

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI FRIDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2020



NATION | 4

Rajnath Singh says that 26/11-type attack is impossible in India now

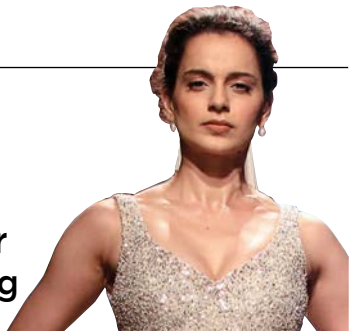


SPORT | 8

50% crowd allowed in Sydney as India, Australia clash in first ODI today

TABLOID | 16

Budget of Kangana-starrer *Dhaakad* down from ₹120cr to ₹80cr due to location rejig



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Members of central trade union organisations participate in a protest march against the Centre's various economic policies, in Bengaluru on Thursday. — PTI

Delhi considers night curfew, weekend curbs

New Delhi: The AAP government has informed the Delhi High Court that it is actively considering whether to impose night curfew or weekend restrictions to contain the Covid-19 situation of the Capital as a bench comprising Justice Hima Kohli and Justice Subramonium Prasad asked the government whether it will be taking any specific measure like other states. The city has witnessed 2,364 deaths due to coronavirus since October 28.

■ More on Page 2

Modi plans to visit Hyderabad on Sat

Hyderabad: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive in Hyderabad on Saturday to review the status of India's first indigenous Covid-19 vaccine — Covaxin — being developed by the city-based Bharat Biotech. Mr Modi is visiting Hyderabad as a part of his three-city tour.

■ More on Page 3

Penguin to acquire Simon & Schuster

New York: The biggest book publisher in the United States is about to get bigger. ViacomCBS has agreed to sell Simon & Schuster to Penguin Random House for more than \$2 billion in a deal that will create the first mega-publisher. The deal was announced on Wednesday.

■ More on Page 6

COUNTERPOINT



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

WEATHER

Max: 25°C
Min: 11°C
RH: 56%
Rain: 0%

Forecast: Sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Shuddha Dwadasi till 7.46 am
Star: Ashwini till 12.21 am (Saturday)
Variyam: 7.51 pm to 9.39 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.44 am to 9.28 am; 12.25 pm to 1.09 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

SUNSET TODAY 5.24 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.54 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 4.15 PM
MOONSET TODAY 3.57 AM

■ 2 CMs in Twitter spat ■ Govt calls Dec. 3 meet ■ Many detained ■ Gurgaon roads clogged

Delhi Chalo: Farmers storm barriers

SANJAY KAW and BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, NOV. 26

The Haryana police on Thursday used water cannons and teargas in a bid to stop thousands of farmers from Punjab from proceeding towards the national capital for their “Delhi Chalo” march against the Centre’s new farm laws. The situation got tense at the Shambu inter-state border on the national highway as protesting farmers threw police barricades off the bridge into the Ghaggar river.

It was after a two-hour clash on the bridge that farmers from Congress-run Punjab managed to cross the border into BJP-ruled Haryana, which used heavy force to try and block them for making their way towards the capital in tractors and on foot on their two-day protest march against the new farm laws that they fear will reduce their earnings and give more power to large retailers.

Today is Punjab's 26/11. We are witnessing the end of the right to democratic protest...

— **Sukhbir Singh Badal,**
Akali Dal chief

Many roads in Haryana leading to Delhi, especially those in Gurgaon, were clogged with heavy traffic as barricades had been put up at different places to prevent the protesters from entering the nation’s capital. The roadblocks were especially intense in places like Kundli, near Sonipat, and on the Delhi-Gurgaon border at Sirhaul and Rajokri. However, despite the tight security measures, about 70-odd protesters, including some trade union members, managed to gather near Jantar Mantar, in the heart of Delhi, but were detained after refusing to vacate the area.

Amid huge protests, Union agriculture minister



Police personnel use water cannons on farmers to stop them from crossing the Punjab-Haryana border during the ‘Delhi Chalo’ protest march against the new farm laws, near Ambala on Thursday.

— PTI

Narendra Singh Tomar appealed to the farmers to suspend their agitation and invited them for talks on December 3. “The government is committed to the welfare of farmers and we are ready for talks. Whether it’s about minimum support price or infrastructure, we are ready for a discussion,” he said.

The agitation saw Punjab

chief minister Capt. Amarinder Singh entering into a war of words on Twitter with Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar, who urged him to “stop inciting innocent farmers”. Capt. Singh attacked the Haryana CM, saying: “Shocked at your response Manohar Lal Khattari! It’s farmers who’ve to be convinced on MSP, not me. You should’ve tried to talk

to them before their ‘Delhi Chalo’. And if you think I’m inciting farmers, why are Haryana farmers also marching to Delhi?”

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

Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal condemned the Haryana government and the Central government for choosing to repress the peaceful farmers’ movement. “Today is Punjab’s 26/11. We are witnessing the end of the right to democratic protest. The Akali Dal condemns Haryana govt & Centre for choosing to repress peaceful farmer movement. Battle for Punjab farmers’ rights can’t be throttled by using water cannons

■ Turn to Page 4

Last farewell to Ahmed Patel



Relatives and supporters gather during the funeral procession of late Congress leader Ahmed Patel, who passed away in Gurgaon on Wednesday, at Piraman in Gujarat’s Bharuch district on Thursday.

— PTI

International flights to be off till Dec. 31

Mumbai: India’s aviation safety regulator DGCA on Thursday extended the suspension of scheduled international commercial passenger flights to December 31.

The restrictions, however, will not apply on international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), an official circular said.

International scheduled flights, however, may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis, the DGCA said. — PTI

Sack gov for ‘criminal links’: TMC

Trinamul asks Prez to remove Dhankhar for aiding ‘BJP-linked accused’

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, NOV. 26

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

The TMC also sought Mr Dhankhar’s prosecution by the Kolkata police on criminal charges over his alleged support on Twitter to two accused — Govind Agarwal, a chartered accountant, and Sudipta

Roy Chowdhury, a businessman — after their arrests in two separate cases of financial offences involving several crores of rupees.

On Thursday, Sreerampore TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee claimed at Trinamul Bhavan: “The governor, as a public servant, is creating obstruction to the ongoing investigation against the two accused. He is trying to indulge criminals of the BJP with whom he has connections. The way Mr Dhankhar is giving threats to the Kolkata police and the Bidhannagar police through his tweets, he is



Jagdeep Dhankhar

liable for prosecution under Sections 186 and 189 of the Indian Penal Code. The police must initiate a criminal case against him. No sanction is required for this.”

He added: “The President must intervene in the matter to see if the two IPC sections were violated by the governor or not. If so, Mr Dhankhar should be removed by the President as governor with immediate effect. He is not entitled

to remain as governor. According to my reading of the statute, since the governor has violated two IPC sections, the President should not allow him to continue in his chair further after considering all aspects.”

Asked if the TMC has planned to present any memorandum to President Kovind for Mr Dhankhar’s removal as governor, Mr Banerjee said: “It will be decided later.”

Countering the TMC’s demand, Mr Dhankhar, who is now in North Bengal, said: “My attention has been drawn to

2 Army jawans die in Srinagar militant attack

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, NOV. 26

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

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

Soon after the attack, the Army’s 2 RR and the J&K police’s Special Operations Group launched a search operation in the area, as the Army pressed a helicopter into service to hunt the militants and the Maruti car used to carry out the attack. The Army said in a statement: “Terrorists fired indiscriminately at Quick Reaction Team of Indian Army in Khushipora. Being a crowded area, troops exercised restraint to avoid any civilian casualties.”

It added: “Two soldiers were critically injured and were evacuated to the nearest medical facility. However, they have succumbed to their injuries.

The area has been cordoned and a search operation is in progress.”

