

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 13 | NOVEMBER 2020

## WEATHER

Max: 31°C  
Min: 22°C  
Rainfall: 3 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Aippasi 28  
**Tithi:** Thrayodashi/  
Chaturtashi  
**Star:** Chithirai  
**Rahukalam:**  
10.30 am to 12 noon  
**Yamagandam:**  
3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 4.52 am  
**Jumma:** 11.58 am  
**Asar:** 3.12 pm  
**Maghrib:** 5.41 pm  
**Isha:** 6.54 pm

## Actor Asif Basra found dead in Dharamshala

**Dharamshala (HP):** Actor Asif Basra, a familiar face in several movies and TV shows including *Jab We Met*, *Kai Po Che!* and *Paatal Lok*, was found hanging in a private residential complex here on Thursday, police said. He was 53.

## COUNTER POINT



Preserve these banners, posters... for Bengal polls!

## STATE | 3

Removal of Arundhati's book from MSU's MA syllabus draws flak



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## WORLD | 5

Biden transition picks up, Klain chief of staff

## SPORT | 8

Recovered Kapil turns up for golf



## I-T raid on jeweller yields undisclosed income of ₹500 cr

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 12

The income tax department on Thursday said it has detected undisclosed income to the tune of ₹500 crore during searches on the premises of leading wholesale bullion and gold jewellery dealer in Chennai.

The search operation that began on Tuesday was carried out at 32 premises located in Chennai, Kerala, Mumbai, Kolkata, Coimbatore, Salem, Trichy, Madurai and Tirunelveli.

The evidence unearthed includes unaccounted stock maintained by the assessee at various places.

## Schools in TN to remain shut

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 12

Days after seeking the views of parents, the state government on Thursday reversed its move to reopen schools on November 16 for classes 9 to 12 and said they will continue to remain closed.

"The order on reopening schools from November 16 for classes 9-12 is cancelled. An announcement on reopening schools will be made later based on the situation," an official release said.

The government has revised its plans for the colleges, too. It was decided to open the colleges on November 16 but the government has now said colleges and universities shall reopen on December 2 only for research schol-

ars and final year post-graduate students of science and technology streams.

"The opening of colleges for other courses will be announced later," the government said in an official release adding hostels would be opened only for those students who shall resume studies next month.

The government said the parents of students of private, government and aided schools were divided in their opinion on reopening schools for higher classes.

Parents of some schools wanted the institutions to reopen, but others were against such a move in view of the coronavirus and the school education department analysed the opinions holistically, the release said.

## Restrictions on all gatherings to stay

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 12

The state government on Thursday cancelled its order allowing social, political, religious and cultural events from November 16 allowing participation of a maximum of 100 people.

Citing festival season and people congregating in large numbers in public places throwing caution to winds, the TN government said curbs shall continue as regards such programmes including those related to entertainment and education. An official release

said the government has noted that people gathered in large numbers in public places like markets and bus stands without paying attention to social distancing and wearing masks.

The government said though the spread of the virus has been controlled in the state due to slew of measures, with a possibility of a second wave of the pandemic seen in some foreign countries, it has become imperative to intensify curbs. In view of the Deepavali on November 14, shopping hubs like T Nagar here are teeming with people.

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO | FC  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 12

In a move to bring the Covid-hit economy back on track, the Union government on Monday announced yet another stimulus package of 12 additional measures worth over ₹2.65 lakh crore under Atmanirbhar Bharat 3.0, which mostly focuses on job creation for the poor, farmer's uplift, credit support to stressed sectors like housing, real estate as well as construction and boosting exports, among others.

Unveiling the third tranche of measures finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman told media that the government is also launching a scheme to incentivise the creation of new jobs, a move to fuel a rebound of the economy.

To start with, the finance minister announced an Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana, under which EPF-registered organisations would get benefits on recruiting new people who did not have an EPFO account before or those who lost their jobs between March 1 and September 30.

"The scheme will cover any new employee joining

- Govt to pay EPF share of new employees and employer for two years
- ₹18,000 cr more for PM Awaas Yojana
- I-T relief for developers and home buyers
- ₹900 cr for R&D of Indian vaccine

employment in EPFO-registered establishment on monthly wages less than ₹15,000. It will also cover EPF members drawing monthly wages of less than ₹15,000, who lost their jobs during Covid-19 pandemic from March 1, 2020 and is employed on or after October 1, 2020," she said. "Employees contribution (12 per cent of wages) and employer's contribution (12 per cent of wages) totalling 24 per cent of wages would be given to establishments for two years. However to avail the scheme, operational till June 30, 2021, establishments with up to 50 employees will have to add a minimum of two new employees and those with more than 50 staff, will have to give a minimum of five new jobs," she added. ■ P4

## Chinese daily rejects disengagement plan

PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 12

China's state-owned *Global Times* newspaper on Thursday said Indian media reports on a "detailed border disengagement plan" in the Pangong Tso area in eastern Ladakh between India and China are "inaccurate".

It was reported on Thursday that India and China have been moving

closer towards an agreement on a disengagement plan at some of the flash-points, including the most contentious one, Pangong Tso, in eastern Ladakh.

However, the *Global Times* report said India always had "unrealistic" ideas about the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and disregarded history, unilaterally believing that Fingers 4 to 8 (on the northern banks of Pang-

ong Tso) are its patrolling areas, and has sought to gain bargaining chips in talks by fishing for inter-est in the disputed border area. The Chinese Army's occupation of the area between Finger 4 and Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso in May 2020 is one of the most sticky points in resolving the six-month military standoff between India and China.

## Tejashwi calls NDA win deceit; Cong admits it's the weak link

Patna, Nov. 12: Rashtriya Janata Dal leader (RJD) Tejashwi Yadav was on Thursday elected the leader of the Grand Alliance's legislature group and claimed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won the Bihar elections by "deceit" amid a call in the Congress for "deep introspection" over its

dismal performance that thwarted the coalition's bid for power.

Congress general secretary Tariq Anwar came out with the candid admission that his party, on account of its poor performance, emerged as the weak link, preventing the Mahagathbandhan from forming its government in the state. — PTI

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## OTHER STORIES

**Furniture worth ₹20 lakh destroyed in fire**DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 12

Furniture worth lakhs of rupees were reduced to ashes in a fire caused by short circuit at a furniture factory in Kundrathur near Chennai.

According to sources, the fire started in the factory located in SIDCO, Thirumulivakkam in Kundrathur on Thursday afternoon. Firefighters from Ponnammalle, Tambaram and Tambaram sanatorium rushed to the spot and doused the fire. No casualty was reported. Although flames were doused, thick smoke continued to billow from the factory until evening.

An electrical short-circuit is suspected to have caused the fire. Initial probe indicated loss of furniture worth ₹20 lakh.

The Kundrathur police registered a case and are investigating the matter.

**Pondy logs 66 new Covid-19 cases, 2 deaths**

**Puducherry, Nov. 12:** Puducherry added 66 fresh coronavirus infections and two related deaths on Thursday, pushing the overall tally to 36,179.

The Covid-19 toll climbed to 607 with two more fatalities.

Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said in a release that the new cases were identified during the last 24 hours ending 10 am on Thursday.

The two patients who died of the viral infection were women and had complaints of COVID pneumonia. The deceased were in the age group of 58 and 82 years.

The Director said that of the overall 36,179 cases, 1,071 were active, 34,501 patients recovered and were discharged so far.

Kumar said 69 patients were discharged from hospitals during last 24 hours. The fatality and recovery rates were 1.68 percent and 95.36 percent respectively.

Of the total 3.51 lakh samples tested so far in Union Territory 3.09 lakh turned out to be negative and result of examination of remaining samples was awaited.

Puducherry region accounted for 50 out of the 66 fresh cases reported today while Karaikal had six, Yanam one and Mahe nine cases.

— PTI

**IAS officers transferred**DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 12

Tamil Nadu Government on Thursday ordered transfers and postings of 14 IAS officers. The following transfers and postings are notified.

Dr S. Sameeran, IAS, Director of Fisheries and Managing Director, Tamil Nadu Fisheries Corporation has been transferred and posted as Collector of Tenkasi District replacing G.K. Arun Sundar Thayalan, IAS.

V. Vishnu, IAS, Managing Director, Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation, and Director of Employment and Training (in charge) is transferred and posted as Collector, Tirunelveli District in a post held by Shilpa Prabhakar Satish, IAS.

P. Madhusudhan Reddy, IAS, Deputy Commissioner (Health), Greater Chennai Corporation is transferred and posted as Collector, Sivagangai District replacing J. Jayakanthan, IAS.

Dinesh Ponraj Oliver, IAS, Director of Rehabilitation and Welfare of Non-Resident Tamils is transferred and posted as Collector, Ramanathapuram District in a post held by K. Veera Raghava Rao, IAS.

Sandeep Nanduri, IAS, Collector, Thoothukudi District is transferred and posted as Collector, Tiruvannamalai District replacing K.S. Kandasamy, IAS.

A.R. Gladstone Pushparaj, IAS, Joint Secretary to Government, Health and Family

Welfare Department is transferred and posted as Collector, Ranipet District.

Dr K. Senthil Raj, IAS, Mission Director, National Health Mission is transferred and posted as Collector Thoothukudi District in a post held by Sandeep Nanduri, IAS, who is now transferred to Thiruvannamalai.

J. Jayakanthan, IAS, Collector, Sivagangai District is transferred and posted as Director of Fisheries and Managing Director, Tamil Nadu Fisheries Corporation.

K. Veera Raghava Rao, Collector, Ramanathapuram District is transferred and posted as Director of Employment and Training vice, where V. Vishnu, IAS, was holding additional charge.

G.K. Arun Sundar Thayalan, IAS, Collector, Tenkasi District is transferred and posted as Joint Secretary to Government, Shilpa Prabhakar Satish, IAS, Collector, Tirunelveli District is transferred and posted as Joint Secretary to Government, Health and Family Welfare Department.

K.S. Kandasamy, IAS, Collector, Tiruvannamalai District is transferred and posted as Special Officer, Grievance Redressal, e-Governance. Jacintha Lazarus, IAS (MN:2005), on inter-cadre Deputation, is posted as Director of Rehabilitation and Welfare of Non-Resident Tamils.

The services of S. Divyadharshini, IAS, are placed at the disposal of Greater Chennai Corporation for appointment as its Joint Commissioner (Health).

**‘Allow MGNREGS workers to help in farm work’**DC CORRESPONDENT  
THANJAVUR, NOV. 12

Farmers of Kumbakonam area have appealed to the government to permit the Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee scheme (MGNREGS) workers to get involved in agriculture works, as agriculture labourers have become a scarcity in the district.

**Care for animals from crackers**T. SUDHEESH | DC  
CHENNAI, NOV. 12

With the government allowing bursting of crackers, Deepavali celebrations are set to bring horror to the animals.

The city's Deepavali celebration has a record of bringing a lot of trauma for animals due to the noise of firecrackers.

It may be recalled that in 2017, a cattle shed in suburb Madipakkam caught fire from stray crackers and burnt five cows alive.

Alokparna Sen Gupta, managing director, Human Society International-India, urged everyone to celebrate Deepavali with lamps and lights and not with loud firecrackers.

"Given the situation we are in, it would also be prudent to not burst firecrackers to protect our health and the environment. Make this festival a happy one by not bursting crackers as the year has been a struggle for both humans and animals alike", she said.

She also advised parents to keep their pets indoors and in a familiar room. "Switch on soothing music or television if possible. Keep all doors and windows closed and draw the curtains to reduce the noise," she added. Aditi Madhusudhanan, trustee, 'Born to Win', a city-based NGO, who has been conducting a campaign against bursting of crackers during Deepavali, said that the city had witnessed many cases of missing pets due to noise of firecrackers. It's important to create an

**ADVISORY TO KEEP ANIMALS SAFE**

■ Store fireworks safely in a closed box, somewhere cool and dry, and out of reach of pets.

■ Do not keep fireworks containers under stairs or exposed in passages. Decorate with lights, lamps and diyas that are friendlier to the environment and animals.

