI is forecast to marginally deteriorate and stay in the 'very poor' category on November 18 and 19," said govern-

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi 221	Gurugram 246		
Ghaziabad 207	Faridabad 186		
Noida 243	Greater Noida 226		
■ Good 0-50	■ Satisfactory 51-100	■ Moderate 101-200	
■ Poor 201-300	■ Very Poor 301-400	■ Severe >400	
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours)   Source: CPCB			

ment-run monitoring agency SAFAR.

The 24-hour average AQI of Delhi was 221 on Monday, and the values for Gurugram and Noida were 246 and 243, respectively.

### Satellite imagery

The number of stubble fires in Haryana, Punjab, and neighbouring border regions of Delhi was 282, but this figure could be an underestimate due to the inability of satellites to identify spots under cloudy conditions, SAFAR said.

The contribution of stubble burning in neighbouring States to PM2.5 level in Delhi was estimated to be 1% on Monday.

Temperature likely to fall to single digits

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The western disturbance that helped blow away pollutants a day after Deepavali did not bring any further rain to the Capital on Monday but managed to bring down the day temperature and raise the minimum temperature that has been below normal for several days.

Due to an overcast sky, the maximum temperature in the city was 25.8°C, two degrees below normal. The minimum temperature settled at 16°C, two notches above normal. The minimum temperature this year has been below normal due to a lack of cloud cover, the Meteorological Department has said.

However, relief from the cold night temperature is only temporary as the minimum temperature is expected to fall to single digits by November 19 as withdrawal of the western disturbance is likely to cause a change in wind direction, which will bring cold winds from the hills.

Clear sky, shallow fog is forecast for Tuesday.

Two stab man to death after being told not to drink liquor

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 42-year-old man was stabbed to death allegedly by two men after the former scolded them for eating and drinking near his residence in Jahangirpuri, the police said on Monday.

The deceased, identified as Rajesh, ran an eatery near his residence.

According to the police, the incident took place late Sunday after a quarrel broke out between Rajesh and two other men when he scolded them for eating and consuming alcohol near his residence.

The quarrel escalated and one of them took out a knife and stabbed Rajesh before fleeing the spot.

The injured Rajesh was then rushed to Babu Jagivan Ram Memorial Hospital where he died during the course of treatment, a senior police officer said.

The officer said that the victim and the accused duo had quarrelled before over the same matter but despite being warned by Rajesh, the two men continued their activities.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (North-West) Vijayanta Arya said, "A case was registered under the Indian Penal Code and CCTV footage at the crime scene was examined. Two accused Rajkumar (22) and Deepak (23) have been arrested in connection with the incident."

### IN BRIEF

**Man found dead, note names police officer**

NEW DELHI  
A 46-year-old man was found dead at his residence in South Delhi's Defence Colony on Friday. A note has been recovered in which he had blamed a police officer for taking the step. DCP (South) Atul Thakur said that the contents of the note are being verified. A senior officer said that inquest proceedings have been initiated and further probe is under way.

**Bail denied to Chinese woman in espionage case**

NEW DELHI  
A Delhi court has denied bail to a Chinese woman arrested in an espionage case, involving freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma, saying she may flee the country. The police had claimed that Mr. Sharma, currently in judicial custody, was allegedly passing on sensitive information about India's border strategy, Army's deployment and procurement, and foreign policy to Chinese intelligence agencies. PTI

## DU defers special list for UG courses

'Many university officials have been affected by COVID-19'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Delhi University has postponed the admission process for a few categories until further notice as several officials have been affected by COVID-19.

Spot admissions to entrance-based courses and the special cut-off list are among the categories that have been delayed.

In a statement, DU Registrar Vikas Gupta said: "Many of the university departments and officials have

been affected by COVID-19. Due to this, spot admission to UG entrance-based courses and special cut-off for UG merit-based courses have been deferred till further notice."

### 'Vacant seats on Nov. 18'

"However, as announced earlier, the University of Delhi shall display the course-wise and category-wise vacant seats in each college on November 18," Mr. Gupta said.

Classes for undergradu-

ate courses are set to begin from November 18.

The university, which began the admission process on October 10 with the announcement of the first cut-off list, was scheduled to announce a special list depending on the number of vacant seats.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the admission process has been moved completely online and the university has released five cut-off lists for merit-based undergraduate courses.

## JNU begins phased entry of students

PhD scholars in particular to be allowed for thesis work

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on Monday started welcoming back its final-year PhD research scholars who were residing in the hostels before the lockdown as part of its phased reopening process.

### Declaration form

The entry has been allowed for those students in particular who need to access laboratories and submit



Students on the JNU campus. ■ FILE PHOTO

their PhD thesis on or before December 31 or June 30, the university said.

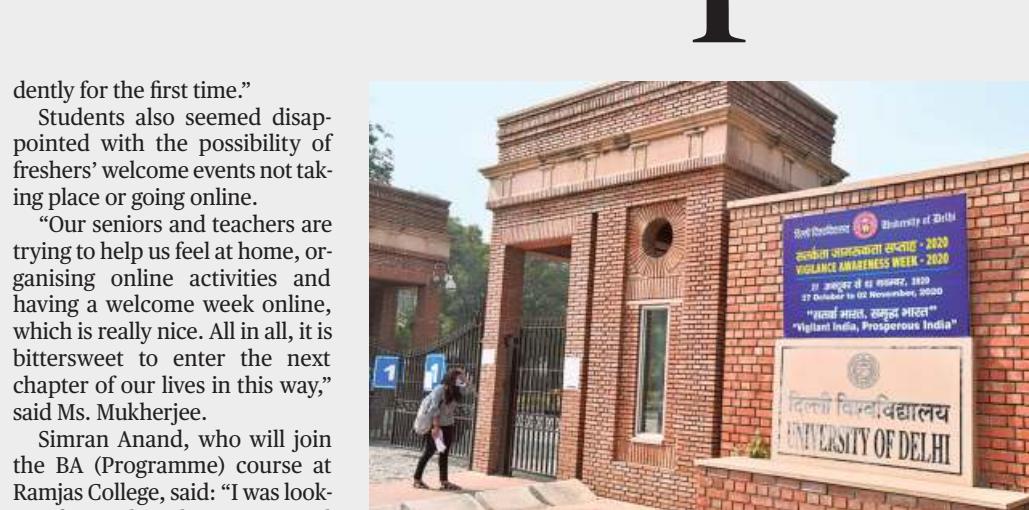
Dean of Students Sudheer Pratap Singh, said that upon arrival, the students will need to fill up and submit a self-declaration form available with the JNU security and get a pass issued for their entry into the closed campus.

### No gathering

The university said that no social gathering will be allowed in the hostel and all social distancing norms must be followed.



## All quiet on campus



Clockwise from top: A deserted Vishwavidyalaya metro station; St. Stephen's College; Khalsa College; and Delhi University campus. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

dently for the first time."

Students also seemed disappointed with the possibility of freshers' welcome events not taking place or going online.

"Our seniors and teachers are trying to help us feel at home, organising online activities and having a welcome week online, which is really nice. All in all, it is bittersweet to enter the next chapter of our lives in this way," said Ms. Mukherjee.

Simran Anand, who will join the BA (Programme) course at Jamia Millia Islamia, said: "I was looking forward to having a good campus life in DU. We have been told that there is a possibility that a freshers' event may be held online but we do not know what will materialise."

Students also rued missing out on youth festivals and joining various cultural societies that colleges in DU offer.

Aahuti Singh, a resident of Chandigarh who has taken ad-

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Timings DELHI		
TUESDAY, NOV. 17	RISE 06:46	SET 17:27
	RISE 08:55	SET 19:29
WEDNESDAY, NOV. 18	RISE 06:46	SET 17:27
	RISE 10:01	SET 20:28
THURSDAY, NOV. 19	RISE 06:47	SET 17:27
	RISE 11:00	SET 21:30

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	26	16
Safdarjung	26	16
Palam	25	17

**Delhi Palam Today**  
27°C Cool morning with mist shallow fog. Comfortable sunny day. Deterioration of pollution level.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
27°C Cool hazy morning with light winds. Pollution condition would turn severe.

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## IN BRIEF

**Man arrested for 'raping' 10-year-old girl in Narela**

NEW DELHI  
A 10-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 25-year-old man in Outer North Delhi's Narela, a day after Deepavali on Sunday. The accused has been arrested, the police said.

**BJP hails Amit Shah as Delhi's sarkatmochak**

NEW DELHI  
Terming Home Minister Amit Shah as Delhi's sarkatmochak (troubleshooter), the BJP opposition on Monday said the senior leader was working day and night to keep Delhiites safe while Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was busy "serving corona to Delhiites".

## Number of hotspots in Delhi likely to rise

There are over 4K containment zones

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The total number of containment zones in the city is close to breaching the 10,000-mark amid the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in the Capital. The number is expected to rise rapidly over the coming days due to a significant increase in testing.

According to Revenue Department records, till November 15, as many as 9,333 containment zones have been delineated in Delhi since the pandemic began. As many as 4,903 such zones have been decontaminated, scaling down procedures are under way at 1,603 while 2,827 such areas fall under the 'active category', leaving as many as 4,430 containment zones across the city.

Out of the 11 districts in Delhi, the South-West, South, West and South-East

districts account for the maximum number of containment zones with 740, 700, 568 and 505 such areas in their respective jurisdiction – or 2,513 zones in total.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, following a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday, announced that testing for COVID would be increased from around 60,000 to 1.25-2 lakh. Though it has acknowledged that the city is witnessing a third wave of infections, the Delhi government said that both daily cases as well as number of deaths are expected to recede over the coming days.

Official records state that 8,999 of the total zones were created after June 21 when the government acknowledged that the city was in the grips of a second wave of COVID infections.

## No bail for yoga teacher accused of harassment

More complaints filed against him

### STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has rejected the anticipatory bail plea of a yoga teacher, who is facing charges of sexually harassing a minor girl, noting that there was at least three complaints against him where women have made allegations of abusive and inappropriate conduct.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh also took into account the fact that investigation has not yet concluded and the man "does have the propensity to influence the investigation".

The case relates to the complaint of a 17-year-old girl who had alleged that on May 14, while she was studying in her house, Swami Ganeshanand had clicked four to five photographs of her and made obscene gestures towards her.

Mr. Ganeshanand claimed that the complaint registered against him was false.

However, the High Court was informed that there are two other FIRs which have been registered against him by other women, residing in the same neighbourhood.

## Centre forms 10 teams to inspect private hospitals

Paramilitary doctors, paramedics heading to the Capital

### STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Centre has constituted 10 multidisciplinary teams to inspect about 114 private hospitals that are treating COVID-19 patients in the national capital and check compliance with various directions issued by it and the Delhi government to contain the spread of the virus.

A Union Home Ministry order on Monday said the teams will start their visits immediately and submit reports within two days.

The teams were set up as per decisions taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday.

Meanwhile, at least 75 doctors and 250 paramedics from the paramilitary forces are on their way to Delhi,



A woman being tested for COVID-19. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

without ventilators were full, as per government data.

GTB Hospital and Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital did not have any ICU beds available. Of the total 16,677 beds available for COVID-19 treatment, 53.6% were occupied. There were also complaints of people finding it difficult to find COVID-19 beds in private hospitals.

With lesser number of tests, Delhi reported 3,797 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the tally to 4,89,202 on Monday. The death toll has reached 7,713 with 99 more fatalities.

Of the total cases, 4,41,361 people have recovered and there are 40,128 active cases.

The positivity rate was 12.3% and the overall positivity rate till now is 8.9%.

(With PTI inputs)

## A year after Anaj Mandi fire, fourth accused held

### STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Nearly a year after a massive fire at a four-story building in north Delhi's Anaj Mandi claimed the lives of 45 people, the fourth accused in the case has been arrested, the police said on Monday.

The building's owner Rehan, manager Furkaan and another man named Mohammad Suhail were arrested earlier.

The fourth accused, Mohammad Imraan, who is Rehan's brother and partly owns the building, was nabbed on Saturday.

Mr. Imraan had been absconding since the day of the incident and was carry-

ing a reward of ₹50,000.

Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime) B.K. Singh said, "On Saturday, our team received information that Mr. Imraan would be coming to Delhi to attend a family function. A trap was laid and he was apprehended in Azadpur."

He has been taken into five days police remand.

On December 8 last year, a fire had ripped through the building housing illegal manufacturing units. The blaze claimed 45 lives, including nine minors. Almost all the deceased were migrant labourers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

## 'Be cautious while probing rape cases'

### STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

In an order issued by the Legal Cell of Delhi Police, all investigating officers (IO) have been asked to be cautious while investigating cases of sexual offences in the wake of instances of 'honey trapping'.

The order, signed by Deputy Commissioner of Police (Legal Cell) Rajesh Deo, stated that cases have emerged in which a complainant reported rape against one or more persons and during probe it emerged that it was a case of 'honey trapping'.

1,649 beds for isolation.

The total reserved ICU beds and ventilators are 312 and 139, respectively. Of these, 1,001 isolation beds, 119 ICU beds and 63 ventilators are unoccupied.

Chief Medical Officer (Gurugram) Virender Yadav said the new order will increase beds under general category to about 2,500 and ICU beds/ventilators to 700. "Around 5% of patients need hospitalisation and 2% need critical care," said Mr. Yadav.

As per the latest health bulletin, Gurugram has 5,749 active cases and 244 people have died so far.

## Nikita's murder was premeditated: police

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT FARIDABAD

The prime accused in the Nikita murder case had done a reccie of the victim's house and college on at least four occasions before he shot her outside Aggarwal College on October 26, according to the chargesheet submitted by Faridabad Police.

"The mobile location of the accused, Tausif, shows he was present near Nikita's house on October 10. It also show that he was present

near her house and college on October 18, 22 and 24. It proves the murder was premeditated and preplanned," said the complainant's lawyer Adal Singh Rawat, quoting the chargesheet.

The 700-page chargesheet has listed 64 witnesses, including 10 private witnesses and two dozen policemen.

Sessions Judge Deepak Gupta has already directed that the hearing in the case should be conducted on a day-to-day basis.

### ARMY COLLEGE OF DENTAL SCIENCES (ACDS)

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### CORRIGENDUM

### POST OF REGISTRAR & HEAD OF ADMINISTRATION

Published in 'The Hindu' and 'Times of India' on 07 Nov 2020

For "Applications with Bio-Data are invited from Retired Colonel for the post of Registrar & Head of Administration for ACDS.

Read "Applications with Bio-Data are invited from Retired Colonel/ Colonel (TS) with Med Cat SHAPE-1, for the post of Registrar & Head of Administration for ACDS.

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•JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543  
•NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP  
•LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

## 100th FOUNDATION DAY

### Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sri Amritsar

Bhog Sri Akhand Path Sahib at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib, Sri Amritsar. 17 November 2020 at 10:00 AM.

GURMAT SAMAGAM : 17 November 2020 From 10:30 to 2:30 PM

Venue : Gurdwara Sri Manji Sahib, Diwan Hall, Sri Amritsar.

All are cordially invited to participate enthusiastically in the First Centenary functions and take inspiration from the glorious history of this institution which came into existence after unparalleled sacrifices for the Democratic Gurdwara Management.

-Guru Panth De Das Bhai Gobind Singh Longowal President SGPC Members Issued by : Secretary, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sri Amritsar

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Sachin Tendulkar and other Super Writers pay tribute to 40 Superstars

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## Threat or treat

The final agreement of RCEP covers various issues that India had flagged

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was signed into existence on Sunday by 15 countries led by China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the 10-state ASEAN grouping, creating one of the world's largest trading blocs. Noticeable by its absence was India, which after seven years of protracted negotiations decided last November to exit the grouping. India had justified its decision as protecting its economy from burgeoning trade deficits with a majority of the 15 RCEP members and had cited the grouping's refusal to accede to its requests on safeguards as a deal breaker. Those reasons were on the face of it justifiable at the time and were welcomed by industry, trade and farmers' groups. However, 12 months down the road, India's opting out appears far more debatable in terms of its economic rationale. With global trade and the economy foundering on the shoals of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as new infections in Europe and the U.S. prompt fresh restrictions there, the pre-eminence of the east Asian and Pacific countries including China, South Korea, Vietnam, Australia and New Zealand serving as a bulwark in containing the pandemic and re-energising economic activity can hardly be understated. Add to this the heightened tariff uncertainty generated by the deadlocked Brexit negotiations between Britain and the E.U., and it becomes evident that India may have missed a vital opportunity.

Given that the RCEP members now account for about 30% of the global GDP and a third of the world's population, the signatory states were emphatic that the timing of the accord presents a unique opportunity to support their economic recovery, inclusive development and job creation even as it helps strengthen regional supply chains. Interestingly, among the ASEAN signatories are several relatively far smaller economies including Vietnam and the Philippines, which not only continue to have their share of disputes with Beijing but also suffer significant trade imbalances with Asia's largest economy. That these and other larger nations in the grouping have chosen to bury their geopolitical differences with China in order to prioritise what they collectively see as a mutually beneficial trading compact that would benefit their economies over the longer term is the clearest testament to economic realism trumping nationalist politics. Also, the summary of the final agreement shows that the pact does cover and attempt to address issues that India had flagged including rules of origin, trade in services, movement of persons and, crucially, remedies and safeguards. Acknowledging India's economic heft and value as a market, the RCEP members have not only left the door open should New Delhi reconsider its stance but have also waived a key 18-month cooling period for interested applicants. It would be in India's interest to dispassionately review its position and embrace openness rather than protectionism.

## For Bihar

Nitish Kumar must use the mandate to bring the State back on the development path

Nitish Kumar began another term as Chief Minister of Bihar on shaky footing but retaining considerable influence among his core support base. His party, the JD(U), has 31 seats fewer than the BJP in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Even with 74 MLAs among the total NDA tally of 125 in the 243-member Assembly, the BJP had to concede the post of the CM to Mr. Kumar – proof of his indispensability. His command over social groups critical to the alliance remains unimpaired for now, but the inversion of the BJP-JD(U) hierarchy has triggered a new churn that is set to reframe politics in Bihar. The near-death experience of the NDA in the recent election might temper the BJP's ambitions momentarily, but its plan to claim the pole position in Bihar will inevitably lead to tensions with its partner. By appointing two Deputy Chief Ministers, and displacing former DCM Sushil Modi who was seen as close to Mr. Kumar, the party has set the ball rolling for a more expansive role. The BJP has also kept a lion's share of ministerial berths and significant portfolios. Two other allies, the Vikashin Insaan Party (VIP) and Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular), have four members each, and either party could threaten the survival of the government. Both got a berth each.

Mr. Kumar's measured response to his party's showing is meaningful. While the changed reality of numbers is visible, the realignment that the BJP will seek remains unmapped. One discernible element of the BJP's plans is to chart its own routes to Mr. Kumar's social constituency. This, and issues in government, will require new terms of engagement between him and the BJP. Friction is inherent, but both parties can and should develop a proactive working relationship that optimally pulls in the force of both the Centre and the State governments to plan and execute a rigorous development agenda for Bihar. Repeated electoral defeats must also force the Opposition parties to relook at their mobilisation and organisational strategies. Their role in the opposition should have this larger vision. For the RJD, it is about redesigning its grassroots work to embrace a wider social constituency; for the Congress, the sole focus must be on building an organisational network that takes into account the State's peculiar social dynamics. In the four years to the next Parliament election, there is ample time for the NDA to advance a new governance mechanism and the Opposition to develop a fresh sense of purpose. The boycott of the swearing-in by the Opposition should have been avoided. Both sides must imbibe the realisation that their responsibilities in Bihar are particularly heavy, considering the State's daunting development challenges.

# The right lessons from Pulwama and Balakot

The events of February 2019 need to be extricated from the electoral straitjacket and boastful political utterances



SUSHANT SINGH

**T**he ghost of Pulwama and Balakot (picture) has been exorcised nearly 20 months after the twin events happened (2019). In Pakistan, former Speaker and Opposition MP, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, alleged in the Pakistani National Assembly last month that the PTI government, fearing an imminent missile strike from India, had capitulated and released the captured Indian fighter pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman. The allegation was denied by the Pakistan government and the all-powerful military, and even Mr. Sadiq partially backtracked within a day, but it brought the spotlight back on an incident where the two nuclear-armed neighbours were threatening a military escalation.

### Overtaken by politics

The revival of the focus on Pulwama and Balakot provides us with an opportunity for an honest appraisal of the incident. Unfortunately, this happened in the midst of the Bihar election campaign, and in a throwback to the parliamentary polls last year, an event of strategic importance was only seen through the narrow prism of its electoral utility for the ruling party. The events of February 2019 need to be extricated from the electoral straitjacket to draw the right lessons.

