





## IN BRIEF

**2 women held for robbing elderly man**

**New Delhi:** Two women were arrested on Thursday for allegedly robbing a senior citizen of ₹50,000 in south Delhi, police said. The accused have been identified as Renu (36) and Jyoti (34), both residents of Rajgarh district in Madhya Pradesh, they said. Police said that a 62-year-old man withdrew ₹50,000 from a bank in the Tigr area on October 14 and visited a nearby dispensary, where he realised that the money had been stolen from his bag. He suspected two women who followed him from the bank to the dispensary to be involved in stealing the money. During investigation, police checked the CCTV footage and noticed two women near the complainant with suspicious movements, the officer said. "On Thursday, police got a tip-off and apprehended the accused women from near NBCC Plaza, Khokha Market, Pushp Vihar, at 8.35 am, deputy commissioner of police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said. Police recovered ₹20,000 from their possession. The police said three women were involved in the crime. The third accused, identified as Kali, has left for her native village after taking her share of the loot, the police added. — PTI

**Second bank loot suspect arrested**

**Noida:** The second suspect in a bank loot a fortnight ago was held after he suffered injury in a gunfight with police in Greater Noida early on Thursday, officials said. Anuj Kumar Dubey's arrest came within hours of the arresting of his partner Amit Kumar, who too is a suspect in the October 6 bank loot, in a similar shootout in Greater Noida late on Wednesday night. "Amit was held after a gunfight on Wednesday night but Anuj had escaped from there. A combing operation was launched to track Anuj. He was later intercepted near the ATS roundabout," additional deputy commissioner of police, Greater Noida, Vishal Pandey said. "Anuj was on a motorcycle and gestured to stop at a barricade set up by local police. He instead sped away and opened fire on the police party. He was chased, shot in the leg and held," Pandey added. He said the accused, part of an armed trio that struck the private bank on October 6 and decamped with ₹3.90 lakh, has been taken to a hospital for treatment. A firearm along with ammunition was seized from the possession of the accused, while his motorcycle has been impounded, the additional DCP said. — PTI

**PM, in a first, opens pujas in Bengal, with eye to elections**

■ **Continued from Page 1** on this auspicious occasion for the welfare of the nation," the PM added.

With an eye towards the BJP's success in next year's Assembly election, Mr Modi also eulogised the state's rich cultural heritage and legends for their excellence in the fields of religion, education, literature, social reforms, politics and the freedom struggle.

He added: "The BJP government has adopted a Look East policy. West Bengal has an important role to play in this mission. I firmly believe that Bengal will head towards a new direction as the pivot of this mission."

Mr Modi began his address by paying tribute to Rabindranath Tagore, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Rani Rashmoni, among many other icons of Bengal. "Whenever the need was felt in India's history, Bengal has always led the way for India and showed the path. Listing several well-known personalities, he said: "If I continue to take the names of such Bengalis, the day will end but we won't run out of names."

The Prime Minister also warned everyone to take precautions against the coronavirus pandemic, with several videos showing West Bengal crowds throwing caution to the winds. "I urge everyone to ensure distancing and wear masks during the celebrations at all times," he said.

**■ AQI turns worse with increase in stubble fire count****Delhi air quality 'very poor', to deteriorate in next 2 days**

**New Delhi, Oct. 22:** Pollution levels in the national capital dropped to 'very poor' category on Thursday evening and is likely to worsen in the coming two days, government agencies said.

Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) have been recorded at 302, which is in the 'very poor' category. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast further deterioration in air quality with increase in PM 10 and PM 2.5 pollutants.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences' air quality monitor SAFAR said an increase in stubble fire count was observed around Haryana, Punjab and neighbouring regions. On Wednesday, the count was 1,428.

Though the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and other agencies had predicted an improvement in air quality for Thursday, the AQI turned out to be worse than Wednesday.

According to the CPCB, Delhi's AQI was in 'poor' category on Thursday morning at 254 and it deteriorated to 'very poor' at 302 by evening. It was 256 on Wednesday. The 24-hour average AQI of Delhi was 223 on Tuesday and 244 the day before.

The figures are based on data collected from 34 monitoring stations in the city.

Calm surface wind conditions prevail over Delhi region, SAFAR said, adding, "It is forecast that the air quality will be in the 'poor' to marginally 'very poor' on October 23 and 24."

According to AQI monitoring mobile application SAMEER, Delhi's 10 monitoring stations recorded "very poor" air quality.

— PTI



A thick blanket of dust and haze envelops the old city area of Delhi on Thursday.

— PTI

**'Stubble burning: SC doing its part, Centre & states have to do theirs'**

**New Delhi, Oct. 22:** The Supreme Court is already doing its part to deal with stubble burning in the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana and now the Centre and the state governments have to do their bit, the Delhi High Court said on Thursday.

The court made this observation while declining to entertain a plea seeking immediate steps to prevent stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana on the grounds that it would aggravate Covid-19 related problems.

A bench of chief justice D.N. Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan said the apex court on October 16 constituted a committee headed by its former judge, Justice M.B. Lokur,

to monitor the steps taken by these states to prevent stubble burning.

The high court further said that if it too hears the same issue, then there would be a danger of contradictory orders being passed. With the observation, the bench disposed of the application which was moved by Sudhir Mishra, an advocate, in his main PIL filed in 2015 seeking directions to the Centre to take immediate steps to control increasing air pollution in the national capital.

The application had contended that stubble burning would increase the air pollution drastically in the national capital and could further aggravate the health problems in the

city in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

The high court, however, gave liberty to Mishra to approach it in the future in case of any necessity or difficulty.

During the hearing, additional solicitor general (ASG) Chetan Sharma said the sun was not visible on Thursday and it was an emergency like situation in the national capital due to the poor air quality.

The ASG also referred to a news report which stated that people who have recovered from Covid were facing respiratory problems as the air quality worsened in the national capital region and were flocking to the hospitals. — PTI

**N-E Delhi riots worst since Partition, says court**

**New Delhi, Oct. 22:** The riots in north east Delhi in February this year was the worst communal riots since Partition in the national capital and that it was a gaping wound in the conscience of a nation aspiring to be a major global power, observed a Delhi Court on Thursday.

The remarks by the court came while dismissing the bail pleas in three cases of former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain, who allegedly abused his muscle power and political clout to foment communal violence.

It is common knowledge that the dreary day of February 24, 2020 saw parts of north-east Delhi gripped

by a communal frenzy, reminiscent of carnage during the days of partition. Soon, the riots spread like wildfire across the smoke-grey skyline of Capital, engulfing new areas and snuffing out more and more innocent lives.

The Delhi riots 2020 are a gaping wound in the conscience of a nation aspiring to be a major global power. Even if there were no direct acts of violence attributable to the applicant, he cannot shy away from his liability under the provisions of the sections invoked against him, particularly on account of the fact that his house/building became the hub/centre point for the rioters and

▶ **The spread of riots on such a big scale in such a short time is not possible without a premeditated conspiracy, additional sessions judge Vinod Yadav said while dismissing bail pleas in three cases of former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain**

rabble-rousers to unleash the worst communal riots since Partition in Delhi, additional sessions judge Vinod Yadav said.

The court further said the spread of riots on such a big scale in such a short time is not possible without a premeditated conspiracy.

One of the cases pertained to the alleged presence of 100 people standing on the terrace of Hussain's house with petrol bombs and throwing them on the persons belonging to another community during the riots in Dayalpur area.

The second case related to looting of a shop in the area due to which the shop's owner incurred a loss of about ₹20 lakh. The third case related to looting and torching of a shop due to which the owner incurred a loss of around ₹17-18 lakh.

The judge said there was enough material on record to presume that Hussain was very well present at the spot of crime and exhort-

**Hindu Rao docs urge PM to resolve salary crisis**

*Doctors of North Corp hospitals stage protest again*

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 22

The resident doctors association (RDA) of the civic-run Hindu Rao Hospital on Wednesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking a resolution of the crisis over the pending salaries of medics of the North Corporation facilities.

"Through this letter we would like to convey and express the gravity of our peril that we are being exposed to despite the hardships of the nature of our work everyday in the COVID premises," reads the letter sent by the RDA to the Prime Minister.

Doctors of Hindu Rao Hospital, Kasturba Hospital and Rajen Babu Tuberculosis Hospital, all British-era facilities, have been agitating for the last several days, demanding release of their pending salaries for the last couple of months. Recently, they



Resident doctors of North Delhi Municipal Corporation run hospitals protest at Jantar Mantar on Thursday.

— PTI

had also written to Union health minister Harsh Vardhan and had also protested at Jantar Mantar. They staged a protest at Jantar Mantar again on Thursday.

Sporting black arm-bands, wearing masks and shouting slogans, the doctors held placards and

appealed to higher authorities to intervene and resolve the crisis.

A resident doctor at Hindu Rao Hospital, who joined the protest, said, "Some of us might even sit on hunger strike from today. Final decision is yet to be made by the association".

**SC moved seeking uniform minimum age of marriage**

**PARMOD KUMAR**  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 22

The Supreme Court has been moved seeking a uniform minimum age of marriage of 21 years both for the boys and girls invoking gender justice and gender equality.

The petitioner Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay has sought transfer to the Supreme Court of the cases relating to the issue pending before various high courts including Delhi High Court and Rajasthan High Court. Upadhyay is a top court lawyer and a BJP leader active in party's Delhi state unit.

Seeking the transfer to Supreme Court of matters pending before vari-

ous high courts on the same issue, Upadhyay has said that this will avoid multiplicity of litigations and conflicting interpretation of Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the constitution, on the issue of uniform minimum age of marriage both for the men and women.

While men are permitted to get married at the age of 21, women are married, when they are just 18, the petition has contended that the distinction is based on "patriarchal stereotypes", and has no scientific backing, "perpetuates inequality against women", and goes completely against the "global trends".

**35 Covid deaths, 3,882 cases in 24 hours in city**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 22

The national capital recorded 35 more fatalities on Thursday, taking the Covid-19 death toll to 6,163, while 3,882 fresh cases pushed the infection tally to over 3.44 lakh, authorities said.

These fresh cases came out of the 58,770 tests conducted the previous day.

According to the latest health bulletin, the tally of active cases on Thursday rose to 25,237 from 24,217 the previous day.

The total number of cases has climbed to 3,44,318, the bulletin added.



A food vendor sells food item at Meera Bagh in New Delhi on Thursday. Balbir Singh opened his own food stall on his scooter after he lost his job during the lockdown. Now, he doesn't feel the need to get a job again as he became self-employed, promoting PM Narendra Modi's ideology of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

— PTI

**16-year-old girl raped by neighbour**

**New Delhi, Oct. 22:** A 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour in southeast Delhi's Sarai Kale Khan area, police said on Thursday. The accused has been detained, they said.

The police said it is verifying whether the accused is a minor or an adult. Police said both the accused and the victim were neighbours and have known each other for over three years. The girl's condition is fine. She had minor medical issues. The accused has been detained, a senior police officer said.

An eight-year-old girl was allegedly sexually assaulted by her relative in northwest Delhi's Ashok Vihar area, police said on Thursday. On Wednesday at 9.55 pm, police received information regarding the sexual assault on a minor girl in Ashok Vihar area. The victim was rushed to Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital, a senior police officer said.

A case has been registered. Police said the accused, a 25-year-old man from Darbhanga district in Bihar, has been arrested. He is a relative of the victim.

— PTI

**Rape accused flees with cop's pistol, arrested**

**Noida, Oct. 22:** A rape accused man allegedly tried to escape after snatching a pistol from a policeman in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida on Wednesday but was arrested again following a brief exchange of fire, officials said.

The accused was arrested by a team from Surajpur police station in

the morning in connection with a rape of a minor and was taken to the crime scene in the evening, when he tried to escape, the officials said.

The accused was taken to the crime scene for investigation. He told the police that he had kept a knife in hiding behind the Moser Baer company's office. When the police

reached there to recover the weapon, the accused snatched a sub-inspector's pistol and ran away from the spot, additional deputy commissioner of police, Central Noida, Ankur Aggarwal said.

He was chased by the police but after reaching some distance the accused opened fire on the officials. He got a bullet shot

on his leg in retaliatory firing by the police, Aggarwal said.

The accused, who was booked under provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, has been taken to a hospital for treatment, the additional DCP said, adding that further proceedings in the case are underway. — PTI

**North Delhi mayor virtually addresses global mayors forum**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 22

North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash on Thursday participated in international mayors forum organised by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Mr Prakash virtually addressed the august gathering on "Impact Investment in Cities — Innovation to finance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) locally". This is first time when North DMC Mayor participated at a UN level event. Mr Prakash said that it is a great honour to represent North Delhi Municipal Corporation on UN days.

**Himalayas poised for a series of big earthquakes, says study**

**New Delhi, Oct. 22:** The entire Himalayan arc is poised to produce a sequence of great earthquakes, and the next big quake — of the magnitude of 8 or above — may occur during our lifetimes, according to a study reviewing geological, historical, and geophysical data.

The human toll of such an event in the densely populated countries across the arc is likely to be unprecedented, the researchers said. The study notes that the sequence of future Himalayan earthquakes could be similar to the great earthquakes that occurred in the twentieth century along the Aleutian subduction zone, which extends from the Gulf of

Alaska to Kamchatka in Russian Far East. The review, which appeared in the journal Seismological Research Letters in August, used basic geological principles — stratigraphic analysis, structural analysis, soils analysis, and radiocarbon analysis — to estimate the size and timing of prehistoric earthquakes and evaluate future risk.

"The entire Himalayan arc extending from the eastern boundary of Arunachal Pradesh in the east to Pakistan (in the west) has in the past been the source of great earthquakes," study author Steven G. Wesnousky told PTI.

"These earthquakes will occur again and scientifically, it would not be a sur-

prise if the next great earthquake occurred in our lifetimes. But the resolution of our studies is at best on the order of 100 years, longer than a human lifetime," said Wesnousky, a professor of geology and seismology and director of the Center for Neotectonic Studies at the University of Nevada at Reno, US.

"The research is a comprehensive review of paleoseismological studies of past Himalayan earthquakes and a forecast of the future events based on the findings," said Supriyo Mitra, a professor in the department of Earth Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Kolkata.

