

SHORT TAKES

SCR SAYS NO
FIRECRACKERS
IN TRAINSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 10

South Central Railway issued a travel advisory to all the rail passengers in view of Diwali festival not to carry inflammable/explosive materials and firecrackers in trains endangering the safety of passengers and also the railway assets.

In a release issued on Tuesday, the SCR said that transport of dangerous and offensive goods was prohibited under section 67 and also punishable under sections 164 and 165 of Railways Act, 1989.

PROGRAMME BY
APSSDC ON SKILL
DEVELOPMENTDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 10

The AP State Skill Development Corporation launched industry customised training and placement programme for unemployed youth at Remalle of Bapulapadu Mandal in Krishna district on Tuesday. APSSDC chief general manager A.V.S. Krishna Mohan said that APSSDC with the collaboration of Mohan Spintex India started the training programme under which training is offered to Class X to degree aspirants as weaving operator and to below Class X as spinning operator.

TD DEMANDS CBI
PROBE IN MUSLIM
FAMILY SUICIDEDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 10:

Telugu Desam demanded handing over of Abdul Salaam family's suicide case to CBI, setting of a special court at Nandyal and dismissal of officials from services responsible for the family suicide.

TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday addressing a meeting of the party presidents of 25 Lok Sabha constituencies on Tuesday blamed the YSRC government's continued harassment for the joint suicide of Abdul Salaam family in Nandyal in Kurnool district.

INTERNAL
SQUABBLES IN
TD RESURFACEDC CORRESPONDENT
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM, NOV. 10

Internal disputes in the Telugu Desam have suddenly surfaced in Rajamahendravaram as the senior TD leader, Rajamahendravaram Rural MLA. Also, TD politburo member Gorantla Buchaiah Chowdary announced his brother G. Santharam's son Dr Raviram Kiran as his political heir. He also said that Dr Raviram Kiran would see the Rajamahendravaram urban and Greater Rajamahendravaram politics and he can solve the party cadre and people's problems.

It is said that a proxy war is going on between Gorantla Buchaiah Chowdary and the former MLC Adireddy Appa Rao's family. Adireddy Appa Rao's son Adireddy Vasu was appointed as the TDP Organising Secretary and Vasu's wife Adireddy Bhavni is the MLA of Rajamahendravaram Urban assembly constituency. There was a big debate going on in the TD circles and also other political circles with the announcement of Mr Buchaiah Chowdary. Mr Buchaiah Chowdary was elected as Rajamahendravaram City for four times and two times from Rajamahendravaram Rural, which is a stronghold of Mr Buchaiah Chowdary. In 2014 elections, the TDP Chief N. Chandrababu Naidu had given Rajamahendravaram Rural ticket to Mr Buchaiah Chowdary as the Rajamahendravaram urban constituency was allocated to BJP in alliance. However, in 2019 elections also, the Rural constituency ticket was given to Mr Buchaiah Chowdary and Rajamahendravaram urban ticket was given to Adireddy Bhavani as Adireddy Appa Rao joined TD again after quitting the YSRC party.

"The party does not belong to one family. Some of the leaders in Rajamahendravaram are insulting me and my followers and the TD cadre," said Mr Buchaiah Chowdary.

Victory dance



BJP leaders and activists burst firecrackers after sharing sweets at state office after winning Dubbaka byelection in Telangana, Madhya Pradesh byelections, and Bihar elections, in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Domestic traffic picking
up at Tirupati int'l airport

Passenger footfalls increasing from 6,811 in June to 22,322 in Sept.

AVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, NOV. 10

Domestic air passenger traffic at Tirupati International Airport is showing gradual recovery, with passenger footfalls increasing from 6,811 in June to 22,322 in September. The figure, however, indicates an overall decline of 64 per cent on a year-on-year basis owing to Covid-19 pandemic.

The number of flights operating has increased to 310 in September from 168 in June. This too indicates a year-on-year decline of

about 59 per cent.

According to a report of Airports Authority of India (AAI), domestic air passenger traffic showed a gradual recovery in September, registering a growth of 23.3 per cent over August, while the aircraft movement marginally increased to 11.5 per cent.

Incidentally, flights in India had remained grounded for about two months between March and May, as part of Government of India's measures to curb the spread of Coronavirus. Domestic air services, however, had resumed in

late May, with flights operating with only third of their total capacity, which subsequently increased in a phased manner.

Number of flights operated from Tirupati Airport in May stood at 18, with only 916 passengers. Air traffic gradually increased during the subsequent months.

June saw 168 aircrafts landing with 6,811 passengers, followed by 228 aircrafts and 11,040 footfalls in July, 278 aircrafts and 18,108 passengers in August and 310 aircrafts and 22,341 footfalls in September.

Departures between

April and September 2020 had been 1,002, significantly lower than departures of 5,502 during the same period last year, showing a year-on-year decline of 81.8 per cent.

Similarly, the number of passengers from April to September 2020 was 59,216, as against 4,39,362 passengers during the same period last year, the Y-o-Y decline being 86.5 per cent.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Tirupati Airport director S. Suresh said passenger footfalls at Tirupati Airport has been rising consistently since the government lifted curbs on air travel, fol-

lowed by resumption of darshan for devotees at Tirumala Temple.

"Though the growth is very limited compared to the same period last year, we feel it is a good improvement while the pandemic is still around. AAI is taking all Covid-19 precautions at all airports. Airlines on their part are giving masks and sanitisers to every passenger, especially PPE kits to non-family middle seat passengers. This has helped airlines gain the trust of passengers. As a result, passenger traffic has been rising consistently", the airport director added.

Bone marrow, liver
transplants included
Aarogyasri schemeDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 10

AP has included the expensive bone marrow and liver transplant procedures in Aarogyasri, providing a ray of hope to needy patients.

The inclusion is on orders issued by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy during a review meeting on YSR Aarogyasri scheme held here on Tuesday.

He asked officials to identify hospitals where these procedures can be efficiently taken up, thereby providing a new lease of life to bone marrow and liver transplant patients.

The Chief Minister directed authorities to ensure that all Aarogyasri network hospitals are accredited with the National Accreditation Board of Hospitals. He instructed officials to monitor services of Aarogyasri empanelled hospitals to ensure that they provide nutritious

food and transport facility to the patient from hospital to home after discharge.

With regard to ANMs, Mr Jagan asked officials to train them in medical procedures generally required at the village level. He said ANMs should be able to receive patients and guide them to a doctor based on their ailments through telemedicine. He instructed officials to be vigilant and strengthen telemedicine call centre in the state. Doctors should be available round the clock for telemedicine services. They must be able to attend whenever a patient or ANM calls.

Officials explained to the Chief Minister implementation of Aarogyasri scheme in the state. They informed him that so far, 1.35 crore smart health cards have been issued and 716 medical procedures are also being made available at 130 hospitals in Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai.

Missing woman case
solved after 2 yearsDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, NOV. 10

The Guntur urban police resolved the mystery behind the missing woman after two years by arresting her lover for her merciless murder, cutting the body into parts with electric floor/tile cutter and burning those parts. Addressing a press meet, Guntur urban SP R.N. Ammi Reddy said that 28-

year-old Sk. Nazima was missing from her home on May 25, 2018 and her mother Meerabi lodged a complaint with the police but the investigation was pending. Recently the case was reopened and the police cracked the mystery behind the missing case.

The police during reinvestigation found Nazima and Sk. Karim alias Nagur were classmates during polytechnic.

More places claim to be
Hanuman's birthplace

FROM PAGE 1

"Accordingly, that place is now called as Bedi (hand-cuffed) Anjaneya Swamy Temple, which is located exactly opposite the Tirumala Temple. It is for this reason that the idol of Lord Hanuman in the temple is seen in the unique form of both hands being handcuffed," the EO underlined.

Further, he said, Lord Anjaneya's mother Anjana Devi later sent her son to stay with his maternal uncle Sugriva at Kishkindha Hills. "Till going to Sugriva's place, Lord Hanuman spent his entire childhood at Anjanadri Hills," he emphasised.

The TTD EO maintained that when this and several other historical references are supporting Hanuman Janmabhoomi

● There are also claims that the birthplace of Lord Hanuman is Anjaneyadri Hill in Hampi, which lies in the centre of Aneondi area in Karnataka. Further, Anjaneri Hills at Triambakeshwar near Nashik in Maharashtra is also considered the birthplace of Lord Hanuman.

● According to TTD, the birthplace of Lord Hanuman is right in AP at Anjanadri Hills

being in Tirumala, such a historical place of Hindu worship needs to be promoted in a big way. Thus, the Devasthanams want to develop Anjanadri Hills near Akasaganga Teertham into a major destination for spiritual tourists.

Jawahar Reddy said, "We are currently working out modalities to promote Hanuman Janmabhoomi in a big way. Our officials and experts have been asked to thoroughly deliberate for taking the concept forward, as it is an important initiative, which is part of Hindu Dharma Prachara."

Incidentally, there are also claims that the birthplace of Lord Hanuman is Anjaneyadri Hill in Hampi, which lies in the centre of Aneondi area in Karnataka. Further, Anjaneri Hills at Triambakeshwar near Nashik in Maharashtra is also considered the birthplace of Lord Hanuman.

However, according to TTD, the birthplace of Lord Hanuman is right in AP at Anjanadri Hills on Tirumala.

Health infra worst
under TD rule: CM

FROM PAGE 1

He went on to assure that one nursing college and a teaching hospital will be set up in every parliamentary constituency.

The Chief Minister pointed to the poor state of medical care under the previous Telugu Desam dispensation, including inadequate infrastructure facilities from primary health centres to district hospitals, surgeries under cellphone lights, death of a newborn due to rodent bite, non-payment of dues to Aarogyasri hospitals, poor state of 104 and 108 vehicles and zero health-care facilities at villages.