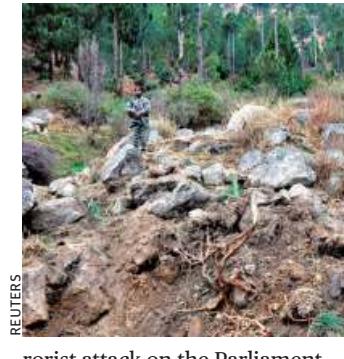
Mr. Sadiq was referring to a meeting held by Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi with parliamentary leaders of other political parties on February 27 last year, where he discussed the threat of an Indian missile attack that night. A day earlier, the Indian Air Force (IAF) had targeted a se-

minary at Balakot in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, avenging the suicide car bomb in Pulwama 12 days earlier that led to the death of 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel. On the morning of February 27, the Pakistan Air Force attempted its riposte in Jammu and Kashmir, and in the ensuing aerial combat, Wg. Cdr. Abhinandan was captured by the Pakistan military.

On February 28, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan announced in Parliament that he was releasing the Indian fighter pilot and sending him back home "as a peace gesture".

### Aspects about Pulwama

The full details of backroom happenings between the suicide car bombing of February 14 and Wg. Cdr. Abhinandan's return on March 1 are not publicly available but 20 months later, there is definitely greater clarity. Even though a video of the suicide bomber was released by the Jaish-e-Mohammad, there have been constant whispers about certain aspects of the Pulwama terror attack. Those questions have not been answered satisfactorily, even after the 13,800-page National Investigation Agency charge sheet was filed in August and a Pakistani Minister, Fawad Chaudhry, last month claimed, and immediately backtracked from his country's involvement in the suicide bombing. The responsibility for the intelligence failure, violation of standard operating procedures by security forces and the possible involvement of disgraced Jammu and Kashmir police officer, Davinder Singh, remain unexamined. Davinder Singh was posted in Pulwama from May 2017 to August 2018, and was caught transporting two absconding militants to Delhi in his private car earlier this January. He had earlier been named by Afzal Guru, who was hanged in 2013, as a key go-between in the 2001 ter-



REUTERS

rorist attack on the Parliament.

### The conduct of the forces

If there are some unanswered questions about Pulwama suicide bombing, the questions about the Balakot air strike have, more or less, been answered by foreign governments and international media. Those answers are unflattering to the professional image of the IAF: from actually hitting the designated targets to providing proof of the destruction, the IAF is seen to have lost the battle of the narrative to its Pakistani counterpart – not that a fumbling and bumbling Pakistan military was anywhere near perfect, making ridiculous claims. The performance of the IAF in aerial combat the next day, where it claims to have shot down a Pakistan Air Force F-16 fighter jet, has been received with scepticism in most western capitals. Wg. Cdr. Abhinandan's defiant behaviour in Pakistani custody deserved the praise that came his way, but the fact remains that the IAF came second best that morning, as it lost a fighter aircraft and the pilot ended in Pakistani custody.

That day, the IAF also shot down its own helicopter in friendly fire, close to Srinagar. It cast a shadow on the IAF's report card of those days, but what made it worse were the IAF's efforts to prevent any media reportage of the fratricide incident before the Lok Sabha elections were over. It was not just dishonest on the part of a

professionally respected force but a partisan act in support of one political party. In a healthy democracy, apolitical armed forces are supposed to follow the elected government's lawful orders but do not work to further the partisan aims of the ruling party – that would be more in tune with China, where the armed forces are loyal to the Communist Party and not the Chinese state.

Military veterans and nationalistic commentators, quick to take offence to any perceived slights on behalf of the uniformed, have conveniently ignored this grave misdemeanour of the IAF during an election campaign. Unless corrected, this would set a wrong precedent for the armed forces and its senior leadership. Two decades ago, the then Army Chief, General V.P. Malik, had lodged a strong complaint with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee during the Kargil war about the use of the images of three service chiefs on the Bharatiya Janata Party's election posters. While the crumbling of institutions like Parliament, the judiciary and the media in recent years has earned a lot of attention, scholars have been shy of making robust enquiries about the conduct of the armed forces, an institution even more critical to the health of Indian democracy.

### Claims, facts and the audience

Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat claimed on November 6 that the Balakot strike had sent a strong message that Pakistan no longer enjoys impunity of pushing terrorists into India under the nuclear bogey, and a new Indian template to deal with terror has injected uncertainty in Pakistan. It is a claim which does not hold against the facts on the ground this year, as senior Indian Army officers regularly claim that Pakistan is pushing militants into the Kashmir Valley and has hundreds of militants ready to be pushed across the Line

of Control (LoC) at launchpads. Neither the surgical strike of 2016 nor the Balakot air strike have infused deterrence or altered Pakistan's policies, whether in the Kashmiri hinterland or on the LoC, where Indian security forces personnel continue to lose their lives. However, the Balakot air strike was definitely a punitive move, a tactical act, which demonstrated India's willingness to cross the threshold of using air power against Pakistan, that too on its mainland. The target audience, as evident in hindsight, was largely domestic – the voters at the polling booth, who responded approvingly.

### Gravity of the crisis

The real focus from February 27 last year should be on the Indian threat and Pakistani counter-threat of firing missiles at each other, an escalatory move that could have taken the conflict into uncharted territory. That the situation was serious is recognised from the urgent interventions by the United States, the United Kingdom and others that night who pressed on both the governments to step back. Narendra Modi's election campaign speech about the incident, claiming that nuclear weapons were not kept for Diwali, points to the gravity of the crisis. That the two countries could de-escalate so quickly is a positive sign but the fact that any miscreant with a few kilos of explosive and an old car can bring these two nuclear weapon states to the brink of war should leave us worried. The current shenanigans in Pakistan's Parliament should warn us of those dangers and force us to think of ways to minimise them, instead of the usual dose of more bravado and boastful utterances from our political leadership.

Sushant Singh is a Senior Fellow with the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal

## Needed, a policy framework in step with technology

With the rapid pace of technology blurring boundaries, a holistic view of schemes is a must



SRIVATS RAM

**A**s technology has evolved in the latter part of the 20th century and the early part of the 21st century, the traditional boundaries between goods and services have blurred. By virtue of Moore's law, computing capabilities have surged faster than capabilities in traditional industries. These information-based technologies have been widely adopted across a broad range of industries and products that traditionally have not been perceived as electronic or software based.

Information is the new currency powering economies. The expansion of computing power has driven the pace of information gathering and analysis. The new currency drives processes and decision-making across a wide array of products and services, making them more efficient and value accretive for consumers.

### Data is a new currency

Let us look at a traditional good, the automobile. A modern automobile has 40% of its component value from electronic-based products and a modern electric vehicle

has close to 100 million lines of code, which is more than that used by a Boeing 787 or the Chrome browser. This is a paradigm shift as the amount of "value add" from intangible technology services as opposed to physical objects, even in traditional goods, is being transformed by information.

Even if you look at a conventional "metal-based" industrial product, information and electronics are becoming all-pervasive, ensuring that we set boundaries to control quality or the uptime of the equipment. There is increasing digitisation and electronification of industrial activities, products and services, influencing the evolving skill sets in industry.

This revolution is taking place across products, as information availability drives efficiency and creates value for customers by providing greater control over the product and its surrounding environment. And, this is what impels customers to value products that have utilised these evolving technologies.

### Working in silos

As governments have focused on improving the lives of people, they have looked at economic development and industry as catalysts to progress. To address the needs of various stakeholders, governments have tended to build specialised departments and de-

signed policies that govern those areas. However, over time, as each of these departments grew, they have tended to operate in silos. This has for most of the 20th century been reasonably successful in driving economic development in countries.

The recent developments in technology have, however, blurred standard boundaries that dictate policy framework in most governments. If you take India, industrial promotion policies look at encouraging capital formation from a manufacturing perspective. As technology is driving an increasing share of the value add coming from digitisation and data analytics in products and services across industry segments, there needs to be a way of encouraging capital formation by way of intangibles in traditionally tangible industries.

If you look at the automobile industry, policies are governed by the Heavy Industries and the Surface Transport Ministries, respectively. However, increasing electrification and digitisation of the

automobile are not covered by industrial policies that govern the Electronics and Information Technology Ministry.

Another example involves drones that could serve different sectors, including agriculture, and would require a lot of inter-departmental clearances outside of the Department of Agriculture. There is increasingly a need for inter-departmental cooperation and synergy not only in policy framework but also in deployment.

### Taking an aggregate view

This departmentalisation of policies is facing a challenge from technology that very often blurs the boundaries served by different policies. There is a need to have a holistic view of policies for economic development as technology is becoming a significant enabler in most industries. A change in policy framework regarding economic development that enables various ministries to work together is essential. A sufficiently empowered policy clearing cell could ensure a holistic view on policy across departments of government, at the State and the Centre.

In terms of attracting investments, policies have always been driven by subsidies and incentives but increasingly, in a competitive scenario, these are becoming hygiene factors. More significantly, a nourishing ecosystem for industry, including the hard infrastruc-

ture and softer areas such as education, skilling, technical institutions, laboratories, testing centres, etc., has to be cultivated. The creation of clusters of companies in adjacent but complementary areas could constitute such an ecosystem that encourages multi and cross-disciplinary learning and spur innovation and economic development.

There is also the larger issue of a shift of value between manufacturing and services as technology changes. The policy, by and large, promotes and gives incentives for manufacturing, whereas the share of intangibles, even in traditional manufacturing companies, whether it be software, research and development or even servicing of products, are not adequately covered in industrial policies. It is important to include these to encourage innovation and technological development.

In this evolving policy framework, it is important that there is close cooperation and alignment between the Centre and State to ensure effective implementation on the ground. Some of these thoughts could help us navigate through an ecosystem that is changing with technology.

Srivats Ram is Managing Director, Wheels India Ltd.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or initials.

### RCEP dynamics

The very fact that Japan and Australia, part of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue exercise, which includes India, signed the RCEP agreement shows that in international relations, permanent interests in trade and commerce score. India faces a Shakespearian dilemma. In a globalised environment, a give and take attitude would have been more sensible.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai

### Judicial review

Over the past few years, the government at the Centre has systematically chipped away at the foundations of India's major institutions and the guardians of its democracy. God forbid if the last bastion, the

Supreme Court of India, also falls (Editorial page, "Protect our Republic, my lords", November 16). It is also a fact that what has aided the acceleration of this destruction is the weakest political Opposition this country has seen in years. The number of criminals who have been elected this time to the Bihar Assembly is a grim reminder of how much India needs to evolve as a democracy. We may be the world's largest, but are arguably one of its weakest. The voice of the people has been muted like never before. The time has come for a strong Opposition to emerge and counter undemocratic moves of this government.

M. PREETHI,  
Bengaluru

It is painful that there is 'selective application' of fundamental principles. Invariably, as elaborated in the article, favourable treatment awaits the ones who are on the side of the government. It is worth recalling the words of the American judge, Irving R. Kaufman: "The Supreme Court's only arm[u]r is the cloak of public trust; it's a sole ammunition, the collective hopes of our society." A court reduced to playing second fiddle to the executive will sound the death knell for the Republic.

TONY AUGUSTINE,  
Bangalore

The writer has expressed concern about others who languish, citing the plight of activists in the news. But there are hundreds more

who have been forgotten. My lords may know that "70% of prisoners in India are undertrials" and that the overcrowded state of prisons has been documented. The fourth estate is key to the functioning of democracy, but is it performing its duties? In the case of the well-known TV anchor, did the judiciary act because he has created the image of being privileged?

VIJANAGIRI RAVI,  
Vegavaram, Godavari, Andhra Pradesh

The perception is that this important pillar in the framework of governance is weakening and is ceasing to be a check to a powerful executive. In India today, those who partake in unlawful activities and ought to be behind bars walk free while those who flag rights

violations are put behind the bars. It is distressing.

SUKUMARAN C.V.,  
Palakkad, Kerala

A court that is supreme is sure to know what cases are urgent for disposal. Senior advocates should stand by the top court on this count. If lawyers themselves find fault with the top court under the garb of citing relief of personal liberty, it could open the floodgates to excoriate the Supreme Court. Perhaps lawyers ought to convey their misgivings to the judges concerned in private.

K. PRADEEP,  
Chennai

The examination ahead

I am a Class 12 student from a CBSE school. It is worrying that there are some school

principals, especially in Delhi, wanting the Board examination to be conducted on time. I am unable to understand how fair it is to write an exam which decides our future without attending school in the midst of the pandemic. Although online classes are being conducted, they are not the real thing. Also, we have not touched even a single equipment in our science laboratories. So how does the Board expect us to write a practical exam? Even though the syllabus has been reduced by 30%, is it still sufficient? Students are under stress. The authorities could consider rescheduling the examination by a month or two.

BALAJI,  
Chennai



# Andhra Pradesh's capital conundrums

Will designating three capitals for the State promote 'distributed development'?



SRINIVAS CHOKKAKULA



**Big plans:** Visakhapatnam, as the executive capital, will experience much stress under the new proposal. ■ FILE PHOTO

Andhra Pradesh is witnessing a 'Game of Thrones'-like gritty politics involving capital cities. Chief Minister Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy's YSRCP government proposed a three-capital plan in the previous session of the Assembly. As per the Andhra Pradesh Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020, the State will have Visakhapatnam, Amaravati and Kurnool respectively as the executive, legislative and judicial capitals of the State.

The matter has become contentious along political party lines and the Bill is facing myriad legal and procedural challenges. The proposal is set to replace the ambitious plan of the previous government, led by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), of building Amaravati as a world-class green-field capital city. The proposed three-capital plan claims to produce decentralised growth, but will it achieve the goal?

After the State's bifurcation in 2014, the then Chief Minister, N. Chandrababu Naidu of the TDP, never missed an opportunity to create a hype around the project. And his own ambitious attempt to make it work with the land-pooling model captured everybody's attention. The project remained in news, thanks to dissent from protesting farmers, environmental activists and the mirage of hyped investments in the city.

#### A fait accompli

It is necessary to acknowledge the origins of the three-capital plan. The attribution to similar plans in South Africa and elsewhere can be shallow, though these might have influenced the thinking of the K.C. Sivaramakrishnan (KCS) Committee that made recommendations along similar lines. However, the KCS committee's own origins can explain this thinking. The committee was constituted in the aftermath of a bifurcation driven by an agitation legitimised and politicised by regional imbalances in development. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the committee expli-

city stress the overall development of backward regions in the State. They refer to the existing uneven development: the backward north-coastal Andhra and Rayalseema districts compared to the central coastal districts. The ToR also stress least disturbance to agricultural lands. Decentralised development has thus become a *fait accompli* for the committee to recommend, especially in the backdrop of the coruscating sub-nationalism that was running high at the time.

Given his proclivities for mega-scale thinking, Mr. Naidu, as the first CM after the bifurcation, had little patience for this moderate path of rebuilding a new State. As someone who flaunted Hyderabad's growth as a 'world-class' city under his rule, Mr. Naidu saw in 2014 an opportunity to build yet another 'world-class' city. He put his entire might in envisioning Amaravati. Mr. Naidu's obsession with a 'world-class' capital, combined with the neglect of a coherent development agenda, seems to have cost the TDP. The YSRCP is now riding on this discontent.

Though the YSRCP government's rationalisation of the three-capital plan leans on the KCS committee's recommendations, there is a difference between the two. While the government's formula of three capitals – calling them judicial, legislative and executive capitals – appears to be an imported idea, perhaps inspired by the South African example, the KCS committee stressed distributed development through decentralised governance. The essence of the 'distributed development' concept was to make deliberate efforts to spatially deconcentrate executive

power, driven by region-specific economic activities. For instance, while discussing the Vizag region's suitability, the committee recommends having government offices relevant to local economic potential, such as for ports, shipping, fisheries and industry, in Visakhapatnam. Further, the panel recommended developing the Visakhapatnam region as a high-tech zone. In a similar manner, it recommends developing the 'Rayalseema Arc', building on the Hyderabad-Kurnool-Anantapur-Bengaluru highway, and the 'Kalahasti Spine', using the potential of Nadikudi-Kalahasti railway line.

#### Distinct challenges

There may be other reasons for the functionally organised, multiple-capital plan. But the key principle of 'distributed development' must not be lost in executing it. The following points may help in ensuring that.

First, the multi-capital plan is beset with difficult challenges for the government's functioning. Running legislative business with most of the secretariat located 400 km away can lead to logistic nightmares and inefficiencies, especially in the absence of efficient infrastructure. Andhra Pradesh can learn from Maharashtra's experience of running Winter Sessions in Nagpur, aimed essentially at placating regional sentiments. International experiences – including that of South Africa – of deconcentrating executive power by shifting capitals to address regional sentiments do not inspire confidence either. However, Andhra Pradesh has the advantage of a clean slate and does not have to move an existing capital.

Thus, the success of distributed

development depends on a well-developed infrastructural network linking the growth centres. Andhra Pradesh lacks these linkages now, and sooner the State focuses on these preconditions the better for it. A re-invigorated focus on projects like the Chennai-Visakhapatnam Industrial Corridor is important.

Second, infrastructure development within cities – the proposed growth centres – is critical. The KCS committee stressed this extensively. Visakhapatnam, as the executive capital, will experience much stress. The basis cannot be just the availability of land and built-up area, but also the ability to cope with such an intense development. Visakhapatnam, in spite of its excellent and natural advantages, is woefully lacking in its infrastructure. It could not even deliver a functional Bus Rapid Transit system, even with the availability of resources.

Third, it is necessary to be conscious of the dynamics set off by these plans, with weak institutions to regulate growth. Unbridled real estate interests can co-opt local State institutions and sabotage environmental interests. The KCS committee warns about the environmental impact of such intensification and densification in cities, with a special reference to Visakhapatnam. The recent environmental disasters, including the LG Polymers gas leak, expose the city's vulnerabilities.

The ongoing processes of preparing the Master Plan and Strategic Plan for the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region are an opportunity to address these challenges. Ad hocism and a casual approach can undo its future potential.

Finally, the Andhra Pradesh Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020 is thin in details but offers hope in its broad contours of pursuing inclusive development through Zonal Planning and Development Boards. Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy now stands at a crossroads: he can either leave the State mired in the alleged "capitalising politics" or work towards a vibrant and well-governed Andhra Pradesh by pursuing the true spirit of "distributed development", irrespective of how the functionalised multi-capital plan plays out.

Srinivas Chokkakula is with the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi

# Fallen through the cracks

India's high economic growth has been of little value for its under-acknowledged female workers



NEETHI P.

The year 2020 marks the anniversary of two major events concerning the status of women. First, it is nearly fifty years since the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) submitted the report 'Towards Equality' to the United Nations (UN), which focused on women-sensitive policymaking in India, providing a fresh perspective on gender equality. Second, it is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, a benchmark for analysing the condition of women and State-led empowerment. Noting these jubilees, this article reviews the position of women's work in India, the effects of the ongoing pandemic, and the new Indian labour codes in relation to women's labour.

India's female employment trends do not resonate with its high economic growth, low fertility, and rise in female schooling. Between 2004 and 2018 – unlike the shrinking gender gap in educational attainment – the gender gap in workforce participation yawned, demonstrating one of the lowest labour participation rates for women, which have been consistently declining since 1950.

The recently released Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2018-19 indicates a dramatic fall in absolute employment for men, and more so women, who faced a decline in labour participation rates (from 2011 to 2019) in rural areas from 35.8% to 26.4%, and stagnation in urban areas at around 20.4%. Furthermore, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report ranks India at 149 among 153 countries in terms of women's economic participation and opportunity. The gender wage gap is the highest in Asia, with women 34% below men (for equal qualification and work), according to a 2019 Oxfam report. This stifles women's labour force participation, despite the guarantees of India's Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. Women also disproportionately populate India's informal economy, and are concentrated in low-paid, highly precarious jobs.

Research analyst Shiney Chakraborty's estimates show that agriculture employs nearly 60% of women, who form the bulk of landless labourers in an almost completely informal sector, with no credit access, subsidies, little equipment, and abysmal asset ownership. According to IndiaSpend, only about 13% of women tillers owned their land

in 2019. Manufacturing employs (almost completely informally) only around 14% of the female labour force. The service sector sees women disproportionately involved in care-work. According to the National Sample Survey (NSS) 2005, over 60% of the 4.75 million domestic workers are women.

#### COVID-19 fallout

In the context of the ongoing pandemic, in India, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) showed that 39% of women lost their jobs in April and May compared to 29% of men, corroborating the UN's fears of COVID-19's compounding impact on already low-paid and insecurely-employed poor women. Unsurprisingly, India's strikingly unequal gender division of household work has also worsened during the pandemic. Women spend (an unpaid) three times (as per NSS) or even six times (as per OECD) more time than men in household work. According to the World Health Organization, 70% of the world's healthcare and social workers are women. In India, women are indispensable as frontline ASHA workers, but they are underpaid and overworked.

