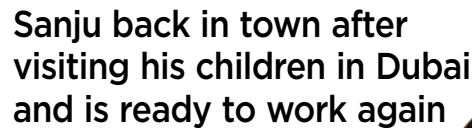


NEW DELHI FRIDAY 16 OCTOBER 2020



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Morning-walkers at Rajpath amid hazy weather in New Delhi on Thursday. The national capital's air quality hit an eight-month low on Thursday with stubble burning accounting for only six per cent of the city's PM2.5 concentration. **■ Report on Page 2** — PTI

IN BRIEF

Minor held for taking Jamia entrance test for another candidate

New Delhi: A 15-year-old boy has been apprehended when he tried to appear in an entrance examination being held by the Jamia Millia Islamia University in place of another candidate. Meanwhile, a JMI official said that the boy, who tried to appear in the exam on Wednesday in place of the actual candidate, was wearing a mask and might have thought that the invigilator will not check his antecedents. "The official on duty asked him to remove the mask and it was found that the photo on the admit card did not match the photo on the Aadhaar card of the candidate. The invigilator informed the superintendent who in turn informed the Controller of Examination and subsequently, a police complaint was filed," said the JMI official. "The teenage boy, however, claimed that he doesn't know the whereabouts of the original candidate. He did it reportedly on the assurance of one Shah Nawaj who promised to waive his coaching class fees if he agrees for the arrangement," said R.P. Meena, DCP (Southeast district).

3 herbal products sellers arrested

New Delhi: Three men, including a foreigner, were arrested for allegedly duping people on the pretext of trading in herbal products, police said on Thursday. The accused have been identified Collines (29), a resident of Nigeria, Abrar Ahmad Ansari (44), a resident of Ghaziabad, and Mayank Sharma (24), a resident of Dabri, they said. During interrogation, main accused Collines revealed that he had come to India in 2013 and his visa expired in 2016. Since then, he has been staying in the country illegally. He and his associates contact people on social media and pretend to be top executives of a pharmaceutical company. The accused have disclosed that so far, they have cheated over a dozen people in the last one year of around ₹1.5 crore, including ₹92 lakh from a Gujarat based person, police added.

600 quintals of illegal molasses seized

Noida: Police in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar on Thursday said they have impounded two tankers containing around 600 quintals of 'sheera' or molasses, a crucial ingredient of hooch, among other items. The tankers were intercepted by officials of the Excise Department and the district police near a toll plaza in Dadri area of Greater Noida, and a man has been arrested for illegally transporting the molasses, they said. "The tankers contained around 600 quintals of illegal sheera. One of the drivers has been arrested, while the other left the truck and managed to escape," a police spokesperson said. The seized sheera is estimated to be worth ₹5 lakh, the spokesperson added.

1st day, no show: Majority cine halls in Delhi remain closed

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 15

Majority cinema halls in the national capital remained closed on Thursday and a few that reopened after seven months of the coronavirus-induced shutdown attracted very few audience for the "first day, first show" in the time of pandemic.

Some of the theatres that reopened held special screenings for COVID-19 warriors or staff members and their families.

Sushant Singh Rajput's last theatrical release Chhichhore, Kedarnath, Tanhaji, Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan, Malang, War and Thappad are among films that have been released on the big screen since there are no new releases this week.

PVR Naraina's first show was a special screening of Tapsee Pannu-starrer "Thappad" for 40 coronavirus warriors, including doctors and civil defence volunteers. The special screening was organised by the New Delhi

District Magistrate's office. Similarly, at PVR Cinema at 3C's Mall in Lajpat Nagar, a special screening of "Tanhaji" was organised for the staff members and their families. The theatre will remain open for public from Friday onwards. "We have total three shows tomorrow onwards. Our first show will start at 12 pm for Dream Girl, followed by Tanhaji at 3.15 pm and at 6.30 pm we have a Punjabi movie (Sardarji). We are maintaining social distancing at every point here. We have demarcations at the ticket counters, inside the cinema halls, at entry as well as exit points," said Sandeep Singh, Cinema Manager of PVR Cinemas at 3C'S.

"We are using the latest antimicrobial treatment to sanitise the halls. It was also used in sanitising all the touch points like door handles. Sanitiser dispensers have been placed at all major points inside and at the entry points of the cinema halls. We are also encouraging contactless digital payments," he added.

At Cinepolis cinema in Greater Kailash, only five tickets were sold for the 11.30 am show.

Cinepolis Fun cinema at V3s mall in Nirman Vihar, PVR Cinema at EDM Mall in Kaushambi, Eros cinema in Jangpura, and Cinepolis Karkadooma were among the theatres that remained closed.

Owner of Milan Cinema Ravinder Gupta said that it was very difficult to reopen the hall.

"My single screen hall has accumulated lakhs of rupees in dues due to pending fixed charges of electricity in past eight months. Also, due to COVID-19 no new releases are there to attract the audience," he said.

Ushering in a new era of movie watching, the Union government allowed multiplexes, cinema halls and theatres to reopen from Thursday within the framework of a set of standard operating procedures (SOPs). The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) left it to states to take a final call on the matter.

Smoky haze shrouds Delhi-NCR even after stricter anti-air pollution measures**Air quality enters 'very poor' zone**

New Delhi, Oct. 15: A layer of smoky haze lingered over Delhi-NCR on Thursday with air quality in the region hitting 'very poor' levels, even as stricter anti-air pollution measures, including a ban on electricity generators, came into force under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).

NASA's satellite imagery showed a large cluster of farm fires near Amritsar, Patiala, Firozpur and Faridkot in Punjab and Ambala and Rajpura in Haryana.

However, the Ministry of Earth Sciences' Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi said its impact on the capital's air quality was marginal.

The city recorded an air quality index (AQI) of 315 at 11:10 am. The last time the air quality hit such a poor level was in February.

The 24-hour average AQI was 276 on Wednesday, which falls in the 'poor' category. It was 300 on Tuesday, 261 on Monday, 216 on Sunday and 221 on Saturday.

ITO (AQI 372), Vivek Vihar (AQI 370), and

Will write to EPCA, CPCB for shutting 11 coal-fired power plants: Gopal Rai

New Delhi, Oct. 15: Delhi environment minister Gopal Rai on Thursday said he will ask the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and a Supreme Court-mandated pollution control authority to shut the 11 coal-fired power plants operating within 300 kilometres of Delhi within a week.

"The Delhi government has been making all efforts to bring pollution levels down, but we become helpless when pollution from neighbouring states affects the city's air quality. I am going to write a letter to the CPCB and the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority, asking them to

Shadipur (AQI 359) recorded the highest pollution levels on Thursday morning.

The air quality in the neighbouring cities of Faridabad (317), Ghaziabad (326), Greater Noida (344) and Noida (314) was also in the red

shut these power plants within seven days till the situation improves," Mr Rai said.

The minister said authorities are considering granting extension to these power plants to meet the new emission norms, instead of shutting them. The 11 power plants have missed two deadlines to install flue-gas desulphurisation units to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions. The CPCB had earlier set the deadline as December 2017 to meet the emission standards. It was later extended by two years to December 31, 2019. — PTI

zone. An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

A senior scientist at the India Meteorological

Department said the dip in the air quality can be attributed to low wind speed which allowed accumulation of pollutants.

PM10 levels in Delhi-NCR rose to 300 microgram per cubic meter (g/m3) at 9:30 am — the highest this season so far. PM10 levels below 100 g/m3 are considered safe in India.

PM10 is particulate matter with a diameter of 10 micrometers and is inhalable into the lungs. These particles include dust, pollen and mold spores.

The levels of PM2.5 finer particles which can even enter the bloodstream were 151 g/m3. PM2.5 levels up to 60 g/m3 are considered safe.

GRAP — a set of anti-pollution measures followed in Delhi and its vicinity towns according to the severity of the situation — comes into force on Thursday.

It was notified by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 2017 for implementation through the Supreme Court-mandated Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority. — PTI

Civic bodies intensify efforts to control dust pollution

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 15

BJP ruled South and North Delhi Municipal Corporations have intensified efforts to control dust pollution. The North Corporation launched a drive while South Corporation takes stringent pollution control measures including action against burning of solid waste, garbage, dry leaves, and plastic, rubber and construction activities at Dwarka, one of the main hotspots. The South Corporation has issued a NGT challan of ₹50,000 to a construction company in Dwarka for keeping building material in open amounting ₹50,000.

North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash launched the drive at Ajmal Khan Park in Karol Bagh area sprinkling water in the presence of civic officials.

Stubble burning causes only 4% pollution in city, says Javadekar

Being in denial will not help: Kejriwal

New Delhi, Oct. 15: Being in denial will not help, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said, on Thursday, after Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar asserted that stubble burning contributes to only 4 per cent air pollution.

"Staying in denial will not help. If stubble burning causes only 4 per cent pollution, then why has pollution suddenly increased in the last fortnight? Air was clean before that. Same story every year."

"There's no massive jump in any local source of pollution in the last few days to cause this spike," Mr Kejriwal said in a tweet.

Earlier in the day, Mr Javadekar said that stubble burning is not a major factor for air pollution in Delhi-NCR.

"Only 4 per cent pollution is due to stubble burning. Ninety-six per cent of it is due to local factors like biomass burning, garbage dump-

ing, unpaved roads, dust, construction and demolition activities, etc." he said.

Later, a spokesperson of the Union environment ministry clarified that Mr Javadekar was referring to the contribution of stubble burning only for this year, which is 4 per cent till now. Last year, it was much higher.

Meanwhile, Aam Aadmi Party MLA Raghav Chadha said that by the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) own estimate of 2019 suggest stubble burning contributed up to 44 per cent to the national capital's air pollution.

According to SAFAR data, the contribution of farm fires to Delhi's PM 2.5 concentration was around 6 per cent on Thursday.

The wind direction is partly favourable for transport of smoke from farm fires and "hence an increase in the contribution in Delhi's PM2.5 is expected," SAFAR said. — PTI

Kejri urges people to turn off vehicles at traffic signals

New Delhi, Oct. 15: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday launched a campaign to tackle air pollution in the national capital and urged people to turn off the engines of their vehicles while waiting at traffic signals.

He said the government will launch a massive campaign — "Red light on, Gaadi off" — to make people aware of efficacy of the action and to ensure its success.

"Red light on, gaadi off. Delhi starts this today as a part of our campaign "Yudh, pradushan ke virudh" in our bid to

tackle pollution. Let's all pledge to turn off our vehicles at red lights. Every single effort will contribute in reducing pollution," he tweeted.

Addressing an online media briefing, the chief minister said that there are one crore vehicles registered in the city. If 30-40 lakh vehicles come on the road everyday and keep idling at traffic signals, it increases air pollution levels in the city, Kejriwal said.

Doctors of NDMC hospitals to protest at Jantar Mantar today

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 15

Resident doctors of three North Corporation-run hospitals, who are currently agitating over their pending salaries, on Thursday decided to hold a joint protest at Jantar Mantar on October 16, with the RDAs saying no resolution seems to be in sight to the issue.

These doctors are from Hindu Rao Hospital, Kasturba Hospital and Rajen Babu Tuberculosis Hospital.

The members of the Resident Doctors' Association of the Hindu

Rao Hospital have been protesting for the past several days and had gone on an indefinite strike, seeking release of salaries due for the past three months. Since Wednesday, resident doctors of the Kasturba Hospital are on a week-long strike over their pending salaries too.

"The RDA of Hindu Rao Hospital stands in solidarity with the RDA of Kasturba Hospital and RDA of Rajen Babu TB Hospital in the ongoing agitation on the grounds of non-payment of salaries for almost four months. We cumulatively

would like to state that there hasn't been any resolution to our issues," said the RDA of Hindu Rao Hospital in a statement.

"Therefore, we all North MCD residents would like to join hands on a common platform to demonstrate our agitation validating our affliction with the administration due to strict non-compliance.

Considering the above situation, we would have to resort to hold a peaceful protest at Jantar Mantar on October 16 to symbolise our agony," it added.

Social media, law & order, and policing not under state govt, SC told**Centre questions competence of Delhi Assembly to probe N-E Delhi violence**

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, OCT. 15

The Centre on Thursday questioned the jurisdiction and competence of Delhi Assembly to hold inquiry into February 2020 riots in north-east Delhi saying that the law and order and policing were not under it, as social media platform facebook questioned the summons issued to it by an inquiry committee constituted by the State assembly.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told a bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul and also comprising Justice Dinesh Maheshwari that in the matter of law and order and policing, Delhi assembly has no competence to

constitute a committee to conduct an inquiry into the riots. The top court was said this as it decided to hold a detailed hearing of the matter starting from December 2 as senior counsel Abhishek Manu Suinghvi appearing for Delhi assembly and senior counsel Harish Salve appearing for Ajit Mohan of Facebook strongly differed on the contents of the latest affidavit filed by the Delhi government.

Singhvi said that they wanted Facebook to appear before the committee to give an expert opinion as to how the misuse of social media platforms could be avoided in tense and sensitive situations. Singhvi read out paragraphs from the affidavit

filed on behalf of the committee to back his contention that State assembly did not intend to initiate any coercive action against the social media platform.

Salve too referred to the paragraphs from the same affidavit and said that it says that any failure of facebook to respond to the summons and appears before the committee would trigger matter being referred to the Speaker for the initiation of privilege action.

Finding no meeting ground between the two counsel, Justice Kaul said that the matter would require a hearing and fixed December 2 for the commencement of the hearing asking counsels to submit a short note of five pages

each on their submissions. The court also fixed the time that each counsel will get to make his submissions.

The apex court on Thursday issued notice to the Centre on a PIL seeking the use of plain English in the drafting of laws, government orders and notification to make them easy to understand by the people and increase their awareness about laws and their rights.

A bench issued notice as PIL petitioner Dr. Subhash Vijayan said that the use of plain English in the framing of law, government orders and notification will increase people's awareness of their rights which is necessary for access to justice.

HATHRAS RAPE Mahila Congress launches campaign for justice to victim

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 15

Delhi Mahila Congress on Thursday launched a 'postcard' campaign for sending messages to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for justice to Hathras rape victim. Launching the campaign Delhi Mahila Congress president Amrita Dhawan said her party now aims to limit further "humiliation" of Hathras rape victim and speedy justice in her case.