Mr Reddy pointed out that Aarogyasri of AP will be available even outside AP at 130 super-specialty hospitals in Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai cities. Under Aarogyasra Asara, patients who undergo surgeries are being given financial aid of up to ₹5,000 per month during their recuperating period. Special pensions of ₹10,000 per month are being given to those suffering from chronic ailments like thalassemia, cancer and kidney disorders. In addition, 510 medicines approved by World Health Organisation (WHO) are being made available in

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Mr Reddy directed officials to pay special attention to implementation of Aarogyasri scheme and ensure that Aarogyasra Asara is made available without fail to patients. He asked authorities to involve Aarogyasra Mitras at all Aarogyasri-empanelled hospitals by December 10 for creating awareness among public. On the occasion, the Chief Minister launched the Aarogyasri App in both English and Telugu languages. Deputy chief minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas, minister Botsa Satyanarayana, chief secretary Nilam Sawhney, principal (Health) secretary Anil Kumar Singhal, commissioner for Health and Family Welfare Katamaneni Bhasker, Aarogyasri CEO Mallikarjun, and other officials were present at the event.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy launches newly covered 2,434 medical procedures in 6 districts under the Aarogyasri scheme from camp office on Tuesday.

Donor's healthcare
costs ₹1.5 to ₹2 lakh

FROM PAGE 1

Says M. Tripura of Kakinada, "As is, it is very difficult to get a kidney donor. The medical bill for providing medicare to donor itself ranges from ₹1.5 lakh to ₹2 lakh, spread over a period of six months. Many patients, who belong to below poverty line and middle class, are unable to bear expenses for the donor. Thus, the government should cover under Aarogyasri medical expenses incurred on donors also," Tripura stated.

There are also pleas from patients that Aarogyasri should cover multi-diseases when a patient undergoes treatment. For example, when a patient goes in for cardiac-related surgery, s/he may face other complications, such as renal issues.

In such cases, hospitals authorities maintain that

expenses related only to cardiac issues will come under Aarogyasri. Patients will have to pay for the treatment of other diseases from their pocket. Such patients too have appealed to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to extend Aarogyasri to cover multi-diseases within an individual when he undergoes treatment for a particular ailment.

Dr YSR Aarogyasri officials maintain that under the scheme, patients with only 138 diseases can avail coverage for post-operative treatment and follow-up medicines. The same is not applicable for other diseases. For instance, if a person suffers a fracture, s/he cannot get post-operative medical care.

Officials clarified that when it comes to kidney transplantations, medical treatment of donors is not covered under Aarogyasri.

FLOOD | DAMAGE | East Godavari district incurred a loss of ₹2,442cr: Collector

Central teams visit Godavari districts

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, NOV. 10

Inter-Ministerial Central Teams toured in East and West Godavari districts to assess the damage caused by the recent floods and heavy rains. The members of the team visited many areas in the districts and interacted with the officials, farmers and the victims.

They said that they would submit the report on the damage to the Central government.

In West Godavari, the central team members, the deputy director of Power O.P. Suman, Agriculture, Cooperation,

Farmers Welfare Joint Director K. Ponnusamy, Minister of Jalshakti Director P. Devendra Rao and others visited West Godavari district. They visited Nandamuru village of Tadepalligudem and observed the paddy fields which were affected by breaching of Yerrakaluva. The joint collector of west Godavari K. Venkatarami Reddy said that the paddy fields were damaged and there will be no yield for the crop in this Kharif season. The horticulture deputy director Mr Subbarao said that horticulture crops in 2,035 hectares had been damaged in the district due to

stagnation of waters more than 10 days in the fields. Roads and Building Department officials said that Madhavaram-Kamsalipalem bridge collapsed due to flooding of Yerrakaluva.

The team members told the media that paddy and also other crops had been damaged due to the calamities, and it was observed that the paddy fields were in stagnated waters.

He said that the officials in the West Godavari district cleared their doubts and the farmers also explained their problems to them. They said that they visited Polavaram

and observed Godavari bund, which was damaged.

The West Godavari district collector Revu Muthyala Raju felicitated the central team members.

In East Godavari district, the Union home affairs and fisheries joint secretary Sourav Ray, rural development assistant commissioner Ayush Punia, road transport, highway minister superintendent Mr Sravan Kumar Singh and financial consultant R.B. Koul visited the district. They toured Podagatlapalli, Ramakapet, Komarajulanka, Badugu Vani Lanka, Kandrakota, Jonnada and

other villages and observed the agriculture and horticulture fields, damaged roads, bridges and others.

Giving a PowerPoint presentation on the losses during the floods and rains in August, September and October, East Godavari collector D. Muralidhar Reddy said that the district incurred a loss of ₹2,442 crore, including ₹422.6 crore for agriculture and horticulture, ₹2,019 crore for infrastructure facilities and others. He said that the ₹2,000 for each victim had been given as financial assistance through village volunteers.

IN BRIEF

LEFT STRIKE RATE BETTER THAN CONGRESS'

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, NOV. 10

If any single block has gained phenomenally in the battle for Bihar it is undoubtedly the three Left parties — the CPI(Marxist), CPI and CPI-ML (Liberation).

The three parties fought as part of the RJD-led Mahagathbandhan, but their strike-rate was far better than the other alliance partner, Congress, which fought 70 and is on its way to winning only 20.

According to the Election Commission, the Left parties were leading in 18 of the 29 seats they contested in the Bihar Assembly election.

Out of this, the major gainer was the CPI-ML (Liberation) which was leading in or had won 13 seats out of the 19 it fought. The CPI(M) was ahead in two out of the four it contested and the CPI in three out of six.

The RJD had stuck its neck out and gave the Left 29 seats despite objections from other alliance partners. Some of the seats contested by the Left had been won by the RJD in the last Assembly polls.

In 2015, the CPI-ML (Liberation) had grabbed three seats while the other two Left parties drew a blank. Only the CPI-ML (Liberation) had an understanding with the RJD in 2015, and not the other two Left parties.

According to Dipankar Bhattacharya, general-secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, "The leads so far are on expected lines and we hope to catch up in three more seats. This was a different kind of election. This was more a people's movement. We banked on young candidates, student leaders, candidates who were part of farmer struggles, working class people. That seems to have worked".

The Left parties fielded candidates from Agiaon, Arrah, Arwal, Balrampur, Bibhutipur, Darauli, Daraundha, Dumraon, Ghosi, Karakat, Manjhi, Matihani, Paliganj, Tarari, Ziradei, Bachhwara, Bakhti, among other places.

According to CPI, general-secretary D. Raja, while the alliance with the two parties has helped in vote conversion, what has also led to the good performance is the cadre base of the three parties that helped spread the reach of the Mahagathbandhan.

NITISH WILL GET POST BECAUSE OF US: SHIV SENA

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, NOV. 10

Maharashtra's ruling party Shiv Sena has said that Nitish Kumar should thank the Uddhav Thackeray-led party should he become the Bihar chief minister again.

Commenting on the results of Bihar assembly polls senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said, "If Nitish Kumar becomes the CM again with the BJP's support despite securing less number of seats, he should give credit to Shiv Sena, which has shown in Maharashtra what happens when you break your promise."

In Bihar, Mr Kumar's Janata Dal United (JDU) party has been relegated to a third position. Though the BJP leadership has made it clear that Nitish will be the CM again, the local leaders have demanded that the saffron party should stake its claim on the top post.

Mr Raut said, "The BJP has to give the chief minister's post to Nitish Kumar, as the tricks of breaking the word will not happen in Bihar. Because of the counter blow given by the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, the BJP cannot afford to repeat its game in Bihar."

Last year, the Shiv Sena broke its alliance with the BJP after the Vidhan Sabha polls over a dispute on the Chief Minister's post and joined hands with the NCP and Congress to form the MVA government headed by Mr Thackeray. According to Sena, the BJP had promised to share the CM post before the polls, but later backtracked.

Mr Raut also said actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death had no impact on polls. "I don't think, the case in Maharashtra would have helped any party in Bihar. The election was fought on issues like development, unemployment, health, education etc and the credit for it goes to Tejashwi Yadav," he said.

Nitish, NDA apple cart upset by Chirag

Chirag Paswan's negative campaign against Nitish Kumar reduced the NDA's tally in Bihar elections

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, NOV. 10

LJP Chief Chirag Paswan's aggressive campaign against Chief Minister Nitish Kumar affected the JD(U)'s tally during the assembly elections. The results show that the JD(U) has slipped to number three position in the state after BJP and RJD. The situation also raises questions about Nitish Kumar's role in the NDA after the results.

The BJP, however, met Nitish Kumar in the evening to discuss future strategies. When asked whether the BJP was comfortable in accepting Nitish Kumar as its Chief Ministerial face despite its falling tally MoS Home Nityanand Rai said, "the party extends its thanks to the people who voted for the NDA during the assembly elections. NDA is intact and there is no problem with our leadership issue in Bihar".

The BJP emerged as a single largest party in the state with 74 seats while its partner JD(U) managed to win 43 seats. Two NDA partners Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) and Vikasheel Insan Party (VIP) also managed to win 4 seats each during the polls. Jitan Ram Manjhi's HAM had fielded candidates on 7 seats and Mukesh Sahani's VIP was given 11 seats from the BJP quota.

However, Chirag Paswan who campaigned aggressively against Nitish Kumar's party JD(U) failed to open an account in the state. "In the current scenario, the BJP would be needing JD(U)'s support to form a government in the state comfortably. It is also clear now that the NDA's tally would have been better if Chirag Paswan had not fielded candidates against the JD(U)", political observers said.

Reports suggest that the JD(U) has urged the BJP central leadership to act against the LJP "for creating confusion by launching a negative campaign against Nitish Kumar and his party".

A day after quitting the NDA citing ideological differences with Nitish Kumar, Chirag Paswan had written an open letter urging people "not to waste a single vote" for the JD(U) nominee. Ahead of the polls, Chirag had also distributed symbols and tickets to sitting BJP MLAs who seats had gone to the JD(U).

The BJP in face-saving tactics had later issued a letter condemning the act and expelled its leaders for abandoning the party for joining hands with LJP ahead of polls.

Despite initiating action against its leaders, the move was seen as BJP's tactics to create an alternative against Nitish Kumar who has been facing massive anti-incumbency.

Political experts said that "the BJP tried to create an alternative in the state as it was aware of the anti-incumbency against Nitish Kumar. The saffron party feared that the voters may towards the grand alliance".