India recently passed three labour codes, on occupational safety, health and working conditions, on industrial relations, and on social security. The laws are expected to transform labour relations, but they only end up 'easing business'. The codes acknowledge neither the gender wage gap nor non-payment of wages and bonuses, and ignore informal (mostly women) workers in terms of social security, insurance, provident fund, maternity benefits, or gratuity. Though 'allowing' women to work night shifts, there is little focus on accountability and responsibility; even protection from sexual harassment at workplace is missing. Maternity benefits remain unchanged from the 2017 amendment, with an insensitively formulated adoption leave policy that grants leave to women who adopt infants under the age of three months, ignoring that most children are much older at the time of adoption, and offering little incentive to adopt long-awaited older children.

The recent labour codes disregard women's work conditions. This is, bluntly, women-insensitive labour policy-making, and, all in the middle of a crushing pandemic. Gender cannot be wished away, since every policy and code affects a giant proportion of India's workforce – both paid and unpaid, acknowledged and unacknowledged.

Neethi P. is with the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bangalore and teaches on Labour Informality and Women's work

# Unabating attacks on journalists

There is an urgent need to enact laws that protect mediapersons and provide accountability

M.P. NATHANAEL

Isreal Moses, a 26-year-old television journalist who reported on illegal encroachment of land and sale of ganja, was hacked to death in Nallur village in Kanchipuram district of Tamil Nadu on November 8. Four persons who attacked him were later arrested. The same day, another journalist, 35-year-old Syed Adil Wahab, was found brutally murdered in a jungle on the outskirts of Bhopal.

Earlier on June 14, 2018, Shujaat Bukhari, a prominent journalist from Kashmir and the Chief Editor of *Kashmir Times*, was shot dead by three militants in the heart of Srinagar, when he was returning home from office. His manifest views on bringing peace to the Valley did not go well with militants.

Such attacks on journalists who dare to expose corruption and misdeeds of anti-social elements, or who do not toe the line of the establishment, have proved to be a threat to journalists the world over.

Unfortunately, India has been going down on the World Press Freedom Index during the last few years. In the annual reports of Reporters Without Borders, India has steadily gone down in the global index from a rank of 138 in 2018 to 140 in 2019, and further down to 142 this year.

According to the United Nations, "Journalism is one of the most dangerous professions in the world". Between 2006 and 2019, over 1,200 journalists have been killed the world over. On an average, it is estimated that one journalist is killed every four days. Sadly, in just one out of every ten such cases, the killers get convicted, while the rest go scot-free.

In 2009, as many as 32 journalists were killed in Philippines; ten were killed in Afghanistan in 2016, and ten journalists were among those killed in a suicide bomb attack in Kabul in April 2018.

A report released by an NGO last year states that 40 of the 198 journalists attacked in India between 2014 and 2019 died due to the attack. The killing of journalists is more rampant in smaller towns, while the figures in metro towns are quite low. It is cases like the killing of journalists such as

the late Gauri Lankesh in Bengaluru in 2017, that draw much country-wide attention and impel the police to investigate the murder.

#### Low convictions

Considering the rising trend in the number of journalists killed each year, the Chairman of the Press Council of India (PCI), Justice Chandramauli Kumar Prasad, counselled the government "to enact a special law for protection of journalists and speedy trial of cases of attacks and assaults". The PCI's records indicate that 96% of the cases of attacks on journalists end up without conviction.

That there is a need for stringent laws to protect journalists hardly calls for emphasis. Towards this end, Maharashtra has emerged as the first State in the country to enact a law. Under the Maharashtra Media Persons and Media Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss to Property) Act, 2017, any attack on journalists would be non-bailable and cognisable, and would be investigated by an officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police. Conviction under this Act could lead to imprisonment of up to three years and/or fine of up to ₹50,000. The attacker will also have to compensate for medical treatment in case of injuries to the journalist and also pay for damage to any equipment.

Taking a cue from the Maharashtra law, Chhattisgarh is in the final stages of enacting a law known as Chhattisgarh Protection of Mediapersons Act. It has a wider definition of journalists, covering drivers, and even relatives of journalists. On conviction, the attacker would be liable to be punished under relevant sections of the IPC. But any public servant found guilty of dereliction of duties is liable to be punished with imprisonment of up to one year and/or fine of up to ₹10,000.

While these two States have taken the initiative to enact laws to protect journalists, other States have to follow. The sooner it is done, the better.

M.P. Nathanael retired as Inspector-General of Police, CRPF



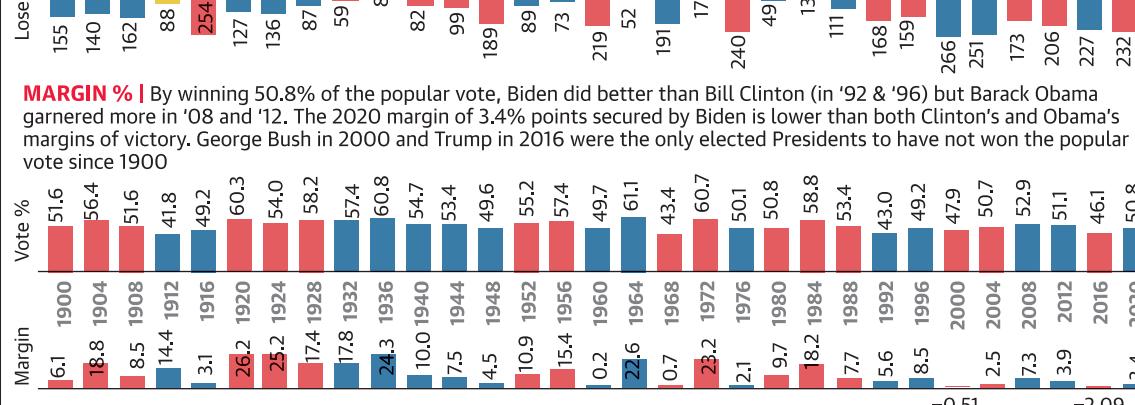
#### DATA POINT

## U.S. poll history

On November 7, Joe Biden was elected the 46th president of the United States with 306 electoral college votes defeating incumbent Donald Trump, who secured 232 votes. With more than 98% of votes counted in most States, Biden has secured 50.8% of the popular votes, about 3.4% points more than Trump's. A look at how these numbers compare with past results. By The Hindu Data Team

**ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTES |** The 306 electoral college votes secured by Biden are the 10th lowest among winners in the country's last 31 elections since the 1900s. It was the fifth-lowest when only Democratic wins are considered in this period. It was also considerably lower than the four recent Democratic wins. On the other hand, the 232 electoral college votes secured by Donald Trump are the fifth-highest among losers in the considered period. Republican George W. Bush's win in 2000 with 271 electoral college votes against Democrat Al Gore was the closest.

**MARGIN % |** By winning 50.8% of the popular vote, Biden did better than Bill Clinton (in '92 & '96) but Barack Obama's margins of victory. George Bush in 2000 and Trump in 2016 were the only elected Presidents to have not won the popular vote since 1900.



Source: archives.gov, presidency.ucsb.edu, NYU

The Hindu

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 17, 1970

Pakistan's closest friend  
(From an editorial)

Air Marshal Nur Khan recently described Communist China as Pakistan's closest friend and this relationship appears to have been further cemented by President Yahya Khan's visit to Peking. China is to give Pakistan no less than Rs. 100 crores for its next plan, repayable over 20 years without interest. This is the kind of loan that Pakistan needs in view of its huge external debt which eats up 20 per cent of its exchange earning in debt servicing. The Chinese terms are even more generous than the Russian credit recently promised which is repayable in 12 years. Pakistan has already received a large number of tanks and planes from China and last September, the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Navy went to Peking to ask for warships as well. The communiqué issued on the conclusion of Mr. Yahya Khan's five-day visit reaffirmed China's support for the self-determination of Kashmir and for Pakistan's stand on the Farkha Barrage. However, the Chinese side expressed the hope that Indo-Pakistan problems would be solved peacefully. It is interesting to observe that there was no reference to China's criticisms of American and Russian policies and that Pakistani support was invited mainly for the holding of an international conference to discuss a total ban on nuclear weapons.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 17, 1920

Panchama education  
(From an editorial)

The education of Panchamas should naturally form, we think, one of the principal factors in the educational policy of the Government under the new order of things and it should also be the primary object of achievement by those who are working heart and soul for the elevation of the depressed classes. The spread of education among the Panchamas is a condition precedent for the material advancement of this country. We are glad to note from the reports submitted to the Government, by the Presidents of District Boards and Chairmen of Municipal Councils regarding the admission of Panchamas in schools under public management in the Presidency, that steps are being taken in several localities to get the Panchama boys admitted into schools under public management and that opposition to their admission by caste Hindus will in course of

## FROM PAGE ONE

**Nitish starts new term with 14-member team**

Congratulating Mr. Kumar on being elected Chief Minister again, Lok Janshakti Party president Chirag Paswan tweeted that he "hoped the government would complete its full term and you would remain NDA's Chief Minister".

The LJP had put up candidates against the JD(U) in the recent Assembly poll and caused huge damage to the tally of winning seats for the party. Mr. Paswan had said that he fielded candidates against the JD(U) to "dethrone" Mr. Kumar as the Chief Minister. The JD(U) could win only 43 seats, while the BJP bagged 74.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and the Congress boycotted the swearing-in ceremony, saying, "the mandate was against the NDA".

"RJD boycotts the swearing-in ceremony. The mandate for change was against NDA and the mandate has

been converted into government order. Ask the unemployed youth, farmers, contract workers, teachers of Bihar what they are going through. People are upset with the fraud committed by NDA. We're people's representatives and we stand with people," the RJD tweeted.

With 75 seats, it is the largest party in the 243-seat Assembly.

State Congress president Madan Mohan Jha said the "party would not attend the function as the alliance partner RJD has boycotted it and we believe that the mandate was against the

NDA".

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP president J.P. Nadda, party's State in-charge Bhupendra Yadav, former Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi and other leaders attended the function.

**Judge recuses himself from Jagan case**

Supreme Court advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, in his contempt plea to Mr. Venugopal, claimed that the decision of a Bench led by Justice Ramana on September 16, directing expeditious completion of pending criminal trials against politicians had spurred Mr. Reddy to write the letter. Mr. Reddy, the lawyer said, had 31 criminal cases against him.

A petitioner-in-person, advocate G.S. Mani, has accused Mr. Reddy of "misusing his official post". A similar petition has also been filed by an NGO, Anti Corruption Council of India Trust.

The third petition is by another lawyer, Sunil Kumar Singh, who has urged the apex court to issue an order to bar Mr. Reddy from

making public statements against the judiciary and holding press conferences to malign the judicial institution.

The Constitution does not allow such deliberate attempts to publicly embarrass the judiciary.

"What is at stake is the confidence that courts inspire in the public in a democracy... Discussions can go wild in the media within hours or days and affect the image of the judiciary," Mr. Singh contended.

The right place to bring allegations against the higher judiciary is Parliament or the State Legislature and not press conferences, he has argued. The petition said the constitutional immunity granted to the judiciary is to allow them to function fearlessly.

**Early data show vaccine is 94.5% effective**

Researchers test vaccines by inoculating some study participants and giving others placebos, and then watching the two groups to see how many people get sick. In Moderna's study, 95 people contracted the coronavirus: five who were vaccinated, and 90 who received placebo shots of saltwater. Statistically, the difference between the two groups was highly significant. And of the 95 cases, 11 were severe – all in the placebo group.

The results were analysed by an independent safety monitoring board, appointed by the National Institutes of Health.

Moderna, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, developed its vaccine in collaboration with researchers from the Vaccine Research Center, part of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. The company announced on October 22 that it had completed enrolment of its 30,000-person study, and that 25,650 participants had already received two shots.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the institute, said: "I had been saying I would be satisfied with a 75% effective vaccine. Aspirationally, you would like to see 90, 95%, but I wasn't expecting it. I thought we'd be good, but 94.5% is very impressive."

Stéphane Bancel, chief executive of Moderna, said in a statement that the results had provided "the first clinical validation that our vaccine can prevent COVID-19 disease, including severe disease."

Pfizer and Moderna each announced the findings in news releases, not in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and the companies have not yet disclosed the detailed data that would allow out-

side experts to evaluate their claims. Therefore, the results cannot be considered conclusive.

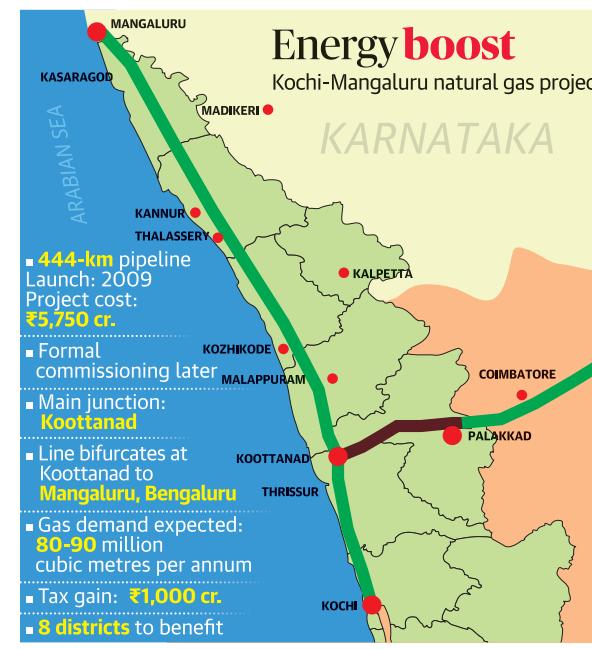
The companies' products open the door to an entirely new way of creating vaccines – and creating them fast. Both use a synthetic version of coronavirus genetic material, called messenger RNA or mRNA, to programme a person's cells to churn out many copies of a fragment of the virus. That fragment sets off alarms in the immune system and stimulates it to attack, should the real virus try to invade.

**Several unknowns**

It will be important to determine whether the vaccines work equally well in older and younger people, experts say. Researchers also want to know if the vaccines prevent people from spreading the virus – an ideal result that could help quash the pandemic. Another big unknown is how long the immunity provided by the vaccines will last.

An additional concern is that the vaccines must be stored and transported at low temperatures – minus 20 degrees Celsius for Moderna, and minus 70 degree Celsius for Pfizer – which could complicate their distribution. But on Monday, Moderna said researchers had found that its vaccine had a longer shelf life in the refrigerator than previously thought: 30 days, not seven. And it will last 12 hours at room temperature, the company said.

So far, studies of the two vaccines have not found serious side effects, but participants have reported sore arms, fatigue, fever and joint and muscle aches that last for a day or two.

**GAIL completes Kochi-Mangaluru pipeline**

'Gas will reach Mangaluru through the 444-km pipeline this week'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOCHEE

The much-delayed Kochi-Mangaluru natural gas pipeline project is finally ready for commissioning as GAIL India has completed the final 540-metre treacherous stretch across the Chandragiri river in northern Kerala, according to a senior company official.

The 444-km-long natural gas pipeline was launched in 2009 at an estimated cost of ₹2,915 crore and was to be commissioned in 2014. But opposition with regard to safety and on commercial grounds, wherein the land

price was the main hurdle, had resulted in the project cost nearly doubling to over ₹5,750 crore.

## Testing is on'

"We completed the most difficult stretch across the Chandragiri river in Kasaragod district on Saturday. Now, testing is on and this will be completed in the next two days. Within this week itself, gas will reach Mangaluru through the 444-km pipeline," P. Murugesan, Executive Director and Head of Southern Region, GAIL, said on Monday.

The formal commission-

ing will be done later, according to the availability of the Minister, he added.

The pipeline is charged up to Kannur now and has been live up to Kottanad in Palakkad district, 90 km north of Kochi, since June 2019. Kottanad is the main junction of the project. From here, the line bifurcates to Mangaluru and Bengaluru.

The first phase of the project was commissioned in August 2013 in the Kochi metropolitan area, with industrial supplies and domestic supplies from February 2016 by Adani Gas.

With the commissioning of the pipeline, gas demand in Kerala will touch 80-90 million cubic metres per annum from 60 million cubic

metres now. Apart from huge environmental gains, the State can gain monetarily as it can get up to ₹1,000 crore by way of taxes alone.

## 540-metre stretch

Authorities were ready to complete the project in August, but a 540-metre stretch across the Chandragiri river became a nightmare for them. As a way out, they reduced the diameter of the pipe to a fourth – from 24 inches to just 6 inches now.

Mr. Murugesan said the pipeline would supply gas to all seven districts it passed through in Kerala – Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargod – and the hilly Wayanad district.

**Pressured to name politicians: Sivasankar**

ED says its probe clearly established the bureaucrat's role in diplomatic channel gold smuggling case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCHEE

Counsel of M. Sivasankar, former Principal Secretary to the Kerala Chief Minister, filed an argument note at the Principal Sessions Court, Ernakulam, on Monday alleging that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had exerted pressure on the bureaucrat to name few political targets of its choice, which he refused to oblige.

The allegations related to the kickbacks received by Mr. Sivasankar in the LIFE Mission project at Wadakkanchery were also baseless,

the note said. It pointed out that the evidence from the WhatsApp chats presented by the ED were only half-truths and lies to mislead the court.

## Probe into other projects

The ED reiterated that its investigation had clearly established the role of Mr. Sivasankar in the diplomatic channel gold smuggling case. The agency is looking into whether he had received kickbacks for projects such as the Kerala Fibre Optics Network (K-FON) and SmartCity Kochi.

M. Sivasankar had shared confidential details about these projects with Swapna Suresh, an accused in the gold smuggling case. The Principal Sessions Court had earlier cleared the request by the

him and Swapna proved his involvement in the gold smuggling case and receipt of kickbacks in the LIFE Mission project, it said.

## Customs' questioning

The Customs (Preventive) on Monday questioned Mr. Sivasankar in connection with its probe into the gold smuggling case. The investigating team reached the Kakkanad sub-jail in the afternoon where Mr. Sivasankar is in judicial remand and took his statement. The Principal Sessions Court had earlier cleared the request by the

**Pinarayi sees bid to scuttle K-FON project**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

tions of the State government and its functionaries. "Immediately thereafter, the social media was flooded with objectionable posts. Even the persons occupying high position went to the media and gave interviews against the High Court and its judges, that too, from the party office belonging to a political party, which is in power," it read. The FIR states that the cases were initially registered by the CID on the complaints lodged by the Registrar General of the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

The agency has taken over the probe into 12 cases earlier registered by the Cyber Crime unit of the Amravati CID, following the Andhra Pradesh High Court's directive on October 12. Several provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Information Technology (IT) Act have been invoked.

**Objectionable posts**  
The High Court order mentioned that on May 22, different Benches of the court had passed orders with respect to some petitions, against the orders and ac-

**Norms in place to check COVID-19 at Sabarimala**

New set of arrangements rolled out

STAFF REPORTER  
PATHANMITHTA

From supplying medicinal water to arranging hand sanitisers and disinfecting the premises using chlorinated water, a new set of arrangements have been rolled out at Sabarimala for the Mandalam-Makaravilakku season that began on Monday.

According to Devaswom Minister Kadakkampally Surendran, preparations have been made in compliance with the COVID-19 protocol and in accordance with the directions of the Kerala High Court.

A counter has been opened near the Ganapati Kovil at Pampa for supplying medicinal water. The water will be supplied in one-litre stainless steel containers, which could be refilled at Charalmedu, Jyothinagar and Malikappuram.

Spots have been marked at the Sannidhanam, including Valiyana-dapanthal, lower and upper Thirumuttam, and Malakkappuram, prasadam counters and Annadana Mandapam, to ensure physical distancing.

Malakkappuram, prasadam counters and Annadana Mandapam, to ensure physical distancing.

The Annadana Mandapam, Devaswom mess, police mess and bhandaram will be disinfected with the thermal vaporisation fogging machine. Sanitiser dispensers operated by foot have been installed at 23 spots.

Five emergency medical centres have been set up along the route from Pampa to the Sannidhanam.



Ayyappa pilgrims at the Sabarimala Sannidhanam on Monday morning.

area on Sunday night.

The case was registered against him after the victim contacted the police on the phone soon after the incident. She told the police that the man took her to the isolated area at around 11 p.m., in the name of consulting a doctor.

Following police investigation, hospital authorities placed the man under suspension.