PAGE 4

► **Army JCO killed, civilian injured in Pak shelling on LoC**



Soccer fans waiting to pay their final respects to Diego Maradona face off with the police guarding the presidential palace where Maradona is lying in state in Buenos Aires on Thursday.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Air quality 'very poor' in Noida, Ghaziabad,

Noida: The air quality improved in Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad but stayed in the 'very poor' category on Thursday, while it was "poor" in Gurgaon and Greater Noida in the Delhi-National Capital Region, according to a government agency. Presence of pollutant PM 2.5 also remained high in the five immediate neighbours of Delhi, according to the air quality index (AQI) maintained by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). According to the index, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. The average 24-hour AQI at 4 pm on Thursday was 301 in both Ghaziabad and Noida, 296 in Greater Noida, 312 in Faridabad and 299 in Gurgaon, according to CPCB's Sameer app. On Wednesday, it was 444 in Ghaziabad, 414 in Noida, 394 in Greater Noida, 348 in Faridabad and 299 in Gurgaon. — PTI

Schools won't be reopened, says Jain

New Delhi: Schools in the national capital will not reopen till the government is convinced about students' safety, Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain said on Thursday. Universities and schools across the country were closed on March 16, when the Centre announced a countrywide classroom shutdown as part of measures to contain the spread of Covid. A nationwide lockdown was imposed on March 25. "There is no plan to reopen schools (in Delhi) as of now. We are hopeful that a vaccine will be available soon. Schools will not be reopened till the time we are convinced that students will be safe," Mr Jain told reporters. Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia had on Tuesday said reopening of schools is unlikely till a vaccine is available. While several restrictions have been eased in different 'unlock' phases, educational institutions continue to remain closed. — PTI

2 arrested for fraud in Noida

Noida: Two persons were arrested here on Thursday for alleged fraud with a man by falsely promising him financial benefits by installation of a telecom network tower on his property, police said. The accused, including a woman, were held near Sector 82 by a joint team of officials from the Cyber Cell and Phase 2 police station, they said. Those held have been identified as Ghaziabad resident Sumit Gupta and Delhi-based Aarti Chand, a police spokesperson said. "A complaint was lodged on Tuesday by a man, who lives in Bhangal village in Noida, that the duo had duped him of over ₹1 lakh on pretext of getting a telecom tower installed on his property, assuring him monetary benefits in rental from the private company that would install the tower," the spokesperson said. However, soon it emerged that Gupta and Chand had duped him, leading the victim to approach the police after which an FIR was registered at Phase 2 police station, the official said.

Fire in Kirti Nagar, 50 shanties gutted

New Delhi: At least 50 shanties were gutted after a fire broke out in west Delhi's Kirti Nagar area in the early hours of Thursday, a Delhi Fire Service official said. No casualties have been reported. A call about the blaze was received at around 12:40 am and 12 fire tenders were rushed to the spot, said Atul Garg, director, Delhi Fire Service. Fifty shanties were gutted and it took time to douse the fire as multiple LPG cylinders kept in the area exploded, he said. However, the cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. The blaze was doused but there has been extensive loss of belongings of the people residing in the shanties, the officer said. In another incident, a fire broke out at a shop in southeast Delhi's Govindpur area early Thursday but no casualty was reported since the shop was closed. According to the fire department, the blaze was reported at 4:46 am. — PTI

Metro to neighbouring cities suspended till 2pm today

Farmers protest: Traffic snarls at Delhi borders

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 26

People coming to the national capital from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh faced traffic snarls at several border crossings as the Delhi Police on Thursday intensified vehicle checking in view of the "Delhi Chalo" march by Punjab farmers against the Centre's farm laws.

Farmers from Punjab are scheduled to reach Delhi through five highways connecting the city as part of their march.

Tension spiralled at the Shambhu border in Haryana, around 215 km from Delhi, on Thursday as police used water cannons and teargas to disperse hundreds of farmers coming from Punjab who broke barricades, throwing some into a river, determined to enter Haryana as part of their march.

Delhi Metro services from neighbouring NCR cities to the national capital have been suspended in view of the farmers' protest, officials said. However, metro services will be available from Delhi towards the National Capital Region (NCR) sections.

Senior police officials said that heavy deployment as been made on the Faridabad, Singhu and Gurgaon border crossings with Haryana and vehicle checking has been intensified as a precautionary measure in view of the protest march.

Vehicles are also being checked at the DND and National Highway-24 crossings with Uttar Pradesh, they said, adding that borders have not been sealed, but barricades and cement blocks have been placed to stop trucks and tractors of protesters.

Several commuters coming to the national capital from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh complained of



Traffic congestion at Ring Road due to farmers march towards Delhi to protest farm reform bills in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

'Wrong to prevent farmers from holding peaceful demonstrations'

New Delhi, Nov. 26: It is absolutely wrong that farmers are being prevented from holding peaceful demonstrations against the Centre's new farm laws and water canons are being used on them, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Thursday.

Haryana put up road barricades along its border with Punjab on Wednesday as farmers in the adjoining state massed with their tractor-trailers for their "Delhi Chalo" march to protest against



Arvind Kejriwal

the laws. Water cannons were used at least twice to disperse them and stop them from going to Delhi.

Taking to Twitter, the Delhi chief minister said peaceful demonstration was a constitutional right of the farmers.

"All the three farming bills of the central government are anti-farmer.

"Police personnel were checking vehicles. I was stuck there for almost half an hour," he said.

Generally, Abhishek Sinha, who works at a real estate company in Manesar in Haryana, said, "Generally it takes 40 to 45

minutes, but today it is showing over an hour. I commute everyday from Dwarka." Priyanka Rai, who works in Gurgaon, said that she boarded her metro train at Chhatrapur in Delhi as services have been suspended.

The Haryana government on Thursday completely sealed its borders with Punjab. Police personnel have been deployed in large numbers along the state's borders with Delhi as well. — PTI

City records over 2,300 deaths in less than a month

New Delhi, Nov. 26: The national capital has witnessed 2,364 deaths due to coronavirus since October 28, when the daily rise in infections breached the mark of 5,000 cases for the first time, according to official data.

Amid a surge in Covid cases and deaths, 91 more fatalities pushed the city's death toll to 8,811 on Thursday. It was after five days that Delhi recorded single-day deaths below 100.

The city reported 98

deaths on November 19, 118 on November 20, 111 on November 21, 121 each on November 22 and 23, and 109 fatalities on November 24, according to official data.

While 131 Covid-related deaths were recorded on November 18, the highest till date, Delhi registered its highest single-day spike of 8,593 cases on November 11.

On Thursday, Delhi had recorded 7,546 cases, followed by 6,608 on Friday, 5,879 on Saturday, 6,746 on Sunday, 4,454 on Monday,

including 1359 ICU beds increased for covid patients in Delhi hospitals in the last 15 days.

The government has added 211 ICU beds with ventilators, taking the total number of such beds from 1,264 to 1,475 during the same period, according to figures cited in the tweet.

According to the online corona dashboard of the Delhi government at 5.10 pm on Thursday, 205 Covid ICU beds with ventilators were vacant in the city.

Facilities which have no vacancy include Base Hospital Delhi Cantt, Northern Railway hospital, Sir Gangaram hospital, Batra hospital, VIMHANS, and Indraprastha Apollo hospital.

— PTI

City records 91 more Covid deaths, 5,475 cases in a day

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 26

The national capital recorded 5,475 fresh Covid cases in a day as the number of RT-PCR tests crossed the 28,000 mark, while 91 more fatalities pushed the city's death toll to 8,811 on Thursday, authorities said.

The positivity rate was 8.65 per cent. It was 8.49 per cent on Wednesday.

As many as 63,266 tests, including 28,897 RT-PCR ones — the highest till date for the city — and 34,369 rapid antigen tests were conducted the previous day for the detection of Covid according to a bulletin issued by the Delhi health department on Thursday.