"The campaign will run for a week by Mahila Congress wing at all districts and blocks, using social media and actual post cards for asking the Prime Minister and UP CM to safeguard the honour of Hathras victim," Ms Dhawan added.

DCW issues notice to cops, seeks action taken report**Kashmiri woman accuses landlady of calling her 'terrorist', stealing clothes**

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 15

A woman in southeast Delhi has alleged that she was targeted by her landlady for being a "Kashmiri", was called a "terrorist", and in her absence had her furniture removed, police said on Thursday after registering a case following her complaint.

In her complaint, the woman, who hails from Srinagar, has alleged that her landlady had entered the house along with a man and called her "terrorist" as she is from Kashmir.

The Delhi Commission For Women (DCW) has issued a notice to the police in this connection and has sought an action taken report, copy of the FIR and whether any arrests have been made in the case. The incident took place on Wednesday.

During enquiry, it was found that a quarrel had taken place earlier between them over paying house rent and electricity bills. The electricity connection was also disconnected by the BSES.

When the victim returned home, she found her house lock broken and valuables stolen. Her landlady was also at the spot. Soon a heated argument broke out between both the parties, police said.

"We received a PCR call regarding a theft in a woman's house. On reaching the spot, it was revealed that the house was rented to two sisters. Both are natives of Srinagar. The PCR call was made by their landlady," a senior police officer said.

The officer said the tenant alleged that her land-

lady had broken the locks of house and removed furniture and also stolen clothes and ₹20,000.

During enquiry, it was found that a quarrel had taken place earlier between them over paying house rent and electricity bills. The electricity connection was also disconnected by the BSES, the officer added.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) RP Meena said, "Based on a written complaint given by the tenant, a case has been registered under section 448 (punishment for house trespass), 380 (Theft in dwelling house), 457 (lurking house-trespass), 323 (Punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) of Indian Penal Code at Amar Colony police station and the matter is being investigated."

Traffic constable dragged by car, video goes viral

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 15

A Delhi Traffic Police constable was dragged on the bonnet of a car for almost half a kilometre in southwest Delhi Cantonment area, officials said on Thursday.

The incident took place on Monday evening near Dhaura Kuan. The constable tried to stop the vehicle which has the fancy number plate and being driven rashly, they said.

The video of the incident went viral on social media. In the video, constable Mahipal Yadav is seen on the bonnet of a white Hyundai I20 car.

The driver of the vehicle is driving his car in a zig zag way, following which Yadav falls on ground.

The driver tried to flee from the spot, but was later apprehended by public and other policemen. Yadav suffered some injuries.

SHORT TAKES

Spurious liquor kills 11 MP's Ujjain

Bhopal: At least 11 people died after consuming spurious liquor in the temple town of Ujjain, police said on Thursday. All the deaths occurred in a gap of 10 hours on the intervening night of October 14 and October 15. According to the police, the deceased comprised beggars, small-time vendors and daily-wage earners. Some of them were homeless and lived on pavements. Preliminary post-mortem reports have suggested that the deaths may have occurred due to consumption of denatured spirit. According to Ujjain district collector Ashish Singh, the victims visited government hospitals in Ujjain from Wednesday evening onwards. The latest death was reported in the city at around 11 in the morning. Police suspected that a racket was operating in the city to supply the toxic drink. The police has detained 3 people for interrogation.

Kashmiri handicrafts get global platform

Srinagar: Kashmir's exquisite handicrafts will now be available globally through flipkart.com. The J&K government signed what it called a 'historic' MoU with Flipkart to promote local handloom and handicrafts sector which "is a major relief to artisans, craftsmen and weavers". An official spokesman said that the e-commerce company will now display the handicrafts and handloom products of J&K on its special web portal 'Samarth' to enable the producers to reach the global market. The government hopes that the move will introduce artisans, crafts persons and weavers to millions of customers shopping online thereby ensuring efficient marketing "that too when virtual marketing has overtaken the physical marketing of goods and services across globe".

Army restores grave of Pak officer

Srinagar: The Indian Army on Thursday said it has restored the damaged grave of a decorated Pakistani officer in Naugam sector of J&K. Srinagar-based Chinara Corps tweeted a photograph of the epitaph on grave which read, "In memory of Major Mohd Shabir Khan, Sitar-e-Jurrat Shahid 05 May 1972, 1630 H, killed in counter attack by 9 Sikh". "In keeping with the traditions & ethos of the #IndianArmy, #ChinaraCorps resuscitated a damaged grave of Major Mohd Shabir Khan, Sitar-e-Jurrat, Pakistan Army, who was Killed in Action (KIA) at a forward location along LC in Naugam Sector on 05 May 1972," it posted. — PTI

OFFICIALS TOLD TO SCALE UP COVID TESTING

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 15

India's overall cases of Coronavirus crossed 73-lakh mark on Thursday after 67,708 fresh cases were detected in the last 24 hours. The total number of deaths due to the virus has now crossed 1.11 lakh out of which 680 fatalities were recorded in last one day. Union health ministry said that India is reporting a progressively high increase in the recoveries and a persistent decline in the percentage of active cases. As a result, the doubling time of the infection has sharply improved and it is now almost 73 days. Health ministry officials said this indicates a substantial fall in the daily new cases and the consequent increase in time taken to double the total cases. Calling for continued vigilance and a high state of preparedness against the Coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday directed health authorities to scale up Covid-19 testing and sero-surveys and said the facility to get tested regularly and speedily at a low cost must be available to all at the earliest. Chairing a review meeting of the research and vaccine deployment ecosystem against the Covid-19 pandemic, the Prime Minister also underscored the need for continuous and rigorous scientific testing and validation of traditional medicine treatments.

'Won't tolerate attempts to finish off Bollywood'

Mumbai, Oct. 15: Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday said attempts to malign and "finish off" the Hindi film industry or "to shift it" will not be tolerated. Mr Thackeray's statement came against the backdrop of probes by multiple agencies into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death and its media coverage which was seen by some as a deliberate campaign to target Bollywood.

"Moves to finish off the film industry or shift it elsewhere will never be tolerated," a statement from the chief minister's office quoted Mr. Thackeray as saying at a meeting with multiplex and theater owners.

Mumbai was not only the country's financial capital but also its entertainment capital, he said. "Bollywood enjoys a fol-

In the last few days, attempts have been made to malign the image of the film industry by certain quarters which is painful

— Uddhav Thackeray, Maha CM



lowing across the globe. The film industry generates huge employment. In the last few days, attempts have been made to malign the image of the film industry by certain quarters which is painful," he said.

The BJP government in Uttar Pradesh recently announced a plan to create a film city in that State to woo film-makers. Mr Thackeray informed

cinema and multiplex owners at the meeting that the State Culture Department has prepared a standard operating procedure (SOP) regarding reopening of cinema halls which have been closed for over six months due to coronavirus pandemic.

The decision about reopening cinema halls will be taken at the earliest after the SOP is finalised, he said. "The government is positive about it. Entertainment industry is a means to boost the State's economy and the government is keen to restart it," he said.

"In a cinema hall, people are in one room for nearly two hours and hence we want to ensure complete cleanliness and sanitisation as well as physical distancing. There is a need to ensure that only 50% seats are occupied," he said. — PTI

Pledge to fight 'unconstitutional' removal of special status

J&K political parties form alliance

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, OCT. 15

The signatories of "Gupkar Declaration" from among Jammu and Kashmir's mainstream parties held a meeting here on Thursday and named the initiative aimed at fighting for the restoration of the erstwhile state's special status as "People's Alliance".

Top leaders of these parties met at the residence of National Conference president Farooq Abdullah in Srinagar. "Ours is a constitutional battle. We want the Government of India to return to the people the rights they held prior to August 5,



NC leaders Farooq Abdullah, his son Omar and PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti in Srinagar on Thursday. — PTI

2019," Mr Abdullah said. PDP president and former CM Mehbooba Mufti, who was released from a 14-month-long detention earlier this week, also attended the meeting. "Gupkar Declaration" was a pledge for defend-

ing Article 370 and 35A of Kashmir's mainstream parties which they took at a meeting held at Mr Abdullah's residence on August 4, 2019, a day before the state was stripped of its special status.

On Thursday, all the signatories, barring J&K PCC chief Ghulam Ahmad Mir, attended the meeting and renamed the grouping as "Peoples' Alliance for Gupkar Declaration".

Announcing this, Mr Abdullah told reporters, "We've decided to name the resolution as 'People's Alliance' for Gupkar Declaration. Our motive is to fight for the restoration of the pre-August 4, 2019 position. We will also fight for the rights that were snatched last year from J&K. Further, we want that the steps be taken for the resolution of Kashmir issue and all the stakeholders should be taken on board in this regard."

L-G: Graft-free, transparent governance priority in J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, OCT. 15

Jammu and Kashmir's lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday renewed his pledge of providing a corruption-free and transparent administration to the people of the Union Territory (UT) The L-G said that he has already taken a series of steps towards empowering its villages and urban areas.

Addressing a press conference, Mr Sinha also said that he would ensure more use of technology

for quick and hassle-free services like online building permissions, clearance of contractors' bills and other payments. "In the last two months, several major steps have been taken up by the J&K administration to empower villages and urban areas of the UT and to make the government more responsive and accessible to the people. My first and only motto is development across all its twenty districts without any discrimination".

He asserted that apart

from seeking to "universalise" the Centrally-sponsored schemes in J&K, his government has tried to give a push to the ongoing projects of public importance which had been languishing for years and some of them even for decades. This, he said, would benefit common people. "As part of the recently concluded 'Back to Village' programme, we conducted 'Block Diwas' at 285 different locations in which around 4.5 lakh people participated," he said.

Work on Asia's longest Zojila tunnel starts

Will make all-weather connectivity between Ladakh and Kashmir possible

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, OCT. 15

A new tunnel, the longest in Asia, which will pass through 3,000-metre Zojila — the mountain pass of blizzards — will make road connectivity between landlocked Ladakh and Kashmir Valley possible throughout the year.

Presently, the stretch of the 419-km road between Srinagar and Leh remains shut for vehicular traffic for four to five months during winters.

Mr Gadkari said that

The construction of the all-weather tunnel commenced on Thursday with blasting on both ends at Baltal in Kashmir Valley's Ganderbal and Minimarg in Ladakh's Kargil districts and was unveiled virtually by Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari. Lt. Governor of Ladakh, R.K. Mathur, and his counterpart in J&K Manoj Sinha attended the event from Leh and Srinagar, respectively.

Mr Gadkari said that

the re-modelled Zojila project is expected to save about Rs. 4,000 crore in cost and about four hours in commuting time. He said that the inclusion of connectivity from Z-Morh to Zojila) pass tunnel with tunnels, bridges, snow galleries, etc. has further enhanced the Zojila tunnel project into a holistic one. "Beyond Zojila towards Kargil, Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has agreed to take up the works of snow galleries, straightening of road,

Cong gives ticket to Luv Sinha from Bankipore seat Shotgun's son enters poll race

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, OCT. 15

The Congress is all set to launch actor turned politician Shatrughan Sinha's son Luv Sinha in politics by giving him a ticket from Patna's Bankipore seat, which is considered a BJP's stronghold.

He has been pitted against BJP's three-time MLA Nitin Navin. Bankipore Assembly seat comes under the Patna Sahib constituency that elected Shatrughan Sinha twice in 2009 and 2014 when he was in the BJP.

Sources said that the Congress which is an ally of the RJD in Bihar is trying to use the popularity and political influence of Shatrughan Sinha by giving the ticket to his son Luv Sinha from the seat.

The Congress on Thursday released the second list of 49 candidates. Congress insiders said that "the party is distrib-

Won't let LJP use PM's photos: HAM

AGE CORRESPONDENT
PATNA, OCT. 15

The NDA ally Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) on Thursday said that the party would write to the election commission to prevent Chirag Paswan's LJP from using Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photographs during poll campaigns.

"We are getting complaints from several constituencies that LJP is

using the photograph of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to influence voters. LJP is not part of the NDA in Bihar and if this continues then we will write to Election Commission and also lodge complaints against LJP candidates who have been doing this. Those who did not do anything for Bihar are trying to mislead the voters by using PM's photograph," HAM spokesperson Danish Rizwan said.

leadership while selecting candidates for Bihar polls.

Meanwhile, a hip hop song was also released to highlight the failure of NDA and counter growing rhetoric against the grand alliance ahead of polls.

Sources said that the song titled "Kaa Kiye ho" (what have you done) was released by the Congress on the social media.

Nitish insulted my dad: Chirag

Patna, Oct. 15: LJP president Chirag Paswan trashed on Thursday suggestions that he parted ways with Nitish Kumar's JD(U) because of differences over seat-sharing for the Bihar assembly polls, and accused the chief minister of harming the dalit community by creating a sub-group of Mahadalits.

The 37-year-old, who recently lost his father Ram Vilas Paswan, the charismatic LJP founder, also alleged that Kumar had behaved "haughtily" when the late Union minister had called on him last year with the request to accompany him for filing nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha. Paswan Sr. was Union minister at the time of his death. — PTI

India denies Pak NSA's claim about dialogue

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 15

India on Thursday said a claim by Pakistani National Security Advisor (NSA) Moeed Yusuf that India had communicated a "desire for conversation" with Pakistan was "fictitious" and that "no such message was sent" by India. Yusuf had reportedly made the claim in an interview to an Indian news website.

New Delhi also lambasted Islamabad for its "effort to divert attention from domestic failures of the present government and mislead its domestic constituents by pulling India into headlines on a daily basis", adding that the Pakistani NSA should reserve his advice for his own country and refrain from commenting on India's internal matters.

India made it clear that "support to terrorism against India and use of derogatory and abusive language are not conducive to normal neighbourly relations".

At his weekly briefing, MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "We have seen reports on the interview by a senior Pakistani official to an Indian media outlet. He has commented on India's internal matters."

Woman dies of cardiac arrest during Army ops

AGE CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, OCT. 15

A woman died of cardiac arrest during a search operation conducted by security forces in their attempt to flush out militants dead or alive from Gussu village of J&K's southern Pulwama district on Thursday, the family alleged.

The family claimed that 65-year-old Taja Begum collapsed after the Army's 50 Rashtriya Rifles and other security forces compelled her two sons to accompany them to assist them in a house-to-house search in the village during the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. It said that the woman was taken to Pulwama's district hospital where she was declared brought dead.

