



Suspension of MPs unfortunate, says Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla
page 10



First time in decades laws framed to benefit farmers, workers: Modi
page 9



Bernie Sanders says Trump is 'prepared to undermine democracy'
page 15



Kolkata Knight Riders, Sunrisers Hyderabad looking for first win
page 17



NEARBY

Under 4,000 new virus cases for 6th day in city

NEW DELHI

A total of 3,827 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi in the past 24 hours taking the tally to 2,64,450, while the death toll has risen to 5,147 with 24 more deaths being reported. There are now 30,867 active cases in Delhi.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Centre unveils first look of RRTS train design

NEW DELHI
The Centre on Friday unveiled the first look of the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) train that has been designed to attain a top speed of 180 kmph on the 82-km Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor. The prototype will be ready by 2022.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Vodafone wins \$2 bn tax case

International tribunal rules that India's demand is in breach of 'fair treatment'

REUTERS

NEW DELHI

Vodafone Group Plc said on Friday that it had won an international arbitration case against the Indian government, ending one of the most high-profile disputes in the country involving a \$2 billion tax claim.

An international arbitration tribunal in The Hague ruled that India's imposition of a tax liability on Vodafone, as well as interest and penalties, were in a breach of an investment treaty agreement between India and the Netherlands, two sources with direct knowledge of the matter said.

India had claimed a total of ₹27,900 crore (\$3.79 billion), including about \$2 billion in tax, as well as interest and penalties, one of the sources said.

The tribunal, in its ruling, said the government's demand is in breach of "fair



Retro-tax case

A brief look at the events that led to the arbitration case

2007: Vodafone, in a \$11 billion deal, buys the Indian mobile assets from Hutchison Whampoa

■ India claims \$3.79 billion, including about \$2 billion in tax, as well as interest and penalties

■ Telecom company contests the decision

and equitable treatment" and it must cease seeking the dues from Vodafone.

It also directed India to pay £4.3 million (\$5.47 million) to the company as compensation for its legal costs.

Vodafone said in a statement the amount of the award was confidential. Shares in the company's India unit, Vodafone Idea, ended

ed 13% higher on Friday.

"The tribunal held that any attempt by India to enforce the tax demand would be a violation of India's international law obligations," Vodafone said in its statement.

The Finance Ministry said it would carefully study the award, together with its lawyers. "After such consulta-

tions, the government will consider all options and take a decision on further course of action, including legal remedies," the Ministry said in a statement.

"Vodafone has finally got justice, first from the Indian Supreme Court and now from an international arbitral tribunal," said Anuradha Dutt, senior partner at DMD Advocates, an Indian law firm representing the company.

The ruling brings an end to one of the most controversial disputes in India under international treaty agreements that it enters into with countries to protect foreign investments.

India is entangled in more than a dozen such cases against companies, including Cairn Energy, over retrospective tax claims and cancellation of contracts.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 9

A soothing voice falls silent

Legendary singer SPB passes away in Chennai hospital

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI



S.P. BALASUBRAHMANYAM
1946-2020

▪ M. PERIASAMY

singing for nearly 50 years.

Mr. Balasubrahmanyam was hospitalised in August at MGM Healthcare after testing positive for COVID-19. While he reportedly did well initially, he took a turn for the worse and was put on a ventilator and ECMO support.

On September 7, he tested negative for COVID-19 but continued to be on the ventilator and ECMO even as he participated in passive physiotherapy. He seemed to have made a recovery when a sudden setback on Thursday caused a further deterioration in his condition.

A release from the hospital said, "Despite maximal life support measures and the best efforts, his condition deteriorated and he suffered a cardio-respiratory arrest."

Born Sripathi Pandithradhyula Balasubrahmanyam in 1946 in Nellore-based Harikatha exponent Sambamurthy, his original ambition was to become an engineer.

However, life had other plans for him, and he went on to pursue a career in

Tributes poured in from across the country, with

President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and leaders in various sectors hailing his versatility, humility, willingness to learn, and his charity and guidance for those who looked up to him.

SPB's mortal remains were taken to his house in Nungambakkam in Chennai, where scores of people paid their last respects. Late on Friday night, the cortège left for his farmhouse in the northern outskirts of the city where the final rites and cremation will be done.

He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter – Charan and Pallavi – both of whom are singers.

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 11,12

Bihar poll to be held in 3 phases from Oct. 28

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Bihar Assembly election will be held in three phases on October 28, November 3 and November 7, followed by the counting on November 10, the Election Commission of India (ECI) announced on Friday.

Chief Election Commis-

sioner (CEC) Sunil Arora said the number of phases as well as the duration of the conduct of the poll had been reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Polling hours increased
The polling hours have been increased, except in the Left wing extremism-affected dis-

tricts, by an hour – from 7 a.m. till 6 p.m. instead of 5 p.m. Mr. Arora said COVID-19 patients would be allowed to vote in the last hour of polling while following necessary precautions.

In the first phase, election will be held in 71 of the 243 constituencies, while the second phase will cover 94

seats and the third phase 78. With 7.29 crore electors, the poll could be the largest held during a pandemic in the immediate future, Mr. Arora said.

The ECI and other authorities have taken steps to make the elections COVID-19-safe. More than 7 lakh units of hand sanitiser, 46

lakh masks, 6 lakh PPE kits, 7.6 lakh face shields and 23 lakh pairs of hand gloves have been procured.

Everyone involved in election work, including the polling staff and voters, would have to wear masks.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 9

Man-made woes



A family wades through water as their village is submerged by a flash flood in Borkhal village, Assam, on Friday. The flash flood occurred due to water being released from the Umiam hydroelectric dam in Meghalaya. ▶ RITU RAJ KONWAR

DNA samples of Rajouri families match 3 youth killed in Shopian

Army enquiry had stated operation breached AFSPA powers

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR

DNA samples of the three youth killed in a joint operation of the Army and the police in Shopian in Kashmir on July 18 matched the samples taken from the families of the missing youth from Rajouri, the police said on Friday.

"DNA sample results of the three families of Rajouri have matched those killed in Amshipora of Shopian. We will now take further course of action and complete the remaining formalities," Inspector-General of Police Vijay Kumar said at a press conference here.

The police statement comes a week after the Army's inquiry established that the Shopian operation "con-



The three youth were killed on July 18.

travened the dos and don'ts of the Chief of Army Staff approved by the Supreme Court and exceeded the powers vested under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act".

The Army has initiated disciplinary proceedings under the Army Act against those found prima facie

answerable.

"The Shopian encounter was staged, wherein innocent labourers were murdered and passed off as militants. Now is the test for the administration to ensure justice to the families by taking the case to its logical conclusion. It should not be a repeat of Pathribal and Machil cases. The policy to incentivise killings breeds instances of murder for medals", said PDP spokesman Suhail Bukhari.

Peoples Conference chief Sajad Lone said, "It is not [for] the first time and not the last time. There is no deterrence". Apni Party president Altaf Bukhari appreciated the role of the police in a fair investigation.

DU first cut-off list on Oct. 12

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi University will release the first cut-off list for admission to merit-based undergraduate (UG) courses on October 12, the university announced in a notification on Friday.

The university is planning to release five cut-off lists with the second list scheduled to come out on October 19, third list on October 26, fourth on November 2, and fifth on November 9. Admissions against special cut-offs will open from November 18.

In case of vacant seats, DU may announce more lists. Cut-off marks this year are expected to be higher than last year. The first list for entrance-based UG courses will be announced on October 19.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 2

Nearly 7 crore COVID-19 tests conducted in India

15 lakh tests done in a day: Ministry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India has recorded a high of nearly 15 lakh COVID-19 tests in a day, according to a release issued by the Union Health Ministry on Friday.

"With 14,92,409 tests conducted in the last 24 hours, the cumulative tests have touched nearly 7 crore (6,89,28,440)," the Ministry said.

The surge in the daily testing capacities demonstrated the determined escalation of the testing infrastructure in the country. "The last one crore tests were conducted in merely 9 days. The tests per million (TPM) stand at 49,948 as of today," the Ministry said.

Evidence has revealed that higher numbers of testing subsequently led to lowered positivity rate. The

ED attaches London flat in Yes Bank case

'₹127-cr. property linked to Rana Kapoor'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has attached a London-based property currently worth ₹127 crore, linked to Yes Bank co-founder Rana Kapoor, in connection with a money laundering case. The total attachment now stands at ₹2,011 crore.

The residential flat, located on South Audley Street in London, was bought in 2017 for ₹9.9 million (about ₹93 crore) in the name of DOIT Creations Jersey Limited, of which Mr. Kapoor is alleged to be the beneficial owner.

"Information from a reliable source revealed that Rana Kapoor is trying to alienate this property in London," said the agency on Friday.

The ED probe against Mr.

Rana and others is based on an FIR lodged by the Central Bureau of Investigation, which alleged that in April-June 2018, Yes Bank had invested ₹3,700 crore in short-term debentures of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited (DHFL).

DHFL connection
Simultaneously, Kapil Wadhawan of DHFL had allegedly paid kickbacks totalling ₹600 crore to Mr. Kapoor and his family members in the garb of a loan to DOIT Urban Ventures (India) Private Limited.

Yes Bank had also sanctioned a loan of ₹750 crore to RKW Developers, a group company of DHFL beneficially owned by Mr. Wadhawan, Dheeraj Wadhawan and their family members.

Thousands take to streets over farm Bills

They block rail, road traffic; accuse Centre of implementing 'anti-farmer' policies



Sea of protesters: Members of various farmers' organisations took part in a protest at the Punjab-Haryana border near Ambala on Friday. ▶ PTI

VIKAS VASUDEVA

RAJPURA

Thousands of farmers took to the streets on Friday amid a call for a "Bharat bandh" given by a wide coalition of farmer outfits to protest against the three farm Bills recently passed by Parliament.

Farmers blocked rail and road traffic, held sit-ins at many places and shouted slogans against the BJP-led government at the Centre, accusing it of implementing "anti-farmer" policies.

Much of the action was concentrated in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Normal life was hit in Punjab, where over 30 farmer outfits had given a call for a complete shutdown. Shops and commercial establishments remained shut in many parts.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

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AN-NDNE

IN BRIEF

Man involved in 50 criminal cases held

NEW DELHI A 44-year-old man involved in 50 criminal cases has been arrested, the police said on Thursday. They said another man has also been held in connection with the case. DCP (North) said the accused has been identified as Sanjay Kumar. The police said on September 23, a woman complained that two men had snatched her gold chain following which a case was registered. During probe, it was found that several cases of snatching have been reported on the same stretch and to keep a check, staff in plain clothes was deployed. CCTV footage and technical surveillance helped police arrest the accused.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	134	Gurugram	114
Ghaziabad	142	Faridabad	150
Noida	105	Greater Noida	136
Good	50-100	Moderate	101-200
Poor	201-300	Very poor	301-400
Severe	>401		
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB			

Timings
DELHI

SATURDAY, SEP. 26	RISE 06:12 SET 18:13
	RISE 15:12 SET 00:52
SUNDAY, SEP. 27	RISE 06:12 SET 18:12
	RISE 15:56 SET 01:50
MONDAY, SEP. 28	RISE 06:13 SET 18:11
	RISE 16:34 SET 02:47

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 37 25
Safdarjung 37 25
Palam 37 26

Delhi Palam Today
36°C Moderate winds would prevail. Day would become very warm. A short spell of rain at few areas likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
36°C Partly cloudy sky and gentle winds would prevail. Warm afternoon would continue.

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THE HINDU
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IN BRIEF

Capacity of Nigambodh Ghat will be doubled

NEW DELHI
The capacity of Nigambodh Ghat crematorium would be doubled following the commissioning of three new CNG platforms, North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash said on Friday. The platforms are expected to be completed within a month, with 80% of the work having been completed so far, the Mayor said. With this, the number of CNG furnaces at the crematorium would stand at six. The project has been undertaken at a cost of ₹1.3 crore, Mr. Prakash added.

Online programme held for English teachers

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government conducted an eight-week online 'Professional Development for English Teachers' (PDET) programme and a four-week communicative language teaching and TESOL methodology for primary teachers. The online programme was conducted in association with the Regional English Language Office (RELO) of the American Embassy in India and 600 English teachers participated in the training. Education Minister Manish Sisodia, who was scheduled to participate in the concluding session, was unable to make it and sent a message to the attendees.

Booking high-security number plates now easy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The process of booking high security registration plates (HSRPs) has been made easier following the Delhi government's public appeal to citizens to get these installed, said Rosmerta Security Systems Private Limited, the largest vendor of these plates, here on Friday.

According to a Rosmerta spokesperson, the time to book a number plate and take appointment online via www.bookmyhsrp.com has reduced to 1-2 minutes

Second COVID coming reported in city, but experts unconvinced

Studies say that viral particles can persist for up to 140 days, asserts doctor

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Though there have been at least three cases in the city of a person testing positive for COVID-19 for a second time, doctors who handled two of these patients admitted they were not confirmed reinfections as genome study was not done. Experts have frequently reiterated that chances of reinfections are rare.

A police officer had allegedly tested positive for a second time in July at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital. But Rajesh Chawla, a senior consultant at the hospital, said that they cannot call it a reinfection.

"The policeman came to us in July with fever and sore throat and he was tested positive for the virus. He had earlier tested positive more than a month ago at another hospital. It is difficult to say whether it was reinfection or the same infection. Now studies are saying that viral particles can persist for up to 140 days," Dr. Chawla said.

"We did the genome study



Medical staff taking a break after conducting rapid antigen test at Sarai Kale Khan on Friday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

of the virus when he came to our hospital the second time. But it was not done when he was first infected. If it had been done, then we could have confirmed whether it was indeed a reinfection," he added.

Chandra Goda, HoD of Medical Oncology Department of Aakash Healthcare, who also treated a patient who tested positive for a second time after recovering, had a similar opinion. "But the patient had tested negative after testing positive for

the time and then her health improved. But she tested positive again and her health deteriorated. Which means that it could be a reinfection, but we cannot confirm it as Next Generation Sequencing [NGS], which is a genetic study of the virus. It was not done both the times she tested positive," he said.

How to confirm?

K. Srinath Reddy, epidemiologist and president of Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) in Delhi, said that

reinfection is rare.

"When the virus leaves a person's body, it carries a bit of her genetic material. The virus has a genetic structure, but it also picks up fragments of the host's genetic material. A reinfection can be confirmed if a genome study of the virus is done and the genetic structure of the virus is different at the two different points when she tested positive," Dr. Reddy said.

He said that if the genetic structure is the same, then it is not a reinfection and could be a dead virus. The expert said that even if a person had COVID-19 and has antibodies and memory cells against the virus, it can invade the body and reach the nose or throat.

"During this time, the person will test positive for COVID-19, if he takes a nasal swab test. But in most cases, people will have memory cells to fall back upon to mount an immune response to prevent infection from turning into a disease," Dr. Reddy added.

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"I find there is prima facie, cognisable case having been disclosed by the complainant on the basis of the CD in question in which Arvind Kejriwal as the Chief Minister of Delhi is shown singing...under Section 294 [obscene acts and songs] of the IPC, read with 67 [lascivious content] of Information Technology Act," the judge said.

that after the result of Delhi Vidhan Sabha Election on February 12, 2020, a video was uploaded on YouTube in which Mr. Kejriwal has been shown singing an "obscene" song.

by an advocate, within one week.

It also directed the police to file a compliance report by December 2.

The complaint, filed by advocate Amit Sahni, claimed

Fridays For Future holds protest outside Environment Ministry

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
Students and youth under the banner of Fridays For Future (FFF), a global movement demanding climate justice, protested outside the Union Environment Ministry on Friday afternoon.

"We are asking for our rights. Not begging to

anyone", "Scrap Draft EIA 2020", "Emergency! Seas are rising" were some of the slogans the protesters wrote on a road opposite to the Ministry. They also carried placards and raised slogans and demanded the government to act against the climate crisis.

"Stop denying, our earth is dying," read one placard.

"Make love, not CO2," read another. The group also said they would be submitting a detailed list of demands to the Delhi government next week.

The FFF is a global climate strike movement that started in August 2018, when 15-year-old Greta Thunberg began a strike in Sweden.

The court said in its order passed on September 24, "In the video in question, the tone and manner of the song were not only lowering the reputation of a constitutionally elected Chief Minister, but were also addressing public/voters in abusive manner who have exercised their

constitutional/electoral rights while voting for AAP for the purpose of electing Arvind Kejriwal as the Chief Minister of Delhi."

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Farmers block roads in Haryana to protest against Central Bills

Half-a-dozen districts bordering Punjab witness maximum impact of 'Bharat bandh'

ASHOK KUMAR
KURUKSHETRA

Peaceful demonstrations were held across Haryana to oppose the three farm Bills on Friday, in response to the call for a nation-wide bandh given by a wide coalition of farmers' unions. More than half-a-dozen districts bordering Punjab, especially Kurukshetra, Ambala and Yamunanagar, witnessed the maximum impact.

Though commercial establishments and transport services remained unaffected, the protesters sat on the roads, including on State and national highways, at several points across the Haryana to block traffic. Besides the Delhi-Hisar, Ambala-Kaithal and Jind-Patiala highways, the agitating farmers laid seize on roads in Kurukshetra, Sirsa, Ambala, Kaithal and Jind.

The Arthiya (commission agents) association, Janvadi Mahila Samiti, CITU and retired Karamchari Sangh



Farmers protesting against farm Bills during 'Bharat bandh', in Kurukshetra on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

joined the protest at Rohtak. The roads leading to Jind, Panipat, Hisar and Jhajjar from the district were blocked.

Kisan Sabha State vice-president Inderjit Singh, addressing the protesters, claimed that success of Bharat Bandh had proved that there were no takers for the legislations being imposed by the Modi government.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) workers and farmers sat on railway tracks in Yamuna Nagar disrupting the traffic. With arthiyas be-

ing at the receiving end of the three Bills, the grain markets across the State saw little business.

"The business has been almost nil. Around 15,000 sacks of paddy were brought to the mandi on Thursday, but only a couple of farmers turned up today," said Sandeep Beniwal, commission agent, Samalkha New Grain Market - off National Highway-44 in Panipat.

BKU Haryana president Gurnam Singh Charuni, speaking to the media per-

sons at a protest site in Panchkula, said the people in power took donations from big corporates for election and made laws to suit them.