The city had recorded its highest single-day spike of 8,593 cases on November 11. As many as 131 Covid-related deaths were recorded on November 18, the highest till date.

According to the bulletin, the total number of

Delhi environment minister tests +ve for coronavirus

New Delhi, Nov. 26: Delhi environment minister Gopal Rai on Thursday tested positive for coronavirus.

Mr Rai is the third minister in the Arvind Kejriwal government to have contracted the virus.

Earlier, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia and health minister Satyendra Jain had been infected with coronavirus.

An official said that Mr Rai, who is also AAP's Delhi convenor, had met party workers around

coronavirus cases climbed to 5,51,262 on Thursday, of which 5,03,717 have recovered.

The tally of active cases in Delhi was 38,734, up from 38,287 on Wednesday.

Delhi recorded 6,746 new cases on Sunday, 4,454 on Monday, 6,224 on Tuesday

Diwali.

The minister had not attended the all-party meeting convened by chief minister Arvind Kejriwal to discuss the Covid situation in Delhi on November 19 as he was not feeling well. In a tweet, Mr Rai said that after initial symptoms, he underwent Covid test and the report has come positive.

The environment minister has requested those who recently came in contact with him to undergo test for Covid. — PTI

and 5,246 on Wednesday.

The number of Covid containment zones in Delhi rose to 5,156 on Thursday from 4,980 on Wednesday. Of the total number of 18,252 beds in Covid hospitals, 9,143 are vacant, according to official data.

Officials: Entire Delhi can be vaccinated within a month

New Delhi, Nov. 26: Delhi is geared up for the Covid-19 vaccination programme and the city's entire population can be covered in a month if hospital staff and nurses are involved, state immunization officer Suresh Seth said Thursday.

"We have 600 cold storage points and around 1,800 outreach sites for the universal immunization programme for children. We have sufficient equipment for vaccines that can be stored at a temperature of 2 to 8 degrees Celsius and those that need minus 15 to minus 25 degrees Celsius. The Central government is further strengthening the infrastructure and providing more equipment," Mr Seth said. He said the equipment and infrastructure for vaccines that need ultra-cold conditions (minus 70 degrees Celsius) are not there, but "we don't think there will be any problem logistically because the immunization programme will be carried out in a phased manner".

"If we involve hospital staff and nurses etc., we can easily vaccinate the entire population in a month," he said, adding that at present, the Delhi government is collecting data of health care workers who are at top of the priority list of the Delhi government. — PTI

Noida begins work of road made from plastic waste

Noida, Nov. 26: Work began on Thursday on a road stretch in Noida being made from plastic waste, with officials claiming that the initiative is a first of its kind in the country in which blocks of used plastic are being used in road construction.

The 500-metre long stretch of road is a pilot project being developed by the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited as part of an agreement with the Noida Authority, the officials said.

"@BPCLimited and @noida authority have launched the first road construction pilot project in India using plastic waste module to construct a 500 metre long road parallel to Noida-Greater Noida Expressway in sector 129. This road construction will use 35 metric tons of plastic waste," Noida authority CEO Ritu Maheshwari tweeted. The authority's general manager Rajeev Tyagi said the road stretch is coming up on a service lane in Sector 129 along the Noida-Greater Noida expressway. The stretch to be developed is 500 metres long and 12 metres wide, he said. — PTI



Health workers collect swab samples of passengers at Anand Vihar ISBT in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

Mobbed by locals, cop fires in ground, 1 hurt

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 26

A Delhi police constable fired four rounds on the ground after locals surrounded him and misbehaved with him when he went to attend a complaint call made by an elderly couple who allegedly had an argument with their neighbour over a parking dispute, officials said on Thursday.

A woman, identified as Madhu (40), however, sustained injury on one of the fingers of her feet when one of the bullets fired by the constable hit her after hitting the ground, it said.

The incident took place in Rohini area when constable Punit Sharma went to attend the complaint on Wednesday night, the police said.

According to the police, the elderly couple live on the ground floor. An argument took place between their neighbour and them after they parked their vehicle in front of their house thus blocking the entry point of their house.

The alleged neighbour stays on the first floor of the same building. Upon reaching the spot, the relatives of the accused neighbour, who

SOME TRIED to snatch cops mobile phone, keys of his car, and even his service pistol. When they overpowered him, the constable fired four rounds aiming towards the ground in self-defence

live in the same locality, arrived and started arguing with the constable. When he requested them to remove the vehicle, they intimidated him and threatened him for coming to attend the complaint of the elderly couple, a senior police

officer said. Despite several requests made by Mr Sharma, they started fighting with him. One of them even slapped the constable and started manhandling him.

They accused him of being drunk. However, a medical examination confirmed that he was not under the influence of alcohol, the senior officer said.

Some of them also tried to snatch his mobile phone, keys of his car, and even his service pistol. When they overpowered him, the constable fired four rounds aiming towards the ground in self-

defence. However, one of the bullets, after hitting the ground, hit a woman on one of the fingers of her feet. She was immediately rushed to BSA hospital where her condition is said to be normal, the officer said.

The constable, somehow, managed to escape from the spot and informed the police station, he said.

DCP (Rohini) P.K. Singh said as the alleged persons have deliberately tried to obstruct a public servant in discharging official duty, a case has been registered against them and further investigation is in progress.

SHORT TAKES

No auction of Nirav house before Dec 14

Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday made it clear before the Bombay high court that it will not auction a luxurious penthouse Samudra Mahal belongs to Nirav Modi would not be auctioned before December 14. The HC was hearing a petition filed by Modi's son Rohin challenging ED's move to confiscate Samudra Mahal property. In his petition, Rohin informed the court that his father is nowhere concerned with the said property and it belonged to a trust set up by him. Few months back, the ED had filed an application before the special Prevention of Money Laundering Act court. The agency had brought to the notice of the court that as per provision under Fugitive Economic Offenders act 2018, it can confiscate immovable and movable properties belonging to Nirav Modi.

1 dead, 45 injured in MP bus accident

Umaria: An elderly woman was killed and at least 45 others members of a marriage party were injured when their bus overturned in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district on Thursday morning, the police said. The accident took place at Marhai turn under Amarpur police station limits, about 55 km from the district headquarters, when the victims, belonging to Shadhol, were returning along with the bride from Satna, it said. The driver of the speeding bus apparently lost control over the wheels following which it toppled, a police official said. At least 46 passengers were pulled out of the bus by locals and police and rushed to a primary health centre at Bargi where a 65-year-old woman, Ram Bai Gupta, succumbed to her injuries, he said. — PTI

Disha case: Plea for CBI probe rejected

Mumbai: The Bombay high court on Thursday dismissed a petition seeking a court-monitored CBI probe into the death of Disha Sallian, former manager of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput. A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni in its order said "if any person has information in the case, he is free to approach police". The court also noted that petitioner Punit Dhanda has no locus standi in the case as he has nowhere concerned with the case. Sallian, 28, died on June 8 this year. After few days, Rajput allegedly committed suicide at his residence. In his plea, Dhanda had said that there were several media reports informing that Sallian was murdered and sought that the case of Sallian's death be transferred to the CBI.