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Illegal arms factory busted in Hathras

**Hathras (UP):** The police on Thursday claimed to have busted an illegal arms-manufacturing factory in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras following the arrest of a man and seizure of over a dozen firearms along with ammunition. The police have seized 14 pistols of .315 bore, three rifles, including two of .315 bore, and three unfinished pistols of varying capacities from the unit besides ammunition in huge quantity. Equipments and raw material used for illegally making the firearms have also been seized, police said. One person has been arrested in connection with the case, Hathras Superintendent of Police Vineet Jaiswal said. "The illegal arms factory was busted by a joint team of officials from the Kotwali police station and a special operations group (SOG). One person was caught from the spot located on Jalesar road here," Jaiswal said.

— PTI

## Prohibitory order issued in Kalahandi

**Bhawanipatna:** The Odisha government on Thursday decided to clamp prohibitory orders under Section 144 of Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) at Bhawanipatna in Odisha's Kalahandi district to prohibit large public gatherings during the season of Durga Puja and Chhatra Jatra of Maa Manikeswari and related pre and post rituals. The decision was taken on Thursday to ensure strict implementation of the Covid-19 guidelines and avoid large congregations in the town, informed Kalahandi district collector Gavali Parag Harshad. The administration also issued necessary guidelines to be followed during the festival to contain the spread of Covid-19 and ensure the safety of life of the general public.

## Bihar deputy CM tests +ve for Covid

**Patna:** Bihar Deputy chief minister Sushil Kumar Modi on Thursday said that he has tested positive for Covid-19 and was undergoing treatment, while also asserting that his parameters were fine and he was looking forward to hitting the campaign trail soon in the poll-bound state. Mr Modi, one of the tallest leaders of the BJP in Bihar, had been missing from action for quite some time and was conspicuous by his absence when Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman released the party's manifesto earlier in the day. "Tested positive for corona. All parameters normal. Started with mild temperature (but) no temperature for last two days," he said. — PTI

## CENTRAL TEAM VISITS T'GANA TO ASSESS FLOODS

**Hyderabad:** A central team on Thursday began a two-day visit of Telangana for assessment of damage caused by the recent heavy rains and floods in parts of the state, especially the city, as the state government pegged losses to crops and roads at over ₹8,500 crore. The five-member inter-ministerial team, led by Joint Secretary Praveen Vasishtha, met state Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, who said the state government had taken all measures to minimise loss of life and property due to the floods, an official release said here. The team was given a power-point presentation and briefed about the extent of damage caused by the torrential rains, that triggered flash floods, inundating hundreds of houses in low-lying areas here and elsewhere in the state last week, and left 70 people dead. The rains have subsided since the last couple of days. The officials of irrigation, municipal administration, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), energy and other departments interacted with the Central team and gave an overview of the loss incurred, it said. They informed the team that there was excess rainfall during the last ten days which resulted in flooding. Though there were rains in the entire state, excessive damage occurred in and around Hyderabad and neighbouring districts.

— PTI

## Visa curbs eased, foreign tourists still not allowed

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, OCT 22

Home ministry has eased visa and travel restrictions while allowing Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card holders and foreign nationals to visit the country for any purpose, except on tourist visa. Hence validity of all existing visas has been restored. "The government has decided to make a graded relaxation in visa and travel restrictions for more categories of foreign nationals and Indian nationals who wish to enter or leave India," an order from the Ministry said.

As part of the plan, the ministry has decided to restore with immediate effect all existing visas, except electronic visa, tourist visa and medical visa, the statement said.

The permission for OCI and foreign nationals to enter the country includes authorised air or water routes. This includes flights operated under the Vande Bharat Mission as well. However, all these travellers will have to follow the guidelines of the health ministry regarding quarantine and other Covid protocols. Centre had limited foreign air travel since February this year in wake of the Corona pandemic.

Scheduled international passenger flights have been suspended in India since March 23.

## Income-tax sleuths raid Congress office in Patna

NAYEAR AZAD PATNA, OCT. 22

In a major development, the income tax department carried out searches at the Congress headquarters in Patna on Thursday. Sources said that several senior party leaders who were inside the Congress office were also questioned by the officials. A person was also later picked up by the officials for questioning. "Many Congress leaders including Randeep Singh Surjewala and Shakti Singh Gohil have been questioned by the Income Tax officials" a Congress party worker said. Reports suggest that Income Tax sleuths had reached Congress office after ₹8.8 Lakhs in cash were recovered from a vehicle parked outside the party office. A notice from the department was also found pasted outside the party office during the raid.

Reacting to the development senior Congress leader Shakti Singh Gohil

## TMC: Will not support demand for Gorkhaland

**Kolkata, Oct. 22:** The TMC on Thursday ruled out the possibility of supporting the demand for Gorkhaland, a day after it welcomed GJM supremo Bimal Guring to its party fold, with the outfit having walked out of the NDA, accusing the BJP-led dispensation of not fulfilling promises. Senior TMC leader and Lok Sabha MP Saugata Roy said Guring joined the Mamata Banerjee-led party, as it felt cheated by the saffron camp. "There is no question of Gorkhaland. We have dismissed that demand long back. Bimal Guring felt cheated by the BJP, so he decided to join us. We welcome him and together we would fight against the BJP," Roy said.

Echoing him, a state cabinet minister from North Bengal, who did not wish to be named, said, "Gorkhaland can never be a reality".

## MP

## BYPOLLS

## Shivraj cancels 2 poll meetings in wake of court order MP govt to move SC against HC curbs

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, OCT. 22

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday cancelled his two poll meetings, scheduled to be held in Ashok Nagar district in the state, in the wake of restrictions imposed on election rallies by a local court in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

Mr Chouhan who announced to challenge the directive by Gwalior bench of MP high court to 9 district collectors in the state not to allow the candidates

or political parties to hold election rallies without compelling reasons, was scheduled to attend public meetings in Shadora and Bhandar in Ashok Nagar district ahead of November 3 by-elections to 28 Assembly constituencies in the state.

"We will challenge the court's directive in the supreme court. A bizarre situation has emerged following the court order. In some parts of Madhya Pradesh election rallies are allowed, while in some other parts they are not allowed. Even in Bihar, political rallies and public



meetings are held.

"There cannot be 2 laws in one land," he said.

The Gwalior bench of high court on Wednesday ordered the collectors of 9 districts where by-elections to 28 Assembly constituencies are scheduled to be held

▶ **CHOUHAN WHO** announced to challenge the directive by Gwalior bench of MP high court to 9 district collectors in the state not to allow the candidates or political parties to hold election rallies without compelling reasons, was scheduled to attend public meetings in Shadora and Bhandar in Ashok Nagar district

Morena, Bind, Ashok Nagar, Datia, Shivpuri, Sheopur and Vidisha.

The court which had been displeased by the conduct of political parties and candidates for Assembly bypoll campaign, observed that right to health and life of a common man is comparatively more exalted, sacred and precious compared to the right to canvassing and campaigning for a candidate. The court said the DM's permission to conduct the physical meeting 'shall become effective only after the Election Commission of India approves the same in writing'.

## Tomar says Scindia slow in saffronisation, raises eyebrows

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, OCT. 22

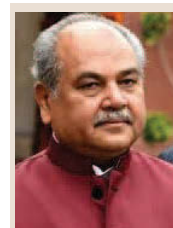
Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Thursday said saffronisation of Jyotiraditya Scindia, who quit Congress and joined BJP in March this year, would take time, raising eyebrows in the political circle here.

Talking to reporters here Mr Tomar said BJP has welcomed Mr Scindia into the party. BJP was an ideology oriented and cadre based party and Mr Scindia was getting acquainted with the party's culture. "It will take time for Mr Scindia to adopt BJP culture (fully). I am confident that Mr Scindia will integrate him into the party's culture. Building of a person is usually a slow process", he added.

Mr Tomar's statement has raised eyebrows in BJP amid growing speculations that the party leadership in Gwalior-Chambal region was yet to reconcile to Mr Scindia's entry into the saffron outfit.

Gwalior-Chambal is considered Mr Scindia's bastion.

Sixteen out of 22 former



It will take time for Mr Scindia to adopt BJP culture (fully). I am confident that Mr Scindia will integrate him into the party's culture. Building of a person is usually a slow process.

— Narendra Singh Tomar, Union minister

Congress MLAs who resigned from the assembly in March this year to pull down the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government hailed from the region, hailed from Gwalior-Chambal region.

All the 22 former Congress MLAs, staunch loyalists of Mr Scindia, later quit Congress and joined BJP following footsteps of their leader.

Mr Tomar also hailed from Gwalior-Chambal.

Significantly, Mr Tomar's statement comes close on the heels of recent remarks by chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan that the former may suffer loss of face before Prime Minister Narendra Modi if BJP did not fare well in ensuing assembly by-elections in the Gwalior-Chambal region.

A BJP leader here howev-

er denied any differences between Mr Tomar and Mr Scindia.

"It was a positive remark by Mr Tomar", he added.

Congress spokesman Narendra Singh Saluja however took a potshot at BJP for not being able to 'saffronise' Mr Scindia completely even 7 months after he joined the party.

"Can it be construed that BJP was yet to rely on Mr Scindia", he asked.

Meanwhile, MP high cover said that cases should be filed against Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar and former chief minister Kamal Nath for alleged violation of Covid-19 protocol. The court has asked district magistrates in Gwalior and Datia to ensure the registration of First Information Reports in the matter.

## Decline in Covid cases continues, tally at 77L

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, OCT. 22

The trend of steady decline in active cases in India continues as active cases are now below 10 per cent of the total cases for the last three days suggesting only 1 in 10 cases are active Covid-19 patients across the country. Presently, the active cases comprise 9.29 per cent of the total positive cases of the country that stands at 7.16 lakh.

The overall cases in India reached 77.07 lakh out of which 55,839 cases were detected in the last 24 hours. With 702 new fatalities, the total number of deaths in India are over 1.16 lakh.

According to union health ministry, the daily Positivity Rate has also been less than 5 per cent under the past three days indicating that the spread of infection is being effectively contained. The daily Positivity Rate on Thursday was 3.8 per cent. Officials said the decrease in the daily positivity rate is simultaneously mapped by the falling active cases, which continue to be under 7.5 lakh on Thursday.

The total recovered cases are close to 69 lakhs and the difference between active cases and recovered cases is consistently increasing and stands at 61.59 lakh. In the last 24 hours, 79,415 patients recovered taking the national Recovery Rate to 89.20 per cent.

Meanwhile, India on Thursday achieved a milestone of conducting 10 crores covid-19 tests with average testing of more than 10 lakhs per day in last 17 days. So far, 74,000 tests per million population have been conducted, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said.

## Rahul takes a dig at BJP's free Covid vaccine pledge

New Delhi, Oct. 22:

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday took a swipe at the BJP for promising free Covid-19 vaccine in its Bihar poll manifesto, saying one has to refer to the state-wise election schedule to know when one will have access to vaccine.

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday released the BJP manifesto for the Bihar assembly polls which promised free COVID-19 vaccine once it has been cleared by the ICMR. "GOI just announced India's Covid access strategy. Kindly refer to the state-wise election schedule to know when you will get it, along with a hoard of false

promises (sic)," Gandhi said on Twitter.

Taking pot shots at the BJP, Congress spokesperson Ragini Nayak said, "Even (PM Narendra) Modi ji does not know when the corona Vaccine will come... And, Nirmala Sitharaman has started distributing it for free."

Shiv Sena leader Priyanka Chaturvedi also took a dig at the saffron party, saying that while the vaccine is yet to come, it has already become a part of poll rhetoric by the BJP. "The vaccine is yet to come, but it has already become a part of poll 'jumbas' (rhetoric). Is the central government's responsibility not equal towards people of all states?" — PTI

## 7,482 fresh cases of Covid found in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram:

Kerala on Thursday reported 7482 cases of Covid — 19 taking the total active cases to 93291. At a press conference here chief minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan said 3,69,323 cases of Covid — 19 have been reported in the state so far of which 2,74,675 persons have recovered. As of now 2.80 lakh persons are under surveillance across the state of which 2.57 lakh persons are under home/institutional quarantine.

Of the new cases, 6448 contracted the infection through contact, 123 came from outside.

"Together, we will work for the overall development of the Hills and the state," the minister said.

Gurung, after joining hands with the TMC, had clarified on Wednesday that there was "no going back" on the demand for Gorkhaland — a separate state — and said his outfit, prior to the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, would align with any party that supports the cause.

The Gorkha leader, who was on the run since 2017 following a three-month-long agitation in Darjeeling over the demand for a separate state, has quit the NDA, underscoring that the saffron party has "failed to find a permanent solution" for the Hills.