**Kerala cases dip, but positivity at 10%**

Test positivity in Karnataka down to 1.51%; Telangana reports a low of 502 cases

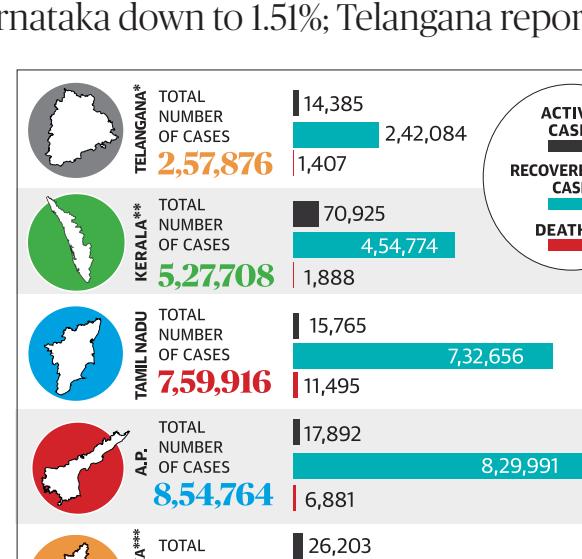
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Following the recent pattern, on Monday, Kerala's COVID-19 cases dipped along with testing, registering 2,710 new cases from 25,141 samples. However, the test positivity rate touched 10.78%.

The weekly averages showed that the State's case graph could be dipping. From 48,346 cases reported in the first week of November, in the second week it was 40,592. However testing too went down from 4,03,374 tests in November first week to 3,74,534 tests in the second week.

The case doubling time rose from 45 days in the first week of the month to 59 days, in the week ending November 14. On Monday, the State added 19 more deaths, taking the cumulative virus toll to 1,888.

Telangana recorded a four-and-a-half month low on Sunday. Only 502 positive



cases were detected from 17,296 samples, against 40,000 to 45,000 samples tested in a day.

This was the lowest number of cases since July. The new 502 cases on Sunday included 141 from Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and 72 from Rangareddy. Results of 288 samples were awaited.

Andhra Pradesh reported 753 new infections and 13 new deaths on Monday. With this, the overall tally went up

to 8,54,764 and the toll to 6,881. However, only 43,044 samples were tested as against the 70,000 on an average over many weeks now. The positivity rate in the past day was 1.75%, the lowest in four months. The positivity rate of 91.97 lakh samples tested so far was 9.29%.

Karnataka on Monday reported 1,157 new cases. Also, 12 deaths were recorded.

The State's positivity rate stood at 1.51%, while the case fatality rate was 1.04%. Bengaluru Urban, which has witnessed a reduction in cases, reported 597 new cases.

The number of COVID-19 cases reported in Tamil Nadu stayed below the 2,000 mark for the fourth consecutive day and dipped further marginally to 1,725 on Monday.

The total number of cases reported so far in the State stands at 7,59,916.

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

## APPEAL

6 years old Mast, Miriyala Barath Kumar needs support in bringing a lasting change and a new life. He suffers from Acute Myeloid Leukaemia and has to undergo Bone Marrow Transplantation at V.S. Hospital, Anna Nagar. His urgent needs are Rs.18,00,000/- for his transplant, supportive care. Donations sent by Ch.D.D. favouring V.S. will be acknowledged. The through Ch.D.D./DNF/T Transfer Syndicate Bank, Nungambakkam Branch, A/c. No. 60182010063310, IFSC: SBNNB0006018 (Fees: 60182010063310, IFSC: SBNNB0006018) favouring WWS. (Please do

# Congress sees bid to break Grand Alliance

Party slams RJD leader for statement against Rahul

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

The Congress on Monday slammed senior Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Shivanand Tiwari for his statement that Rahul Gandhi was picnicking at his sister's Shimla house during the Bihar Assembly election.

Mr. Tiwari is acting on the directions of the BJP and the Janata Dal (U) to divide the RJD and the Congress, and he wants to save the fragile National Democratic Alliance government and damage the possibilities of the formation of a Grand Alliance government, the Congress's Bihar in-charge Shakunti Singh Gohil said.

The RJD leadership, he said, should take note of this betrayer. Otherwise, the two parties that united out of an ideological commitment and the people of Bihar would suffer, he said.

#### Rahul's promise

Congress leader Tariq Anwar too slammed the RJD leader's statement.

"The RJD is a regional par-



**RJD leader**  
Shivanand Tiwari  
wants to divide the  
RJD and the  
Congress on the  
directions of the BJP  
and the JD(U)

SHAKUNTI SINGH GOHIL  
Congress leader

ty and its scope is limited to Bihar. Rahul Gandhi had said that he will keep coming here whenever Bihar needs him and he did this as well. He [Mr. Gandhi] cannot act like RJD leaders," he said.

Senior State Congress leader and MLC Prem Chandra Mishra said, "Shivanand Tiwari is not an official spokesman of the RJD. He is hand in glove with the BJP and the JD(U) and is speaking their language."

## Sonia may discuss Bihar loss with senior leaders

Virtual meeting likely to be held today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Exactly a week after the debacle in Bihar, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday is likely to meet a group of senior party leaders who are part of a recently constituted group to help the party president in organisational and operational matters.

The meeting comes amid calls for introspection by party leaders like former Law Minister Kapil Sibal who has said the results showed that the party was not seen as an alternative choice and the leadership was treating the defeat as business as usual. Karti Chidambaram, MP, took to Twitter and tagging Mr. Sibal's comment, asked his party to "ideate, consult and act".

"Bihar elections, the Gupkar Alliance in Jammu and Kashmir, the next round of Assembly elections could be discussed in a virtual meet," a member of the Congress's special committee told *The Hindu* on Monday. Senior leaders of the group include A.K. Antony, Ahmed Patel, Ambika Soni, K.C. Venugopal, Randeep Surjewala and Mukul Wasnik, who was part of the Group of 23 (G-23) leaders who had questioned the leadership in a letter to Ms. Gandhi.



Sonia Gandhi

Mr. Sibal's latest comment against his party attracted sharp comments from some of his colleagues including Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot.

There was, however, no official reaction from the party on the former Law Minister, who is also part of the G-23.

"There was no need for Mr. Kapil Sibal to mention our internal issue in the media. This has hurt the sentiments of party workers across the country," Mr. Gehlot said.

Delhi Congress chief Anil Chaudhary too took a dig at Mr. Sibal and reminded the former Law Minister that he should take some time out to visit the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) office as he was a former Lok Sabha MP from Delhi.

"For our democracy to survive, Congress has to survive. Time to act is now or tomorrow may be too late," said Congress MP Vivek Tankha, coming to Mr. Sibal's defence.

## SC seeks Centre's reply on KUWJ plea

The journalists' union has asked for the release of its secretary Siddique Kappan

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday sought a response from the Centre, the Uttar Pradesh government and its police chief on a plea made by the Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) for the release of its secretary Siddique Kappan.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad A. Bobde scheduled a hearing on November 20 after the KUWJ's lawyer, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, pressed for bail.

Chief Justice Bobde said the Bench would like to hear the State.

Mr. Sibal said the journalist was detained along with some others on October 5 while on their way to Hathras in Uttar Pradesh, where a Dalit girl was allegedly gang-raped by four men. An FIR had been registered under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act in the case. Mr. Kappan is lodged in the Mathura jail, the KUWJ noted.

But the FIR does not have his name in it. There is no reference of an offence against him. But he is in jail since October 5. The magistrate says go to jail. The jail authorities say go to the magistrate... My Lord, this man is a journalist," Mr. Sibal submitted.

But the CJI referred to the last hearing when Mr. Sibal was advised to approach the Allahabad High Court for the journalist's freedom.

"But I am not able to meet this gentleman... I have no



Hearing on: In this photo dated October 7, 2020, Siddique Kappan and three others are produced at a Mathura court. •PTI

access to him. He is in jail", Mr. Sibal replied.

#### Pleas under Article 32

Chief Justice Bobde, while asking how then he moved the apex court, said the reason for advising the KUWJ to approach the High Court was because it was "trying to discourage petitions under Article 32".

Mr. Sibal replied, "But you [Supreme Court] have interfered in such Article 32 petitions in the past..."

Chief Justice Bobde said,

"We are aware of our powers under Article 32".

Mr. Sibal persisted, "I would not have tried to come straight to you under Article 32, but this is the case of a journalist... We want bail".

He also pushed for an immediate stay order against the State, but did not succeed.

An application filed by the KUWJ has sought the fulfilment of Mr. Kappan's basic rights such as legal help and access to family.

The KUWJ had approached the Supreme Court on a *habeas corpus* plea to know the whereabouts of Mr. Kappan. But the court refused to intervene while advising the union to move the Allahabad High Court instead.

The union said the FIR registered in the case related to speech on certain websites. But it said the URL and names of the alleged offending websites were not specified.

The FIR is completely frivolous, the union said.

## Won't tolerate illegal conversion: Chouhan

STAFF REPORTER

BHOJPUR

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said religious conversion of tribals in the name of service would not

be tolerated. On 'Tribal Pride Day' on Sunday, he said steps were being taken to prevent illegal conversions.

"Religious conversion in the name of service has

been going on for years," he stated.

Mr. Chouhan remembered freedom fighter Birsa Munda on his birth anniversary, saying he was admitted to a German

Christian school after undergoing conversion.

"Soon Birsa realised it and left school and rejoined the mainstream," he said, adding Birsa fought for his culture and tradition.

## Pakistan continues to raise terror charges

India silent after repulsing earlier allegations

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE

NEW DELHI

A day after the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) described Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's allegations against India as 'diversion', Islamabad cited a recent U.N. report and claimed presence of the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda in India.

The Ministry did not respond to the allegation but officials told *The Hindu* earlier that the Pakistani statements are aimed at targeting India ahead of January 2021 when India will begin its stint as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

The office of the spokesperson of Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday claimed that India has 'mischievously' presented itself as a 'victim' of terrorism and said, "The presence of ISIL and AQIS in India as highlighted in



Tight vigil: The frontier district of Kupwara in north Kashmir has seen ceasefire violations in the past as well. •PTI

recent U.N. report indicates that India is emerging as a hotbed of U.N.-designated international terrorist organisations and posing a great risk to the region".

The claim indicates a change in Pakistani campaign for global platforms where it is often accused of harbouring top international terrorists from a wide variety of groups like the al-Qaeda.

A U.N. report in June had pointed out "significant numbers" of IS and al-Qaeda members in Kerala and Karnataka.

Over the weekend, Mr. Qu-

## Ceasefire violated in Kupwara

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR

The Army on Monday said Pakistan had initiated a ceasefire violation along the Line of Control in north Kashmir's Kupwara in the Tangdhar Sector.

"A befitting response is being given," a Srinagar-based Army spokesman said.

reshi had claimed that his country is preparing evidence of India's support to terrorism inside Pakistan.

The so-called claims of 'proof' against India enjoy no credibility, are fabricated and represent figments of imagination. This desperate attempt will find few takers as the international community is aware of Pakistan's tactics and proof of its terror sponsorship has been admitted by none other than its own leadership," MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said in response on Sunday.

Over the weekend, Mr. Qu-

## Nitish will have to live with a different BJP

Party seems to be making a break from some of the old patterns of its relationship with JD(U)

NISTULA HEBBAR

NEW DELHI

It has been a good month for the BJP so far, with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) moving past the majority line in the Bihar Assembly; the party far ahead of its ally, the Janata Dal (U); and grabbing the House Speaker's position as well. But what has really made this an important month for the BJP in the State is that it has been given, through the difference in its relative strength vis-a-vis the JD(U), the opportunity to make changes in the party organisation and even take bold steps in broadening its social coalition, over and above that of being a party identified with upper castes.

#### Poor performance

Mr. Tiwari had raised questions over the dismal performance of the Congress in the polls.

"Rahul Gandhi visited Bi-



Warm welcome: Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda in Patna on Monday. •PTI

har on three days and addressed two rallies every day. PM Modi is very senior to him in age but he has been addressing three or four rallies every day. After campaigning for three days, Rahul Gandhi went to Shimla for picnic at his sister's house," he said on Sunday.

Mr. Tiwari's son, Rahul Tiwari, won the Shahpur seat in Bhojpur on the RJD ticket.

made Deputy Chief Minister. Mr. Modi had, for years, managed the BJP's relationship with Nitish Kumar and his exclusion this time around meant that the terms of engagement between the BJP and the JD(U) had changed and would be far tougher for Mr. Kumar without the benign friendship of Mr. Modi.

For years, Mr. Modi had been resented by his own party men for giving in too much to Mr. Kumar and not asserting enough on behalf of the party within the coalition.

Even in 2010, when just before the Bihar polls, Mr. Kumar said that there was no need for then Gujarat Chief

Minister Narendra Modi to campaign on behalf of the NDA in the State, matters were smoothed over but the BJP cadre was restive at such an open insult.

#### NEWS ANALYSIS

The BJP, therefore, seems to be making a decisive break from some of the old patterns of its relationship with JD(U).

The chief ministership may not be in the BJP's hands but the party intends greater control over the government and the Assembly. A generational shift within the State leadership is being

effected, with leaders like Union Minister Nitayam Rai likely to take centre stage.

#### The silent voter

Many who covered the Bihar polls saw first hand that BJP and the Prime Minister's popularity remained intact through months of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown and after. Much of it was attributed to the welfare work done under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana and improvement in last-mile delivery of welfare goods of various Central programmes. Several commentators and even some party leaders were of the view that the BJP would have improved its tally had it fought alone, and maybe even won on its own.

The national leadership of the BJP, however, had learnt from the 2015 debacle and knew that a BJP-JD(U) alliance had the critical mass of social coalitions needed to win. That the JD(U)'s vote among Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs), Mahadalits (a sub-category among Dalits created by Mr. Kumar) and women was important to reach the finish line. The

appointment of Ms. Devi, not just an experienced and assertive politician but also belonging to the backward Nonia community, as deputy leader, gives enough notice of the BJP seeking to widen its social base, with or without Mr. Kumar's help.

The 2020 verdict, therefore, is being seen as a take-off point for a new Bihar unit of the BJP. A project that had to be abandoned in 2015, but which is likely to gain traction in the next five years.

## Accused in Dalit woman murder case arrested

'He killed her after she resisted rape bid'

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

The Basti police on Monday said it had arrested a person who allegedly murdered a Dalit woman (23), his alleged lover, after she resisted his attempts to rape her while they were meeting in the fields.

Two police personnel including an SHO were suspended on Sunday for not registering an FIR on the complaint of the family of the woman who was found dead in a field near her home in Kalwari area.

Basti SP Hemraj Meena said the autopsy report had found the cause of the death to be ante-mortem strangulation but there was no evidence of any sexual assault.

The arrested person was identified as Balchandra Yadav, who police said had been in regular touch on mobile phone with the victim especially during the lockdown.

At around 5:45 a.m., a police team intercepted Yadav, who was walking towards his residence, and arrested him. The FIR is completely frivolous, the union said.

day, said the SP. Yadav allegedly fired at the police team who in retaliation shot him in his leg, said Mr. Meena.

A .315 bore country-made pistol was recovered from him, the SP said.

Yadav, whose native village is nine km from the girl's home, used to visit her often as his maternal uncle lived there, said the police. On November 10, she went to meet him in the fields at around 7 p.m. and the two spent around one and half hours there, said Mr. Meena.

The two were having a discussion about marriage and elopement when the boy tried to make physical moves at her. She protested and bit two of his fingers," said Mr. Meena.

In anger, the accused first strangled her with his hands and then with her dupatta, said the officer. He then allegedly covered her body with hay and fled, the police said.

#### ANDHRA PRADESH INTEGRATED IRRIGATION AND AGRICULTURE TRANSFORMATION PROJECT (World Bank Aided Project)

#### Request for Bids (National Competitive Bidding)

Tender Notice Nos.03/2020-2021 to 13/2020-21, Dt: 10.11.2020

## IN BRIEF



Kashmir highways shut after snowfall

**SRINAGAR** Widespread snowfall in the past 24 hours in the upper reaches of Kashmir resulted in the closure of three main highways on Monday, and disconnected the Valley's surface routes with the rest of the country. An avalanche warning has been issued for Kupwara and Bandipora.

## 15th Finance Commission submits report to PM

**NEW DELHI** The 15th Finance Commission on Monday submitted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi its report on the ratio in which tax is to be divided between the Centre and the States over the next five years. The report 'Finance Commission in COVID Times' will be submitted to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday.

## Mehbooba visits evicted Gujjars, Bakarwals

**SRINAGAR** Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti visited the nomads of south Kashmir, whose huts were demolished by the authorities recently, and accused the Centre of pushing the Gujjars and Bakarwals to the wall. "A sinister agenda is being pursued against the peace-loving communities of Gujjars and Bakarwals," she said.

## Approach HC for bail, SC tells man held for tweets

**NEW DELHI** The Supreme Court on Monday declined the bail plea of a man arrested for tweeting objectionable remarks against Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and his son, Aditya. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde asked the petitioner, Sameet Thakkar, instead to approach the High Court. Mr. Thakkar was arrested on October 24.

## Army relaxes norms for purchase of cars

**NEW DELHI** Reversing an earlier decision, the Army issued an order increasing the price cap for purchase of four-wheelers through the Canteen Stores Department (CSD) for military personnel and veterans. Junior Commissioned Officers and other ranks entitled to purchase a car of ₹5 lakh can now buy a car of ₹5 lakh up to ₹7 lakh and ₹6 lakh respectively, excluding taxes.

# High praise for Manmohan Singh in Barack Obama's new memoir

Former U.S. President says that in many respects India counted as a success story, but he also talks about the striking inequality and 'violence'

## SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

In the first of his two-part memoir, *A Promised Land*, former U.S. President Barack Obama speaks at length about his interest in India, Mahatma Gandhi's life and his relationship with former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh whom he calls a man of "uncommon wisdom and decency".

Mr. Obama says he had developed a "warm and productive" relationship with Mr. Singh, describing their interactions in New Delhi on Mr. Obama's first visit there in November 2010.

"A gentle, soft-spoken economist in his seventies, with a white beard and a turban that were the marks of his Sikh faith but to the Western eye lent him the air of a holy man, he had been India's finance minister in the 1990s, managing to lift millions of people from poverty. For the duration of his tenure as Prime Minister, I would find Singh to be wise, thoughtful, and scrupulous-

ly honest," he writes.

"While he [Mr. Singh] could be cautious in foreign policy, unwilling to get out too far ahead of an Indian bureaucracy that was historically suspicious of U.S. intentions, our time together confirmed my initial impression of him as a man of uncommon wisdom and decency; and during my visit to the capital city of New Delhi, we reached agreements to strengthen U.S. cooperation on counterterrorism, global health, nuclear security, and trade," Mr. Obama says.

**'A special place'** The former U.S. President writes that his first trip to India was in 2010 but that the place had always "held a special place in my [his] imagination."

He says this is possibly due to its "sheer size" with a sixth of humanity and 2,000 distinct ethnic groups and over 700 languages. Or, he speculates, it could be because he had listened to the



Wise counsel: Manmohan Singh with Barack Obama at the Oval Office of the White House on September 27, 2013. ■ AFP

Mahabharata and Ramayana during his childhood in Indonesia, or his interest in Eastern religions or because a group of Indian and Pakistani friends in college taught him how to cook 'dal' and 'kheema', and introduced him to Bollywood movies.

Mr. Obama writes at length about Gandhiji's life and his legacy, including the inspiration U.S. Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

drew from Gandhiji's philosophy. He describes a visit with former First Lady Michelle Obama to Mani Bhavan, where Gandhiji used to stay when in Mumbai [then Bombay].

While Mr. Obama says in many respects India counted as a success story, he is not all praise for the country. He talks about the striking inequality between the rich and poor and says "vio-

lence, both public and private" continued to be "an all-too pervasive part of Indian life."

"What I couldn't tell was whether [Manmohan] Singh's rise to power represented the future of India's democracy or merely an aberration," Mr. Obama says.

## Mumbai attacks

Mr. Singh's "restraint" against Pakistan after the November 2011 attacks in Mumbai had cost him politically, Mr. Obama writes.

"He [Mr. Singh] feared that rising anti-Muslim sentiment had strengthened the influence of India's main opposition party, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)." Mr. Obama describes his meetings with Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi during his trip to India. "Both Sonia and Rahul Gandhi sat at our dinner table that night. She was a striking woman in her sixties, dressed in a traditional sari, with dark, probing eyes and a quiet, regal presence," he writes.

Ms. Gandhi listened more than she spoke he says, attributing her power to "a

anywhere else."

Mr. Obama describes the rise of "illiberalism" in wealthy nations.

"...if I was seeing it even in the United States with the Tea Party – how could India be immune?"

The former President's descriptions of individuals throughout the book, often include a physical description – this applies to both men and women (for instance, on former French President Nicolas Sarkozy: "he looked like a figure out of a Toulouse-Lautrec painting").

Mr. Obama describes his meetings with Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi during his trip to India. "Both Sonia and Rahul Gandhi sat at our dinner table that night. She was a striking woman in her sixties, dressed in a traditional sari, with dark, probing eyes and a quiet, regal presence," he writes.

The book takes us to 2011, towards the end of Mr. Obama's first term. Presumably, it is for this reason, the author does not discuss Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who became Prime Minister in 2014 and hosted Mr. Obama in New Delhi at the Republic Day celebrations.