The local sources said that the woman was suffering from heart disease for quite some time and complained of

chest pain after the security forces arrived in the area and reportedly took her two sons along. The Army denied it was responsible for the death of the woman whereas the local police said they are investigating the incident. "Since no one has come forward to lodge a complaint with us, I doubt the cordon-and-search operation of the security forces has become the cause of her death," a police officer who spoke to this newspaper on condition of anonymity said.

Separately, unknown gunmen on Thursday evening shot and critically wounded a former militant Tanveer Soi in Kakapora area of Pulwama. He was immediately evacuated to a Srinagar hospital.

Meanwhile, a Junior Commissioned Officer of Army was injured in firing by Pakistan Army along the LoC in J&K's Rajouri district on Thursday.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority			
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, (UP) Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com			
E-TENDER NOTICE			
E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & http://etender.up.nic.in . Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.			
1.	22/SP/PE/(PH-II)/ET/2020-21	Cleaning, Sweeping of Internal Roads, Drains, Toilets and Stair in Command Control Centre Sec-94 Noida.	Rs. 1056284.64
The above tenders can be uploaded by date 22-10-2020 upto 5.00 PM . Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 23-10-2020 at 11.00 AM .			
Office Sector-39		Sr. Project Engineer (Public Health) Noida	
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA			

SEARCH FOR MISSING	
	General public is hereby informed that a person (depicted in the photo), Namely: Kapil S/o Shri Pawan Kumar R/o H. No. A-226, Ambedkar Colony, New Delhi has been missing since 24.09.2020 from his house. In this regard a case vide DD No. 75A dated 05.10.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Mehrauli, New Delhi. His physical description is as under:- Age : 27 Years, Height: 5'7", Complexion : Wheatish, Face : Round, Built : Stout, Wearing : Black colour T-shirt and black & white colour lower. Any person having any information/clue about this missing person, may inform SHO, Mehrauli, New Delhi at E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in or website: http://cbi.nic.in
SHO P.S. Mehrauli, New Delhi South Distt. Delhi Ph. 011-26645050, 26643200	

INTRODUCTION OF NEW SPECIAL TRAIN BETWEEN PORBANDAR AND DELHI SARAI ROHILLA				
This is notified for the information of passengers that Railways have decided to run following Special train as per details given below :-				
Train No.	From-To	Frequency	Date of Commencement	Stoppages & Timings Accommodation
09263	Porbandar - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Special Express	Bi-Weekly	17.10.2020	Same as Train No. 19263/19264 Porbandar - Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Porbandar Express AC-2 Tier, AC-3 Tier, Sleeper & Reserved Second Class
09264	Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Porbandar Special Express		19.10.2020	
NOTE : All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.				
For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in				
Security Helpline No. 182		Please join us on 		
Integrated Helpline No. 139		 NORTHERN RAILWAY Visit us at: www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in		
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE				



SHORT TAKES

Wife moves SC for Varavara Rao's bail

New Delhi: The wife of Telugu poet and writer Varavara Rao, arrested in connection with the Elgar Parishad-Koregaon Bhima case, moved the Supreme Court on Thursday seeking bail for him, claiming that his continued custody amounted to cruel and inhuman treatment. The petition, filed by Pandyala Hemalatha, urged the court that during the pendency of the petition, the 81-year-old accused be released on temporary medical bail and be allowed to travel to Hyderabad to be with his family and loved ones. It sought immediately release of Rao on the ground that his continued custody amounts to cruel and inhuman treatment, violating Article 21 of the Constitution (life or personal liberty) and violative of his dignity in custody". The plea said that he has lost about 18 kg and is suffering from various health issues and is "basically bed-ridden".

— PTI

All eyes on India-US Beca defence pact

New Delhi: All eyes are on whether India and the United States will ink the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (Beca) defence pact for "greater geospatial information-sharing" during the forthcoming Indo-US 2+2 talks at the foreign and defence ministerial level that could be held in New Delhi in the last week of this month. India on Thursday said it looked forward to holding the Dialogue in New Delhi at an early date. The Beca is the third proposed defence pact between the two countries after the signing of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016 and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) in 2018. With the US going to Presidential polls soon, the forthcoming 2+2 Dialogue is expected to be the last major engagement between the US and India in the current tenure of the Donald Trump Presidency.

Court junks ED plea in Jet Airways case

Mumbai: A Sessions court on Thursday rejected the revision application filed by Directorate of Enforcement challenging an order of a magistrate court denying ED permission to intervene in the Jet Airways case. In this case the ED is opposing a report filed by MRA Marg police for closing a cheating case against Jet Airways and its directors. The sessions court observed that no case is made out to interfere in the order passed by the magistrate. According to the sessions court, the magistrate rightly held that the central agency had no locus to intervene in the case and only a complainant can intervene. After the Sessions court rejected the application, ED sought stay on the order so that the agency could approach the high court. However, the court refused to grant stay too.

SC TO HEAR TARUN TEJPAL'S PLEA ON OCT. 9

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, OCT. 5

The Supreme Court on Monday said that it will hear former Telhika chief Tarun Tejpal's plea objecting to the cross-examination of the Delhi-based victim on October 5 through video-conferencing in the 2013 sexual assault case in Goa and the Goa Police seeking extension of time for completing the trial. The victim, then a young colleague of Tejpal, has a lung infection because of which she does not want to travel during the ongoing pandemic but ready for the cross-examination through video conferencing, solicitor general Tushar Mehta said. Mehta appearing for Goa police also told the court that the police has also filed an application for more time to complete the trial. The Bench of Justice Ashok Bhushan, Justice R. Subhash Reddy and Justice M.R. Shah expressed surprise at senior counsel Kapil Sibal, appearing for Tejpal, objecting to the virtual cross-examination of the victim and She has no lung problem, he told the court. Justice Shah shot back: "What is wrong with video conferencing? We are also hearing other cases through video conferencing."

FLOOD CRISIS ■ CM announced ₹5L compensation each to families of the dead, total toll 50 KCR urges PM to release ₹1,350cr for relief work

S.A. ISHAQUI
HYDERABAD, OCT. 15

Chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao put the initial estimate of the damage caused by rains and floods in the state at ₹5,000 crore, in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday. He urged the Centre to release ₹1,350 crore immediately, ₹600 crore for farmers and ₹750 crore for taking up relief and rehabilitation measures.

The CM while reviewing the situation instructed officials to take up relief measures on a war footing in the affected areas. Officials put the toll at 50, 11 of them dead in the city. They said that 20,540 houses in 144 colonies at 72 places in the city were under floodwaters and 35,000 families affected.

The CM announced ₹5 lakh as immediate compensation each to the families of the dead. He directed the authorities to distribute rice, pulses, food and three quilts per family in affected areas. ₹5 crore was announced as immediate financial assistance to the GHMC to take up relief works. The chief minister said that new houses would be built for those whose houses were destroyed. Financial assistance would be given to repair houses that were partially damaged. He said houses would be built on government land for those whose houses were built on nalas and washed away in floodwaters.

Electricity authorities were told to restore power supply to apartments situated in low-lying areas only after draining out the cellars, though this may



K. Chandrashekar Rao

► **CM DIRECTED** the authorities to distribute rice, pulses, food and three quilts per family in affected areas. ₹5 crore was announced as immediate financial assistance to the GHMC to take up relief works

delay things. Restoration of power without clearing the water could be dangerous. Noting that most of the colonies affected were built within full tank levels, the CM instructed the officials to include a condition to prevent water stagnation in the cellars while granting permissions for construction of apartments.

Officials told CM that crops were submerged in 7.35 lakh acres. Even if there is 50% of damage to crops, the loss would be to the tune of ₹2,000 crore. They said that the GHMC limits had received 31 cm rainfall, the first since 1916, which resulted in inundation of several areas, especially colonies which were constructed within the full tank levels of water bodies.

The officials explained to the Chief Minister that in Hyderabad 14 houses were damaged and 65 houses partially damaged, bitumen roads in 445 places and at six places on national highways were damaged.

Rains, release of water from dam worsen K'taka flood situation

Bengaluru, Oct. 15: The flood situation in Karnataka worsened further on Thursday with several areas in the northern parts of the state inundated due to torrential rains and release of water from major dams.

Yadgir, Raichur, Ballari, Bidar, Vijayapura, Bagalkote, Belagavi, Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Gadag, Koppal, Haveri and Dharwad were the worst affected due to floods.

According to the Karnataka state natural disaster management centre, the floodgates of all the major dams have been opened resulting in water gushing into villages and formation of islands at different places.

Dams which were filled to the brim were Linganamakki, Supa, Varahi, Harangi, Hemavathi, Krishna Raja Sagar, Kabini, Bhadra, Tungabhadra, Ghataprabha, Malaprabha, Almatti and Narayanapura. An overflowing river Bhima has wreaked havoc in Kalaburagi and Yadgir districts whereas water level in Krishna river at Devasugur in Raichur district is rising at an alarming level. The Central Water Commission too warned that River Bhima at Deogaon Bridge in Afzalpur Taluk of Kalaburagi was rising and "is expected to cross danger level by this evening".

— PTI



People wade through a waterlogged road after heavy rains at Bandlaguda in Hyderabad on Thursday.

— PTI

Body of missing Hyd postman found in lake

Hyderabad, Oct. 15: When 50-year-old Sunder Raj responded to his call of duty on October 13, little did he know that fate had other plans, as the senior mail man who fell into a swirling rainwater storm here while on his way to deliver letters was found dead on Thursday.

According to police, his body was fished out of Nagole lake, which was overflowing with rain water following downpour in the last two days.

Efforts were on to locate missing persons, who were washed away in floods due to heavy rains that pounded the city on Tuesday and Wednesday, police said.

— PTI

Vodafone-Idea services in Maha partially hit

Mumbai, Oct. 15: Subscribers of Vodafone Idea in Maharashtra are facing connectivity issues since Thursday morning as a key site in Pune got flooded.

The company said one of its "key sites" in Pune's Kalyani Nagar area got flooded because of the heavy showers resulting in the "partial disruption in services" for subscribers across the state.

Unlike tower infrastructure, which serves subscribers in a local area, the site was serving people across the telecom circle which affected the subscribers in the state.

— PTI

₹1.3 crore guns damaged at Narang's shooting academy

Hyderabad, Oct. 15: Seepage of water due to torrential rain has damaged equipment worth ₹1.3 crore, including rifles and pistols, in the city's Gun For Glory shooting academy helmed by Olympic medallist, Gagan Narang. In a post on Facebook, a gutted Narang spoke about the extent of damage the rain has caused.

The champion shooter, who has taken to mentoring a few years ago, called it a "torrid 24 hours".

Equipment worth 1.3 crore which included 80 new rifles & pistols for and 9 years of hard work by the GFG team has been adversely affected, washed away by the deluge," Mr Narang wrote.

— PTI

50 rescued from 2 Solapur villages

4 swept away by swollen stream in Pune after heavy rains in 2 Maha districts

Pune, Oct. 15: Nearly 50 people were evacuated from two flood-hit villages in Solapur, while four persons were swept away by a swollen stream in Pune after heavy rains in the two Maharashtra districts, officials said on Thursday.

In the last couple of days, heavy rains lashed several parts of the state, including Pune, Solapur and Kolhapur.

A few villages in Solapur's Mohol tehsil have been flooded and teams the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), district disaster management cell have been deployed to evacuate stranded people, an

official from the district administration said.

The NDRF also said it has deployed one team to evacuate people stranded in some remote areas of Mohol tehsil.

"Around 50 people who were stranded in remote areas of Ghatni and Kharkhatne villages in the tehsil have so far been evacuated with the help of the NDRF team," the district administration official said.

He said the NDRF teams of the district disaster management cell and local administration are also moving to other flood-affected villages to shift the people stuck there to safer places.

► **AROUND 50** people who were stranded in remote areas of Ghatni and Kharkhatne villages in the tehsil have so far been evacuated with the help of the NDRF team

The district received 79 mm rainfall on Wednesday, the official added.

The evacuation work is going on in several parts of the district since Wednesday night. Superintendent of Police Tejasvi Satpute said.

On Wednesday, six people were killed when a wall on the banks of the Chandrabhaga river in the Pandharpur temple

town of Solapur collapsed due to heavy rains. State Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday ordered a probe into it and instructed that an offence of culpable homicide be filed against those responsible for it.

In Pune, four people were swept away by a swollen stream in Khanota village on Wednesday while they were trying to cross the water body on two motor-cycles, an official from Daund police station said. "We recovered three bodies on Thursday morning and search is one for the fourth person," he said.

— PTI

Talks a work in progress, says Jaishankar on India-China row

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 15

India is engaged in "confidential" discussions with China to resolve the situation in the Ladakh sector, external affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar said on Thursday evening. He was speaking at the Bloomberg India Economic Forum 2020.

When queried about the outcome of the ongoing talks, Jaishankar said the "discussions are going on and it is a work in progress." At the same time, he said there has been a troop build-up along the LAC and in many ways it has no precedence in the recent past.

"What is going on is obviously something confidential between us and the Chinese. And we will wait to see how this plays out," Mr Jaishankar said, in response to a question.

Thousands of troops of both nations backed by Tanks and heavy artillery are deployed in the Ladakh sector and the two Asian giants are currently holding talks at the military and diplomatic levels to resolve the situation after China began heavy deployments of its troops in the area from April this year.



S. Jaishankar



West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee plays a conch as she virtually inaugurates different community puja pandals ahead of Durga Puja festival, at Nabanna in Kolkata on Thursday.

— PTI

Peace talks between Nagaland govt, civil society groups end

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, OCT. 15

The crucial consultative meet on Naga peace-talks with civil society groups and stakeholders on Thursday concluded with an appeal to facilitate the peace process and strengthen the ongoing negotiation for an early realisation of the desired "one solution" in a transparent manner.

The consultative meet hosted by the government of Nagaland at Kohima was attended by 39 organisations including 14 Naga Tribal Hohos, Naga Hoho and Naga Mothers' Association along with church organisations, NGOs, political parties and many mass-based

► **THE CONSULTATIVE** meet hosted by the government of Nagaland at Kohima was attended by 39 organisations including 14 Naga Tribal Hohos, Naga Hoho and Naga Mothers' Association along with church organisations, NGOs, political parties and many mass-based organisations.