'Nitish butchered like Abhimanyu'

SANJAY BASAK | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 10

If there's a major loser in the keenly fought Bihar elections, it is Nitish Kumar. Bihar's wily old fox, who always came out on top, was ambushed by the BJP, which used Lok Janshakti Party chief Chirag Paswan as its "Shikhandi" to cut Nitish Kumar to size.

While top BJP leaders, from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to home minister Amit Shah, maintained a stoic silence over Chirag's decision to go it alone and take on Nitish Kumar, the lone voice which stood by the chief minister was his "old friend", deputy chief minister Sushil Modi. He was the only one who



RJD chief Lalu Yadav, who is serving a jail term in a fodder scam case and undergoing treatment at RIMS, speaks on the phone during counting day of Bihar Assembly polls in Ranchi on Tuesday. - PTI



Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) supporters flash victory sign during counting of votes for the Bihar Assembly polls, in Patna on Tuesday. - PTI

Tejashwi Yadav emerges as a formidable player in Bihar politics

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, NOV. 10

The NDA on Tuesday emerged as a winner after the closely contested Bihar Assembly elections — the first amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Political analysts said that it was Tejashwi Yadav's "ten lakh job promise" and aggressive campaign against the NDA which made the contest tough during the Bihar assembly elections.

This was also probably the first time in four decades when RJD chief Lalu Yadav did not campaign for Bihar elections.

While talking about the assembly election results, RJD leaders in Patna said that, "it was Tejashwi Yadav's leadership and his effort that made the contest tough for the NDA. A leader like Nitish Kumar who has been ruling in Bihar for 15 years has slipped to the third position only due to him and despite grand alliance los-



ing the polls, we are sure that Tejashwi Yadav will prove his worth in the state assembly as well".

Experts assessing the political scenario after the results on Tuesday were of the opinion that Tejashwi Yadav has come out of the shadow of a mass leader like Lalu Yadav and has proved that he is ready to lead the party in his absence.

Lalu Yadav is currently serving a jail term in fod-

der scam cases and his bail petition is to be heard on November 27.

"Despite NDA's '15 years of good governance of Nitish Kumar versus 15 years of jungle raj' narrative against the RJD he managed to turn the tally in his party's favour. However, our assessment is that few political parties like RLSP and AIMIM cut his party's votes during the third phase of polls which led to the loss of the

grand alliance", political analysts said.

During the polls, he had also managed to mobilize youths and did not pull back while being attacked by the NDA during polls campaigns.

They said that "when he was called the Yuvraj of the jungle he handled the situation well and urged the NDA to talk about employment, industrialization and special status for the state."

Moreover, similar to Bihar, anti-incumbency is riding high in Bengal. The BJP leaders are working overtime to talk about distributions of ration and relief material post-cyclone Amphan and the home minister, Amit Shah who recently promised a "Sonar Bangla" also targeted the TMC regime for "shoddy handling of the Covid crisis and distribution of relief materials."

Polarizing the vote bank will remain BJP's main weapon against the TMC ruled Bengal. To counter Mamata Banerjee's hold over the minority community, the strategists intends to divide the Muslim vote bank.

In 2016 of the 294 assembly seats, TMC had won 211. According to statistics in nearly 100 of these Muslim votes played the decisive factor.

Already, BJP leaders have begun to credit Modi for the results. Before the elections, Mr Kumar declared this would be his last election. After the results it is clear that whatever may be the final outcome, Mr Kumar has lost, or as someone said, he is "finished" - thanks to BJP".

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With Bihar show, Cong's relevance to allies dwindles

ASHHAR KHAN | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 10

The political capital of the Congress suffered a major dent after it managed to win just about 25 per cent of the seats allotted to it in the alliance with the RJD. This will have serious repercussions for the former party chief, Rahul Gandhi, who is also battling strong resistance from within his party for his leadership bid. Mr Gandhi is seen as the architect of the alliance. Many in the party and the RJD feel that had the Congress improved its strike-rate, the outcome of the Bihar elections would have been completely different.

A senior leader from Bihar Congress who did not wish to be identified told this newspaper, "There were leaders from outside the state running the show who had no idea about Bihar. Several candidates were dropped from the top who had little resonance on the ground." He said that the Congress had more Central observers than the number of seats the party has won.

In the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections in 2017, the Congress was in alliance with the Samajwadi Party. It contested 105 seats and won only seven, thus ensuring that the alliance lost miserably.

Now questions are being raised about the Congress being a burden on its alliance partners in states. Many feel that after the Bihar result it will be difficult for the Congress to get a good deal from the DMK in the upcoming Assembly elections of Tamil Nadu

where the two parties are slated to contest in alliance.

Even in West Bengal, where the Congress is looking at Left parties for potential alliance, the Congress will be on the back-foot in seat-sharing negotiations.

The dismal performance of the party in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat by-polls also suggests that the leadership was not geared up to take the challenge to the BJP.

Though there is no dearth of issues, including farm laws, rising prices, unemployment, the party is unable to connect with the people.

In Madhya Pradesh, the Congress could just manage to win eight seats out of the 28 it fought, while in Gujarat it lost all the eight seats. In Uttar Pradesh, where the Congress staged two massive protests over migrant labourer crisis and the Hathras rape incident, the party lost all seven seats.

Just two months back, 23 leaders of the Congress — young and old included — had written to the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, demanding several changes, including elections to the working committee and the post of Congress president. Many saw this as a challenge to Mr Gandhi who is in line to take over from his mother in due course.

With the disastrous results in Bihar and bypolls, the chasm within the party is only going to grow and create more troubles for Mr Gandhi.

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where the two parties are slated to contest in alliance.

Even in West Bengal, where the Congress is looking at Left parties for potential alliance, the Congress will be on the back-foot in seat-sharing negotiations.

The dismal performance of the party in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat by-polls also suggests that the leadership was not geared up to take the challenge to the BJP.

Though there is no dearth of issues, including farm laws, rising prices, unemployment, the party is unable to connect with the people.

In Madhya Pradesh, the Congress could just manage to win eight seats out of the 28 it fought, while in Gujarat it lost all the eight seats. In Uttar Pradesh, where the Congress staged two massive protests over migrant labourer crisis and the Hathras rape incident, the party lost all seven seats.

Just two months back, 23 leaders of the Congress — young and old included — had written to the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, demanding several changes, including elections to the working committee and the post of Congress president. Many saw this as a challenge to Mr Gandhi who is in line to take over from his mother in due course.

With the disastrous results in Bihar and bypolls, the chasm within the party is only going to grow and create more troubles for Mr Gandhi.

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IN BRIEF PALESTINIAN SPOKESMAN EREKAT DEAD

Jerusalem, Nov. 10: Saeb Erekat, a veteran peace negotiator and prominent international spokesman for the Palestinians for more than three decades, died Tuesday, weeks after being infected by the Coronavirus. He was 65.

The American-educated Erekat was involved in nearly every round of peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians going back to the landmark Madrid conference in 1991, when he famously showed up draped in a black-and-white checkered keffiyeh, a symbol of Palestinian nationalism. Over the next few decades Erekat was a constant presence in Western media, where he tirelessly advocated for a negotiated two-state solution to the decades-old conflict, defended the Palestinian leadership and blamed Israel for the failure to reach an agreement. His Fatah party announced his death in a statement.

A relative and a Palestinian official confirmed he passed away.

Erekat is survived by his wife, two sons, twin daughters and eight grandchildren.

ANTI-GOVT PROTESTS: IRAN PARDONS 157

Tehran, Nov. 10: Iran pardoned 157 people held on charges stemming from their alleged participation in antigovernment protests, the country's judiciary announced on Tuesday, the biggest such release of those swept up in the harsh crackdowns.

Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili told reporters that the people freed had been imprisoned for "spreading propaganda against the system" and taking part in several waves of protests that challenged the government over the last three years. The amnesty was part of a customary clemency order by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to mark the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, Khamenei, who has the final say on all state matters, issued a decree pardoning 3,780 prisoners last week.

As the Coronavirus pandemic ravaged Iran, propelling its death toll to highest in the Middle East, the government released over 100,000 prisoners to keep the virus from spreading behind bars. Economic grievances in Iran have repeatedly triggered nationwide political unrest in recent years.

In November 2019, security forces smothered protests that were prompted by a sharp increase in gasoline prices, arresting over 1,000 and killing hundreds, according to rights watchdog Amnesty International. The cases of those caught in crackdowns have drawn international outrage.

In September, Iran executed a 27-year-old wrestler accused of stabbing a water supply company employee.

CHASTISED CARDINAL HOSPITALISED

Warsaw (Poland), Nov. 10: A prominent Polish cardinal who was recently sanctioned by the Vatican over sex scandal cases has been hospitalised since last week and remains unconscious, Polish media said Tuesday.

Retired Archbishop Henryk Gulbinowicz was sanctioned by the Vatican last week after the 97-year-old was accused of sexually abusing a seminarian and of covering up abuse in another case.

The Vatican's embassy in Poland said Friday that Gulbinowicz, the former archbishop of Wrocław, has been forbidden from using his bishop's insignia and participating in any religious celebrations or public events.

The once well-respected cardinal, who supported Poland's pro-democracy Solidarity movement in the 1980s, has also been denied the right to have a cathedral burial service or to be buried in a cathedral. Professor Wojciech Wtewicz, head of the hospital in Wrocław, told Radio Wrocław Tuesday that Gulbinowicz is in a very serious condition and unconscious.

Local daily Gazeta Wroclawska said Gulbinowicz was hospitalized Wednesday. A few days earlier, Vatican envoys had informed him about the sanctions. Recently, allegations were also made that Gulbinowicz was an informer for the communist-era secret security.

Gulbinowicz is the latest Polish prelate to be sanctioned after a Vatican-mandated investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct.

Ready to write next chapter: Harris

Will build an economy that works for working families, the V-P elect says in a tweet

SC weighs future of Obamacare

Washington, Nov. 10: When the Supreme Court weighs the fate of "Obamacare," arguments will revolve around arcane points of law like severability — whether the justices can surgically snip out part of the law and leave the rest.

But what's at stake has real-world consequences for just about every American, as well as the health care industry, a

major source of jobs and tax revenues. Whether the Affordable Care Act stays, goes, or is significantly changed, will affect the way life is lived in the US.