The state BJP unit, following the announcement, asked the TMC to clear its stand on Gorkhaland

— PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
E-TENDER NOTICE	
Sr. DEE-TRS-GZB acting for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender against Tender No. 230-TRS-GZB-2019-20-22. The details are as under:-	
Sl. No.	Name of the work
1.	Hiring of Truck capacity 09 MT to carry Railway material to various sheds/shops/depots and to any destination within Indian Territory & back to Electric Loco Shed, Ghaziabad, Qty. 3,37,000 KM for 24 months.
2.	Approx. Cost of work
3.	Earnest Money to be deposited
4.	Cost of Tender Document
5.	Last Date & Time of Submission of tender bid of tender
6.	Date & Time of opening of tender document
7.	Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen
Note:	
(i) The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement System (IREPS) site i.e. <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> for participating in e-tender system.	
(ii) For all terms and conditions please refer tender document.	
(iii) No manual offers are acceptable.	
(iv) Cost of Tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only.	
No.: 230-TRS-GZB-2019-20-22 Dated: 20.10.2020 2323/2020	
Serving Customers with a Smile	

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE						
Sr. No.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE DEPARTMENT	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1.	PWD B&R, AMBALA	CONST. OF ADMINISTRATIVE BLOCK (SDM COMPLEX) AT SHAHABAD IN DISTT. KURUKSHETRA (CN ANNOUNCEMENT CODE NO. 15621 DATED 04.06.2016) (PDG. 250KVA ELECT. SUB STATION). + 7 OTHER WORKS	28.10.2020 11.11.2020	333.32 LACS	<a href="http://etenders.hry.nic.in">http://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	0171-2630877 pvd-eecd-ambala@hry.nic.in
2.	BLOCK DEV & PANCHAYAT OFFICER BHIVANI	CONSTRUCTION OF PARK-CUM-VYAMSHALLA	19.10.2020 27.10.2020	21.57 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	87662-57787 bdpo@bhivani@gmail.com
3.	PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT, KURUKSHETRA	LADWA : TECHNICAL PROPOSAL FOR PROVIDING SEWERAGE SCHEME IN REMAINING AREA / BALANCE STREETS OF LADWA TOWN DISTRICT, KURUKSHETRA + 1 OTHER WORKS	21.10.2020 03.11.2020	129.94 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
4.	FOREST DEPARTMENT,GURUGRAM	CONSTRUCTION OF 3 WATER POND AT PRBCB JHABUA-REWARI + 4 OTHER WORKS	21.10.2020 30.10.2020	92.16 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	0172-2583682/pcdf-cwv-hf@hry.gov.in pcdf@hry@gmail.com
5.	FOREST DEPARTMENT,GURUGRAM	CREATION OF EATING LAWN FOR VISITORS FACILITY AT SULTANPUR NATIONAL PARK, DISTRICT GURUGRAM + 1 OTHER WORKS	22.10.2020 30.10.2020	30.31 LACS	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a>	0172-2583682/pcdf-cwv-hf@hry.gov.in pcdf@hry@gmail.com
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : <a href="http://www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in">www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in</a> or <a href="http://www.etendehry.nic.in">www.etendehry.nic.in</a>						
Ro No. PRDH-Adv. No.:11/2021/10000000000/83351						

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority		
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, (UP)		
Website : <a href="http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com">www.noidaauthorityonline.com</a>		
E-TENDER NOTICE		
E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with 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: <a href="http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com">www.noidaauthorityonline.com</a> & <a href="https://etender.up.nic.in">https://etender.up.nic.in</a> . Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.		
(a)	S.N.	Job no. / Work name
1.	41/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2020-21, M/o Park with two year Maintenance Under Ground car Parking Sector 16A, Noida.	Cost Rs. 25.51 Lacs
2.	118/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2020-21, Re. D/o Park (Between A to Z Block) in Sector-12	Cost Rs. 25.71 Lacs
3.	182/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2020-21, M/o RSP Sector-33.35 For two year ( Pruning of Trees)	Cost Rs. 10.47 Lacs
4.	178/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2020-21, M/o RSP with two year maintenance Sector-74, 75 & 76.	Cost Rs. 26.87 Lacs
5.	174/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2020-21, M/o RSP with two year maintenance Sector-78 & 79.	Cost Rs. 27.20 Lacs
6.	179/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2020-21, M/o RSP Sector-39, 40, 41 (Pruning tree) for Two year.	Cost Rs. 14.07 Lacs
7.	177/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2020-21, M/o Green Belt with Two Year maintenance Sector-115 Near FNG.	Cost Rs. 8.99 Lacs
8.	180/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2020-21, M/o RSP Sector-108 Internal Road with two year maintenance.	Cost Rs. 16.47 Lacs
9.	181/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2020-21, M/o RSP Sector-48, 49 For two year (Pruning of Trees)	Cost Rs. 15.38 Lacs
10.	123/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2020-21, Two year M/o Green Belt, Express Highway, LHS 15.50 Km	Cost Rs. 7.45 Lacs
11.	124/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2020-21, Two year M/o R.S.P. Central Verge in Sector-130, 133, 134.	Cost Rs. 10.37 Lacs
12.	125/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2020-21, Two year M/o R.S.P. Central Verge Sector-136 (Central Verge Sector-137 to Metro Station to T Point to Advant.)	Cost Rs. 22.22 Lacs
Which can be uploaded by date 05/11/2020 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 06/11/2020 at 11.00 AM.		
(b)	S.N.	Job no. / Work name
1.	119/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2020-21, M/o Park Village Raipur Near water work compound-7 Christian Kabristan Sector-126.	Cost Rs. 14.84 Lacs
Which can be uploaded by date 29/10/2020 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 02/11/2020 at 11.00 AM.		
Director (Hort.) Noida		
Office Sector-39		
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA		



## SHORT TAKES

Fire in Mumbai  
mall, none injured

**Mumbai:** A fire broke out in a mall here on Thursday night, but no casualty was reported, according to a fire brigade official. He said the blaze erupted in the City Center Mall in Mumbai Central around 8.53 pm. "Eight fire engines are on the spot and an operation is on to douse the flames," he said, adding there was no report of injury to anyone so far. According to fire brigade officials, the exact cause of the fire was not yet known. According to locals, the mall mainly houses shops selling mobile phone accessories. This was the second fire in the city on Thursday. Earlier in the day, a fire had broken out in a garment factory at Kurla West. It was doused after more than two hours.

HC stays conviction  
of Maha minister

**Mumbai:** The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court on Thursday suspended the three-month sentence awarded to Maharashtra cabinet minister Yashomati Thakur for allegedly assaulting a policeman in 2012 in district Amravati. Ms Thakur approached the high court after a trial court in Amravati convicted and sentenced her to three-months of simple imprisonment on October 15. The court held her and three others including her driver guilty of assaulting a policeman. The prosecution case is that the incident took place on March 24, 2012, in the Chunabhatti area under Rajapeth police station limits in Amravati when Ms Thakur, the then MLA, was moving in her vehicle along with her aides. According to the police, her car was about to enter a one-way lane from the wrong side following which Ulhas Raurale, a traffic constable, stopped her car. This enraged her and she along with her driver Sagar Suresh Khandekar, and party workers Sharad Kshirav Jawanlikar and Raju Kisan Ingle, allegedly beat him up.

Complaint filed  
against Kangana

**Mumbai:** A Mumbai-based lawyer on Thursday filed a complaint against actress Kangana Ranaut for allegedly maligning judiciary in her social media posts. The lawyer approached a magistrate court in Andheri accusing Ms Ranaut of allegedly posting a malicious tweet against the judiciary after another magistrate court in Bandra ordered the registration of an FIR against her. Following the Bandra court's order to the police to register a First Information Report against her, Ms Ranaut posted "malicious and defamatory" tweets against the judiciary, terming it as "Papu Sena", lawyer Ali Kaashif Khan Deshmukh stated in his complaint before the Andheri court.

'DISENGAGEMENT  
IN LADAKH IS  
IMMEDIATE TASK'

**New Delhi:** India on Thursday made it clear that the "immediate task is to ensure a comprehensive disengagement of troops in all the friction areas" in the Ladakh sector where there continues to be a heavy presence of both Indian and Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The two sides have reiterated their desire to maintain dialogue and communication through military and diplomatic channels, and arrive at a mutually acceptable solution for disengagement as early as possible, New Delhi also said. The heavy deployment remains after China began deploying large numbers of its troops at the LAC in the Ladakh sector from April this year. On Thursday, MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "As you are aware, India and China continue to have discussions through both diplomatic and military channels to peacefully resolve the issues along the LAC in India China Border areas. This is in keeping with the agreement reached between the two Foreign Ministers during their meeting in Moscow on 10 September 2020. The immediate task is to ensure a comprehensive disengagement of troops in all the friction areas." He added, "In this context, the 19th meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) was held on 30 September 2020.

Twitter called it a technical issue  
Govt warns Twitter for  
showing Leh in China

**New Delhi, Oct. 22:** India has warned Twitter over its location setting that showed Leh in China, saying any disrespect of the country's sovereignty and integrity is totally unacceptable.

In a strongly-worded letter, Ajay Sawhney, secretary in the ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY), asked Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey to respect the country's sensitivities, sources in the ministry said.

Twitter came under heavy criticism and faced a backlash from social media users after its geo-tagging feature displayed "Jammu & Kashmir, People's Republic of China" in a live broadcast from Leh's Hall of Fame, a war memorial for fallen soldiers in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

This triggered angry responses from netizens who demanded that stringent action be initiated against the micro-blogging platform.



▶ **THE GOVERNMENT** has asked Twitter to respect the sensitivities of Indian citizens and made it clear that any attempt by Twitter to disrespect the sovereignty and integrity of India, which is also reflected by the maps, is totally unacceptable and unlawful

Twitter, earlier this week, called it a technical issue, which has been swiftly resolved.

Sources said Sawhney, in the letter sent on Wednesday evening, warned Twitter that any attempt to undermine the sovereignty and integrity of India will not just bring disrepute to the micro-blogging site but also raises questions about its neutrality and fairness as an intermediary.

Conveying strong disapproval of the government over misrepresentation of the map of India, Sawhney in his letter reminded Twitter that Leh is the headquarter of the Union Territory of Ladakh. And that both

Ladakh as well as Jammu and Kashmir are integral and inalienable parts of India, governed by the Constitution of India.

The government has asked Twitter to respect the sensitivities of Indian citizens and made it clear that any attempt by Twitter to disrespect the sovereignty and integrity of India, which is also reflected by the maps, is totally unacceptable and unlawful.

When contacted, Twitter in an e-mail response said: "Twitter remains committed to working with the Government of India. We respect the sensitivities involved and have duly acknowledged the letter."

— PTI

Chhattisgarh  
scribe booked  
over 'abusive'  
video clip

**Raipur, Oct 22:** A case has been lodged against a journalist in Chhattisgarh's Surguja district for allegedly using abusive and derogatory language in a video clip related to an anti-encroachment drive undertaken by the local civic body and circulating it on social media, police said on Thursday.

Refuting the charges, the journalist, Manish Soni, claimed he was being falsely implicated in the case as someone else had edited his news clip and made it viral.

An FIR was lodged on Tuesday night against Soni under sections 294 (obscene acts) of the IPC and sections 66 and 67 of the Information Technology Act based on a complaint of Mayor of Ambikapur Municipal Corporation Ajay Tirkey. As per the complaint, Soni allegedly made the audio-video clip in a news form and used abusive and derogatory language in it and circulated it on WhatsApp and Facebook, he said.

The accused tried to malign the image of the Congress through his posts, Tirkey, a leader of the ruling party, said in the complaint.

Further investigation into the matter was underway, the official said. Soni, who works as a freelancer, said on October 17, he had posted on YouTube the video clip of a news report related to some farmers whose paddy crops were destroyed by JCB machine used during the anti-encroachment drive undertaken by the Ambikapur Municipal Corporation (AMC). The AMC claimed the crop were planted on government land. The video also contained reactions of farmers who said they had been sowing crops on that land for the last several years and without giving any prior notice, the municipal corporation destroyed their crops, he said. — PTI

India, US may  
ink Beca defence  
pact at 2+2 talks

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 22

India and the United States could 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 on October 27.

According to reports, the Beca pact will enable India to use US geospatial intelligence & satellite imagery to improve the accuracy of missiles and drones, a development that could prove crucial amid the situation in the Ladakh where there is heavy deployment of both Indian and Chinese troops backed by tanks and heavy artillery on both sides.

As already reported, United States Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and secretary of defence Mark T. Esper will be visiting New Delhi on October 26 and 27 and will hold talks with their Indian counterparts S. Jaishankar and Rajnath Singh on October 27 as part of the Indo-US 2+2 talks.

The third India-US 2+2 foreign and defence Ministerial Dialogue on October 27 "will entail a comprehensive discussion on cross-cutting

▶ **THE THIRD** India-US 2+2 foreign and defence Ministerial Dialogue on October 27 "will entail a comprehensive discussion on cross-cutting bilateral issues of mutual interest and both sides will also exchange views on salient regional and global issues

bilateral issues of mutual interest and both sides will also exchange views on salient regional and global issues", New Delhi meanwhile said on Thursday.

It added that India and US have a comprehensive global strategic partnership which includes political, security and defence, economic, commercial, technology and people to people contacts.

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.

In addition, New Delhi also said on Thursday that the US "Secretaries Esper and Pompeo will also have bilateral meetings with their respective counterparts" and will also be meeting National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval apart from "jointly calling on" Modi.

India, EU decide to set  
up high-level dialogue

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 22

India and the European Union (EU) on Thursday agreed to hold their "high-level dialogue on Trade and Investments at an early date" and also "discussed the opportunities for strengthening the India-EU

Strategic Partnership in a post-Covid world, including in areas of healthcare, global supply chain resilience, reformed multilateralism and green transition".

Both sides also "reviewed the working of various institutional mechanisms between India and the EU.



Artistes perform Ramlila, a dramatic re-enactment of the life of Lord Ram, at Laxman Qila in Ayodhya on Thursday. — PTI

## India hammers Pak for terror safe havens

Govt says Pakistan made over 3,800 ceasefire violations this year

**SRIDHAR KUMAR SAMAM**  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 22

Pakistan has failed to take action on "six important action items" stipulated by global anti-terror-financing watchdog Financial Action Task Force (FATF), New Delhi said on Thursday, even as it accused Islamabad of "aid and abetment to cross-border terrorism, smuggling of arms and narcotic substances including through the usage of drones and quadcopters". India also said Pakistani forces have carried out more than 3800 unprovoked ceasefire violations (CFVs) this year so far and that there "have also been attempts to drop arms and ammunition close to the LoC in the garb of civilian activities".

Pakistan is currently on the "grey list" of the FATF whose latest plenary meeting in virtual mode is ongoing and will culminate on Friday. New Delhi hinted clearly that Islamabad did not deserve to escape the grey list. Islamabad is likely to continue in the grey list despite its attempts to

## R&amp;AW chief meets Nepal PM Oli

**Kathmandu, Oct. 22:** Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) chief Samant Kumar Goel paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and said India will not allow interruption in the friendly bilateral relations with Nepal and resolve all outstanding issues through dialogue, according to a top Nepalese official on Thursday.

His visit comes ahead of the upcoming official trip of Indian Army chief Gen. M.M. Naravane to Nepal in the first week of November.

Mr Goel called on Prime Minister Oli at his official residence at Baluwatar on Wednesday evening, the premier's press advisor Surya Thapa said.



During the meeting, Goel "expressed his views regarding not to allow interruption in friendly relations between Nepal and India, resolving all the outstanding issues through dialogue and continuing mutual cooperation," Mr Thapa said.