However, BJP spokesperson Mhlonlumo Kikon told reporters that consultative meet passed the resolution unanimously, the president of Naga Hoho claimed that they walked out of the meeting as they were not allowed to speak. Some of the leading civil society

groups like Naga Gaon Burha (GB) Federation did not turn up to attend the meeting.

Pointing out that all the organisations invited for the meeting were allotted time to speak, Mr Kikon said that the consultation meet appreciated the Centre for acknowledging the unique history of Nagas and recognising the Naga issue as a political issue.

The consultative meet in its seven-point resolution appealed to the Naga political groups to honour and respect the "covenant of reconciliation and maintain the sanctity of non-violence in letter and spirit for shared Naga future as members of one Naga family".

INSIDE INDIA

Prisoner hangs self, suicide note found in stomach

Mumbai, Oct. 15: A 32-year-old murder convict allegedly hanged himself at Nashik Central Prison in Maharashtra, the police said on Thursday.

In his suicide note, Asghar Ali Mansoori, the convict, accused prison staff of harassment. The note was recovered from his abdomen during autopsy, said an police official.

Sentenced to life in a murder case, Mansoori was found hanging in his cell on October 7. The suicide note, wrapped in polythene, was recovered from his abdomen during autopsy, the official said.

He was nearing the completion of his term and was given the responsibility of warder to assist prison staff. As per the suicide note, he was being harassed by the prison staff and not allowed to work as a warder in the last few days.

— PTI

Girl conceived to donate bone marrow saves brother's life

Ahmedabad, Oct. 15: A one-year-old girl, conceived by her parents through IVF specifically for the purpose of donating her bone marrow to their thalassaemic son, has succeeded in saving her six-year-old brother's life.

Baby Kavya was born a year ago through In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) technique in Ahmedabad, under the concept known as 'saviour sibling'.

Her bone marrow was successfully transplanted to her brother Abhijeet Solanki in March this year and the boy is now "risk-free", doctors said on Thursday.

Abhijeet, the second child of Sahdev Singh Solanki and Alpa Solanki, was diagnosed with Thalassaemia-major, a blood disorder, and was dependent on blood transfusion every month, they said.

— PTI



Farmers block railway tracks during the ongoing Rail Roko protest over the farm reform bills at Devi Dass Pura village in Amritsar on Thursday.

— PTI

Woman rescued after being locked up in toilet for a yr

Chandigarh, Oct. 15: In a shocking incident, a man allegedly kept his wife locked up in the toilet of his home in a Panipat village for nearly a year, saying she faced mental health problems, police said on Thursday.

The 35-year-old woman, the mother of three grown-up children of 11, 15 and 16 years was found

living in an unhuman condition in the toilet for nearly a year, the police said after rescuing her on Tuesday.

The woman was rescued from her confinement from Rishipur village in Panipat by a team of district Women and child welfare department officials with the help of police on Tuesday after

they got a tip-off.

The woman had been locked up in the toilet. Upon questioning, her husband Naresh Kumar, who was arrested for the offence, claimed she was having mental health issues for nearly past three years, said Panipat's Sanoli police station in-charge Surrender Dahiya.

— PTI

Amidst TRP row, agency pauses ratings

Mumbai, Oct. 15: Following the fake Television Rating Points (TRP) scam, the Broadcast Audience Research Council (Barc) on Thursday announced a temporary suspension of weekly ratings of news channels across languages.

The council intends to review and augment the current standards of measurement to improve on "statistical robustness", and the exercise will result in a "pause" in the weekly ratings for up to 12 weeks, an official statement said.

At least five people have been arrested by the city police which busted the scam earlier this month.

Those arrested include news channel employees, while the police is also questioning executives of Arnab Goswami-led Republic Media Group with regard to the case. Republic Media Group has denied any wrongdoing.

The audience estimates given by Barc influence ad spends, and the total size of the ad placements was pegged at ₹32,000 crore annually by the police. The

► **AT LEAST** five people have been arrested by the city police which busted the scam earlier this month

police allege the ratings were being rigged by inducing the homes where the monitors were placed.

In the light of the recent developments, Barc Board has proposed that it's technical committee review and augment the current standards of measuring and reporting the data of niche genres, to improve their statistical robustness

— PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

16 OCTOBER 2020

Rainy spotlight on bad urban planning

The overnight heavy rains that pounded Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and parts of Karnataka and Maharashtra have claimed scores of lives and caused destruction of property worth crores of rupees on Wednesday and if the weatherman gets it right, the region will continue to face the threat in the coming days, too. Apart from the loss of lives, the rains left several busy residential areas and commercial streets in Hyderabad flooded and houses and shops inundated. Power supply was disrupted for hours together. Even the road to the airport was washed away in the rains, marooning the city for all practical purposes.

The way the rain fury threw life out of gear in the Telangana capital leaves some disquieting questions about our urban planning. It is unacceptable that one night's rain can bring the civic life of a growing city to halt. The threat is not specific to Hyderabad — Chennai and Mumbai had similar experiences in the recent past while the others are waiting for their turn. True, the impact of global warming and sudden changes in the weather patterns are tough to handle at the local level but the citizen's and official culpability should not go unnoticed. It's a shame that the cities which were built with proper drains decades or even centuries ago now drown in flood waters. Hyderabad had a proper way out for water in the form of River Musi but it has now become a waste dump and a victim of mindless encroachment despite several recovery plans. The smaller ones have been lost forever.

It is not that the planners cannot foresee this happening and ensure that life is not completely disrupted overnight. Adequate warning and advance planning can ameliorate the hardship of the people and reduce the loss of property. The disastrous cyclones that regularly visited the eastern coast, especially Odisha, and claimed thousands of lives no more repeat their dance of death now, thanks to the improved advance warning systems and an efficient governmental machinery that ensures that the cyclone passes its way as is its wont but no lives are lost. Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, was saved from the devastating floods in 2018 and 2019 after a project named Operation Anantha was implemented with focus on clearing the drains five years ago. It was made possible by the determination of a team of officials, led by the chief secretary, and helped by the stringent provisions of the National Disaster Management Act, 2005.

An action plan on a similar pattern which uses technology and concepts of advance planning must be introduced in our cities to save them from such calamities. The bodies responsible for disaster management at the national, state and district levels must be made operational full-time. Laws on urban planning must be implemented strictly, violators punished ruthlessly and bureaucrats responsible for the lapses made accountable. No society which swears by rule of law can allow the situation where law-breakers thrive at the cost of the lives and livelihoods of the rest. This is the least the government can do for the city dwellers.

Hate squad's scary agenda

So frightening has the monster of social media grown that it is causing serious concern in responsible quarters about the cohesiveness of our Armed Forces. This was recently conveyed in an open letter to President Ram Nath Kovind by more than one hundred veterans from the Army, Navy and the Air Force. The retired personnel, including former Chiefs, have urged that action be taken against fake social media posts that spread divisiveness within the forces on the religious basis.

Social media posts have spread the canard that a "Muslim Regiment" of the Army had to be "dismantled" when it refused to take up arms in the 1965 war against Pakistan. The truth is that such a regiment never existed. But social media posts seek to exploit the ignorance of the people, and their gullibility, when they circulate false, malicious, communal propaganda.

Since such posts are not sent out by stray, well-meaning but ignorant individuals, but typically by tens of thousands of organised foot soldiers of hate squads that occupy the Internet highway, it is time the government stepped in with alacrity to punish those who attempt to sow discord and mistrust within the Armed Forces.

At a time when our forces are busy dealing with the twin menace emanating from Pakistan and China, these cyber armies with their disturbing agenda may, sometimes even unwittingly, have become instruments of psy-ops (psychological operations) of forces hostile to India.

In India's Armed Forces, soldiers of all faiths have distinguished themselves, and they are not grouped on a religious basis but fight in multi-class formations in the singular cause of defending this country. The example of Havildar Abdul Hamid, who was posthumously awarded the Param Vir Chakra for his gallantry against the Pakistan Army in the 1965 war, is of course legendary. But there are so many others. The antecedents of those posting about the so-called "Muslim Regiment" must be examined and suitable punishment awarded quickly.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani

Flashback



The 'beauty of oneness': Has today's India lost it?



Karan Thapar

As I See It

I admit memories can be deceptive and as you grow older they could even become misleading, but the India I recall from my teens seems a very different country to the one I live in today. Of course, we were a poorer country, few people travelled abroad whilst most hankered for foreign goods. Simple telephones were a luxury, trunk calls a nightmare, journeys by plane a treat and there was only black and white television. On the other hand, Coca Cola cost 25 paise and five rupees was considered generous pocket money for a 13-year-old. But these are not the differences I have in mind.

There was something else about the old India that we took for granted in the 1960s which we are in danger of losing today. Long before Sunil Khilnani coined the evocative phrase "the idea of India", we lived it every day at Doon School. We had no idea of our caste or what it implied. Religion, which is tearing us apart, seemed irrelevant. Rich or poor, intelligent or dim, fat or thin, fair or dark, short or tall, these attributes did not create divisions between us. They did not matter. We were one. Strange as it may sound, we were so similar it felt as if we were the same.

It's this sentiment the now withdrawn Tanishq advertisement sought to celebrate. Created to promote its Ekavatam brand of jewellery — and remember that word means oneness — this is what the company itself says of the advertisement: "The idea behind the Ekavatam campaign is to celebrate the com-

ing together of people from different walks of life, local communities and families during these challenging times and celebrate the beauty of oneness." So it wasn't simply selling golden baubles. It was promoting, actually revelling in, "the beauty of oneness". That's an elevated and captivating phrase for what politicians prosaically call "unity in diversity".

This is the silken thread that binds together the many different people of India. We speak in a multitude, even a babel, of languages, prefer contrasting cuisines, dress differently, look dissimilar and pray to a perplexing pantheon of gods. Yet each of us calls himself Indian and is proud of it. This is because "the beauty of oneness" is an instinctive part of us. You could even say it's our raison d'être.

Yet this was the target the trolls were after when they attacked Tanishq's Ekavatam campaign. The advertisement they excoriated celebrated the love of a Muslim mother-in-law for her Hindu daughter-in-law. It's a love that transcends the foolish but often impregnable walls that rigid faith can erect between people. A love that gives meaning and fulfilment to the relationships that really matter in our lives.

The trolls, however, called it "love jihad". Not only is this oxymoronic but it mocks and challenges the belief our different religions do not divide the Indian people. The fact some pray westwards facing Mecca whilst others do so blowing conch shells in temples does not preclude affection for each

other. Some may wear a cross, others a tilak or topi, but these differing symbols of faith do not separate us or, even, define us. There is a lot more that we share in common. This is the idea of India and the trolls were trying to tear it apart.

Tanishq has allowed them to succeed. But I don't blame the company alone. That would be too narrow. The Tata Group cannot escape responsibility. Let me explain why. How could they not have been aware of the deeper, stronger, richer message that the advertisement sought to convey? Indeed, how could they not have intended it? The advertisement was not created in a fit of forgetfulness nor was it accepted without considering the consequences that could follow. After all, it was so obviously doing more than just selling jewellery. It was a haunting picture of something the Tatas know we are in danger of losing — "the beauty of oneness". It was a call to awaken India. A reminder of what makes us one country.

So when the Tatas withdrew this advertisement, they also turned their back on this message. I am pretty certain they know this and I believe they must be embarrassed by it. Consider carefully their explanation for what they have done. It's not just weak and unconvincing, it's actually contradictory. "We are

The Tata Group cannot escape responsibility. Let me explain why. How could they not have been aware of the deeper, stronger, richer message that the advertisement sought to convey? Indeed, how could they not have intended it?

deeply saddened with the inadvertent stirring of emotions", it begins. So what do they do? Stand up and fight back, as their convictions would expect of them? No. They decided to "withdraw this film keeping in mind the hurt sentiments and well-being of our employees, partners and store staff". But whose sentiments did that advertisement hurt? Only that of the trolls. And if there is any threat to the well-being of their employees, partners and store staff — and, sadly, that could be so — it's enhanced security that they need, not a cowardly retreat.

The Tata Group has let down India. There's no denying that fact. However, corporations don't think in these grandiloquent terms except when their chairmen are making speeches to attract public attention. What's more surprising is that the Tatas have also let themselves down. This is a company that's always been credited with a vision that encompasses more than growth and profit. It's created an image of the Tata Group that we have all bought into. Now that picture has developed cracks.

I don't know Ratan Tata well. However, on the few occasions we have met I sensed there was more to him than just an outstandingly successful businessman. My hunch is that he knows this too. I would say he values this extra quality. He's probably silently proud of it. But, today, when he looks at himself in the mirror, will he be happy with the image that is reflected back? I know he will see the difference. But will it upset him? Or will he comfort himself with the excuse that this is a change which is necessary to succeed in Narendra Modi's India?

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

MANIFESTLY ABSENT

In a secret ballot in the 193-member UN General Assembly, Pakistan, China, Russia and Cuba won seats in the UN Human Rights Council in spite of strong opposition from some activist groups. They had called on UN member states to oppose the election of China, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Cuba and Uzbekistan due to their abysmal human rights record. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has slammed the UNGA for electing China, Russia and Cuba, all communist bloc countries, but didn't mention the name of Pakistan which is close friend.

M.C. Joshi
Lucknow

REMOVE KOSHYARI

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Koshiyari's conduct is beyond the pale" (Oct. 15). Indeed, secularism is a basic feature of the Constitution. Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari's taunting of the CM on having 'turned secular' was not only disparaging but also violative of the oath of office he took as Governor. It ill-behoves the nation that someone holding such a high office expresses such views. Proceedings should be initiated to remove him.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

MOVIE NIGHTS BACK

THE KARNATAKA government's decision to reopen theatres and multiplexes must cheer moviegoers. The government has permitted all cinema halls located outside containment zones to restore operations but not exceeding 50 per cent seating capacity. It has also directed movie halls to ensure sanitisers at entrance and exit while ensuring social distancing in the waiting area, parking, toilets and elevators. Cinema halls have been closed for an unprecedented seven months.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

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

Skand Tayal



India weighs options as it faces Chinese intransigence

The seventh round of the corps commander-level talks between India and China on Monday has not led to any notable advance on the Indian demand of a comprehensive disengagement by China from all the areas of the ongoing standoff in Ladakh. The prospects are receding for any significant reduction in force mobilisation before the onset of winter.