"Both the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party have exploited farmers. But I would like to say that BJP is doing so four times faster than the Congress," said Mr. Charuni, denying allegations of any understanding with the Congress.

'Do or die battle'

Addressing gatherings at Ambala and Yamuna Nagar, Mr. Charuni said the farmers were ready for a "do or die" battle. He added that the new law would establish the monopoly of a few corporate houses in the country to buy and sell agricultural products.

Mr. Charuni said the State unit of Haryana had less than two days to prepare for the strike, but still the response was "good".

Demonstrations in Rajasthan

BJP has launched an attack on farmers, alleges Congress

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

Farmers staged demonstrations and participated in rallies in several districts of Rajasthan on Friday during the Bharat bandh called to oppose the farm Bills passed in the Parliament. Vehicular traffic was blocked on several roads and highways in Sri-ganganagar, Hanumangarh and Jhunjhunu districts.

A large number of Krishi Upaj Mandis across the State remained closed on the bandh called given by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC). The towns in northern Rajasthan, bordering Punjab, also witnessed closure of all shops and commercial establishments, as the farmers' bodies organised protest march and public meetings.

The Youth Congress workers took out a 'Mashaal Jaloos' (torch rally) at Nainwa road in Bundi to protest against the contentious Bills, which they said would weaken the rural economy. The police force was deployed at all sensitive places, while the State Transport and private buses remained off the road



CM Ashok Gehlot and senior Cong. leader Randeep Surjewala addressing a press conference in Jaipur on Friday. ■ PTI

in Sri-ganganagar district during the day.

AIKSCC-Rajasthan coordinator Sanjay Madhav said the farmers were apprised of the Bills impact on their livelihood, minimum support prices, public distribution system and Krishi Upaj Mandis during the bandh. He said the farmers, villagers, agricultural labourers and small shopkeepers ensured a peaceful observance of bandh in the State.

The Congress affirmed that it had extended an unqualified support to farmers in their struggle against the Ofarm Bills, which had been introduced by the Centre as a

"disgusting conspiracy". The party's chief spokesperson, Randeep Surjewala, said at a press conference here that the BJP had launched an attack on the farmers through the Bills, depriving them of their livelihoods.

'Mandis will be finished'

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said the mandis across the country would be finished if the provisions made in the Bills were implemented.

"The Bills were brought to divert people's attention from the BJP's divisive politics... No mandi traders and Opposition parties were consulted," he said.

Highway still under siege in Dungarpur

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

A two-km stretch of the National Highway-8 near Dungarpur in Rajasthan remained under control of the unruly tribal youth for the second consecutive day on Friday. After unsuccessful attempts to disperse the protesters who torched a dozen vehicles and vandalised a petrol pump, the district administration clamped prohibitory orders under Section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code in the region.

Police lobbed teargas shells and fired rubber bullets at the crowd on the highway, which connects Udaipur with Ahmedabad. Dungarpur Collector Kana Ram said the police had arrested about 30 persons, while the highway was still blocked and efforts were underway to restore law and order.

The youth have been demanding recruitment of Scheduled Caste candidates to 1,167 posts of teachers in the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) area.

'Govt. wants to make us bonded labourers'

During polls we become voters, but today we are nothing, says Hapur farmer

ANUJ KUMAR
HAPUR

"When there is an election, we become both *anna daata* (food provider) and *mat daata* (voter), but today the farmer is neither of the two," complained Jagveer Singh, a 74-year-old farmer squatting on the divider of NH 9, jammed by thousands of farmers on Friday in protest against the farm bills passed by the Parliament in the just-concluded monsoon session.

Hailing from the Rasoolpur village of Hapur, he shied away from sharing the exact size of landholding he had. "Mahjola (mid-level) kisan samajh lo," he said. "None of us protesting here has more than 7-8 bighas of land. *Bas kisi tarah ghar chal jata hai!*"

He didn't know exactly what was there in the three farm Bills but what he understood was "this government wants to make us bonded labourers of private players." "And I know what a private party is like because we have dealt with Simbaoli Sugar Mill. It still owes around ₹500 crores to cane farmers," his wrinkled face grew a few more creases. "Despite," chipped in Sudesh Kumar, sitting next to Mr. Singh, "Our Chief Minister, taking oath on Ganga water, had said that he would get us our dues in 14



Farmer Jagveer Singh in Hapur on Friday. ■ ANUJ KUMAR

days and even the Supreme Court gave a ruling in our favour. Do you still think we stand a chance against these corporates when they won't abide by the contract," he rued. "Freedom was the only thing we had and that is also being snatched away from us," said Mr. Kumar, adding the only option left for farmers was to hit the road and get themselves heard.

Unity among groups' The good thing, said Kushalpal Arya, national secretary of Bharatiya Kisan Union, the issue had brought together different farmer groups and political parties. At the protest, tractors with flags of Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan could be seen and representatives of the Bahujan Samaj Party and Congress were part of the sit-in protest. "I hope farmers will not get swayed by the emotive issues

The Bills, he said, were formulated without taking into account the ground realities. "Through these Bills, the government is allowing the private parties to hoard knowing fully well that the ordinary farmer doesn't have any storage capacity. He will always blink first in the battle of wait for a good price," he said.

One nation, 2 markets' Dharmendra Malik, the national spokesperson of BKU, said The Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill 2020 would create a situation of one country, two markets. "The government is saying that the APMC system would continue. But it is anybody's guess that faced with two systems - one with regulation and taxes and the other without them - the private player, agent, and businessman would ensure only the latter thrives. This will eventually make APMC meaningless."

Earlier, in a widespread protest, in which Rashtriya Lok Dal and Bharatiya Kisan Sangathan also participated, farmers jammed national and State highways in Shahjahanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Bijnor, Saharanpur, Ghaziabad, Noida, Aligarh, and Mathura, leading to long traffic jams across western Uttar Pradesh.

COVID-19 cases cross 2 lakh mark in Odisha

4,208 test positive in last 24 hours

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

The number of COVID-19 cases in Odisha soared past the 2 lakh mark on Friday even as the spread of the infection showing no signs of slowing down.

The State's COVID-19 count reached 2,01,096 cases after 4,208 persons tested positive during the past 24 hours. The number of fatalities also jumped to 767 following the death of 15 persons.

While Odisha took 169 days to breach the one lakh mark on August 30, the next one lakh cases came in just 27 days on September 25.

Odisha's COVID-19 graph has been rising sharply as the daily spike has been consistently surpassing the 4000-mark for the past 10 days.

Only six other States – Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh – have registered higher daily infections.

Among the neighbouring States, while Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal have stayed ahead of Odisha with 6,54,385 and 2,37,869 cases respectively, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are yet to cross

the one lakh mark.

Local cases, which are found to be above 40%, are on the rise. For the past two days, the State government has been testing more than 50,000 samples per day. The positivity rate has been hovering over 8% since the first week of August. The daily growth rate of Odisha's COVID-19 tally is estimated to be above 2%.

Fatality count

Meanwhile, a controversy has erupted over the number of fatalities in the State, which account for 0.83% of India's total death toll. "Going by the number of bodies being disposed at Satyanagar crematorium in Bhubaneswar, we doubt that government is hiding the death figures," said Manas Choudhury, president of the District Congress Committee, Bhubaneswar, in a video he shared of bodies being cremated.

Similarly, in another video related to a crematorium in Cuttack, a relative of a deceased person took to social media alleging that the number of bodies being cremated daily was higher than the official figures put up by the State.

We added that a team of AIIMS specialists would be arriving "in a day or two" for treating the former Chief Minister, whose parliamentary son Gaurav Gogoi participated in the videoconference too.

AIIMS team to check ex-CM Gogoi's health

He is in hospital for virus complications

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A team of doctors from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is expected to visit Assam soon to check the health of former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi.

Mr. Gogoi was admitted to the intensive care unit of the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) on Thursday due to post-COVID-19 complications. His admission almost coincided with the discharging of another former Chief Minister, Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, from a private hospital where he had undergone treatment for a neurological ailment.

"We had a videoconference with AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria in the morning to discuss Mr. Gogoi's health condition. He expressed satisfaction with the line of treatment by the GMCH doctors and advised some tests," Assam Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told journalists on Friday.

He added that a team of AIIMS specialists would be arriving "in a day or two" for treating the former Chief Minister, whose parliamentary son Gaurav Gogoi participated in the videoconference too.



Mr. Sarma said the former Chief Minister's health improved on Friday compared to what it was on Thursday. "He is maintaining a saturation level of 94 with three litres of oxygen compared to 92 with six litres of oxygen 24 hours ago," he said.

Panel for Bodoland Meanwhile, Assam Governor Jagdish Mukhi on Friday formed a four-member panel for redrawing the map of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) and increasing the number of councils from 40 to 60.

Mandated by the Bodo Accord of January 29, the BTR would be an "upgraded" version of the existing Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), which has been under the Governor's Rule since April 27 after the expiry of its term.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

सूचना

जन हित में सुचित किया जाता है कि फ्रेंड्स कलोनी (सिविल लाइन) परीक्षा के पास गुरुग्राम, में मकान नम्बर 28/18 पर गुरुग्राम डिस्ट्रिक्ट कोट में केस चल रहा है। केस (मुकदमा) नम्बर CS/1687/2019 कोट में केस चल रहा है। आपने यह एक बड़ी प्रबल तारीख तक नहीं देखा है।

मकान के मालिक डॉ सिंहराज

S/o चौपांच सुरजनल

PUBLIC NOTICE

WILL

"Late Sh. Tirath Ram made a WILL with respect to his property MIG Flat No.DGII 167-A, Vikaspuri, New Delhi-110018 in the name of his son and my client Dr. P.K. Rathore which he desires to be carried into effect his death. The said 'WILL' was registered on 19-07-2014 by Sh. Tirath Ram with the concerned client. Registration No-06-09-2010 and thus my client Dr. P.K. Rathore is the sole owner of the said property and he is not responsible for any kind of illegal work."

GAYA PRASAD (Advocate)

Res.cum Off. 1015-B, West Gorakhpur, Park Street No.-1, Shadnagar, Delhi

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I. Priyanka, Resident of H.No. 2, Pradhani Colony, New Delhi-110010, have changed her Name to Swati Lohia for all Future Purposes.

I. Munesh, who was residing at H. No. 5767, Gali No. 6, New Chandivali, Delhi-110007, have shifted to H.No. 24368638, Lodhi Colony, New Delhi-110010, and have changed my name to Meenu for all Future Purposes.

For enquiries on

announcements in this

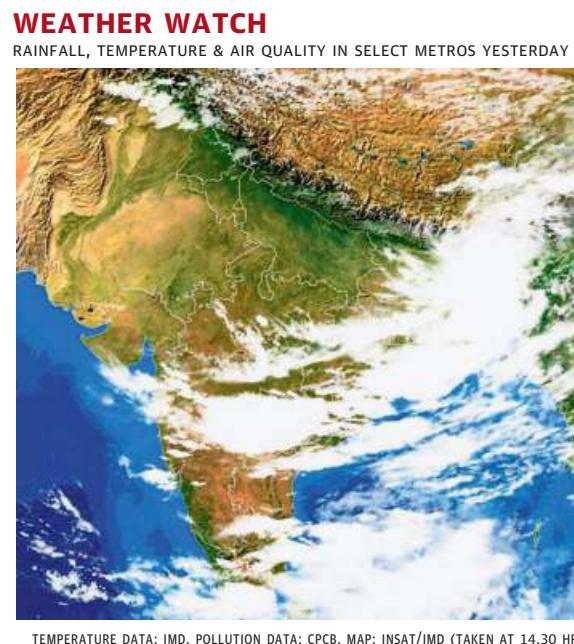
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TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 14.30 HRS)

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Bihar, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and coastal Karnataka. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Jharkhand, Rayalseema, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	4.4	31.6	25.7	Kozhikode	—	32.4...	25.7
Ahmedabad	—	34.3	26.6	Kurnool	—	33.7...	24.7
Aizawl	9	26.8	18.7	Lucknow	—	32.2...	24.6
Allahabad	—	30.8	26.3	Madurai	—	34.2...	26.6
Bengaluru	—	29.6	20.9	Mangaluru	0.4	31.0...	23.3
Bhopal	—	32.7	24.4	Mumbai	2	30.5...	25.2
Bhubaneswar	—	31.6	27.3	Mysuru	—	30.0...	20.5
Chandigarh	—	35.2	25.5	New Delhi	—	37.4...	25.4
Chennai	—	33.8	28.3	Patna	44.8	29.8...	24.6
Coimbatore	—	31.2	23.4	Port Blair	16.2	30.8...	23.7
Dehradun	—	32.5	24.0	Puducherry	—	34.4...	26.2
Gangtok	0.5	19.0	17.3	Pune	3.5	29.6...	22.0
Goa	15.6	28.2	25.3	Raipur	—	32.4...	24.8
Guwahati	16	32.0	24.2	Ranchi	2.6	31.2...	23.1
Hubballi	—	27.0	22.0	Shillong	244.7	21.7...	17.5
Hyderabad	—	31.8	23.8	Shimla	—	27.0...	17.6
Imphal	0.6	28.5	20.5	Srinagar	—	28.3...	10.0
Jaipur	—	37.8	27.4	Thiruvananthapuram	0.2	30.6...	24.6
Kochi	1.6	29.8	24.2	Tiruchi	—	34.1...	26.8
Kohima	5.6	25.2	18.0	Vijayawada	—	35.2...	27.2
Kolkata	—	32.5	27.6	Visakhapatnam	0.4	30.5...	28.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	14	56	33	...85	90	GREEN
Bengaluru	3	21	28	...43	66	GREEN
Chennai	21	12	42	...61	—	GREEN
Delhi	—	45	77	126	217	RED
Hyderabad	7	47	24	21	32	GREEN
Kolkata	10	19	23	57	77	GREEN
Lucknow	7	45	42	46	.89	GREEN
Mumbai	18	6	36	—	.115	GREEN
Pune	13	22	48	40	40	GREEN
Visakhapatnam	6	40	21	66	.105	GREEN

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Charkhi Dadri, Haryana recorded an unhealthy pollution index (AQI) score of 248 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Mysuru, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 21

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

'MVA govt. opposed to enacting farm, labour Bills'

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar says govt. studying legalities; farmer outfits stage protests across Maharashtra

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday clarified that the Maharashtra government had no plans of implementing the contentious farmer and labour Bills passed by the Narendra Modi-led Central government.

Mr. Pawar's statement in Pune came in the backdrop of protesting farmer outfits, who demonstrated against the Bills as part of the shutdown called by the Akhil Bhartiya Kisan Samanvay Samiti. "What was the need [of the Modi government] to pass these Bills in such a hurry? They do not seem to be beneficial to farmers. Several farmer outfits across the country have vehemently opposed them. The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), along with several other political parties, are strongly opposed to it as well," said Mr. Pawar, speaking on the sidelines of a COVID-19 review meeting in the city.

He said while the Maha Vikas Aghadi government was currently studying the legalities, the fact that they were pushed through Parliament cast aspersions on whether they would ultimately be beneficial to farmers.

Growing opposition

Farmer outfits, including the Raju Shetti-led Swabhiman Shetkari Sanghatana (SSS) and the All-India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), staged protests across the State, burning copies of the Bills while raising slogans against the Modi-led government.

Protests were prominent in Kolhapur and Buldhana - both strongholds of the SSS, as well as Nanded, Jalna and Ahmednagar. "The AIKS has staged protests in 21 districts of Maharashtra on Friday. We have made a bonfire of the Bills and protested in



Strong objection: Democratic Youth Federation of India workers stage a protest with farmers demanding the withdrawal of the farm Bills passed by Parliament in Mumbai on Friday. • PTI

CThe Centre is washing its hands of its responsibility of looking after the welfare of farmers

AJIT NAWALE
State Secretary, AIKS

front of tehsil and Collector offices while staging rasta roko. It is heartening to see that the ruling parties, the NCP, the Shiv Sena and the Congress are also participating wholeheartedly in these protests," said Ajit Nawale, State Secretary, AIKS.

Dr. Nawale said the Centre had cleverly couched the Bills as a means of 'freeing' the farmers from the exploitative practices of the agricultural committees.

"However, in reality, the Centre is washing its hands of its responsibility of looking after the welfare of farmers by subjecting them to the whims of the corporates," he said, adding that under these Bills, market committees are to be dismantled, which will thereby destroy the system of guaranteed prices to farmers.

Non-implementation will amount to betrayal of farmers: Fadnavis

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Devendra Fadnavis on Friday said not implementing the farm Bills in Maharashtra would mean nothing less than a betrayal of farmers.

He said it was the Congress that had included these Bills in its 2019 election manifesto.

"Congress leader H.K. Patil, who is on his first visit to the State after being appointed Maharashtra

tra in-charge, said party leaders will be meeting Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari to hand over a memorandum, demanding the withdrawal of the Bills, on Monday.

"This is nothing but lies by the BJP that these Bills were part of the Congress manifesto. We never promised such draconian laws," he said.

The Maharashtra Congress is starting a month-long online campaign against the Bills from Saturday. The party will also observe October 2, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri, as Kisan Majdoor Bachao Divas and launch a month-long signature campaign.

Shetti: will offer support if Centre promises MSP

Farmers at risk of corporate exploitation

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Swabhiman Shetkari Sanghatana (SSS) chief Raju Shetti on Friday reiterated his opposition to the Centre's farm Bills and said destroying the system of agricultural produce market committees (APMCs) and replacing it with contract farming did not guarantee that farmers would not be exploited.

Mr. Shetti said farmers are worried about what would happen to their MSP once the corporates took over. He said, "Farmers in Maharashtra have not been hit hard yet. So, there is relative peace here. But in Bihar, farmers are selling maize at ₹1,100 per quintal even though the guaranteed price is ₹1,850 per quintal. Who is responsible for this?" Mr. Shetti said there was widespread anxiety that the FCI and NAFED would be sold to corporates.

Given that 80% farmers in India are smallholders, Mr. Shetti said they were extremely vulnerable to corporate exploitation.



Burning issue: SSS leader Raju Shetti (right) burns copies of the farm Bills in Kolhapur on Friday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Marathas stage protests outside tehsildar offices

'Govt. should stall recruitment drives'

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Maratha Kranti Morcha on Friday staged simultaneous protests outside 13 tehsildar offices in Raigad district, demanding steps by the State government to vacate the Supreme Court's stay order on Maratha reservation. The group called for a freeze on government recruitment drives till the community gets justice.