## Gupkar allies break poll pact

Congress fields candidates against PDP in many seats in district council polls

## PEERZADA ASHIQ

**SRINAGAR**

Fissures within the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an amalgam of seven political parties, came starkly to the fore on Monday as the Congress fielded candidates against the alliance partner Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on many seats for the upcoming District Development Council (DDC) polls.

Sources said the Congress, which filed nominations for the second phase on Monday, decided to field candidates in Tral, Larnoo, Keller, Tangdar and other seats in Kashmir that was decided by the alliance to have joint candidates from the PDP.

**To fight as Independent** At Budgam in central Kashmir, PDP district president Nazir Ahmad Khan also filed his nomination despite the alliance deciding on a candidate from the National Conference (NC).

"I was given an authority



Unity under peril: At its November 7 Jammu meeting, the Gupkar allies had decided to fight the DDC polls jointly. ■ PTI

letter by the alliance to file nomination papers. However, at the eleventh hour, I was replaced with an NC candidate. I don't think I have done any mistake by filling nomination papers as an independent," Mr. Khan said.

A second rung PDP leader, on condition of anonymity, said the Congress was putting up candidates against

the PDP, especially in south Kashmir. "The Congress is playing a perfect spoiler. It seems as if the Congress is in a seat-sharing arrangement with only the NC," the PDP leader said.

## Misleading reports

However, senior Congress leader and former legislator Ghulam Nabi Monga told *The Hindu* that the Congress

was committed to the alliance. "These are misleading reports. The BJP is trying to create fissures. If any Congress candidate has filed nomination in seats where a joint candidate is contesting, he will be asked to withdraw his nomination or publicly support the alliance candidate," Mr. Monga said.

He said the alliance partners need to sit down and thrash out the issue to avoid any confusion.

The Congress, which avoided attending the meetings of the alliance in Jammu fearing a backlash from the Hindu belt due to the utterances of NC president Farooq Abdullah and PDP's Mehbooba Mufti, has finally decided to enter into an "electoral alliance" with the amalgam.

"The Congress has an electoral alliance as on date with the Gupkar alliance. The apex body of the Congress will sit in the near future and take a final decision on the ideological alliance," Mr. Monga said.

## J&K parties' stand on flag, Art. 370 anti-national: BJP

Congress should clarify if it supports these parties or not'

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**NEW DELHI**

In the run-up to the first-ever District Development Council (DDC) polls in Jammu and Kashmir, the BJP on Monday termed the stance of the parties of the Gupkar alliance on Article 370 and the tricolour "anti-national" and demanded that the Congress clarify if it supported these parties or not.



Ravi Shankar Prasad at a press conference in New Delhi on Monday. ■ PTI

At a press conference, Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad cited a number of pro-people Central laws that have been brought into force in the Union Territory (UT) following the 2019 repeal of Article 370 and the tricolour "anti-national" and demanded that the Congress clarifies if it supported these parties or not.

"I want to ask Sonia Gandhi [Congress president] and Rahul Gandhi, do they want restoration of Article 370? Please tell the nation categorically and clearly does

the Congress support annulment of pro-people laws," Mr. Prasad asked. He attacked the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an amalgamation of various Jammu and Kashmir parties, whose demands have drawn some support from the Congress.

Mr. Prasad pointed to the "anti-national" views of National Conference (NC) leader Dr. Farooq Abdullah, who had favoured China's support for Article 370 restoration.

tion, and People's Democratic Party (PDP)'s Mehbooba Mufti's statement that she would not raise the national flag if the separate flag of Jammu and Kashmir is not restored, and sought to know the Congress's stand over them.

Mr. Prasad said women were earlier deprived of property rights in the UT if they married outside and anti-corruption laws, reservation for the disadvantaged sections of society and various other "humanist" Central laws were not implemented in the region. He accused the Gupkar alliance of working to push Jammu and Kashmir towards "narrow conservatism".

"If a Muslim or Hindu girl from Jammu and Kashmir married a boy from outside, then she would have no right in the property of her father. We have changed it and restored her right to property," he observed.

## Indian students in U.S. dropped 4.4% last year

International enrolment fell 42% after pandemic: survey

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**NEW DELHI**

The number of Indian students in the United States dropped 4.4 per cent in 2019-20, the worst drop in over a decade, according to initial data released on Monday from a study funded by the U.S. government.

COVID-19 is likely to pull those figures down even further, with new international student enrolment in American universities crashing 42 per cent in fall 2020. However, 90 per cent of institutions reported that students have deferred enrolment by a year, meaning that many may be hoping to resume their plans to study in the U.S. next year.

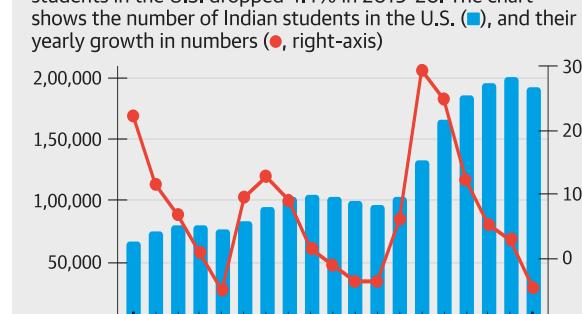
## China has bigger share

Key findings of Open Doors 2020, an annual survey conducted by the International Institute of Education in partnership with the U.S. State Department, showed that 18 per cent of the one million international students in the U.S. are from India. Only China, with 35 per cent, holds a bigger share of the international population in American institutions.

However, the number of Indian students in the U.S. dropped to 4.4 per cent to 1.93 lakh in 2019-20, after six straight years of growth. In

## Dropping diaspora

After growing for six consecutive years, the number of Indian students in the U.S. dropped 4.4% in 2019-20. The chart shows the number of Indian students in the U.S. (■), and their yearly growth in numbers (●, right-axis)



fact, this is the sharpest decline since the 5 per cent fall in 2005-06.

The 2020-21 drop is likely to be steeper still, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey of fall enrollment at 700 institutions showed that 20 per cent of their international students are studying online this year.

There is no data split available by country of origin for the 2020 enrolments.

## Admissions deferred

The total number of international students – including those studying online – dipped 16 per cent. But new enrolments were the worst hit, with a 43 per cent drop. The number of new international students who are in the U.S. and able to attend

## More options to file EPF life certificates

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**NEW DELHI**

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) on Monday said pensioners of the Employees' Pension Scheme 1995 could submit their life certificates to continue drawing pension through the Umang app, the EPFO's regional and district offices, pension disbursing banks and post offices.

Earlier, the pensioners would have to submit certificates in November but now they can submit it any time of the year, the EPFO said. "In the current scenario of COVID-19 pandemic, the EPFO has facilitated multiple options for EPS pensioners to submit their digital life certificate."

## Comply with FDI ceiling, govt. tells digital news firms

I&B Ministry seeks details of shareholders, directors

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**NEW DELHI**

Four days after it brought video streaming platforms such as Netflix under its jurisdiction, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Monday issued a detailed notification asking digital news portals to comply with the 26% cap on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) sanctioned last year.

The notification reiterates the Cabinet decision of August last year, imposing a 26% cap on FDI under government route for uploading/streaming of news and current affairs through digital media.

The only major departure

is that now even the companies with investment below this will continue," said Abhinandan Sekhri, co-founder of news portal *News Laundry*. Mr. Sekhri is also the general secretary of



REVIEW

# A fitting experience

The Apple Watch Series 6 released with a lot of pandemic-related concerns in mind for the user. Are these new features worth an upgrade?

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

The pandemic has reminded people to be more vigilant about their health – from calories burned to environmental pollution. As a response, technology has been cleverly inserting gadgets that prompt users to upgrade for a healthier lifestyle. A recent point of interest has been blood oxygen, which Apple has integrated into their Watch Series 6.

Apple also launched the Solo Loop bands this year; if you plan on investing, make sure you take at least four measurements using the disposable measuring ring and average them out, before you make your final purchase.

My review device was the blue aluminium; it is lighter on the wrist compared to the denser stainless steel, and is ideal for those with slighter wrists as well as for those who lead an active lifestyle. The build is still rather durable and has an attractive frosted finish. Plus, the OLED Always-On Retina display on the Series 6 is a slight glow-up from that of its predecessor.

The Series 6 and Series 5 are noticeably different in their sensors. While the Series 5 has a green light-emitting sensor, Series 6 has four LED clusters and four photodiodes incorporated into the back.

When taking blood oxygen readings, the photodiodes capture the light that is reflected to detect the colour of your blood. The colour of your blood indicates the oxygen le-

vel – bright red is more saturated, while dark red is less.

Apple Watch setup is quite easy, directly feeding information to your iPhone's Health app which presents your bio-data in digestible infographics.

## Power up

The device's watchOS 7 is powered by the S6 SiP (System in Package) and makes the most of the close-to-18 hour battery. The S6 sports a speedy dual-core processor similar to that on the A13 Bionic in iPhone 11.

I had to charge up to full battery once a day and for about 25 minutes in the evenings before activating Bedtime Mode. However, on days I used the Fitness app, the bat-

The device's watchOS 7 is powered by the S6 SiP, and makes the most of the close-to 18 hour battery.



tery required two full charges a day, which was expected. Ultimately, this is a decent battery life on a smartwatch that has multiple complicated functions through the day and night. Those who are considering upgrading from their Watch 3 or 4 will appreciate the massive battery life improvement.

I also activated Cellular, making it easy for me to go on errands and workouts without my phone, only accepting and attending to what was urgent. This switch-on marginally affected the battery life, but do note that linking the Cellular to your mobile phone plan may incur some data charges.

## Oxygen at the core

Now, back to the blood oxygen sensor, while useful in this post-COVID world, it also helps during workouts when wearing a mask while out for a run. I had a few issues with this sensor: it needed to be on a flat surface for 15 seconds while held completely still which is not easy in an outdoor workout scenario,

and more importantly, it often gave me statements of 'inconclusive readings'. However, when checking the Health app, numerical readings were registered from the background readings taken through the day. The blood oxygen sensor was one of the first things mentioned at the Series 6 keynote but unfortunately, the feedback issue needs fine-tuning before making bold statements.

The watchOS 7's SpO<sub>2</sub> and VO<sub>2</sub> Max (the maximum rate of oxygen consumption measured during incremental exercise) features is not new to the smartwatch industry. Brands such as Withings, Garmin and Fitbit have had these for a couple of years now. These additions to Apple Watch do round the health-tracking off nicely.

The sleep-tracking feature that comes with the new watchOS 7 is an

exciting add-on for existing and potential users. However, I found that some of the sleep data was not enough for me, someone with disturbed REM cycles. I decided to download third-party app Autosleep which gauges Deep Sleep, Sleep Debt, Sleep Movements, and more. The first week or so using this was insightful, indicating the importance of a pre-sleep wind-down. But later, the app offered many inaccurate readings while the native sleep-tracker stayed solid in the basic measurements of heart rate, breathing and sleeping hours.

The Series 6 is not a huge upgrade from the Series 5, this may not be too much of a stretch for you. In fact, most of the noteworthy features are watchOS 7-related, so if you already have a Watch with a robust battery life and a whip-smart SiP, you could skip this. However, if you have money to spare – ₹40,900 to be precise – and want the latest, you could give it a go.



**Tick tock** The Apple Watch Series 6 is faster than its predecessors

■ DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

GAMESPOT

As a launch game for the PlayStation 5, it looks the part and has some winning points, but Godfall is very boring

JULIAN ALMEIDA

You have heard of loot shooters like Borderlands and Destiny. Now make way for the very first loot slasher, Godfall. With loot-based games, the grind is part of the gaming experience, though there is always a balance that is tricky to achieve between storytelling and combat. As one of the first launch titles for next-gen consoles, Godfall seems to have tossed its hat into a very empty ring. Does this game live up to its hype or does this god fall?

[Insert very generic story here.] Yes, Godfall's tale is a threadbare excuse to push its worldbuilding – a vehicle to push beautiful environments with which we would associate a deity's realm. You play as Orin, the last of the Valorien Knights and a fallen king. Betrayed by his brother Macros, Orin has to marshal his strength and find a lot of loot to defeat his brother and his generals.

While the story feels like it was lifted from Marvel's version of Asgard or the plot of *Black Panther*, the character designs are interesting, especially those



# The very first loot slasher



of Orin and Macro, whose armours and masks reflect mythologies of Egypt and the Aztecs. The story has a predictable pace, with deliveries of lore doled out with the same zest as a bored guide at a run-down theme park. The gamerguns through the motions, instead of creating something special with its narrative.

The gameplay is a mix and match of styles from Monster Hunter to Devil May Cry series. However, Godfall hinges upon

the Valorplate armour system which imbues Orin with elemental abilities as well as their own progression systems. These look fantastic and, together with the five different weapon types, you can really mix and match to find your fighting style.

Fighting in Godfall is tied to its loot system; the more style, the more loot you get. For example, you can take advantage of weak points or find breaks in enemies' armour to yield more rewards. You could also accrue the enemies' health into one big explosion for style. All of these guarantee better drops and add a layer, albeit a thin one, of strategy to the fight. But if you just

# Make that a play date!

Two siblings set up a web-based platform for extra-curricular activities to keep children engaged safely outside school hours



**Digitally engaged** A young girl on a virtual learning platform ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

NAHLA NAINAR

Conscientious parents have always been concerned about how to keep their children productively occupied out of school hours. And since the lockdown has made online or televised class attendance the norm, the worry over how to keep children safely engaged has only grown.

Enter Playdate, a web-based platform that connects educators with parents for local extra-curricular activities for children from eight months to 15 years of age in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Delhi, Chandigarh, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Pune and Thane. Though the platform launched last year, it has seen more activity now owing to the current physical distancing norms.

**The Playdate team takes a merit-based approach to selecting tutors. There are no paid promotions**

Anagha in an email interview. "We have had the opportunity to observe her process closely – how parents find her class, get in touch, register, communicate. It made me realise that gaps exist in this unstructured market. We saw a strong need for a credible platform that could showcase India's best educators and programmes to a keen and discerning parent community. That is how we began."

The platform works with a group of community managers to identify the best educators in their neighbourhood. Often, the teachers are recommended by parents themselves, though the Playdate team takes a merit-based approach to select tutors. There are no paid promotions.

"The biggest verification in this space is a mom's word, and that is what we give importance to," says Anagha.

She adds, "We have a robust ratings and review system (carried out by parents) which is integrated on the platform. So the ratings and reviews determine how teachers get promoted across our social media platforms."

Extra-curricular activities are essential to children, especially in an age when technology-based education has assumed greater importance across the world.

"For our children to thrive in the coming decades, they will need to be armed with skill sets that go above and beyond the mark sheet. Learning how to find solutions for a problem and thinking on your feet will be some of the must-haves for future generations," says Anagha.

She adds, "Holistic development doesn't mean you have all the answers, it means you have developed a mindset and skills to address the questions. This is where extra-curricular activities play an important role."

For more information and/or to sign up, visit [playdate.in](http://playdate.in) or WhatsApp the team at +91 8928062560.

**Attack of the sword** Screenshots from the video game

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



**GODFALL**

**DEVELOPER:** Counterplay games

**PUBLISHER:** Gearbox Publishing

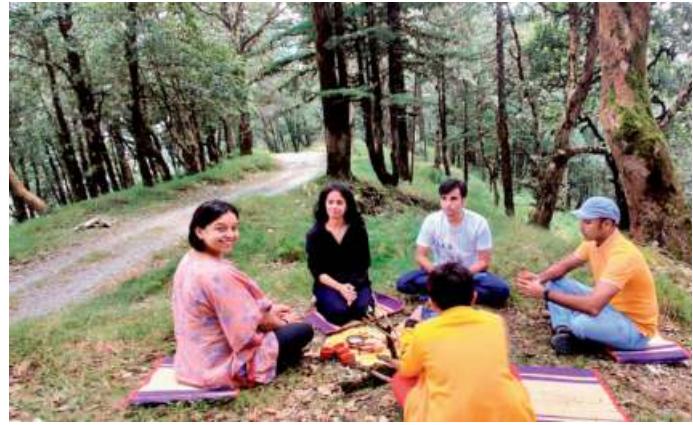
**PRICE:** ₹3,999 on Xbox Series X, Playstation 5, PC

levels you have been in, with different objectives.

Being a launch title on the PS5 and Xbox Series X, Godfall looks gorgeous. The world of Aperion has a godlike glow, and the graphics are worthy of the admission fee into this game. Despite the stock situation for the next-gen consoles, you can still play Godfall on PC, if you have a beefy enough rig.

Godfall is, at best, a first game in a series. While it is a decent step forward with its competent battle system, the repetition will give you massive buyer's remorse. This should have been a free-to-play game like Warframe. If Godfall does interest you, we suggest you wait and watch until bargains come around or this game becomes free-to-play.

The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel



**Finding oneself in the woods** (Far left) Dipika Sharma with her group, during one of her forest bathing retreats ■ GETTY IMAGES, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



## Under the silent deodars

Forest bathing or *shinrin-yoku*, as the Japanese call a mindful walk in the woods, is finding resonance among people tired of boxed-in city life, and a year of endless scrolling and swiping

■ ANASUYA MENON

Dipika Sharma has just returned from Patgot, Uttarakhand, where she led a group of 10 people through the enchanting Kilbury forest. They walked under trees that seemed to touch the sky, listened to birds and gurgling streams. After a two-night retreat, they are back in their city homes, feeling rejuvenated. They are a group of forest bathers and Dipika was their guide.

The ancient Japanese practice of *shinrin-yoku* (*shinrin* meaning forest and *yoku* meaning bath) is about mindful walking in the woods. Advocates of *shinrin-yoku* say it teaches you how to create little pockets of stillness within. "Don't confuse it with a trek or a jog. Forest bathing is just a slow, meditative stroll under the trees, where you absorb the sounds, smells and sights of the forest," Dipika explains.

Based in Noida, Dipika has been conducting forest bathing walks in Delhi since September 2019 and has held two retreats in the Himalayas through her website, Forest Therapy-India. With the pandemic and successive lockdowns, more people are awakening to the idea of going back to Nature. "People are now aware of how Nature can be the best stress-buster," she adds.

### In search of better health

After months of endless scrolling, swiping and clicking on devices, some time amid trees is refreshing, both physiologically and psychologically, says Nitin Das, a Delhi-based filmmaker who started forest bathing in 2016. He formed a collective in the same year, Healing Forests, which creates awareness on the restorative power of Nature.

What Nitin started as a personal blog now has grown across social media platforms. The Facebook page of Healing Forests has over 1,50,000 followers and the blog has over 10,000 readers. A WhatsApp group has over 100 members from different

parts of the country, who initiate people to forest bathing. "Humans are evolutionarily linked to Nature. So, when we go back to it, our brain releases certain hormones that lower stress levels," he says.

However, for practising *shinrin-yoku*, one does not necessarily need a forest, says Kala Ramchand, a haiku poet, who has been leading forest bathing walks and Earth Grounding (walking barefoot to promote physical connection with the Earth), for over three years in Pune. "Just look for parks and urban forests within your city. Even walking on a tree-lined road could make a difference," she says. The idea is to smell and feel, rather than see.

Kala's forest bathing walks are usually conducted on the 400-acre-sprawling campus of Pune University. She even got two 'forest bathing' boards installed with permission from the authorities. The walks are in Alice Garden, a heritage site packed with over 70-year-old trees that were planted by the British.

Kala encourages participants to touch the trees and hug them to build a sense of closeness. "It is good for the body too. Trees give out phytocides – anti-microbial organic compounds that are believed to help lower blood pressure and even enhance the body's autoimmune responses," she says.

Forest bathing typically lasts for about two hours and follows no fixed routine. Guides let participants experience the forest in their own ways. Some of them weave in meditation, journaling and photography.

Kala invites painters, musicians and dancers to express their experiences through their art form, and at times, she even introduces haiku to the group. The important thing is to have people believe in the authenticity of the practice, she says.

**Don't confuse forest bathing with a trek or a jog. It is a slow, meditative walk under the trees, where you absorb the sounds, smells and sights of the forest, focussing on how you feel**

Punashchetana, an exhibit by Bengaluru-based Shenoy Art Foundation, features 16 artists and their perception of the 'new normal'



so they could continue working during the lockdown. We also told them they would have a platform to showcase their creations, so they would work towards that goal."

The process served as a physical, mental and emotional outlet for the artists whose creativity seemed to have been set free.

remain motivated during this period, Shenoy encouraged young artists to have a body of work ready to exhibit whenever the lockdown lifted.