This round was held in the background of the foreign ministers' meeting of India, the United States, Japan and Australia in Tokyo on October 6 under the "Quadrilateral" security dialogue format. In these days of most high-level meetings being virtual, the Quad ministers met in person, in a sign of both the agenda's urgency and the imperative of confidential confabulations secure from any cyber snooping. US secretary of state Mike Pompeo travelled to Tokyo despite President Donald Trump being stricken by the Wuhan virus.

Mr Pompeo did not mince words and named Chinese Communist Party for its "exploitation, corruption and coercion". He elaborated: "We have seen this in the South, in the East China Sea, the Mekong, the

Himalayas, the Taiwan Straits."

In contrast, India's external affairs minister S. Jaishankar refrained from pointing any finger at China, let alone the CCP, despite the ongoing aggressive actions by the People's Liberation Army in Ladakh.

On the same day, the German delegation at the UN General Assembly delivered a joint statement on behalf of 39 countries conveying their "grave concern on the human rights situation in Xinjiang and the recent developments in Hong Kong". The statement called on China to "respect human rights, particularly the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities, especially in Xinjiang and Tibet".

The statement was signed inter alia by India's three Quad partners — the US, Japan and Australia — and also by several other important strategic partners like Canada, France, Britain and Germany. But India was conspicuous by its absence from the list of signatories.

In an angry response, the Chinese ambassador to the UN termed the well-founded accusations as "groundless" and said that China "opposes interference in internal affairs". This is ironic as China has repeatedly

backed Pakistan in its futile efforts to raise the Kashmir issue at the UN Security Council, which is clearly an internal matter of India.

India has also refrained from making any official statements on possible upgrading of its ties with Taiwan or on the unilateral actions by China in Hong Kong in violation of its treaty obligations with Britain.

This cautious approach by South Block is in contrast with strong public opinion across this country, expressed vociferously in the mass media, that India openly favour Taiwan's independence and Tibet's autonomy. On October 7, many Indian newspapers carried full-page advertorials by the Republic of China (Taiwan) celebrating its October 10 national day. The Chinese embassy was hurt by this pinprick and in an open letter reminded its "media friends" that "there is only one China in the world".

South Block is carefully calibrating its response to China's aggression in Ladakh by going full throttle on military preparations, mobilising our strategic partners and sensitising public opinion for a lengthy standoff, but simultaneously keeping the dia-

logue with China civil and keeping all channels of communication open. South Block is taking care not to take formal positions in multilateral fora from which it may be difficult to walk back if the border standoff is resolved.

The forthcoming American presidential election is of critical importance for a global response to an aggressive and unilateralist China and its "wolf warriors". While President Donald Trump has openly identified China as the US's main future adversary on all fronts — technological, economic and strategic — and has the toughness and resolve to strongly push back, it will take time for a future Joe Biden administration's China policy to evolve. Recent Democratic Presidents like Bill Clinton and Barack Obama made tough statements on China, but practised a non-confrontational policy, allowing China to expand its occupation of the South China Sea and emasculate the manufacturing sector in the US and elsewhere, including India.

In television appearances after returning from the Tokyo Quad meeting, Mr Pompeo criticised China's aggressive behaviour and

noted that "Indians are seeing 60,000 Chinese soldiers on their border". The Trump administration is sending a strong signal to China that it stands by India by scheduling the next 2+2 dialogue of the foreign and defence ministers of the two nations on October 26-27, 2020, a week before the November 3 election.

The two principal options for India are either to declare open adversarial relations with the world's second biggest economic and military power or, in Mr Jaishankar's words, to seek a "new equilibrium with China". The Narendra Modi government is now following the second option of not engaging in verbal duels with China in full view of the world, defend its interests robustly at the borders and negotiate with China both at the military and diplomatic levels. The basic premise is that both China and India would prefer to avoid an all-out confrontation. This is the basis on which the new equilibrium is being sought in India-China ties, while keeping all options on the table.

The writer is a retired diplomat and has served as India's ambassador to South Korea

IN BRIEF

Kyrgyzstan Prez steps down

Moscow: Kyrgyzstan President Sooronbai Jeenbekov announced his resignation Thursday in a bid to end the turmoil that has engulfed the Central Asian nation after a disputed parliamentary election. Jeenbekov, who has faced calls to step down from protesters and political opponents, said in a statement released by his office that holding onto power wasn't "worth the integrity of our country and harmony in society". "For me, peace in Kyrgyzstan, the country's integrity, the unity of our people and the calm in the society are above all else," Jeenbekov said. Kyrgyzstan, a country of 6.5 million people located on the border with China, was plunged into chaos following an Oct. 4 vote that election officials say was swept by pro-government parties.

Raid on HK media tycoon's house

Hong Kong: Hong Kong police raided the private offices of media tycoon and pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai on Thursday, according to his aide Mark Simon who wrote in a post on Twitter that 14 police officers visited Lai's office and confiscated documents. Lai, 71, is an outspoken pro-democracy figure who regularly criticizes China's authoritarian rule and Hong Kong's government. He is also the founder of media company Next Digital, which operates pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily*. "I spoke with police they said they would remain until our lawyer arrived," Simon wrote. "They did not, they took documents and departed before our lawyer arrived." Police confirmed that they had conducted a search operation inside an office in Kwun Tong district on Thursday.

Plea for equality law in Japan

Tokyo: Sexual minority groups and human rights activists launched a petition on Thursday calling for an LGBT equality law in Japan in hopes that it can be enacted next year, when the country is to host the Olympics and will be the focus of international attention. "In this country, equal rights for LGBT people are not guaranteed by law or in their social lives," said Yuri Igarashi, co-representative of the Japan Alliance for LGBT Legislation, one of several organisers of the petition. "We call for the passage of an LGBT equality law in time for the Tokyo games, and as an Olympic legacy." Japan has slowly shown an increased awareness of sexual diversity but it is often superficial. Pressure to conform still forces many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to hide their sexual identities, even from their families.

SPACE PROBE MAKES 1ST VENUS FLY-BY

Berlin, Oct. 15: A spacecraft bound for Mercury swung by Venus on Thursday, using Earth's neighbourhood to adjust its course on the way to the solar system's smallest and innermost planet.

Launched almost two years ago, the European-Japanese probe BepiColombo took a black-and-white snapshot of Venus from a distance of 17,000 kilometres (10,560 miles), with some of its own instruments in the frame. The fly-by is the second of nine so-called planetary gravity assists that the spacecraft needs for its seven-year trip to Mercury.

The first, around Earth, took place in April. The European Space Agency has described the 1.3 billion-euro (\$1.5 billion) mission as one of its most challenging yet. Mercury's extreme temperatures, the intense gravity pull of the sun and blistering solar radiation make for hellish conditions.

BepiColombo will make one more fly-by of Venus and six of Mercury itself to slow down before its arrival in 2025. Once there, the spacecraft will split in two, releasing a European orbiter nicknamed Bepi that will swoop into Mercury's inner orbit while Mio, built by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, gathers data from a greater distance.

Both probes are designed to cope with temperatures varying from 430 degrees Celsius (806 degrees Fahrenheit) on the side facing the sun, and -180 degrees Celsius (-292 F) in Mercury's shadow.

Europe reels as it sets records

France slaps 9 p.m. curfew on many of its cities, Londoners face travel restrictions

Berlin, Oct. 15: Fears rose Thursday that Europe is running out of chances to control its fall Coronavirus outbreak, as infections hit record daily highs in Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy and Poland. France slapped a 9 p.m. curfew on many of its biggest cities and Londoners faced new travel restrictions as governments imposed increasingly tough measures.

New infections have surged across Europe over recent weeks as the fall kicks in, prompting authorities to start re-imposing restrictions relaxed over the summer. The Czech Republic, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, France and Britain are among the countries causing particular concern. The head of the World Health Organisation's Europe office urged governments to be "uncompromising" in controlling the virus. "These measures are meant to keep us all ahead of the curve and to flatten its course," Dr. Hans Kluge said, while wearing a mask.

"It is therefore up to us to accept them while they are still relatively easy to follow instead of following the path of severity," Kluge cited epidemiological models that suggested if 95% of people wear masks and follow other social distancing measures, Europe could avoid about 281,000 deaths by February. But he warned that relaxing measures could lead to a five-fold increase in deaths by January. European nations as a whole have seen nearly 230,000 confirmed deaths from the virus — more than the nearly 217,000 reported virus deaths so far in the United States. — AP

EU CHIEF LEAVES SUMMIT TO GO INTO QUARANTINE AFTER STAFFER IS +VE

Brussels, Oct. 15: European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen was forced to leave an EU summit Thursday shortly after it opened because one of her close staffers tested positive for Covid-19.

She said that she herself tested negative but "as a precaution I am immediately leaving the Europe-

an Council to go into self-isolation." Von der Leyen had already been mingling with other EU leaders ahead of the formal opening of the two-day summit. Organisers had taken special precaution to keep leaders apart and make sure they respect all health regulations. — AP

SINGAPORE AND HONG KONG AGREE ON BILATERAL AIR TRAVEL BUBBLE

Singapore, Oct. 15: Singapore and Hong Kong have agreed on a bilateral air travel bubble, which will exempt travellers from the mandatory quarantine upon arrival, as the rate of Coronavirus infection declines in both regional aviation hubs.

To avail the flights, travellers will have to test negative in the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test for Covid-19, Singapore's Ministry of Transport

(MOT) on Thursday. Travellers under the bubble will not be subject to mandatory quarantining, the release said, adding that there will be no restrictions on travel purposes and no need for a controlled itinerary. The MOT said the bubble can be "scaled by adjusting the number of dedicated flights upwards or downwards, or even suspended, in line with the latest developments". — PTI

CHINA FIRES TWO HEALTH OFFICIALS

Beijing, Oct. 15: A hospital president and the director of the health commission in the northern Chinese city of Qingdao have been fired after China's latest Coronavirus outbreak, authorities said Thursday.

A brief notice on the official microblog said Health Commission Director Sui Zhenhua and Deng Kai, president of Qingdao's thoracic hospital, were placed under further probe. — AP

DON SON BARRON TESTED POSITIVE

Washington, Oct. 15: Barron Trump, the teenage son of US President Donald Trump, contracted Coronavirus after his parents tested positive for Covid-19 but has since tested negative, First Lady Melania Trump has said. In a blog posted on the White House website, she said that Barron, 14, exhibited no symptoms, a departure from herself and the president, who have both said they experienced mild symptoms. — PTI

Navalny poisoning: Curbs on Russians

Brussels, Oct. 15: The European Union on Thursday imposed sanctions on six Russian officials and one organisation over the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny with a Soviet-era nerve agent.

The move came a day after Russia's foreign minister warned that Moscow might respond with similar measures. The decision was agreed upon among the 27 EU envoys to Brussels. "The adopted restrictive measures consist of a travel ban to the EU and an asset freeze for individuals, and an asset freeze for the entity," the EU said in a statement.

The list includes two high level officials in the Presidential Executive Office, a director of the federal security service and two deputy ministers in the Russian defence ministry. The EU is also targeting the State Scientific Research Institute for Organic Chemistry and Technology.

EU foreign ministers agreed Monday to impose the sanctions, following a push by France and Germany to freeze the assets of those suspected of involvement and ban them from travelling in Europe under sanctions to combat the use and



Alexei Navalny

spread of chemical weapons. Navalny, an anti-corruption investigator and major political opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin, fell ill on Aug. 20 during a domestic flight in Russia. He was flown to Germany for treatment two days later and is still recovering there.

Last week, tests conducted at labs designated by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons confirmed that Navalny was poisoned by a Novichok nerve agent. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview on Wednesday that "the Germans are not planning to provide any facts, despite all international and legal obligations. We respond in kind. This is diplomatic practice." — AP

450 Pak Oppn workers booked on rally eve

Lahore, Oct. 15: Over 450 workers from Pakistan's Opposition parties have been booked in Lahore and other areas of Punjab province ahead of the first grand anti-government rally on Friday by an alliance formed to oust Prime Minister Imran Khan.

On September 20, the leaders of 11 major Opposition parties announced formation of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and launch of a three-phased anti-government movement under an "action plan" starting with countrywide public meetings, protest demon-

strations and rallies before a "decisive long march" towards Islamabad in January 2021. The first anti-government rally is scheduled on Friday in Gujranwala city, some 80 kms from Lahore, followed by another rally on October 18 in Karachi, in Quetta on October 25, Peshawar on November 22, Multan on November 30 and then a rally in Lahore on December 13.

The Opposition leaders announced that they would use all political and democratic options, including no-confidence motions and mass resignations

from Parliament to seek "the selected" prime minister's resignation. The Opposition parties have accused the powerful army of rigging the 2018 elections that brought Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party to power. The Opposition parties are openly opposing the military's interference in politics and elections for the first time in the recent history of the country.

The PDM comprises mainly three mainstream Opposition parties — PML-N of Nawaz Sharif, PPP of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Jamiat Ule-

Thailand declares emergency after unprecedented protest

Bangkok, Oct. 15: Thailand's government declared a strict new state of emergency for the capital on Thursday, a day after a student-led protest against the country's traditional establishment saw an extraordinary moment in which demonstrators heckled a royal motorcade.

After the pre-dawn declaration, riot police moved in to clear out demonstrators who after a day of rallies and confrontation had gathered outside Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha's office to push their demands, which include the former general's stepping down, constitutional changes and reform of the monarchy.

Several top leaders of the protest movement were taken into custody, with one later declaring on his Facebook page that he had been denied access to a lawyer and was being forced onto a helicopter and taken to a city in the country's north.

Police made 22 arrests. Despite a new ban against large public gatherings, several thousand people answered calls to rally in another area of the city later Thursday. The text of the emergency declara-



A pro-democracy protester reacts as police try to detain him during a rally in Bangkok on Thursday.

— AFP

tion said it was needed because "certain groups of perpetrators intended to instigate an untoward incident and movement in the Bangkok area by way of various methods and via different channels, including causing obstruction to the royal motorcade." The protest in

Bangkok's historic district was the third major gathering by student-led activists who have been pushing the boundaries of what is considered acceptable — and legal — language by publicly questioning the role of Thailand's monarchy.