The protests were held outside tehsildar offices in Panvel, Karjat, Uran, Mhasla, Khalapur, Alibaug, Roha, Shrivardhan, Mahad, Poladpur, Tala, Mangaon and Pen in the district.

Vinod Sabale, Raigad coordinator of the Maratha Kranti Morcha, said, "In many high-profile cases, when the Supreme Court refers a case to a larger Constitution Bench, it is transferred without any stay. In our case, the

government does not take cognisance of their problems, then they will be forced to intensify their protests."

He said if the government

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Code debate

Far-reaching in effect, the new labour codes require greater deliberation

Some laws are far too important and have far too much impact on the people to be passed in haste or without sufficient deliberation. The three codes aimed at consolidating diverse labour laws and ushering in reforms fall in this category. The codes were passed in both Houses after a limited debate and in the absence of the Opposition. The Industrial Relations Code, the Social Security Code and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, are an updated version of the respective Codes of 2019, which were scrutinised by a Standing Committee. Therefore, there is considerable merit in the argument that the fresh drafts, introduced a few days before their passage, ought to have been sent back to the panel for an assessment. It is significant that the most contentious feature – the increase in the threshold for an establishment to seek government permission before closure, lay-off or retrenchment from units that employ 100 workers to 300 – was not found in the 2019 draft, but has been introduced now. This gives establishments greater freedom in their termination and exit decisions. No one disagrees with the basic objective of amalgamating, simplifying and rationalising labour laws. However, the very fact that it involves a voluminous body of legislation should have meant that the final version was widely discussed with the stakeholders, and given sufficient time and opportunity to give their views.

The root of the idea of consolidated labour codes goes back to the June 2002 report of the Second National Commission on Labour. The broad vision has been to give an impetus to economic activity without adversely affecting the interests of workers. Whether this is adequately reflected in the new provisions will be tested by the experience of administering the Codes. A positive feature is that the Social Security Code promises the establishment of social security funds for unorganised workers, as well as gig and platform workers, and also says their welfare would be addressed by the National Social Security Board. A contentious section allows the appropriate government to exempt any new factory from all provisions of the Code on occupational health, safety and working conditions. The threshold for considering any premises as a factory has also been raised from 10 to 20 workers without the use of power, and from 20 to 40 with power. It is significant that almost all major trade unions are opposing the new codes. This reflects a genuine fear that expansive powers of exemption have been conferred on the respective governments and there has been excessive delegation of rule-making powers. The threshold for lay-offs, as well as for various social security schemes can be raised by executive order; safety standards can be changed. There is much reason to fear that conferring wide discretion to the central and State governments may not be conducive to the interests of workers.

Cess pool

The Centre must keep the faith of Parliament, States and the people, and stop misusing cess

The latest audit of the Union Government's accounts tabled in Parliament this week reveals that the Finance Ministry quietly retained over 40% of all cess collections in 2018-19 in the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI). As many as 35 different cesses, levies and charges yielded ₹2.75-lakh crore in the year, but just around ₹1.64-lakh crore was remitted to the specific reserve funds for which these cesses were levied. This not only helped understate India's revenue and fiscal deficit numbers but also meant that the purposes for which Parliament approved such cesses – be it health, education or infrastructure development – were not met. The CAG of India has, not for the first time, urged the Finance Ministry to take immediate corrective action. Over 10 years, not a paisa of the ₹1.25-lakh crore of cess collected on crude oil was transferred to an oil industry development body it was meant to finance. Part of the hefty cess collected as additional excise duties on petrol and diesel, ostensibly to finance roads and infrastructure, was similarly retained in the CFI. The GST Compensation Cess, over which the Centre and several States have now locked horns, was not spared either, with ₹47,272 crore not remitted to its rightful account over the first two years of GST. Worse, compensation cess transfers to States were accounted as Grants-in-aid to States, distorting the Centre-States fiscal math.

A new 4% Health and Education Cess on income tax was partly deployed towards education, but no fund was created for health. Ditto with a Social Welfare surcharge levied on customs. None of these lapses can be considered inadvertent. It is no secret that the Centre's reliance on cesses and surcharges to raise revenue has increased significantly since the States's share of the divisible pool of taxes was raised to 42% in line with the 14th Finance Commission's suggestions. Cess receipts are not part of this pool and though it is arguable whether such levies are in sync with a nation trying to simplify its tax regime, their intended use to fund specific public spending needs serves as an acceptable rationale, provided it is adhered to. With a climate of distrust hovering over India's federal polity – be it over the GST compensation dispute or the passage of Farm sector Bills without taking States on board – it is critical for the Centre to rebuild bridges. Cesses, starting with the excise duties on petrol and diesel, need to be rationalised, even if just to provide succour to a citizenry whose incomes and job prospects have been pummeled by the pandemic and a shrinking economy. Finally, absolute transparency is needed in the management of cess receipts so that Parliament and the people do not need to wait for audit findings to learn of this subterfuge.

Parliamentary scrutiny on the back burner

Data show that the government is losing sight of Parliament's primary role — discussion and reconsideration



VALERIAN RODRIGUES

There must be triumphant laughter in the resting places of those who argued in the 1940s that India is not suited for parliamentary democracy. Their reasons varied from the political culture to the proverbial social diversity of India, or even the Gandhian idea of swaraj that were construed as not easily amenable to forge representative institutions characteristic of parliamentary democracy.

Providing the lead

At the same time, there were others who forcefully defended the appropriateness of parliamentary democracy for India on grounds of representativeness, responsiveness and accountability. They argued that the wielders of power have to continuously demonstrate their responsiveness to public interest on a day-to-day basis in this dispensation; that even a small minority can play a significant role, and that those who wield public power would be subject to a close audit of their actions at the level of their constituencies.

There is a running thread across the Constituent Assembly Debates that Parliament at the Centre and legislatures in the States would be the key institutions around which parliamentary democracy in India would revolve. While the State legislatures in India have tended to largely imitate Parliament, without evolving an institutional culture of their own to this end, much

rested on Parliament to provide a lead in this regard. While there were a few buds of hope in this regard at times, they seem to be withering far too early.

Committee system

Over the years, the Indian Parliament has increasingly taken recourse to the committee system (as its counterparts did elsewhere). This was not merely meant for house keeping, to enhance the efficacy of the House to cope with the technical issues confronting it and to feel the public pulse, but also to guard its turf and keep it abreast to exercise accountability on the government.

Some committees such as the Estimates Committee and Public Accounts Committee (that even go back to the colonial period) have a commendable record in this regard. The executive in independent India, irrespective of the parties in power, was not very disposed to committees of scrutiny and oversight, sometimes on the specious plea that they usurped the powers of Parliament. This was far from the case. They were guardians of the autonomy of the House: the committees of scrutiny and oversight, as the case with other committees of the House, are not divided on party lines, work away from the public glare, remain informal compared to the codes that govern parliamentary proceedings, and are great training schools for new and young members of the House. In the discharge of their mandate, they can solicit expert advice and elicit public opinion. The officialdom in India has often attempted to take cover under political masters to avoid the scrutiny of committees. Besides the standing committees, the Houses of Parliament set up,



V.V. KRISHNAN
from time to time, *ad hoc* committees to enquire and report on specific subjects which include Select Committees of a House or Joint Select committees of both the Houses that are assigned the task of studying a Bill closely and reporting back to the House.

Some faultlines

While there is much to commend about the routine working of the parliamentary committee system in India, it has not been creative or imaginative. The presiding officers of the Houses who had to give up leadership in this regard have tended to imitate changes and innovations done elsewhere (such as in Britain). The chairman of the Rajya Sabha, being the Vice-President of India, cannot probably distance himself much from the stance of the Cabinet, but even when it comes to the Lok Sabha, very few Speakers, with exceptions such as G.V. Mavalankar, P.A. Sangma and Somnath Chatterjee, have taken cudgels with their party leaders to uphold the autonomy of the House.

However, ground was broken in 1993 when 17 Committees (later increased to 24) of Parliament, the Departmentally-related Standing Committees (DRSCs), drawing members from both Houses roughly in proportion to the strength of the political parties in the Houses, were set up.

They were envisaged to be the face of Parliament in a set of inter-related departments and ministries. They were assigned the task

of looking into the demands for grants of the ministries/departments concerned, to examine Bills pertaining to them, to consider their annual reports, and to look into their long-term plans and report to Parliament.

A gradual marginalisation

It is important to point out that committees of scrutiny and advice, both standing and *ad hoc*, have been confined to the margins or left in the lurch in the last few years. Data by PRS India brings this out eloquently. While 60% of the Bills in the 14th Lok Sabha and 71% in the 15th Lok Sabha were wetted by the DRSCs concerned, this proportion came down to 27% in the 16th Lok Sabha.

Apart from the DRSCs, the government has shown extreme reluctance to refer Bills to Select Committees of the Houses or Joint Parliamentary Committees. The last Bill referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee was The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Second Amendment) Bill, in 2015. Some of the most momentous Acts of Parliament in recent years such as the radical overhaul of Article 370 that revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and divided the State into two Union Territories were not processed by any House committee.

Given their large-scale implications and the popular protests against them, the three Bills related to agricultural produce and the three labour Bills that overhauled conditions of work, terms of employment, grievance redress and social security in the monsoon session of Parliament were cases that definitely deserved to be scrutinised by Select Committees of the

Houses. But the government used its majority in both the Houses of Parliament and steamrolled the Bills (with hardly any discussion), amid the predictable din and noise that a fragmented Opposition could mount.

Setting aside a culture

There is no dearth of scholarly literature to suggest that the committee system has greatly enhanced the capacity of Parliament to carry out its mandate. So, why has the ruling dispensation neglected this?

One of the reasons given at this point in time is the novel coronavirus pandemic and the urgent need to enact safety measures. The argument of urgency seems spurious given the fact that some of the most controversial Bills introduced in the House, such as relating to labour and the farm sector, were vehemently opposed by the groups concerned and clearly aimed at market reforms. If it is urgency, then the Women's Reservation Bill, on which there was a broad consensus in the House, should have come up upfront.

Clearly, this regime is not disposed to a reflection and reconsideration of Bills proposed in the House. It does not seem to believe that the primary role of Parliament is deliberation, discussion and reconsideration, the hallmarks of democratic institutions, but a platform that endorses decisions already arrived at. Further, what is ominous is the encroachment into the powers of a State that some of these bills reflect, and the reinforcement of the central authority they portend.

Valerian Rodrigues is a former professor at Mangalore University and Jawaharlal Nehru University

The Doha-Kabul journey as a road to nowhere

There is an element of naiveté among those who feel the Taliban will find middle ground with the Afghan government



D. SUBA CHANDRAN

Finally, after numerous false starts, the representatives of the Afghan government and the Taliban could meet in Doha recently (picture). It was a tough road from Kabul to Doha for all three actors involved – the Afghan government, the Taliban, and, most importantly, the United States. Now, that they have met in Doha, the road back to Kabul will be more challenging, given the inherent differences on the Afghan endgame among these three actors.

Some red flags

First, as one could observe from the statements made by Abdullah Abdullah (chairperson of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation and overseeing the government's peace efforts) and Mullah Ghani Baradar (the Taliban's deputy leader), their endgame in Afghanistan appears substantially different, and even contradictory. Consider the following. Abdullah Abdullah was referring to an Afghanistan with democracy as the basis, with liberal values and equal rights for everyone, including the minorities and women. Mullah Baradar's position is more straightforward: an Islamic emirate in Afghanistan. Keeping the theological and theoretical assumptions of a democracy and an emirate away, do these

two representatives refer to something that means the same Afghan endgame? Are there at least complementarities in what each wants to achieve, and how they see the future of Afghanistan? Unfortunately, given history, the Taliban's version of an Islamic emirate will be in direct contradiction to what the Afghan government wants in terms of democracy, human rights and equal rights for women and minorities. Striking a middle ground may be difficult, even impossible. Furthermore, this would be a deal-breaker.

Exit America

Second, how involved will the U.S. be once intra-Afghan talks take shape? The U.S. endgame in Afghanistan is not aimed at a political settlement in and for Kabul. Instead, the U.S. looks at an exit from Afghanistan, as early as possible, preferably before the forthcoming U.S. presidential elections. The U.S. should remain committed to the intra-Afghan process and ensure both sides, especially the Taliban, sticks to the political plot.

Unfortunately, the U.S. will not. U.S. President Donald Trump will declare an American victory in Afghanistan in the next few weeks. He would state the following as the American achievements: The al-Qaeda in Afghanistan is neutralised, the Taliban has severed its relationship with all external actors, the killing of Osama bin Laden, elections and democracy in Afghanistan, and, finally, an intra-Afghan dialogue. Topmost on his achievement list would be the job done in Afghanistan, announcing the withdrawal of all American



AFP
troops, before Christmas or the New Year. After West Asia, Afghanistan would be Mr. Trump's major achievement.

Third, the American exit from Afghanistan – physically and politically, would rupture the intra-Afghan dialogue process. The Afghan government has not only been reluctant from the beginning to engage with the Taliban but is also divided within in terms of how it sees the Taliban. While leaders like Abdullah Abdullah and Amrullah Saleh (Afghanistan Vice-President) are on the extreme side in terms of how they would loathe sharing power with the Taliban, others including President Ashraf Ghani would have reservations. The Afghan leadership was pressurised by the U.S. and even threatened with an aid cut, to get on to the road to Doha. The Loya Jirga that the Afghan government organised recently on the subject was under American pressure, to create a consensus in starting a dialogue with the Taliban. This is what the Afghan Peace Council has been tasked to and has been grappling with – to find an answer and a middle ground.

Outside the Afghan government, there reservations among multiple sections – the minorities and women. The last few years and elections have created certain institutions of democracy and lib-

eral notions that make many Afghans look at their future beyond the tribal and religious orders. For them, negotiating with the Taliban and reaching a middle ground will be a tough assignment.

The Taliban spells violence
Fourth, what does the Taliban want? Is it looking forward to sharing power in Kabul and taking part in an electoral process? Is it looking forward to working with the Afghan institutions and abiding by the legislation and parliamentary norms? Is it looking at creating an equal and egalitarian society in Afghanistan?

There is an element of naiveté among those who believe that the Taliban is transformed and will find middle ground with the Afghan government. For the Taliban, it would be nothing short of an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Period.

Fifth, the Taliban has been waiting for the last two decades for international troops to leave. It would wait for a few more months to see the last American soldier exit Afghanistan. Then, it would return to what it knows best – violence. Aimed at three actors (the international troops, the Afghan government and the Afghan people), the Taliban has been employing violence as the primary strategy to achieve what it has wanted.

Despite the February 2020 agreement with the U.S. in Doha, the Taliban never stopped from using violence. Available data would suggest that there has been no let-up in violence since February 2020, and in the process, the Taliban has got what it has wanted.

Outside the Afghan government, there reservations among multiple sections – the minorities and women. The last few years and elections have created certain institutions of democracy and lib-

ed: the release of all Taliban prisoners. Once the Americans leave, it would go back to the strategy that has yielded maximum dividends – violence. As one could observe during the last week, violence continues today, even during the post-Doha meeting between the two actors. Also, until now, it has not agreed to a ceasefire; it will not in the near future.

The regional game
Sixth, the return of the regional great game. Pakistan, Iran, China, Russia and India all have stakes in Afghanistan, and have made it clear through the multiple dialogues on Afghanistan (bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral). As long as American troops and interests remain in Afghanistan, their role would remain limited. Now, one should wait and watch on how the regional great game in Afghanistan is played, and how it has shaped the Afghan endgame.

The last point would be how history would judge the American intervention in Afghanistan in the last two decades. Is the U.S. leaving Afghanistan in 2020 any better than how it saw it when it invaded the country in 2001? Or has it made the situation worse?

To conclude, if the road from Kabul to Doha was tough, the return would be even tougher and more complicated. It is also possible that the Doha-Kabul journey could be a road to nowhere.

D. Suba Chandran is Professor and Dean, School of Conflict and Security Studies, and Head, Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme and Science Diplomacy Programme, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru

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■ SPB made his mark in the Malayalam film industry too. One remembers his 'E Kadalm Marukadalum', 'Tharapadham Chethoharam' and 'Nenjil Kanjabanam'.
ALEX GEORGE,
Kochi

Dean Jones
The world has lost one of the finest ODI batsmen of his generation, a colourful raconteur and an entertaining commentator. 'Professor Deano' brought fresh energy to the Aussie side with his creative shot-making and frenetic running between wickets.
N.J. RAVI CHANDER,
Bengaluru

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Exit Harley

I am not surprised that Harley-Davidson Inc. has pulled down its shutters. Unlike the West where citizens can afford the many luxuries in life, India is still a middle-class nation, where people will be cautious while spending their money. We are also 'mileage conscious' when it comes to vehicles. Finally, Indian roads, being what they are, would have caused grief to the bike.
T. ANAND RAJ,
Chennai

S.P. Balasubrahmanyam
It is hard to believe that the voice that has enthralled millions across the globe has fallen silent. The natural way with which SPB

blended into a song will be unmatched. A down-to-earth personality, he will continue to live through his legendary songs. He was someone who unhesitatingly encouraged young singers. In combination with maestro, Ilayaraja, SPB has given this world innumerable hits.
G.B. SIVANANDAM,
Coimbatore

■ His songs in 'Shankarabharanam' and 'Annamaya' were great renderings. His Hindi songs in 'Ek Duuje Ke Liye' deserve special mention.
SRAVANA RAMACHANDRAN,
Chennai

lyric writers, be it happiness, sadness, romance or rusticity, can never be matched. His non-stop song, 'Materani Chinnadan', is outstanding. His excellence in mimicry helped him sing for hero and comedian. His rendering of devotional numbers such as 'Siva Stuthi', 'Viswanatha Ashtakam', the songs in the films 'Annamaya', 'Sriram Daasu' and his subtle performance in 'Midhumam', starring him and Lakshmi are evergreen.
BHATTARAM VIJAYA KUMAR,
Nellore, Andhra Pradesh

■ SPB connected at least three generations who will hold him in high esteem – as a family member and a divine voice. His song, 'Om

Nama Shivayan', spread a spiritual mood. Apart from being a prolific singer, he will always be remembered for being polite, humble and living an exemplary life.
J. BHARATHI,
Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

■ SPB's complete supremacy and dominance in Tamil playback singing will remain unsurpassed. His songs, 'Aayirum nilave vaa', 'Ithu Oru Ponnmalai Pozhuthu', 'Malare Mounama' and 'Sundari Kannal Oru Sethi' will be remembered for long. In music competitions, as a judge, he would be humble to a fault and also magnanimous enough to applaud a fine performance.
V. LAKSHMANAN,<

Sowing seeds of doubt

Farmers in Punjab are worried about the implications of the three new farm bills that will allow them to sell their produce directly to private players.