Sources here said the chief of India's external intelligence agency is also expected to meet chiefs of different security agencies in Nepal, including the Nepalese Army, during his visit. — PTI

rorist entities and individuals" and not taking any action "against several terrorist entities and individuals including those proscribed by the UNSC such as Masood Azhar, Dawood Ibrahim, Zakir-ur-Rahman Lakhvi".

Navy Chief: Will maintain  
high-tempo of operations

**PAWAN BALI**  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 22

Indian Navy's Chief Admiral Karambir Singh said on Thursday that navy would continue to "maintain a high-tempo of operations" and peak combat-readiness in coming months. Navy chief on Thursday reviewed the operational preparedness and combat-readiness of the Indian Navy's principal combatants at sea and the Carrier Battle Group led by aircraft carrier Vikramaditya.

Indian Navy Chief comments come at a time when India is involved in a six months military stand-off with China in the Eastern Ladakh.

Admiral Singh embarked the indigenous guided-missile destroyer Chennai, off the Karwar Naval Base, which is currently part of Carrier Battle Group led by aircraft carrier Vikramaditya.

A carrier battle group (CVBG) is a naval fleet consisting of an aircraft carrier like Vikramaditya and its large number of escorting ships (destroyers, frigates, corvettes, fleet support ships and integral swing-role fighters and helicopters). Navy chief witnessed weapon firings, air-to-air combat operations,

Indigenous stealth warship  
INS Kavaratti commissioned

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 22

The indigenously-built anti-submarine warfare (ASW) stealth corvette "INS Kavaratti" was on Thursday commissioned into the Indian Navy by the Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane at a ceremony held at Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam.

Having completed sea trials of all her equipment, Kavaratti has been commissioned as a fully combat-ready platform providing a boost to the anti-submarine warfare capability of the Indian Navy. INS Kavaratti is

the last of the four ASW Corvettes, indigenously designed by the Indian Navy's in-house organisation, Directorate of Naval Design and constructed by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata. The ship has up to 90 per cent indigenous content.

INS Kavaratti is manned by a team comprising twelve officers and 134 sailors with Commander Sandeep Singh at the helm as her first Commanding Officer. The ship would be an integral part of the Eastern Fleet under the Eastern Naval Command.

anti-submarine drills and fleet manoeuvres under realistic conditions. He embarked fleet support ship Deepak to interact with the ship's crew, followed by embarkation on aircraft carrier Vikramaditya, where he witnessed the Carrier Battle Group's capabilities for integral fleet air defence and strike.

Addressing the combatants of the Carrier Battle Group over broadcast from

Vikramaditya, CNS complimented them for continuously maintaining peak combat-readiness and high tempo of operations over the past months, in spite of Covid related challenges. He said that the Indian Navy has remained mission-deployed and combat-ready across the Indian Ocean Region, even though rough seas during the monsoon period, towards maintaining the maritime security of the nation.

Palghar mob lynching  
case: 8 more arrested

**Mumbai, Oct. 22:** The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Maharashtra Police on Thursday arrested eight more people in connection with the lynching of three persons by a mob in Palghar district in April this year, a police official said.

With this, 186 people have so far been arrested and 11 juveniles detained in connection with the incident.

After the arrest of 24 people on Wednesday, the police nabbed eight more persons on Thursday, the official said. He said these accused

were present at the incident spot amid the Covid pandemic and also did not stop the assault on the three victims.

Some of these people were also recording videos of the incident and some were involved in the clamour at that time. The accused also had sticks in their hands, the official said.

On April 16, two seers and their driver, who were heading towards Surat from Mumbai in a car, were beaten to death by a mob in Palghar's Gadchinchale village on suspicion that they were child-lifters. — PTI

Consent to CBI  
withdrawn to  
prevent political  
misuse: Mantri

**SONU SHRIVASTAVA**  
MUMBAI, OCT. 22

Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh on Thursday said that 31-year-old 'general consent' given by the state to the Central Bureau of Investigation has been withdrawn so that the central agency cannot be misused for political purposes.

On Wednesday late night, his department issued a notification stating the general consent withdrawn to the CBI. Maharashtra is the fourth state in the Country to withdraw the general consent to the apex agency. Meanwhile, the BJP slammed chief minister Uddhav Thackeray led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government for this move.

Mr Deshmukh said that Central Bureau of Investigation should not be used to settle the political scores. "Therefore, we have come out with the order yesterday (Wednesday) for the CBI in Maharashtra. If the CBI wants to take over any case, it needs to get the prior consent from the Maharashtra government," the home minister said.

The Maharashtra government's move came close on the heels after the central agency took over a case registered by the Uttar Pradesh Police against "unknown" channels and persons over alleged fudging of TRPs in Lucknow. The development created apprehensions in the Maharashtra government that the Central Bureau of Investigation would take over a similar case on alleged fudging of TRPs registered in Maharashtra in a bid to move it away from the jurisdiction of Mumbai police. Referring to the apprehension, Mr Deshmukh said that the government wanted to avoid such a thing happening.



Lt. Shivangi



Lt. Shubhangi



Lt. Divya

Training (DOFT) Course, who graduated as 'Fully operational Maritime Reconnaissance (MR) Pilots' at a passing out ceremony held at INS Garuda, Kochi on Thursday.

SNC Chief Staff Officer (Training) Rear Admiral

Antony George presented awards to the pilots who are now fully qualified on Dornier aircraft for all operational missions.

These officers had initially undergone basic flying training partly with the Indian Air Force and partly with the Navy prior

Trio was part of six pilots of 27th DOFT course  
Navy's 1st batch of women pilots ready to fly

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI**  
KOLKATA, OCT. 22

The first batch of women pilots of the Indian Navy has been operationalised on Dornier aircraft by the Southern Naval Command (SNC) at Kochi. They are Lieutenant Divya Sharma from Malviya Nagar in New Delhi, Lieutenant Shubhangi Swaroop from Tilhar in Uttar Pradesh and Lieutenant Shivangi from Muzaffarpur in Bihar.

The three women pilots were part of the six pilots of the 27th Dornier Operational Flying



# THE ASIAN AGE

23 OCTOBER 2020

## Bihar: Lalu son handful, but contest is wide open

Assembly polls in any state are consequential in the larger framework of our democracy, and in the case of Bihar they give us a feel of the political currents in the Hindi heartland which, historically, has had a particular salience in shaping the politics of the country.

The three-stage state election in Bihar kicks off on October 28 and the result will be known on November 10, but so close to voting day it is not quite clear which way the wind is blowing. In the ordinary course, the outright win of the JD(U)-BJP alliance that chief minister Nitish Kumar leads might have been taken for granted since there are no known stars in the fray on the opposite side. This is indeed what media reporting and anecdotal evidence initially appeared to suggest.

But with the campaign picking up, the turbulence in the waters of the Ganga, Kosi, Gandak and the Son are becoming more evident.

**The unemployment issue is serious all over India but has a special resonance in Bihar since the state saw the largest number of very poor returnees from big cities in the wake of the coronavirus-related lockdown**

too the BJP may be getting ready to quit being bridesmaid. Chirag Paswan, the young, inexperienced, LJP leader, was thought to be its pawn in this venture.

But there could be trouble ahead. If LJP cuts into JD(U) votes in any substantial way, its game may end up helping the RJD-Congress-Left Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) pose an even bigger challenge to the JD(U)-BJP alliance, with JD(U) weakened on account of Mr Paswan's effort. Thus, the game that BJP-LJP is accused of launching may just turn out to be a double-edged sword.

Lalu Yadav's young son Tejashwi, who had been written off as a factor since his father is still languishing in jail and is not available to campaign, is actually turning out to be quite a handful with his promise of 10 lakh jobs the minute he takes office. The unemployment issue is serious all over India but has a special resonance in Bihar since the state saw the largest number of very poor returnees from the big cities in the wake of the coronavirus-related lockdown. In contrast, the CM's campaign is lacklustre, still harping on issues of a decade ago. The NDA is hoping that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will electrify the mood for the incumbents. If Mr Kumar beats the odds, he could remain CM even if the BJP does well. If he slips, and the BJP doesn't have a clear majority on its own (an unlikely scenario), the BJP may be pushed to scout for post-poll friends. That could muddy the waters.

## Can America rein in Google?

The tech titan Google is facing an anti-trust suit filed by the US Justice Department accusing it of maintaining an illegal monopoly over Internet search and search advertising. This is the most significant step in years in which a backlash has been gaining strength, first in Europe and now in US, against the big four of the new economy — Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon. Spurred on by a collection of lawyers, economists and activists, governments have been pushed into questioning them for their monopolistic business practices. The big question to be answered now is whether Google has become far too successful for the good of technology and the free market that created such behemoths.

The tech battle isn't new. More than two decades ago, Microsoft was in the crosshairs for pervasively abusing its domination of personal computer software. The seminar tech giant escaped any great fetters on its operations even as the tech world evolved with alternatives including Apple's operating system. Like Big Pharma and Big Oil, Big Tech had made its own rules for decades in attaining its Unicorn status. It bought out budding competitors or simply trampled upon them by virtue of deep pockets created by market capitalisation of more than trillion dollars and billions of reserve cash, some owed to miserly but clever tax non-compliance practices across nations.

Microsoft wriggled out of its existential crisis of 1998 and rebuilt. Google, with its virtual search engine monopoly, its most popular web browser Chrome, its Android technology and its unique business model in which the user does not have to pay a cent to access its search engine will doubtless employ the best legal brains to stretch out this battle against the Justice Department in years to come. The larger issue is should monopolies be broken up in countries that swear by free markets and capitalism in the fond hope of creating a democratic level playing field for all. Do regulators know enough on how technology works to write new regulations to rein in Google with its 2019 revenue of \$161 billion?

### THE ASIAN AGE

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Saeed Naqvi  
Wide Angle



## Only Walter Mitty can dream Afghan troop withdrawal before US election

It always seemed an exaggeration that a dramatic announcement from Doha on the eve of the American elections on troop withdrawals would cause American voters to march to the polling booths doubly enthused to re-elect President Donald Trump. US chief negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad does not in the slightest resemble James Thurber's notorious daydreamer Walter Mitty to push for unrealistic deadlines. He is an eager beaver, but not desperately unrealistic.

When President Barack Obama had set firm deadlines for withdrawal, I made an extensive survey of the country for the Observer Research Foundation. I had concluded that the US is "not leaving Afghanistan today; it is not leaving it tomorrow". A superpower enters a major theatre with one set of interests but, over a period of time, develops multiple compelling interests.

Withdrawing empty-handed would be an admission of defeat. Since this is not on the cards, the only conclusion one can draw is that a plan for the future is not being disclosed for now.

The US involvement in Afghanistan has been a great

tragedy, but its frequent false starts in a rush to the exit door and announce withdrawal is material for a spoof by someone like Michael Moore. Take, for instance, the peace agreement the US signed with the Afghan Taliban on February 29 in Doha. So eager was US negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad to flourish a peace agreement just when the election campaign in the US was picking up that he would have inserted into the agreement anything that the Taliban wished. Read the title headline of that agreement — it is patently absurd: "Agreement for bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (which is not recognised by the United States as a state, and is known as the Taliban) and the United States of America."

The fragility of the agreement is transparent in the pulls and counter pulls that had obviously gone into the headline. There is an unbridgeable distance on Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's role, for instance. The Taliban will not talk to Mr Ghani, whom they describe quite brazenly as a US "toady".

Mr Ghani deludes himself if he imagines he is being "firm". He is coming across to the world at large

as a leader with a very thick skin. New Delhi wishes to keep up appearances. In the trapeze act, South Block does not wish to be seen loosening the clasp of Mr Ghani's hand midair. The zero-sum game with Pakistan may operate as a factor but, in deference to realism, not a defining one.

One of the advantages the US extracts from being a superpower is to keep making mistakes almost wilfully without any fear of being called to account. It is almost a forgotten story that in December 2001 that Nato, helped by Russia, Iran, India and the Northern Alliance based in the Panjsher Valley defeated Taliban and Al Qaeda. Panjsher was also the operational headquarters for Tajik hero Ahmad Shah Masoud. So strong was Masoud's opposition to the Taliban and Al Qaeda that he travelled extensively to acquaint various international bodies of the danger that Al Qaeda and the Taliban posed to Afghanistan. His summer 2001 address to the European Parliament, months before 9/11, was historic by any yardstick. The complete silence on this Masoud speech is surprising. His forces had picked up chatter about a possible Al Qaeda action

in the US mainland. He was speaking in Brussels. On September 9, precisely two days before September 11 (9/11), two Arabs disguised as journalists visited him in his hideout near the Tajik border for an interview. Their passports, it was revealed much later, had been forged in Brussels. These "journalists", while saying goodbye to Masoud, detonated their vests. All three died instantly. Two days later, the Twin Towers came down in New York. Is there nothing here that deserves investigation?

Maybe not before the November 3 US election, but is the curtain is about to be brought down on US involvement? Whether Mr Trump or Joe Biden wins, China, Russia, Iran are likely to remain America's principal adversarial concerns. And Afghanistan is a supreme vantage point from where to needle them.