The royal family has

long been considered sacrosanct and a pillar of Thai identity. King Maha Vajiralongkorn and family members are protected by a lese majeste law that has been used to silence critics who risk up to 15 years in prison if deemed to have insulted the institution. — AP

Citizenship: Joe woos immigrants

Washington, Oct. 15: Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has vowed to provide citizenship to 11 million illegal immigrants if voted to power in the November 3 presidential election.

Biden identified this as one of his priorities in addition to beating the Coronavirus pandemic, rebuilding the economy and figuring out how to restore American leadership around the world. Responding to a question at a virtual fundraiser on Wednesday, Biden said there is a need to deal

with what's going on at the border.

"We're going to have to deal with the immigration crisis we have. I'm going to send the House and Senate an immigration bill that's going to provide access to citizenship to 11 million people," he said. President Donald Trump has been repeatedly calling for the quick deportation of illegal immigrants who "invade" the US and lamented that the current immigration system is "unfair" to those who came legally to America. — PTI

DUELLING TOWN HALLS FOR TRUMP, BIDEN AFTER DEBATE PLAN NIXED

Washington, Oct. 15: President Donald Trump and challenger Joe Biden will compete for TV audiences in duelling town halls instead of meeting face-to-face for their second debate as originally planned. They will take questions in different cities on different networks Thursday night: Trump on NBC from Miami, Biden on ABC from Philadelphia. Trump backed out of

plans for the presidential faceoff after debate organisers shifted the format to a virtual event following his Covid-19 diagnosis.

As the pace of the campaign speeds up, the two candidates first are taking care of other electoral necessities Thursday: Trump has a midday rally in battleground North Carolina, and Biden is raising campaign cash at a virtual event. — AP

China slams US over Tibet

Beijing, Oct. 15: China on Thursday slammed the US for appointing a Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues, describing Washington's move as political manipulation aimed at destabilising Tibet.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday named Robert Destro, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, as the Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues.

Destro will focus on advancing dialogue between the Communist-run government in Beijing and the Dalai Lama, protecting the distinct religious cultural and linguistic identity of Tibetans, improving respect for their human rights and

much, much more, Pompeo said. Reacting to Destro's appointment, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said that the US move amounted to interference in China's internal affairs.

He said, "the setting up of the so-called special coordinator for Tibetan issues is entirely out of political manipulation to interfere in China's internal affairs and destabilise Xizang", the Chinese name for Tibet. Chinese officials in recent times have been referring to Tibet only as Xizang. "China firmly opposes that and never recognise that. People of ethnic groups in Xizang are part of the big family of Chinese nation," Zhao said. — PTI

BEIJING TRACKS U.S. NAVY SHIP'S PASSAGE THROUGH TAIWAN STRAIT

Beijing, Oct. 15: China says it tracked a US Navy warship as it passed through the Taiwan Strait and has its forces in the area on high alert, as tensions between the world's two largest economies and rivals for regional influence continue to simmer. The spokesperson for its Eastern Theater Command, Maj. Zhang Chunxuan, said air and sea forces were mobilized to keep tabs Wednesday on the USS Barry, an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer.

Zhang said the US has recently been sending

"the wrong signal" to proponents of independence for Taiwan, a pro-US self-governing democracy that China claims as its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary.

Although the Taiwan Strait is a public waterway, China is extremely sensitive to all US military moves in its periphery amid heightened tensions over Taiwan, the South China Sea, trade disputes and other issues. The US has been "seriously undermining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait region". — AP

Provocations: France warns Turkey

Ankara, Oct. 15: France warned Turkey on Thursday that it could face European Union sanctions for its "provocations," after Ankara redeployed its search vessel on a new energy exploration mission in the eastern Mediterranean.

Speaking in Paris after a meeting of the French-German-Polish 'Weimar Triangle', French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian reiterated the EU stance that unless Tu-

rkey shows "respect for the integrity of Greece and Cyprus" then the European Council will consider initiating sanctions.

"We are forced to note that there are permanent acts of provocation on the part of Turkey which are not bearable, and therefore we really wish that Turkey clarifies its positions and returns to a spirit of dialogue," he said.

Turkey redeployed its search vessel, Oruc Reis,

near the Greek island of Kastellorizo, reigniting tensions between Greece and Turkey over sea boundaries and energy drilling rights, and putting the future of the planned resumption of talks between Athens and Ankara to resolve disputes into doubt. Those talks were last held in 2016.

Those tensions had flared up over the summer, triggering fears of a confrontation between the two

historic rivals and NATO allies. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said he understood Greece's unwillingness to engage in dialogue due to Turkey's decision to again dispatch its ship. Given Berlin's efforts to mediate between the parties "the behaviour by Turkey to conduct another provocation, resulting in the agreed process of dialogue not taking place, is annoying," Maas said. — AP

OLI RESHUFFLES CABINET, KEEPS DEF MINISTRY

Kathmandu, Oct. 15: Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli has reshuffled his Cabinet, keeping the key defence portfolio with himself, in a bid to strengthen his grip within the fractious ruling party and to allow smooth functioning of his government. Oli has inducted three new ministers, including Finance Minister Bishnu Poudel, and changed the portfolio of Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Ishwor Pokharel.

However, the dissident faction of the ruling Communist Party of Nepal led by executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' was not satisfied with Oli's latest move, which they considered as one-sided, a source close to the ruling party said.

Oli and Prachanda, bitter political rivals, have been trying to shore up their base within the party in recent months. The finance ministry had remained vacant for some time and the nomination of Poudel, who is also the general secretary of the ruling party, to the department was a normal phenomena, the party source said.

However, Oli's move to relieve Pokharel from the defence ministry and retain the portfolio with himself has sparked speculation in the Nepalese political spectrum and the media.

"Pokharel, who is known for his tilt towards the North, has been transferred to the Prime Minister's Office, apparently in a signal to New Delhi ahead of the forthcoming visit to Nepal by the Indian Army chief," senior journalist and editor of *Janamanch Weekly* Pralhad Rijal said. Indian Army chief Gen. M.M. Naravane is scheduled to visit Nepal in the first week of November and the details of the visit is being worked out, a Nepal Army spokesperson said in a statement. — PTI

11 parties formed the Pakistan Democratic Movement and launch of a three-phased anti-govt movement

06 rallies: In Gujranwala (Oct. 16), Karachi (Oct. 18), Quetta (Oct. 25), Peshawar (Nov. 22), Multan (Nov. 30) & Lahore (Dec. 13).

— PTI

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,728.41	-2.61
Nifty 50	11,680.35	-2.43
S&P 500*	3,461.45	-0.78
Dollar (₹)	73.37	-0.08
Pound Sterling (₹)	95.22	-0.70
Euro (₹)	85.96	0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,503.32	0.06
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	42.52	-0.80
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.898	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.711	-0.011

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Govt bans import of ACs with refrigerants

The government banned imports of air conditioners with refrigerants with a view to promote domestic manufacturing and cut imports of non-essential items. "Import policy of air conditioners with refrigerants ...is amended from free to prohibited," the directorate general of foreign trade said in a notification. The government is taking steps to promote domestic manufacturing and cut import bill of non-essential goods.

Lakshmi Vilas gets board nod for rights issue



Cash-strapped Lakshmi Vilas Bank said its board has approved plans to raise up to Rs 500 crore through a rights issue. Last week, the private sector lender had informed exchanges about receiving a non-binding offer from Aion-backed NBFC Clix Group for a merger. The old-generation Chennai-based private bank, faced a blow in late September when its shareholders voted out seven directors.

Paytm Mall's festive season sale from today

Homegrown e-commerce platform Paytm Mall said it will start its eight-day long 'Maha Shopping Festival' sale from October 16 with participation of over 5,500 brands. The firm's online sale coincides with Flipkart's 'Big Billion Days' sales and Amazon's 'Great Indian Festival' sale, but would run for a longer period. The firm said products from MSMEs, Made in India brands, emporiums will also be part of the sale.

Kia Seltos anniversary edition launched

Kia Motors India said it has launched a special edition of its SUV Seltos, priced between Rs 13.75 lakh and Rs 14.85 lakh, to mark the model's first year in the country. The Seltos anniversary edition is based on HTX trim and comes with petrol and diesel engine options. The 1.5-litre petrol trim with manual transmission is priced at Rs 13.75 lakh, while petrol automatic is tagged at Rs 14.75 lakh.

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Rally comes to an abrupt halt

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, OCT. 15

A second wave of Covid infection in Europe, leading to severe restrictions, and fading US stimulus hopes led to a sell-off in global markets, triggering profit-taking in IT and financial stocks in the Indian market after a run-away 10-day rise.

The Sensex fell 1066 points to close below the 40000 level at 39728.41, down by 2.61 per cent. The Nifty-50 closed at 11680.35 down 290.70 points, or 2.43 per cent.

The market erased the last six days' gains in a single session and investors lost more than Rs 3.25 lakh crore of their wealth in a day. Market volatility could rise in the near term—the volatility index, NSE's India VIX, rose 9.14 per cent on Thursday.

Both foreign portfolio investors and domestic institutional investors were net sellers of equities worth Rs 604.07 crore and Rs 808.29 crore, respectively.

Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities, said, "Bank Nifty led the fall, erasing 3.36 per cent to close at 23,072. Weakness in the European markets led to a fresh bout of selling in our markets post 1300 hours. European stocks slumped, with investors concerned about the impact of a second wave of coronavirus on the economy without any imminent stimulus to



cushion the blow."

The top losers among the financials included ICICI Bank (-4.07 per cent), HDFC Bank (-3.54 per cent) and SBI (-3.62 per cent).

The Nifty IT Index fell 2.87 per cent despite Infosys announcing over 26 per cent rise in July-September quarter profit and raised annual revenue forecast. Infosys shares closed 2.09 per cent down at Rs 1,113.25 on the NSE.

Other major losers included Reliance Industries (-3.68 per cent), TCS (-2.69 per cent) and Bajaj Finance (-4.98 per cent).

Prasanna Pathak, head-equity & fund manager, Taurus Mutual Fund, said, "The market reacted to probability of US stimulus getting pushed after presidential elections, concerns about Trump's prospects in the elections and second round of lockdown starting in key European countries."

Stalled vaccine trials and Brexit clouds also played a part in the sentiments

weakening. In India we additionally had reports of a MFII defaulting on debt servicing due to internal fraud and a financial service firm facing forensic audit directed by the regulator.

The Nifty, after so many attempts, has failed to go above the January high of 12431. A large bear candle at the top could result in more weakness if Nifty does not stop falling in the next one-two days. On falls the Nifty could take support in the 11522-11605 band.

Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking, said, "the benchmark indices opened flat and gradually inched lower in the first half however decline in IT, banking and energy majors intensified the fall as the session progressed...This fall has engulfed the gains of the last six sessions and derailed the momentum as well. We believe 11600 would be the next critical support in Nifty.

Real estate, infra funding down 82% this year

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, OCT. 15

An 82 per cent fall in investments in real estate and infrastructure has pulled down the total PE and VC investments in the first nine months of 2020, despite the \$11.7 billion funding received by Reliance and Jio platforms.

At \$2.9 billion, investments in real estate and infrastructure in January to September 2020 was down 82 per cent against \$16.1 billion during the same period last year. "At \$16.1 billion real estate and infrastructure had accounted for 44 per cent of all PE/VC investments in Jan-Sept. 2019. In 2020, these sectors have received only \$2.9 billion in investments till date, accounting for just 10 per cent of total PE/VC investments

PE/VC investments during the Jan-Sept period declined by 21 per cent to \$28.9 billion compared to \$36.4 billion in the same period last year. "If we exclude one-off PE investments in the Reliance Group entities, PE/VC investments in 2020 would be significantly lower at \$17.2 billion, a 53 per cent decline, said a IVCA-EY report.

Real estate investments were down to \$2.3 billion in the nine-month period against \$5.3 billion in the year ago period, according to Knight Frank India.

MFIs could return to pre-Covid levels soon

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, OCT. 15

With collections improving to around 80 per cent of year-ago levels, the microfinance industry is expecting the business to return to pre-Covid levels in two to three months.

"Collection efficiencies have improved to 80-85 per cent levels by September. Some states like Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan have seen up to 90 per cent collections and some like Odisha and West Bengal are lagging behind with 75-80 per cent. Overall, by this month-end we would reach 90 per cent levels and probably in a month or two to 99 per cent levels," said Manoj Nambiar, chairperson of MFIN.

P.N. Vasudevan, MD and CEO of Equitas Small Finance Bank, too finds that collections have been steadily improving and have reached 80-85 per cent levels.

At a webinar by CRIF High Mark, Vasudevan said the industry will get back to pre-Covid levels in two to three months.

"Once the collections return to earlier levels, there will be demand for fresh loans. This is just around the corner and in two to three months, the industry will be back to pre-Covid levels," he said.

While collections have been improving month-on-month, disbursements are still at 50 per cent of pre-pandemic levels.

"The demand is there. People are in need for



EQUITAS SFB'S IPO FROM OCT. 20

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, OCT. 15

Chennai-based Equitas Small Finance Bank, a subsidiary of Equitas Holdings, aims to raise Rs 517 crore through an initial public offering in the price band of Rs 32-33 per share of Rs 10 face value. The public issue opens on October 20.

The IPO initial public offering consists of a fresh issue aggregating up to Rs 280 crore and an offer for sale of up to 7.2 crore equity shares by Equitas Holdings, which is already listed on the stock exchanges.

The offer includes a reservation aggregating up to Rs. 51 crore for subscription by eligible Equitas Holdings shareholders. The public offer closes on October 22.

additional credit. But before we start providing them additional credit, we have to be sure about the resumption of their economic activity. Else, the loans will end up in delinquencies," said Nambiar.

According to him, NBFC-MFIs are extra cautious while lending. The credit checks have become more stringent and lenders are ensuring that the borrower has paying capacity.

"While the economic activity has not returned to normalcy, the level of

stress is different in different states. Some states like Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have seen higher economic activity compared to some others. Migrant labourers are also returning with the resumption of activity," he said.

With the beginning of the festive season, the demand for credit also will be more. Once the collections improve and lenders regain the confidence, in a month or two, industry will return to normalcy, he added.

CYIENT Q2 NET PROFIT DOWN 15% TO ₹84 CR

New Delhi, Oct. 15: IT firm Cyient on Thursday reported a 14.8 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit at Rs 83.9 crore for September 2020 quarter.