Vikas Vasudeva reports on the concerns of farmers, commission agents and workers despite the government's assurances that the legislation empowers them

In June 2020, 55-year-old Shingara Singh in Fatehpur village in Patiala, Punjab, sold his spring season maize crop at ₹700-₹800 per quintal, far below the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of ₹1,850/q fixed by the Central government for the season's crop. He says private traders buy the produce at a much lower price than the MSP.

In the upcoming Rabi (winter) season, Shingara is hoping to get a remunerative price for his wheat crop. In Punjab and Haryana, the Central government purchases wheat and paddy (rice) at the MSP, which gives farmers an assured market and return. But Shingara is worried that following the passage of the farm bills in Parliament last week, even wheat and paddy will face the same fate that crops that are not purchased by the government agencies of the State or the Centre face.

The Central government says the three bills – the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill – are aimed at transforming agriculture in the country and raising farmers' income. The provisions of the bills, it says, will enable barrier-free trade in agricultural produce and empower farmers to engage with investors of their choice.

'I can't trust private players'

But farmers are not convinced by the government's promises. In both Punjab and Haryana, farmers are up in arms against the three farm bills. They fear that they are a step towards abolition of the MSP regime, leaving farmers to suffer possible exploitation at the hands of big corporate houses. And the fear is not limited to any one group of farmers; it is shared by marginal, small and large/other farmers. While marginal farmers (those cultivating upto two and a half acres of land) and small farmers (those cultivating upto five acres) fear that they will be completely pushed out of agriculture, large farmers (cultivating over five acres) feel they may be able to ride it out for a few years, but will eventually find it difficult to stand up to multinational corporations and big traders.

Shingara is wary of dealing with private companies. His fear is rooted in his experience of trading with a company. He started sowing barley crop around eight years ago after a liquor manufacturing company near his village offered to buy his crop. "The company makes beer. People from the company came to our village and wanted us farmers to cultivate barley. They said the company would purchase our produce at a higher price than the MSP. Initially, for two-three years, they did pay us ₹400 above the MSP. But later, when several farmers started sowing the crop and supply increased, they were reluctant to buy the produce at that assured price. On the pretext of quality, they either rejected the produce or paid us a lower price. After 2015-16, I stopped cultivating barley," he says.

Dilbag Singh, 44, another farmer from the same village, who has over 15 acres of family land, speaks of a similar experience that left him poorer. "A local pea processing industry asked me to plant green peas. In 2012, representatives of the company approached me and said they would pay ₹8.5 per kg. They prepared some documents as well. I planted the crop. When the crop was ready, I took a tractor trolley with around 100 bags (50 kg each) of produce to their unit, but they were unwilling to buy my crop citing poor quality. It was only after the intervention of local farmer outfits that they purchased my crop. Later, I sold the rest of my crop that I had sown in five acres of land at ₹2-₹3 per kg in the local mandi (market place). I had to bear heavy losses," he says. "I can't trust them anymore."

The story is no different in other parts of the State. In Tibba Tapprian village in Rupnagar district, Dharmpal Singh, who owns close to three acres of land, says he sold 25 quintals of maize crop at ₹800/q at the Balachauri mandi a few days ago. "The government announces the MSP, but what's the use if I have to sell my crop below the MSP? Government agencies should buy farmers' produce at the MSP or make it legally mandatory for private traders to purchase crop at the MSP," says the 56-year-old.

A senior government official points out that the government did not intervene as maize is not distributed under the Public Distribution System (PDS). "Government purchases only those crops that are distributed under the PDS. Maize is not among those crops," says Gurvinder Singh, Joint Director at Punjab's Agriculture Department.

Surjit Singh, 65, fears that mandis under the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) will gradually vanish if private trade is allowed without any government regulation. "Trade



Farmers protest in Patiala, Punjab against the farm bills passed by Parliament. (Below): Farmers on their way to the protest site. • V. V. KRISHNAN



Once I harvest my crop, I sell it at the local mandi. Even if I get a higher price from private traders, I do not have the resources to trade my crop at distant places. So, even if the bills promise us the freedom to sell anywhere, it seems a distant dream in practice.

GURMUKH SINGH, 47
Farmer, Lachkani village, Patiala

"Moreover", he adds, "I can't leave my commission agent for private traders. The relation with my arthiya goes back generations. Whenever I am in need, I get money from him. He pays me in advance for the crop that is to be harvested. Such a relationship based on trust will be difficult to establish with private traders or companies."

In Patiala's Ranbirpura village, Avtar Singh, who owns two and a half acres of land, is equally grateful to his commission agent. "I have already taken an advance of ₹1 lakh from him for the paddy crop that I had planted this season. It would have been next to impossible for me to cultivate my farm if my arthiya had not given me the advance. He gave me an advance only because he is assured that my paddy crop, which I'll sell through him, will be purchased by government agencies at the MSP. If the government stops purchasing paddy or wheat at the MSP, I don't think I'll be able to cultivate any crop on the farm. No one will give me an advance or offer any financial help without a tangible guarantee," he says.

Avtar fears that once the parallel private market starts functioning outside the regulated market, there will eventually be no MSP in that market. "The government should come out with another bill making MSP a statutory right of the farmers," he says.

Commission agents and labourers working in grain markets have their own concerns about the new bills. "The government has announced the MSP for several crops but it is only for wheat and paddy that farmers actually get the MSP. And that's because the government buys it. For instance, this year, government agencies purchased wheat at an MSP of ₹1,925/q during the official procurement. But now, after government purchase, the wheat is being bought by private traders at ₹1,600/q-₹1,650/q in the mandi here. The government, it seems, wants to remove us from the market," says Mulk Raj Gupta, president, Arthiya Association, Patiala's new grain market. "But they possibly don't realise how many people are generating employment in this entire chain, be it labourers, staff at shops, employees of market committees or others," he says.

In the grain market, Badri Mukhiya,

45, who hails from Bihar, ropes in labourers from his State. He says he has been coming to Punjab since 1990, but is now worried after hearing that work at the mandi could reduce. Work includes loading and unloading of produce and cleaning of grain. "If farmers stop coming to the mandi altogether or even if fewer farmers come, there will be less work. The livelihood of at least 20 people and their families who are associated with me is dependent on the work we do here. We earn around ₹400 a day, but we will have to return to our native place if there's no work. Everyone is worried," he says.

Concerns and responses

Agricultural experts have expressed their reservations about the bills as well. Lakhwinder Singh, Professor of Economics and Coordinator at the Centre for Development Economics and Innovation Studies at Panjab University, Patiala, has been mapping rural Punjab for decades. He says these bills have generated a lot of suspicion as they were passed through the ordinance route. "The new bills state that the foodgrain trade will be in the hands of private traders. But no safeguards have been enacted. The majority of farmers in India are small and marginal farmers. They usually wait for the crop to be harvested in order to fulfil their basic needs. They don't have the capacity to trade the food at distant places. Therefore, the claim that farmers will have the freedom to sell does not hold true. Giving private players the freedom of foodgrain trade without any regulation will eventually lead to the emergence of monopolies, oligopolies or a cartel system," he says.

Noted economist and professor at the Ludhiana-based Panjab Agricultural University, Sukhpal Singh, points out that 86% of Indian farmers have less than five acres of land, and 67% of farmers have less than two and a half acres of land. "These are the victims of the grave economic crisis. How can these small farmers sell their produce in other markets? What is the purpose of new markets if small farmers cannot participate in them? How will the new private markets operate? These new markets will not have any regulation and they won't

be taxed by the State government. State governments will regulate only the already running markets. In Punjab, for instance, these markets levy 8.5% tax, including 3% market fee, 3% rural development fund, and 2.5% commission of the commission agents. Thus this year, the tax is around ₹155/q on paddy and about ₹64/q on wheat. This means that due to non-tax on private purchase, the purchase of paddy and wheat will be cheaper for private buyers to the extent of ₹155-₹64/q. Initially, even if private markets offer farmers ₹55/q-₹64/q on paddy and wheat purchases, they (private traders) would still get a profit of ₹100/q. Government procurement will be affected as farmers will be inclined towards private markets. As the volume of purchase increases in the new system, the government will reduce its purchase target. Gradually, government procurement will be negated. In such a situation, the prices of crops in private markets will be reduced," he says.

In response to all these concerns, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a series of tweets in English, Hindi and Punjabi that MSP will continue. "Government procurement will continue. We are here to serve our farmers. We will do everything possible to support them and ensure a better life for their coming generations," he tweeted. He added the government was bringing in these provisions as middlemen have been bullying farmers for years.

Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar has also tried to allay fears. He said the APMC system will continue. Alleging that the Opposition was trying to mislead the country, Tomar said, "Farmers, so far, were forced to sell their produce in mandis. In Punjab there's 8.5% tax in the mandis on several items. Now, through these bills, the farmers will be able to sell their produce even outside the ambit of the mandi."

The distance between traders and farmers will reduce now, Tomar told Parliament. "If a trader will visit a village, farmers of that village will assemble at one place to sell their produce. [The] trader will fix the rate of purchase after discussing with farmers. The trader will purchase the produce and take that away in a truck. Farmers will not have to go anywhere to sell their produce," he said.

Playing politics over the bills

Despite the government's assurances, concerns persist, and not only among the Opposition parties. After initially supporting the ordinances pushed by the National Democratic Alliance government, Shiromani Akali Dal, an old alliance partner of the Bharatiya Janata Party, decided to take a U-turn on the issue. The Akali Dal's lone representative in the Union Cabinet, Harsimrat Kaur Badal, quit the Cabinet in protest against the bills. In her resignation letter to the Prime Minister, Badal wrote, "In view of the decision of the Government of India to go ahead with the Bill on the issue of marketing of agricultural pro-

duce without addressing and removing the apprehensions of the farmers and the decision of my party, Shiromani Akali Dal not to be a part of anything that goes against the interests of the farmers, I find it impossible to continue to perform my duties as a minister in the Union Council of Ministers."

The Akali Dal has also accused the Congress government in Punjab of "double speak" on the issue. The Congress government in 2017 amended the State APMC Act after coming to power in Punjab to include provisions similar to those in the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, the Akali Dal claimed. According to the State Act, trade can be done only after obtaining a licence from the government in its mandis under the Punjab Mandi Board or the private mandis. However, according to the Centre's new farm bills, no licence from the State government is required; any PAN card holder can engage in trade. Besides, no private or government mandi is required for trade under the new farm bills. Trade can be done outside the physical premises of markets or deemed markets notified under various State agricultural produce market laws.

The ruling Congress party, on the other hand, accused the Akali Dal of misleading people on the farm bills and asked the party to part ways with the NDA. Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said that the Akali Dal's claims of standing shoulder to shoulder with the farmers are hollow as long as it remains a part of the Central government.

In neighbouring Haryana, Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala, whose Jannayak Janta Party is part of the coalition government with the BJP, has made it clear that while there's no mention of doing away with the MSP in the farm bills, he will quit if the MSP is indeed discontinued. That leaves a question mark on the alliance.

While parties spar with one another, farmers are concerned about the present. On September 25 afternoon, hundreds of angry farmers sat on the Amritsar-Delhi national highway at the Shambhu border of Punjab-Haryana, protesting against the bills. Jasbir Singh, 55, who owns two and a half acres of land in Kutha Kheri village in Patiala's Rajpura Tehsil, says he has enough cash in hand to undertake farming operations. "But after harvesting my paddy crop, I'll be needing money for sowing wheat in my field. It's only my arthiya who will give me an advance. If mandis go redundant and arthiyas go away, how will I sustain myself? I am under a debt of about ₹2.5 lakh. I don't think I have a choice but to sell my land," he says as he drops his head in despair.



FROM PAGE ONE

Vodafone wins \$2 billion tax case

The exchequer could end up paying billions of dollars in damages if it loses.

To reduce future arbitration claims, India has ended such agreements with over 50 countries and is working on a new law to protect foreign investors by offering relief from possible policy changes even as it upholds the right to tax them, Reuters reported.

Vodafone's tax dispute stems from its \$11 billion deal to buy the Indian mo-

bile assets from Hutchison Whampoa in 2007. The government said Vodafone was liable to pay taxes on the acquisition, which the company contested.

In 2012, India's top court ruled in favour of the telecom provider but the government changed the rules to enable it to tax deals that had already been concluded.

In 2014, Vodafone initiated arbitration proceedings against India.

Bihar poll to be held in 3 phases from October 28

The notification for the first phase would be issued on October 1. The last date of nominations would be October 8 and their scrutiny done on October 9. The last date of withdrawal of candidates would be October 12.

For phases two and three, the notifications would be issued on October 9 and October 13. The last date of nominations would be October 16 and October 20 and the scrutiny of nominations done on October 17 and October 21. The last date of withdrawal of candidates would be October 19 and October 23.

In order to reduce crowds at polling stations, the maximum number of electors at a polling station has been reduced from 1,500 to 1,000, leading to the number of polling stations going up from 65,367 in 2015 to 1,06,526 now.

Persons with disabilities, electors aged above 80, essential service workers and those suspected of or positive for COVID-19 would be given the option to vote by postal ballot.

According to the ECI guidelines, political parties will

have to follow social distancing norms while campaigning. Candidates could be accompanied by two people instead of the usual five when filing nominations and only five people could be involved in door-to-door campaigning at a particular place. Public meetings and rallies would be allowed at designated grounds identified by the Bihar Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), with social distancing circles marked.

Mr. Arora said the CEO had prepared a list of such grounds.

Answering a question about the potential spreading of COVID-19 during the polls, Mr. Arora said the election exercise had been meticulously worked out. "It's a leap of faith, not a leap in the dark," he said.

The ECI also announced

the schedule of election to the Bihar Legislative Council from four Graduates and Teachers' constituencies each that had fallen vacant on May 6 due to retirement of the members. Polling for the eight constituencies would be held on October 22, the ECI announced.

Farmers take to the streets over farm Bills

Farmers blocked railway track at a few places in Amritsar, Ferozepur, Barna and Patiala, and announced that the "rail roko" agitation would be stepped up further across the State from September 26. They also announced stoppage of rail traffic indefinitely from October 1, if their demands were not met.

Jagmohan Singh, general secretary, Bhartaiya Kisan Union (Dakauwa), said protests were held at over 150 places in Punjab. "Besides starting an indefinite rail roko agitation from October 1, a resolution will be passed by the gram sabha of each village to cancel the agriculture Bills and [Punjab] Chief Minister Amarinder Singh will be urged to convene a special session of the Assembly and pass a resolution not to implement the agricultural laws in Punjab," he said.

BJP's alliance partner, Shiromani Akali Dal, also staged protests across the State as part of its 'chakka jam' programme. The party asked Captain Amarinder Singh to call an immediate Cabinet meeting and pass an ordinance to declare the

entire State as one 'mandi' (principal market yard) to ensure that the Central agricultural Bills are not enforceable in Punjab.

Peaceful protests

In neighbouring Haryana, peaceful demonstrations were held across the State, with Kurukshetra, Ambala and Yamuna Nagar bearing the maximum impact. Though commercial establishments and transport services remained unaffected, protesters sat on roads at several places, including highways, disrupting traffic. Besides Delhi-Hisar, Ambala-Kaithal and Jind-Patiala highways, farmers blocked internal roads in Kurukshetra, Sirsa, Ambala, Kaithal and Jind.

Farmers massed on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border, squatting on National Highway-9 and disrupting traffic. Protests in Shahjahanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Bijnor, Saharanpur, Ghaziabad, Noida, Aligarh and Mathura led to long traffic jams across western Uttar Pradesh. Protests were also held in Rajasthan.

"Let the CBI file an affidavit, then we will see," Justice Rao observed orally. The court issued notice. It sche-

(With inputs from Ashok Kumar and Anuj Kumar)

Nearly 7 crore COVID-19 tests conducted in India

The country now had 1,818 labs – 1,084 in the government sector and 734 private labs. These include Real-Time RT PCR-based testing labs (923), TrueNat-based testing labs (769) and CBNAAT-based testing labs (126). "Testing forms an integral pillar of COVID-19 response and management. The Ministry has conveyed that the aim is to catch every missing person through testing to curb the spread of

the infection. Several measures have been taken by the Central government through calibrated steps to widen the testing net and ensure easier and more accessible testing by all across the country. States/UTs have been instructed to ensure higher testing and directed that all symptomatic negatives of Rapid Antigen Tests are mandatorily subjected to RT-PCR," the Minister added.

The youth, Chinta Yoga Hemanth Kumar from the

No respite for Kerala as 6,477 cases reported

Survey of Kozhikode BSF camp shows 40% of samples positive; A.P. incidence above 7,000; Karnataka reports 8,655 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala reported 6,477 new COVID-19 cases on Friday. Testing levels too rose, with 56,057 samples added in 24 hours.

The number of active cases in hospitals rose to 48,892. Of these cases, 371 persons were being cared for in ICUs, with 96 requiring ventilator support.

COVID-19

The State's death toll rose steadily and on Friday, 22 deaths that took place between September 3 and 24 were added to the official list.

In a big cluster, 200 BSF personnel tested COVID-19 positive at the Border Security Force (BSF) training centre at Areekkarakkunnu near Nadapuram in Kozhikode district on Friday. Tests

were conducted among 500 persons in the camp.

Health Department sources said a large scale antigen test was done as six camp members tested positive on Thursday. Only 19 persons showed symptoms.

These symptomatic patients were admitted to First Line Treatment Centres under the Health Department at Nadapuram. Others were quarantined at the camp. The camp housed 900 persons. Antigen tests for the remaining 400 would be done on Saturday.