"The Shenoy Art Foundation chose about 11 artists we have worked with before, as well as five new ones and gave them a grant to help them with material



**Unusual muse** Artwork by Sanjeeva Rao Guthi (left) and by Meenakshi (bottom)

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Shenoy says, "Exclusion from family and friends, the change of everything familiar, a constraint of space – it led to them improvising, experimenting and adapting to the circumstances around them."

"For instance, one of the artists, Pradeep Kumar, who is also a farmer, painted on circular tiles used by the farming community in his hometown. He

created agrarian-themed works during this period."

Tabbu Tabassum who hails from Bellari and works on Mysore stone, says the lockdown had put her in a tight spot. "It was difficult to source stones, but I eventually managed. Space was also a constraint when working from home and none of my sculptures could be bigger than two feet. However, the exhibition was a chance for me to display my work," she says.

Punashchetana showcases the creative mindset of many first-generation artists when the lockdown was at its peak. Different genres, styles and media not only reflect contemporary issues, but also the artists' perception of the 'new normal'.

Online is also the new way of exhibiting to a wide audience.

*Punashchetana can be viewed at the Shenoy Art Foundation's Facebook and Instagram pages until November 30.*

**Away from the noise**  
Nitin leads his forest bathing walks at Sanjay Van in Delhi and the Gurgaon Biodiversity Park. "In Bangalore, Cubbon Park is where the walks are held," he adds. Kala, who is originally from Chennai, says Natesan Park in the city would be a great location for *shinrin yoku*. "Even Kalakshetra Foundation would be an ideal location. I plan to explore these options once the COVID-19 situation improves," she says. Auroville also has quiet, wooded areas, which are ideal forest bathing spots.

While the benefits of forest bathing are being widely studied in Scandinavian countries and Japan and South Korea, it is still nascent in India, says Dr Diptarup Chowdhury, a part of the faculty of Clinical Psychology at LGBRIMH, in Tezpur, Assam, one of the oldest mental health institutions in India.

Nature creates a space for self-healing, he says. "In the midst of Nature, in the absence of noise, you listen to the chatter of your mind and realise how much of it really matters," Diptarup adds. He has introduced forest bathing at the Youth Wellness Hub, a centre for promoting mental health among the youth, at LGBRIMH.

These walks, he believes, help young people get re-acquainted to Nature and learn to appreciate it. "Ours is an 80-acre campus with a wealth of trees. We can even catch a glimpse of the Himalayas ... the Brahmaputra flows next to our facility. By getting closer to Nature, one can build one's own repertoire of wellness," he says.

For those such as poet TM Shihab, who left his home in Fort Kochi 25 years ago to live in the forest, the city is just a noisy abode of discontent. He lived in a tree house in the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary for three years.

Now, having built a house in Kanthalur, a forest area near the Anaimudi National Park, Shihab says he has never felt the need to go back to the city. "The lure of the forest is irresistible. It is mysterious, there is something new to discover every day," he says. "There is no other way to live, than in a forest."



## The circus of adventures

For eight years, Chennai-based Manna Abraham travelled around the US as a travelling teacher with what claimed to be the 'biggest show on earth'

■ SARASWATHY NAGARAJAN

Not every teacher gets a jumbo group hug. But Mary Abraham, a.k.a. Manna Abraham, got one, literally, when she bid farewell to her work as a 'travelling teacher' with the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus in the US, promoted as the 'biggest show on earth'.

The circus' elephants' group hug is just one of many memorable moments that Manna wrote about in a recent post in Her Trivandrum – a closed social media group for women – which went viral.

Manna joined the circus at the age of 46 and travelled with them for eight years. As the only Indian with the 145-year-old The Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus, Manna got a ringside view of life in a circus. Eventually, the circus eventually closed down in 2017.

"I had no idea of what it would entail when I applied for the post of a 'travelling teacher'. Little did I think it would be with a circus, perhaps the largest in the world," recalls Chennai-based Manna.

The adventurous Manna had left for the US for a break in 2001 after putting in her papers at a school in Kuwait. She was working in a school in the US when she came across an advertisement for a 'travelling teacher'.

She decided to apply and was appointed as a teacher for children between the ages of five and 18 in 2004. "Either their parents were performers for the circus or the children were performing different acts. The classes were mandatory according to the Department of Education in the US. I taught all grades (1 to 12) and all subjects," explains Manna over a phone call from Chennai.

The newly-appointed teacher was given a room to herself with a minuscule kitchen and an attached bath on a mile-long train, the longest, privately owned one in the US. As she enjoyed Indian food, Manna cooked chicken, rice and all kinds of Indian food that many of her co-workers came to enjoy.

While the manager and those higher up in the

hierarchy of the circus had entire compartments for their use, those looking after the animals, cleaning their cages, and so on had bunk beds on the train, elaborates Manna.

Aboard the train were acrobats, jugglers, clowns, high-wire and tightrope walkers, lion tamers, animal trainers and an entire menagerie of animals like lions, tigers, zebras, horses and elephants.

"There were people from 27 nationalities on the train, acrobats from China, performers from Russia, Chile, Colombia, Brazil.... The train on which we travelled had about 300 people on board most of the time," she says.

Whenever the train stopped in a city for a show, Mary would hold her classes in a room or a space allotted for her at the arena. She recounts how she would complete her lesson plans and prep for the classes while they were travelling.

Manna travelled to 48 of the 50 states of the US and managed to explore many of the places too. As she travelled she connected with family and friends who picked her up from where the circus had a show and took her to tourist attractions. "Those eight years got rid of all my prejudices and fears about people. At the end of the day, we were all people trying to earn a living," asserts Manna.

After every show, she says there were parties and barbecues. However Manna was not a frequent party hopper as she often had lot of work to complete and wanted to be a role model for her students.

She says with pride that many of her students still keep in touch with her, though she returned to India in 2013.

As a qualified counsellor, Manna was sought by some of the parents and performers to help them sort out personal issues. "It was a world in itself. There were marriages, births, deaths, break-ups, tiffs and heartbreaks," she says. "The eight years were some of the most memorable years of my life."

**Looking back** (Top) The train that was home and (left) Manna Abraham

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Cathartic creations

■ RUTH DHANARAJ

The lockdown has been a dampener for artists in more ways than one – apart from zero sales or exhibitions on ground, the enforced isolation has kept them from all manner of interaction, curbing any ray of inspiration they may have received.

"The world is going through a new life experience and that is what Punashchetana is all about," says Bengaluru-based artist Gurudas Shenoy. "This has been a trying time, especially for younger artists with no scope for art camps, galleries or exhibitions since most artists have to sell their work to live."

Acutely aware of the need for artists to work continuously and



**Unusual muse** Artwork by Sanjeeva Rao Guthi (left) and by Meenakshi (bottom)

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Shenoy says, "Exclusion from family and friends, the change of everything familiar, a constraint of space – it led to them improvising, experimenting and adapting to the circumstances around them."

"For instance, one of the artists, Pradeep Kumar, who is also a farmer, painted on circular tiles used by the farming community in his hometown. He

created agrarian-themed works during this period."

Tabbu Tabassum who hails from Bellari and works on Mysore stone, says the lockdown had put her in a tight spot. "It was difficult to source stones, but I eventually managed. Space was also a constraint when working from home and none of my sculptures could be bigger than two feet. However, the exhibition was a chance for me to display my work," she says.

Punashchetana showcases the creative mindset of many first-generation artists when the lockdown was at its peak. Different genres, styles and media not only reflect contemporary issues, but also the artists' perception of the 'new normal'.

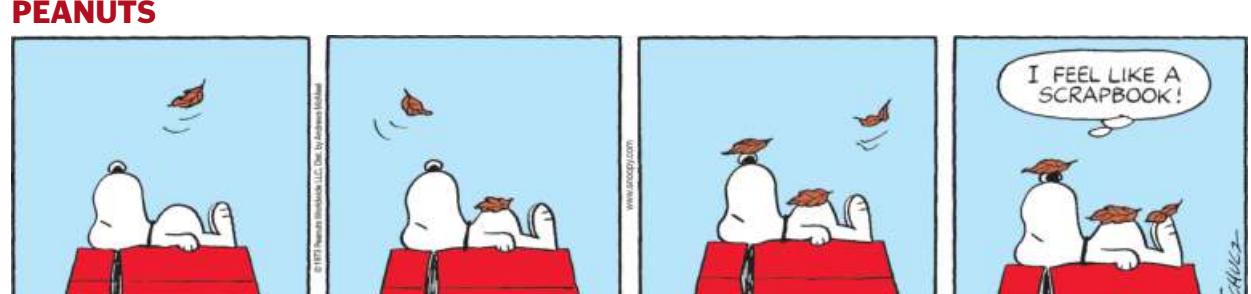
Online is also the new way of exhibiting to a wide audience.

*Punashchetana can be viewed at the Shenoy Art Foundation's Facebook and Instagram pages until November 30.*

### POOCHE CAFE



### PEANUTS



### HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



### CALVIN AND HOBBES



### TIGER



### PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



A N D - N D E

# Biden seeks window on vaccine plans

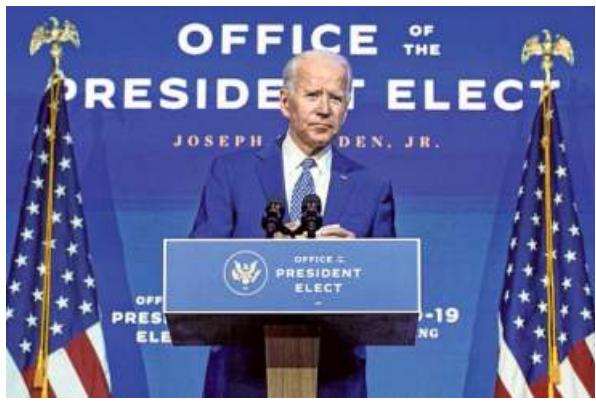
His scientific advisers will meet vaccine makers even as they are out of the loop on govt.'s vaccination plans

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON

President-elect Joe Biden's scientific advisers plan to meet with vaccine makers in coming days even as a stalled presidential transition keeps them out of the loop on government plans to inoculate all Americans against COVID-19.

President Donald Trump's refusal to accept that he lost the election means that the Biden team lacks a clear picture of the groundwork within the government for a mass vaccination campaign that will last the better part of next year, says Mr. Biden's chief of staff, Ron Klain.

"We now have the possibility... of a vaccine starting perhaps in December or January," Mr. Klain said. "There are people at HHS making plans to implement that vaccine. Our experts need to talk to those people as soon as possible so nothing



**Crucial phase:** Coordination between the outgoing and incoming governments is key to dealing with the crisis. ■AP

ing drops in this change of power we're going to have on January 20th."

#### Fauci's outreach

A lack of coordination between outgoing and incoming administrations would be especially problematic in a worsening public health crisis, said the government's top infectious disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci.

"Of course it would be better if we could start working with them," said Dr. Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who has been through multiple presidential transitions during 36 years of government service.

The President-elect's outreach to vaccine manufacturer

ers comes as the coronavirus pandemic in the U.S. has entered perhaps its most dangerous phase. The seven-day rolling average for new daily cases stood at 1,48,725 on Sunday, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. That means the U.S. is adding about 1 million new cases a week. Deaths averaged 1,103 a day as of Sunday, a 33% increase over two weeks.

Pfizer's announcement that preliminary data indicate its vaccine is 90% effective lifted financial markets last week and gave people worldwide hope that an end to the pandemic will be coming. On Monday, another company, Moderna, said its vaccine appears to be 94.5% effective, according to preliminary data.

"We're going to start those consultations this week," said Mr. Klain, including Pfizer and other pharmaceutical companies. But in some ways the more critical issue is getting a detailed understanding of distribution plans being finalised by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Pentagon.

"We need to be talking to them as quickly as possible," Mr. Klain said. "It's great to have a vaccine, but vaccines don't save lives—vaccinations save lives. And that means you've got to get that vaccine into people's arms all over this country. It's a giant logistical project."

Dr. Fauci stressed the arrival of vaccines won't be like flipping a switch to return to normal life. The first doses will become available for people in high-risk groups later this year. He said Americans will have to keep up preventive measures, such as wearing masks, observing social distancing well into next year.

# Imran's party in the lead in Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly poll

Initial reports suggest that PTI has won at least eight seats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) on Monday won eight of 23 constituencies and was leading in one seat in the legislative assembly polls in Gilgit-Baltistan, prompting Opposition parties to dub the election as "stolen".

Both the Opposition parties PPP and PML-N have alleged poll rigging by the ruling PTI.

Commenting on the unofficial results, PPP chief Bilawal Bhutto Zardari alleged that the "election was stolen".

"Our candidates were asked to leave PPP and join PTI," Mr. Bilawal said while addressing a protest rally at Gilgit's DC Chowk against the alleged rigging in the elections.

"The people of this region will not allow you to steal their votes," he said.

PML-N also rejected the election results, saying the party would protest against them.

Polling was due on 24 seats but it was postponed on one seat after the death of one of the contestants.

## ELSEWHERE



**Syria's longtime Foreign Minister dies at age 79**

BEIRUT  
Syria's longtime Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem, a career diplomat who became one of the country's most prominent faces to the outside world during the uprising against President Bashar Assad, died on Monday. He was 79. Al-Moallem, who served as Ambassador to Washington for nine years, starting in 1990 during Syria's on-and-off peace talks with Israel, was a close confidant of Mr. Assad. He was known for his loyalty. ■AP

## It is time for Trump to concede, says Obama

'No scenario to reverse poll outcome'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON

It's time for U.S. President Donald Trump to concede to President-elect Joe Biden, as there is no scenario to reverse the outcome of the election, his predecessor Barack Obama has said.

Mr. Trump, who is refusing to concede, has 232 electoral college votes. He has challenged the election results in various States, including Pennsylvania, Nevada, Michigan, Georgia and Arizona. He had demanded a recount in Wisconsin.

Mr. Biden has 306 of the 538 electoral college votes.

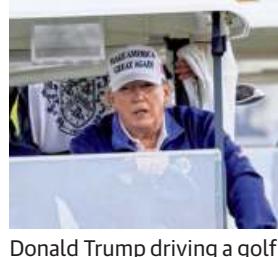
## Trump campaign retreats from key claim in Pennsylvania suit

It maintains that Democratic voters were treated more favourably

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
PENNSYLVANIA

Ahead of a Tuesday hearing in the case, President Donald Trump's campaign dropped the allegation that hundreds of thousands of mail-in and absentee ballots – 6,82,479, to be precise – were illegally processed without its representatives watching.

The campaign's revised lawsuit, filed in federal court on Sunday, maintains the aim of blocking Pennsylvania from certifying a victory for Mr. Biden in the State,



Donald Trump driving a golf cart in Virginia. ■REUTERS

and it maintains its claim that Democratic voters were treated more favourably than Republican voters.

The campaign still contends in the lawsuit that hun-

dreds of thousands of ballots weren't properly processed.

The Trump campaign isn't making that claim on the hundreds of thousands of mail-in and absentee ballots, however. Instead, it targets the practice of giving voters an opportunity to fix mail-in ballots that were going to be disqualified for a technicality.

It contends some Democratic-run counties allowed voters to do that, while Republican counties did not, arguing Democratic voters were treated more favourably.

Mr. Johnson met with a small group of Conservative lawmakers for about 35 minutes on Thursday. One, Lee Anderson, later developed coronavirus symptoms and tested positive.

Mr. Johnson said he was contacted by the national test-and-trace system on Sunday and was following its order to self-isolate for 14 days even though he is "bursting with antibodies" after recovering from the virus earlier in the year.

"It doesn't matter that we were all doing social distancing, it doesn't matter that I'm fit as a butcher's dog, feel great – so many people do in my circumstances," he said.

## Islamabad blocked off over anti-France protest

Mobile phone services were suspended

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan authorities sealed off a major road into Islamabad for a second day on Monday as a far-right religious party held fresh anti-France protests.

Around a thousand protesters gathered at the road-block preventing them from entering the capital, a day after 5,000 people rallied in neighbouring Rawalpindi.

Authorities have suspended mobile phone services in Islamabad and surrounding areas since early Sunday to prevent rally organisers from coordinating, apart from some brief intervals when coverage appeared to resume.

Commuters faced lengthy

## Sri Lanka to unveil crucial budget today amid virus

Hit by COVID-19, the island nation's economy has come under strain

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's ruling Rajapaksa administration will present its maiden Budget on Tuesday, amid a relentless second wave of COVID-19 that hit the island nation last month.

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, also the Minister of Finance, will unveil the Budget for the year 2021 in Parliament, and the final vote – after its third reading – is scheduled on December 10.

The Budget assumes significance, coming amid a devastating global pandemic. Sri Lanka's foreign reserves are under enormous strain in the wake of mounting external debt – the government recently repaid \$4.2 billion

for this year – while its export and tourism sectors, and worker remittances from abroad, have been severely impacted. The budget comes a year after President Gotabaya Rajapaksa rose to power, promising his voters development and prosperity, and at a time when analysts have warned of a GDP contraction of possibly up to 10%, a low that the country did not experience even during its civil war years.

Meanwhile, the plight of Sri Lanka's working people has come to the fore.

Not only because of the cluster that broke out at a garment factory near Colombo last month, putting the lives and jobs of several thou-



Mahinda Rajapaksa

sand workers at risk, but also because the threat of joblessness looms larger than before. Worker organisations are desperately looking for some respite in the budget, to help them cope.

According to Anton Marcus, joint secretary, Free Trade Zones and General Services Employees Union – representing workers from

most of Sri Lanka's garment factories – some 20,000 workers of the 300,000 employed companies affiliated to Sri Lanka's Board of Investment have already lost their jobs. "There is a fear of even higher rates of joblessness in the coming months. So about 10 major unions have got together and submitted a proposal for an unemployment benefit insurance scheme. The budget will tell us if the government has taken it into consideration," he told *The Hindu*.

#### Concerns on job security

Chamila Thushari, of Da Bindu Collective, an organisation working with women employed in the Free Trade Zones, too emphasised the need for the budget to address widespread concerns about job security. "It is very

important that the government substantially widens social security. It is essential to allocate money to provide these workers with a cash assistance and essential goods in these bleak times."

It is not just the garment sector workers who are worried. The over 100,000 workers in tea estates, another vital, foreign exchange-earning sector, are faced with heightened poverty and uncertainty since the pandemic hit. "In January, just ahead of Pongal festival, President Rajapaksa promised to raise their wages to LKR 1,000 a day (roughly ₹400). The demand for 1,000 rupees is now five years old and it is yet to be met. The pandemic has meant fewer days of work and even lesser wages [than the 700 they currently get]," said C. Gane-

salingam, convenor of the Movement for Plantation People's Land Rights. Further, with many hill country youth employed in capital Colombo losing their jobs and returning to the estates, the number of people to feed in each family has increased. "Some families tell us that they have two instead of three meals a day."

"The pandemic has spared no one. But we have to see how it affects a community that has been neglected and marginalised for several decades. Only a comprehensive policy can help them in the long run. It must factor in job creation, say by ensuring access to agriculture sector, setting up small industries, housing needs, education infrastructure, better health and safety for workers," he added.

## We will not give up cartoons, asserts Macron

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

French President Emmanuel Macron has called *The New York Times* media correspondent to criticise English-language coverage of France's stance on Islamic extremism after recent attacks, arguing it amounts to "legitimising" violence.

"So when I see, in that context, several newspapers which I believe are from countries that share our values... when I see them legitimising this violence, and saying that the heart of the problem is that France is racist and Islamophobic, then I say the founding principles have been lost."

In his column, Ben Smith said the French President had argued "foreign media failed to understand 'laïcité,'" or secularism, a pillar of French policy and society. "We will not give up cartoons," he vowed.

## What's behind the conflict between Ethiopian govt. and Tigray rebels?

PM Abiy's target is TPLF but the conflict risks sliding into a wider civil war

STANLEY JOHNSY

**E**tiopeia's Nobel Prize winning Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed started a military operation in the rebellious Tigray region earlier this month. Mr. Abiy has said it would be a limited campaign focusing on the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the militia cum-political party that runs the northern region. However, almost two weeks into the conflict, Ethiopia risks falling into an ethnic civil war with regional implications.

#### Who is TPLF?

The TPLF was founded in 1975 as a resistance army against the Tigrayan people against the military dictatorship, which was called the Derg. The leftist Derg, which was established in 1974, would change its title in 1987 but practically remained in power till it was ousted by the

armed rebels in 1991. The TPLF played a crucial role in ousting the junta and they were welcomed as national heroes in 1991. TPLF leader Meles Zenawi took over as the interim President in 1991 and became the first elected Prime Minister in 1995. He is largely seen as the architect of the country's ethno-federal system and remained in power till 2012.

But over the years, the government led by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition put together by Mr. Zenawi, was accused of being increasingly authoritarian and there were frequent mass protests in the regions. Though the EPRDF contains regional political parties such as the Amhara Democratic Party, the Oromo Democratic Party and the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement, the TPLF remained the dominant political force. In 2018, the EPRDF chose Mr. Abiy, a former military intelligence officer, to lead the government amid growing protests and a political deadlock.