The Hyderabad-based company had posted a net profit of Rs 98.5 crore in the year-ago period, it said in a regulatory filing.

Its revenue decreased 13.4 per cent to Rs 1,003.3 crore for the period under review as against Rs 1,158.9 crore in same period year ago.

On a sequential basis, the net profit was higher by 3 per cent from Rs 81.4 crore, while revenue increased 1.2 per cent from Rs 991.7 crore in the June 2020 quarter.

"PAT increased by 3 per cent quarter-on-quarter mainly from higher operating income driven by higher volume and efficiency," the company said.

Krishna Bodanapu, managing director and chief executive officer of Cyient said the second quarter results are in line with its expectations.

"This quarter we focused on setting up the business back on a growth path. We continued our rigour on efficiency improvement and building pipeline for the business," he added. —PTI

APOLLO READY FOR 1M VACCINES A DAY

FC BUREAU CHENNAI, OCT. 15

Apollo Hospitals is prepared to administer one million Covid-19 vaccines daily. It has trained 10,000 professionals in safe vaccination protocols.

The Apollo Group will leverage its robust pan-India web of 19 medicine supply hubs with cold chain facilities and use its 70 hospitals, over 400 clinics, 500 corporate health centres, 4000 pharmacies alongside their omni-channel digital platform Apollo 24/7 to ensure massive administration capacity of Covid-19 vaccines. Shobana Kamineni, executive vice-chairperson, said. It has already trained 10,000 professionals.

Pent-up demand pushing recovery: BMW chief

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, OCT 15

BMW, India's second biggest luxury carmaker, which is seeing month-on-month sales recovery, said Q4 (October-December) will be better than Q3, which crossed 70 per cent sales recovery.

"Now all our dealerships across the country are open and the market is responding and recovery of sales is happening," Vikram Pawah, president at BMW Group India, told Financial Chronicle.

He said he was seeing a lot of traction and the pent-up demand was pushing recovery in sales across all models of BMW cars, including the popular Mini vehicles.

"We have also lined up more product offensive such as the M-performance cars, 330i, 5-Series, X5 SUV and other models to stir up the market," Pawah pointed out.

He said the luxury car market in India would very much depend on the way the pandemic would flatten even as more and



Vikram Pawah

more people preferred personal mobility which would give fillip to luxury car sales in Asia's third biggest economy.

MINDTREE Q2 NET PROFIT RISES 88%

New Delhi, Oct. 15: IT firm Mindtree on Thursday reported a 87.9 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 253.7 crore for the September 2020 quarter. It had posted a net profit of Rs 135 crore in the corresponding period last year, Mindtree said in a regulatory filing.

The Bengaluru-based company saw its revenue grow marginally to Rs 1,926 crore in the quarter under review from Rs 1,914.3 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

In dollar terms, its net profit rose 79.2 per cent to \$34.3 million, while revenue declined 3.7 per cent to \$261 million in the September 2020 quarter

over the year-ago period. At the end of the September 2020 quarter, the company's active client base stood at 283, and eight new clients were added during the quarter, the filing said.

Mindtree had 21,827 employees at the end of the September quarter with trailing 12-months attrition at 13.8 per cent.

"Our approach of redefining possibilities in the new normal for businesses enabled us to deliver a balanced H1 (first half of the fiscal) performance," Mindtree CEO and MD Debashis Chatterjee said.

The board has declared an interim dividend of Rs 7.5 per share. —PTI

New Land Rover Defender launched at ₹73.98L

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, OCT 15

Tata Motors-owned British luxury car maker Jaguar Land Rover on Thursday launched the all-new Land Rover Defender SUV priced between Rs 73.98 lakh and Rs 79.94 lakh at pan India showroom.

The new imported SUV is available in two body styles, the 90 (3-door) and the 110 (5-door), and in five trim levels to choose from.

The Land Rover Defender does not have any direct rivals in India but will compete with the



Jeep Wrangler as a niche four-wheel drive offering. Deliveries for the Defender 90 will begin in April-June 2021.

"So far, under Land Rover, we had the Discovery product pillar and Range Rover product pillar available in India.

With this launch, the third product pillar, Defender, is now available," Rohit Suri, president & MD at Jaguar Land Rover India, said.

This, in many ways, completes the Land Rover brand story, he said.

The Land Rover Defender is powered by a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder, turbo-petrol engine from JLR's Ingenium family, putting out 300HP and 400Nm of torque. The SUV accelerates from 0-100kph in a claimed 8 seconds in the 90 and 8.1 seconds in the 110. An 8-speed automatic gearbox is standard.

MAKING | BIG BET

Group reportedly in talks with Big Basket and IndiaMart

Tata Group chases e-com deals to bolster retail

ANTO ANTONY & P. R. SANJAI OCT. 15

Tata Group is seeking to buy online retailers to beef up its presence in e-commerce, people familiar with the matter said.

The group has reached out to IndiaMart InterMesh Ltd, a business-to-business marketplace, for a potential stake purchase, the people said, asking not to be identified as the plans are confidential. IndiaMart's shares have surged 142 per cent in Mumbai this year, giving it a market value of about \$2 billion.

Supermarket Grocery Supplies Pvt Ltd, commonly known as BigBasket, is also among Tata's potential investment targets, one of the people said.

Deliberations are at an early stage and there's no certainty Tata's pursuit of the assets will result in transactions, the people said.

A representative for Tata declined to comment, while V.S. Sudhakar, one of the BigBasket founders, also declined to comment.

"Any talk of IndiaMart being in discussions with Tata Group for invest-



ment or acquisition is completely baseless," Dinesh Agarwal, founder and chief executive officer of IndiaMart, said.

Tata Group, which owns Jaguar Land Rover and tea maker Tetley, is scouting for local e-commerce assets at a time when the

race for Indian online shoppers is heating up. While billionaire Mukesh Ambani's JioMart is seeking to shake up the industry dominated by the local units of Amazon.com Inc and Walmart Inc, Tata is seeking potential acquisitions to narrow the gap with its rivals.

Tata is pursuing a two-pronged strategy to modernise its online model, which is at present fragmented. Besides seeking acquisitions, it is also in talks with potential investors about taking stakes in a digital platform it is creating, people familiar with the matter

said last month.

Tata's digital platform will centre around an all-in-one e-commerce app that aims to bring disparate online businesses of its entrenched consumer units under one umbrella. These include Tanishq jewellery stores, Titan watch showrooms, Star Bazaar supermarkets, chain of Taj hotels and a joint venture with Starbucks Corp in India.

The expansion of Ambani's Reliance Industries into technology and retail businesses has added urgency to Tata's plans.

—Bloomberg

NPS, Atal Pension AUM hits ₹5 L cr



MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, OCT. 15

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) is expecting its asset under management (AUM) from the National Pension System (NPS) and Atal Pension Yojana (APY) to near Rs 6 lakh crore by the end of December.

The AUM has crossed the Rs 5-lakh crore mark this month.

The NPS has seen subscription of 70.40 lakh employees from the government sector and 24.24 lakh from the non-government sector over the last 12 years.

"With continuous rise of subscribers, the AUM has already crossed Rs 5 lakh crore as on October 10, 2020. We believe, it will be very close to Rs 6 lakh crore AUM by the year-end...Besides, the PFRDA is also seeing continuous onboarding of new subscribers, even during the current pandemic situation," said Supratim Bandyopadhyay, chairman, PFRDA, in a virtual meeting on Thursday.

The pension fund regulator has also formed a new panel to look into the fund managers' demand for higher commission.

"The PFRDA has also set up a committee to look into the demand raised by the seven pension fund managers to increase their commissions, which was currently hovering at around 1 per cent. The committee will submit its report by November end. We hope that few more players were likely to join the bandwagon in future," Bandyopadhyay said.

"During this pandemic, a growing realisation of both corporates and individuals has emerged that retirement planning is not a mere saving or tax benefit choice," he said.

SHORT TAKES

Commentator
Bhimani no more

Kolkata: Veteran sports journalist and cricket commentator Kishore Bhimani died at the age of 80, family sources said on Thursday.

He is survived by his wife Rita and son Gautam who is also a well-known TV personality. "He had suffered a cerebral attack a few days back and was undergoing treatment," a family source said.

Bhimani was one of the most recognised English voices of the 1980s. Bhimani was commentating when Sunil Gavaskar became the first player to reach 10,000 runs in Test cricket, during the drawn match against Pakistan in Ahmedabad in 1987.

One of the most sought-after Indian cricket writers who would be wooed by British publications in the 1980s, Bhimani was also on air during the final moments of the famous 1986 tied Test against Australia at Chepauk. — PTI

Medvedev rallies
to beat Gasquet

St. Petersburg: Top-seeded Daniil Medvedev recovered from a shaky start to begin his defense of the St. Petersburg Open title with a

3-6, 6-3, 6-0 win over Richard Gasquet on Wednesday. Medvedev hit 22 aces to secure his first win since losing to Dominic Thiem in the U.S. Open semifinals, having lost in the first round in Hamburg and at the French Open. Medvedev set up a second-round match with Reilly Opelka, who earned a 3-6, 7-6 (5), 6-2 win over qualifier Nino Serdarusic.

Stan Wawrinka booked his spot in the quarterfinals with a 6-1, 3-6, 6-3 win over Evgeny Donskoy, a wild-card entry who has now competed in the St. Petersburg tournament 12 times. — AP

Weightlifting's Oly
future in doubt

Dusseldorf: The future of weightlifting at the Olympic Games was put in further doubt on Wednesday after the governing body's interim president was ousted and the International Olympic Committee expressed concern. Interim president Ursula Garza Papandrea said that board members voted to remove her from office

Tuesday during a virtual meeting which she did not attend, after she had called the meeting for Wednesday. She said that first vice-president Intarat

Yodbangtoey of Thailand was appointed in her place.

Papandrea, a former weightlifter and coach from the United States, questioned the board's authority to remove her before a full electoral congress. She said board members repeatedly thwarted her attempts to reshape the IWF after an investigation alleged long-running corruption and doping cover-ups.

Papandrea said the IWF was "dysfunctional" and long-serving officials were hostile to reform. — AP

Raja-Ram out of
Spain Challenger

Alicante: The top-seeded Indian team of Ramkumar Ramanathan and Purav Raja bowed out of the ATP Alicante Ferrero Challenger following a straight set defeat, here on Thursday. Raja and Ramkumar lost 2-6, 2-6 to local unseeded combination of Gerard Granollers and Pedro Martinez. Ramkumar has already exited from the singles event of the tournament after losing to Carlos Alcaraz. — PTI

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Mumbai Indians vs KKR from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

BADMINTON

Denmark Open: Matches from 5.30 pm on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

TENNIS

St Petersburg Open: Matches from 3.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

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THE BOSS IS BACK

Gayle returns with a bang as Kings XI pip RCB

Sharjah, Oct. 15: K.L. Rahul played a captain's knock and Chris Gayle fired in his first game since January as Kings XI Punjab finally ended their five-match losing streak with an eight-wicket win over Royal Challengers Bangalore in an IPL match here on Thursday.

Chasing 172 in a must-win game, the in-form opening pair of Rahul (61 not off 49) and Mayank Agarwal (45 off 25) got off to a flying start before Gayle (53 off 45) joined his skipper in the middle to get KXIP close to the finishing line.

Needing seven off the final two overs with nine wickets in hand, KXIP somehow managed to take the game to the last ball with Nicholas Pooran finally hitting the winning six.

Both Rahul and Gayle smashed five sixes each, rendering the opposition attack helpless.

Batting first, skipper Virat Kohli top-scored with 48 off 39 balls in his 200th game for RCB before Chris Morris' 25 off 8 in the death overs took the team to 171 for six.

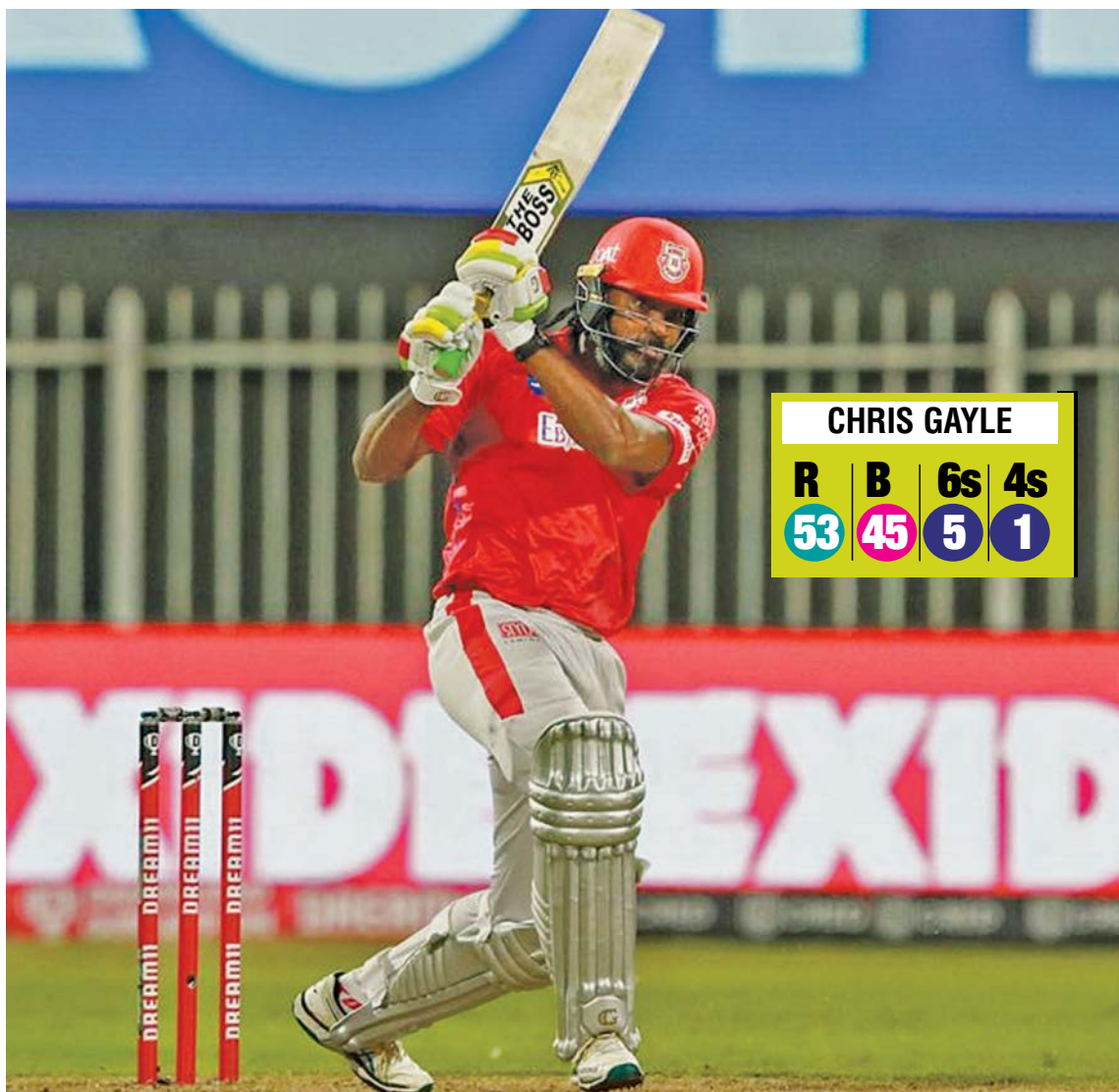
It was a rare all-round effort from KXIP who had failed to close out games earlier in the competition.