Andhra Pradesh recorded 7,073 new infections and 48 deaths on Friday, and tested 69,429 more samples. Currently, 67,683 patients were under treatment.

In all 54.47 lakh tests were carried out with overall positivity rate of 12.14%; in the past day, the rate was 10.19%. East Godavari added 1,031 infections and two deaths.

NIA court finds Subhani Haja Moideen guilty of joining IS

The quantum of sentence will be pronounced on Monday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

A special court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) here on Friday found Subhani Haja Moideen, an Islamic State recruit, guilty of joining the proscribed terrorist organisation and waging war against the Government of Iraq. The quantum of sentence will be pronounced on Monday.

The court found the accused guilty of Section 120 (B) of the Indian Penal Code (criminal conspiracy) and Sections 38, and 39 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for offences relating to membership of a terrorist organisation and support given to a terrorist organisation respectively.

The accused had, along with some other persons, agreed to do certain illegal

acts, including joining the terror outfit and support and associate with it. These are punishable under Sections 120(B) of the IPC and Sections 20, 38 and 39 of the UAPA, the judge noted.

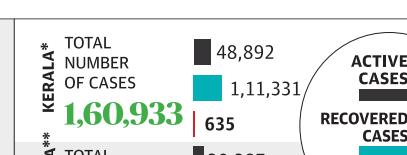
Convicting Haja, P. Krishnakumar, NIA special judge,

Back on track

After the government lifted the complete lockdown, life is slowly limping back to normalcy in many States. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



Essential service: The government has resumed State Road Transport Corporation bus services in Hyderabad on Friday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL



*Kerala has a mismatch of 75 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons, **Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Thursday, ***Karnataka has 19 non-COVID deaths

Telangana recorded 2,381 cases on Thursday and 10 fatalities. While 57,621 persons were tested, reports of 1,659 were awaited. Greater Hyderabad added 386 cases.

Karnataka on Friday reported 8,655 new cases and 86 fresh deaths. Bengaluru Urban reported 4,080 cases and 32 deaths. The State carried out 59,919 tests includ-

ing 20,284 rapid antigen tests. A total of 5,679 persons tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday and the deaths of 72 persons were recorded in Tamil Nadu. Of the fresh cas-

es, Chennai reported a rise in cases for the second consecutive day with 1,193 persons testing positive for the infection followed by 661 in Coimbatore.

The new cases took the State's overall tally to 5,69,370. Of this, 46,386 were active cases. Another 5,626 persons were discharged following treatment on Friday. Till date, a total of 5,13,836 persons were discharged. The toll climbed to 9,148. A total of 9,48,877 samples were tested in the last 24 hours in the State. Till date, Tamil Nadu has tested a total of 69,10,521 samples. Four more private laboratories were approved for conducting COVID-19 tests. With this, there are a total of 116 COVID-19 testing facilities in the private sector and 66 in the government sector.

(With inputs from Vijaya-wada, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai bureaus)

IN BRIEF



Telugu Desam Party revamp on the cards

VIJAYAWADA Telugu Desam Party chief N. Chandrababu Naidu is toying with the idea of re-jigging the party structure. Apart from overhauling the party, Mr. Naidu plans to change the State president. In all probabilities, former Minister K. Atchannaidu (in picture) will replace Kimidi Kala Venkat Rao, who has been serving as Andhra Pradesh president since bifurcation.

Telangana Legislative Council bypoll on Oct. 9

NEW DELHI The byelection to a Telangana Legislative Council seat that was deferred due to the COVID-19 pandemic would now be held on October 9, the Election Commission announced on Friday. The Nizamabad Local Authorities' constituency had become vacant due to the disqualification of the sitting member R. Bhoopathi Reddy.

Father held for drowning 40-day-old baby in river

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM The Thiruvallam police arrested Unnikrishnan, 24, of Pachalloor on Thursday on charge of drowning his 40-day-old daughter in a river near Thiruvallam in Kerala. Unnikrishnan was arrested shortly after the child's mother filed a complaint. The baby's body was retrieved by Fire and Rescue Services personnel on Friday.

Five booked for stealing jewellery from dead

CHITTOOR The Alipiri police of Tirupati on Friday registered a case against an outsourcing Class IV employee and his four other accomplices, involved in the alleged theft of gold jewellery from the bodies at the COVID hospital attached to Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences here.

'Won't stay CBI probe into Kerala murders'

SC seeks the agency's response

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to stay a CBI investigation into the murder of two Youth Congress workers at Periya in Kasaragod district of Kerala.

A Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao indicated that it may not intervene if the central agency has already made "substantial progress" in the investigation.

The court said it would wait to see the CBI's response to the appeal and refused to pass any interim orders.

"Let the CBI file an affidavit, then we will see," Justice Rao observed orally. The court issued notice. It sche-

duled the next hearing for October 26.

Kripesh and Sarathlal were hacked to death by three motorcycle-borne men in February last year.

Police had arrested some

suspects, including a local CPI(M) leader, A. Peethambaran.

The Kerala High Court had transferred the case to the CBI.

The parents of the two men have alleged that district leaders of the CPI(M) were involved.

The Kerala government had appealed to the Supreme Court against the High Court decision to shift the case to the CBI.

Cable connect



New link: Fireworks marked the inauguration of the Durgam Cheruvu cable bridge in Hyderabad on Friday. The bridge, touted as one-of-its-kind in the country, was constructed as part of the Telangana government's Strategic Road Development Plan. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

Newly-married Telangana man kidnapped, killed by wife's kin

14 arrested in suspected honour killing case

STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD

In a suspected case of honour killing, a 28-year-old interior designer was allegedly kidnapped and killed by his wife's family with the help of hired assassins on Thursday at Sadasivpet of Sangareddy district in Telangana.

Fourteen people, including the girl's parents, maternal uncles, cousin, and aunts, were arrested by the Gachibowli police in connection with the case, while four others are at large.

The youth, Chinta Yoga Hemanth Kumar from the



In shock: Hemanth's wife, Avanti Reddy, centre, and parents waiting outside Osmania General Hospital. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

Cancel licence of turf club, develop area as a park: PAC

Karnataka House panel calls for increasing green cover

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Karnataka Legislature has recommended cancellation of the licence of the Bangalore Turf Club (BTC) and development of the area as a park on the lines of Cubbon Park and Lalbagh Botanical Gardens.

With rapid rise in the city's population and vehicles, the PAC said the BTC land should be developed as a park to increase green cover. The government should develop it as a park with all modern facilities, it said.

Though there were discussions to shift the BTC since 1968, no serious at-

tempt had been made to shift it to the outskirts of the city, it said.

The PAC report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on Friday. The PAC, comprising members of both the Houses of the Legislature, directed the authorities to ensure clearing of the pending rent of ₹36.63 crore by the BTC.

The committee, headed by H.K. Patil (Congress), suggested to the government to seek an early hearing to clear the case pending

Small farmers happiest today, says PM

Modi says it is the first time they have got an option to bargain for the price of their produce

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched a powerful defence of the three farm-related Bills and the Labour Codes dealing with long-pending reforms in the sector. He said it was the "first time in decades that the Centre has framed laws that would benefit farmers and workers".

Mr. Modi was addressing BJP leaders and workers on the 104th birth anniversary of the party's ideologue Deendayal Upadhyaya.

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020; the Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020; the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020; and the labour Bills were passed by Parliament in the monsoon session.

Mr. Modi hit out at the Opposition, which has vehemently protested against the Bills, saying many governments had come to power in the States and at the Centre over the decades in the name of farmers and work-



Firm view: BJP leaders listening to Prime Minister Narendra Modi via video conferencing at the party headquarters in New Delhi on Friday. • PTI

ers, "but what did they get? Nothing; just a web of promises that neither the farmers understood nor the workers."

Entwined in laws'
The farmers were entwined in laws that prevented them from selling their produce at prices that they wanted; consequently, though the quantity of produce went up, their income did not go up,"

he said, adding those who always lied to farmers were now "shooting from their shoulders" and misleading them.

Asserting that the small and marginal farmers were the "happiest today", he stated that it was "for the first time, they have got an alternative to bargain for the price of their produce. The tradition earlier was to sell in 'mandis'. If he thinks he will

benefit by selling there, he will sell there. If he thinks the benefit is more outside, he will sell outside".

Mr. Modi gave a call to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) members to fan out across villages to dispel myths spread by rivals over these Bills. "Our ground connection will bust the propaganda being spread in the virtual world," he said.

Speaking about the La-

bour Codes, he said his government had brought them in to bring workers out of the complex web of dozens of laws. Over 50 crore workers employed in the organised and unorganised sectors would benefit from these reforms, with fixed income and other measures, including health benefits. So far, only 30% of the workers had the coverage of minimum wage guarantee, and it would now expand to all workers in the unorganised sector, he observed.

Women workers have been empowered by these proposed laws as they did not get equal rights earlier, he said.

'Nation-first' mantra
Asserting that "nation-first" is the BJP's mantra, he noted that the promises made by the party have been fulfilled. He referred to decisions such as scrapping of Article 370, which gave Jammu and Kashmir special rights, and the beginning of the Ram temple construction in Ayodhya. Mr. Modi asked BJP cadres to promote local products and spread awareness of the National Education Policy.

New agriculture Bills will enslave farmers, says Rahul

People voice concerns in a chat with Congress leader



Rahul Gandhi

of the East India Company, to which Mr. Gandhi quipped, "There was an East India Company, now there is a West India company."

For India's future'

"These laws will have to be opposed for the future of India. A farmer's voice has immense strength; it was the farmer's voice that helped us win our freedom. And farmer's protests will get us freedom again," he said.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Gandhi in a tweet had said the micro, small and medium scale industries (MSMEs) were destroyed by an erroneous GST, and now new agricultural laws will enslave our farmers.

Political parties welcome Bihar election schedule

BJP and JAP(L) workers clash in Patna during protest



AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

Political parties on Friday welcomed the Election Commission's (EC) announcement on the schedule for the three-phase Assembly elections in Bihar, and expressed confidence over their respective imminent victories in the poll.

A clash broke out between BJP workers and the Jan Adhikar Party-Loktantrik (JAP-L) workers, led by former MP Rajesh Ranjan, outside the BJP's office in Patna. JAP(L) workers were protesting against the farm Bills passed in Parliament earlier this week.

"We welcome the poll schedule as the people of Bihar have already decided to oust the present government led by Nitish Kumar from power. Our contest is against the BJP, not the Nitish Kumar-led Janata Dal United (JD-U) as he (Mr. Kumar) has lost his political credibility among the voters of Bihar. The mahagathbandhan (grand alliance) will come to power in this election," said RJD leader Tejashwi Ya-

av. Mr. Yadav led a tractor march with senior party leader Shivanand Tiwari in Friday's nationwide protest over the farm Bills.

'People's regime'
The ruling NDA (National Democratic Alliance) parties, the BJP and the JD(U), also welcomed the poll schedule and said, "There was no contest between the NDA and the 'grand alliance' as the NDA will win over 220 seats out of the total 243 seats in the upcoming poll."

HAMS's Mr. Manjhi tweeted, "This election will be fought on the plank of 15 years of sushashan (good governance) versus 15 years of jungle raj. The people of the State will return Nitish Kumar to power again as he has served them well."

NDA gears for first polls during pandemic

BJP leader says the party was the first to start digital rallies, and is ready with campaign content

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on Friday welcomed the announcement of the Assembly poll dates for Bihar and exuded confidence that it would win.

At a press conference in Patna, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar announced that his party, the Janata Dal (U), welcomed the Election Commission's decision. The BJP general secretary in charge of Bihar, Bhupendra Yadav, tweeted, "The Assembly polls in Bihar will reflect the results of the Lok Sabha elections and the NDA will win with a two-thirds majority in Bihar Assembly."

The polls, the first in India under the shadow of COVID-19, will present many challenges not only to the EC but also to parties that have

to change the ways of campaigning to accommodate the safety norms. However, a senior Bihar BJP leader says, "We were the first party to start off with digital rallies in June, and we have prepared content and connectivity for outreach on various digital platforms to suit big, small and micro groups."

Seat-sharing plans
The political challenges will unfurl not just as the campaign gains traction but also the closer the BJP and its partner, the JD(U), come to finalising their seat sharing agreement. While the two parties fought together in the 2005 and 2010 polls, Mr. Kumar's exit from the NDA before the 2014 Lok Sabha polls meant that old agreements needed to be renegotiated after his party's return to the

NDA fold in 2017. "While during the 2019 polls, it was decided that the BJP and JD(U) will fight an equal number of Lok Sabha seats, for the Assembly, the JD(U) wants to retain its dominant role. That is a bit hard to swallow for the BJP," said a source in the Bihar BJP. The Lok Jan-shakti Party has also been demanding a larger share of seats, which the JD(U) says is up to the BJP to spare from its share.

JD(U) general secretary K.C. Tyagi told *The Hindu* that while his party expects a seamless seat adjustment with the BJP, they have "no experience" of fighting polls with the LJP. "While we have fought alongside the BJP many times, we have no experience with the LJP," he said, hinting that appeasing the LJP will be the job of the BJP and not the JD(U).

NEWS ANALYSIS
The other challenge is an undercurrent of anti-incumbency for the past 15 years of Nitish Kumar's administration and the handling of the recent floods in the State and the pandemic. The BJP feels that the antidote to this could be in the persona of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the welfare handouts given during the lock-

down. "Every Below Poverty Line family in Bihar has received some assistance or the other under various welfare measures announced by the Central government. Modiji ka bheja huwa paisa (money sent by Modi) is something that the Opposition is not taking into account," said a senior Bihar BJP leader. The Opposition has been playing down the power of double-engine growth, saying it hasn't given much to Bihar, but they forget that the State has only had "double engine government" – same alliance government at the Centre and State – since 2017. "In 2005 and 2010, the UPA was in power, and when Modiji took over as PM in 2014, Nitish Kumar was no longer with us. People will give us the benefit of doubt," the Bihar BJP leader said.

EC to announce bypoll dates on Sept. 29

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission will announce the schedule for bypolls to 64 Assembly constituencies and one Lok Sabha constituency on September 29, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora said on Friday.

Mr. Arora said the EC would hold a meeting on September 29 regarding the schedule for the by-elections. On September 4, the EC said that the bypolls and the Bihar elections would be conducted "around the same time".

Like-minded parties must stay together'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Hours after the EC's announcement of dates for the Bihar Assembly poll, the Congress's Bihar in-charge, Shaktisinh Gohil, said all like-minded parties should stay together. His comments come in the backdrop of RLSP chief Upendra Kushwaha refusing to be part of the *maha-gathbandhan* if RJD chief Tejashwi Yadav remains the face of the alliance.

Mr. Gohil said it was natural that each party would want its leader to be the face of the alliance.

He said he was confident that Mr. Kushwaha would remain in the alliance.

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Sd/- Administrative Officer, NAAC

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DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY
LAKSHADWEEM DISTRICT PANCHAYAT, KAVARATTI
F.No. 104/08/2020 – DP(AH) (2) DATED. 24.09.2020

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Suspension of MPs unfortunate: Birla

Dignity of the House and its Chair is an important aspect of Parliamentary system, says Speaker

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday termed the chain of events leading to the suspension of eight Opposition members in the Rajya Sabha on Monday and the subsequent boycott of both Houses of Parliament by the Opposition "unfortunate".

The "dignity of the House and its Chair" was an important aspect of the Parliamentary system and it is the duty of all members to respect it," Mr. Birla noted at a press conference in New Delhi.

The tradition of Parliament was not to refer to the goings-on in the other House, but that it would suffice to say that the events thereof had been unfortunate, he said.

Mr. Birla, however, observed that the boycott of the Lok Sabha by the Opposition



In the Lok Sabha, the Opposition has largely extended cooperation to the Chair in the peaceful conduct of the House, and the boycott was, as I understand it, under an act of political compulsion

OM BIRLA, LOK SABHA SPEAKER

was largely under political compulsions. "In the Lok Sabha, the Opposition has largely extended cooperation to the Chair in the peaceful conduct of the House, and the boycott was, as I understand it, under an act of political compulsion," he said.

"I had asked the leaders of the Opposition parties in the Lok Sabha to tea after they announced the boycott, and tried to persuade them to reconsider at least for the last

sitting, but these were decisions taken under political compulsions."

Unprecedented event
The suspended Rajya Sabha members had, in an unprecedented event, gone on an overnight strike within the Parliament premises after their suspension was announced by House Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu.

Deputy Chairperson Harivansh, who had been at the receiving end of the Opposi-

tion fury in the House and who was accused of passing the substantive Farm related Bills in the House without division and that issue had been debated not just during a general debate on the issue but also during debates on amendments to the Epidemic Diseases Act.

The Opposition in the Lok Sabha, where the Bills were cleared prior to being tabled in the Rajya Sabha and that too with more than five hours debate, had boycotted the proceedings in solidarity with the eight suspended MPs.

Mr. Birla, while giving details of the productivity of the Lok Sabha, said that it had breached a record on that score, with 167% productivity. Members, through various avenues open to them, had debated various important issues.

LAC crisis
Asked why the border stand-

off with China was not debated in the House, he said COVID-19 was the most challenging problem facing the country and that issue had been debated not just during a general debate on the issue but also during debates on amendments to the Epidemic Diseases Act.

The construction work on a new Parliament complex had almost started and would be completed in 21 months. The Lok Sabha Secretariat was prepared to hold both the winter session and Budget session of Parliament, he stated.

While the Rajya Sabha Secretariat saw 83 staffers contracting COVID-19 during the monsoon session, Mr. Birla, while admitting that the Lok Sabha Secretariat had not escaped the disease, refused to disclose any numbers, terming such disclosure "unseemly."

₹223 crore upgrade for 56 Mi-17s is untenable, says CAG

The helicopters will be phased out by 2024

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

An upgrade of 90 medium lift Mi-17 helicopters of the Indian Air Force (IAF) proposed in 2002 could not be achieved even after 18 years, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) said, as a result of which these "helicopters were flying with limited capability, thus compromising operational preparedness during these years", and the expenditure of ₹223 crore was "not justified" with limited life left in 56 of them.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) concluded a contract with Elbit Systems of Israel for the upgrade of the 90 copters at ₹618.23 crore in January 2017. "After upgradation, 56 of these helicopters would be left with less



The Indian Air Force had initiated the proposal for the upgrade in 2002.

than two years of life. The expenditure of ₹222.92 crore being incurred on their upgradation is not justified," the CAG said in a report tabled in Parliament early this week.