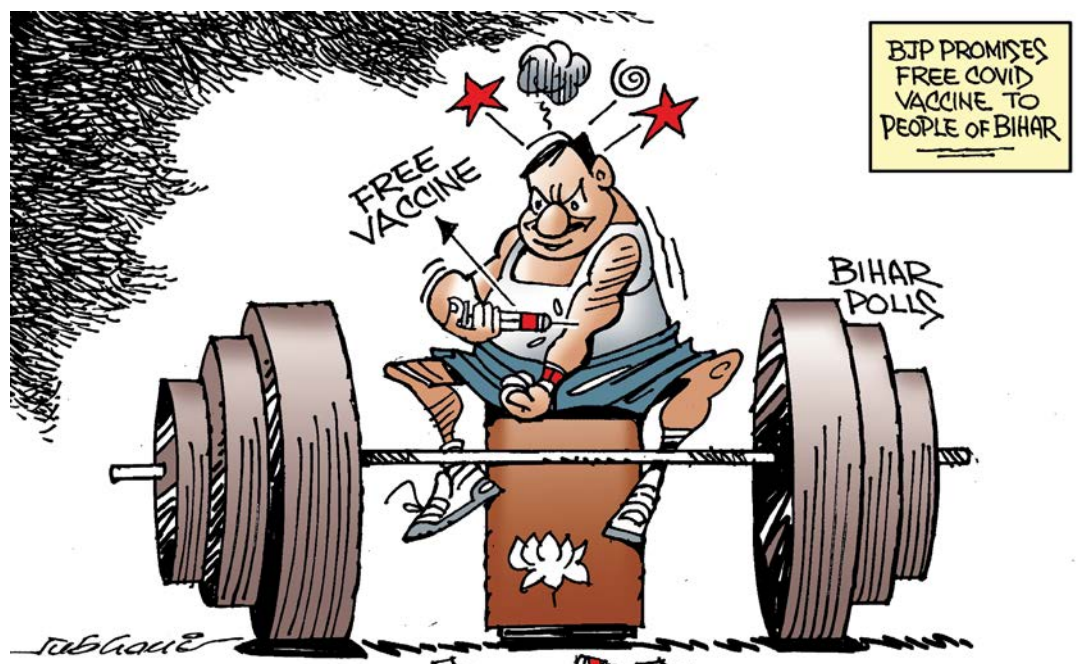
A little over a year ago, just when US military involvement in Syria was winding down, one common chatter was about Jabhat al Nusra and its variants being flown to newer theatres of action. Russia's deputy foreign minister Morgulov Igor Vladimirovich told a high-powered conference in New Delhi,

with Zalmay Khalilzad in attendance, that militants were being flown from Syria to northern Afghanistan. "Only the Afghan government and the US controls the Afghan airspace." The blame cannot be placed at any other door. Mr Khalilzad mounted a token protest, but nothing more.

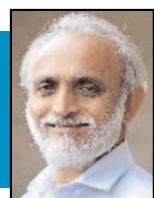
The following Friday, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was more specific: Daesh groups were being flown to Afghanistan. The distinguished chronicler of the West Asian scene, Robert Fisk of London's *Independent*, made similar allegations. The allegation fitted neatly into the thesis that militants, trained to kill, cannot be sent to the slaughterhouse. They have to be deployed in other theatres where they are proximate to the Muslim population into which militancy has to be injected to stir up the Islamic cauldron — Xinjiang, the Caucasus and a handful of Sunni enclaves in Iran. Now comes the news that fighters from Idlib are being flown to Nagorno Karabakh.

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

Subhani



## Hindutva a stumbling block for BJP in Bihar



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

In 2015, flush with the dramatic victory in the 2014 Lok Sabha election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then BJP president Amit Shah hoped to sweep the Assembly elections in Bihar, the other major Hindi-belt state in northern India. The first is of course Uttar Pradesh, the so-called cockpit of Indian politics, and in UP the BJP's calling card was Hindutva. Mr Shah thundered that if the BJP were defeated, crackers would be burst in Pakistan. And Mr Modi announced a huge financial package from the Central government in the loudest of tones. But Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United) and Lalu Prasad Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), along with the Congress, scored an impressive victory. The Modi magic did not work. The BJP's defeat was also a rejection of Mr Modi at a time when it seemed that he was riding the crest of popularity, with an overwhelming victory in neighbouring UP in the 2014 general election. The victory of the Nitish-Lalu duo was interpreted as the unbreakable caste combine of all backward castes and the significant Muslim minority in the state.

Nitish Kumar was not really the lily-white "secularist" that he projected himself to be because he was in alliance with the BJP in the 2005 and 2010 Assembly elections in the state, and the BJP's saffron hue was as prominent then as it ever was. His disapproval of Mr Modi's saffronism did not carry much conviction. But

after the 2015 Assembly poll victory, Nitish Kumar could not bear with the aggressive pressure tactics and intrusion of the impetuous and young Tejashwi Yadav, who was the deputy chief minister. And with a little help from Bihar BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi, who conjured up a "crime", which is what the BJP has always been good at, Mr Kumar slipped out of the strangling grip of Lalu Yadav's family. And he was back with his old mate, the BJP, in 2017.

The present speculation about the outcome in the Bihar Assembly elections flows from the developments of 2015 and 2017. It is being argued that this is Nitish Kumar's "last stand", and the BJP is preparing to push him off the stage once the election is won because Mr Modi and Mr Shah have not forgiven Nitish Kumar's "betrayal"! There are of course serious flaws in the assumptions of the analysts, if not that of the BJP leaders themselves. The BJP is a second party in Bihar. It cannot hope to become the party of first choice. The BJP's hopes lie in the fact that after two decades of being the second party in Maharashtra, the BJP moved to the first position, edging out the Shiv Sena. But then the Shiv Sena chose to walk out of the alliance, and the BJP's lead position in Maharashtra came to nought.

It is keeping in mind the Maharashtra experience that Mr Shah, the BJP's spokesperson though he is not the president of the party any more, declared quite early that Nitish Kumar

would be the chief ministerial candidate of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), comprising the JD(U), BJP and Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) of the late Ram Vilas Paswan. More than the Machiavellian plot to avenge Nitish Kumar, the BJP leaders are reconciled to the fact that they cannot win without the JD(U). There is the plausible argument that Nitish Kumar and the JD(U) are in the same position as the BJP, and that Nitish Kumar can never hope to win an Assembly majority without the BJP.

There is the fact that Nitish Kumar is the last of the "big" leaders in the BJP camp, and he along with Lalu Prasad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan had been Bihar's political heroes. It is now time for a generational change. There is no leader in the JD(U) who can take Nitish Kumar's place. The BJP in Bihar does not have either first-rung or second-rung leaders, though there has been speculation that Union minister for law and justice, information technology and communications Ravi Shankar Prasad is a potential chief minister waiting in the wings. But he does not enjoy the same popular base that Nitish or Lalu do, and Paswan did in his own small limited way, and all of them had emerged from the Jayaprakash Narayan students' movement of the 1970s. It is too early

**There is the fact that Nitish Kumar is the last of the 'big' leaders in the BJP camp, and he along with Lalu Prasad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan had been Bihar's political heroes. It is now time for a generational change.**

to speculate whether Tejashwi Yadav will be the Gen Next leader of Bihar. Bihar's politics seems to be at the end of its political tether, though anti-BJP partisans would like to place their bets on Tejashwi Yadav and the RJD. The political formations as they exist now are caged in their caste grooves. No party can command the approval of the people across the caste barriers.

There is a political vacuum in Bihar, and there is room for some of the existing players to grab the opportunity and fill it up. The BJP could have done it, but it has shown that it is not confident about its ability to make it on its own. The deference shown by the BJP to Nitish Kumar is not pure goodwill. The diffidence of the BJP in Bihar perhaps could be traced back to then chief minister Lalu Yadav's assertive act of stopping Lal Krishna Advani from going to Ayodhya on his infamous "rath-yatra" in late 1990. It was a figurative act, and the BJP seems to have been stuck at the Bihar barricade. The Hindutva card has no resonance in Bihar and Mr Shah and Mr Modi are acutely aware of it. The poll surveys show that Mr Modi enjoys high popularity ratings, but they do not seem to be sufficient for the BJP to dare to go on its own in the state.

Two of the influential Hindi states are stuck in a past which they are not able to free themselves from, Bihar more so than even UP. The people in the state are hugely political, but they are not able to forge their political destiny. This election is much more than the victory or defeat of the major players in the fray. It is Bihar standing on the edge of an uncharted future.

*The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst*

### LETTERS

#### NO VICTIM-SHAMING

This refers to "Rapist trolls" (Oct. 22). Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can hardly hurt me. Nevertheless, the ugly trend of issuing rape threats on social media naturally evokes outrage. These threats are made by ordinary citizens and one wonders if it is the shameless display of the same anti-woman and unjust mindset on the part of leaders on various occasions that has served to embolden them. It is true that there is no law against free speech and it is also dangerous to ban it. However, we can bring a law to punish public representatives casually victim-blaming women.

Hema Hari Upadhyay  
Ujjain

#### STAND BY FARMERS

**YOUR EDITORIAL** "Punjab makes a point, will other states follow?" (Oct. 22) says that the Capt. Amarinder Singh Punjab government was making a political point by moving the state bills which offer little in terms of reforming the markets and suggested that the government should make functioning of mandis transparent and non-exploitative. It is an unfortunate part of Indian politics that political parties do not go by merits of issues but politicise them. There should be an open public debate on farmers' problems.

M.C. Joshi  
Ujjain

#### APPEAL TO VOTERS

**HERE IS MY** appeal to the voters in the impending Bihar election. Please cast your vote on the issue of jobs, education, healthcare and development. Do not be misled by political propaganda and go by the record of the candidate. It is best to even ignore your own ideological leanings if the candidate you deem otherwise suitable belongs to a different political party. Vote responsibly and in the larger interest of the state.

M.N. Alam  
Saharanpur

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



## IN BRIEF

**London gas explosion: 2 die**

**London:** Two people were killed after a suspected gas explosion that led to a building collapse in Southall, the west London suburb with a large Punjabi-origin Indian diaspora population. The explosion occurred at a hair salon and phone shop underneath a set of flats on Wednesday. Four adults and one child, of Punjabi-origin, were rescued at the rear of the property using a ladder, while several people from nearby homes evacuated the King Street area of Southall as London Fire Brigade worked on the "protracted" incident. The Metropolitan Police said the two people killed in the explosion are yet to be formally identified but some local reports indicate that the victims may be of Indian-origin. "A large explosion was found to have taken place inside a shop. Emergency services entered the building and sadly, two people were pronounced dead at the scene. Formal identification has not taken place."

**Indonesia mine landslide: 11 die**

**Jakarta:** Intense rains caused a landslide at a coal mine on Indonesia's Sumatra island that killed 11 miners, authorities said Thursday. The slide occurred Wednesday in a mine tunnel about 20 metres (65 feet) deep at Tanjung Lalang village in Muara Nim district of South Sumatra province, according to National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Raditya Jati. Local rescuers have recovered all the bodies. Seasonal rains and high tides in recent days have caused dozens of landslides and widespread flooding across much of Indonesia, a chain of 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near fertile flood plains close to rivers. Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency said the area could see light to moderate rainfall for the next three days. Most parts of Indonesia have entered the rainy season this October. In addition, the La Nina phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean can set off intense rainfall across the islands.

**Trio who lived on ISS return to Earth**

**Moscow:** A trio of space travellers safely returned to Earth on Thursday after a six-month mission on the International Space Station. The Soyuz MS-16 capsule carrying NASA astronaut Chris Cassidy, and Roscosmos' Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner landed on the steppes of Kazakhstan south-east of the town of Dzhezkazgan at 7:54 a.m. (2:54 GMT) Thursday. After a brief medical checkup, the three will be taken by helicopters to Dzhezkazgan from where they will depart home. Cassidy will board a NASA plane back to Houston, while Vagner and Ivanishin will fly home to Star City, Russia. The crew smiled as they talked to masked members of the recovery team, and NASA and Roscosmos reported that they were in good condition. As part of additional precautions due to the Coronavirus, the rescue team members meeting the crew were tested for the virus.

**LTTE de-list MOVE: LANKA LODGES PLEA**

**Colombo, Oct. 22:** Sri Lanka has appealed against a judgement from Britain's Proscribed Organisations Appeal Commission, which has delisted the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as a proscribed terrorist organisation. A foreign ministry statement issued here said that Sri Lanka has been made aware of the Open Judgement by the Commission on Wednesday. It said the decision of the Commission arises from an appeal filed in May 2019 by an LTTE front organisation challenging the decision of British Secretary of State for Home Affairs dated March 8, 2019, which refused the application by the group to de-proscribe the LTTE from the list of Proscribed Organisations under the UK Terrorism Act of 2000.

While Sri Lanka was not a party to these proceedings at the Commission and could not make direct representations, the Lankan Government assisted the British government by providing relevant information with regard to continued terrorist activities.

— AFP

# Iran behind emails to intimidate voters: US

**Nat'l intel director says aim was to hurt Don in election**

**Washington, Oct. 22:** US officials have accused Iran of being behind a flurry of threatening but fake emails sent to Democratic voters in multiple battleground states in a late-stage efforts to sway public opinion and interfere in the presidential election.

Purportedly from far-right, pro-Trump groups like the Proud Boys, the fake emails were apparently aimed at intimidating voters. John Ratcliffe, the government's national intelligence director, said the aim was to hurt President Donald Trump in the contest against Democrat Joe Biden, though he did not elaborate on how.

One possibility is the messages may have been intended to align Trump in the minds of voters with the Proud Boys after he was criticised for failing to unequivocally denounce the group during the first presidential debate. The threatening emails officials did not lay out specific evidence for how

## Don mismanaged Covid-19: Obama

**Washington, Oct. 22:** Former US president Barack Obama delivered a diatribe against his successor Donald Trump on Wednesday, accusing him of mismanaging the pandemic, as he appealed to the people to come out and vote in favour of Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden.

Jumping into the electoral campaign in support of his former vice president Biden and his running mate Senator Kamala Harris, Obama appealed to the people to defeat Trump and elect the

they came to pinpoint Iran, but the activities attributed to Tehran would mark a significant escalation for a country some

Biden-Harris team on November 3. "They have a plan for the economy and the Coronavirus pandemic," Obama said in his maiden campaign appearance, asserting that the "Biden-Harris team will bring character and leadership back to government". Obama spoke as the sun set, the sky going from pink to gray, framed by the clouds and the Lincoln Financial Field behind him. He stood by himself on stage, far from even the cars in the lot. His podium was sanitized before he spoke. — PTI

cybersecurity experts regard as a second-rate player in online espionage. — AP

## AFTER CHAOTIC DEBATE, TRUMP, BIDEN TRY AGAIN

**Washington, Oct. 22:** After meeting last month in perhaps the most chaotic debate in modern history, President Donald Trump and his Democratic rival, Joe Biden, will take the stage Thursday to give it another go.

The bar to improve upon their last prime-time meeting is low: Their first debate was punctuated by frequent interruptions, mostly from Trump, leaving the two men talking over each other and Biden eventually telling the president to "shut up."