■ Refrain from bursting crackers near an animal shelter or zoo. Noise can cause panic and fear. Pollution from burning firecrackers is

also harmful to their health.

■ Take dogs for a walk during the day-time before the celebrations begin.

■ Consult a veterinarian if your pets are prone to acute anxiety or distress from loud noises.

■ Ensure pets are wearing collars and identification tags with current contact information. All pets, even those kept indoors, should always wear collars with identification tags.

■ Make a first aid kit in preparation for helping injured animals. Have a bucket full of water handy for emergencies and for putting used sparklers into.

■ Keep contact information for local municipal corporations and surrounding shelters handy and approach them immediately in case of lost pets. If you find a lost pet, either take her to the address on the tag or a local animal shelter.

**Cops in Nilgiris extend festive niceties to tribals**B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, NOV. 12

Cops here turned 'good samaritans' as they reached out to tribal hamlets with gifts and delicacies to usher in the Deepavali ambience and keep the tribesmen and other dwellers there in good humour, and garner their support for Maoist control activities in the jungles.

While Covid-19 crisis has certainly dampened the Deepavali spirit in the Nilgiris, SP V Sasimohan, has urged his department personnel across the Nilgiris to visit tribal hamlets with gifts which are otherwise inaccessible to the tribes, and arranging to serve delicacies like biriyani, to cheer up the tribes-

men and their families. Philanthropists and some NGOs are also coordinating with this initiative. This attempt is to gain the confidence of the tribesmen and also to exhibit the finer side of the police department. This could inspire the tribal communities to easily mingle with the mainstream population and



Government Kilpauk Medical College and hospital dean Dr P. Vasanthamani inspects 'First Aid Burns' ward readied for Deepavali. — DC

induce them to lend their hands in nation building, and also help cops maintain security in the jungle environs. SP Sasimohan, himself drove to a couple of tribal villages in New Hope on the Nilgiris border, and also to Chengalpudur tribal hamlet to ignite the Deepavali celebrations.

banned polluting firecrackers in 2018 the situation on ground isn't any different. The TNPCB had last year fixed time slots

to burst firecrackers between 6 am and 7 am and from 7 pm to 8 pm. But residents continued to burst firecrackers.

**Shower lashes Chennai city, thunderstorm warning issued**DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, NOV. 12

Heavy rain lashed Chennai and neighbouring districts on Thursday morning. The Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, has said that thunderstorms packing heavy rain would raid Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu, Cuddalore, Villupuram, Pudukottai, Thanjavur, Tiruvallur and Nagapattinam districts till Friday morning.

The rains are also expected to continue at isolated places over south coastal Tamil Nadu on Deepavali weekend, November 14 and November 15, as the latest weather predictions suggested that it was going to be a rainy week for residents in Chennai.

On Friday, November 13, thunderstorm with heavy rain is likely to occur at isolated places over Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Tiruvallur and Mayiladuthurai districts of Tamil Nadu and Karaikal area. On Sunday, November 15, thunderstorms with heavy rain are predicted over isolated places in coastal Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal followed by Monday, where heavy rain is predicted in isolated places along the coast. A thunderstorm warning has been issued for the next five days from November 12 to 16 at isolated places in the state. With intermittent rains and thunderstorms likely to continue in Chennai for the next 48 hours, maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to hover around 28 degree Celsius and 24 degree Celsius. Weather blogger Pradeep John said that the rains in Chennai may continue in the city with steady and varying intensity, more rains will be expected in Chennai from late night or Friday morning" he added.



A huge tree lies uprooted at Chepet following heavy rain on Thursday.

A flooded road at R A Puram.

**The Greater Chennai Corporation has opened 24x7 emergency control rooms to lodge complaints regarding the issues caused due to northeast monsoon. People can contact to - 044 - 25384530 , 044 - 25384540, 1913**

**Scale down Deepavali celebrations amid corona pandemic, rain threat**

B. Vijayalakshmi

**Viewpoint**

As people gear up to celebrate Deepavali, the first major festival after months of lockdown, amid pandemic threat, the state government is pulling out all stops to prevent the congregation of people in public places for social, political, religious and cultural events.

While some states have already banned bursting of crackers, the Telangana high court on Thursday directed the state government to ban the sale and use of fireworks in view of coronavirus concerns. Similarly, the Maharashtra government has informed the Bombay HC that it would implement the National Green Tribunal's order banning firecrackers in districts where the air quality index was poor or worse.

Meanwhile, the Tamil Nadu government has fixed timings, like last year, for bursting firecrackers. In line with the Supreme Court directive, crackers can be burst in



People shopping ahead of Deepavali near Vilakkuthoon in Madurai without wearing masks and maintaining safe distance. — K. Manikandan

the state between 6 am and 7 am and from 7 pm to 8 pm on Deepavali. Also, Chennai police commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal has warned of strict action against those violating the timings fixed for bursting crackers during Deepavali.

With Tamil Nadu almost fully opened up, there has been a huge increase in consumer spending.

However, it has also raised fears that a fresh surge in positive cases could affect the state's hard-won gains in its battle against the pandemic. One can still witness people gathering in large numbers in public places like markets, shopping hubs, bus terminals forgoing safe distance and masks. Also, heavy rain and thundershowers have been predicted for the next

one week. Experts have already warned that winter may add to corona numbers.

The spread of coronavirus has been controlled in Tamil Nadu due to concerted efforts. But it is imperative that people be warned of any laxity. They must avoid socializing and enjoy Deepavali this year with their families at home.

**Centre again asks state to give job to scavenger**T. SUDHEESH | DC  
CHENNAI, NOV. 12

The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has sent a memo to the state government to fulfil its promise of providing a job to Manikandan, a manual scavenger from K. M. Garden near Pullianthope slum in the city.

The DC had published a report titled "Govt yet to keep promise given to manual scavenger" on last September 19.

The memo signed by S.L.

**DC IMPACT**  
**Govt yet to keep promise given to manual scavenger**

Bourasi, section officer, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment again

requests the state government to take appropriate action on the matter.

It was on September 4, 2017, the Union ministry directed the state government to provide him a permanent job at the city's slum clearance board.

Based on the direction, on January 24 this year Mr. K. Sridharan, Deputy Secretary, Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department, sent a letter to the Commissioner, Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC), asking

ing to take immediate action with regard to a permanent job and one-time cash payment offered to Manikandan. The letter also said that a copy of the action taken report (ATR) should be sent to the government immediately.

It has been three years since the state government was given direction, but Manikandan, father of four daughters aged between 7 and 19, continues to be jobless struggling to make ends meet.

Manikandan says the Union Ministry of Social

Justice and Empowerment in 2017 offered him the job after one of his pictures standing in the neck deep muck courted controversy. "Since then, I have written to many officials. I hoped that the promise would be fulfilled when the municipal administration department wrote to the GCC administration. But nothing happened. I expect the GCC authorities will take up the matter seriously as the Ministry of Social Justice sent a memorandum", he said.

— PTI







## SHORT TAKES

YES BANK SCAM  
ACCUSED ROSHNI  
KAPOOR GETS BAILSHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, NOV. 12

A magistrate court here on Thursday granted bail to Yes Bank founder Rana Kapoor's daughter Roshni Kapoor, an accused in the Yes Bank fraud case linked to DHFL, after she appeared before the court in response to summons issued to her.

A non-bailable warrant could have been issued had she not appeared before the court on the summons issued to her. The court had issued summons to her last month at the time of taking cognisance of the charge sheet filed by the Central probe agency CBI. The agency has named her as one of the eight accused.

The CBI had filed charge sheet against Rana Kapoor and others under the provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act and IPC. However, the charges of corruption were dropped by the special CBI court because the prosecution did not obtain the sanction needed to prosecute under the PC Act. As a result the case was transferred to the magistrate court for trial.

SCORPENE CLASS  
SUBMARINE  
LAUNCHEDPAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 12

The fifth Scorpene class submarine Vagrir for the Indian Navy was launched in Mumbai on Thursday.

The submarine will now undergo comprehensive and rigorous tests and trials for more than a year to ensure delivery of a combat worthy submarine, capable of operation in all modes and regimes of deployment.

The crew will also, at some point of time, sail the submarine for "sea acceptance trials" after which the submarine will be delivered to the Navy. The addition of the submarine will be critical for the Indian Navy which is operating at a less than ideal strength given India's vast coastline.

The Vagrir submarine has the ability to launch a crippling attack on an enemy with torpedoes as well as tube-launched anti-ship missiles whilst underwater or on surface.

Vagrir has the ability to carry out multifarious missions typically undertaken by any modern submarine, which include anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, mine laying and area surveillance. Six Scorpene submarines were to be manufactured by Mazagon Dock Limited, Mumbai, under programme Project-75 with a \$3 billion contract.

Shivraj rules  
out expansion  
of his ministryRABINDRA NATH  
CHOUHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, NOV. 12

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday ruled out expansion of his ministry in near future indicating that he was in no hurry to accommodate the 2 former ministers who resigned from his cabinet on October 21 when their 6-month mandatory period to continue in their position as non-MLAs ended.

Former ministers Tulsi Silawat and Govind Singh Rajput were among 22 ex-Congress MLAs who had resigned from the Assembly and subsequently from their party in March to pull down the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government.

All the 22 former MLAs later joined BJP. 14 of them including Silawat and Rajput were later inducted in the Shivraj ministry.

As per the constitutional provision, a non-MLA can join a state ministry, but he or she needs to be elected to the House within 6 months of being inducted in the ministry.

Accordingly, Silawat and Rajput, who were inducted in the Shivraj cabinet on April 2, resigned from the Shivraj

● **SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN** indicates that he is in no hurry to accommodate the 2 ex-ministers who resigned from his cabinet on October 21 when their 6-month mandatory period to continue in their position as non-MLAs ended.

cabinet on October 21. Both of them were however elected to the Assembly in the November 3 by-elections in the state.

"Ministry expansion is not in my agenda right now", Chouhan told reporters here.

He also refused to commit as to when he was planning to expand his ministry.

Meanwhile, out of the 12 non-MLA ministers in the Shivraj ministry, three have lost the elections, while the rest nine have won the polls.

The three ministers who lost the polls are Imarti Devi, Anand Singh Kansana and Giriraj Dandotia.

Meanwhile, Kansana announced his resignation from the ministry immediately after he lost the polls.

The other two ministers who lost the polls were yet to announce their resignation from the ministry.

## Flouting Covid-19 norms



A view of crowd at Sadar Bazar due to Diwali shopping in New Delhi on Thursday. Single-day increase of 47,905 infections took the country's Covid-19 caseload to 86,83,916, while the number of people who have recuperated from the disease have surged to 80,66,501. The coronavirus death toll climbed to 1,28,121 with 550 new fatalities.

— PTI

Have made no claim  
to CM's post: Nitish

Nitish likely to meet Guv soon after meeting with NDA partners

NAYEAR AZAD | DC  
PATNA, NOV. 12

After the victory of NDA in Bihar polls, Nitish Kumar is all set to take oath as Bihar Chief Minister for the next term.

On Thursday, he visited JD(U) office to greet party workers and said that the NDA was currently assessing the poll results and the dates for oath ceremony has not been finalised yet. Reports suggest that he is expected to meet Bihar governor after meeting with all four NDA partners soon.

While interacting with the media at the JD(U) office he said, "I have made no claim for the Chief Minister's post, the decision will be taken by NDA. It has not been decided yet when the oath ceremony is going to take place, whether after Diwali or Chhath Puja. At the moment we are assessing the poll results and all four NDA partners will also meet soon".

The NDA led by Nitish Kumar's JD(U) has won 125 seats, three more than the number required to form the government in Bihar. Reports suggest that Nitish Kumar has been upset over the performance of his party in the polls.

● **THE NDA** led by Nitish Kumar's JD(U) has won 125 seats, three more than the number required to form the government in Bihar.

● **THE JD(U)** has been holding Chirag Paswan responsible for the low tally and has been accusing him of 'cutting votes' on most of the seats fielded by the party.

This is the first time in 15 years that the JD(U) has slipped to number three position in the state after the RJD and NDA partner BJP.