The 56 helicopters would be phased out by 2024. In addition, for the upgradation, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Electronics Limited were to

supply ₹1,720 crore worth of essential components, for which a contract had yet not been concluded.

The Mi-17 and Mi-17 IV helicopters had certain limitations in operating in adverse weather, night conditions and in electronic warfare dense battlefield. Due to this, the IAF initiated the proposal to upgrade 172 helicopters in 2002 and the Acceptance of Necessity was accorded by the Defence Acquisition Council in 2005. But the Request For Proposal was not issued even after two years as the IAF could not finalise the number of copters to be upgraded. After a series of delays, during which few helicopters were lost in accidents, a contract for the upgradation of 90 was signed with Elbit systems.

Qadri assassins posed as clients, say police

SIT constituted to probe the killing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The J&K police on Friday constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the assassination of television analyst and lawyer Babar Qadri, 39, who was killed by two pistol-wielding men posing as clients. Meanwhile, two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants were killed in an Anantnag operation of the security forces.

A Special Investigation Team has been constituted to probe the incident. It will be headed by the Superintendent of Police, Hazratbal," said Inspector-General of Police Vijay Kumar.

He said two masked men entered Qadri's residence at Hawal, Srinagar, around 6.20 p.m. on Thursday, "as clients with files in their hands".

"They told Qadri that they had to discuss some accident related case and later fired upon him. Qadri sustained four bullet wounds on his head," IGP Kumar said. He said the militants also fired a few bullets in the air. "The police had forewarned Qadri and asked him not to live in the old city's Hawal area but he refused [to heed the warning]," he added.

On the recent killing of a Block Development Chair-



Babar Qadri

man in Budgam, IGP Kumar said, "Militants probably knew about his movement. Two Personal Security Officers have been suspended. Names of two Lashkar-e-Taiba militants have come to the fore."

The Hurriyat, headed by Mirwais Umar Farooq, expressed shock over the killing of Qadri. "As the conflict lingers, another precious life falls prey to it," a spokesperson said.

Two militants killed
The police on Friday said two LeT militants were killed in Anantnag's Sirhama area. "One slain militant was identified as Abu Rehan from Pakistan, who was active since March 2019. Another was Adil Bhat, an LeT commander. Adil was involved in the attack on two policemen at Nowgam on August 14," IGP Kumar said.

Now, Assam tribal groups plan political party

At least three regional parties have already been formed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The list of new political parties in Assam is likely to expand ahead of the 2021 Assembly election.

Less than a month after two influential students' organisations – the All Assam Students' Union and the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chhatra Parishad – formed the Asom Jatiya Parishad (AJP), several tribal groups have announced the possibility of launching a political party.

The committee has 21 member-organisations that include the All Assam Tribal Sangha, All Bodoland Students' Union, All Rabha Students' Union and Takam Mising Poirin Kebang.

"Unlike in the past, we want to ensure each community has equal stake in the new political initiative that will cater to the interests of the tribal people who are a factor in almost half of the 126 Assembly seats in Assam," Mr. Khakhlari told



Activist Akhil Gogoi's group has decided to form a party.

journalists.

Experiments with tribal fronts had petered out in the past. The United People's Front, for instance, was formed a year ahead of the 2016 Assam poll but could not be sustained.

Apart from the AJP, which expects to put up a strong fight against the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress, there have been at least two new regional parties in Assam. They are the Asom Gana Mancha and the Gana Shakti Party.

Peasant rights activist Akhil Gogoi's group Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti has constituted a panel to brainstorm for the formation of a new political party.

MCI replaced by National Medical Commission

Centre releases gazette notification

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has replaced the Medical Council of India (BoG-MCI), as per information released by the Health Ministry on Friday.

Dr. Suresh Chandra Sharma, former head of ENT, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, has been appointed as its chairman for three years. The change was aimed at bringing in reforms in medical education. The government dissolved the MCI in 2018, replaced it with a BoG, which was chaired by Dr. VK Paul, member (health), NITI Aayog, said the Ministry.

"Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 (102 of 1956) is hereby repealed with effect from September 25. The BoG appointed under section 3A of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 (102 of 1956) in supersession of the MCI constituted under subsection (I) of section 3 of the said Act shall stand dissolved," stated the gazette notification issued by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW).

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The due date for uploading of bid for the work of Rehabilitation and Improvement Work of Bisalpur Dam under DRIP Phase-II, District Tonk Rajasthan is hereby extended upto 28.10.2020. The details are available on the websites :- www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, www.djpr.rajasthan.gov.in, <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>.

UBN No.: WRD2021WLOB00232

Addl. Chief Engineer
Water Resources Zone,
Jaipur

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Government of Kerala
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He was an amazingly versatile artiste. He had helped me a lot with my Tamil pronunciation in my song for Ilaiyaraaja. The loss of such a great artiste has left a huge void in the music world
ASHA BHOSLE, singer

Sad to hear about the passing away of such a great yet simple person. He was my first sponsor! He sponsored Chennai Colts in the national team championship in 1983
VISHWATHAN ANAND, Chess grandmaster

The voice which will echo in everyone's house forever, a family member in every household. Ur voice and U will continue to live with us for generations to come. Thank you sir for everything sir. You will be dearly missed
DHANUSH, actor

He recognised @AkashvaniAIR as his first guru as he taught himself music by listening to great singers on the radio. His devotional renderings were as popular as his film songs. Donated his ancestral home for a Vedic school
NIRMALA SITHARAMAN, Finance Minister

Only a very few singers have the quality where they sing a song and it will be a hit even before it reaches the audience. SPB sir was the top among them. We lost him, not his voice. It will always be in the air
SHANKAR, film director

You will forever live on in your undisputed legacy of music! Condolences to the family
SALMAN KHAN, actor

For every emotion in life, there is a fitting SPB number

With a voice that could choke with laughter and quiver with lovelorn anguish, the singer enthralled his fans in a variety of languages across decades



In harmony: S.P. Balasubrahmanyam always beamed during his shows; clockwise from left, the singer with composer Ilaiyaraaja; with composer A.R. Rahman, actors Kamal Haasan and Prabhu; with director Bharathiraja and Kamal Haasan; and receiving the Padma Shri in 2001 from then President K.R. Narayanan. ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

B. KOLAPPAN
CHENNAI

For every occasion in life there is an appropriate SPB song, and millions of fans from all over the world recorded their sorrow at his passing as a "personal loss". His voice, which morphed and modulated to suit the voice of the many heroes he sang for, is without doubt among the most recognised in the country.

SPB, with his hearty laugh, humility and great respect for the audience, was a darling of the masses he entertained for close to five decades.

Though he started out hoping to be an engineer, his failure to clear a subject in PUC forced him to pursue the now-defunct AMIE course in Chennai. But music lured him towards singing competitions and finally into the world of films.

His talent was spotted by another playback singer and music director S.P. Kothandapani, who was in the audience at a competition at the Andhra Social and Cultural Society (ASCA) and he provided him an opportunity to sing in the Telugu film

Sri Sri Mariatha Ramanna. SPB was one among the four singers – S.P. Kothandapani, P. Susheela, P.B. Srinivas and Eelapada Raguramaiha – who rendered the ragamalaika, *Emi Evindha Mogum*.

"Anyone who had listened to the part he rendered for Shoban Babu would have realised the potential in the voice. It proved to be a prelude for a record career in film music," said film music historian Vamanan. As they say, the rest was history.

While his prowess as a playback singer is legendary, SPB was also an excellent voice over, or dubbing artist. He was the voice of actor Kamal Hassan, whenever the latter's Tamil movies were dubbed in Telugu.

Paadum Nila (Singing Moon) as he was called by his fans, had a lilting voice with the finest traces of great singers. "His was a breeze-like voice of A.M. Raja, the softness of P.B. Srinivas and the effortlessness of Mohamed Rafi," said Vamanan.

In one scene he could sing a spoof with laughter in his voice as in *Annatha adurar othiko*, and in another he would powerfully express

the anguished mind by rendering *Unna nenachan, padtu padichen, thangame!* in *Apoorva Sagodharargal*.

He had also acted in films such as *Manathil Uruthi Vendum*, *Keladi Kanmani* and *Sigaram*, besides scoring music for some films – *Sigaram* being a runaway hit for its score.

Zest for life

An extremely friendly and genial man who enjoyed his moments with interviewers, SPB once said he was fond of life and never wanted to die.

SPB bagged his first national award for *Sankarakararam*, though all the songs in the Telugu film are based on pure Carnatic ragas. He was never formally trained in Carnatic music, but that did not stop him, not then, not ever.

"Even SPB had apprehensions about taking up the assignment as he had no proper training in classical music. It was T.K. Pugazhendhi, the assistant of music director K.V. Mahadevan who persuaded SPB to render the songs," recalled Vamanan. And what hits they turned out to be.

The second time he won

the award for his first Hindi song, *Tere Mere Beech Mein* in the film *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*. Two more awards came his way for the Telugu films *Sagaramasam* and *Rudraveena*. *Sangeetha Sagara Ganayogi Panchakshara Gavai*, the Kannada film, won him the fifth national award.

An award for Tamil films eluded him many years, though his collaboration with music directors Ilayaraja and M.S. Viswanathan had resulted in innumerable memorable duets, solos, folk songs, spoofs and songs with the classical touch. He finally won it for the lilting number *Thanga Thamarai* in the film *Minsara Kanavu* with music scored by A.R. Rahman.

Looking back, even as he secured a toehold in the Telugu industry, a break in the Tamil film industry proved elusive until an introduction to music director M.S. Viswanathan (MSV) through his friend Bharani.

SPB chose to render *Nila Ennadam Nerungathe* before MSV, who liked the voice, but had reservations about his Tamil pronunciation. He sent him to learn Tamil properly and when SPB

returned having polished up his pronunciation, decided to give him a song. SPB blew in like a fresh breeze with *Iyarkai Ennum Ilayakanni*, for the film *Santhi Nilayam*.

"Though the song was recorded first, another song, *Aayiram Nilave Vaa* in the MGR-starred *Adimaipen* reached the public first, because it was released earlier in 1969," Vamanan said.

Overnight hits

Both the songs became overnight hits. SPB would gratefully acknowledge the opportunity given to him by MGR and music director K.V. Mahadevan who had introduced him to the future Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. SPB was down with malaria after rehearsal was over. But MGR waited till he recovered so that he could perform.

"MGR told me that he did not want to disappoint me. He felt that I would have informed my friends of this chance, and if I was not given the opportunity, my friends would not think well of my capacity as a singer," SPB once said. Later in the film *Suryakanthi*, he sang the number *Naan Endral Avu*

lum Naanum and late Chief Minister Jayalalithaa rendered the English verses. His playback songs for thespian Sivaji Ganesan, particularly *Potuvaitha Mugamo* in *Sumanthi En Sundari* and *Emuna Nadhi Inkey* in *Gouravam* were equally popular.

SPB sang *Aval Oru Navarasa Natakan* in the film *Ulagam Suttrum Vaibhan* and *Paadum Pothu Naan Thendral Kattru* and *Angey Varuvathu Yaro* in the film *Netru Indru Naalai*. MSV continued to use SPB in films with various actors. SPB was the favourite singer of MSV and would always cherish the song *Ilakkam Marudho* in the film *Nizhal Nijamahirathu*.

SPB's career graph soared with the arrival of Ilayaraja and actors such as Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan. Even with Ilayaraja it did not happen immediately. Once the duo combined, it proved unstoppable. *Bhuvana Oru Kelvikuri* offered him two outstanding songs – *Raja Enbar Mandiru Enbar* and *Vizhiyile Malaranthathu*.

SPB is no more, but his voice will live on; his fans will ensure that.



'I can't believe Balu's voice has fallen silent'

'Undoubtedly, he was like a binding force, a bridge between the past and present generations'

M. VENKAIAH NAIDU

The devastating news of the passing away of the legendary playback singer S.P. Balasubrahmanyam has left me shattered and shell-shocked. I am benumbed and words fail me as I struggle to express my deep anguish. Like millions of people across the globe, my wife, Smt. Ushamma, and I prayed fervently for his speedy recovery. We hoped that he would win this battle against the dreaded coronavirus. Alas! The cruel hand of destiny has snatched away ever-smiling Balu from us.

I wake up every morning and get rejuvenated by listening to Annamacharya Keertans and devotional songs of late Sri Gantatasala Venkateswararao and Sripathi Panditharadhyula Balasubrahmanyam. This has been my routine for many years. The words that Balu is no more has left a void in me. How can my morning routine be the same without listening to your mellifluous voice, Balu?

Ever since I came to know about his hospitalisation, I have been in constant touch, initially with Balu and later with his family members. It became my daily routine to seek updates on his well-being. I was regularly in touch with the doctors who were treating him at MGM Hospital. For the past many days, the doctors kept me informed on how he was coping with the aftermath of contracting the virus. I must

compliment the doctors for doing their best.

During the initial days of his treatment, I felt happy when the doctors told me that he was improving and responding to treatment. They informed me that they were taking advice of experts from Mayo Clinic and Boston Medical University and used to update me on their line of treatment too. Upon my suggestion, they took the advice of leading pulmonologists in South India. When the doctors informed me of the need for physiotherapy treatment for Balu, I had spoken to Apollo Hospitals Group Chairman, Dr Pratap C. Reddy, for arranging the machine.

Balu's son, Charan, was also in constant touch with me.

Four days ago, it came as a relief when the doctors told me that he was progressing and responding to the treatment. They said that he was spending time with family members by speaking to them. I was relieved on hearing this as initially his communication was only through gestures or by writing down his thoughts on a piece of paper.

I was told that he had recently expressed his wish to watch TV as

he was a keen cricket enthusiast. On getting those updates a few days ago, I felt confident that he would pull through. All this made me not believe the news that he is no more when it was broken to me. I can barely stay composed and collect my thoughts. Memories come flooding to me, unable as I am to cope with this sudden tragedy.

I have always had a special affinity towards Balu... it could be due to the fact that I knew him since childhood or because he hailed from my village in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh or for his humility, dedication and hard work, which he im-

bibed from his father, late Sri Sripathi Panditaradhyula Sambamurthy, who was a Harikatha artiste and a great musician. Sri Sambamurthy used to organise Thyagaraja music festivals and invite eminent musicians. It was a great opportunity to me and music lovers of Nellore to listen and enjoy the music of legends like D.K. Pattammal, M.S. Subbulakshmi, Chembari Vaidyanatha Iyer, Sri Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna, violinist Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman, veena expert Sri Chitti Babu, vocalist M.L. Vasanthakumari, eminent percussionist T.K. Murthy and others. It could be any or a combination of all these reasons which endeared Balu to me. I will miss him personally in ways beyond the pale of language – such is the deep bond I shared with him.

With his friendly disposition, Balu was equally affectionate towards me whenever we interacted. We used to go down the memory lane and get nostalgic. His conversations used to be interspersed with interesting anecdotes, which I cherish.

Our love for Telugu language and Bharatiya Samkskriti (Indian culture) was one of the common factors that further cemented our bonding. Balu was an institution by himself. Undoubtedly, he was like a binding force, an overarching bridge between the past and present generations. He was a mentor par excellence and a

gentle guide for the younger generation. Not only did he earn name and fame globally as a versatile singer, but was equally at ease in donning the greasepaint used to organise Thyagaraja music festivals and invite eminent musicians. It was a great opportunity to me and music lovers of Nellore to listen and enjoy the music of legends like D.K. Pattammal, M.S. Subbulakshmi, Chembari Vaidyanatha Iyer, Sri Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna, violinist Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman, veena expert Sri Chitti Babu, vocalist M.L. Vasanthakumari, eminent percussionist T.K. Murthy and others. It could be any or a combination of all these reasons which endeared Balu to me. I will miss him personally in ways beyond the pale of language – such is the deep bond I shared with him.

Apart from Telugu, he has sung in many languages, including Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi.

The Telugu people in particular and the world of music in general will be indebted to Balu for unearthing fresh and hidden singing talent through the popular programme of 'Padutha Theeyaga' patronised by Sri Ch. Ramoji Rao, chairman, Eennadu Group and telecast on ETV for many years. The soft-spoken Balu always used to encourage the budding performers by subtly correcting them in a friendly manner. It was a great quality of this iconic personality.

I can never forget the moment when I presented the centenary award to Balu at the inauguration of the 47th International Film Festival of India in Panaji, Goa 2016.

It will be difficult to me and millions of his fans to accept the fact that Balu's voice has fallen silent. Om Shanti!

(The author is the Vice-President of India)

India has lost one of its most melodious voices: President

Ram Nath Kovind and several other leaders pay tributes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former Congress president Rahul Gandhi were among the leaders who paid tributes to singer S.P. Balasubrahmanyam on Friday.

"In the passing of music legend S.P. Balasubrahmanyam, Indian music has lost one of its most melodious voices. Called 'Paadum Nila' or 'Singing Moon' by his countless fans, he was honoured with the Padma Bhushan and many national awards. Condolences to his family, friends and admirers," Mr. Kovind said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "With the unfortunate demise of Shri S.P. Balasubrahmanyam, our cultural world is a lot poorer... A household name across India, his melodious voice and music enthralled audiences for decades. In this hour of grief, my thoughts are with his family and admirers."

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said, "He will forever remain in our memories through his melodious voice & unparalleled music compositions. My condolences are with his family and followers."

Touched hearts'
Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, in a tweet, said "his songs touched millions of hearts in many languages. His voice will live on."