A planned second debate didn't happen after the president was diagnosed with the Coronavirus and refused to participate in a virtual format. Biden and Trump instead participated in duelling town halls. — AP

## Nigerian prison set afire after protesters shot



A general view of smoke arising from the Ikoyi prison that is on fire in Lagos on Thursday. Gunshots could be heard and smoke was billowing from the prison in central Lagos as fresh unrest rocked Nigeria's biggest city after the shooting of protesters. Police close to the scene told AFP that assailants had attacked the detention facility in the upscale Ikoyi neighbourhood. — AFP

## SENATE JUDICIARY PANEL NOD TO DON NOMINEE BARRETT

**Washington, Oct. 22:** The Senate Judiciary Committee pushed through US President Donald Trump's conservative pick for the Supreme Court, Amy Coney Barrett, Thursday as Democrats boycotted the vote saying it was too close to the November 3 election.

The unanimous vote, with all Democrats absent, sets the stage for full Senate approval at the beginning of next week on Barrett, who will tilt the high court firmly to the right.

On Wednesday Democrats labelled the nomination process a "sham" that broke former Republican promises to never vote on a Supreme Court nominee so close to a presidential election.

"My Democratic Senate colleagues and I boycotted the Supreme Court nominee committee vote today," Senator Kamala Harris, a committee member who is the Democratic nominee for vice president, said. "Let's be clear: This nomination process is a sham and shows how Republicans will stop at nothing to strip health care from millions of Americans with pre-existing conditions," she said, referring to Republican efforts to have the Supreme Court strike down a popular national health care program.

But Republican committee chairman Lindsey Graham dismissed their action, and, taking advantage of their absence, moved up the vote by almost four hours.

"That was their choice," he said before the vote.

## Oxford vaccine trial on amid participant's death

**London, Oct. 22:** The University of Oxford says the late-stage trial of its Covid-19 vaccine in Brazil will continue following reports of a participant's death.

The university said it can't comment on specific incidents but an independent review found no reason to be concerned about the safety of the Brazilian trial. It says an "independent review, in addition to the Brazilian regulator, have recommended that the trial should continue." The Oxford vaccine is being developed in conjunction with the international pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca. Trials are underway in the United States and the UK, as well as Brazil, to determine whether the potential vaccine is safe and effective in humans.

A team at Bristol University used recently developed techniques to validate that the vaccine accurately follows the genetic

instructions programmed into it by the Oxford University team.

The experts say that the novel analysis provides even greater clarity and detail about how the vaccine successfully provokes a strong immune response. "This is an important study as we are able to confirm that the genetic instructions underpinning this vaccine, which is being developed as fast as safely possible, are correctly followed when they get into a human cell," said Dr David Matthews, Reader in Virology from Bristol's School of Cellular and Molecular Medicine (CMM), who led the research.

"Until now, the technology hasn't been able to provide answers with such clarity, but we now know the vaccine is doing everything we expected and that is only good news in our fight against the illness," he said. — PTI

## SAKHAROV PRIZE

## Lukashenko won his 6th term in a poll widely seen as rigged EU awards HR prize to Belarus Oppn

**Brussels, Oct. 22:** The European Union has awarded its top human rights prize to the Belarus opposition movement and its leader, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, for their challenge to President Alexander Lukashenko's long, hard-line reign.

"It is an honour to announce that the women and men of the democratic opposition in Belarus are the 2020 Sakharov Prize

laureates," European Parliament president David Sassoli said. They have on their side something that brute force can never defeat: The truth. Do not give up on your fight. We are by your side."

The 27-nation bloc agreed this month to impose sanctions against officials suspected of election misconduct and a brutal security crackdown on protesters in Belarus. The EU has

● **SINCE THE** Aug. 9 polls that handed Lukashenko a victory with 80% of the vote, mass protests have rocked the ex-Soviet nation sandwiched between Poland and Russia.

warned it is ready to sanction Lukashenko himself if he fails to enter into talks with the opposition

# H-1B speciality jobs: US against issuing biz visas

**Washington, Oct. 22:** The State Department has proposed not to issue temporary business visas for H-1B speciality occupations which allowed several companies to send their technology professionals for a short stay to complete jobs on site in the US, a move which could affect hundreds of Indians. The proposal, if finalised, will eliminate any misconception that the "B-1 in lieu of H policy" provides an alternative avenue for foreign professionals to enter the US to perform skilled labour that allows, and potentially even encourages them and their employers to circumvent the restrictions and requirements relating to the H non-immigrant classification established by Congress to protect the US workers, the State Department said.

The move, made public on Wednesday, less than two weeks ahead of the November 3 presidential election, is likely to impact several Indian companies which send their technology professionals on B-1 visas for a short stay to complete jobs on site in the US.

● **THE MOVE,** made public on Wednesday, less than two weeks ahead of the November 3 presidential election, is likely to impact several Indian companies which send their technology professionals on B-1 visas for a short stay to complete jobs on site in the US.

On December 17, 2019, the Attorney General of California announced a \$800,000 settlement against Infosys Limited to resolve allegations that approximately 500 Infosys employees worked in the state on Infosys-sponsored B-1 visas rather than H-1B visas, the State Department said. "The proposed changes and the resulting transparency would reduce the impact of foreign labour on the US workforce of aliens performing activities in a specialty occupation without the procedural protections attendant to the H-1B classification," it said.

In its federal notification issued on Wednesday, the State Department said the

US architecture firm seeking protection from rising labour costs in the country might believe it could lay off its US architects and contract for the same professional architectural services to be provided by a foreign architecture firm. If the foreign firm sought H-1B visas for its architects, it would be required to pay the prevailing wage for architects in the area of intended employment in the United States, presumably the same wage the US architects had been paid, and meet the other requirements enacted by the Congress to protect US workers.

But under the B-1 in lieu of H policy, the foreign architects could ostensibly seek B-1 visas and travel to the US to fill a temporary need for architecture services, as long as they retained a residence in the foreign country and continued to receive a salary, perhaps significantly lower than what is customary for US architects, dispersed abroad by the foreign firm (or under the auspices of a foreign parent or subsidiary), the State Department said. — PTI

# Deport Nawaz: Pakistan requests UK third time

**Islamabad, Oct. 22:** Pakistan has requested the UK for a third time to deport former prime minister Nawaz Sharif from London to serve his prison term in the country after being sentenced in corruption cases, according to a media report on Thursday. Sharif, the 70-year-old supremo of the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) who was ousted from power in 2017 by the Supreme Court on corruption charges, is in London for medical treatment.

A letter for the deportation of the three-time prime minister was handed over personally to the British High Commissioner here some three weeks ago, *Dawn* newspaper reported.

Through the letter, the Pakistani government asked the British authorities to consider cancelling Sharif's visit visa, which has allowed him to live in London on medical grounds since November. The letter has cited Britain's own immigration laws of 1974 under which any person sentenced to imprisonment of more than four years had to be deported to the country of his/her origin. When contacted, Shahzad Akbar, Adviser to Prime Minister Imran Khan on Accountability and Interior confirmed that the government has made three requests to the UK authorities to deport Sharif, with the last being on October 5.

The previous letter, he said, had been dispatched after the cancellation of Sharif's bail by the Islamabad High Court last month. — PTI

# Withdraw from UN N-ban treaty: US to countries

**United Nations, Oct. 22:** The United States is urging countries that have ratified a UN treaty to ban nuclear weapons to withdraw their support as the pact nears the 50 ratifications needed to trigger its entry into force, which supporters say could happen this week. The US letter to signatories, obtained by *The Associated Press*, says the five original nuclear powers — the US, Russia, China, Britain and France — and America's NATO allies "stand unified in our opposition to the potential repercussions" of the treaty.

It says the treaty "turns back the clock on verification and disarmament and is dangerous" to the half-century-old Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, considered the cornerstone of global nonproliferation efforts. "Although we recognize your sovereign right to ratify or accede to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), we believe that 'you have made a strategic error and should withdraw your instrument of ratification or accession,' the letter says.

The treaty requires that all ratifying countries "never under any circumstances ... develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices." It also bans any transfer or use of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices — and the threat to use such weapons — and requires parties to promote the treaty to other countries. Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize-winning coalition whose work helped spearhead the nuclear ban treaty, said Tuesday that several diplomatic sources confirmed that they and other states that ratified the TPNW had been sent letters by the US requesting their withdrawal. She said the "increasing nervousness, and maybe straightforward panic, with some of the nuclear-armed states and particularly the Trump administration" shows that they "really seem to understand that this is a reality: Nuclear weapons are going to be banned under international law soon." — AP

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Donald Trump

## U.S. TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN RETURNING: DON

**Washington, Oct. 22:** The US has had enough of 19 years in Afghanistan, President Donald Trump has said, reiterating that American troops, who are the greatest soldiers in the world but acting as a "police force" in the strife-torn country, are returning.

Trump has repeatedly said that he would bring home all the US troops from "endless wars". It was also one of the promises he made during his 2016 Presidential campaign. Last month, he said that the United States will reduce the number of its troops in Afghanistan to 4,000 in a very short period of time. "We never had anything like it — and sacrificing American blood and treasure in endless foreign wars in countries that you've never even heard of. And they're all coming back. You know that, right? I hope nobody objects," Trump told his supporters on Wednesday at an election rally in Gastonia, in the battleground state of North Carolina.

"I think 19 years in Afghanistan is enough, wouldn't you say? We're like a police force over there. We have the greatest soldiers in the world, but over there we're like a police force. 19 years is enough," he said. "You think it's easy getting out with all the military-industrial complex, right? The military — beware the military-industrial complex. They are right but we are all coming home. — PTI



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	40,558.49	-0.37
Nifty 50	11,896.50	-0.35
S&P 500*	3,436.26	0.02
Dollar (₹)	73.54	0.08
Pound Sterling (₹)	96.57	-0.57
Euro (₹)	87.16	0.09
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,709*624	-1.22
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	42.66	0.93
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.915	0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.826	0.010

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

Bajaj Auto profit declines 18.8% to ₹1,138 cr in Q2

Bajaj Auto on Thursday reported an 18.8 per cent year-on-year decline in July-September quarter standalone profit to ₹1,138.2 crore. This is even in its first full quarter of operations after India eased lockdown curbs as sales continue to remain under pressure. Income from operations declined 7.2 per cent year-on-year to ₹7,156 crore in Q2 FY21, with sales volume declining 10.2 per cent y-o-y to 10.53 lakh units.

Siberia holds world's biggest gold deposits



Polyus PJSC, Russia's largest gold producer, said its untapped Sukhoi Log deposit in Siberia holds the world's biggest reserves. An audit showed Sukhoi Log has 40 million ounces of proven reserves, CEO Pavel Grachev said. That means the field — accounting for more than a quarter of Russian gold reserves — is bigger than Seabridge Gold Inc.'s KSM Project in Canada and Donlin Gold in Alaska.

L&T Finance posts 79% jump in Q2 profit at ₹265 cr

L&T Finance Holdings Ltd has reported a 79 per cent jump in net profit at ₹265.12 crore for the period ended September 30, 2020 as against net profit of ₹148.31 crores for the period ended June 30, 2020. The total income was ₹3,508.91 crore during Q2FY21 as compared to ₹3,397.53 crore during the period ended June 30, 2020. The company has reported EPS of ₹1.32 for the period ended September 30.

NTPC tops PSUs in Forbes' best employer list

State-run power giant NTPC on Thursday said it has featured on the top on the list of Indian PSUs under 'World's Best Employer 2020', published by Forbes. The employers were also judged based on their Covid-19 responses, image, economic footprint, talent development, gender equality and social responsibility. The final list comprised 750 multinational and large corporations headquartered in 45 countries.

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RBI calls for universal QR codes for payment

Sets March 31, 2022 deadline; bans new proprietary codes

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, OCT. 22

In a move that would make it convenient for customers to transact digitally, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday asked Payment System Operators (PSOs) that use proprietary Quick Response (QR) codes to move to one or more interoperable QR codes by March 31, 2022. The RBI also prohibited launch of any new proprietary QR codes by any payment system operator for any payment transaction. The central bank said that the two interoperable

QR codes in existence — UPI QR and Bharat QR shall continue as at present. "The above measures are expected to reinforce the acceptance infrastructure, provide better user convenience due to interoperability and enhance system efficiency," said the central bank in a notification.

A QR code is a machine-readable code consisting of an array of black and white squares typically used for storing large amounts of information and facilitates mobile payments at the point of sale.

"Payment System Operators (PSOs) that use proprietary QR codes

shall shift to one or more interoperable QR codes; the process of migration shall be completed by March 31, 2022. No new proprietary QR codes shall henceforth be launched by any PSO for any payment transaction. The RBI shall continue a consultative process to standardise and improve interoperable QR codes, to enable beneficial features identified by the Phatak Committee," the RBI said.

A key hurdle in expansion of the ecosystem is that several payment operators use their own closed-loop system for payment processing. A close-loop QR system only accepts

payments from the mobile application of its deployer which goes against the principle of interoperability agreement between the third party payment application and the banks that govern the UPI ecosystem.

The RBI had constituted a committee led by Professor Deepak Phatak to review the current system of QR Codes in India and suggest measures for moving towards interoperable QR Codes. The new norms are based on the recommendations of the committee.

The RBI also said the PSOs may take initiative to spread awareness about interoperable QR codes.

Global trade drops 5% in Sept quarter

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, OCT. 22

Despite making some recovery over the June quarter, global trade was still down five per cent in the September quarter. UNCTAD has revised the global trade projection from a decline of 20 per cent to 7-9 per cent drop for 2020. The UN trade body has also noted that India has made four per cent growth in exports in September.

UNCTAD found a five per cent drop in world trade in the third quarter of 2020 is an improvement from a 19 per cent decline witnessed in the second quarter but insufficient to pull trade out of the red.

The trade body expects the frail recovery to continue in the fourth quarter, with a preliminary forecast of three per cent degrowth compared with the last quarter of 2019.

"The uncertain course of the pandemic will continue aggravating trade prospects in the coming months," UNCTAD secretary-general Mukhisa Kituyi said.

"Despite some 'green shoots' we can't rule out a slowdown in production in certain regions or sudden increases in restrictive policies," Kituyi added.

It expects the value of global trade to contract by 7 to 9 per cent with respect to 2019 after revising the earlier projection of a 20 per cent decline.

Since the June quarter, trade trends have improved with earlier than expected resumption of economic activities in Europe and east Asia.