The RJD with 75 seats has emerged as the single largest party followed by the BJP which has won 74 seats. The JD(U) got only 43 seats and two smaller partners Hindustani Awam Morcha and Vikasheel Insan Party won four seats each.

The JD(U) has been holding Chirag Paswan responsible for the low tally and has been accusing him of "cutting votes" on most of the seats fielded by the party.

On Wednesday, while talking about his party's performance in the Assembly elections Chirag Paswan had said that it was his party's goal to cause a dent to the JD(U) and make the BJP stronger. Sources said that the

JD(U) leadership has urged the BJP to initiate action against Chirag Paswan and his party for aggressively campaigning against Nitish Kumar and fielding candidates on most of the seats where JD(U) had fielded its candidates.

As per an assessment, the LJP harmed the JD(U) on 20-30 seats during the polls.

"It's the BJP which has to decide whether any action is to be taken against him (Chirag Paswan) or his party. It's for the BJP to decide whether or the LJP should remain in the NDA", Nitish Kumar said.

Meanwhile, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav in his first remark after the Assembly election raised doubts over the electoral process in the state.

He also alleged discrepancies in postal ballot count and demanded recounting in more than 20 seats where the grand alliance candidates lost by a thin margin.

Talking to the media after being declared as the legislative party leader of the Grand Alliance on Thursday, Tejashwi Yadav said, "They have hijacked the people's mandate once again. In 2015 also people's mandate was in favour of the Grand Alliance but it was the BJP which made backdoor entry to gain power".

Chief Electoral Officer H.R. Srinivas, meanwhile, submitted the list of winning candidates in the Assembly elections to Governor Phagu Chauhan at Raj Bhavan.

Tejashwi Yadav also announced that he would soon take out a "Dhanyawad Yatra" to thank the people of the state for voting in favour of the grand alliance.

He said that "The verdict was in our favour but the results were declared in their favour. I am confident that the grand alliance would have won at least 130 seats if the counting was done in a free and fair manner. We have also decided to demand video footage of the counting process. The grand alliance also wants to know that under whose pressure postal ballots were cancelled".

Tejashwi Yadav says NDA won by  
deceit, may approach poll panel

From Page 1

"It was undoubtedly a mandate for change. The NDA won by dhan, bal and chhal (money, muscle power and deceit," Tejashwi Yadav told a press conference after he was elected the leader of the five-party Grand Alliance, which gave a stiff competition to the NDA

before the latter scraped through.

Asked whether the Mahagathbandhan would try to muster numbers to form its own government, he said, "We will go to the people who gave the mandate. If they express such a wish we will act accordingly."

Quoting election data, he claimed the NDA got only

12,270 votes more than the Mahagathbandhan.

"How can it convert into their victory in 15 more seats than us? We believe

that had the counting of votes been fair, we would have returned with a tally of more than 130 seats," said Yadav, whose coalition has won 110 seats, 12 less than the magic figure of 122. The NDA clinched 125

seats. He said his alliance will write to the Election Commission and point out the "discrepancies".

"In so many constituencies, postal ballots were counted in the end and not at the beginning of counting which is the norm. Moreover, there were seats where as many as 900 postal ballots were invalidated," he said.

More sops for  
home buyers

From page 1

Besides, Sitharaman announced an additional outlay of Rs 10,000 crore to be provided for PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar Yojana in the current financial year, a move to boost employment in rural belts. In Budget 2020-21, the government had provided Rs 61,000 crore for MGN-REGA and an extra Rs 40,000 crore in the first Atmanirbhar package. So far, Rs 73,500 crore has been already spent.

For farmers, the government also extended its support to the agriculture sector by providing Rs 65,000 crore for subsidised fertilisers.

In order to boost the

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in urban areas, the government also gave an additional outlay of Rs 18,000 crore for PM Awaas Yojana (PMAY-Urban). "This will help 12 lakh houses to be grounded and 18 lakhs to be completed," she said.

To promote construction, the finance minister also announced a cut in performance security cut to 3 per cent from 5 per cent. Moreover, to benefit home buyers and real estate developers, Sitharaman also announced relaxations in income tax rules to allow sale of primary residential units of up to Rs 2 crore value below the circle rate, the minister said.

Chinese daily rejects  
disengagement plan

From Page 1

The Global Times report underlines the challenge of implementing any disengagement plan with China to end the six-month military standoff in eastern Ladakh.

This is why India is moving cautiously in dealing with any agreement with the Chinese side.

After the Global Times report, the status of the disengagement plan will become clear only at the next corps commanders' meeting.

"The Indian media's reports that detailed arrangements for a proposed disengagement plan are being discussed and finalised by the Chinese and Indian militaries are inaccurate and not helpful for the two sides to reach their estab-

lished goals," the state-owned newspaper said, in a report quoting sources. The report said while the momentum brought by the eighth round of corps commanders' talks was good, the "disengagement plan" mentioned by the Indian media is "not accurate".

Earlier too, first in June and then in July, India and China had agreed to mutually move back from Galwan Valley, Gogra Post, Hot Springs and Pangong Tso. However, it was only in Galwan Valley that soldiers from both sides had moved back to some extent. In Pangong Tso, the Chinese Army refused to move back from the Finger 4 ridgelines. In Gogra Post and Hot Springs too, there was no clarity on any Chinese disengagement.

‘Paatal Lok’ actor  
Asif Basra ends life

**Dharamshala (HP), Nov. 12:** Actor Asif Basra, a familiar face in several movies and TV shows including "*Jab We Met*", "*Kai Po Che!*" and "*Paatal Lok*", was found hanging in a private residential complex here on Thursday, police said. He was 53.

He hanged himself around 12-12.30 pm on Thursday. We are investigating the matter. We have sent the body for post-mortem... Prima

facie it is a case of suicide," Kangra Senior Superintendent of Police Vimukt Ranjan told reporters here.

The actor's body was recovered by police officials, he said. Further details are awaited, Ranjan added.

Basra had reportedly leased a property in McLeodganj, Upper Dharamshala, about five-six years ago and visited the place regularly. The news of the sud-

den death of the character actor, which comes months after Bollywood star Sushant Singh Rajput was found hanging at his residence in Mumbai on June 14, led to shock in the industry with several of his colleagues expressing their grief.

"What? This is too shocking!! Shot with him just before Lockdown!!! Oh My God!!!" tweeted actor Manoj Bajpayee.

— PTI

ASEAN KEY TO  
INDIA'S ACT EAST  
POLICY: MODIDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 12

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday participated in the 17th Asean-India virtual summit at the invitation of the Prime Minister of Vietnam Nguyen Xuan Phuc. Vietnam is the current chair of Asean.

"ASEAN-India engagement has evolved over the years into a deep, robust and multi-faceted partnership. Asean and India became summit-level partners in 2002, and strategic partners in 2012. The breadth of our partnership is covered by several dialogue mechanisms cutting across various sectors like defense, cyber security, counter terrorism, commerce, telecommunications, agriculture, energy, environmental issues, tourism, etc," said Riva Ganguly Das, secretary (East) in ministry of external affairs.

The annual Asean-India summits provide the opportunity for India and Asean to engage at the highest level.

The 17th ASEAN-India Summit is the eighth summit attended by Prime Minister. He attended the 16th ASEAN-India Summit in Bangkok in November last year.

Speaking at the summit, Modi underlined the centrality of Asean in India's Act East Policy and noted that a cohesive, responsive and prosperous Asean is central to India's Indo-Pacific vision and contributes to security and growth for all in the region.

The Prime Minister underscored the importance of strengthening convergence between India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific to ensure a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.

SHAHAB ANSARI |  
DC  
MUMBAI, NOV. 12

A special PMLA court on Thursday rejected the bail plea filed by Deepak Kochhar, husband of former ICICI Bank CEO Chanda Kochhar, in a money laundering case. Kochhar had sought default bail on the ground that the probe agency failed to file chargesheet against him within a stipulated time frame.

He had filed the bail application on merits too and his bail plea on merits is yet to be decided.

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED), while investigating the ICICI-Videcon money laundering case, had arrested Deepak Kochhar in September and since then he is behind bars.

Even though special judge Prashant Rajvaidya rejected the default bail application filed by Kochhar, he asked the ED to file its reply on the plea filed on merits and deferred hearing on it till November 23.

In its reply to Kochhar's claim that the charge sheet has not been filed in time, the ED claimed that the same was filed on November 3, but it is pending scrutiny by the concerned department, as there are five trunks full of documents that needed to

● **THE PROSECUTION** has claimed that the Kochhars and their business entities illegally sanctioned loans amounting to ₹1,875 crore to the Videocon Group of companies.

be verified. Hence, the court is yet to take the cognisance of the prosecution's complaint.

Accepting this contention the court rejected his bail plea.

The prosecution has claimed that the Kochhars and their business entities illegally sanctioned loans amounting to ₹1,875 crore to the Videocon Group of companies. Based on these allegations, the central probe agency slapped money laundering charges against the accused.

The ED had earlier said an amount of ₹64 crore, out of the ₹300 crore loan sanctioned by a committee headed by Chanda Kochhar to Videocon International Electronics Ltd, was transferred to Nupower Renewables Pvt Ltd (NRPL) by Videocon Industries Ltd on September 8, 2009, just a day after disbursement of the loan by ICICI Bank.

NRPL was earlier known as Nupower Renewables Ltd (NRL) and is a company of Deepak Kochhar.

₹5L compensation to two  
‘wrongly’ accused of murderAKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC  
BARGARH, NOV. 12

The Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has ordered compensation of ₹2.5 lakh each to two persons of Bargarh district who were 'wrongfully' arrested on charges of killing a boy in 2016 who was later found alive following his return to home after two years.

The panel has recommended that the compensation amount of ₹5 lakh be recovered from the salary of Prakash Kumar Karna, former inspector of Paikamal police station, who had arrested the two.

As per reports, one Jitu

Dandasena of Piplipali village in Bargarh district went missing on Dec. 7, 2016. During the course of investigation, police arrested Halu Gurla and Raghab Naik of Bargarh town on December 24, 2016 on the charges of murder and destruction of evidence.

The two were later sent to jail. However, Dandasena returned home in 2018 and the two wrongly accused had moved the OHRC seeking justice after their release from jail.

Later, human rights activist Biswapriya Kanungo had moved the OHRC alleging lapses and seeking justice for the arrestees.

GREATER CHENNAI CORPORATION PARKS DEPARTMENT	
P.D.C. No.P2/1155 & 1180/2020	
<b>TENDER NOTICE</b>	
Tenders are invited by the Superintending Engineer / Parks for the following work as per details furnished below:	
<b>Redevelopment of Playground in Dn-65 and Formation of Playground in Dn-68, Zone-6</b>	
Approx. value of work in Rs. 144.99 Lakhs - E.M.D: 1,45,000/-	
For more information see <a href="http://www.tenders.gov.in">www.tenders.gov.in</a> and <a href="http://www.chennai corporation.gov.in">www.chennai corporation.gov.in</a>	
Due Date and Time for Submission of tender: 30.11.2020 upto 3.00 pm	
Tender opening date and time :01.12.2020 @ 3.30 pm.	
DIPR/4257/Tender/2020 Superintending Engineer (Parks)	

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT CORPORATION (CHENNAI) LIMITED PALLAVAN ILLAM, ANNA SALAI, CHENNAI- 600 002.	
<b>TENDER NOTICE</b>	
Wax sealed and superscribed tenders are invited for the following Work/ Material from the eligible tenderers who shall submit documentary evidence:	
DESCRIPTION OF WORK	E.M.D Amount
1) Procurement of Retro Reflective Stickers	Rs. 10,000/-
2) Providing cement concrete pavement for 1500sq.m at Adambakkam Bus Terminus in Depot.	Rs. 25,000/-
Sale of Tender Documents	From 13.11.2020 (10.00 A.M. to 12.00 P.M. for SLNo:1)
Sale of Tender Documents	From 13.11.2020 (10.00 A.M. to 05.00 P.M. for SLNo:2)
Last date for sale of Tender Documents	28.11.2020 upto 05.00 P.M. (For SL No:2)
Last date for submission of Tender	upto 02.30 p.m. 30.11.2020 (For SLNo:1)
Last date for submission of Tender	upto 03.08 p.m. 30.11.2020 (For SLNo:2)
Date of opening	03.00 p.m. on 30.11.2020 (For SLNo:1)
Date of opening	03.15 p.m. on 30.11.2020 (For SLNo:2)
The Tender document is available in Government website ( <a href="http://www.tenders.in.gov.in">www.tenders.in.gov.in</a> ) Any modification (if any) in tender terms and tender invitation period will be uploaded in the website and the tenderers are requested to go through the above website periodically.	
DIPR/4257/TENDER/2020 MANAGING DIRECTOR	



## IN BRIEF

**Shots fired at Saudi embassy in Dutch**

**The Hague:** Several shots were fired early Thursday at Saudi Arabia's embassy in The Hague, Dutch police said. Nobody was injured and police were investigating. Spokesman Steven van Santen said police were alerted around 6 am (local time) to shots being fired at the building on a stately avenue in the Dutch city. Officers found several bullet casings outside the building and local media showed images of bullet holes in windows. The motive for the shooting was unclear. Police appealed for witnesses. Calls to the embassy went unanswered early Thursday.