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, External Affairs Minis-

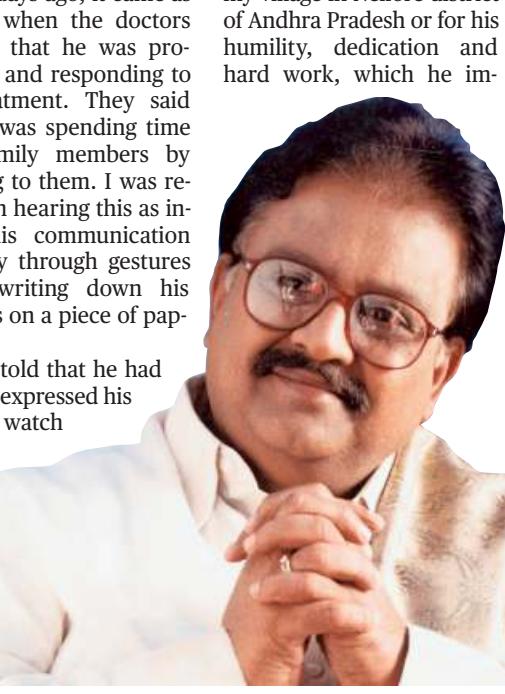


Honour roll: Former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda presenting an award to S.P. Balasubrahmanyam in Bengaluru on August 13, 2012. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

ter S. Jaishankar and other Union Cabinet Ministers also offered their condolences.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami said it was a great loss for the Tamil film industry and music fans. "He reached great heights and his songs will always remain in our memories," he stated.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, Puducherry Chief Minister K. Narayanasamy, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan were among those who offered condolences.



and a gentle guide for the younger generation. Not only did he earn name and fame globally as a versatile singer, but was equally at ease in donning the greasepaint used to organise Thyagaraja music festivals and invite eminent musicians. It was a great opportunity to me and music lovers of Nellore to listen and enjoy the music of legends like D.K. Pattammal, M.S. Subbulakshmi, Chembari Vaidyanatha Iyer, Sri Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna, violinist Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman, veena expert Sri Chitti Babu, vocalist M.L. Vasanthakumari, eminent percussionist T.K. Murthy and others. It could be any or a combination of all these reasons which endeared Balu to me. I will miss him personally in ways beyond the pale of language – such is the deep bond I shared with him.

(The author is the Vice-President of India)



Instapick

Savage X Fenty: While we are still waiting on a new album from Rihanna, she has fans occupied with a fashion show launch of lingerie from Savage X Fenty. In true Riri fashion, the models are diverse in race and body type; performers include Travis Scott, Bad Bunny, Normani and Lizzo. Each Instagram post on @savagexfenty is preceded by a cover image warning of bold, confident, unapologetic content. On Amazon Prime Video on October 2.



Talking point

Indian Premier League: Empty stands and canned cheering make for a strange IPL-watching experience. While pre- and post-game analysis hasn't changed, the frenzy that marks each game, especially from the home crowd, is what defines this sporting event. However, with 20 crore people tuning in to watch the opening match, organisers and advertisers are a happy lot.

YARN IT!

Lockdown money-makers

How to pick a passion that will make you a pretty penny during the pandemic

JANE DE SUZA

While others bemoan how this lockdown has incapacitated them, you can mint money, especially off these moaners. A countdown of careers that are flourishing like fun-gus.

5. Cultural Vultural Workshopper:

Count on your fingers, toes, strands of hair, how many online workshops you've been propositioned with – to make you draw, dance, sing, cook like a pro in four hours flat. You now have to discover a skill you can entice people to learn. You have shown amazing aptitude of late for binge-watching web series on your sofa, falling asleep into the chips. 'Join my workshop,' you can proclaim, 'On Deep Relaxation of Mind and Body. Book now! Only

one seat left (the sofa)'. Such truth.

4. Resume Rockstar:

If you can't find a job, advise others on getting a job. Always works. Charge exorbitantly to fabricate their CVs. 'Guaranteed to get you to the place of your dreams.' (Sleeping on the sofa, watching daytime soaps is a dream, right? Remember, stick to the truth.) No one will question why, with your genius in creating resumes, you haven't landed yourself a job. Panic, like love, is blind.

3. Love Your Bodyst:

Loads of people want to lose weight. Loads more are telling them how to. You can offer: 'Lose weight naturally.' (That takes months, you can keep charging.) Or create an exotic fad: The only-purple-food/sweat-reabsorbing/inte-

mittent binging/Scandinavian/Quillwillian way. Spout science you've made up on the spot to back up ridiculous claims. 'Three hours of eating your hair is the latest breaking-news diet. Find out how to, only here!'

2. Child (Parent) Expert:

We parents are a hyper lot, and if not, we can easily be persuaded to be. Over-commit in your headline: 'Make your toddler the next Elon Musk – enrol now!' Or 'The 5 things only parents of successful kids do.' (The five hours of your workshop – duh.) Anything to do with the

offspring sets off our mush-hormones. 'How to love your child more' or 'Parenting mistakes to avoid' We will be sobbing our way through our stampede to enrol.

1. Top-Class Alarmist:

And the winner is a profession that has been collecting likes since caveman times, when he who sounded the alarm, perched precariously on

• SREEJITH R KUMAR



a tree, banged his drum when a flesh-eating beast (or firefly) approached. Alarms are in high demand in the social media era. You can start by retweeting panic willy-nilly, and then starting a YouTube channel to threaten: 'You will die' (insert appropriate cause from the following) 'from unbleached vegetables, vaccines, immigrants, screen time... not forwarding this forward'.

If all else fails, enrol for my upcoming workshop on Finding Your Inner Fool. Enrol now, only one seat left!

Where Jane De Suza, author of Flyaway Boy, pokes her nose into our perfect lives.

Pick of the week

Concerts, stand-up and pop-ups to keep you busy during the pandemic.



AR for Mumbai walls

Art curator and 'sari man' Himanshu Verma's Red Earth organisation has a new portal for affordable Indian art. Find everything from paintings and sculptures to prints, Nathdwara pichwais and Cherrylal paintings. At art.readearthindia.com. Meanwhile, fans of Hindi cinema can see the Bollywood Art Project come to life on Snapchat. BAP relives classics like Mughal E Azam and Dil Chahta Hai through AR Lenses connected to murals across Mumbai. Look out for iconic actors like Sridevi and Irrfan feature via the Lenses.



Florals and athleisure

Péro's Autumn-Winter collection, DISCO 2020, is inspired from the fashion of the 1970s, and helps "us forget all that is happening around us and break free". Expect geometric patterns, sequins following textile patterns, and hand embroidered wool flowers. Textiles have been developed in various regions of India: cotton stripes and checks from West Bengal, mashru stripes from Gujarat, and handwoven silks from Bhagalpur, amongst others. Expected at Ogaan stores mid-October; glimpses at ilovepero on Instagram



Wunderhaus presents

Auroville-based label Wunderhaus and architect-turned-artist M Kalavani – known for her cyanotype printing – of the brand 56th Day present a fashion show of their collaborative collection this Sunday at Coromandel Café in Puducherry. Called Moonsigns, it will feature unisex clothing with nature-inspired prints on handloom garments. The show will be choreographed by Kedar Madula, founder of Wunderhaus, with music by Marc Morais. On YouTube and Facebook. Details: @wunderhaus.residency



For folk's sake

This Saturday evening, tune in to Together, Louder, Stronger, a virtual event organised by Anahad Foundation and Believe Entertainment. The lineup includes indie musicians and playback singers, and outfits like Mame Khan, Shaan, Jonita Gandhi, Benny Dayal, When Chai Met Toast, Bhuvan Bam, and Nithyasree Mahadevan, among others. The NGO's work focusses on conserving heritage folk music and creating sustainable livelihoods for the artistes. From 6.30 pm on YouTube and Facebook. Details: anahad.ngo



DIY meals or Avartana?

If you're in Chennai, ITC Grand Chola has reopened Avartana, their contemporary fine dining South Indian restaurant. Choose from multi-course meals – Maya, Bela, Anika, Tara and Jia – to suit different palates and price points. From ₹2,000 plus taxes. From 6 pm to 8 pm. Staying with a friend and prefer to order in? The hotel offers DIY meal kits with ingredients for two – just follow the instructions and serve hot. There's Thai curry, khao suey, ravioli, shepherd's pie and more. From ₹1,150. #22200000



The AD Weekender

AD India's first virtual festival curates home tours, masterclasses, performances, webinars and conversations for an immersive weekend that will stream live on social media. Go from the chil lake-view home of Hong Kong-based designer Andre Fu to Geoffrey Bawa's tropical garden estate in Sri Lanka. Experience a virtual walkthrough of Vastrakala embroidery atelier in Chennai, founded by Jean Francois Lesage. And Mira Nair talks about the making of her latest series A Suitable Boy. Details: architecturaldigest.in



Gandhi state of mind

October 2 marks the birth anniversary of the father of our nation. While government events haven't been announced yet, the Communist Party of India has said the day will be a "celebration of secularism and plurality of the Indian democracy". For OTT regulars, there are some new releases – Khaali Peeli (Zeeplex and Zee5), Serious Men (Netflix) and Nishabdham (Amazon Prime Video). Carrying forward Gandhi's legacy of khadi, the Crafts Council of India will present the Kamala Awards on October 3. Watch on Facebook.

E-STORE EDIT

Metallic and moulded

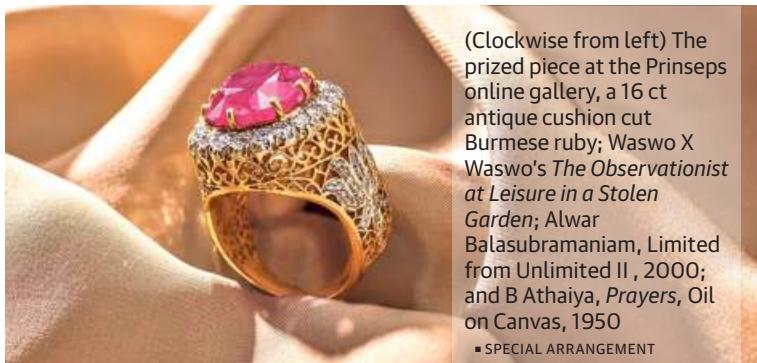
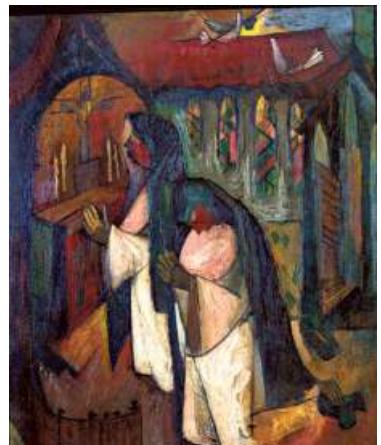
Amit Aggarwal's new online store works with contrast

SUSANNA MYRTLE LAZARUS
amitaggarwal.com



(Top) Amit Aggarwal and (below) from his collection • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

(like Gaurav Gupta, who launched his digital store recently). For those not bound by a budget, AA Exclusives features winged gowns, 3D skater dresses, and pre-stitched saris. This price-on-request section, unfortunately, has no descriptor or quick view for each garment. Users have to click and go into a new page to see each piece while browsing. That said, the site is easy to navigate, with tabs that introduce customers to the designer and brand, as well as a prominent press section. Aggarwal's film from the recently-concluded India Couture Week is hosted on the home page. Up next: AM.I.T., Aggarwal's ready-to-wear collection. The diffusion line, launched in 2015, was created to "ensure natural and manmade textiles co-exist" and features handloom fabric from across the country.



(Clockwise from left) The prized piece at the Prinsep's online gallery, a 16 ct antique cushion cut Burmese ruby; Waswo X Waswo's The Observationist at Leisure in a Stolen Garden; Alwar Balasubramanian, Limited from Unlimited II, 2000; and B Athaiya, Prayers, Oil on Canvas, 1950
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Art on site

Virtual galleries like TAP and Prinsep are the latest additions to the art world

GEORGINA MADDOX

Online shopping for art is not a new beast. In fact, art portal Saffronart (launched in 2001) announced their whopping sale of ₹35 crore for a 1974 Gaitonde painting at their 300th auction held earlier this month. With the wine and cheese evenings at galleries becoming almost non-existent during the pandemic, the entire art market has migrated to an online experience that is undoubtedly two dimensional.

Starting afresh

Launching a venture in these times appears almost catatonical and yet, Prinsep, an online auction house launched in 2017, is set to open their new season with a virtual gallery and auction sales in November. "The luxury market relied heavily on the shopping experience of consumers at luxury stores or malls," observes founder-director Indrajit Chatterjee, adding, "This traffic has reduced dramatically. We feel that we are ideally positioned to offer the same experience via our online platform so we are aggressively pursuing it."

Ranjit Hoskote, poet, cultural theorist and curator, says that there can be no substitute for being in the physical presence of the artwork. However, online galleries have amplified our access to collections across the world.

"We may never visit Saturn or Uranus, and rely on space probes to relay impressions of these planets to us, do we not? Let's approach online viewing in the same spirit," he suggests.

The idea is to present buyers with a wide price range between ₹10,000 to ₹10 crore. The piece de resistance is a 16-carat antique cushion-cut Burmese ruby ring (₹56 lakh). Also on offer are idyllic landscapes on canvas by Atul Bose, who sprung to fame through his association with Academy of Fine Arts in Kolkata, and whose delicate, small-format nude studies have sold at Sotheby's.

Oils on canvas and watercolours from the estate of Bhanu Athaiya – the first Indian to win an Oscar (costume design for Richard Attenborough's 1982 *Gandhi*) – come up for auction for the first time in almost 70 years.

Meanwhile, galleries are grouping together to make it easier for the harried collector to browse for art. The Art Platform India (TAP), which went live on September 2, is a partnership of around 13 galleries from across the country, who have come together to accent their visibility. They hope to appeal to a wider audience with a choice of works, with the follow-ups being done on a personal level. "During the lockdown I realised we all needed a collective effort and that was how the idea of this platform was born," says Sharan Apparao, of Chennai's Apparao Galleries, who is showcasing the work of artist Alwar Balasubramanian, known for playing with the dualities of presence and absence.

"This format accessibly brings the latest in contemporary Indian art to viewers in the comfort of their own homes," adds Bhavna Kakar, founder-director of Delhi-based Latitude 28. They are currently hosting Waswo X Waswo's exhibition of 'staged' hand-painted photographs made collaboratively with Rajasthan miniaturists Rajesh Soni and Shyam Lal Kumar.

"The primary market becomes more transparent online and helps buyers make informed choices," shares Tunty Chauhan, director, Gallery Threshold. Showcasing artists like Anindita Bhattacharya, V Ramesh, Indraprmit Roy and Rahul Inamdar, the Delhi gallery focusses on art ideas and discourse.

While the online space has been well received by most, there is an expectation and a yen that younger galleries and those located outside the metros would also get to dip into the collaboration. A general criticism floating around the art vine is that the same names appear to crop up even online. "One would have expected that an online presence would shift focus a bit from the city-centric galleries and artists," concludes Kolkata-based curator Nanak Ganguly.

A ND-NDE



The Irish writer's latest picture book, *What We'll Build*, explores a mighty partnership and offers hope in these uncertain times

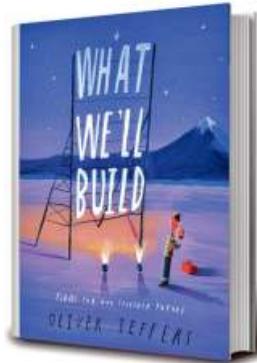
Oliver Jeffers to his daughter

MENAKA RAMAN

Hope is a feeling that is in short supply these days. The Covid-19 curve only seems to be interested in ascent. The sky has turned a dystopian orange in some parts of the world. Governments say that 'there is no data' and use the pandemic to detain those who dare voice dissent. Optimism has been shoved to a corner by fear, distrust and guilt.

Our children ask when they can go back to school, when they can see their grandparents, when things will be normal again. And the adults have no answers. We've possibly never had the answers, but once upon a time at least we could Google them. It is into this landscape that renowned Irish author-illustrator Oliver Jeffers brings out a new illustrated book, *What We'll Build: Plans for Our Together Future*.

Modern family
Build. Together. Future. Words that connote the very hope that has been relegated to a corner.



Published by HarperCollins, *What We'll Build* is scheduled to be released on October 25. At ₹799, it is available for pre-order now.

Jeffers' latest is dedicated to his two-year-old daughter, Mari. I loved the lyrical quality of his writing and the illustrations that invoked a sense of familiarity.

I asked the writer if he'd felt a certain pressure to write a book for Mari, after publishing *Here We Are* for his son, Harland, in 2017. "It occurred to me that I'd make a book for her before she could speak, so I thought I'd have enough time before she asked for a book," he says. "I didn't really know when I'd write a book for her, but as soon as she came along, I found myself in a similar although different situation as I had been when Harland arrived. Without intending to, I started thinking some of these thoughts and writing them down."

And from those thoughts emerged *What We'll Build*.

Jeffers says that there's been a shift in mindset around his own understanding of what a family is, between these two books. "I was grappling with the reality of explaining the world as it is right now to my children. *What We'll*



+ FOOD SPOT

A whiff of Park Street

When travel for food is still a tall order, this home chef brings the cuisine of Kolkata to Delhi-NCR, with Park Street Khana



fried and ground onions, pureed tomatoes, and beaten yogurt, sprinkled with raisins.

I focused on the pork, which was a dry dish of stir-fried pieces. Some were deliciously soft, but a few were a bit too chewy. The meat had been tossed with pieces of capsicum, tomatoes, onions, and baby corn.

Of course, the piece de resistance was the *rasgulla*. There were six juicy sponge balls in thick and creamy, sweetened milk, topped with nuts. I had two, and sighed in contentment.

Later, I had a conversation with the hand-wielding *karchi*. Antara Daniels started this home delivery service on August 22. Park Street Khana has its own delivery mechanism, and supplies to Delhi, Noida, and Gurugram (call 9810842901).

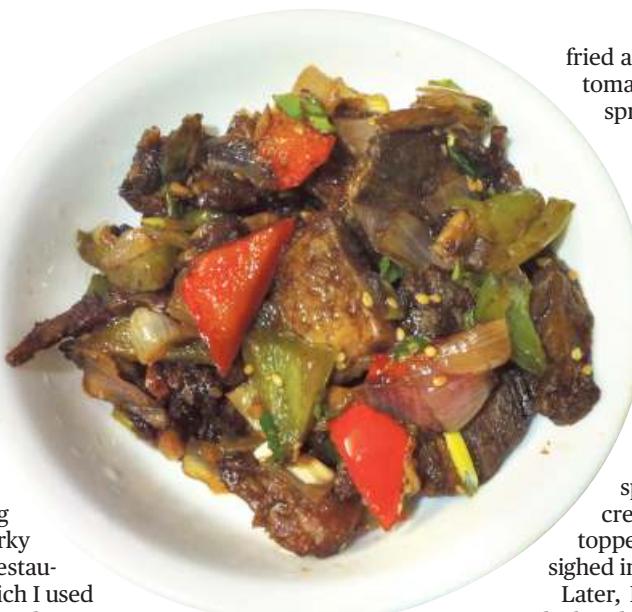
"This is a venture that mum (Leena Daniels) and I started. We do all the shopping of ingredients including meats and fish, all the cutting, cooking, packing. We have our own delivery person who is sanitized for every trip," she says.