China has in particular restarted its economy much earlier than initially expected.

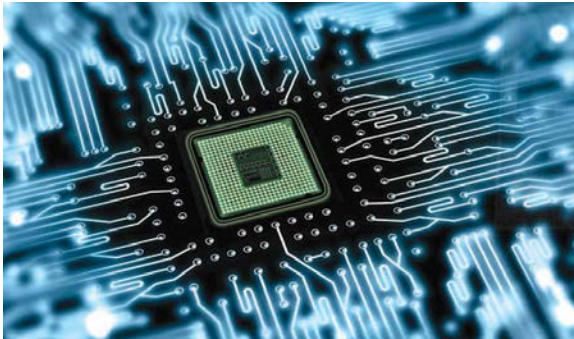
Berlin/Taipei, Oct. 22: On a scorching hot day in late August, representatives of Taiwan's government and industry crowded into the clinical cool of a state-of-the-art semiconductor facility for a symbolic moment in the global tech conflict.

They were attending the opening ceremony for a training centre built by Dutch company ASML Holding at a cost of about \$16 million, small change for an industry used to spending \$10 billion or more on a single advanced manufacturing plant.

The real value of the site in Tainan is strategic: It's one of just two such facilities outside the Netherlands capable of training semiconductor engineers to fabricate cutting-edge chips on ASML machines. Fellow US ally South Korea hosts the other — and Washington is working hard to ensure China never acquires the same technology.

As the US-China confrontation takes root, the ability to craft chips for everything from artificial intelligence and data centers to autonomous cars and smartphones has become an issue of national security, injecting government into business decisions over where to manufacture chips and to whom to sell them. Those tensions could kick into overdrive as Communist Party leaders set a five-year plan that includes developing China's domestic technology industry, notably its chip capabilities.

Semiconductors made from silicon wafers mounted with billions of microscopic transistors are the basic component of modern digital life and the building blocks of innova-



tion for the future. They are arguably one of the world's most important industries, with sales of \$412 billion last year; scale that up to the electronics industry that depends on chips, and it's worth some \$5.2 trillion globally, according to German manufacturers.

At once highly globalised and yet concentrated in the hands of a few countries, the industry has choke points that the US under the presidency of Donald Trump has sought to exploit in order to thwart China's plans to become a world leader in chip production.

Washington says Beijing can only achieve that goal through state subvention at the expense of US industry, while furthering Communist Party access to high-tech tools for surveillance and repression. For both sides, Taiwan, which is responsible for some 70 per cent of chips manufactured to order, is the new front line.

Beijing is increasingly hostile toward Taiwan. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co.'s status as the world's largest contract chipmaker — a trend taking over the industry — the go-to supplier for Apple Inc. and the focus of next-genera-

tion chip-making, adds another dimension to China's enmity.

Just a couple of kilometers from the new training center, cranes dot a massive construction site where TSMC is building "fabs" in which it will manufacture the most advanced chips in the world — chips that are no longer available to China's Huawei Technologies due to US export controls.

China's intentions are so alarming to America because chips can be dual-use items with military applications, according to a former official familiar with the US administration's efforts.

China — the world's biggest semiconductor market, accounting for more than 50 per cent of all chips sold — isn't standing by as its high-tech ambitions are kneecapped.

China's five-year plan for the chip industry will lend it the same strategic importance Beijing gave to its atomic bomb programme. What's more, a law passed on October 17 may allow China to hit back at the United States, with speculation that it could prompt export controls on rare earths used in chip production.

— Bloomberg

Boycott China call fails to hit China handsets 3 in every 4 smartphones sold in India are Chinese

New Delhi, Oct. 22: Smartphone segment in India rebounded after the lockdown to touch an all-time high of 50 million units in September quarter with Chinese companies collectively holding 76 per cent market share, according to research firm Canalys.

All the top five smartphone vendors — Xiaomi, Samsung, Vivo, Realme and Oppo — saw their shipment grow in the third quarter compared to the year-ago period.

"Smartphone shipments in India recovered in Q3 2020, posting 8 per cent growth to 50 million units (from 46.2 million units in year-ago period). This is an all-time record for smartphone shipments in a single quarter in India," Canalys said in a statement.

Xiaomi remained the market leader with 26.1 per cent share, shipping 13.1 million units.

Samsung reclaimed the second place from Vivo,

Ongoing tension between India and China has been a hot topic in the past few months, but we have yet to see a significant impact on purchase decisions of mass market customers

VARUN KANNAN, Canals analyst

with 10.2 million units (20.4 per cent share) — helped by its aggressive product portfolio and pricing strategy in the low-end paid off, it added.

Vivo had 17.6 per cent share (8.8 million units), while Realme had 17.4 per cent share (8.7 million units) and Oppo had 12.1 per cent share (6.1 million units) in the said quarter.

Apple regained momentum in India in the third quarter with double-digit growth to nearly 8,00,000 units.

Despite a call to boycott Chinese products after a

bloody border clash in Ladakh, Chinese vendors collectively comprised 76 per cent of total smartphone shipments this quarter, which has grown from 74 per cent a year ago. This is, however, slightly lower than the June 2020 quarter, when Chinese companies had around 80 per cent cumulative share.

"Ongoing tension between India and China has been a hot topic in the past few months, but we have yet to see a significant impact on purchase decisions of mass market customers," Canals Research Analyst Varun Kannan said.

However, the tensions have caused Chinese smartphone brands to act conservatively in recent months, reducing their marketing spend, and carefully trying to project the image that they are important contributors to, and stakeholders in, the economic future of India, he added. — PTI

Real estate sees hope in future

FC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, OCT. 22

The future sentiments in the real estate market have turned positive for the first time this year, though the current sentiments still remain negative.

The Future Sentiment Score for Q3 2020 of the Knight Frank-Picci-Naredco Real Estate Sentiment Index, which shows the sentiments of the stakeholders of the industry for the next six months, climbed the optimistic zone at 52 points for the first time in 2020. It moved up from 41 in the previous quarter. The Current Sentiments Score, an indicator of past six months, also recorded a significant improvement from the previous quarter low of 22 points to 40 points in Q3 2020.

A score of above 50 signifies 'optimism' in sentiments, a score of 50 means the sentiment is 'same' or 'neutral', while a score below 50 shows 'pessimism'. This revival in sentiments is attributed to the remarkable upturn seen in the real estate business, especially in the residential segment, in the third quarter of 2020 as a result of the unlocking process. In Q3 2020, residential launches and sales bounced back from the Covid-induced decline, across cities. The office sector also resumed operations, at varying occupancies across markets as occupiers took steps to ensure continuity in business operations to their highest potential. These developments have turned the stakeholder outlook on the real estate sector to optimism, as reflected in the Future Sentiment score of Q3 2020.

"Low home loan rates and discounts and attractive offers for residential homes, have pushed sales velocity in the third quarter. While the volumes are yet to catch up to the pre-Covid levels, the spurt has been instrumental in perking up sentiments. Similar positivity is visible for the office sector as well, where we have seen a revival of leasing activities," said Shishir Bajjal, chairman and MD, Knight Frank India.

Firms to become socially responsive

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, OCT. 22

Business organisations are going to become more environmentally-sustainable and make more of a positive impact on society in the economic recovery from Covid-19, a survey by the global body of professional accountants, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) said.

"About 95 per cent of 829 accountants and finance professionals surveyed agreed that finance teams have a role to play in building a more socially inclusive and environ-

mentally sustainable future."

Survey respondents agreed that professional accountants should be involved in understanding social and environmental impacts and dependencies, prioritising creating positive social impact alongside financial returns and in improving risk management of social and environmental issues.

South Asia respondents also said having an understanding and accounting for environmental dependencies and social impact was important for organisations to build a greener and more inclusive world.

DRL servers face cyber attacks

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, OCT. 22

Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd, the country's second drugmaker by market value, said on Thursday that it had isolated all its data centre services as a preventive measure after it detected a cyberattack.

"We are anticipating all services to be up within 24 hours and we do not foresee any major impact on our operations due to this incident," Dr Reddy's chief information officer Mukesh Rathii said, commenting on the development.

The company, which has tied up with Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) for conducting clinical trials of Sputnik-V Covid-19 vaccine in India, did not reveal the source of the attack.

The breach could possibly aimed at accessing classified information from the servers.

As per the tie-up, RDIF will supply 100 million doses of the vaccine to Dr Reddy's upon regulatory approval in India.

According to sources, the company had temporarily closed down its plants in the United States, United Kingdom, Brazil, India and Russia because of the breach.

Honda exports over 2,000 bikes

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, OCT. 22

The emission technology upgrade to BS-VI has Indian OEMs a new opportunity for sales exports. Thus, the made-in-India badge is now expanding its footprint to all corners of the world.

The Japanese automaker Honda Motorcycle & Scooter on Thursday said it has exported more than 2,000 completely knocked down or CKD kits of its next generation 125cc, advanced and stylish bike SP125 to Europe since August 2020.

The company has an export portfolio of 18 two-wheeler models and supplies to 25 export markets led by Asia, Middle East and Latin America.

The SP125 BS VI bike is currently manufactured at the Tapukara plant in Rajasthan, which has a manufacturing capacity of 1.2 million units a year.

The SP125 was the first BS-VI motorcycle launched by Honda in November 2019. It has 19 new patent applications, a completely new 125cc HET engine with eSP technology that delivers 16 per cent more mileage.

MNREGA pulls down employment rate in Oct

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, OCT. 22

After recording a month-on-month recovery till September from the lows of April, the employment rate has once again dropped in the first three weeks of October. The significant drop in MNREGA man-days has pulled down rural jobs and stagnated the employment rate.

The employment rate of 2019-20 stood at 39.4 per cent. It fell to 27.2 per cent in April 2020 but recovered to 30.2 per cent in May. In June, it further recovered to 36.2 per cent and then to 37.6 per cent in July. There was a marginal drop in August to 37.5 per cent, but September once gain saw a recovery to 38 per cent.

However, the first three

weeks of October show signs of continued stress. The employment rates of the first three weeks were 37.6 per cent, 37.5 per cent and 37.9 per cent, as per CMIE's Consumer Pyramids Household Survey.

Fall of the employment rate revealed in the first three weeks of October 2020 is entirely because of a fall in the employment rate in rural India.

The weekly employment rate had touched 39.9 per cent in the week ended September 6. But, in the week ended October 4, the rate was down to 39 per cent and then it slipped further to 38.8 per cent in the week ended October 11. It recovered to 39.5 per cent in the week ended October 18, but was still lower than the September average.

More electric vehicle firms queue up to go public

Detroit, Oct. 22: Missed out on the Tesla rally but still want to surf the electric vehicle wave?

A stream of EV-related startups backed by blank-check firms are lining up to go public so there's plenty of choice. But like Tesla in the early days, few have products ready to sell or any likelihood of generating significant revenue anytime soon.

Instead, investors will be relying on rosy production, sales and revenue forecasts for new cars, trucks and batteries, all

set to be jostling for a slice of markets that will be far more crowded than when Tesla's cars first hit the road.

Take Fisker Inc, for example. It was launched in 2016, just three years after the bankruptcy of its predecessor and early Tesla rival Fisker Automotive. In July, Fisker Inc announced a \$2.9 billion reverse merger deal with Spartan Energy Acquisition Corp, a Special Purpose Acquisition Company (SPAC), and is planning to go public later this year.

● INVESTORS WILL be relying on rosy production, sales and revenue forecasts for new cars, trucks and batteries, all set to be jostling for a slice of markets that will be far more crowded than when Tesla's cars first hit the road.

It has no revenue and its Fisker Ocean electric sports-utility vehicle (SUV) is at least two years away from production in a project heavily dependent on nailing down deals

with partners who will build the car and provide key components.

That's not particularly unique for young companies in the sector looking to use SPACs to go public and bypass the scrutiny of a traditional IPO process, according to company presentations and interviews with executives and investors.

That also didn't seem to be an issue earlier this year when US electric truck maker Nikola Motors used a SPAC to go public. Shares in the com-

pany that hopes to generate revenue next year almost trebled after listing on the Nasdaq exchange.

But they slumped when a short-seller questioned whether founder Trevor Milton had made false claims about Nikola's technology, forcing the 38-year-old entrepreneur to step down as chairman — and making some investors more cautious.

However, Bill Rinna, director of Americas vehicle forecasts at LMC Automotive, projects total U.S. EV sales in 2024 will

just top one million. Tesla could account for half that volume, with GM, Ford and VW taking significant shares as well, analysts say.

Whether fund managers dangling blank-check deals will pursue a more cautious approach in the post-Nikola environment, despite the potential red flags, remains an open question. But with Nikola as a cautionary tale, and Fisker sparking additional concerns, some investors have become more choosy. — Reuters



## SHORT TAKES

## Badminton World Jr event is off

**New Delhi:** The 2020 World Junior Badminton Championship, which was postponed to be held in New Zealand in January, was on Thursday cancelled in wake of Covid-19 pandemic. The competition was originally planned for September-October but was pushed to January amid the raging pandemic.

"...the entry restrictions in place and complexities related to the Covid-19 situation makes it impossible for the event to be planned and therefore hosted in New Zealand in January 2021 as currently scheduled," said Badminton World Federation (BWF) Secretary General Thomas Lund.

However, Badminton New Zealand are still committed to hosting the BWF World Junior Championships and the BWF has accepted a proposal for them to stage the 2024 edition as a replacement for the edition lost. — PTI

## Football great Pele turns 80

**Sao Paulo:** Brazilian football great Pele turns 80 on Friday, but the celebration will have to wait. The three-time World Cup winner will spend the day isolated with a few family members outside Sao Paulo, where he is expected to receive a flood of tributes from players, fans, celebrities and politicians.

His long-time spokesman, Pepito Fornos, said Pele will likely spend his birthday at his mansion in the beachfront city of Guarujá, on the coast of Sao Paulo state, where he has been since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. He also has residences in Santos and Sao Paulo. He will only stay with his family.

Fornos said Pele isn't speaking publicly because he is still mourning his brother Jair, who died of cancer in March. — AP

## World's top trio sign for Big Bash

**Sydney:** All three of the world's top-ranked Twenty20 players have signed on for Australia's Big Bash League with Afghan spin king Rashid Khan Thursday confirming his return to the Adelaide Strikers.