ED arrests Cox & Kings promoter

New Delhi/Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday arrested Cox & Kings promoter Peter Kerkar in a money laundering case linked to the alleged loan default at the Yes Bank, officials said. Kerkar alias Ajay Ajit Peter was arrested in Mumbai under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and will be produced before a court there on Friday. The case relates to ED's money laundering probe in which the central probe agency had said that Yes Bank had a total outstanding of ₹3,642 crore against Cox & Kings Group of Companies. — PTI

Happy to have met Sidhu: Amarinder

Chandigarh: Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh on Thursday said he and former minister Navjot Singh Sidhu had some "simple talks", a day after both leaders met over lunch. Capt. Singh on Wednesday met Mr Sidhu at the former's residence, triggering speculation that the cricketer-turned-politician may be re-inducted into the state Cabinet. The CM on Thursday expressed hope that he and Mr Sidhu will continue to have cordial meetings like the one they had on Wednesday, where they spoke a lot about cricket, apart from a host of other things. Both were in a good mood during the luncheon, Capt. Singh said. — PTI

West Bengal CM condemns police action against farmers protesting farm bills in Haryana Will march to Delhi with farmers if invited: Didi

RAJIB CHOWDHURI and PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI
KOLKATA/BERHAMPUR, NOV. 26

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday extended her support to the ongoing farmers' protest rally to New Delhi over the Centre's three bills which has deregulated the essential commodities. Calling the use of teargas and water canons on the farmers' rally in Haryana "unfortunate", the Trinamul Congress supremo also offered to join their

agitation, if invited, with an eye on the Assembly elections in the state. "This is unfortunate. I am sorry to say this is the first time the Central government wants to capture all the fundamental rights of all sections of people. It cannot curb farmers' democratic rights. The bills are illegal as they are aimed to help the hoarders for black marketing, not the farmers. Why did the Central government snatch their rights? To allow the people of the country to die? Only one man, one party, one election, one nation? We were,

are and will be with the farmers. If we are invited, we will participate in their rally to Delhi," the CM said. Ms Banerjee, however, supported the cause behind the nationwide strike of the Congress and Left trade unions against the Centre's economic policies. "Today a workers' movement happened. We support the cause, not the bandh as it is against our policy," she added. This prompted the BJP to foresee another "Mahagatbandhan" (grand alliance), in line of what happened in Bihar recently,

The Centre cannot curb farmers' democratic rights. The bills are illegal as they are aimed to help the hoarders for black marketing, not the farmers. Why did the Central govt snatch their rights? If we are invited, we will participate in their rally to Delhi...

— Mamata Banerjee, West Bengal chief minister



against it in Bengal.

At Berhampore in Murshidabad, state BJP president Dilip Ghosh said, "The TMC earlier opposed the bandh of the CPI(M) and Congress. But

today they supported them though the bandh was not successful. I think it is a signal of a Mahagatbandhan against us in the Assembly polls here. Nothing is impossible. The

TMC has already wrecked the AIMIM here."

Comparing the Left-Congress alliance with the combination of a "blind and lame," the Midnapore MP added, "We will win despite their unholy and unwritten alliance. We are ready for every possibility."

The West Bengal CM, meanwhile, claimed that the BJP is a party of outsiders which has no place in the state.

The Trinamul Congress supremo also said she will never allow Bengal to be turned into a "riot-torn Gujarat".

Wondering why Union

home minister Amit Shah is so busy with elections even when the situation on the country's border is not good, Ms Banerjee said she has never seen such a "home minister in her career".

"There is no place for outsiders in Bengal. Those who come to the state only during elections and try to disturb peace of the state are not at all welcome, she said while addressing a press conference here.

The BJP has recently divided the state into five organisational zones and put central leaders in charge of them.

Amarinder, Khattar spar over 'Delhi Chalo' march

Punjab CM says stopping farmers 'undemocratic'

Chandigarh, Nov. 26: Punjab CM Amarinder Singh and his Haryana counterpart Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday engaged in a war of words over farmers' Delhi Chalo march against the Centre's farm laws.

While Capt. Singh slammed Mr Khattar for stopping farmers from moving towards the national capital, terming it as "totally undemocratic and unconstitutional", the latter told the Punjab chief minister to stop "inciting innocent farmers". Capt. Singh took to Twitter for lashing out at his counterpart in Haryana after farmers were stopped from entering the state to move towards Delhi.

Haryana has completely sealed its borders with Punjab to prevent farmers from entering the state for their protest march.

"Why is @mlkhattar govt in Haryana stopping the farmers from moving to Delhi? The tyrannical use of brute force against peacefully protesting farmers is totally unde-



WHILE AMARINDER SINGH slammed Manohar Lal Khattar for stopping farmers from moving towards Delhi, terming it as 'totally undemocratic and



unconstitutional', the latter told the Punjab chief minister to stop 'inciting innocent farmers'

mocratic and unconstitutional," said Capt. Singh in a tweet.

He said farmers have been peacefully protesting in Punjab against the farm laws for two months.

"Why is Haryana govt provoking them by resorting to force? Don't the farmers have the right to pass peacefully through a public highway," Capt. Singh asked.

The Punjab CM said it was a "sad irony" that the constitutional right of farmers were being "oppressed" on Constitution Day. Let them pass @mlkhattarji, don't push them to the brink. Let them take their voice to Delhi peacefully," Capt. Singh said.

He also appealed to the

BJP to direct the Khattar-led government not to indulge in "strong arm tactics" against the farmers.

Shortly after Capt. Singh lambasted him, Mr Khattar sternly told the Punjab chief minister to stop "inciting innocent farmers".

Mr Khattar asked the Punjab CM to desist from misleading farmers, highlighting that he has already pledged to quit politics if the MSP mechanism is ever dismantled. "I've said it earlier and I'm saying it again, I'll leave politics if there'll be any trouble on the MSP — therefore, please stop inciting innocent farmers," the Haryana CM tweeted. — PTI

Cong HQ locked up by former staff in UP

Lucknow, Nov. 26: The UP Congress headquarters in Mall Avenue area of the state capital were locked up for some time on Thursday by some former employees of the party.

The party's office was locked up by people living in some illegally built hutments and out-houses inside and around the office campus after the party administration disconnected their power supply.

The party officials said they disconnected the supply to these out-houses as their residents were "stealing" power from the party's main supply line.

"Relatives of some former employees of the party office live illegally with their families in the area adjacent to the Congress office. These people have taken the power connection from the party office," Anup Gupta, the administration in-charge of the UP Congress headquarters told PTI. The party acted against the illegal residents after the party received a huge power bill of ₹6 lakh this month, he said.

"When the electricity department officials were asked about the bill, it transpired that out of the total bill, power worth ₹3.5 lakh had been consumed by the illegal occupants, said Mr Gupta.

At this, the power supply lines of these houses were snapped, he added. "To protest against the snapping of power, some persons locked the party's main gate at around 10 am. They, however, removed the lock later," he said.

He said appropriate action would be taken against these "illegal occupants" as per law. — PTI

PM to visit vaccine hubs in Pune and Hyderabad Nov. 28

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit India's top vaccine hubs in Pune and Hyderabad this weekend with coronavirus cases surging in parts of the country and amid redoubled efforts to zero in on an effective vaccine.

On Saturday, the PM will visit the Pune-based Serum Institute of India, which has partnered with global pharma giant AstraZeneca and the Oxford University for a Covid-19 vaccine.

An official in Pune confirmed the Prime Minister's visit, and said he would review the status of the vaccine, including its launch, production and distribution mechanisms. "We have received a confirmation about PM Modi's visit to the Serum Institute of India on Saturday, but his minute-to-minute program is yet to be received," Pune divisional commissioner Saurabh Rao told PTI.

The same day, PM Modi is expected to travel to Hyderabad and visit Bharat BioTech, which is working on



Covaxin, pitched as India's first indigenous vaccine candidate.

Cyberabad police commissioner V.C. Sajjanar told NDTV the Prime Minister was expected at 3:40 pm and after a visit to the facility between 4 and 5 pm, he would fly out at 5:40 pm.

The BJP was reportedly keen on PM Modi using the trip to campaign for the municipal polls in Hyderabad, but sources said the Saturday visit will not include any political activity.