**Radio Liberty scribe killed in bombing**

**Kandahar:** An Afghan journalist working for a US-funded radio network was killed in a blast in southern Afghanistan on Thursday, officials said, just days after a former television presenter was murdered in Kabul. Radio Liberty reporter Aliyas Dayee was killed when a sticky bomb attached to his car exploded in the city of Lashkar Gah in Helmand province, said Omar Zwak, the spokesman for the province's governor. Targeted killings of prominent figures, including journalists, clerics, politicians and rights activists, have become more common in recent months as violence surges in Afghanistan, despite ongoing peace talks between the government and the Taliban. Dayee, 33, was on his way to the local press club with his brother when the car exploded, Radio Liberty's chief editor Rateb Noori said.

**Democracy bloc set to resign in HK**

**Hong Kong:** Hong Kong's legislature opened on Thursday ahead of the planned mass resignation of its pro-democracy bloc, one day after the government ousted four of its members. One of the pro-democracy lawmakers, Lam Cheuk-ting, unfurled a banner from a balcony of the legislative council building saying the city's leader Carrie Lam had brought disaster to Hong Kong and its people. The group had said they would hand in resignation letters on Thursday, but it was not immediately clear when they would do it or even what the proper procedure was. One said the removal of their four colleagues could sound the "death knell" for democracy in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory. The resignation of the 15 remaining pro-democracy lawmakers would ratchet up tensions over the future of Hong Kong, a former British colony, regional financial hub and bastion of Western-style civil liberties where China's government has increasingly tightened its control.

**CARDI B SORRY FOR GODDESS DURGA LOOK**

**Los Angeles, Nov. 12:** American rapper Cardi B has apologised for appropriating Goddess Durga's image for a magazine cover shoot. The 28-year-old musician recently appeared on the cover of Footwear News magazine, posing as Goddess Durga with shoes in her hands, while promoting her first line of sneakers with Reebok.

In the magazine's cover photo, Cardi B is seen holding a shoe while multiple arms stretched out around her from her shoulders.

The singer was then slammed on social media with many Indian users claiming that she has insulted the Hindu goddess, while others took offence to her outfit. On Wednesday, Cardi B took to her Instagram story and apologised to her Indian fans.

In a video message, the musician said, "When I did the shoot, the creatives told me I was going to represent a Goddess; that she represents strength, femininity and liberation, and that's something I love and I'm all about."

"And though it was dope, if people think I'm offending their culture or their religion I want to say that was not my intent. I do not like offending anyone's religion; I wouldn't like it if someone did it to my religion," she added.

Cardi B maintained that her intention was not to disrespect anyone's god. "When people dress as Virgin Mary and Jesus, as long as they do it in a beautiful, graceful way it is ok". But I wasn't trying to be disrespectful; maybe I should have done my research. I'm sorry, I can't change the past but I will do more research for the future," she added.

**Typhoon Vamco strikes Philippines**

Rescuers pull a rubber boat carrying residents through a flooded street after Typhoon Vamco hit in Marikina City, suburban Manila on Thursday. — AFP

**Biden transition picks up, Klain chief of staff**

Long road ahead for duo to fight Covid, heal divided nation

**Washington, Nov. 12:** US President-elect Joe Biden pressed ahead with his transition on Wednesday despite Donald Trump's refusal to acknowledge defeat, naming a seasoned Democratic operative as chief of staff in his first public White House personnel choice.

Biden tapped longtime aide Ron Klain, who previously served as his first chief of staff while vice president, acknowledging the two had a long road ahead in fighting the coronavirus pandemic as well as healing a deeply divided nation.

"His deep, varied experience and capacity to work with people all across the political spectrum is precisely what I need in a White House chief of staff as we confront this moment of crisis and bring our country together again," Biden said.

He made the announcement after visiting the Korean War Memorial in Philadelphia earlier in the

**US military won't be used as political pawn, says Gen Mark**

**Washington, Nov. 12:** The words spoken by America's top military officer carried a familiar ring, but in the midst of a chaotic week at the Pentagon, they were particularly poignant. "We are unique among militaries," said Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "We do not take an oath to a king or a queen, a tyrant or a dictator. We do not take an oath to an individual."

Milley was speaking

day for a solemn wreath-laying ceremony to mark Veterans Day in the US.

President Trump attended a separate, simultaneous ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery out-

side Washington, in what should have been a moment of national unity but instead highlighted the Republican's refusal to acknowledge election defeat.

Esper's successor, acting defense chief Christopher Miller, reflected a view he has long been passionate about: the military's unequivocal duty to protect and defend the Constitution — what he called the "moral north star" for everyone in uniform.

But his message in a time of turmoil — Trump has refused to concede his election loss — was unmistakable: The military exists to defend democracy and is not to be used as a political pawn. — PTI

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But his message in a time of turmoil — Trump has refused to concede his election loss — was unmistakable: The military exists to defend democracy and is not to be used as a political pawn. — PTI

**ARMENIA DETAINS CRITICS OF KARABAKH DEAL**

**Yerevan, Nov. 12:** Armenia on Thursday arrested 10 leading opposition figures for violently protesting against a Russian-brokered peace deal that ended weeks of fighting with Azerbaijan and sparked fury with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Prosecutors announced the arrests hours ahead of a fresh demonstration called by the opposition against the accord that sees Armenia give up swathes of disputed territory in Nagorno-Karabakh to their long-standing foe.

The 10 politicians face up to a decade behind bars for their role in "illegal violent mass disorder", prosecutors said. — AFP

**Asian leaders to sign huge China-backed trade pact**

**Hanoi, Vietnam, Nov. 12:** Fifteen Asia-Pacific nations are set to sign an enormous free trade deal at an online summit that started on Thursday, with the pact seen as a coup for China in extending its influence across the region.

Once signed, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) will be the world's largest trade pact in terms of GDP, according to analysts. The pact, which was first proposed in 2012 and viewed as a Chinese-led rival to a now-defunct US trade initiative, loops in 10 Southeast Asian economies along with China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia.

"After eight years of negotiating with blood, sweat and tears, we have finally come to the moment where we will seal the RCEP Agreement this Sunday," said Malaysia's trade minister Mohamed Azmin Ali, ahead of the virtual meeting.

Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc also confirmed the pact would be signed this week during opening remarks at the online summit.

India had been due to sign the pact but pulled out last year over concerns about cheap Chinese goods entering the country, though it can join at a later date if it reverses its position.

The RCEP— whose members account for around 30 percent of global GDP — would be a "major positive step forward for trade and investment liberalisation" in the region, said Rajiv Biswas, Asia Pacific chief economist at global business consultancy IHS Markit. "RCEP will be the world's biggest free trade area measured in terms of GDP," he said.

The pact's expected signing comes as the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) fight to mitigate the crippling cost of the Covid-19, which has ravaged their economies and left many battling a severe public health crisis. — AFP

**China lays out tech roadmap to catch up with US: Report**

**Beijing, Nov. 12:** China must apply cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence if it wants to transform its military into a modern fighting force on a par with those of other leading powers, according to new guidelines and comments from President Xi Jinping and other officials.

The statements come from a booklet published this month by the state-run People's Publishing House, in which senior officials, including President Xi, outlined the latest five-year plan for the country's development.

The military modernisa-

tion is being pushed by 67-year-old Xi, who besides heading the ruling Communist Party (CPC) and the Presidency is also the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), which is the overall high command for China's 2-million strong military.

China this year approved about \$179 billion defence budget, the second-highest after United States defence spending of \$732 billion. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) military expenditure figures, China defence spending in 2019 amounted to \$232 billion. — PTI

**DYNASTY | JUBILEE****Bashar Assad, has an unquestioned grip on what remains Syria marks 50 yrs of Assad family rule**

**Beirut, Nov. 12:** On Nov. 13, 1970, a young air force officer from the coastal hills of Syria launched a bloodless coup. It was the latest in a succession of military takeovers since independence from France in 1946, and there was no reason to think it would be the last. Yet 50 years later, Hafez Assad's family still rules Syria.

The country is in ruins from a decade of civil war that killed a half million people, displaced half the population and wiped out the economy. Entire regions are lost from government control. But Hafez's son, Bashar Assad, has an unquestioned grip on what remains.

His rule, half of it spent

in war, is different from his father's in some ways — dependent on allies like Iran and Russia rather than projecting Arab nationalism, run with a crony kleptocracy rather than socialism. The tools are the same: repression, rejection of compromise and brutal bloodshed.

Like the Castro family in Cuba and North Korea's Kim dynasty, the Assads have attached their name to their country the way few non-monarchical rulers have done.

It wasn't clear whether the government intended to mark the 50-year milestone this year. While the anniversary has been marked with fanfare in previous years, it has

**\$500 mn to be pledged at Paris forum for cure**

**Paris, Nov. 12:** Several countries and foundations are set to pledge more than \$500 million on Thursday for a global pool aimed at ensuring equitable access to coronavirus tests, treatment and vaccines for all nations, organisers of a French forum said.

The third edition of the Paris Peace Forum, which seeks to address governance issues with concrete projects, takes place Thursday and Friday in the French capital and is dedicated to finding ways to ease and get out of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It takes place as the number of cases is rising rapidly across Europe and beyond.

It also comes just days after American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech reported highly promising results for their vaccine candidate, raising hopes globally.

During the forum, several countries are expected to announce funding for the so-called ACT-Accelerator, a mechanism led by the World Health Organisation that aims to ensure access to tests, treatments and vaccines for all. According to a statement by organisers, France will be announcing a commitment of 100 million euros, Spain 50 million and the European Commission 100 million specifically for the vaccines part of ACT-A.

The British government is also set to declare a contribution of one additional pound for each four dollars announced.

Organisers added that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was also due to "announce an important commitment during the discussion." WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, French President Emmanuel Macron, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, will take part in an online discussion due to be streamed online.

In September, the United Nations estimated that the ACT-Accelerator had only received around \$3 billion of the \$38 billion needed to meet the goal of producing and delivering two billion vaccine doses, 245 million treatments and 500 million diagnostic tests over the next year.

— AFP

**UK crosses 50,000 Covid-19 deaths**

**London, Nov. 12:** The UK has become the first country in Europe to cross the grim milestone of 50,000 Covid-19 related deaths as Prime Minister Boris Johnson said, "we mourn everybody who's gone". As per the official figures released by the government, 1,256,725 people have tested positive for the virus after 22,950 new cases were recorded this week.

A further 595 fatalities due to the deadly viral infection on Wednesday took the death toll to 50,365, making the UK the fifth country in the world to cross the 50,000-mark after the US, Brazil, India and Mexico. "We're not out of the woods yet. Every death is a tragedy, we mourn everybody who's gone and our feelings are with their families and friends," Johnson said. "It is a global pandemic whose effects, whose treatments, whose implications for the economy, all those have been

— AFP

**Turkey prohibits smoking in public**

**Istanbul, Nov. 12:** Turkey's interior ministry has banned smoking in public places across the country to curb the spread of Covid-19.