The argument against the law from the Trump administration and conservative states is that the 10-year-old statute was rendered unconstitutional in its entirety when Congress dialled down to zero a penalty on those

remaining uninsured.

The court has shifted solidly to the political right under President Donald Trump. Here's a look at some of what's at stake if the opponents of the law prevail: COVID-19 A NEW PRE-EXISTING CONDITION Before the ACA, insurers could turn a person down for an individual policy, or charge them more, based on their medical history. — AP



Harsh Vardhan Shringla

FS DISCUSSES WAYS TO BOOST TIES WITH MALE

Male, Nov. 10: Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Tuesday held a series of meetings with the Maldivian leadership and the Opposition and discussed ways to further strengthen India's relations with the island nation, and reviewed the progress of key infrastructure projects under the \$1.3 billion bilateral package. Shringla, who was on a two-day visit to the Maldives, held a joint meeting with Minister for National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Mohamed Aslam, Minister of Economic Development Fayyaz Ismail and Minister of Finance Ibrahim Ameer.

On Monday, Shringla also called on President of Maldives Ibrahim Mohamed Solih and Speaker of the People's Majlis Mohamed Nasheed.

"FS@harshvshringla held a joint-meeting with Minister for National Planning, Housing & Infra Dvpt @AslamAslamtey Minister of Economic Dvpt@faya.i& Minister of Finance @iameru; they assessed progress in 8 infrastructure projects part of the \$1.3 billion bilateral package," the High Commission of India in the Maldives tweeted.

India is carrying out a wide-range of infrastructure projects in the Maldives, including Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) and other projects such as port, roads and reclamation, expansion of airports, building of a new Cricket Stadium and cancer hospital and development of fisheries. Shringla also met Maldivian Home Minister and leader of the Adaalah Party Imran Abdulla and sought the party's cooperation in further strengthening the bilateral relations.

The religious conservative Adaalah party is part of the Maldivian Democratic Party-led ruling coalition. "Foreign Secretary @harshvshringla @HarshShringla met Home Minister & leader of the Adaalah Party @ShimranAb; FS sought continuing cooperation of the Adaalah Party in ensuring the success of #IndiaMaldives relations," it said. — PTI



People wave the national flag and hold portraits of Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev as they celebrate in the streets of the capital Baku on Tuesday, after Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed a ceasefire. — AFP

Russian peacekeepers head for Nagorno-Karabakh as war ends

Moscow, Nov. 10: A dozen planes filed with Russian peacekeepers headed for Nagorno-Karabakh on Tuesday, hours after Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to halt fighting over the separatist region and amid signs this ceasefire would hold where others hadn't.

The truce came after significant advances by Azerbaijani forces that the Nagorno-Karabakh leader said made it impossible for their side to carry on — but angered many Armenians, who stormed government buildings overnight, demanding the Parliament invalidate the agreement. Dozens of protesters gathered again Tuesday morning in front of the parliament building in the Armenian capital of Yerevan. Armenia and Azerbaijan have been locked in a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh for decades. The region lies within Azerbaijan but has been under control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994.

Heavy fighting erupted in late September — the biggest escalation of the conflict in a quarter-century — and has left hundreds, possibly thousands, dead. Several cease-fires announced over the past six weeks crumbled almost immediately, but the

current agreement appeared to be holding, with neither side reporting any more fighting since it came into force. It came days after Azerbaijan pressed its offensive deeper into the region and took control of the city of Shushi, which is strategically positioned on heights overlooking the regional capital of Stepanakert. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian said on Facebook that calling an end to the fight was "extremely painful for me personally and for our people." But on Tuesday he explained that he was left with no choice, saying the army had told him it was necessary. "We found ourselves in a situation when there was no alternative to signing the agreement," Pashinian was quoted by Russia's Interfax news agency as saying.

Nagorno-Karabakh's separatist leader Arayik Harutyunyan echoed Pashinian's sentiment. He said: "Had the hostilities continued at the same pace, we would have lost all of Artsakh (an Armenian name for Nagorno-Karabakh) within days." Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev referred to the agreement as a "glorious victory" on Twitter, and Azerbaijanians flooded their capital city to celebrate. Russia's Defence Ministry said that 12

● **THE TRUCE** came after significant advances by Azerbaijani forces that the Nagorno-Karabakh leader said made it impossible for their side to carry on — but angered many Armenians, who stormed government buildings overnight, demanding the Parliament invalidate the agreement.

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planes carrying peacekeepers and military equipment departed for the region Tuesday. A total of 1,960 Russian peacekeepers are to be deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh under a five-year mandate. The pact calls for Armenian forces to turn over control of some areas it held outside the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh, including the Lachin region, where the main

road leading from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia passes through. The agreement calls for the road, the so-called Lachin Corridor, to remain open and be protected by Russian peacekeepers. The agreement also calls for transport links to be established through Armenia linking Azerbaijan and its western exclave of Nakhchivan, which is surrounded by Armenia, Iran and Turkey.

Nagorno-Karabakh military have reported over 1,200 troops killed in the six weeks of fighting. Azerbaijan hasn't disclosed its military losses. Scores of civilians have also been killed and wounded on both sides.

Nagorno-Karabakh has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a 1994 truce ended a separatist war in which an estimated 30,000 people died. Sporadic clashes occurred since then, and full-scale fighting began on Sept. 27. Several cease-fires had been called but were almost immediately violated. However, the agreement announced early Tuesday appeared more likely to take hold because Azerbaijan has made significant advances, including taking control of the strategically key city of Shushi on Sunday. — AP

Boris cautiously welcomes bugle of virus vaccine

London, Nov. 10: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has cautiously welcomed the promising results from the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and warned people not to rely on this news as a solution as it is still "very, very early days".

Addressing a briefing from 10 Downing Street here on Monday, Johnson urged the British public not to "slacken" their resolve as it is still "very, very early days", even as he confirmed that the UK had pre-ordered 40 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine — enough for about a third of the UK population, taking into account that two doses each are required.

"The Pfizer/BioNTech Vaccine has been tested on over 40,000 volunteers and interim results suggest it is proving 90 per cent effective at protecting people against the virus. But we haven't yet seen the full safety data, and these findings also need to be peer-reviewed," said Johnson.

"We have talked for a long time, or I have, about the distant bugle of the scientific cavalry coming over the brow of the hill, and tonight that toot of the bugle is louder. But it is still some way off. And we absolutely cannot rely on this as a solution," he said. He reiterated that it is "crucial" not to overdo things and follow the lockdown rules strictly until December 2, after which England is set to revert to a tiered lockdown system.

"We cannot let our enthusiasm (about a vaccine) run away with us. It is more vital now than ever that we follow the basics," said the prime

REGULATOR HALTS BRAZIL VACCINE TRIALS

Sao Paulo, Nov. 10: Brazil's health regulator has halted clinical trials of the potential Coronavirus vaccine CoronaVac, citing an "adverse, serious event." The decision posted on Anvisa's website Monday night elicited immediate surprise from parties involved in producing the vaccine.

The potential vaccine is being developed by Chinese biopharmaceutical firm Sinovac and in Brazil would be mostly produced by Sao Paulo's state-run Butantan Institute. Sao Paulo state's government said in a statement it "regrets being informed by the press and not directly by Anvisa, as normally occurs in clinical trials of this nature." Butantan said in a statement that it was surprised by Anvisa's decision and that it would hold a news conference Tuesday. The CoronaVac shot has already stirred controversy in Brazil. — AP

minister. England's deputy chief medical officer Prof Jonathan Van-Tam, who joined Johnson at the briefing, said he was "hopeful" that the first vaccine could be seen by Christmas after Pfizer's announcement earlier on Monday that its vaccine candidate has proven 90 per cent effective in a large trial. "This is a very important scientific breakthrough," said Prof Van-Tam. — PTI

Covid triggers OCD in kids

London, Nov. 10: Children and young people with obsessive thoughts and compulsions may experience their OCD, anxiety, and depressive symptoms worsen during a crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a new study.

While previous research had shown that trauma and stress can trigger or worsen obsessive-compulsive disorder, or OCD, the current study, published

in the journal BMC Psychiatry, assessed how children and young people with the condition experience the ongoing pandemic. In the study, scientists, including those from Aarhus University in Denmark, sent a questionnaire to two groups of children and young people between the ages of seven and 21.

They said one group had been diagnosed with OCD in a specialised section at

the Centre for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry — and all had been in contact with a therapist at the hospital.

The other group consisted mostly of children and young people who had been diagnosed years ago, identified through the Danish OCD Association. According to the study, a total of 102 children responded to the questionnaire. — PTI

SPIRITUAL | OASIS

Master plan in the video shows a massive amphitheatre overlooking the shrine

Images of Abu Dhabi's 1st Hindu temple released

Dubai, Nov. 10: The majestic stone façade of the first Hindu temple coming up in Abu Dhabi will be adorned with scenes from Hindu epics, scriptures and ancient stories from India, as well as motifs popular in the Gulf countries, according to a media report on Tuesday.

The temple management of the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi has released the first images of the final design of the traditional stone temple and the hand-carved stone pillars that have been taking shape in India, the *Gulf News* reported. The visuals of the final design of the temple have been released through a video that chronicles the progress of the temple right from the inception of

its concept till the pouring of the UAE's largest single pouring of fly ash concrete for the raft foundation of the temple.

The foundation stone of the temple was laid in April last year and work started from December. Dubbed a spiritual oasis for global harmony, the temple's final master plan revealed in the video shows a massive amphitheatre overlooking the shrine, the daily reported. A library, a classroom, a majlis and a community centre have also been featured within the compound in Abu Mureikha area. Waterfalls flanking the steps to the entrance of the shrine, and water bodies circling the temple complex can also be seen in the video.

The design of the master plan was completed in early 2020, and optimised engineered during the slowdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a spokesperson of the temple told the *Gulf News*. "This is the first time the visuals of the final design have been released through the video," said Ashok Kotecha, BAPS Hindu Mandir spokesperson. "The work on the historic temple is progressing with the support of the community and guidance from the leadership in India and the UAE. While navigating the challenges produced by COVID-19 and adhering to local best practices during the pandemic, stone work has continued in India," Kotecha said.

Kotecha said key values

and tales of universal wisdom, and the authentic ancient art and architecture would be revived through the stone carvings used for the temple.