Ambassadors and envoys from 100 countries are expected to visit the Serum Institute of India and the Genovax Biopharmaceuticals Ltd in Pune next week. After AstraZeneca reported that its vaccine was 90 per cent effective under certain conditions, Serum Institute, the world's largest vaccine maker, said it planned to make available a minimum of 100 million doses of Covishield by January. — PTI



Couple and wrestlers Bajrang Punia and Sangeeta Phogat during their marriage ceremony. — PTI

China PM to attend meet hosted by India

K.J.M. VARMA
BEIJING, NOV. 26

China on Thursday announced that Premier Li Keqiang will attend the 19th meeting of the council of the heads of government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states to be held under India's chairmanship Monday.

India will host the virtual meeting of the heads of the government of the eight-member bloc on November 30.

Premier Li will take part in the heads of the government meeting, for-



eign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian announced at a media briefing, Mr Zhao said Mr Li and other leaders will hold in-depth communication and exchange on deepening SCO cooperation amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

They will also build more consensus on cooperation and formulate more practical measures to seek greater synergy between the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) cooperation and national

development strategies and regional cooperation initiatives, he said.

They will also discuss measures to enhance economic, trade, investment, production capacity, connectivity, culture and people to people cooperation, push national economic recovery, improve people's livelihood and promote faster and better development of SCO, he said.

On November 10, Russia organised the heads of state summit of the SCO through a video link which was attended by PM Narendra Modi and

Chinese President Xi Jinping among others.

He said the recent summit of the SCO delivered fruitful results. Leaders of the participating countries drew up a blueprint and charted a course for organisations development in the next stage, Mr Zhao said.

About the SCO, he said that since its founding 19 years ago, the SCO has maintained a sound and stable development momentum and successfully placed a new path of cooperation and development for regional organisations. — PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
Invitation of tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)	
The Sr. Divisional Engineer-IV, Northern Railway, Delhi Division for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender on prescribed form for the following work.	
Name of work with its location	Hiring of artisan & Helper for day to day maintenance of colonies and service building under Sr.DEN-IV.
Approx Cost of work	Rs. 96,05,861.57
Earnest Money	Rs. 1,92,100.00
Date and Time of submission of tender and opening of tender	Bidding Start date for work no. Up to 15.00 hrs on 04.12.2020 opening of e-Tender at 15.00 hrs on 18.12.2020
Website particulars, published e-tender notice location etc. complete details of tender can be seen and web site where the tender form can be downloaded	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
No. 128-W/260/Tender Notice/NIT 36-W-IV/20-21/W-IV Date : 25.11.2020 2643/2020	
Serving Customers With A Smile	

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
TENDER NOTICE	
(Through e-tendering)	
Tender No. 558-Sig-16-M-TENDER-AMC-045-2020-21	Dated: 26.11.2020
Name of work with its location	Comprehensive Annual Maintenance contract and Repair of DG sets installed over Delhi Division for one year.
App. Cost of the work (₹)	14,27,091/- only
Earnest Money Deposit(₹)	28,600/-only
Address of the office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annex-1, DRM Office, New Delhi-110055.
Date & Time for upload the tender / closing of tender	Tender uploading / closing date & time- 23.12.2020 up to 15.00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.ireps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055
2651/20	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
TENDER NOTICE	
Name of work	
Outsourcing of escorting duty for primary based Garib Rath trains - T/s 12215/16 (DEE-BDTS), T/s 22405/06 (Delhi Anand Vihar - Bhagalpur), T/s 12212/11 (Delhi Anand Vihar - Muzaffarpur), T/s 22410/09 (Delhi Anand Vihar - Gaya Junction), T/s 12436/35 (Delhi Anand Vihar - Jaynagar) for three years.	
Tender No.	30-Elect-6T-Chg-2020-21
Approx. cost of the work in (Rs.)	Rs. 3,52,79,867.52
Cost of tender form	Rs. 11,800/-
Address of the office	Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/Chg/Northern Railway, New Delhi.
Earnest Money	Rs. 3,26,400/-
Period of completion of work	36 Months
Last Date & time of submission of tender	21.12.2020 up to 15.00 Hrs.
And Opening of tender	21.12.2020 at 15.01 Hrs.
Website & notice board	www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. DEE/Chg/DLI
2646/20	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

IN BRIEF

COVID-19 PATIENT JUMPS OFF HOSP BUILDING, DIES

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, NOV. 26

A Covid-19 patient in Chhattisgarh on Thursday jumped off the building of All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), Raipur. The deceased, identified as Muralidhar Sahu (49) of Janjgir-Champa, was admitted in AIIMS, Raipur on November 22 after being tested positive for Covid-19. He was put on a ventilator a couple of days ago when his condition worsened. However, the ventilator was removed on Thursday morning when his condition started improving. According to the Raipur police, Sahul had gone to washroom at around 1.30 in the afternoon and then jumped off the second storey of the AIIMS building. He was later admitted in the intensive care unit. He died during treatment. The reason for his extreme step was yet to be ascertained, police said. As on Thursday, Chhattisgarh has reported 2,29,203 Covid-19 positive cases and 2,783 deaths.

GROOM ARRESTED FOR LINK IN IIFL LOOT CASE

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 26

A 30-year-old youth serving as manager in a private gold loan firm was on Thursday arrested in the middle of his marriage rituals by the Crime Branch in connection with dacoity at the IIFL Finance Ltd branch office in Cuttack city. The arrested youth was identified as Pitambar Sahoo of Nischintakoli, Cuttack. Following Pitambar's arrest, the police seized a large quantity of stolen gold and investigation is underway to ferret out more information on the IIFL Finance loot case, said Prateek Singh, deputy commissioner of police, Cuttack. Following the manager's arrest, the bride and her family who were waiting at a hotel had to pack up and cancel the event. According to reports, the police had obtained the custodial remand of five accused persons in the loot case. Their preliminary questioning revealed that more than 10 employees of IIFL Company had direct links with the crime that took place on November 19. According to sources, the interrogation of other suspects was on and many more are likely to be arrested. On the other hand, people who had deposited gold in IIFL Company Ltd with the hope to get more returns have become skeptical whether they would get their deposits back in view of scam and police action.

PROF HELD FOR BRIBERY, SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Ahmedabad: A medical college professor has been arrested by the Gujarat Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on the charges of sexual harassment and demanding bribe from junior teachers for favourable appraisal. The accused, Dr S.K. Nagar, is currently serves as a professor with the state-run MP Shah Medical College in Jamnagar, the ACB said in a release. He had earlier served as the head of the anatomy department with Vadodara Medical College, it added. The ACB has arrested Nagar under Section 354 (a) of the IPC, which deals with sexual harassment, and under various sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act. When he was with Vadodara Medical College some time back, the state Health and Family Welfare Department had received an application from a woman faculty member against Nagar, it said. In her application, the junior medical teacher claimed Nagar has demanded ₹1.5 lakh for writing a favourable confidential report about her. She also alleged that Nagar had a habit of passing lewd remarks. She also attached an audio-video evidence to prove her claim. The health department forwarded the matter to the ACB, which found substance in the allegation of bribery and sexual harassment levelled against him by the complainant and some other woman applicants, it added. — PTI

Cyclone Nivar leaves 3 dead, over 1,000 trees uprooted in TN



NDRF personnel move locals to safer places after the landfall of cyclone Nivar at Mudichur in Chennai on Thursday. At least three people were killed in Tamil Nadu, over 1,000 trees uprooted and some low-lying areas marooned due to water-logging following heavy rains as severe cyclonic storm Nivar made landfall near Puducherry. Subsequently, Nivar weakened into a cyclonic storm and further into a deep depression, centered about 50 km west-southwest of Tirupati at 1430 hrs, the India meteorological department officials said.