In a statement late Wednesday, the ministry said smoking would be banned in busy streets, bus stops and public squares when necessary. It said the nationwide mask mandate in public spaces, which has been in effect for several months, must be followed at all times and smokers were routinely violating the mask rule.

The ministry also said provinces can decide to impose curfews on senior citizens above the age of 65 if they are seeing increases in the number of critical patients. The governors of Istanbul and Ankara have already rein-

— AP

**CREATIVE TROLLS SLAM W.H.O. ON FB FOR TAIWAN CENSOR**

**Taipei, Nov. 12:** Alleged censorship of Taiwan on the World Health Organisation's Facebook page inspired some creative trolling on Thursday, with special characters and foreign scripts used to bypass filters that also censored Winnie the Pooh, a character used to poke fun at Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The deluge came after Taiwan politicians and social media users shared screenshots showing messages containing "Taiwan" or "Taiwan can help" failing to upload underneath a banner advertising a WHO livestreamed event on the Coronavirus.

becoming clearer as the months have gone on," he said. — PTI

**'JERUSALEMA' BECOMES GLOBAL LOCKDOWN HIT**

**Johannesburg, Nov. 12:** When Coronavirus placed the world in lockdown, a gospel-influenced anthem with Zulu lyrics brought people together through social media, lifting spirits and instantly becoming a global phenomenon.

Today, "Jerusalem" has clocked more than 230 million YouTube views in less than a year — and lured an army of people into mimicking its dance moves.

"The feedback was crazy," says 24-year-old South African artist Master KG, who co-wrote and performs the disco-house track with Nomcebo Zikode. The viral "Jerusalem dance challenge" saw thousands across the world posting clips of themselves copying the video choreography. — AFP

**Italian hospitals near breaking point as Covid-19 cases surge**

**Milan, Nov. 12:** Dr Luca Cabrini was certain his hospital in the heart of Lombardy's lake district would reach its breaking point caring for 300 Covid-19 patients. So far, virus patients fill 500 beds and counting.

Italy, which shocked the world and itself when hospitals in the wealthy north were overwhelmed with Coronavirus cases last spring, is again facing a systemic crisis, as confirmed positives pass the symbolic threshold of 1 million. "We are very close to not keeping up. I cannot say when we will reach the limit, but that

day is not far off," said Cabrini, who runs the intensive care ward at Varese's Circolo hospital, the largest in the province of 1 million people north-west of Milan.

The hospital expanded its 20-bed ICU ward to 45 beds during Italy's deadly spring peak. It had 38 patients last weekend, and Cabrini was preparing to set up beds in an operating theater this week, "something we would

● **THE HOSPITAL** expanded its 20-bed ICU ward to 45 beds during Italy's deadly spring peak.

have preferred to avoid." As dire as Italy's ICU situation is once again, it's not critical care that is most worrying doctors during the pandemic's autumn resurgence.

It's sub-intensive and infectious disease wards caring for less gravely ill patients, who are often younger and sometimes require care for longer periods.

The Italian doctors federation called this week for a nationwide lockdown to forestall a collapse of the medical system, marked by the closure of non-emergency procedures. — AP



Syrian mourners wave portraits of President Hafez Assad, right, and his two sons Bashar, centre, and Basil who died in a car accident in 1994 to mourn the death of their president, in Damascus, Syria on June 10, 2000. — AP file photo

been a more subdued celebration during the war. "There can be no doubt that 50 years of Assad family rule, which has been

ruthless, cruel and self-defeating, has left the country what can only be described as broken, failed and almost forgotten,"

said Neil Quilliam, an associate fellow at Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa program.

After his 1970 takeover, Hafez Assad consolidated power. He brought into key positions members of his Alawite sect, a minority in Sunni-majority Syria, and established a Soviet-style single-party police state.

His power was absolute. His Mukhabarat — or intelligence officers — were omnipresent.

He turned Syria into a Middle East powerhouse. In the Arab world, he gained respect for his uncompromising position on the Golan Heights, the strategic high ground lost to Israel in the 1967 war. — AP



DECCAN Chronicle

13 NOVEMBER 2020

Digital oversight: Don't try to regulate, censor

The Central government's move to bring the digital space under the purview of the information and broadcasting ministry, with President Ram Nath Kovind approving the Government of India (Allocation of Business) 357th Amendment Rules, 2020, gives it the power to regulate policies and rules for online content, including news and creative material broadcast through over-the-top platforms. This comes soon after the Supreme Court expressed concern over the lack of oversight on OTT content and seeking the government's views on the subject.

At present, most content in India is regulated by statutory or autonomous bodies. The Press Council of India and the Central Board of Film Certification, both statutory bodies, monitor the print media and films respectively, while the News Broadcasters Association represents television news channels and the Advertising Standards Council of India regulates advertising. However, there is no law or body that governs online content, or OTT platforms. The attempt by a group of video streaming services to formulate a self-regulatory code that laid down a set of guiding principles for content on these platforms had failed to take off. In this background, the new rules fill in a lacuna, and thus welcome.

It is learnt that the programme code that governs content on TV and which found an outlet in the Cable Television Network Regulation Act, 1995 may serve as the template for guidelines, and the code lists several don'ts.

While it is necessary that there is a regulatory body which can oversee the content, there are too many apprehensions and challenges that such a body will face. This is basically because of two factors. One, it should work within the limits of Article 19 (1) of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to speech and expression. Any attempt to muscle information or opinion expressed online will fall foul of the Constitution, and hence untenable. The media is best left to regulate itself, and a statutory regulator should not take on the role of a censor or do the bidding of the government in power. There are laws in our statute book to punish those who break them; and thus it must function solely as an overseer and not as a regulator, in the strict sense of the term. Second is the role that technology plays while trying to regulate online platforms. In the case of the press, television, advertisements or films, the products are made and/or distributed physically within the territory of India but when it comes to online, none of this is applicable, thanks to technology. One can produce content sitting anywhere in the world and make it available in the country, and imposing restrictions on them would be a tough, if not impossible, task. At the same time, those from within the country are easy to be brought under control. It is incumbent on a regulator to ensure that every player gets a level-playing field.

A knowledge society demands an open and free exchange of ideas. Regulators do have a role, but only a very limited one. The government must ensure that the new regulator promotes India's transformation into a knowledge society, and not impedes it.

A fitting finale for IPL

The smiles on the faces of not only the record winners of the Indian Premier League said it all. There was an immense sense of satisfaction to the event having been held as a glorious tribute to the sporting spirit of mankind with the popular multi-billion IPL 2020 season transplanted in the UAE desert and gone through virtually without a hitch. Five-time champions Mumbai Indians may have pulled one more away from the pack but they were just one great part of a wonderfully uninhibited final in which bright cricket of the enterprising T20 variety was served as entertainment in the face of one of humanity's greatest challenges in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The super hero frame may have frozen prematurely on Marcus Stoinis as Delhi Capitals' opening gambit backfired, but denied by one of the great weapons of the 2020 season — pace attack. Even on Asian pitches there was plenty for quicks like Trent Boult to show the way. A methodical thoroughness may have exemplified the extent to which Mumbai Indians have revolutionised the format but they displayed that long after attacking batsmanship saw the likes of Kagiso Rabada being toyed with. This was not a nail-biting final, but an almost clichetic DC captain had realised that setting a target is as much a way of trying to win in this format. The flow of then attacking game was owed primarily to getting on with it rather than complicating it excessively.

The slow bowlers held their own too, so too did athletic fielders who bring excitement in their new gravity-defying, boundary riding ways even as the batsmen went through the vicissitudes, sometimes run ragged by just the thought of winning when near enough to the threshold. Many of the youth of India embellished the competition in unfolding their unique talents while the experienced often left us marvelling at how they reproduce skills as if from muscle memory. The public, drawn even more into interaction with the Dream XI IPL fantasy games, was laughing too as a great IPL edition went by.

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Subhani



New insights on Rajiv, but questions remain



Karan Thapar

As I See It

Biographies written by friends can be both revelatory and exasperating. Because the author knows the subject intimately there's a lot you can learn from them which otherwise you might never have found out. But, equally, for the same reason the book is likely to ignore or gloss over incidents that could embarrass the subject. Such books are fascinating but not always satisfying.

That is largely true of Wajahat Habibullah's recent book *My Years with Rajiv*. First, however, a word about their relationship. Habibullah and Indira Gandhi's two sons, Rajiv and Sanjay, studied together at Doon School and earlier at Welham. Their families knew each other and Habibullah's mother even served as a Congress MP. Later, the adult Wajahat served in both Rajiv Gandhi's and his mother's office. As he reveals, Habibullah accompanied Mrs Gandhi "on every tour within India, from Kashmir to the Andamans". Consequently, he got to know and, perhaps, understand the Gandhis better than any other civil servant.

Now, let's come to the book. The new bits suggest that a lot happened when he was Prime Minister of which Rajiv Gandhi knew very little. In fact, he was often kept in the dark. By politicians, by generals and even, it seems, by his close friends. If true — and I'm prepared to accept Habibullah's word — it's hardly a flattering portrait of India's youngest Prime Minister.

Habibullah reveals that Rajiv was totally clueless when, in February 1986, the gates of the Babri Masjid were unlocked. "Was Rajiv Gandhi involved in the decisions leading up to this unlock-

ing?" he asks. This is the answer that Rajiv Gandhi gave him: "I had not been informed of this action and have asked Vir Bahadur Singh (then chief minister of Uttar Pradesh) to explain. I suspect it was Arun (Nehru) and Fotedar (Makhan Lal) who were responsible, but I am having this verified. If it is true, I will have to consider action."

Unfortunately, Habibullah does not explain how a Prime Minister could be ignorant of something as important as this, or what that suggests of his leadership and of his control of events. Yet Habibullah does write of himself that he was "completely taken aback". Therefore, it's a mystery why he doesn't dig deeper to find an explanation for Gandhi's ignorance. Or ask how Rajiv's cousin, Arun Nehru, could have placed the Prime Minister in this predicament.

Even more surprising is what Habibullah has to reveal about Operation Brasstacks. In 1986-87, this operation was viewed as unwarrantedly provocative and many feared that it could spark a conflict with Pakistan. Although Habibullah says that it involved "the entire Indian Army", it emerges that Rajiv Gandhi had no idea of its planning or that it was actually happening. Habibullah reveals he only found out as a result of a casual comment to Lt. Gen. P.N. Hoon, then Western Army commander, at an Army Day reception.

Habibullah's account of Rajiv's conversation with Lt. Gen. Hoon is both funny and frightening. "When Rajiv saw him, he sauntered up to him and asked cheerfully: 'How is the Western Front?' " Lt. Gen. Hoon then started to speak about Operation Brasstacks. "Rajiv looked taken aback and asked

Hoon what he was talking about." As Habibullah adds, it soon become crystal clear that "the Prime Minister of India had in fact no inkling of an exercise that had brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war".

Once again, Habibullah does not bother to ask the obvious questions. What does Rajiv Gandhi's ignorance of Brasstacks reveal of his relationship with the Army Chief and, more importantly, Arun Singh, the minister of state for defence and Rajiv's closest friend? Indeed, what does this sorry state of affairs reveal of Rajiv Gandhi's hold on the government? Habibullah's silence doesn't mean the questions don't exist or that they can conveniently not be answered.

The third revelation is from Rajiv Gandhi's brief term as Leader of the Opposition. During Operation Desert Storm, launched by a 35-nation coalition led by the United States in 1991, to liberate Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's control, Rajiv Gandhi "launched a tirade against the USA focused on refuelling permissions given by India to US planes". Gandhi claimed this was a surrender of Indian sovereignty. However, Habibullah points out that such criticism overlooked the fact "India itself was routinely given such permission by a host of countries".

The author goes a step further to reveal Gandhi's hypocrisy was a lot worse. Behind closed doors he was in touch with the US embassy to convey a very different message. "Rajiv

was at pains to quietly explain to the US embassy in New Delhi the domestic compulsions behind his actions and stressing that he had no desire to undermine India-US relations that he had himself so carefully wrought". Once again, Habibullah has no comment to make on this distressing two-facedness.