The 10th season of the eight-franchise tournament is set to start on December 3 and end with the final on February 6, with the Sydney Sixers defending their title.

Rashid will be back for a Strikers side coached by Jason Gillespie. His return follows the signings this week of England's top-ranked batsman David Malan for the Hobart Hurricanes and Afghan allrounder Mohammad Nabi by the Melbourne Renegades. Others on board include English internationals Alex Hales (Sydney Thunder), Tom Banton (Brisbane Heat) and Tom Curran (Sydney Sixers). — AFP

## Tennis champ Julia calls it a day

**Berlin:** Germany's Julia Goerges, a Wimbledon semi-finalist in 2018, announced her retirement from tennis on Wednesday.

"I have always known that I would feel it when the right time has come to say goodbye — and the moment is here," the 31-year-old, currently ranked 45th in the world, posted on social media.

Her highest ranking was ninth in the world two years ago, when the season she lost to Serena Williams in the semi-finals at Wimbledon. — AFP

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**IPL:** Chennai Super Kings vs Mumbai Indians from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

## FORMULA ONE

**Portuguese Grand Prix:** Practice 1 from 2.25 pm; Practice 2 from 6.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Aston Villa vs Leeds United from 12.30 am (Saturday) on Star Sports Select 2, HD

**Italian League:** Sassuolo vs Torino from 12.15 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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## Sun too hot for RR

## Holder, Pandey script warm win against Royals

**Dubai, Oct. 22:** Sunrisers Hyderabad defeated Rajasthan Royals by eight wickets in their Indian Premier League match here on Thursday.

Sent into bat, Rajasthan Royals scored 154 for 6 in the allotted 20 overs. In reply, SRH chased down the target with 11 balls overs to spare at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium.

Manish Pandey top-scored for the winners with an unbeaten 83 off 47 balls while Jason Holder was the most impressive bowler with excellent figures of 3/33 in four overs. Sunrisers opted to bowl after winning the toss at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium.

Playing his first match of the tournament, Holder came up with an impressive bowling effort while also affecting a run out to destabilise the RR innings. Rashid Khan (1/20) and Vijay Shankar (1/15) picked a wicket each.

For RR, Sanju Samson (36 off 26 balls) was the top scorer. Put in to bat, Robin Uthappa looked in rampaging form, hitting the first four and six of the innings. He quickly raced to 19 off 13 balls.

However, his time in the middle was short lived. After Ben Stokes (32) hit Holder for back-to-back boundaries in the fourth over, the West Indies skipper effected Uthappa's run out as the Indian was late to turn back at the non-striker's end. — PTI



Manish Pandey of Sunrisers Hyderabad hits a six against Rajasthan Royals during their IPL match at Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Thursday. — BCCI

## SCORECARD

**Rajasthan Royals:** Robin Uthappa run out 19, Ben Stokes b Rashid Khan 30, Sanju Samson b Jason Holder 36, Jos Buttler c Nadeem b Vijay Shankar 9, Steve Smith c Pandey b Holder 19, Riyan Parag c David Warner b Holder 20, Rahul Tewatia not out 2, Jofra Archer not out 16. Extras: (W-2) 2. Total (for 6 wickets in 20 overs) 154.

**FOW:** 1-30, 2-86, 3-86, 4-110, 5-134, 6-135. **Bowling:** Sandeep Sharma 4-0-31-0, J. Holder 4-0-33-3, Vijay Shankar 3-0-15-1, T. Natarajan 4-0-46-0, Rashid Khan 4-0-

20-1, Shahbaz Nadeem 1-0-9-0.

**Sunrisers Hyderabad:** David Warner c Ben Stokes b Jofra Archer 4, Jonny Bairstow b Jofra Archer 10, Manish Pandey not out 83, Vijay Shankar not out 52. Extras: (LB-1, W-6) 7. Total (for 2 wickets in 18.1 overs) 156.

**FOW:** 1-4, 2-16. **Bowling:** Jofra Archer 4-0-21-2, Ankit Singh Rajpoot 1-0-11-0, Kartik Tyagi 3-1-0-42-0, Ben Stokes 2-0-24-0, Shreyas Gopal 4-0-32-0, Rahul Tewatia 4-0-25-0.

## IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Delhi Capitals	10	7	3	0	14	+0.774
Royal Challengers Bangalore	10	7	3	0	14	+0.182
Mumbai Indians	9	6	3	0	12	+1.201
Kolkata Knight Riders	10	5	5	0	10	-0.828
Sunrisers Hyderabad	10	4	6	0	8	+0.092
Kings XI Punjab	10	4	6	0	8	-0.177
Rajasthan Royals	11	4	7	0	8	-0.620
Chennai Super Kings	10	3	7	0	6	-0.463

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

## MCCULLUM NOT HAPPY WITH KKR APPROACH

**Abu Dhabi, Oct. 22:** Disappointed with his team's "timid approach" with the bat, Kolkata Knight Riders head coach Brendon McCullum has admitted that the crushing defeat against Royal Challengers Bangalore would definitely affect the morale of the side, but their destiny is still in their hands.

He believes KKR can go all the way to the final, despite just hanging on to the fourth spot.

McCullum admitted that they were not good enough and lacked intent in the lop-sided contest against RCB.

"This (loss) is going to affect a little bit in terms of our confidence. We need to work hard on ensuring our morale doesn't drop at the same time having those honest conversations around how we improve," McCullum said. — PTI

## Virat handing me new ball boosted confidence: Siraj

**Abu Dhabi, Oct. 22:** Royal Challengers Bangalore pacer Mohammed Siraj, who ripped through Kolkata Knight Riders' top-order with a "magical performance", said skipper Virat Kohli's surprise decision to hand him the new ball lifted his confidence in the IPL match here.

Siraj's first three wickets came without conceding a run as he became the first bowler in IPL history to bowl two maidens in a single game. RCB restricted KKR to a paltry 84/8 and chased down the target in 13.3 overs.

Once Chris Morris generated swing early on, Siraj was asked to bowl the second over following a discussion with wicket-keeper AB de Villiers.

"We hadn't planned that I would open but when we went out, Virat bhai said 'Miyan, ready ho jao (Sir, get ready!),' you will have



Mohammed Siraj (right) of Royal Challengers Bangalore and captain Virat Kohli.

to bowl..." It boosted my confidence," the Hyderabad pacer said.

"Initially, I didn't think it would swing so much after seeing the wicket. I just backed my strength and really enjoyed a lot," he added.

Brought in the second over, Siraj struck in his third ball with a good

length ball that went away of Rahul Tripathi.

In his next delivery, he cleaned up Nitish Rana and in the next over, he accounted for Tom Banton with another outswinging delivery.

His bowling figures became the most economical this season.

— PTI

## 'SLOW WICKET ALLOWS ME TO ATTACK MORE'

**Sharjah, Oct. 22:** MI leg-spinner Rahul Chahar on Thursday said the pitches getting gradually slower in the UAE and bigger grounds than India has allowed him to attack the batsmen consistently in the IPL.

Chahar has taken 11 wickets in nine games with a decent economy rate of 7.40.

Asked to compare between the pitches here and the Wankhede in Mumbai, Chahar said, "In the starting matches, we felt that the wickets (here) were similar to the Wankhede stadium easy for batsmen."

"Like at Wankhede a spinner had to bowl on a shorter side, like five meter length, but here we are bowling fuller, because the grounds are big and pitches are slightly slow, we can bowl fuller, and can attack batsmen," added Chahar. — PTI

## CSK up against formidable MI

**Sharjah, Oct. 22:** Their campaign turning from bad to worse, CSK are expected to try out a few of their younger players when they take on defending champions MI in an IPL match here on Friday.

Though skipper M. S. Dhoni conceded after the loss against RR that the season might be already over them, CSK can still get to 14 points if they win their remaining four games, giving them an outside chance of making the play-offs.

Things have gone pear-shaped for CSK since their win over MI in the tournament opener on November 19.

The team received a hammering at the hands of RR and would be without the services of the injured Dwayne Bravo, who is out of the tournament.

Dhoni himself has not been at his best along with the others barring Faf du Plessis.

However, they would be up against a formidable MI side which won five games in a row before KXIP halted the juggernaut, turning the tables in a double Super Over on Sunday night.

The four-time IPL champions have been in ominous form and the varied bowling attack could prove a challenge for the CSK batters, who are low on confidence.

Also, the MI batting line-up has been in good nick

## NUMBERS GAME

## HEAD TO HEAD

## OVERALL:

- Matches: 29
- Mumbai: 17
- Chennai: 12

## MEETING IN 2019

- Mumbai Indians defeated Chennai Super Kings by 37 runs at Mumbai (League)
- Mumbai Indians beat Chennai Super Kings by 46 runs at Chennai (League)
- Mumbai Indians beat Chennai Super Kings by 6 wickets at Chennai (Qualifier 1)
- Mumbai Indian beat Chennai Super Kings by one run at Hyderabad (final)

## MEETING IN 2020

- Chennai Super Kings beat Mumbai Indians by 5 wickets at Abu Dhabi

## FOR THE RECORD

- Rohit Sharma who scored 3988 runs at an average of 31.65 and a strike rate of 130.54 in 148 innings of 152 matches, needs just 12 runs to become the first batsman to score 4000 or more runs for Mumbai Indians in IPL.
- Ravindra Jadeja who claimed 85 wickets at an average of 26.60 in 99 innings of 112 matches, will become the first Chennai Super Kings player to bowl in 100 innings in IPL.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

with Quinton de Kock in splendid form while Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan have had their moments. That's not all, the power-hitting abilities of Kieron Pollard and Hardik Pandya have rescued Mumbai Indians when the big guns have not fired. — PTI

## INDIAN TEAM ALLOWED TO TRAIN IN QUARANTINE

**Sydney, Oct. 22:** Sydney and Canberra are set to host the white-ball leg of India's tour of Australia after the New South Wales government allowed the visiting team to train during its mandatory quarantine upon arrival.

ESPNNricinfo on Thursday reported that New South Wales government and Cricket Australia have struck a deal to allow Indian and Australian players returning from IPL to train in Sydney while quarantining.

The Indian team was initially supposed to land in Brisbane but the Queensland state health authorities did not relax their 14-day quarantine rule to allow Virat Kohli and Co to train during that period.

India are scheduled to play three T20s, three ODIs and four Tests in Australia. The first two ODIs are set to be held on November 27 and 29 at the Sydney Cricket Ground before final game of the series in Canberra's Manuka Oval. The first T20 will also be played in Canberra.

The pink-ball Test will be at Adelaide from December 17 to 21. The Boxing Day Test from December 26 could also be held in Adelaide if the Covid-19 situation in Melbourne doesn't allow the authorities to host the game at the iconic MCG. — PTI

## ICC mulls splitting points for WTC

**Dubai, Oct. 22:** Aiming to complete the World Test Championship cycle and host the final in June as per schedule, the ICC is contemplating splitting points for all those WTC bilateral series that had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The matter is likely to come up for discussion at its Cricket Committee meeting next month. ESPNNricinfo has reported.

According to the website, while one of the options is splitting points, the other feasible option could be considering the points for only those matches that will actually be played by the end of March, 2021.

Based on those matches till March, the final posi-

tions on the points table could be computed based on the percentage of points the teams have won from the matches that they've contested.

As of now, each series carries 120 points and depending on the number of matches, two, three, four or five, the points are distributed.

For a two-Test series, winner gets 60 per match and 30 for a draw. For a three-match series, it is 40 and 20 for win and draw. For a four-match rubber, it is 30 and 15 while for a maximum of five-game event, it would be 24 and 12 points. The points split system that they are mulling will be distributing one third of the total points for the postponed series.—PTI

## Reds pip Ajax, City win big

**Paris, Oct. 22:** Bayern Munich began their defence of the Champions League title in ominous fashion by crushing Atletico Madrid 4-0 on Wednesday, while Liverpool and Manchester City also won but Real Madrid suffered a shock defeat.

Liverpool shook off the absence of Virgil van Dijk to edge Ajax 1-0 behind closed doors in Amsterdam in Group 'D'.

Van Dijk is set to miss the rest of the season with a knee injury but Jurgen Klopp's side kept a clean sheet and took all three points after Nicolas Tagliafico turned a wayward Sadio Mane shot into his own net on 35 minutes. Madrid, the record 13-time European champions,

THE RESULTS			
<b>Bayern Munich</b> (Coman 28, 72, Goretzka 41, Tolisso 66)	<b>4</b>	<b>Manchester City</b> (Sergio Aguero 20-pen, Ilkay Gundogan 65, Ferran Torres 73)	<b>3</b>
<b>Atletico Madrid</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>FC Porto</b> (Diaz 14)	<b>1</b>
<b>Real Madrid</b> (Modric 54, Vinicius Junior 59)	<b>2</b>	<b>Inter Milan</b> (Lukaku 49, 90)	<b>2</b>
<b>Shakhtar Donetsk</b> (Tete 29, Varane 33-og, Solomon 42)	<b>3</b>	<b>Borussia Moenchengladbach</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Ajax</b> (Tagliafico 35-og)	<b>0</b>	<b>Ramy Bensebaini 63-pen, Jonas Hofmann 84)</b>	<b>1</b>

went down to a 3-2 home loss against Shakhtar Donetsk.

Two months after scoring the winner in the final against Paris Saint-Germain in Lisbon, Kingsley Coman put Bayern ahead against Atletico in Group A and later scored a stunning

individual effort to wrap up the victory at an empty Allianz Arena.

In between Leon Goretzka and Corentin Tolisso were also on target for the German champions, with the latter's strike a stunner from long-range.

Meanwhile, Real were 3-0 down at half-time against

Shakhtar at the Alfredo di Stefano stadium and fell short with a second-half fightback to get their European campaign off to a disastrous start.

Strikes from Tete and Manor Solomon, either side of a Raphael Varane own-goal, gave them a three-goal half-time lead. — AFP



Sergio Aguero (left) of Manchester City and his teammate Ilkay Gundogan (centre) fight for the ball with Porto's Pepe during their Champions League Group 'C' match at the Etihad stadium in Manchester on Wednesday. City won 3-1. — AFP