India, Nepal to advance mutual cooperation

Kathmandu, Nov. 26: India and Nepal on Thursday agreed to step up efforts to advance mutual cooperation during a "productive" meeting between Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and his Nepalese counterpart Bharat Raj Paudyal. Mr Shringla began his two-day official visit to Nepal on Thursday. He was accorded a warm welcome on maiden visit to Nepal which is happening at the invitation of Nepal foreign secretary Paudyal, amid a strain in bilateral ties following a bitter border row between the two countries.

"FS @harshvshringla had a productive meeting with @PaudyalBR during which they took stock of bilateral cooperation and discussed issues of mutual interest," the Indian embassy in Kathmandu said in a tweet. "Both sides appreciated the progress made on the numerous bilateral initiatives and projects. It was agreed to take further steps to advance mutual cooperation," it said in another tweet. Mr Shringla arrived at Tribhuvan International in Kathmandu on Thursday morning. While interacting with the media, he said, "I have wanted to come here earlier also, but because of Covid-19 I couldn't do so. I am very happy to be here. I was here in Kathmandu earlier too, though this is my first visit to Nepal as a foreign secretary. We have very strong relationship. Our endeavour will be to see how we can take that relationship forward."

"I would like to thank the government of Nepal, the foreign secretary for the warm hospitality extended to us. We have some very good meetings ahead of us and we will look forward to how that goes. My first meeting will be with the Nepalese Foreign Secretary and then I will meet Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali. I will also hold meetings with high dignitaries in Kathmandu," he said. — PTI

Delhi Chalo: Farmers storm barriers

■ **Continued from Page 1** against them," he tweeted. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee also targeted the Centre, saying it wants to "capture" all the fundamental rights of the people. "They cannot curb the democratic rights of farmers! The farm laws are illegal. If a law is not meant for farmers but for black marketers, it is illegal. Why does the Central govt want to snatch farmers' rights?" she asked. Activist Yogendra Yadav also criticised the BJP-governed states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh for preventing farmers from protesting. He said any police action would only

embolden more farmers to join in. "Three lakh farmers are marching... the numbers show the extent of anger (against the laws)," he said, targeting Haryana deputy CM Dushyant Chautala, who has often said he is a farmers' representative in the state government, to step down and apologise to the farmers. He was later detained in Gurgaon along with around 50 farmers as they tried to cross into Delhi to join the nationwide protest. Activist Medha Patkar and many famers were also stopped by the UP police at the Rajasthan border and later detained. Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal

also tweeted in support of allowing farmers to express their voice against the three farm laws. "All the three farm laws of the Central government are anti-farmer. Instead of withdrawing these laws, farmers are being prevented from holding peaceful protests, water cannons are being run on them. This crime is absolutely wrong. Peaceful demonstration is their constitutional right," the AAP chief said. The Central government is treating farmers as "enemy of the State". SAD leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal alleged, condemning the use of force to stop them from marching towards Delhi in protest

against the Centre's farm laws. Ms Badal had resigned from the Union Cabinet in September in protest against three farm sector bills, which later got the President's assent after being passed by Parliament. She was the Union minister for food processing industries. Farmers from six states — Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Kerala and Punjab — have been planning the November 26-27 march for two months. The farmers and Opposition parties have said these laws should be repealed, or the MSP system should be woven into the laws.

Bihar BJP MLA files FIR against Lalu for luring him

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, NOV. 26

A complaint case has been registered against RJD chief Lalu Yadav at the vigilance police station in Patna. BJP MLA Lalan Paswan who had accused Lalu of making strategies to topple the newly-elected NDA government in Bihar filed the complaint on Thursday under the prevention of corruption act. On Wednesday, BJP leader and former deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi had released an audio clip in which Lalu was heard talking to Lalan Paswan, asking him to abstain from the voting during the Speaker's election. Sources said that the Jharkhand administration has also asked the officials to ascertain the veracity of the audio clip which was released by the BJP on Wednesday. Amid the political tur-

RJD supremo shifted from hospital director's bungalow to paying ward

Ranchi, Nov. 26: Jailed RJD president Lalu Prasad was shifted from the director's bungalow of a Ranchi hospital to its paying ward on Thursday following his alleged phone call to a Bihar BJP MLA seeking his help in defeating the NDA candidate for Assembly Speaker's post, an official said. Prasad, who was convicted in fodder scam cases, was undergoing treatment in the Rajendra



Lalu Yadav

moil, Lalu Yadav, who is serving his jail term after being sentenced in several fodder scam cases, has been sent back to the paying ward of Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences, Ranchi. "This is an attempt to stop the Opposition RJD from rais-

ing questions against the NDA. The allegation against Lalu is baseless and the NDA leaders cannot prove anything. The Opposition would continue to expose the failures of the Bihar government", RJD spokesperson Chitraranjan Gagan said.

Rajnath: Another 26/11-like attack almost impossible

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, NOV. 26

A 26/11-like terror strike in India is almost impossible as the national security architecture has been significantly bolstered in the last few years, defence minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday, the 12th anniversary of the deadly Mumbai terror attack.

Mr Singh asserted that the country is no longer a soft target for terrorists and India has "escalated the cost for those supporting terrorism". Referring to the Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people, including 28 foreigners from 10 nations, were killed, Mr Singh said that it forced the country to think to permanently change its 'national security strategy'.

"We can assure all the countrymen that now India has strengthened its internal and external security cycle so much that it is now almost impossible to execute another 26/11 attack on Indian soil," Mr Singh said.

He also talked about the failed attempts by Pakistan-based terrorists to carry out a major attack in Nagrota in Jammu and Kashmir recently. Mr Singh said that India has "escalated the cost for those supporting terror-



Rajnath Singh

ism, and countries like Pakistan are paying a heavy price for making terrorism a state policy." "Pakistan's model of terrorism against India is slowly being demolished," said the defence minister. He said that India's response to terrorism now has been under a 360 degree approach.

"India is taking action within its borders. But, if needed, our brave soldiers are going beyond that to destroy the terrorist bases," said the defence minister. Without taking the name of China, Mr Singh said that like Pakistan there is another neighbouring country which keeps on creating trouble on border. "Our government has given full freedom to the Army to oppose any attempt to change the line of actual control (LAC)," the minister said. He said that in the Galwan Valley, Indian soldiers forced the Chinese troops to go back.

Phase 3 trial of India-made 'Covaxin' begins at AIIMS

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

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, NOV. 26

With 44,489 new confirmed cases in the last 24 hours, India's Covid-19 caseload crossed 92 lakh, while the number of recoveries surged to 86.42 lakh. The number of total Coronavirus cases rose to 92,22,216, while the death toll due to the disease climbed to 1,34,699 with 481 new fatalities.

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

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

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

Dr Srivastava said, "Covaxin is the first indigenously-developed anti-coronavirus vaccine and on top of that, my institute is participating

India extends international flights ban till Dec. 31

Mumbai, Nov. 26: India's aviation safety regulator DGCA on Thursday extended the suspension of scheduled international commercial passenger flights to December 31.

The restrictions, however, will not apply on international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), an official circular said.

"In partial modification of circular dated 26.6.2020,

the competent authority has further extended the validity of circular issued on the subject cited above regarding scheduled international commercial passenger services to/from India till 2359 hours (IST) of December 31, 2020," the DGCA said in the circular. International scheduled flights, however, may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis, the circular added. The suspension of inter-

Drugs Controller General of India.

According to the Union health ministry, the active caseload shot up to 4,44,746, an increase of 6,079 cases from Tuesday, even though it remained below five lakh for the 15th consecutive day, accounting for 4.82 per cent of the total cases. The number of people who have recovered from the disease surged to 86,42,771, pushing the national recovery rate to 93.72 per cent, while the Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.46 per cent.

Of the 1,34,699 deaths reported in the country, Maharashtra accounts for 46,683, followed by Karnataka (11,695), Tamil

Nadu (11,639), Delhi (8,621), West Bengal (8,121), Uttar Pradesh (7,615), Andhra Pradesh (6,956), Punjab (4,653) and Gujarat (3,892).