Mohammad Shami (2/45) conceded 24 runs in the final over that spoiled his figures after he got rid of Kohli and AB de Villiers but overall it was a much improved bowling effort by KXIP especially in the death overs.

Leg spinner M. Ashwin struck twice and pacer Chris Jordan took his first wicket of the tournament.

The run chase was supposed to be straightforward after Agarwal took the opposition to the cleaners in the powerplay before Rahul took over. As usual, the 41-year-old Gayle, batting at three, took his time early on before going ballistic.

Earlier, KXIP conceded only 25 runs from over 16-19 before Morris and Isuru Udana hammered Shami for three sixes. — PTI



Kings XI Punjab's Chris Gayle plays a shot against Royal Challengers Bangalore during an IPL game in Sharjah on Thursday. — BCCI

IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Delhi Capitals	8	6	2	0	12	+0.990
Mumbai Indians	7	5	2	0	10	+1.327
Royal Challengers Bangalore	8	5	3	0	10	-0.139
Kolkata Knight Riders	7	4	3	0	8	-0.577
Sunrisers Hyderabad	8	3	5	0	6	+0.009
Chennai Super Kings	8	3	5	0	6	-0.390
Rajasthan Royals	8	3	5	0	6	-0.844
Kings XI Punjab	8	2	6	0	4	-0.295

Tabulated as Played, Won, Lost, No Result, Points, Net Run Rate

SCORECARD

Royal Challengers Bangalore: A. Finch b Ashwin 20, D. Padikkal c Pooran b Arshdeep Singh 18, V. Kohli c Rahul b Mohammed Shami 48, Washington Sundar c Jordan b Ashwin 13, S. Dube c Rahul b Jordan 23, AB de Villiers c Hooda b Mohammed Shami 2, C. Morris (not out) 25, I. Udana (not out) 10. Extras (b 4, lb 2, w 6) 12. Total (for six wickets in 20 overs) 177.

For: 1-38, 2-62, 3-86, 4-127, 5-134, 6-136. **Bowling:** Maxwell 4-0-28-0, M. Shami 4-0-45-2, Arshdeep Singh 2-0-20-1, Ravi Bishnoi 3-0-29-0, M. Ashwin 4-0-23-2, C. Jordan 3-0-20-1.

Kings XI Punjab: KL Rahul (not out) 61, M. Agarwal b Chahal 45, C. Gayle run out (Padikkal/de Villiers) 53, N. Pooran (not out) 6. Extras (lb 3, w 9) 12. Total (for two wickets in 20 overs) 177.

For: 1-78, 2-171. **Bowling:** Morris 4-0-22-0, Saini 4-0-21-0, Chahal 3-0-35-1, Udana 2-0-14-0, M. Siraj 3-0-44-0, Washington 4-0-38-0.

NUMBERS GAME

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:

- Matches: 26
- Mumbai: 20
- Kolkata: 6

MEETING IN 2019

- KKR beat Mumbai by 34 runs at Kolkata.
- Mumbai beat KKR by 9 wickets at Mumbai.

MEETING IN 2020

- Mumbai beat KKR by 49 runs at Abu Dhabi.

FOR THE RECORD

- Andre Russell who has hit 99 fours in 54 innings for KKR needs one more to complete a century of fours.

- Rohit Sharma who has scored 3,944 runs at an average of 31.80 in 146 innings needs 56 runs to become the first batsman from Mumbai Indians to score 4,000 runs in IPL.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

DENMARK OPEN | BADMINTON

Srikanth storms
into last-8 stage

Odense, Oct. 15: Ace Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth stormed into the Denmark Open quarterfinals with a straight-game win over Canada's Jason Anthony Ho-Shue here on Thursday.

The fifth seeded Indian took 33 minutes to get the better of his Canadian opponent 21-15 21-14 in the men's singles second round of the \$750,000 Super 750 tournament, the only world tour event happening this year in a calendar thrown haywire by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The BWF was forced to cancel multiple tournaments and postpone the Asia leg and the World Tour Final to January next year due to the pandemic.

"It was close until 11 in both games. I'm just happy that I could continue that form throughout the match. I had to be alert to get back his shots," Srikanth told BWF.

The 27-year-old is likely to face world no.2 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei, who meets Ireland's Nhat Nguyen later in the day.

Talking about Chou Tien Chen, Srikanth said: "He's been playing well the last few years. It's definitely a match where I can understand where I'm at. That's the whole idea of playing this tournament.

"He hits hard, he's someone who has an overall game, he has a hard smash,

he knows when to attack and when to defend. He has matured. It's always good when you play a top 4 player."

In the opening game, Srikanth zoomed to a 9-4 lead before grabbing a three-point advantage at the break.

The Indian then reeled off six points to create a huge gap, which Jason couldn't bridge.

Srikanth fell behind 5-8 in the second game but bounced back with six straight points to reach 11-8 at the interval. The Canadian made it 10-11 after resumption.

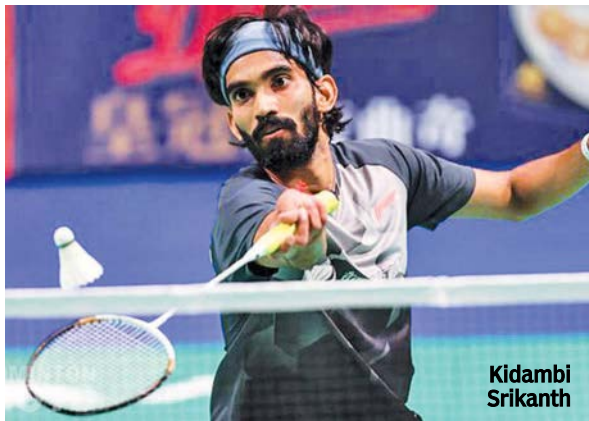
Srikanth then stepped up the pace and was immediately rewarded as he opened up a 15-10 lead.

He constructed the rallies well to quickly jump to 19-11. Srikanth soon garnered 8 match points but sent one to the net and couldn't reach the shuttle next to concede two.

But his opponent went wide next and Srikanth sealed it comfortably.

The other Indian in the competition, Lakshya Sen, will be up against local challenger Hans-Kristian Solberg Vittinghus in his second round match later in the day.

Subhankar Dey and Ajay Jayram were also in the fray but made first round exits on Wednesday. — PTI



Kidambi Srikanth

Didn't know I bowled
IPL's fastest ball: Nortje

Dubai, Oct. 15: South African speedster Anrich Nortje, who set the Indian Premier League ablaze by bowling the fastest delivery in the tournament's history, says he was unaware of the feat until after the end of the match.

The 26-year-old pacer clocked a breathtaking 156.2 kmph while bowling to Jos Buttler in the third over of Rajasthan Royals' run-chase against Delhi Capitals on Wednesday. He bettered compatriot Dale Steyn's (154.4 kmph) record in the process.

"I heard about it afterwards. I did not know about it at the time," Anrich told his Capitals teammate Shikhar Dhawan in a video posted by IPLT20.com.

Nortje added that he has been working hard on injecting pace in his deliveries. "I have been working really hard to get my pace up, been a couple of seasons. Been working on my

braced leg and my front arm... simple stuff. Happy to get some pace behind it but you obviously need to get it in the right area, that's the most important thing."

Bowling the fastest delivery did not have the desired result for Nortje as Buttler scooped it for a boundary. The Englishman had played the same shot in the previous delivery.

However, the duel didn't last long as the South African claimed Buttler's wicket with a 155 kmph thunderbolt, the second fastest ball in IPL history.

"Yeah, the battle against Buttler was interesting. I know he plays the scoop shots, but when he played the first one, it took me by surprise," Nortje said.

"I did not think he would do it again, but he played the shot once again on the next delivery. He played really well, but I stuck to my strength," Nortje added. — PTI

Mumbai have edge over KKR

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 15: An explosive batting line-up and a lethal-at-death bowling attack will give defending champions Mumbai Indians a definitive edge over Kolkata Knight Riders when the two teams clash in an IPL game here on Friday.

The defending champions are on a roll having won their last four games, while there are problems aplenty for KKR, who were decimated by the Royal Challengers Bangalore by 82 runs in their last game.

Mumbai Indians are thus unlikely to tinker with their playing XI.

For KKR, questions remain as to whether their key spinner Sunil Narine, who has been once reported for suspect bowling action, will play or not. He had missed the game against RCB even as KKR hoped for an "early resolution" to the



Mumbai Indians opener Quinton de Kock (left) and Rohit Sharma. — BCCI

issues surrounding his controversial action.

In the event of Narine missing out again, Mumbai will fancy their chances even more at the Sheikh Zayed stadium, where skipper Rohit Sharma has scored both his half-centuries this season.

Sharma (216 runs), on his day, can pummel any

attack to submission and particularly enjoys playing against Kolkata. When the two teams met last, Mumbai rode on his belligerent 80 to register a 49-run win.

Apart from Sharma, the Mumbai top and middle-order is in good form be it South African opener Quinton De Kock (191 runs) or Suryakumar

Yadav (233 runs), who would like to continue in the same vein.

Ishan Kishan (186 runs) underlined his potential with a blistering 99 against RCB, but the Jharkhand player needs to convert his starts into big scores to make his presence felt.

Mumbai Indians coach Mahela Jayawardene would be pleased with the likes of Hardik Pandya and swashbuckling Kieron Pollard, who have been launching into the opposition attack with their big-hitting prowess along with Krunal Pandya.

Given the trio's abilities, they can rip apart the KKR attack, especially one sans Narine. On the bowling front too, Mumbai looks a settled unit with Trent Boult and Jasprit Bumrah providing early breakthroughs. — PTI

Mbappe fires France past Croatia; England stumble

Paris, Oct. 15: England's prospects of returning to the finals of the Nations League suffered a big hit as Gareth Southgate's side lost 1-0 at home to Denmark on Wednesday, while Kylian Mbappe gave World Cup holders France a 2-1 victory in Croatia and Portugal won without Cristiano Ronaldo.

Harry Maguire was sent off for England in the first half at Wembley for two clumsy yellow cards, and Christian Eriksen then converted a 35th-minute penalty on the occasion of his 100th cap to put the Danes ahead.

They held on to inflict a first home defeat on England in two years, with the hosts also having young Chelsea full-back Reece James sent off for dissent after the final whistle.

"He is a top player, he is a massive part of what we do," Southgate said in

defence of Maguire, who has struggled for Manchester United since his involvement in a brawl on the Greek island of Mykonos in August.

"He is having a period where is having a lot of stick thrown his way and he is big enough to deal with that."

England got to the four-team finals of the inaugural Nations League last year but their chances of getting there again this time are very much in the balance with Belgium two points ahead of Southgate's team and the Danes atop League A, Group 2.

Belgium won 2-1 in Iceland on Wednesday with Romelu Lukaku scoring twice. They host England in Brussels on November 15.

In Zagreb, Paris Saint-Germain star Mbappe missed an open goal early on but got the winner in

the 79th minute as France beat Croatia 2-1 in their latest re-run of the 2018 World Cup final.

Antoine Griezmann had put France ahead with Nikola Vlasic equalising in the second half for Croatia before around 7,000 fans.

Les Bleus have still never lost to Croatia and are level with Portugal on 10 points at the top of League A, Group 3.

Double for Jota,

Lewandowski

Portugal, winners of the inaugural Nations League, shrugged off the absence of Ronaldo because of a positive Covid-19 test as they beat Sweden 3-0 in Lisbon.

Liverpool's Diogo Jota set up Bernardo Silva for the opener then scored two of his own, one either side of half-time.

"This team will always be better with Cristiano,

but they showed they can still compete," said Portugal coach Fernando Santos.

Meanwhile, the prolific Robert Lewandowski scored a brace as Poland beat Bosnia and Herzegovina 3-0 in Warsaw. Karol Linetty got the other goal and Poland are top of Group A, a point above Italy and two ahead of the Netherlands.

The Dutch came from behind to draw 1-1 with Italy in Bergamo, with Donny van de Beek netting for Frank de Boer's side after Lorenzo Pellegrini put Italy ahead.

Scotland continue

revival

Below the top tier, Scotland continued their tentative revival by beating the Czech Republic 1-0 at an empty Hampden thanks to an early goal by Newcastle United's Ryan Fraser.

After edging Israel on penalties to reach the Euro qualifying play-off final, Scotland beat Slovakia 1-0 at the weekend.

They are now unbeaten in eight matches and are four points clear of the Czechs at the top of League B, Group 2, and five ahead of Israel who came from 2-0 down to win 3-2 in Slovakia with a hat-trick from PSV Eindhoven's Eran Zahavi.

In Group 4, Wales won 1-0 in Bulgaria with a late Jonny Williams goal.

They are unbeaten in eight competitive games, and Ryan Giggs' side are top with 10 points, a point ahead of Finland.

Stephen Kennedy is still waiting for his first win as Republic of Ireland manager after a 1-0 defeat in Finland left his side out of contention for top spot in that group. — AFP



France's Kylian Mbappe reacts after scoring a goal against Croatia in Zagreb. — UEFA