However, where this book falls horribly short is in its discussion of the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984. It has very little to say of the killings and almost nothing of the enormity of what happened. There's no attempt to assess the response of the new Prime Minister or the failure of his government to act effectively.

In fact, Habibullah describes the gathering at Teen Murti House, where Presidents and Prime Ministers queued up to pay their last respects to Indira Gandhi, but seems to ignore what was happening outside. Over 3,000 Sikhs were killed but his account suggests Rajiv Gandhi, standing beside his mother's body, was unaware or uninformed of the pogrom taking place in his capital. Habibullah as good as admits this when he writes: "We were later to learn that Sikhs were assaulted on the streets".

Habibullah quotes Rajiv Gandhi's November 2, 1984 broadcast: "As Prime Minister of India, I cannot and will not allow this". But it happened and most people believe he did little to stop it. Yet this is not a subject Habibullah pays any attention to.

I guess when a Dosco writes about another Doon School boy, friendship comes in the way of an honest and objective account. Between chums that might be understandable, but for a biographer it's less forgivable. But then Habibullah doesn't hide his enormous admiration for his subject. That's apparent from the introduction. Quoting what Marc Antony said of Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, Habibullah says of Rajiv Gandhi: "This was a man".

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

GOOD MOVE

It's interesting to note that the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee organised a virtual meeting recently with former bureaucrats, academics and activists and discussed ways to strengthen the party, whose popularity has been flagging in recent times (*Congress seeks public opinion*, Nov.12)). It's undoubtedly a good move. After all, the best way to progress is to eliminate weaknesses, be it an individual or a party or an organisation. One of the participants suggested to the national party that it saved the public sector, as the Modi government is on a privatisation spree. This really hit the nail on the head. That said, the party needs many spunky youngsters to work for the party and take it forward.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

STATUS QUO IN BIHAR

THIS IS with reference to the editorial *Something for everyone, except for Congress, LJP* (Nov. 12). Bihar electorate have reposed more faith in Modi's BJP and less with Nitish's JD(U), thereby maintaining status quo for the next five years. Being a poor state, Bihar could not cope up with Covid-19 and influx of migrants and people understood the limitations of Nitish government. People taught a right lesson to Chirag's LJP for its illogical 'Love Modi, hate Nitish' strategy. Tejashwi's RJD would have been triumphant and he would have been chief minister at 31 but for the blunder of yielding 70 seats to Congress which lost 51 outright. Nitish must be thanking his stars to be the Chief Minister for the fourth term like Odisha's Naveen Patnaik of BJD. Surprisingly, Left parties and MIM could come up with creditable performances like tailenders. Ambitious Rahul and Chirag were shown the door by the intelligent voters of Bihar.

Parthasarathy Mandadi, Tirupati

VACCINE FOR COVID

THE INTERIM results of Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for Coronavirus, showing 90 per cent efficacy in protecting people from infection provides a glimmer of hope for an early end to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic that had virtually brought the world to its knees. The extraordinary speed with which vaccine candidates to prevent and treat Covid-19 are being developed across the globe without making compromise on safety and efficacy is unprecedented in human history. Detailed data about Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine candidates regarding how long individuals be protected and whether it prevents infection and how effective it will be for vulnerable people are yet to be known. But it is potentially a transformative moment.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

Sanjiwan Sahni



Forum of CMs: An idea 'whose time has come'

An idea whose time has come". This was among the responses following my earlier article in these columns, which proposed the creation of a forum comprising the chief ministers and Leaders of the Opposition in states not governed by the ruling party.

The fulcrum would be to reinforce the federal structure, with national issues getting a collective voice, rather than individual efforts. Over time, it was hoped, with more credibility, a potential challenger would emerge.

The second dominant response was over implementation, which is even normally problematic and would be a challenge.

Let us look at the proposed alternative in these contexts.

First, the establishment of a forum, if it finds acceptance by even a few CMs or LOPs, will help to create an enabling structure as a first step. Not having to negotiate alliances to join a larger collective would be an advantage. Its membership will be limited to CMs and LOPs, and participation voluntary. This would extend to issues as well.

In other words, there need not be a consensus on all issues. There could be a consensus on major national issues,

where the forum will allow the CMs' viewpoints to get wider national acceptance than in their areas of influence. Success could be reinforcing.

The point is that this would be a democratic forum as all members would be representatives chosen on the basis of their success in the electoral process in their states. Collectively, the forum would be representative of 60 per cent of the electorate that had not voted for the ruling party. This is a small attempt to address the lacuna in our first-past-the-post system. The majority vote gets divided and permits even a minority to get majoritarian power. A collective forum for the voice of 60 per cent seems worth exploring.

There is enough expertise available in the system to put a structure together that would incentivise and promote collaboration. At the same time, it will leave scope for dissent. Dissent by abstention from issues isn't acceptable to some.

How could the forum's voice be more effectively disseminated?

The CMs and LOP will be supported by experts selected by them in multiple domains including but not limited to economics, law, diplomacy and even politics. Ideally, this forum will have a

fair measure of younger people, who not only have the relevant domain knowledge but are also articulate and have acceptability at an individual level, that will be enhanced by their collective credibility. Some names that come to mind include Mahua Moitra, Kanhaiya Kumar, Prashant Kishore, Sachin Pilot, Chetan Bhagat, Kishore Chaturvedi and Raghav Chadha.

Another key question: It is all very well to find fault with the government's viewpoint but what is the alternative vision. Currently, different state-level politics brings out the relevant issues, but restrictively. Nobody has the mandate to credibly propagate an all-India national vision. Besides policy, the administrative capabilities of the states are only well known where they are in power.

Many states have demonstrated progress in multiple but limited spheres of activity. If this experience is pooled in the forum, the likelihood of national issues gaining acceptance will probably increase exponentially. The forum could generate shared experience. It could also incentivise a competitive streak. Both of these are positives.

Where the advisory team can be helpful is in focusing and bringing to the

CMs' and LOPs' attention, in a structured way, key issues that should be taken up on a priority basis. Its mandate should be to:

a) Segment — economic, defence/foreign affairs, political, administrative reforms, technology, etc. Identify — key issues in these segments.

b) The effort should be to try and arrive at a consensus on three (illustrative) issues in each segment. This would become the core alternative agenda to propound collectively.

This would be a combination of political, managerial and technological prowess. Segmentation and prioritisation would put the focus on what must be done with immediacy across the country. The powerful team of spokespersons using the best technologies, carrying credibility with the bulk of voters, should make an impact.

For clarity, the team will be required to focus on the positives that need to be done. Political parties will be left to fight their battles independently, as is currently the norm.

The intention is to "cut the clutter" and bring forward issues that pass the test of experiential and intellectual rigour, including multi-disciplinary analysis.

Electroally, in a Utopian world, the

60 per cent of the electorate outside the establishment would be incentivised to vote together. However, in a real world, that is not going to happen. But, it is hoped this proposed forum will enable better communication, understanding on several issues, a collective desire to effectively reinforce the democratic process, the federal structure, as well as formulate policies relevant to alleviate poverty, to ensure India's progress in many respects. To summarise, there is a distinct hope and possibility that at least at the national level, not necessarily at state level, even electoral solidarity will become more visible.

The hope is that we could help create an institution for the voice of 60 per cent of the non-establishment electorate, create a direction for an alternative vision, bring closer multi-party state leaderships and employ multimedia technology to disseminate positive possibilities.

All this will enable an alternative leadership to become more visible across India. From among this leadership, it is hoped a challenger would emerge.

The writer is a management and economic adviser



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	43,357.19	-0.54
Nifty 50	12,690.80	-0.46
S&P 500*	3,558.67	-0.39
Dollar (₹)	74.63	-0.34
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.40	0.23
Euro (₹)	88.15	-0.52
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,057▼81	0.16
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.28	0.48
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.903	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.916	-0.073

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## China's online Singles Day sales exceed \$74 bn

China is gripped by "Singles' Day" online shopping frenzy this month as sales on e-commerce giant Alibaba's e-commerce platform Tmall exceeded \$74.1 bn, a new record for the 12-year-old event. Sales on Tmall exceeded 498.2 bn yuan (\$74.1 bn) between Nov. 1 and Nov. 11, state-run Xinhua news agency said. Another e-com giant JD.com, which started promotions from Nov. 1, said it generated \$41 bn since.

## TCS to acquire select assets of Pramerica Ireland



TCS said it has inked an agreement with Prudential Financial, Inc (PFI), under which the Indian firm will acquire over 1,500 employees and select assets of Pramerica Systems Ireland Ltd. The move will help strengthen TCS' delivery capability in Ireland, it said. Pramerica is PFI's subsidiary based in Letterkenny, Ireland. PFI will retain the Pramerica Ireland entity, which will continue to operate from Letterkenny.

## Emirates posts \$3.8 billion in half-year losses

Emirates Group, the owner of the Middle East's biggest carrier, reported it lost \$3.8 billion in the first half of the year, its first net loss in over three decades after the pandemic wiped out air travel. The state-owned company said revenue for its Dubai-based airline, Emirates, had dropped 75 per cent to \$3.2 bn from the same period a year ago, even with this year's 52 per cent reduction in operating costs and rise in cargo traffic.

## Festive kits for Maruti Alto, Celerio, WagonR

Maruti Suzuki India said it has launched festive edition kits for three models—Alto, Celerio and WagonR. The kits, which could only be bought with a new car, are priced at Rs 25,490 for Alto, Rs 25,990 for Celerio and Rs 29,990 for WagonR. The Alto kit comes with features like touch-screen music system, security system, dual tone seat covers, among others. Celerio kit comes with designer mats, double din audio with bluetooth.



# Measures likely to increase fiscal deficit of central govt Incentives seen costing ₹1.2 L cr

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, NOV. 12

Though the government has estimated that the benefits of Atmanirbhar Bharat 3.0 will amount to Rs 2.65 lakh crore, the measures are likely to cost the exchequer Rs 1.19 lakh crore to Rs 1.2 lakh crore, find analysts. The measures are likely to increase the fiscal deficit of the Centre.

According to Barclays India, the measures announced on Thursday will cost the exchequer Rs 1.19 lakh crore, or 0.6 per cent of the GDP. Ica said the cost would be around Rs 1.2 lakh crore.

Among the measures announced, the enhancement in the outlay for fertiliser subsidies is Rs 65,000 crore. This will directly raise fiscal spending, says Aditi Nayar, principal economist, Ica.

The Rs 1.46 lakh crore production-linked incentive scheme for ten sectors will be spent over a period of five years. If at all it is evenly distributed across five years, the cost will be around Rs 29,000 crore in FY21.

The government also raised allocations for urban affordable housing by Rs 18,000 crore in order to offer some relief for construction and infrastructure companies. The government has also promised an equity injection of Rs 6,000 crore for the National Infrastructure and Investment Fund (NIIF) to encourage greater debt financing.

The government has also added an extra Rs 10,000 crore for rural employment assistance, and is looking to provide Rs 10,200 crore for capital

## ECONOMY SEEING STRONG RECOVERY: FM

New Delhi, Nov. 12: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the Indian economy is witnessing a strong recovery after a long and strict lockdown. Addressing the media, she said macro-economic indicators are pointing towards recovery.

She noted that Covid-19 active cases have declined from over 10 lakh to 4.89 lakh with case fatality rate (CFR) at 1.47 per cent. Giving out details of recovery, she said composite purchasing managers index (PMI) rose to 58.9 per cent in October versus 54.6 per cent in the previous month, registering strongest increase in output in close to nine years. Energy consumption



Nirmala Sitharaman

growth trended higher in October at 12 per cent year-on-year, while GST collections have grown 10 per cent to over Rs 1.05 lakh crore. Daily railway freight tonnage grew by an average 20 per cent year-on-year versus 12 per cent, she said adding bank credit has improved 5.1 per cent. Also, FDI inflows in April-August at \$35.37 billion was a 13 per cent year-on-year.

— PTI

equipment spending. It may also release Rs 3,000 crore for the Export-Import Bank of India to boost exports.

However, there is no indication that the borrowing programme will remain unchanged at Rs 12 lakh crore, or estimated 6 per cent of GDP, says Barclays.