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

It said 60.50 per cent of the 524 latest fatalities are concentrated in six states and UTs — Delhi, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Kerala leads the tally with 6,491 new Covid-19 cases.

'With a bribery rate of 39%, India worst in Asia'

New Delhi, Nov. 26: India has the highest bribery rate in Asia and the most number of people who use personal connections to access public services, according to a new report by corruption watchdog Transparency International. The Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) Asia, found that nearly 50 per cent of those who paid bribes were asked to, while 32 per cent of those who used personal connections said they would not receive the service otherwise. The report is based upon the survey which was conducted between June 17 and July 17 this year in India with a sample size of 2,000.

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

Bribery in public services continues to plague India. Slow and complicated bureaucratic process, unnecessary red tape and unclear regulatory frameworks force citizens to seek out alternate solutions to access basic services through networks of familiarity and petty corruption, the report said.

"Both national and state governments need to streamline administrative processes for public services, implement preventa-

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

Sextortion is extorting money or sexual favours from someone by threatening to reveal evidence of their sexual activity through means like morphed images.

In India, 89 per cent think government corruption is a big problem, 18 per cent offered bribes in exchange for votes and 11 per cent experienced sex-

tortion or know someone who has.

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

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

After India, Cambodia has the second highest bribery rate at 37 per cent, followed by Indonesia (30 per cent) while the Maldives and Japan maintain the lowest overall bribery rate (2 per cent), followed by South Korea (10 per cent) and Nepal (12 per cent). — PTI

Army JCO killed and civilian hurt in Pak firing

AGE CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, NOV. 26

A junior commissioner officer (JCO) was killed and a local resident was injured as Indian and Pakistani armies again exchanged artillery and small arms fire along the line of control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Thursday.

Officials of the Indian Army said that the Pakistan Army initiated "unprovoked ceasefire violation" by firing small arms and mortars along the LoC's Qasba and Kirni sectors at around 1.30 pm. The Indian Army retaliated "befittingly", they added.

In the exchange of fire, Subedar Swathantra Singh of 16 Garhwal was critically injured in Kirni Qasba sector, they said adding that the 48-year-old JCO was shifted to the nearest Army hospital where he succumbed.

Reports received here said that a civilian was injured in mortar shelling from across the de facto border in Kirni village of Poonch district. SHO Poonch S.D. Singh identified the injured civilian as Muhammad Rashid.

Sack gov..

■ **Continued from Page 1**

press release and a press conference by a ruling party leader. To the extent the governor's role or actions are concerned, the reflections are wide off the mark, betraying ignorance of elementary constitutional and legal aspects and factually untenable. A classic case of 'memory lapse of law and Constitution'. This is the unfolding of a strategy to take a diversionary route so that burning issues get to the backburner. This shall not happen. It deserves no serious note except for being ill-informed on law, facts and Constitution. It is part of an ongoing vituperative campaign to cover up monumental lapses and constitutional indiscretions. These cannot be impactful. I cannot help it if someone cannot even read and understand a tweet."

THE ASIAN AGE

27 NOVEMBER 2020

Ahmed's passing leaves crisis-hit Cong in trouble

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

These events may be expected to pose a particular challenge principally on account of the fact that the Congress had become more or less wholly reliant on the organisational resources and skills that the late Mr Patel brought to the table. The rest of the party structure does exist in a nominal sense, but it is based on

Without exception, the late Mr Patel was the only Congress stalwart who could phone any senior non-Congress leader in any state to discuss poll alliances and adjustments or any political matter

nominations and lacks substance. Ahmed Patel, too, was a nominated member of the Congress Working Committee but he used to win CWC elections until these stopped being held. Besides, he had vast experience.

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

also made the party's treasurer in 2018, a position he had held earlier.

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

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

Farewell, Diego

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

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

To say he was the most human of sport's immortals would be an understatement. His flawed genius illustrated how the loss of moral compass can affect man. Success went on to ravage him, his addictions to cocaine and liquor and women — he sired five children from four women — proving a pervasive cocktail. Judging others might seem incongruous as there is no such thing as a perfect human being. But, as a sporting icon whose millions of fans worshipped the very ground he walked on, Maradona had a responsibility to fulfil, which his bacchanalian lifestyle and attitude precluded. Comparisons can be odious but one must be done with Pele to illustrate what Maradona would have been if only... But then, as he said in a famous speech — “The ball does not show dirt.”

THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY
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Subhani



‘Contempt of court’: A relook may be needed



Karan Thapar

As I See It

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In 1987, after the Spycatcher judgment, when the Daily Mirror called Britain's Law Lords ‘You Old Fools’ or, in 2016, after the Brexit ruling, when the Daily Mail called three judges ‘Enemies of the People’, the British judiciary ignored the headlines

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

TIBETAN SOLUTION

Apropos Claude Arpi's article “Use Tibet links to counter China in the Himalayas” (Nov. 26), the writer is realistic. In spite of the reluctance of the Indian government to be involved with Tibet, the age-old ties between the two have remained intact. The proposal for creation of a Department of Himalayan and Tibetan Affairs, to function under the Prime Minister's Office is sound and deserves attention. Significantly, amidst strained US-China relations, the recent visit of head of the Tibetan government in exile, Dr Lobsang, to the White House for the first time in six decades signals a shift in the US's Tibetan policy.

M.C. Joshi
Lucknow

BIDEN'S TROUBLES

IF JOE BIDEN is given to scanning distant horizons on climate change, Donald Trump was consumed by close-range nightmares of a brutalised economy's fallout on his reelection. Trump spurned science, brushed aside Covid even as he sought everyone to put loyalty to him before ethics. Under Biden, though, efforts to re-establish conventional realpolitik may set aside the immediate needs of his nation. The 74 million who voted Trump should keep Biden on his toes.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

THE HUMBLE MASK

THE PUBLIC has become complacent, as if the Covid-19 pandemic has come to an end. Almost every state is witnessing a surge in cases. Vaccines are expected soon, but won't be available for everyone in the next few months and would not have 100 per cent results. Thus the mask remains the mainstay for preventing this disease. Metaphorically speaking, a mask is no less a vaccine; the regret is that people are underestimating its importance.

Neha Jamal
Chandigarh

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

Saeed Naqvi
Wide Angle



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IN BRIEF

40 miners stuck at Zimbabwe mishap

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

Flydubai lands 1st scheduled flight

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

Greek oil tanker hit by blast at Saudi

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

PALESTINIAN WHO WAGED 103-DAY FAST FREED

Nablus, Palestinian Territories, Nov. 26: Israel on Thursday released a Palestinian who waged a 103-day hunger strike to protest Israeli rules allowing his detention without charge, the Palestinian Prisoner's Club said.

Maher al-Akhras, arrested over alleged membership of a militia group, was transferred from a Tel Aviv hospital to Nablus's Al-Najah University Hospital in the occupied West Bank, the prisoners' rights group said in a statement. A decision on releasing him to return home will follow "a medical assessment of his condition". Al-Najah hospital medical director Abdul-Karim Al-Barqawi said.

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

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

Trump reiterates voter fraud allegations amid transition

Calls into Pennsylvania Republican event to probe charges

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said, "The President has pardoned General Flynn because he should never have been prosecuted.



Michael Flynn

ed. An independent review of General Flynn's case by the Department of Justice — conducted by respected career professionals — supports this conclusion."

In fact, the Department of Justice has firmly concluded that the charges against Flynn should be dropped, she said. "This Full Pardon achieves that objective, finally bringing to an end the relentless, partisan pursuit of an innocent man," she said.