**Rise of Abiy**  
Though the EPRDF provided a stable rule with high economic growth for 17 years, there was mounting criticism against the country's ethn-

federal arrangement. The Tigray people make up roughly 6% of the population, while the Oromos have a 34% share and the Amhara 27%. While the TPLF controlled the levers of power through the EPRDF, the Oromos alleged marginalisation.

As Prime Minister, Mr. Abiy took a host of steps to cut the outsized influence of the TPLF in the government. He purged TPLF functionaries from key government posts, released political prisoners (jailed by the TPLF-led government) and promised freer media. He reached out to Eritrea, a sworn enemy of the TPLF, which shares a long border with the Tigray region.

Mr. Abiy, the country's first Oromo leader, claimed that his actions are not driven by ethnic calculations but rather aimed at addressing the historic power imbalance in the country and making peace with the neighbours. But the TPLF saw his moves as hostile.

#### EXPLAINER

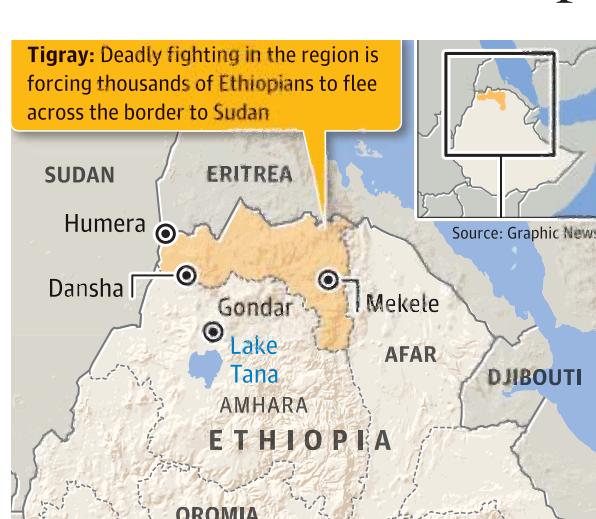
#### War begins

The tensions were building up for a while. When Mr. Abiy formed a new political coalition, the Prosperity Party, all constituents of the EPRDF, except the TPLF, joined the new platform. The TPLF saw the formation of a new party as an attempt by

trea from Tigray, threatening a wider regional war in the Horn of Africa. Tigray rebels also fired rockets into the neighbouring Amhara region.

Even if Mr. Abiy is serious about keeping the operation short, it could spill out of control, given the underlying complexities of the conflict. The TPLF's old guard cut their teeth in the resistance against the Derg and they have thousands of fighters under their command. Also, the Tigray region shares a border with Sudan. The TPLF enjoyed good relations with Sudan's ousted dictator Omar Bashir.

Sudan has a border dispute with Ethiopia. If Sudan's new rulers (the transition government includes civilian and military leaders) keep the old links with the TPLF active and the border open for the rebels, the conflict could go on. If it does, it could derail Mr. Abiy's reform agenda at home as well as the diplomatic agenda abroad.



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'Stimulus 3.0' supportive for growth, fiscal impact unclear'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

India's third tranche of stimulus measures should support economic rebound over the coming quarters but the actual fiscal impact is difficult to ascertain, Fitch Solutions said on Monday.

The government on November 12 announced another stimulus package, called Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan 3.0, totalling ₹2.65 lakh crore.

The package included a boost to formal employment, the Production Linked (PLI) Scheme, an increase in the fertiliser subsidy and the rural employment programme MGNREGA. In a report, Fitch Solutions said India's fiscal deficit is likely to be 7.8% of the GDP in the FY21. "While many of ('Stimulus 3.0') scheme should be supportive to India's economic rebound over the coming quarters, the actual impact on public finances is difficult to ascertain," Fitch said.

The PLI scheme, for instance, spans across a five-year period, and its fiscal impact will likely only be seen from FY2021-22 onwards, it said.

**Additional expenditure**  
"Estimating using the outright fiscal outlays from this announcement, 'Stimulus 3.0' appears to suggest additional expenditure of ₹1 lakh crore [0.44% of FY2019/20 GDP]," it said.

Moreover, the announcement did not outline any additional borrowing to finance these additional spending, which suggests a reallocation of FY2020/21 budget expenditure plans instead, Fitch added.

# A day after RCEP, Jaishankar slams trade pacts, globalisation

The effect of past trade agreements has been to deindustrialise some sectors'

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

India has allowed other countries 'unfair' trade and manufacturing advantages "in the name of openness", External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar asserted in a speech criticising globalisation on Monday. Speaking just a day after the 15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was signed, Mr. Jaishankar was particularly scathing of trade agreements.

"In the name of openness, we have allowed subsidised products and unfair production advantages from abroad to prevail. And all the while, this was justified by the man-



**Raw deal:** In the name of openness, we have allowed unfair production advantages from abroad, Mr. Jaishankar said. ■AP

tra of an open and globalised economy," Mr. Jaishankar said at the Deccan Dialogue conference supported by the Ministry of External Affairs.

Without directly referring to the RCEP, the trading bloc

that India decided to walk out of a year ago, Mr. Jaishankar said that the government had decided to move away from trading arrangements, towards an "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India)

policy where India could decide the rules and consolidate "comprehensive national power".

The effect of past trade agreements has been to deindustrialise some sectors. The consequences of future ones would lock us into global commitments, many of them not to our advantage. Those who argue stressing openness and efficiency do not present the full picture," Mr. Jaishankar said. India was not "turning its back on the world" but strengthening itself.

The minister's comments indicate that India is not considering an offer from RCEP nations to rejoin the group.

The WPI for August has been revised upwards from 0.16% as reported earlier to 0.41%, as per final data compiled by the Office of the Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of In-



gest that this trend has strengthened with manufactured group inflation hitting a 19-month high of 2.1%, and core inflation accelerated to the highest level in 18 months at 1.7%, according to a note by India Ratings and Research.

## 'Not yet a recovery'

"Increase in core inflation suggests improvement in demand conditions, which have improved after [the] COVID-related lockdown was lifted. However, it will be too early to term this as a general recovery; a large part of this is due to festival related demand," said Devendra Kumar Pant, chief economist at the rating firm. He termed rising retail food inflation and declining wholesale food inflation 'a nightmare for policymakers'.

dustry and Internal Trade.

This revision assumes significance as August marked the first month since March that the WPI clocked positive growth, which was considered a sign of an industrial recovery with producers' pricing power returning.

October's numbers sug-

# WPI quickens to 8-month high

Food inflation slows to 5.78%, vegetables cool to 25.2%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India's wholesale price inflation quickened to the highest level in eight months, reaching 1.48% in October 2020 as per provisional data, compared with 0% in October 2019 and 1.32% in September this year.

The WPI Food Index inflation slowed from 6.92% in September 2020 to 5.78% in October, 2020, with vegetables inflation cooling down to 25.23% from 36.5% in September. Inflation in potato prices touched 107.7%, while onions registered 8.5% inflation in October.

The WPI for August has been revised upwards from 0.16% as reported earlier to 0.41%, as per final data compiled by the Office of the Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of In-

# Power demand grew 7.8% in first half of Nov.

Diesel sales fell, after rising in October



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

India's power consumption grew 7.8% to 50.15 billion units (BU) in the first half of November this year, signalling a rise in economic activity, as per government data.

Power consumption was recorded at 46.52 BU during November 1-15 last year, according to power Ministry data. For all of November last year, power consumption was 93.94 BU.

Separately, four industry officials said three to four bids have been put in.

Reliance

Industries,

which was considered a potential bidder as BPCL would have added 22% fuel market share to its fledgling retail business and made it the nation's number one oil refiner.

Thus, the extrapolation

of half-month data clearly

indicates that power con-

sumption may witness year-

on-year growth for the third

month in a row, according

to experts.

Diesel sales in the country fell 5% in the first half of November from a year ear-

## Airlines may return to pre-COVID levels by Jan.'

Have opened up 70% capacity: Puri

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

Airlines in India are likely to be permitted to operate at the pre-COVID-19 capacity levels by year-end or mid-January, from the existing 70%.

"By December 31 or soon thereafter [which] means a week or two weeks thereafter we will back to pre-Covid levels," Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Monday.

Virtually addressing the Indian School of Business's Deccan Dialogue, the Minister said he had already urged officials to consider allowing airlines to operate at 80% from the 70% the carriers are permitted now.

Civil aviation in the country was resumed on



Hardeep Singh Puri

May 25, a good two months and two days after we had completely locked down [for COVID-19] with 30,000 passengers in a day. Two or three days ago, just before Diwali, we carried 225,000 [passengers]," he said, stressing the need to adhere to the safety protocols and maintain discipline.

## BPCL gets 3-4 bids; Reliance skips, no big players in race

'Multiple' expressions of interest received, tweets FM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The government on Monday received 'multiple' bids for buying out its stake in India's second-biggest fuel retailer BPCL.

However, billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries as well as supermajors Saudi Aramco, BP and Total did not make a bid.

Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), which is handling the strategic sale, tweeted that the transaction advisers for the sale of government's 52.98% in Bharat Petroleum Corp. Ltd. (BPCL) have reported receiving "multiple expressions of interest."



Sitharaman tweeted.  
Neither of them, however, gave the number of bids received or the names of the bidders.

Separately, four industry officials said three to four bids have been put in.

Reliance Industries, which was considered a potential bidder as BPCL would have added 22% fuel market share to its fledgling retail business and made it the nation's number one oil refiner.

However, it did not put in an expression of interest (EoI) at the close of the deadline on Monday.

A clutch of private equity funds and/or pension funds are said to have put in an EoI.

## China factory output faster than expected

REUTERS  
BEIJING

China's factory output rose faster than expected in October and retail sales sped up, as the recovery from its COVID-19 slump gathered momentum.

Industrial production climbed 6.9% in October from a year earlier, data from the National Statistics Bureau showed on Monday, in line with September's gain and faster than the 6.5% rise expected in a Reuters poll of analysts.

China's industrial sector has staged an impressive turnaround from the pandemic paralysis seen earlier this year, helped by resilient exports. Now, with the coronavirus largely under control in China, consumers are opening up their wallets again in a further boost to activity.

## Made-in-China items find favour with 29% buyers

Lower prices drive decisions: survey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Chinese products continued to find favour among more than a fourth of Indian households as they offered higher 'value for money' even as a majority of respondents chose to skip products made in China, according to a survey.

In a survey by LocalCircles, which registered 14,000 responses, 71% respondents said that they "consciously did not buy made-in-China items", while 29% said they had bought made-in-China products this festival season.

Asked what prompted them to choose Chinese products, 66% respondents who purchased made-in-China products said they did so because they found the products offered 'value

for money', while 13% chose them for their "uniqueness". Though 71% consumers did not buy made-in-China products this festive season, many of those who did, ended up doing so because of lower prices," LocalCircles said in a statement.

"With earnings impacted...

...for many households this year, buying the lowest-cost product was not a choice but the only option."

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"With earnings impacted...

...for many households this year, buying the lowest-cost product was not a choice but the only option."

## Apollo Tyres to pare capital expenditure

Focus on 'sweating' the assets, says MD

N. ANAND  
CHENNAI

Apollo Tyres Ltd. (ATL), is aiming to lower its capital expenditure during the current fiscal while it focusses on 'sweating' the assets, and deleveraging the balance sheet, said a top official.

"We are towards the end of our current capex cycle," said Neeraj Kanwar, vice chairman and MD, during an analysts' call. "Going forward, the focus would be on sweating the assets and deleveraging the balance sheet," he added.

In the next 2-3 years, ATL would aim to get return-on-capital-employed levels to double digits, he said. As of March, it was 5.3%. For the first half, ATL's capex was ₹600 crore. ATL had earlier planned capex of about

## India sees 375 cyberattacks everyday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Referring to China as a major 'challenge' from a cybersecurity perspective for India, National Cyber Security Coordinator Lt. Gen. (retd.) Rajesh Pant on Monday said cyberattacks have gone up manifold in the current environment.

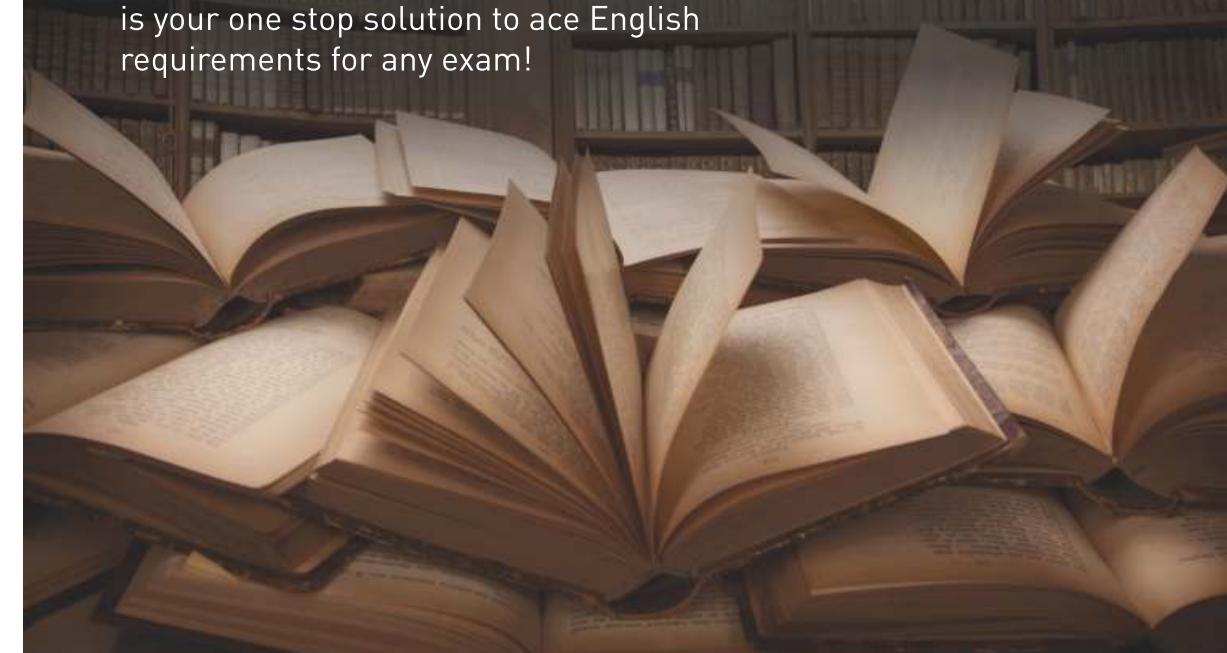
"In such unprecedented times, you mentioned two Cs – the challenge of corona and challenge of cyber. Actually, at the perch which I sit, there are 3 Cs. The third 'C' of course is on our northern border, which is another challenge that we are facing," Mr. Pant said at an event organised by HDFC Bank.

"There are 4 lakh malware, we find every day. 375 cyberattacks take place," he added.

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# Johnson realises childhood Masters dream

Sets a few records on way to second Major title; Im and Smith second, five strokes behind



## ...And the Green Jacket goes to

Records tumbled during Dustin Johnson's spectacular journey at Augusta

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

AUGUSTA  
Top-ranked Dustin Johnson won the Masters in record-smashing fashion on Sunday, capturing his second Major title with the lowest total score in Augusta National history.

### In tears

The 36-year-old American, known for keeping his cool on the course, was in tears after winning the green jacket only an hour's drive from where he grew up. "It's a dream come true," a crying Johnson said. "As a kid I al-

ways wanted to become a Masters champion. It's just incredible."

Johnson, whose other Major victory came at the 2016 US Open, fired a four-under 68 to finish on a Masters record 20-under 268. That was good enough for a five-stroke triumph over South Korean Im Sung-jae and Australian Cameron Smith with third-ranked American Justin Thomas fourth on 276.

Johnson's score in relation to par matched the lowest in Major history and smashed the old 72-hole Masters mark of 18-under 270 set by Tiger

Woods in 1997. It was an incredible turnaround for a player who missed his planned Masters tune-ups after contracting COVID-19 last month, returning only last week with a runner-up effort in Houston.

Johnson, who began with a four-shot edge, had never converted a 54-hole Major lead into a title, stumbling at the 2010, 2015 and 2018 US Opens and in August's PGA Championship, where he finished runner-up.

Johnson is the first reigning World No. 1 to grab the green jacket since Tiger

Woods in 2002. Im had the lowest score for any Masters newcomer but couldn't become the first debut winner since 1979. Smith closed on 69, becoming the first Masters player to shoot all four rounds in the 60s.

**Woods' nightmare**  
Woods, a five-time Masters winner and 15-time Major champion, found Rae's Creek three times on his way to a septuple-boogy 10 at the par-3 12th, his worst score ever on a Major hole. He responded with birdies on five

of the last six holes to close on 76 and finish on 287.

Germany's Bernhard Langer, at 63 the oldest to make any Masters cut, shot 71 to finish on 285, one stroke better than US Open champion Bryson DeChambeau, who closed on 73 and never threatened to overpower Augusta, nagged by dizziness.

**The scores:** 268: Dustin Johnson (65, 70, 65, 68); 273: Im Sung-jae (Kor, 66, 70, 68, 69), Cameron Smith (Aus, 67, 68, 69, 69); 276: Justin Thomas (66, 69, 71, 70); 277: Dylan Frittelli (RSA, 65, 73, 67, 72), Rory McIlroy (NIR, 75, 66, 67, 69).

Perfect fit! Dustin Johnson gets the green jacket from 2019 winner Tiger Woods.

REUTERS

### No hiccups

■ The American registered just four bogeys, the lowest at the Masters, bettering the records of Trevor Immelman (2008), Phil Mickelson (2004), Ben Crenshaw (1995), Jack Nicklaus (1965) and Jimmy Demaret (1940).

### Finding the fairways

■ Johnson hit 60 of the 72 greens, tying with Woods (2001) for the most at Augusta. Nolan Henke, too, hit 60 en route to a T-6 finish in 1992.

### Sensational streak

■ Johnson has finished first or second in six of his last seven starts.

### PGA Championship:

Runner-up;  
**Northern Trust:**  
Winner;  
**BMW Championship:**  
Runner-up; **Tour Championship:** Winner;  
**U.S. Open:** Sixth; **Houston Open:** Runner-up;  
**Augusta Masters:** Winner

### No Green Jacket, but...

■ Runners-up Im and Smith's 15-under 273 is the lowest shot by players who haven't gone on to win the title.

■ Smith's 67-68-69-69 made him the first player in Masters history to shoot four rounds in the 60s.

# Djokovic routs Schwartzman

Nadal proves too good for Russian debutant Rublev

### ATP FINALS

REUTERS

LONDON  
Diego Schwartzman suffered a similar fate to fellow ATP Finals debutant Andrey Rublev the previous night as the Argentine was brushed aside by five-time champion Novak Djokovic on Monday.

Russian Rublev barely laid a glove on 20-time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal during a straight sets loss and Schwartzman looked equally powerless to prevent a sixth defeat from six meetings with the clinical Djokovic, losing 6-3, 6-2.

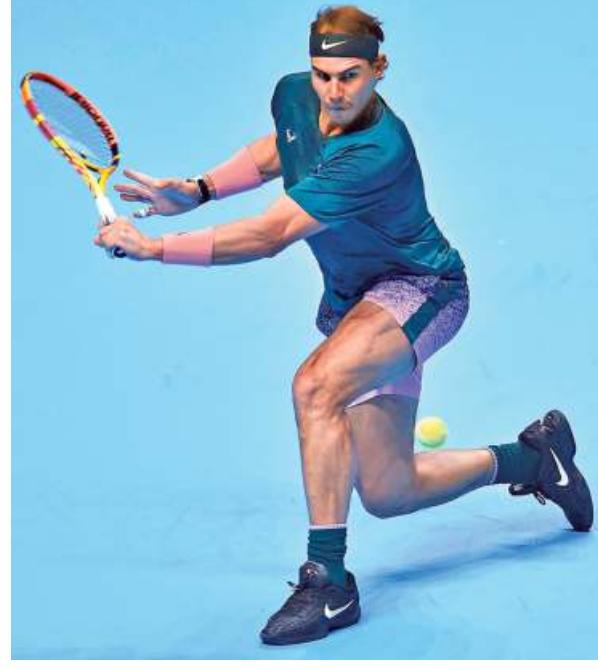
The Serb dropped serve early on, but was immaculate thereafter. He broke back immediately and then pounced again when Schwartzman served at 3-4, outmanoeuvring his opponent before pummelling away a forehand winner into the corner.

Djokovic secured two breaks in the second set and clinched victory with minimum fuss.

On Sunday, Nadal began his quest to fill the one blank on his glittering CV in impressive fashion with a crushing 6-3, 6-4 defeat of Rublev.