"The stories and carvings include diverse portions of India's geography and Hindu belief systems. This would include [epics] Mahabharata and Ramayana as well as the Puranas and regional histories. In fact, this Mandir will be uniquely identified by its intricate mandorla [facade] which will share many traditional value tales from throughout India as well as unique designs of the Gulf," he said. The intricate carvings of the temple range from figurines only a few inches tall to statues of many metres. — PTI



The temple management of the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi has released the first images of the final design of the traditional stone temple.

DECCAN Chronicle

11 NOVEMBER 2020

Act responsibly, heed NGT ban on crackers

The decision of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to impose a total ban on all kinds of firecrackers in the National Capital Region from November 9 to 30, and extend it to all cities and towns where the average of ambient air quality is “poor” is welcome. The NGT has mandated that only green crackers that pollute less will be allowed in cities and towns where air quality is “moderate” or below. In other towns and cities, the state governments are given the freedom to impose more stringent restrictions. The duration for bursting of crackers has been limited to two hours during festivals.

The NGT decision comes in the wake of the extreme poor air quality reported in the national capital and elsewhere in the country in the winter season and the renewed threat the Coronavirus has been posing of late to the lives of people.

With fog and crackers, the air quality is sure to go down further, inconveniencing even healthy citizens. That apart, the ban on crackers will have a salutary effect on the fight against Covid-19 as the pandemic is resurfacing as a wave in Delhi and some other states.

Cracker bursting is a community activity in most places and can turn into a super-spreader event. It can be fatal for some people who are suffering from the disease, which impairs, among others, the lungs most. The ban would, thus, help the nation save precious lives.

But the purpose will be served fully only if the state governments and more importantly, the people, took it seriously and implemented it wholeheartedly. It is natural for governments to be hesitant in pouring cold water on the festive spirit and invite the wrath of the people, though some states such as Rajasthan and Odisha have already banned crackers. The procrastinators have a ruse now in the form of the order of the NGT, and can go all out and ensure that the order is implemented in its spirit.

But there is only so much the governments can do on public health; it should primarily be the concern of the public.

They must come forward and understand why the tribunal and governments have been forced to come out with such restrictive orders. Reports from the ground suggest that there is little progress in the way Indians grasp the enormity of the threat the pandemic is, and that they go ahead with their lives and manners throwing caution to the wind. They swarm markets, shops, malls, public places and places of worship as if the virus either did not exist or has vanished.

Since neither is true, it is incumbent upon them to restrict themselves and keep the virus at bay.

The Union government should intensify the Jan Andolan awareness campaign but is for the people to pick the right lessons from the nation's experiences and protect themselves. Celebrations and festivals are a yearly phenomenon; life is but a once-in-a-lifetime offer. It's important that we live on to celebrate them.

Hope across sectors

Valuations on the Indian equity markets soared on Tuesday after a report jointly issued by drug makers — Pfizer from the United States and BioNTech from Germany — announced a significant success in the development of a vaccine for the most infectious Covid-19 disease. While the broader Indian markets were mirroring euphoria witnessed around the world, India's benchmark index BSE Sensex hit an all-time high on Tuesday.

The vaccine may not be available immediately. However, it gives hope to businesses across sectors like aviation, travel and hospitality, tourism, movies among others that were shut because of the highly human contact nature of their operations. It will reopen a significant part of the economy which is either shut or severely underperforming. The rise in the Sensex and the Nifty was primarily driven by bank stocks, which indicate an optimistic assessment of the economy by investors.

This assessment goes against claims made by several analysts that the Indian economy would take a year or two to crawl back to its size in March 2020. However, the bullishness of investors, who look at future earnings before taking investment decisions, should keep us optimistic about the return of normalcy in the economy.

Another factor that has been driving the growth in equity markets across the world, including India, is the victory of Democratic candidate Joe Biden in the US Presidential elections. Investors were happy about the election result because they expected global trade would return to normalcy under the Biden administration. However, with incumbent US President Donald Trump preparing for protracted legal challenges to invalidate mail-in votes that predominantly favoured Mr Biden and several grey areas existing in the US electoral system, the field is still open in Washington. It would be ideal for Indian investors to be cautious and watchful about the unfolding events in US politics.

Subhani



India-US ties might be stronger under Biden

Vishnu Prakash



It was difficult to believe one's eyes when the so-called leader of the free world stood before the cameras to announce that his opponent was trying to “steal” the just-concluded American presidential elections, which he claimed he had already won, with barely half the votes tabulated. In the supercharged atmosphere, such an incendiary assertion was bound to spark protests and violence across the nation. Unfortunately, it did.

India may not be a perfect democracy, but it has a fairly enviable record of peaceful transition of power, notwithstanding the heated rhetoric. Even Mrs Indira Gandhi, having imposed an ill-advised Emergency in 1975, bowed out of office gracefully upon losing at the hustings in 1977. Every credit goes to India's Election Commission for meticulously organising the gigantic parliamentary elections last year, involving a 850-million strong electorate.

Curiously, the United States doesn't have a Federal Electoral Commission. Each of the 50 states and Washington D.C. is responsible for holding the elections and framing procedural/policy guidelines, even without judicial oversight. As such, there is a wide variation in practices. Some states allow early voting by all, some don't. Some use EVMs, while others have only paper ballots. Some undertake simultaneous or early ballot counting, while the others do so only after the polls have closed.

Even more unique is the institution of an “Electoral College” which actually elects the President and vice-president. An eligible voter votes for the President and the Veep, but also for the elector. Both the popular and the Electoral

College votes are tallied, but the latter takes precedence. At least five times in US history has a candidate won the popular vote while his rival has taken office by virtue of garnering a majority in the Electoral College.

The Electoral College is a historical legacy. America's 1787 constitutional convention was not ready to bestow universal franchise and was bitterly divided over allowing semi-literate or underprivileged individuals to choose the President. That is when a compromise was struck. Political parties could nominate their representatives to contest for the Electoral College. Towards the end of the 18th century only property-owning white American men were enfranchised, who comprised just six per cent of the population. Women got the right to vote only in 1920. Surprisingly, the system has worked extremely well till now.

However, not even America's founding fathers could have foreseen and insulated the electoral architecture against an iconoclast and narcissist like Donald Trump, for whom the ends justify the means. As of November 9, he continues to claim victory and vows to wage a futile legal battle to get the results annulled or the ballots recounted, essentially on frivolous grounds.

All the same, much to the relief of the world and a majority of the American people, former vice-president Joe Biden is all but certain to be the next occupant of the White House. His running mate, Kamala Devi Harris, half black and half Indian, will become the first woman and the first non-white person to become the vice-president of the United States.

The question that is uppermost in the minds of most Indians is about Mr Biden's disposition

towards India and China. Some analysts contend that he would be soft towards China and Pakistan. It would be recalled that in October 2008, Islamabad had conferred the “Hilal-i-Pakistan” (Crescent of Pakistan), its highest civilian honour, on him “in recognition of... consistent support for Pakistan”. That said, the geostrategic scenario has undergone a sea change in the past five years, and Pakistan has been totally exposed. Its utility for the US has diminished, and it is now firmly in the Chinese camp, which makes it a bigger suspect.

At the same time, China has grievously erred by overtly stepping up its efforts to displace America as regional hegemon. It challenged the might of the US by flexing its military muscle with most maritime neighbours, some of whom, like Japan and Philippines, are under the US security umbrella. It also aims to wrest the crown as world leader in innovation, infotech and biotech. Through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China is expanding its economic and strategic footprint across the globe. As these directly threaten America's primacy, no US President, not even an internationalist like Joe Biden, can afford to turn a Nelson's eye.

On the other hand, Mr Biden has stayed invested in India-US relations for decades. He has visited India several times and officially once while he was vice-president in 2013. He has been an admirer of India's democratic moorings and pluralism. As a senator, he voted in favour of India-specific motions at least six times. He backed the civil nuclear agreement with India as well as India's permanent membership of the UN

There is a growing convergence in our regional and global outlook. We particularly view Chinese aggression, ambition and threats from a similar prism.

Security Council.

Earlier this year he assured the Indian American community: “I'll continue to believe and continue... standing with India and confronting the threats it faces in its own region along its borders.”

In any event, leaders are guided by national interests in cultivating ties with other countries. India and the US have over 60 dialogue mechanisms in addition to the “2+2” ministerial consultations encompassing a wide range of subjects, including the economy, trade, education, energy, science and technology, security and defence, outer space, counterterrorism and cyber security, in addition to regional and international issues. It is natural for the world's largest and (soon to be) third largest economies to enhance their synergies.

There is a growing convergence in our regional and global outlook. We particularly view Chinese aggression, ambition and threats from a similar prism. It is said that “where you stand in the world has a good deal to do with where you sit”. And there are a handful of matters where our interests do diverge, such as India's ties with Iran and Russia. This is primarily due to our geographical and security imperatives.

It is reasonable to expect, therefore, a continued emphasis and attention on infusing greater momentum in bilateral ties. America's interest in the “Indo-Pacific concept” or the “Quad” should remain undiminished. Given the trajectory that China is following, it is not inconceivable for India to opt for an enhanced partnership with the US. “If the US and India became closer friends and partners, then the world will be a safer place”, Mr Biden had observed 15 years ago. It's time to make that happen together!

The writer is a foreign affairs analyst and a former Indian high commissioner to Canada and ambassador to South Korea

LETTERS

BIHAR POLLS

Whether the Bihar voter may or may not get the promised Coronavirus vaccine free as was being promised, the BJP has got a booster dose in the form of popular mandate, which gives it immunity from regional party dominance. The BJP emerging as the single largest party in Bihar Assembly is phenomenal. The 40-year-long regional party dominance there has ended this time, giving way to the BJP's juggernaut. Though it cannot form government on its own, it will have a big brother's role among its partners over political and administrative issues. The ultimate loser seems to be JD(U)

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

TTD DARSHAN

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) authorities are not allowing senior citizens and children for darshan of Lord Venkateswara. As per reports a decision is yet to be taken. But they are allowing VIPs, swamis with their kith and kin, and the authorities posing photos with the temple as background with them. Is there is no threat of virus from VIPs. Since buses and train services are yet to be restored people owning cars only can go to Tirumala. Are the blessings of God are limited to few people?