"General Flynn should not require a pardon. He is

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

Russia oil giant declares Arctic project open

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Iran swaps Australian for 3 Iranians

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

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

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

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

Payne said the release

FACEBOOK FIGHTS WITH ELECTION DISINFORMATION

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

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

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

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

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

— AFP

'Infodemic' risks jeopardising Covid vaccines

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

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

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

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

In April, Trump mused on the possibility of using

PANDEMIC OR NOT, PEOPLE MUST STAY ACTIVE, SAYS WHO

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

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

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

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

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

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

Turkish coup accused get life terms

Ankara, Nov. 26: A Turkish court jailed more than 300 former pilots and other suspects for life in a mass trial stemming from a bloody 2016 coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Fethullah Gulen, a US-based Muslim preacher who was once an Erdogan ally, is accused of ordering the failed putsch. His movement has been proscribed as a terrorist group by Ankara, but the 79-year-old denies all charges.

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

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

Turkey's largest courtroom was packed with dozens of security personnel and the presiding judge ordered one protesting defendant to "Sit down!" several times before reading the verdict.

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

Ankara and civilians who orchestrated the coup attempt from inside the Akinci military base near the capital.

Court documents subsequently obtained by AFP showed 337 defendants handed life sentences for murder, violating the constitutional order and attempting to assassinate Erdogan.

Sixty suspects were given jail sentences of various lengths while 75 were acquitted. — AFP

PUBLISHING | GIANT Bertelsmann's rival News Corp., which owns HarperCollins, slammed the deal

Penguin to buy Simon & Schuster for \$2bn

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

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

"Simon & Schuster strengthens Bertelsmann's footprint globally,

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

The purchase of Simon & Schuster would reduce the so-called Big Five of American publishing — which also includes HarperCollins, Hachette Book Group and Macmillan — to four.

The companies said the deal is expected to close in 2021, subject to regulatory approval.

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

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

termination fee if the deal fails due to regulatory reasons.

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

petition for book deals, and lower advances.

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

The department did not immediately return a request for comment.

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

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

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

ment. "This literary leviathan would have 70% of the U.S. literary and general fiction market."

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

Simon & Schuster's current president and chief executive, Jonathan Karp, will continue to lead the publishing house, Bertelsmann said. — AP

quick BITES

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

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Import duty on crude palm oil slashed to 27.5%

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

Bombay HC refuses to stay LVB-DBS merger



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

Infotech sector visionary F.C. Kohli dead

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



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

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

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

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, NOV. 26

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Companies can classify NPS contribution as 'biz expense'

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, NOV. 26

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

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

contributed towards NPS on behalf of employees.

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

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

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

BMW X5 M Competition launched at ₹1.95 crore

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, NOV. 26

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

The BMW X5 M is being



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

Audi RS Q8 and Porsche Cayenne Turbo.

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

LTC scheme: Insurance premium also eligible

New Delhi, Nov. 26:

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

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

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

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

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

Vedanta Resources sounds out bondholders on debt extension

BIJOU GEORGE & LUCA CASIRAGHI NOV. 26



Anil Agarwal

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

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

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

holders, slumped as much as 7.7 cents after the news. That's set for the sharpest drop in more than six weeks, according to prices compiled by Bloomberg.

London-based Vedanta Resources must repay \$670 million in outstand-

ing principal on those securities.

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

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

A spokesman for the Vedanta group declined to comment.

—Bloomberg

Murugappa Group takes over CG Power, restructures board

New Delhi, Nov. 26:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Short-term rates crash with funds overflowing with cash

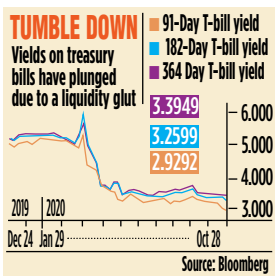
SUBHADIP SIRCAR NOV. 26

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"A sure recipe for financial instability in the future."

—Bloomberg

THERMAX PLANS ACQUISITIONS TO EXPAND BIZ

SHWETHA SUNIL NOV. 26

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

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

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

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

—Bloomberg

CUTTING RISKS Company building assembly lines for iPad and MacBook Foxconn to shift some Apple production to Vietnam from China

YIMOU LEE TAIPEI, NOV. 27

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



R.C. Bhargava

"The more the industry can sell, the more jobs will be created in the economy," he noted.

Bhargava pointed out that creating jobs across sectors was important for the overall growth of the economy. He, however, criticised states which have reserved jobs in manufacturing for locals. "It is an anti-competitive step." He also said MSMEs have to be as globally competitive as the large companies because the supply chain determines the overall competitiveness. —PTI

countries such as Vietnam, Mexico and India.

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

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

3 bn people live in water-scarce areas

MEGAN DURISIN NOV. 26

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

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

sive foods like meat and dairy.

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

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

—Bloomberg

GAMES

THE ASIAN AGE | FRIDAY | 27 NOVEMBER 2020 | NEW DELHI

DATE OF BIRTH:

October 30, 1960

PLACE OF BIRTH:

Buenos Aires, Argentina

DATE OF DEATH:

November 25, 2020

PLACE OF DEATH:

Tigre, Argentina

HEIGHT:

1.65m

PLAYING CAREER

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

INTL GOALS:

34

Position: attacking midfielder/playmaker

INTL CAPS:

91

(1977-94)

DIEGO MARADONA



Honours

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

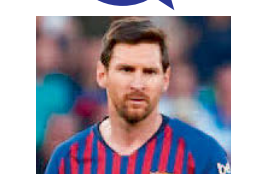
Coaching career

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

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Uncontrollable Argentina cries

Country mourns death of favourite son Maradona



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



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



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

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

“There are a few incredible players in all of history, he is one of them. For people of our generation, the World Cup in ’86 in Mexico was something which made this sport better.”
— **Pep Guardiola, Manchester City manager**

“I’m 53 years old and it feels like my entire life, he was part of it. When I was very young — maybe eight or nine, 10 years old — I saw him for the first time and he was 16 or 17. In any video, juggling the ball, from that moment on he was the player for me.”
— **Jürgen Klopp, Liverpool manager**

“Our sport lost one of its biggest idols. I lost a great friend, whose talent inspired me from the time I was a boy. I’m in shock that he’s gone, but grateful that our paths crossed in life. El Pibe, your legacy is eternal. Your magic on the pitch will never be forgotten.”
— **Ronaldo, former Brazil, Barcelona and Real Madrid striker**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— AP



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

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

— AP

GOA SET TO INSTALL MARADONA STATUE

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

KERALA DECLARES 2-DAY MOURNING

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

HEARTS IN NAPLES BREAK IN PIECES

Naples (Italy), Nov. 26: Few places will mourn the death of Diego Maradona as much as Naples, the downtrodden, gritty Italian city that clasped the troubled Argentine to its heart at his time of need and was repaid with the best years of perhaps the greatest footballer to ever play the game.

Buildings around Naples are adorned with depictions of the man who took Napoli to the top of the Italian game and beyond and became an icon and spokesman for Neapolitans, whose chaotic city was feared and loathed in equal measure by the rest of Italy.

— AFP

STADIUM IN NAPLES AFTER MARADONA

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

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

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

— AFP

WHEN MARADONA GRIPPED KOLKATA

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI



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

— AFP

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia vs India: First ODI from 9:10 am on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

FORMULA ONE

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

FOOTBALL

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

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

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India take on Oz in top ODI clash

Six Pak players test positive for Covid

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

whitewashed 3-0 in the ODIs.

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

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

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

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

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

The potent combination of Mohammed Shami and

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

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

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

— AFP

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

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

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

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

Six of those results have come back positive, although two of the six cases are believed to be “historical”.

New Zealand Health also revealed that “several team members have been seen on CCTV at the facility breaching managed isolation rules, despite clear, consistent and detailed communication of expected behaviours”.

“The team as a whole has been issued with a final warning,” it said.

— AFP