The Spanish 20-time Grand Slam champion looked in menacing form against the Russian youngster. The World No. 2 broke serve in the sixth game before winning the first set.

Rublev, whose five titles this year was more than any other player on the ATP



Breezing through: Rafael Nadal took just 77 minutes to get past Andrey Rublev. ■ AFP

Tour, became visibly frustrated as he could make no impression on the rock-solid Spaniard, having dropped serve at the start of the second set.

Nadal was clinical on serve and wrapped up victory in his opening round-robin match in the London Group in 77 minutes.

**The results:** **Group Tokyo 1970:** 1-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt 8-Diego Schwartzman (Arg) 6-3, 6-2.

**Group London 2020:** 2-Rafael Nadal (Esp) bt 7-Andrey Rublev (Rus) 6-3, 6-4.

**Doubles:** **Group Bob Bryan:** 4-Marcel Granollers (Esp) & Horacio Zeballos (Arg) bt 6-John Peers (Aus) & Michael Venus (NZ) 7-6(2).

■ The last time Nadal won his opening match at the ATP Finals was in 2015

■ The Spaniard has never won the title and is a two-time finalist (2010 and 2013)

■ Djokovic's win over Schwartzman was his 37th at ATP Finals, moving him past Becker into third place in the all-time list. Federer leads the tally (59) followed by Lendl (39)

**Group Mike Bryan:** 2-Rajeev Ram (USA) & Joe Salisbury (GBR) bt 8-Lukasz Kubot (Pol) & Marcelo Melo (Bra) 7-5, 3-6, [10-5].

# Not sure Kohli's absence will be a deciding factor: Cummins

Pacer says Australia keen to 'make amends' for 2018-19 loss

### INDIA IN AUS

AMOL KARHADKAR

MUMBAI

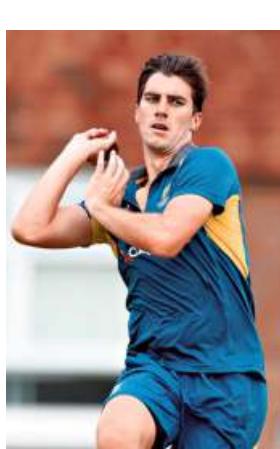
Ever since it was announced last week that Virat Kohli would return to India after the first Test against Australia, it has stolen the headlines across the cricketing globe.

Asked to weigh in on the effect of Kohli's absence on the series, Australia pace wizard Pat Cummins said it "might make a bit of a difference" but it won't be a deciding factor.

### Will be missed

"As a captain, obviously he'll be missed, but the Indian cricket side always has some incredible batsmen outside the team just waiting for an opportunity, so maybe that new opportunity will be the beginning of someone else's career," Cummins said in a select media interaction on Monday.

"It might make a bit of a difference. I am not sure it's



Pat Cummins. ■ GETTY IMAGES

going to be a deciding factor in the series, but to be honest us players haven't spoken too much about it."

The tour, which starts with the first of three ODIs on November 27 and will be telecast on Sony Six, is being touted as an opportunity for revenge for Australia since India won its first Test series Down Under in 2018-19.

Cummins stressed that Australia is eager to "make amends" this time around.

"Both teams, I think, are at the top of the Test championship table at the moment. It's going to be a high-quality series," he added.

The 27-year-old also said Australia was in a better position now compared with the 2018-19 series, which David Warner and Steve Smith missed because they were serving suspensions after the ball-tampering incident in South Africa.

### Best in the world

"If I look back at that series, obviously Smith and Warner [are back], but obviously you've got Marnus [Labuschagne] who now is one of the best batters in the world. Travis Head's had another 20 or 30 games and obviously the bowlers, two years further down the track. Hopefully we're better equipped than we were a couple of years ago. But India are much the same. They have got the same line-up, same high-quality players, so it's going to be a great series."

# 'When Virat goes home, Rohit might step up'

McGrath also says Bumrah has 'every attribute' as a fast-bowler 'to be one of the greats'

AYAN ACHARYA

CHENNAI

Former Australia fast-bowler Glenn McGrath said in a select media interaction on Monday that Virat Kohli's absence during the Border-Gavaskar series will be an opportunity for Rohit Sharma to realise his full potential as a Test batsman. Excerpts:

Virat Kohli will return home after the first Test for the birth of his child. Will that impact India's chances in the four-match series?

■ The birth of your child is a very important time and he wants to be there for it and support his wife. So, I can understand.

There is no doubt that it will impact the series for India to lose a player of his quality and class. It's up to the other players to do the heavy lifting.

In Kohli's absence, who might the Australian bowlers target?

■ Rohit Sharma is a quality batsman who hasn't achieved at Test level what he should be achieving in my opinion... Maybe when Virat goes home, he might step up.

Having said that, you can't just focus on one player. You have [Ajinkya] Rahane, [Cheteshwar] Pujara, [K.L.] Rahul, so there's a quality batting line-up.

Once Virat leaves, it will be an opportunity for someone else to put their hand up and make a mark. Maybe that could be Rohit Sharma.

### How important is the Adelaide Test?

■ India haven't played a Day/Night Test in Australia.

It is unique, especially with the sun setting and at night, where it starts favouring the bowlers, primarily the quicks.

■ Bumrah is a class bowler. He has a lot of mental strength to go along with his skills.

It is about timing – when you are bowling or batting in those conditions.

Virat, to have an impact, needs to come good... the first Test will set the tone – two years ago, [India] won



the first game in Adelaide and went on to win the series.

What does Jasprit Bumrah need to do to hit the ground running in Australia?

■ Bumrah is a class bowler. He has a lot of mental strength to go along with his skills.

He bowls good pace and good areas... his second and third spells are just as quick as his first, so he has got ev-

ery attribute to be one of the greats.

He will be fine – it is about confidence and getting a few overs under your belt... finding the right length on the slightly quicker wickets.

That said, he did pretty well in the IPL, bowled a lot of overs, so he will be confident in his body.

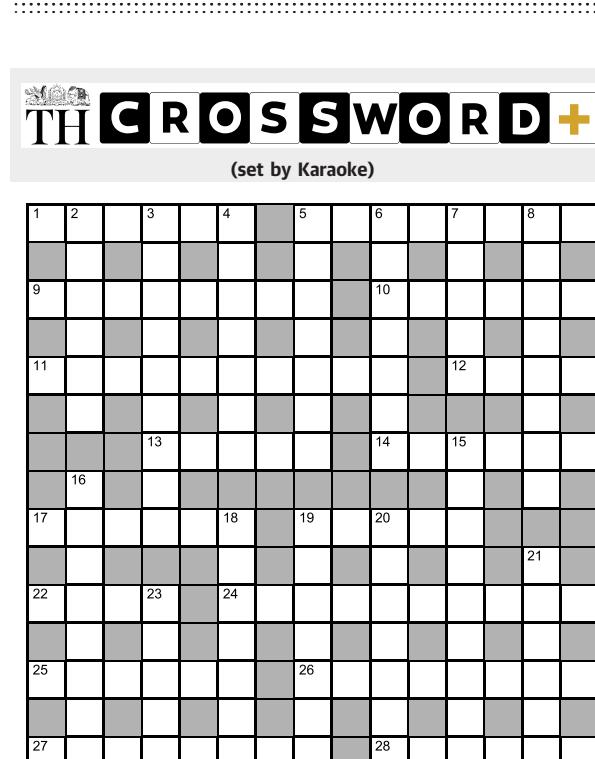
India's tour of Australia will be telecast live from 8 a.m. on November 27, on Sony Ten 1, Sony Ten 3 and Sony Six channels.

# Fresh outbreak in Adelaide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ADELAIDE

A fresh coronavirus outbreak in Adelaide on Monday forced Australian players, including captain Tim Paine, into self-isolation, but the cricket board asserted that the first Test against India from December 17 would go ahead as scheduled.



### ACROSS

- 1 Bad money rotated around clubs (6)
- 5 Khan dancing nude outside by implication (8)
- 9 Hazy smog obstructs two-wheeler in any large city (3,5)
- 10 Soldiers receive short rebuke for bloomer (6)
- 11 Floating bergs engulfed each and everything from foreigner (10)
- 12 They go with bolts in components (4)
- 13 Within no time, go-team draws the conclusion (5)

14 Look about sweetheart in brief and lure (6)

17 Doctor joins in Afghan war (6)

19 Best camera shot needs initial adjustment (5)

22 Picked up source from sounds of corvine birds (4)

24 Following change of hands in management (10)

25 About to occupy second place immediately at start of play (3,3)

26 It is unfairness to horse's nature to move in to the front (8)

27 Extremely shady politician chases darling ignoring wife at last in arrangement (8)

28 Most efficient cycling boards (6)

### ■ DOWN

2 Garden to go for a bee-house (6)

3 Company's attempt to associate with old Central Mumbai is very expensive (4,1,4)

4 No place for maiden in comedies played in bishop's district (7)

5 Liked Subaru snap exposed on Japanese craft (7)

6 Pets leave California with geese (7)

7 He was once in Big House – age, about 90 (2-3)

8 Fight in a game of chance by floating masses (5,3)

15 Disappointment caused by moist firework? (4,5)

16 Kingdom's chief in capital without empress primarily (8)

## TV PICKS

**ATP Finals:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.; Sony Six (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Wednesday)  
**Nations League:** Sony Ten 1, 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 1.15 a.m.

## Akshat gets past Umang

CHANDIGARH: Akshat Dhull beat Umang Singh Gogi 8-7 (4) in the under-16 boys' pre-quarterfinals of the AITA Championship series junior tennis on Monday. **The results (pre-quarterfinals): Under-16 Boys:** Aditya Chauhan bt Naveen Pruthi Sabayaschi 8-1; Anirudh Sangra bt Darshan Dilab Singh 8-3; Akshat Dhull bt Umang Singh Gogi 8-7(4); Rakshit Dhanakar bt Yash Solanki 8-2; Arush Sharma bt Gurbaaz Singh Dhanoa 8-3; Rishi Dahiya bt Gurpuneet Singh 8-3; Arnav Bishnoi bt Aryan Jolly 8-1; Keshav Dangi bt Lakshya Gupta 8-4. **Girls:** Harleen Kaur Dhanda bt Saanvi Garg 8-2; Riya Kausik bt Milli Pandit 8-6; Vanya Arora bt Kritika Katoch 8-1; Rubani Kaur Sidhu bt Catherine Bhangu 8-4; Harnoor Kaur Sidhu bt Gurmanat Kaur Sandhu 8-7(4); Shriya Singh bt Ananya Dogra 8-5; Sidhak Kaur bt Simar Atwal 8-4; Radhika Vasudeva bt Agrima Gandhi 8-1.

## Jack sizzles, but in vain

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A seven-goal spree by Jack Richardson proved inadequate for Sona Polo as it lost 11-8 by Sahara Warriors in the Sir Pratap Singh Cup 14-goal polo tournament at the Jaipur Polo ground.

With three teams in the league finishing on equal points, a penalty shootout resulted in Sahara Warriors and Sona Polo making the final ahead of Jindal Panthers.

**The results (league):** Sahara Warriors 11 (Daniel Otamendi 4, Padmanabh Singh 3, Gaurav Sahgal 2, Kuldeep Singh 2) bt Sona Polo 8 (Jack Richardson 7, Basheer Ali).

## Italy roars back into contention

Belgium bundles England out; Wijnaldum's star turn for the Netherlands

## NATIONS LEAGUE

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
ROME

Three years after an embarrassing failure to qualify for the World Cup, Italy is back in contention with the best in Europe. England, meanwhile, is already out of contention for the Nations League finals with one round of matches still to play.

An Italy squad badly hit by the coronavirus still managed to beat Poland 2-0 on Sunday, putting the Azzurri in control of their group, while England was beaten 2-0 by top-ranked Belgium.

Italy leads Group 1 in League A with nine points. The Netherlands is next with eight points after beating Bosnia 3-1.

Dries Mertens scored a superb free kick as Belgium ended England's hopes of reaching the finals.

Belgium took the lead 10 minutes in when Romelu Lukaku set up Youri Tielemans for a deflected shot.



**Curling it in:** Mertens' superbly taken free-kick sounded the death knell for England. ■ AFP

Mertens made it 2-0 in the 24th by expertly curling his kick over the English wall.

Frank de Boer finally has his first win as Netherlands coach after Georginio Wijnaldum scored a swift brace to lead his team to a 3-1 victory over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Wijnaldum, captain in the absence of his injured Liverpool teammate Virgil van Dijk, tapped in from close range in the sixth and 14th

minutes to set up the win.

**Important results: League A:** **Group 1:** the Netherlands 3 (Wijnaldum 6, 14, Depay 55) bt Scotland 0; Czech Republic 1 (Darida 7) bt Israel 0.

**Group 2:** Denmark 2 (Eriksen 12-pen, 90+2-pen) bt Iceland 1 (Kjartansson 85); Belgium 2 (Tielemans 10, Mertens 24) bt England 0.

**Group 3:** Turkey 3 (Karaman 26, Under 32, Tosun 52-pen) bt Russia 2 (Cheryshev 11, Kuzyayev 57); Hungary 1 (Kalmar 39) drew with Serbia 1 (Radonjic 17).

**Group 4:** Bulgaria 1 (Iliev 68) lost to Finland 2 (Pukki 7, Loh 45+1); Wales 1 (Brooks 67) bt Republic of Ireland 0.

**League B:** **Group 1:** Austria 2 (Schaub 81, Grbic 87) bt North-

ern Ireland 1 (Magennis 75); Romania v Norway - postponed.

**Group 2:** Slovakia 1 (Gregus 32) bt Scotland 0; Czech Republic 1 (Darida 7) bt Israel 0.

**Group 3:** Turkey 3 (Karaman 26, Under 32, Tosun 52-pen) bt Russia 2 (Cheryshev 11, Kuzyayev 57); Hungary 1 (Kalmar 39) drew with Serbia 1 (Radonjic 17).

**Group 4:** Bulgaria 1 (Iliev 68) lost to Finland 2 (Pukki 7, Loh 45+1); Wales 1 (Brooks 67) bt Republic of Ireland 0.

## ₹10 lakh sanctioned for M.P. Singh's treatment

Olympian currently on dialysis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Sports Ministry on Monday disbursed ₹10 lakh for the treatment of hockey Olympian Mohinder Pal Singh, who is suffering from a chronic kidney ailment and is currently on dialysis.

The money, sanctioned under the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons, was given to his wife Shivjeet Singh.

Speaking about the decision to extend financial support to Singh, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said,

"M.P. Singh ji has contributed richly to hockey both as a player and a coach. His physical condition is a matter of great concern for all of us.

"Kidney treatment is an expensive treatment and we wanted to extend as much financial support as



M.P. Singh. ■ FILE PHOTO

we could.

"I have also spoken to Mahesh Sharma ji, who is the Member of Parliament of Noida where MP Singh ji lives and a letter has also been sent from his office to PM Relief Fund so that the hospital bills can be paid through the fund."

## Prajnesh stumbles in the final

SPORTS BUREAU  
CARY (USA)

Fourth seed Prajnesh Gunneswaran was beaten 3-6, 6-0 by the second-seeded American Denis Kudla in the final of the \$52,080 Challenger tennis tournament here.

Prajnesh earned 48 ATP points and \$4,240.

## Mannika in quarterfinals

NEW DELHI: Top seed Mannika Sansanwal beat Suhani Gupta 8-7(7) in the AITA Talent series u-14 girls pre-quarterfinals' tennis on Monday.

**The results (pre-quarterfinals): Under-14 boys:** Pratyushraj Goel bt Tanmay Tomar 8-0; Eshan Patra bt Uttam Karthik 8-6; Kunsh Kapoor bt Charanjot Singh 8-1; Dhruveer Grover bt Dhruv Sharma 8-0; Mayank Ujjainwal bt Anmol Saini 8-7(4); Aarav Chawla bt Shivam Kandari 8-0; Vraj Chawla bt Purahan Yadav 8-1; Vishesh Kumar Singh bt Mod. Salik Neyazi 8-1.

**Under-14 girls:** Mannika Sansanwal bt Suhani Gupta 8-7(7); Nafeesa Zafar bt Mrinalika Swami 8-1; Anisha Sikavumar bt Pradeepita Gusain 8-1; Tanvi Arora bt Pari Hardwani 8-1; Stuti Kumar bt Praneet Kaur 8-1; Snigdha Ruhil bt Samaira Kohli 8-3; Khushi Gaur bt Vaishnavi Singh 8-3; Anya Gupta bt Avika 8-1.

## Aditi finishes tied 11th

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KAEC (SAUDI ARABIA)

Aditi Ashok finished tied 11th in the inaugural Aramco Saudi Ladies International golf with a one-over 73 and three-under 285.

Emily Kristine Pedersen edged Georgia Hall on the first play-off hole for her second title of the season.

## Telangana govt. approves online totalizator transactions for season

## HORSE RACING

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

ware at a considerable cost for taking online transactions on the totalizator from November 19," the statement mentioned.

The Hyderabad Race Club will resume live racing after a pandemic-induced long gap. According to an official press release, the races without spectators, will be part of the Hyderabad winter races from November 19 and March 1, 2021.

The Club also expressed its gratitude to the Telangana government for granting approval to online totalizator transactions.

"The morning sales counters will be opened at HRC and other tote centres from 9.00 am and will be closed half-an-hour prior to the scheduled first race of that

particular racing centre and there will not be live offline transaction tickets sold during the conduct of the races," the statement added.

Besides the online facility, the regular morning ticket sales counters for both live and off-course races will be open while strictly following the COVID-19 protocols at HRC, Malakpet and its off-course tote centres in the twin cities and outstation venues.

The procedure to register and use the online application can be viewed on [www.hydraces.com](http://www.hydraces.com)

The total prize money on offer is ₹6,62,00,000, with trophies to the value of ₹3,65,000.

**Important races:**

**Nov. 19:** Doddla Pratap Chander Reddy Memorial Million; **Dec. 13:** Golconda 1000 Guineas; **Dec. 27:** Golconda 2000 Guineas; **Jan. 10:** Golconda Oaks; **Jan. 31:** Golconda Derby Stakes.

## Tarun, Himanshu shine in Uttarakhand's win

A century by man-of-the-match Tarun Bisht (106) and good bowling by Himanshu Kumar (4/7) helped Uttarakhand Boys Academy beat Venkateshwar Academy by 177 runs in the Manoj Soni memorial tournament.

**The scores:**

Uttarakhand Boys 296/6 in 40 overs (Tarun Bisht 106, Kapil Kumar 59, Chirag Rana 2/35, Nikhil Kumar 2/41) bt Venkateshwar Academy 119 in 28.4 overs (Himanshu Kumar 4/7, Dhruv Sharma 2/03).

**Century for Aryan, five-for by Amit**

Amit Kumar took a five-for and Aryan Dabas scored a

match-winning centry as Swastik Academy beat Tyagi Cricket Nursery by three wickets in the 3rd Vicky Bandrey Under-16 tournament.

**The scores:**

TCN 184 in 40 overs (Manavdeep Singh 37, Kartik Verma 34, Amit Kumar 5/27, Ram Ashish 2/33) lost to Swastik Academy 185/7 in 39.2 overs (Aryan Dabas 116, Kuldeep Rawat 4/28).

**Bowlers shine for Unique**

Brilliant bowling by Khalid Ahmad, Vikas Singh and Vikas Yadav saw Unique Sports Club beat Moh Maya Club by 41 runs in the All India Unique T20 tournament.

**The scores:** USC 102/5 in 20

overs (Jatin Gehlot 43, Prince Yadav 10/1) bt MMC 61 in 17.5 overs (Khalid Ahmad 4/15, Vikas Singh 3/8, Vikas Yadav 2/3).

**Dinesh and Vansaj excel in BBA's win**

Man of the match Vansaj Sharma picked up four wickets and Dinesh Mor top-scored with 90 as Bal Bhawan Academy (BBA) beat Telefunken Club by 68 runs in the 5th Shanti Devi memorial tournament.

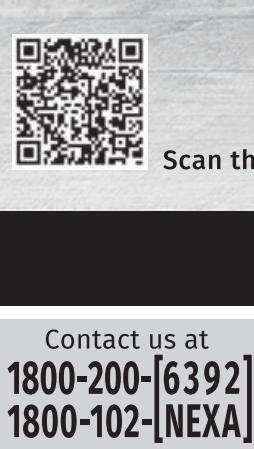
**The scores:**

BBA 235/8 in 40 overs (Dinesh Mor 90, Yash Dhull 60, Arpit Rana 39, Siddhant Bansal 3/36) bt Telefunken Club 157 in 36.5 overs (Bharat Sidhwani 52, Vansaj Sharma 4/19, Rahul Gehlot 2/42).

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