P. Ramakrishna
Rajahmundry

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Gen. De Gaulle passes away

COLOMBEY-LES-DEUX- EGLISES, Nov. 10

General De Gaulle, towering figure of modern French history, died suddenly in his country home here last night and will be buried in the simple country churchyard of this east French village.

His death, at the age of 79, shocked France and the world, leading President Georges Pompidou to declare “General De Gaulle is dead. France is a widow.”

The General's death appears to have stemmed from a condition often linked to a hardening of the arteries. It came as a complete surprise as there had been no previous report that the General had suffered any ill-health since his resignation as President in April, 1969.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Gehlot denied his choice of chief secretary

N.K. Arya, the new chief secretary of Rajasthan, is not the first choice of state chief minister Ashok Gehlot for the position. Until the last moment, the last working day of outgoing chief secretary Rajeev Swarup, the Gehlot government hoped to push for a tenure extension for Mr Swarup. But the Centre denied its consent and Mr Arya was drafted in, superseding eight IAS officers in the process. He was additional chief secretary for finance. Besides appointing Mr Arya, the government also effected a major reshuffle involving 21 senior IAS officers.

The drama was building for some time. Sources say that Mr Gehlot had worked hard to ensure Mr Swarup was appointed chief secretary in early July this year and then pushed for his extension. It is said that to appoint Mr Swarup to the state's top post, the chief minister reportedly “struck a deal”

with the previous chief secretary D.B. Gupta who was slated to retire in September. Under this supposed deal, Mr Gupta resigned in July and was immediately appointed advisor to the CM for a year and Mr Swarup stepped in as his successor.

The babu grapevine has it that Mr Swarup endeared himself to the chief minister during the Gehlot-Sachin Pilot standoff, which may not have gone down well with the Centre.

HAVE ‘COOLING-OFF’ PERIOD FOR BABUS, SAYS EC

The Election Commission (EC) is now likely to recommend to the Centre a “cooling off” period for IAS, IPS and other officers who join politics soon after retirement or after resigning the service. Sources say that the poll panel was jolted into this line of thinking after former Bihar DGP Guptaeshwar Pandey resigned

from the IPS in September and promptly joined a political party barely weeks before the Bihar Assembly elections. His resignation was accepted immediately, even though government regulations stipulate that an officer who wishes to join private employment after service needs to wait a year after retirement or resigning from service.

Though the demand for a cooling-off period is not a new one and is usually raised around election time when babus who have political ambitions often quit to join a political party. The government has so far rejected it, arguing that barring former babus from joining politics immediately after leaving service can be interpreted as an infringement of their right to equality.

But the poll panel is now keen to ensure that the government insists on a cooling-off period for AIS officers seeking to join poli-

tics, just as it does for those seeking corporate jobs. The commission is yet to work out the modalities of how long this cooling-off period should be, but sources say it could be at least two years.

FOREST TRANSFERS IN UTTARAKHAND: A U-TURN

The forest department of Uttarakhand and the state government seem to be at odds with each other. The government recently cancelled all the transfers of forest department officials done between September and October for violating an order that prohibited transfer of any official during 2020-21. Apparently, the department has done around a dozen such transfers without first seeking clearance from the state government.

Earlier, in July, sources say, the government had revoked the transfer order of 11 deputy conservator of forests (DCFs) within 48

hours of the issuing of the orders. At the time, Anand Bardhan, principal secretary, forest department, had issued a terse statement saying that it was a government order “and we are simply following it”.

However, according to sources, several Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officers say that the order was revoked since the transfer list contained several names that were not presented before the civil service board for transfers. Further, some officers on deputation were given additional charge, which is apparently against the rules. According to a Supreme Court ruling, no transfer can be done without the approval of the civil services board. So why was this being done? That's a mystery.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	43,277.65	1.60
Nifty 50	12,631.10	1.37
\$&P 500*	3,543.39	-0.20
Dollar (₹)	74.18	-0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.27	-0.96
Euro (₹)	87.57	0.50
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,338,662	1.31
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	43.14	0.74
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.916	0.040
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.961	0.003

* As of 8:30 PM IST

States may cut capital outlay on infra by 40%: Icra

Impacted by the pandemic, states are likely to cut capital outlay on infrastructure by up to 40 per cent, Icra said. States account for 37-40 per cent of the total infrastructure capital expenditure. Major states together had a budgeted capital outlay of over Rs 5.7 lakh crore for 2020-21 against Rs 5.1 lakh crore in 2019-20. "The capital outlay on infrastructure by states could decline 10-40 per cent in FY2021," Icra said.

WhatsApp adds shopping button to push catalogue



WhatsApp said it has added a new shopping button on its app to make it easier for people to discover a business catalogue to get details about the goods and services offered by a firm. More than 175 million people message a WhatsApp Business account every day. Previously, people had to click into the business' profile to see if it had a catalogue. Now, the shopping button, resembling a storefront icon, will lead to catalogue.

SBI board nod for divesting UTI Trustee stake

SBI said its board has approved divestment of over 8.5 per cent holdings in UTI Trustee Company. It said the nod from the executive committee of the central board is for divesting 8,510 equity shares constituting 8.51 per cent of the bank's stake in UTI Trustee Company Pvt Ltd. As per Sebi regulation, no sponsor of a MF, its associate or group firm can have 10 per cent shareholding or voting rights in another mutual fund.

Crompton promoters sell ₹1,630 cr shares

Macritchie Investments Pte Ltd and Amalfiaco Ltd, promoters of Crompton Greaves Consumer Electricals Ltd, offloaded the firm's shares worth over Rs 1,631 crore through open market transactions. Macritchie sold over 1.89 crore scrips at an average price of Rs 296.54 per scrip, valuing the deal at Rs 561.23 crore, as per bulk deal data on NSE. Amalfiaco offloaded over 3.6 crore shares at Rs 296.57 apiece.



Pandemic helps nearly 80% schools to adopt tech

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 10

Covid-19 has helped faster technology adoption by schools. While only 15 per cent of the schools in India had working computers prior to Covid-19, now almost 80 per cent of them have made some level of technology adoption. Covid-19 has disrupted the education sector and forced them to adopt tech-

nology faster. Prior to the pandemic, out of the 15 lakh schools in the country, only 2.6 lakh or 14 per cent had working computers. This includes 35 per cent private aided schools, 30 per cent private unaided schools, 9.8 per cent government schools and 7 per cent other schools. However, in the case of higher education, about 85 per cent of the 55,000 colleges had working comput-

er facilities, as per a study by Bengaluru-based RedSeer Consulting and Mumbai-based Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI). "Schools and other education institutes were caught off guard after the onset of Covid and lockdowns. However, despite low technology maturity, both in terms of device/infrastructure readiness and teacher's technological

readiness, schools were remarkably resilient in adjusting to the 'new normal'," said Anil Kumar, founder, RedSeer Consulting. In the past six months, technology adoption has been at different levels across schools. Less than five per cent schools use dedicated/advanced tech solutions like teacher-centric tools and administration management. Almost

20 to 30 per cent schools are using live tuitions, sharing digital content through shared cloud, e-mail and the like. Another 45 to 55 per cent schools have basic digital communication through WhatsApp and similar platforms and they share pre-recorded digital content. However, 15 to 25 per cent schools have shut down, with no tech adoption. Further, 75 per cent of

the surveyed school students are making use of live lectures to connect with the teachers, which used to be under 10 per cent before the lockdown - an eight-fold jump. Private schools performed above average with 90 per cent students and parents making use of technology to join live classes, while this was 60 per cent for government schools. However, not a significant difference in

pattern was observed in bigger cities and smaller cities. In the case of colleges, 80 per cent students are making use of live lectures to connect with the teachers, which earlier would be close to 30 per cent, a 2.5 times jump. Engineering colleges were equipped with technology requirements. But non-engineering colleges were also able to catch up fast.

Banks say it's a money losing proposition

Promote only RuPay card, FM tells banks

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, NOV. 10

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday asked banks to promote only RuPay cards and ensure that the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) becomes a brand-India product. But bankers argue that with no MDR charges on transactions, RuPay cards give zero revenue and they lose money on it. Besides, the card is not as competitive for customers as MasterCard, Visa and American Express cards.

Addressing the 73rd annual general meeting of the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) virtually, Sitharaman said, "I would not think it is necessary today in India when RuPay is becoming global, for Indians to be given any other cards first

than RuPay itself. So, promote Rupy cards. Make sure that the NPCI becomes a brand-India product, which can be promoted elsewhere in the globe and NPCI therefore should be a priority." "Whoever needs the card, RuPay will be the only card you will promote," she said. MDR, or merchant discount rate, usually 1 to 3 per cent of a transaction, is the fee charged to a merchant by payment processors for debit and credit card services. After the government revoking merchant charges on digital payments, Rupy debit cards seem to have lost their popularity with the banks, which are choosing Visa and MasterCard. An IIT-Bombay study authored by Prof. Ashish Das has revealed that RuPay is facing differen-

tial treatment in the pricing structure. The study found that fewer RuPay debit cards were being issued by banks from September 2019 to August 2020. The study also revealed that only 65 lakh debit cards were issued in August 2020, compared with 4.6 crore cards in the same period of 2019. A senior banker said, "RuPay is India's own card. There is no MDR on RuPay card, but banks generally lose money when MDR is not there, as there is a cost involved. So banks are happy to promote Visa and MasterCard. Even the RBI's Pathak committee had suggested not to make MDR zero. So the government has to relook at its decision." "Secondly, MasterCard and Visa are already established international companies. The transac-

tion experience is seamless and they burn money to attract and retain customers with so many offers such as free lounge access at airports, campaigns, etc. On the other hand, the transaction drops are high with UPI transactions. The government should have a reasonable MDR to help us recover expenses on RuPay," added the banker. Sitharaman also gave lenders a deadline up to March 31, 2021 to link all bank accounts with Aadhaar. "I want Aadhaar card-seeded accounts." "... by March 31, 2021, every account should have a PAN where needed and where applicable, and Aadhaar in every one of your accounts," she said. She also said banks should discourage non-digital payments and promote digital transactions.