"While activity indicators are improving, government revenues continue to significantly trail estimates. The finance minister indicated that the new fiscal projections remain a work in progress. But we believe that Thursday's extra spending will raise the deficit. As such, we raise our consolidated deficit forecast to 13 per cent of the GDP for fiscal year 2020-21, from 12.4 per cent previously. Of this, we expect the centre's

fiscal deficit to rise to 7 per cent of GDP, from 6.4 per cent earlier," said Rahul Bajoria, chief India economist, Barclays.

Financing pressures should remain manageable, in our view, with the RBI supporting market yields through sustained Open market purchases, he added.

"At present, our forecast for Indian real GDP in FY2021, is of a contraction of 11 per cent. We will revisit this projection in early December 2020, after the data for Q2 FY2021 is released by the NSO. By then, there will be greater clarity on the likelihood of the endurance of the festive season uptick, as well as the pace of new covid-19 infections domestically and in major trading partners during the colder months," said Nayar.

## Moody's raises forecast, sees 8.6% growth in 2021

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 12

Global rating agency Moody's Investors Services on Thursday revised India's GDP growth forecast for the calendar year 2020 upwards to -8.9 per cent contraction from -9.6 per cent contraction forecast earlier. Similarly, GDP forecast for calendar year 2021 has been revised upwards to 8.6 per cent from 8.1 per cent projected earlier. In September, the agency had forecast the economy to shrink by 9.6 per cent in 2020.

The revision comes in the backdrop of slowing spread of novel coronavirus cases in the country and gradual pick up of economic activity after seeing a 23.9 per cent contraction in April-June. The country, however, saw a worst phase of economic slowdown when consumer spending,

private investments and exports collapsed during one of the world's strictest lockdowns.

"India's economy to shrink by 8.9 per cent in the 2020 calendar year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, compared to an earlier forecast of a 9.6 per cent contraction. The steady decline in new and active (Covid-19) cases since September, if maintained, should enable further easing of restrictions. We, therefore, forecast a gradual improvement in economic activity over the coming quarters," Moody's said in a note, adding that there is limited room for further rate cuts in emerging markets like India.

The agency also noted that the global economic recovery over the coming year will be highly dependent on the development and distribution of a coronavirus vaccine, effective

pandemic management and government policy support. However, Moody's expects pandemic management will continue to improve over time, thereby reducing fear of contagion and allowing for a steady normalisation of social and economic activity. As a result, the virus is expected to become a less important macroeconomic concern throughout 2021 and 2022.

The report further said the geopolitical and trade risks will remain a key focus in the year ahead, as the relationship between the US and China, has deteriorated. "The agency does not believe that the Biden administration would differ materially from the current administration with regard to these issues. Decoupling of the Chinese economy from the US is likely in the areas of trade, technology and investment," it said.

## Tax sops to help clear unsold homes; realtors may cut prices

New Delhi, Nov. 12: Home developers facing a liquidity crunch may reduce rates to clear their unsold inventories following the government providing income tax relief, realty industry said on Thursday even as they pointed out that overall housing prices are unlikely to come down as builders are already working on thin profit margins. The Centre on Thursday

relaxed income tax rules to allow primary or first sale of housing units of up to Rs 2 crore at a price that can be 20 per cent below the stamp duty circle rate.

Currently, the law restricts differential between circle rate and agreement value at 10 per cent.

This relaxation, which is applicable till June 2021, is aimed at helping builders clear their unsold stocks, estimated to be around 7

lakh in major eight cities.

"We do not anticipate overall reduction in housing prices. Rates are already low and margins are low. But, the income tax relief will allow those developers who are facing liquidity challenges to clear their unsold inventories by reducing prices," Credai national chairman Jaxay Shah said.

He said the housing prices have already gone

down below circle rates.

Naredco and Assocham president Niranjan Hirani welcomed the tax relief. "Differential above 10 per cent between circle rates and agreement value translates into tax penalties under Section 43CA of IT Act. This has been a major stumbling block for price rationalisation. This pinches when it comes to liquidating unsold inventory," he said.

# RBI may keep rupee weak to boost exports

FALAKNAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, NOV. 12

Despite positive factors such as foreign portfolio investors returning back to domestic equities, stronger Asian currencies and weak dollar, the rupee continues to be the one of the worst performers against the dollar.

According to traders, the central bank continues to aggressively buy dollars to keep the rupee weak in order to boost exports. Experts said that 75 level would be a crucial resistance for the rupee.

A trader said, "While the RBI maintains that it intervenes only to remove volatility and has no targeted level for the rupee, we have been noticing aggressive dollar buying whenever the rupee touch-

es 73.90 level. The RBI aggressively intervenes and heavily buys dollars through the public sector banks. Since the last one month, the RBI has been aggressively buying dollars. Even yesterday, there was an aggressive intervention by the RBI."

During the calendar year, the rupee has been one of worst performers having depreciated by 4.5 per cent. In comparison, the Thai baht and the Korean won have appreciated, with the yuan trading at a 28-month high at 6.6. On Thursday, the rupee continued its losing streak to the fourth straight session and dived 28 paise to end at 74.64 against the US dollar.

Darshit Purohit of IFA Global said, "The domestic equities are trading at



an all-time high but the rupee has continuously remained weak. The primary reason for the rupee remaining weak vis-a-vis other Asian currencies is the aggressive RBI intervention as reflected in the robust build-up in forex reserves. The motive

## Anti-dumping duty on acrylic fibre removed

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, NOV. 12

Close to the heels of announcing production-linked incentives (PLI) for man-made fibre (MMF) products, the government has revoked anti-dumping duty on acrylic fibre exported from Thailand. The industry feels this will give a major fillip to the MMF segment that employs more than 10 lakh people.

Acrylic fibre, known as poor man's wool, is used for making sweaters and shawls for domestic and international market. The anti-dumping duty had made the fibre costly and stunted the growth of the sector for more than two decades.

"Removing the anti-dumping duty on acrylic fibre, which was long overdue, will be a game changer for the Indian AF sector and it will go a long way in boosting the growth of the MMF industry. The move will act as an impetus to this labour-intensive sector by generating additional employment and increasing the competitiveness of the entire value chain," said Sanjay Garg,

president, Northern India Textile Mills Association (Nitmra).

According to Nitmra, only three players in India produce acrylic fibre and due to the high anti-dumping duty on imported fibre, the downstream industries were forced to buy it from them. This made the fibre-made products expensive in both domestic and export markets.

The value-add industry has more than 1,500 unorganised players, employing over 10 lakh. The move will make the fibre cheaper for them and make Indian products competitive in the export market.

The government had earlier removed the anti-dumping duty on purified terephthalic acid, a raw material of polyester staple fibre, thus providing a boost for the production of polyester products. The industry has been asking the government to remove anti-dumping duty on viscose staple fibre (VSF) as well in order to make Indian MMF competitive in the global market.

Nitmra expects that the government will soon remove the anti-dumping duty on VSF as well.

## Industrial output leaves contraction zone in September

FC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 12

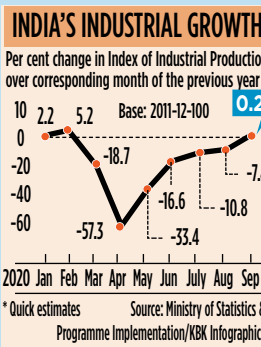
The country's industrial output moved back to positive territory after six months contraction to clock a modest 0.2 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth in September, while retail inflation inched up to 7.61 per cent in October, over elevated food prices, government data released on Thursday showed.

The rise in industrial output, measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), is significant when contrasted against 8 per cent contraction in August and 4.6 per cent contraction a year ago in September 2019.

"With the gradual relaxation of restrictions, there has been a relative improvement in economic activity by varying degrees as well as in data reporting," the government said in a statement, adding that it may not be appropriate to compare the IIP in the post-pandemic months with the IIP for months preceding the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The September IIP growth was marked by a positive rise in both electricity and mining whilst the key category of manufacturing is still in the negative territory, registering a decline of 0.6 per cent. The speedy recovery is cushioned by a turnaround in the core sector output which shrunk at its slowest pace at 0.8 per cent this fiscal," the release said.

As the core sector output constitutes over 40 per



cent of the IIP, the output of mining and power segments grew by 1.4 per cent and 4.9 per cent, respectively.

Joseph Thomas, head of research, Emkay Wealth Management, said, "The IIP is almost flat at 0.20 per cent, from a deeply negative number for the period before that there is some economic recovery happening at present, but the price level too is rising. To sustain the early gains in recovery, control of the price level is critical."

As per data, the retail inflation stood at 7.61 per cent in October against 7.27 per cent in September. It was at 4.62 per cent in October 2019.

In October, inflation in meat and fish rose to 18.7 per cent while vegetable prices rose 22.51 per cent.

"This may have an impact on the trajectory of interest rates, and RBI may have to continue to focus on liquidity provision rather than rate action... Persistently high inflation could invite action from the RBI by way of even reducing the free liquidity," Thomas said.

## SINGAPORE PLANS NEW VISA TO DRAW TOP GLOBAL TECH TALENT



YOO LIM LEE  
NOV. 12

Singapore is rolling out the red carpet for top talent, launching a program to initially attract 500 individuals with a proven track record of contributing to the global technology ecosystem.

Under the so-called Tech.Pass programme, qualified individuals will be able to secure a new type of visa, allowing them to start and operate more than one company and become an investor; consultant or mentor for local startups, according to the Economic Development Board. This offers more flexibility than current government regulations, which require firms to sponsor an employment pass for talent they want to bring in.

The two-year visa isn't designed for mid-tier tech workers who might compete with locals for jobs, a political issue that has prompted the government to tighten its framework for issuing employment passes to foreigners this year. It's targeted at highly accomplished entrepreneurs and technical experts who can bring in capital, networks and knowhow, as Singapore aims to become the region's technology and innovation hub.

"Tech.Pass will add to the critical mass of established tech talent in Singapore and create a flywheel effect to further strengthen our position as a leading tech hub for the region," minister of trade and industry Chan Chun Sing said.

— Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## Mother of tennis star Evert dead

**Deerfield Beach (UK):** Colette Evert, the matriarch of a tennis family that produced five children who were successful in the age-group and professional ranks, including 18-time Grand Slam champion Chris Evert, has died. She was 92.

She died last Thursday in Deerfield Beach, Florida, according to a tweet by Chris Evert and an online obituary posted by Fred Hunter's Funeral Home in Fort Lauderdale.

Born Jeanne Colette Thompson on June 15, 1928, in New Rochelle, New York, she went by her middle name and was the youngest of 10 children. In 1952, she married Jimmy Evert, a tennis teaching professional in Florida whom she met at the wedding of a mutual friend in New York. The couple's five children played tennis collegiately or professionally. — AP

## Shah ensures safe T20 WC next year

**Dubai:** The BCCI is committed towards hosting a safe and healthy ICC T20 World Cup next year and "will leave no stone unturned" in its endeavour, board secretary Jay Shah said as the countdown for the much-anticipated event began on Thursday. The ICC T20 World Cup was scheduled in Australia in October-November this year but had to be postponed to 2022 owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. India, however, will be hosting the 2021 edition of the global event as per schedule in October-November. "The BCCI will leave no stone unturned in ensuring that the health and safety of everyone concerned in this showpiece event is taken care of," Shah was quoted as saying in an ICC statement. — PTI

## Younis named Pak batting coach

**Karachi:** The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Thursday extended batting coach Younis Khan's contract till 2022 T20 World Cup in Australia. The PCB said it had received positive feedback about Younis' role during tour of England, which paved way for is contract extension. "I am delighted that Younis will now be with for, at least, the next two years as our batting coach. The feedback we received about Younis' impact in a short period of time in England was excellent," Pakistan Cricket Board Chief Executive Wasim Khan said. "His work ethics, commitment and knowledge are second to none, and I am confident that his appointment will benefit a number of talented batsmen." When not on national duty, Younis will work at the High Performance Centre at Karachi, where he'll be joined by Mohammed Yousuf. — PTI

## Foreign players pull out of PSL

**Karachi:** The efforts of Pakistan Cricket Board to complete the Pakistan Super League have received setbacks due to the unavailability of some more overseas players ahead of the play-offs matches due to Covid 19 related travel restrictions. The PCB is holding the four remaining play-off matches and the summit clash this weekend and next week in Karachi. But for the first time since the PSL was launched in 2016, former West Indian captain Darren Sammy, who has one of the leading faces of the league, is not available to play for his franchise. Sammy, who has also captained Zalmi, will not be flying to Karachi because of Covid-19 related travel issues. New Zealand's Mitchell McClenaghan has also pulled out due to his country's travel guidelines. — PTI

## Live on TV

**CRICKET**  
**Women's Big Bash League:** Perth Scorchers vs Melbourne Renegades from 6.45 am (Saturday) on Sony Six

**FORMULA ONE**  
**Turkish Grand Prix:** First practice from 1.25 pm, Second practice from 5.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

**GOLF**  
**Augusta Masters:** From 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

**WWE**  
**SmackDown:** Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1

## Finland pip France

## Forss, Onni spoil Thuram's party; Portugal rock Andorra

**Paris, Nov. 12:** Finland spoiled Marcus Thuram's party on Wednesday after beating France 2-0 on the day the Borussia Moenchengladbach attacker emulated his father Lilian Thuram by making his debut for Les Bleus. Thuram was picked by Didier Deschamps for the friendly at the Stade de France over 22 years after his dad won the World Cup at the same ground, but despite a strong performance on the left wing could not stop the Finns from coming out on top.