Sensex in 43K zone

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, NOV. 10

The bulls were unstoppable for the seventh consecutive session, as the global market rallied on hopes of a coronavirus vaccine hitting drug stores soon, fresh cases in India falling to 38,000 and the NDA seemed taking a comfortable lead in Bihar elections.

The Sensex closed above the 43,000-mark for the first time at 43,277.65, gaining 680.22 points and the Nifty -50 closed at 12,631.10, up 170 points.

However, underperformance and profit taking in the broader market shows the market rally is getting stretched now and could see some profit taking before Diwali. The BSE



Mid-cap Index fell 0.10 per cent while the Small-cap fell 0.48 per cent against Sensex's rise of 1.60 per cent.

The volatility index, NSE's India VIX, rose 7.28 per cent to 21.58.

Foreign portfolio investors pumped another Rs 5,627.32 crore into equities, as per the provisional data, making it Rs 20,340.45 crore investment in the last four sessions post-the US presidential

elections. FPIs have net invested Rs 15,874 crore in November so far. The domestic institutions, meanwhile, have been booking profit and were net sellers by Rs 2,309.19 crore on Tuesday. Devash Vakil, deputy head of retail research, HDFC Securities, said, "Indian markets shot up on positive overnight cues from global markets and Asian peers opening higher." Banking stocks continued to outperform, as the Nifty Bank Index gained a massive 3.89 per cent. At the same time IT and pharmaceuticals stocks corrected while beaten down stocks such as those tied to travel and leisure, movie theaters, and theme park moved up.

Premji most generous Indian in FY20: Hurun

Mumbai, Nov. 10: Wipro's Azim Premji donated Rs 22 crore a day, or Rs 7,904 crore, in a year to emerge as the most generous Indian in FY20 and topped a list of philanthropy.

Premji pipped HCL Technologies' Shiv Nadar, who had earlier topped the list collated by Hurun Report India and Edelgive Foundation, by a wide margin. Nadar's donations stood at Rs 795 crore for FY20 against Rs 826 crore in prior year. Premji had donated Rs 426 crore in the previous fiscal.

Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries retained the third spot among the list of givers by donating Rs 458 crore against Rs 402 crore a year ago, it said. The pandemic had the corporate honchos repurposing their donations to fight Covid infections, and the top giver on this turned out to be Tata Sons with a Rs 1,500-crore commitment, followed by Premji at Rs 1,125 crore and Ambani's Rs 510 crore. A bulk of the corporate commitments seemed to have gone to the PM-CARES Fund, with Reliance Industries com-



mitting Rs 500 crore, and Aditya Birla Group donating Rs 400 crore. The Tatas' commitment also includes a Rs 500 crore donation to the newly created fund. Premji's generosity pulled the total donations up by 175 per cent to Rs 12,050 crore in FY20, the list said. Azim Premji Endowment Fund owns 13.6 per cent of the promoter's shareholding in Wipro and has the right to receive all money earned from promoter shares. Individuals who have donated more than Rs 10 crore numbered 78 against 72 a year ago. With a donation of Rs 27 crore, Amit and Archana Chandra of ATE Chandra Foundation are the only professional managers to ever enter the list. —PTI

Blockchain-based platform launched for crop trading

JUSTINA VASQUEZ NOV. 10

Cerealia SA launched its blockchain-based physical agriculture trading platform for commercial use, allowing companies to trade wheat, sorghum and other commodities. The launch followed a series of pilot transactions beginning in 2018. Firms from Japan, Dubai, Ukraine, Turkey, Algeria and Brazil participated in a pre-launch period before the platform was released on Tuesday to the general trading community, according to a company statement. Transaction volumes range as large as 20,000 tonnes of grain.

The Pully, Switzerland-based company said it's the first to combine the need in the international Russian wheat market for a fast trading platform with a more thoroughly traceable execution programme. Russia is the world's top wheat producer. Transactions span wheat as well as corn, barley and other grains and vegetable oil markets. "Traders can now be 100 per cent certain they really did the trade, versus traditional over-the-phone brokerage," Andrei Grigorov, Cerealia's chief executive officer, said in the statement. "Instantly, they have digitally signed contracts and blockchain-

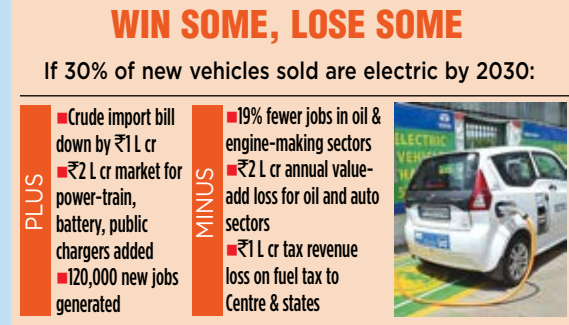
registered records 'forever.'" Agricultural commodity blockchain trading platforms have been projects among both startups and heavyweights in recent years. Prime Shipping Foundation piloted bulk commodities payments via blockchain, shipping wheat from Russia to Turkey. Covantis SA was announced in 2018 after the world's largest agricultural commodities traders--Archer-Daniels-Midland Co., Bunge Ltd., Cargill, Cofco Group, Louis Dreyfus Co. and the agriculture arm of Glencore Plc -- teamed up to streamline trading. — Bloomberg

EV era: Oil bill to dip by ₹1 L-cr; govts to lose ₹1 L-cr revenue

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 10

India can save Rs 1 lakh crore on crude oil imports annually if electric vehicles (EVs) were to garner 30 per cent share of new vehicle sales by 2030, says a study. Meeting the 30 per cent EV penetration target in 2030 will also have several environmental benefits, including a 17 per cent decrease each in primary particulate matter and nitrogen oxide and dioxide (NOx) emissions, 18 per cent reduction in carbon monoxide emissions, and a 4 per cent cut in greenhouse gas emissions relative to the business as usual scenario, found a study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), a New Delhi-based think-tank.

The higher EV penetration would also mean 19 per cent fewer jobs in the oil sector and the internal combustion engine-making sector combined. Further, the annual value-add loss in the oil and automobile sectors



could amount to about Rs 2 lakh crore. In addition, the central and state governments would lose over Rs 1 lakh crore in tax revenue annually from reduced sale of petrol and diesel. However, the increase in EV penetration could also increase the combined market size of power-train, battery and public chargers to over Rs 2 lakh crore in addition to creating 120,000 new jobs in this sector. Further, a substantial number of new jobs are likely to be created in emerging areas such as battery recycling, telematics, and allied construction and services.

"As India recovers from the pandemic, a focus on developing India's domestic EV manufacturing sector and increasing the penetration of electric vehicles in road transport would help deliver on jobs, growth and sustainability. This would require creating a robust and comprehensive transition plan for electric mobility that capitalises on the opportunities created in the form of improvement in balance of payments, new markets, and jobs generated," said Abhinav Soman, one of the authors of the study and a researcher at CEEW.

MAHINDRA BIDS ADIEU TO PLANE MANUFACTURING

Mumbai, Nov. 10: Mahindra Group on Tuesday said it has closed down its aircraft manufacturing business in Australia and is scouting for a buyer, more than a decade after venturing into high-cost plane-making business. The decision also comes little over a year after one of the planes, manufactured at the Australian facility, crashed in Sweden killing nine persons. In 2009, Mahindra Group acquired 75.1 per cent stake each in two Australian aerospace firms, Gippsland Aeronautics (Gipps Aero) and Aerostaff Australia, for Rs 175 crore as part of its plans to manufacture aircraft and allied components to service global market. "We have shut down our Gipps Aero business, which was into the manufacturing of 8- and 10-seater planes in Australia," Mahindra & Mahindra deputy managing director and group CFO Anish Shah told reporters in a post-earnings call. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Alia first female director in PCB

Islamabad: The Pakistan Cricket Board has appointed a female director for the first time. Human resources executive Alia Zafar has been included among four new PCB directors. The others are finance executive Javed Kurieshi, economist Asim Wajid Jawad and corporate executive Arif Saeed. Zafar and Jawad were appointed for two-year terms. The PCB's new constitution makes it mandatory to include at least one woman among four independent directors on its board of governors. I welcome the newly-appointed independent members, especially Ms Alia Zafar, the first female independent member, which is a giant step forward in enhancing the PCB's governance structure, PCB chairman Ehsan Mani said. — AP

Bangla captain tests positive

Dhaka: Bangladesh Test captain Mominul Haque has tested positive for Covid-19 and he is undergoing home isolation, according to a report here. Haque's coronavirus positive result came close on the heels of another senior player Mahmudullah Riyad contracting the virus which forced him to miss the Pakistan Super League play-offs. Bangladesh Cricket Board chief physician Dr Debashish Chowdhury confirmed Haque's test result to local news website. Haque, on his part, said that he had mild fever and got himself tested. "I only came to know yesterday that I have tested positive for Covid-19. I had fever for the last two days. Even I am running temperature today. But otherwise, there aren't any other symptoms," Haque said. — PTI

Bairstow to make Big Bash debut

Sydney: England wicketkeeper-batsman Jonny Bairstow will make his Big Bash League debut this year after signing for the Melbourne Stars. The 10th edition of Australia's Twenty20 tournament begins on December 10, although the 31-year-old will not be available until after Christmas. "I've always watched the BBL no matter where I've been in the world and it will be nice to finally be a part of it," said Bairstow late Monday. "I know the Stars are one of the competition's profile clubs and have a track record of being in contention in finals." Bairstow will join forces with the likes of Glenn Maxwell, Marcus Stoinis and Adam Zampa at the Stars. "His experience and versatility will be a valuable addition to our batting line-up, and we've got several 'keeping options in the squad as well," said Melbourne coach David Hussey. — AFP

Pak whitewash Zimbabwe in T20

Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Leg spinner Usman Qadir grabbed four wickets to guide Pakistan to a 3-0 whitewash of Zimbabwe with an eight-wicket victory in the third Twenty20 here on Tuesday. The 27-year-old Qadir — son of the late star spinner Abdul Qadir — finished with 4-13 from four mesmerising overs to restrict Zimbabwe to a paltry 129-9 in 20 overs. That proved a walk in the park for the home team, which cruised to victory in 15.2 overs losing just two wickets. Pakistan lost Fakhar Zaman (21) and Haider Ali (27) but debutant Abdullah Shafique top-scored with 41 and saw Pakistan home with Khushdil Shah (36 not out). — AFP

Brief scores: Zimbabwe 129/9 (Chibhabha 31, Qadir 4/13, Wasim 2/27) lost to Pakistan 130/2 (Shafique 41, Khushdil 36)

Live on TV

CRICKET

Women's Big Bash League: Perth Scorchers vs Sydney Sixers from 9 am; Brisbane Heat vs Sydney Thunder from 1.35 pm on Sony Six

FOOTBALL

International Friendlies: Norway vs Israel from 10.30 pm on Sony Six; Turkey vs Croatia from 11.15 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD; Belgium vs Switzerland from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1; Germany vs Czech Republic from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Six; Netherlands vs Spain from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; France vs Finland from 1.40 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 3

WWE

NXT: Bouts from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1

MUMB-HIGH FIVE!

Rohit & Co. hammer Delhi by 5 wickets to take fifth IPL title

Dubai, Nov. 10: A peerless Rohit Sharma led defending champions Mumbai Indians to their fifth IPL title with a one-sided demolition of Delhi Capitals here on Tuesday, closing an immensely successful tournament that had to be played in a controlled environment amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

If last year's one-run win over Chennai Super Kings was an absolute cliffhanger, Rohit's aristocratic 68 off 50 balls made it an anti-climax with Mumbai Indians chasing the target of 157 in 18.4 overs.

Five IPL titles are certain to make Rohit the undisputed 'Numero Uno' player-cum-leader in the IPL Universe.

He has played way better knocks than this in the past and will play a few more special ones in the future.

But he might never play a more significant one considering the little whirlpool of controversy that his "once damaged and now on the mend hamstring" created.

The 'Hit-Man' has given an altogether new meaning to what has one known till now about crushing pain barriers.

A hamstring injury can be very painful but the manner in which India's regular white-ball skipper exploded inside the 'Ring of Fire' at the Dubai International Stadium, he was fighting a battle of his own.

The cover drive was about his class, the whiplash behind square was his swagger and the so very familiar "Rohit Sharma pull shot" was an assurance to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly that "All Is Well".

And to prove a point, he fetched those doubles, tap and run singles including a misjudged one that saw Suryakumar Yadav (19) sacrificing his wicket for his skipper and rightly so. The carrom ball bowled by Ashwin was deposited to point fence with a cracking square cut and the straight six off leg spinner Praveen Dubey was "Boss Man" written all over it.

There has never been an edition where a team has



Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma (left) and team celebrate their win over Delhi Capitals in the final of IPL Season 13 in Dubai on Tuesday. — BCCI

●● If last year's one-run win over Chennai Super Kings was an absolute cliffhanger, Rohit's aristocratic 68 off 50 balls made it an anti-climax with Mumbai Indians chasing the target of 157 in 18.4 overs.

● Five IPL titles are certain to make Rohit the undisputed 'Numero Uno' player-cum-leader in the IPL Universe.

looked in a different league compared to seven others.

As Rohit had said earlier, it's not rocket science but investing in pure match-winners that has given Mumbai Indians such a menacing look.

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither a champion outfit that has now won five titles out of the

six finals it has played.

If Jasprit Bumrah wreaked havoc in the Qualifier one, Trent Boult (3/30) decided that final was his turn to inflict the damage and he did it with a first ball beauty that Marcus Stoinis will remember for years to come.

Nathan Coulter-Nile looked like a weak-link

but got the dangerous Rishabh Pant (56 off 38 balls) at the nick of time to put the brakes.

Rohit's batting only finished what looked inevitable but it was his captaincy that set it up.

Only 45 runs conceded in the last five overs during the DC innings was a game-changer as Shreyas Iyer (65 no off 50 balls) literally struggled during the end overs.

That was the time when save for Bumrah (0/28 in 4 overs), Boult and Coulter-Nile took the pace off the deliveries with slow bouncers and cutters making it difficult to hit.

And the decision to have off-spinner Jayant Yadav replace leg-spinner Rahul Chahar also proved to be a success. — PTI

KXIP LIKELY TO RETAIN RAHUL-KUMBLE

New Delhi, Nov. 10: Kings XI Punjab are likely to continue with the captain and coach combine of K.L. Rahul and Anil Kumble even after finishing sixth in a closely-contested 2020 Indian Premier League.

A team source said that the owners want Rahul and Kumble take the team forward in the 2021 edition, scheduled in less than six months.

Rahul, who captained the team for the first team this season, had another stellar season with the bat, amassing 670 runs at an average of 55.83. It was Kumble's first season with the franchise.

KXIP, who have never had a settled unit, have finally found a core group of players around whom a team



K.L. Rahul (left) and Anil Kumble.

can be built. That group includes Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Nicholas Pooran, Mohammad Shami, Chris Gayle and youngsters like Ravi Bishnoi and Arshdeep Singh.

The management wants to plug the gaps in the middle order and bowling department, which has been an issue for a number

of years. "The owners are happy with captain and coach. Rahul was exceptional with the bat and team scripted a remarkable comeback in the second half of the season. Had that short run not being called in the first game (against DC), the team would have been in play-offs" the source said. — PTI

Waugh sad about Virat pullout

Sydney, Nov. 10: Australian great Steve Waugh said on Tuesday he was surprised and disappointed that India captain Virat Kohli will miss three Tests to be at the birth of his first child, with his absence detracting from the blockbuster series.

The 32-year-old and his Bollywood star wife Anushka Sharma are expecting a child in January, and Kohli has been given permission by the Indian cricket board to return home after the first Test in Adelaide, which begins on December 17.

While the absence of the superstar batsman could improve Australia's chances of regaining the Border-Gavaskar trophy, it is a blow to broadcasters and cricket chiefs already feeling the effects of a pandemic-affected year.

"I'm a little bit disappointed he's not going to



AUSTRALIA TOUR

be there — and a bit surprised," former skipper Waugh, who played 168 Tests, said.

"This was really shaping up as one the key series of his whole career after he's achieved just about everything. But obviously family comes first."

India are due leave this week for Australia, where they will spend two weeks in quarantine in Sydney before the first one-day international on November 27.

Kohli will lead India in three ODIs, three T20 and the first Test — a day-night match in Adelaide — before heading home.

The second Test starts in Melbourne on December 26 followed by matches in Sydney on January 7 and Brisbane on January 15, all played under strict bio-security protocols. — AFP

DRUMS BEAT FOR PUCOVSKI AFTER BACK-TO-BACK TONS

Sydney, Nov. 10: Australia's selectors were under pressure on Tuesday to pick Will Pucovski as an opening batsman for the Test series against India after the young prodigy smashed back-to-back double centuries.

The 22-year-old hit an unbeaten 255 for Victoria in the Sheffield Shield last week, sharing in a record opening stand of 486 runs with Marcus Harris against South Australia.

He followed it with 202 against Western Australia on Monday which saw former Australia captains add their weight to calls for him to open alongside David Warner, at the expense of incumbent Joe Burns.

"It's against a good team, India, but this kid's ready... Now is his time,"

former skipper Michael Clarke told reporters.

"Got to pick him. The fact this series is in Australia is a great way to get him into that Test series as well. He is playing in conditions he is accustomed to."

Fellow former captains Ian Chappell and Kim Hughes expressed similar sentiments, as did Mark Waugh.

"I would definitely be picking him for the first Test against India," Waugh told Fox Sports. "He should be picked as an opening batsman."

"Joe Burns has got a decent enough record, but his start to the season hasn't been ideal and he just hasn't nailed that spot down."

Selectors are finalising the squad for the first of four Tests against India in Adelaide on December 17.

BCCI INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR SELECTORS

New Delhi, Nov. 10: The BCCI on Tuesday invited applications for replacing three outgoing selectors in the senior men's committee. The deadline for sending applications is Sunday, November 15, with an age-cap of 60 years and a minimum eligibility criteria of 30 first-class matches.

However, it goes without saying that international experience (7 Tests or a combination of 10 ODIs and 20 first-class matches) will be given preference.

The three outgoing selectors are Devang Gandhi (East Zone), Sarandeep Singh (North Zone) and Jatinder Paranjape (West Zone).

While the BCCI has done away with the zonal policy officially, the convention has been to replace the candidate from the same zone as Sunil Joshi (South) replaced MSK Prasad, who was the chairman of the last committee.

Similarly, Rajasthan's Gagan Khoda was replaced by Railways' Harvinder Singh. — PTI

CA chief reveals Kohli missing Tests was on cards

Melbourne, Nov. 10: Cricket Australia chief executive Nick Hockley is not surprised by Virat Kohli's withdrawal from three Test matches here as he prepares for fatherhood in January, taking solace from the fact that the superstar will be there for a major part of the eagerly-awaited showdown across formats.

Kohli and his actor wife Anushka Sharma are expecting their first child in January. The BCCI has granted Kohli a paternity

leave and he will return to India after the opening Test, scheduled from December 17 in Adelaide.

Hockley, who is CA's interim chief executive, said that Kohli missing a major part of the Test series was expected but he is glad that the stylish batter will be available for three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs starting November 27.

"When they announced their pregnancy earlier, I think it was always on the cards," Hockley told

We're thrilled Virat is coming out for three ODIs, three T20s, the first ever day-night Test against India and we have to respect the fact he wants to be there for the birth of his first child.

— NICK HOCKLEY
Cricket Australia chief executive

Sydney radio station SEN. "We're thrilled Virat is coming out for three ODIs,



three T20s, the first ever day-night Test against India and we have to

respect the fact he wants to be there for the birth of his first child.

"Clearly, (he is) one of the game's absolute superstars. We're looking forward to seeing him here for seven out of the 10 matches," he said.

Hockley said both teams have enough stars to ensure that cricket fans will be hooked to the series. "You've got a good number of players from both sides who played the last series in Australia which India won. There'll

be a huge amount to play for ... it will be fascinating series."

Hockley said it looks highly unlikely that Kohli could get back to Australia to play the latter part of the series.

"I think it's pretty challenging (for him to return). Obviously a mandatory 14-day quarantine period," he said.

"Logistically it's very much more complicated and being brutal it's much harder than normal." — PTI

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