The 23-year-old hit the bar with less 15 minutes gone and soon after flashed a difficult volley over as he and Lucas Digne caused continual problems down the left flank for the away side.

However, Marcus Forss stunned the hosts when he collected the ball after a Moussa Sissoko mistake and rammed home at Steve Mandanda's near post.

France barely had any time to react before Onni Valakari doubled the away side's lead with a stunning effort after being left to stroll towards goal.

## RONALDO CONTINUES GOAL QUEST

Cristiano Ronaldo continued his quest to snatch the all-time record for most international goals when he struck his 102nd Portugal goal in their in a 7-0 win over Andorra.

Pulinho netted brace as Pedro, Sanches, Felix scored one goal each to get past Andorra.

France's opponents on Saturday in what could be a Nations League 'A', Group 3 decider strolled past their weak opponents in Lisbon despite not starting a single player from the team that beat Sweden 3-0 last month.

Ronaldo missed that match after testing positive for Coronavirus and was introduced at half-time on Wednesday, but had to wait until there were only five minutes remaining to boost his record bid with a close-range header.

Former Iran striker Ali Daei holds the record on 109 goals.

Italy extended their unbeaten streak to 20 games after a second-string line-up comfortably beat Estonia a 4-0. — AFP



Belgium's Michy Batshuayi (left) vies for the ball against Switzerland's Loris Benito during an international friendly football match at the King Power stadium in Leuven, Belgium, on Wednesday. Belgium won 2-1. — AP

## Belgians boss over Swiss

## THE RESULTS

<b>Finland</b> (Forss 28, Onni 31)	<b>2</b>	<b>Netherlands</b> (Van de Beek 47)	<b>1</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Spain</b> (Canales 19)	<b>1</b>
<b>Portugal</b> (Neto 8, Paulinho 29, 61, Sanches 56, Garcia 76-og, Ronaldo 85, Felix 88)	<b>7</b>	<b>Germany</b> (Waldschmidt 13)	<b>1</b>
<b>Andorra</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Belgium</b> (Batshuayi 49, 70)	<b>2</b>	<b>Turkey</b> (Tosun 23-pen, Turuc 41, Under 58)	<b>3</b>
<b>Switzerland</b> (Mehmedi 12)	<b>1</b>	<b>Croatia</b> (Budimir 32, Pasalic 53, Brekalo 56)	<b>3</b>

rested. FIFA's top-ranked team was also without Real Madrid star Eden Hazard, who remained quarantined in Spain following a positive Covid-19 test. Switzerland pressed high in the early stages

and took the lead in the 12th minute following a defensive error from Sebastiaan Bornauw, who failed to control a long ball and headed it back into the path of Admir Mehmedi. — AFP

## DUTCH DRAW WITH SPAIN

**Amsterdam, Nov. 12:** Frank de Boer's wait for a first win as Netherlands coach goes on after his team drew 1-1 with Spain in a friendly in Amsterdam on Wednesday. De Boer has now gone four matches without a victory since being appointed in September to succeed Ronald Koeman, who left to take over at Barcelona. But Donny van de Beek's equaliser shortly after half-time ensured the Dutch at least avoided defeat at the Johan Cruyff Arena after Spain had taken an early lead through Sergio Canales. — AFP

## INDIAN TEAM REACH SYDNEY AHEAD OF TOUR

**Sydney, Nov. 12:** A 25-strong Indian squad, led by its star skipper Virat Kohli, reached here on Thursday for a gruelling two-month Australia tour that starts with a 14-day quarantine-cum-training period on the outskirts of the city.

The Indian contingent along with Australian stars such as David Warner, Steve Smith, Pat Cummins arrived late in the afternoon and were whisked away to the Sydney Olympic Park.

With New South Wales government allowing the Indian team to train during the two-week quarantine period, their sessions will be conducted at the Blacktown International Sports Park, which has also been turned into a bio-secure venue.

Captain Kohli, who will return home after the opening Day/Night Test in Adelaide (from December 17 - December 21) for the birth of his first child in early January, is set to get a special treatment during quarantine period, according to a report in *Daily Telegraph*.

The Pullman Hotel where the Indian team would put up for next two weeks was also the base for rugby side New South Wales Blues, who have now shifted to another hotel.

According to *Telegraph*, the hotel authorities will provide the Indian captain a special penthouse suite where Australian rugby legend Brad Fittler normally puts up. — PTI

## Young guns in Oz Test side vs India

**Melbourne, Nov. 12:** The prodigiously talented pair of Will Pucovski and Cameron Green were among five uncapped players picked Thursday in a 17-member Australian Test squad for the big-ticket four-match series against India, starting December 17.

The other uncapped Test players in the Tim Paine-led side are fast bowler Sean Abbott — whose bounce had accidentally hit Phil Hughes during a Sheffield Shield game in 2014, leading to his tragic death — leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson and all-rounder Michael Neser.

All the players who are yet to wear the Baggy Green have been called on the back of extraordinary performances in the domestic circuit in recent times, Cricket Australia said.

Cricket Australia's national selector Trevor Hohns said the Shield performances augur well for the country's cricketing future.

Each of these players, though, has represented Australia in other formats.

Up against a strong Indian line-up and seeking to regain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy they lost for the first time in 2018-19, the fresh faces in the Australian Test squad will join the seasoned stars who dominated their most recent Test series — against Pakistan and New Zealand at home.

The performance took the team to the top of the world rankings before the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

## THE SQUADS

■ **Australia:** Tim Paine (c), Sean Abbott, Joe Burns, Pat Cummins, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Michael Neser, James Pattinson, Will Pucovski, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Swepson, Matthew Wade, David Warner  
■ **Australia 'A':** Sean Abbott, Ashton Agar, Joe Burns, Jackson Bird, Alex Carey (wk), Harry Conway, Cameron Green, Marcus Harris, Travis Head, Moises Henriques, Nic Maddinson, Mitchell Marsh (subject to fitness), Michael Neser, Tim Paine, James Pattinson, Will Pucovski, Mark Steketee, Will Sutherland, Mitchell Swepson.

The limited overs leg, which will comprise three ODIs and as many T20s, will be held prior to the Test series, starting November 27.

Also, Pat Cummins was named Paine's deputy in the Test team.

The selectors also named a 19-member Australia 'A' squad, which includes nine members from the Test team, for four matches against India.

In recent times, past Australian greats have called for Pucovski's selection in the team following his fine run in domestic cricket — the 22-year-old struck successive double centuries in his two Shield appearances. — PTI

## Chhetri gears up for ISL in bubble

**New Delhi, Nov. 12:** Staying inside a bio bubble "isn't easy" but Indian football captain Sunil Chhetri, nevertheless, is bracing up for the upcoming Indian Super League in earnest, doing all it takes for a successful campaign with his franchise Bengaluru FC.

From doing double training sessions and reading books, to watching renowned broadcaster and historian Sir David Attenborough's *A Life On Our Planet*, the 36-year-old has been one busy man through the last three weeks of the team's quarantine in Goa.

"This is our third week inside the bio bubble and I must confess it isn't easy but, of course, needed," Chhetri said in a video he posted on his *Twitter* handle.

"We are doing double time session and we are trying our best as a team to be as fit as possible before the tournament starts," he added.

The franchise-based event starts in the coastal state on November 20 with a game between ATK Mohun Bagan and Kerala Blasters.

The 7th edition of the tournament will be held in three venues of Goa and not across the country

**This is our third week inside the bio bubble and I must confess it isn't easy but, of course, needed. We are doing double time session and we are trying our best as a team to be as fit as possible before the tournament starts.**

— **SUNIL CHHETRI**  
India football captain

owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It's just 10 days left and I am pretty sure all of you are waiting for the ISL as I am and the whole team is.

"Among all this, I am trying my best to find some time for myself I just finished reading a lovely book — *The Body* by Bill Bryson — and I highly recommend this," the ace striker said holding the book.

Chhetri, currently the world's second highest goal-scorer among active footballers — only Portuguese Cristiano Ronaldo is ahead of him — will spearhead former champions Bengaluru FC's challenge in the upcoming edition of the ISL.

Bengaluru FC, known for a professional setup since its arrival on the big stage not too long ago, won the tournament in 2018. — PTI

## BELIHU, GEMECHU ALL SET TO DEFEND THEIR TITLES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, NOV. 12

The Coronavirus pandemic may have brought the entire world to a standstill, but it was not enough to stop Ethiopian duo Andamlak Belihu and Tsehay Gemechu from defending their men's and women's titles respectively at the 16th edition of the Delhi Half Marathon on November 29.

The Ethiopian pair will be eyeing their third successive win at the IAAF Gold Label Road Race.

This year's the marathon will be held in a bio-secure bubble with only an estimated 60 elite international and Indian runners in action. Non-elite runners of all abilities will have a chance to participate virtually from any location, running at any time between November 25 and 29.

Ethiopia's Guye Adola, who created the course record of 59:06 in 2014, will add more fire power to the elite line-up as he will return for the 2020 edition.

An unprecedented 13 men in the elite field have run under the world class bench mark of one hour, and five of them have run faster than Belihu in their careers.

The fastest man in the field is Bahrain's 2018 World Athletics Half Marathon Championships silver medalist Abraham Cheroben, who holds the Asian record for the distance with 58:40.



This handout photo released by the press officer shows Argentine football legend Diego Maradona (right) shaking hands with his doctor Leopoldo Luque in Olivos, Buenos Aires province, Argentina, on Wednesday. — AFP

## Maradona allowed to leave hospital

**Olivos (Argentina), Nov. 12:** Argentine football legend Diego Maradona left hospital on Wednesday followed by a convoy of supporters, eight days after undergoing surgery to remove a blood clot on his brain. Maradona did not speak to the crowd of journalists and chanting fans gathered outside in masks as he left the Olivos clinic in Buenos Aires by ambulance shortly after his doctor Leopoldo Luque told reporters he could go home.

Private security personnel held up dividers to screen the ambulance before it left. A convoy of Maradona's supporters followed the ambulance after dozens had waited outside the clinic for days, holding photos of him and chanting their encouragement.

One banner read "Eternally Thanks." Luque had earlier published on Instagram a photo of himself hugging the 60-year-old, who wore a bandage on his head.

Maradona is expected to continue his rehabilitation in Tigre, 30 kilometers (19 miles) north of Buenos Aires, near his daughter Giannina's home. "Diego has gone through perhaps the hardest time of his life," his lawyer Matias Morla said earlier Wednesday, adding it was a "miracle" that the clot "which could have taken his life, was detected."

What is needed now is family togetherness and being surrounded by health professionals," said Morla. — AFP

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