Most of the recipes, she adds, come from the family, which is a wonderful confluence of cultures — her paternal grandmother was a Bengali and grandfather, a Tamilian from Pondicherry. Her mother is Anglo Indian, with English and Mexican ancestors. "Hence, our menu comprises Anglo-Bengal food," she says.

Their menu includes mutton *kosha*, chicken *vindaloo*, mustard fish, *shammi kabab*, *daab chingri*.

I have started dreaming of Mocambo's pork schnitzel again.

The writer is a seasoned food critic



Tastes of Kolkata (Top to bottom)
Mutton stew, chilli pork, baked rasgulla • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

RAHUL VERMA

I had been dreaming about the food of Kolkata just before the pandemic locked us all in. We had planned to travel in April, and I was looking forward to all kinds of porky delights, especially at a restaurant called Mocambo, which I used to frequent. But as we say in the Hindi heartland: that was one day, and this is another. I am still weaving — and unravelling — my Kolkata plans. One day soon, I tell myself.

Just when I was giving up all hope, our foodie friend from Gurugram asked me if I had tried out a place called Park Street Khana. I hadn't. So, I immediately checked their menu. It had a lovely mix of Anglo-Indian, Bengali, and other dishes. There were home-made sausages, country captain chicken, and tenderloin pot roast. And there was, to my utter delight, baked *rasgulla*, a divine sweet that I lost my heart and willpower to when a friend from Kolkata got it for us several years ago.

We thought we'd mix and match, so we asked for a plate of chilli pork, *maacher kalia*, and mutton stew. Everything on the menu costs ₹599, barring the prawn *malai kari* at ₹699, and the *rasgulla* and *shahi tukda* at ₹300.

It was a wonderfully satisfying meal. I loved the stew and the pork, and though I am not much of a fish eater, I enjoyed the gravy of the fish.

The pork was not cooked in the Oriental style, but with barbecue sauce and a few other condiments. The mutton stew had a light, mildly-sweet sauce, which I liked. The meat pieces were soft, and went well with all the veggies — potatoes, carrots, et al — and the sauce had been flavoured with bay leaves, sliced ginger, and garam masala. The *kalia* had *bekti* fillets in a curry of

The writer is a seasoned food critic

CM YK

ND-NDE

Block by block (Clockwise from far left) Illustrations from the book, *What We'll Build*, and Oliver Jeffers
• CAROLINE TOMPKINS

of children, providing some respite in the otherwise long, seemingly never-ending days, and a break for their caregivers.

To me, these thoughtful sessions and their warm reception drove home the point of just how essential creators of children's literature are in today's world. And yet, they are rarely given the importance and respect they deserve. Creating books for children is still seen as a hobby, something 'cute' one does on the side.

Jeffers admits that he'd gotten used to hearing such comments himself, and what really made him look at things differently was a conversation with Bono. Yes, the Irish singer-songwriter-philanthropist. He shares an anecdote from a time he was collaborating with U2 and the singer didn't know who he was.

"He asked what I did and I said I write books for kids. I was used to the 'Oh, that's sweet' reaction, but without missing a beat, Bono said, 'Oh, what a huge responsibility!' I was like 'Excuse me?' and he said, 'Yeah, you are a human being's first counterpoint to their cultural world. That's a huge responsibility.'

If he feels the weight of that responsibility, Jeffers doesn't show it in his new book. It has the lightness, beauty and deft touch of humour that we have come to look forward to in his work.

My favourite lines from the book are:

A place to stay when all is lost, to keep the things we love the most.

We'll put these favourite things beside, the earlier love we set aside.

I think that we may want them later

When times are hard and needs are greater.

Those hard times are now. And *What We'll Build* is just the book we need for it.

Build has a central idea of a partnership between two people looking towards the future together. If *Here We Are* is about explaining the world as it is, [this book] is about how we change it."

The multi-hyphenate acknowledges that it is definitely more difficult to feel hopeful right now than it has been in the past. And while parents and educators often use his books as a starting point for conversations around grief (*The Heart and the Bottle*), greed (*The Fate of Fausto*) and friendship (*Imaginary Fred*), in his own home, books are very much in the realm of classic storytime. He shares that his children are more interested in spontaneous stories told on the fly and that his partner is much better at the form than he is.

Respect for creators

Jeffers is one of numerous children's book creators who offered joy, comfort and pleasure to many during the initial months of the pandemic through his online storytelling session (#StayAtHomeStoryTime). Creators like Mac Barnett, Carson Ellis, and #ThodaReadingCorona sessions in India have been viewed by thousands



The recently-concluded digital Couture Week has thrown up many relevant questions that India's fashion designers need to answer for themselves

The designer is dead

(long live the art director)

VARUN RANA

If there is one thing that the first-ever fully 'digital' Couture Week in India has proven, it is that the role of the designer has evolved beyond the traditional expertise of many fashion designers. Their collections' 'narratives' — already subservient to the demands of social media — have become more important than the products they seek to sell.

This feature, readers, will not give you the details of which designer showed which silhouettes, championed which crafts or embellishments, or how the models looked draped in yards of luxurious textiles. You only need to search Instagram and see that for yourselves. I simply wish to draw aside the veil between designer and consumer, created by the many demands of a digital showcase.

Look beyond the story
Haute Couture as the French have called it for centuries, has over the years taken on its own definition in India. This is a country many consider the last true bastion of handmade, handcrafted luxury in the world. Our handwoven textiles and painstakingly-crafted embellishments that take hundreds of hours by a single artisan, now seem to hold no inherent value on their own. All thanks to social media's drive of democratisation and its constant craving for stories and narratives.

Now, each designer must vie for the

fickle attention of a large group of viewers who may not even be able to afford their creativity and artisanship. The irony. Without a narrative attached, real customers cannot see themselves in these clothes. Think of Gaurav Gupta's excellently-inclusive choice of models; Rahul Mishra taking us to a renovated Tijara Palace, while few of us have had the privilege to travel in the past six months; Kunal Rawal using the iconic Asiatic Library in Mumbai; and Anju Modi evoking ancient Indian beauty rituals. Without these identifiers, the customer is lost. How sad.

If this is the reality today, I congratulate Falguni and Shane Peacock for creating the most real and relevant digital experience among them all. They have their finger firmly on the pulse. Celebrity stylist Shaleena Nathani sashayed on to a fashion show set and fiddled with a model's gown before sending her and others off on to the catwalk.

As the video progressed, stylist Tanya Ghavri was spotted correcting a flawlessly worn dress, followed by Bollywood's favourite stylists Aastha Sharma and Mohit Rai. This is Falguni and Shane Peacock talking directly to their fans. After all, which woman able to

afford haute couture doesn't dream of a Mohit Rai or a Shaleena Nathani fussing over her?

Even with the return of JJ Valaya to the couture showcase — a designer who had his own website way before anyone even conceived of the idea in the early 2000s — the fact that he was the only one to talk directly to his viewers was eventually subsumed. By? The simple regularity of a beautifully-produced fashion show video. But no use crying over split silk.

The reality is that today, few designers in India are able to synchronise their digital experience with e-commerce backup. And the very nature of e-commerce is antithetical to the tactile and sensory experience of Indian haute couture, of which consultations with the designer are an important part.

After viewing all 10 showcases over five evenings, I am left with a few simple questions: is every designer good at 'storytelling' in the way that Instagram demands they be? Should they be?

As I end this feature with these queries, I would like to assure my peers in the fashion industry that I have not written it to mock their efforts. We are all learning as we enter a new digital age. I am here simply as a questioner, and I know very well that there are no right answers.

The author is a fashion commentator and Communications Director at the House of Angadi

Read the full story on weekend.thehindu.com

ELSEWHERE



Putin for pact with U.S. on poll non-interference

MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed on Friday a pact with the U.S. against interfering in each other's elections, just weeks before the U.S. polls. He called for the two nations to "exchange guarantees of non-interference in each others' domestic affairs, including polls," and particularly noted the use of "information and communication technologies". AFP

13 migrants drown in shipwreck off Libya

CAIRO

At least 13 migrants trying to reach Europe drowned in the Mediterranean Sea when their small dinghy capsized off the coast of Libya, the United Nations reported on Friday. Libyan fishermen spotted the sinking boat late on Thursday, said the International Organization for Migration. They managed to pull 22 people from the water, including those from Egypt, Bangladesh, Syria, Somalia and Ghana. AP

Sanders warns about transfer of power

The Senator calls President Trump a 'pathological liar' with 'strong authoritarian tendencies'

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

Former contender for the Democratic nomination, Senator Bernie Sanders, joined a host of voices that expressed alarm at U.S. President Donald Trump's refusal to commit to peaceful transfer of power if he loses the November election. Mr. Sanders said Mr. Trump is to be taken seriously.

"What I am going to talk about is something that, in my wildest dreams, I never thought I would be discussing. And that is the need to make certain that the President of the United States, if he loses this election, will abide by the will of the voters and leave office peacefully," Mr. Sanders said during his speech, 'Saving American Democracy', at George Washington University, in Washington DC.

'Democracy must win'
Mr. Sanders's remarks came a day after Mr. Trump, when questioned at a press briefing, said he would not commit to the peaceful transfer of power. Again, on Thursday evening after Mr. San-



Tough road ahead: A file photo of Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden at a Democratic presidential debate in Charleston. AP

ders's speech, Mr. Trump called into question the integrity of the November elections while talking to reporters at the White House.

"I think it is terribly important that we actually listen to, and take seriously, what Donald Trump is saying," Mr. Sanders said. "This is not just an election between Donald Trump and Joe Biden. This is an election between Donald Trump and democracy – and democracy must win," said Mr. Sanders, who is an independent Senator from Vermont and was the candidate of choice for progressives.

mocracy to stay in power.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly floated conspiracy theories around vote by mail, claiming that Democrats are using it to commit voter fraud.

Mr. Sanders cited several pieces of research – including from Republican and conservative sources – to demonstrate the very low incidence of voter fraud in the U.S.

Mr. Sanders listed a series of ways in which Mr. Trump, according to him, was trying to undermine the legitimacy of the elections.

"Trump has also urged his supporters to become, quote, 'poll watchers', but what he is really saying is he wants his supporters, some of whom are members of armed militias, to intimidate voters," Mr. Sanders said.

He called Mr. Trump a "pathological liar" with "strong authoritarian tendencies" and someone who is willing to undermine de-

claim victory.

"Furthermore, in States where Republicans control the legislature, it is possible that the election results will be ignored because of false accusations of voter fraud," Mr. Sanders said, echoing another concern of Democrats.

One of the ways to counter these possibilities, Mr. Sanders said, was voter turnout (higher turnouts have traditionally benefited Democrats).

Mr. Sanders listed a series of ways in which Mr. Trump, according to him, was trying to undermine the legitimacy of the elections.

"As someone who is strongly supporting Joe Biden, let's be clear: A landslide victory for Biden will make it virtually impossible for Trump to deny the results and is our best means for defending democracy," he said.

Senate Majority (Republican) Leader Mitch McConnell on Thursday emphasised there would be an orderly transition. "The winner of the November 3 election will be inaugurated on January 20th. There will be an orderly transition just as there has been every four years since 1792," he wrote on Twitter.

U.S. proposes changes to student, media visas

Time periods for 3 categories fixed

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

In line with the Trump administration's progressive restrictions on visas, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has proposed a rule limiting the duration of initial admission for foreign media (I visas), students (F visas) and exchange visitors (J visas).

The significant growth of the F, J and I visa programmes has necessitated this proposed update to ensure the integrity of the U.S. immigration system, but this rule does not propose changes to the underlying requirements to qualify for these non-immigrant classifications," a DHS press statement said.

As per the proposal published in the federal register, the rule would help limit fraud in the F-1 programme.

For the media visas, under the proposal foreign journalists would have to apply again at the end of their limited duration of stay for an extension "at which point immigration officers can review their activities in the United States," the proposed rule says. President Donald Trump has had a strained relationship with the media and the current rule could theoretically place journalists who have written critical pieces on the president or administration in a vulnerable position.

There are some exceptions to the four-year rule. The duration of stay will be two years for those from countries with visa-overstay rates greater than 10% and those non-U.S. citizens either born in or holding citizenship of a country on the State Sponsors of Terrorism list. F and J students already admitted will have their "duration of status" (i.e., "D/S")

is stamped at the port of entry in travel documents) terms converted to a term ending with the end of their

programme (not to exceed four years) if and when the proposed DHS rule becomes final.

Most countries with the highest over-stay rates are from Africa and none are in Europe (U.S. fiscal year 2018), according to a analysis done by immigration firm Boundless.

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Foreign media visa holders will initially be admitted for a period not exceeding 240 days with "an opportunity to extend their stay for a maximum of 240 days based on the length of relevant activities," the statement said.

The proposed rule is open to the public for comments until October 26, 2020.

China aims to make 1 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses a year

Govt. extends support to set up factories for ramping up production

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING

A Chinese health official said on Friday that the country's annual production capacity for novel coronavirus vaccines will top 1 billion doses next year, following an aggressive government support programme for construction of new factories.

Capacity is expected to

reach 610 million doses by the end of this year, Zheng Zhongwei from the National Health Commission said.

"Next year, our annual capacity will reach more than 1 billion doses," he said at a news conference.

American pharmaceutical giants Pfizer and Moderna aim to produce a billion doses each in 2021 as well.



A worker inspecting SARS-CoV-2 vaccine at SinoVac factory in Beijing. AP

Mr. Zheng said distribution of the vaccines would prioritize groups such as

medical workers, border personnel and the elderly before they are made available to the general public.

China has promoted the construction of vaccine testing facilities and manufacturing plants, and assigned independent monitors for their assembly.

11 candidates

China has 11 vaccine candidates in human trials, with four of them currently in the third and final trials.

One of those is CoronaVac, made by the private company SinoVac, which is already rolling off the factory floor at a bio-secure facility outside Beijing.

WHO sets goal

Their target is to make 2 billion doses to inoculate 20% of the world's population.

The Director-General of WHO, Tedros Ghebreyesus, said earlier this month that "the goal must be to vaccinate some people in all countries, rather than all the people in some countries."

setting up the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility, or COVAX, under the World Health Organization.

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EU leader hits out at U.K. on post-Brexit plan

Development partnership, regional security, COVID-19 response, Tamil question are also on the table

Mahinda to discuss fishermen's concerns with Modi

Development partnership, regional security, COVID-19 response, Tamil question are also on the table

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

them fearing the Indian fishermen might be carriers of the coronavirus," he added.

While Sri Lankan Navy arrested 210 Indian fishermen in 2019, only 34 have been arrested so far this year. Some fisher leaders, including from Point Pedro, point to a "persisting problem" of Indian trawlers, but others note that the number of trespassing bottom-trawlers has come down considerably, especially after Sri Lanka introduced tougher laws and stiff fines for foreign vessels.

"There are also some local fishermen who engage in banned fishing practices. PM Rajapaksa has promised to look into that as well," said Annaligam Annarasa, leader of the federation of fisher cooperative societies in Jaffna, after Friday's meeting.

Complaints of Indian fish-

ed to be discussed.

Sri Lanka's Tamil leadership has expressed hope that the leaders will discuss the pending Tamil question, especially in the wake of some in government calling for abolition of provincial councils, the only structural guarantee so far of a measure of power devolution to the provinces.

Closest neighbours

R. Sampanthan, the Trincomalee MP and leader of the Tamil National Alliance, said the TNA very wished that India-Sri Lanka relations are further strengthened and that they "continue to be closest neighbours of each other, in every possible way".

"We are historically, culturally, religiously linguistically very closely associated

with each other. This relationship, in my view, will be greatly strengthened by a negotiated peaceful resolution of the national issue in Sri Lanka relating to the Tamil question," he told *The Hindu* on the eve of the leaders' meeting.

"We fully support PM Modi's message conveyed to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa that the Tamil question must be addressed on that basis within the framework of a united, undivided, indivisible Sri Lanka. And we do sincerely hope that the strengthening of relations between India and Sri Lanka will contribute towards the achievement of that objective and will further strengthen our friendship," he said.

All this in the name of partisan interests," he said.

Terror probe opened after two stabbed in Paris

Attack near old office of Charlie Hebdo

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS

French terrorism authorities are investigating a double-stabbing outside the former Paris offices of a satirical newspaper where a dozen people were killed in 2015, and two suspects have been arrested in Friday's violence, authorities said.

France's counterterrorism prosecutor said authorities suspect a terrorist motive because of the place and timing of the stabbings in front of the building, where *Charlie Hebdo* was based until the Islamic extremist attack on its cartoonists and at a time when suspects in the 2015 attack are on trial across town.

Prosecutor Jean-Francois Ricard said that the chief suspect in Friday's stab-



Security forces gathering near the old office of Charlie Hebdo in Paris. AP

bings was arrested, along with another person. Mr. Ricard said the assailant did not know the people who were stabbed, two workers in a documentary production company who had stepped outside for a smoke break.

Our fisher leaders from the Northern Province raised the issue of Indian trawlers poaching in our waters, and using banned fishing practices, often damaging the boats and fishing nets of Sri Lankan fishermen. PM Rajapaksa said he will take up the matter with PM Modi," Sri Lanka's Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda told *The Hindu* on Friday. "There is a fear that our Navy may not be arresting

them fearing the Indian fishermen might be carriers of the coronavirus," he added.

While Sri Lankan Navy arrested 210 Indian fishermen in 2019, only 34 have been arrested so far this year. Some fisher leaders, including from Point Pedro, point to a "persisting problem" of Indian trawlers, but others note that the number of trespassing bottom-trawlers has come down considerably, especially after Sri Lanka introduced tougher laws and stiff fines for foreign vessels.

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Complaints of Indian fish-

ermen, most originating from Tamil Nadu, will likely be one of the issues taken up by the two leaders in India's first virtual summit in the neighbourhood.

Bilateral cooperation, including development partnership, regional security, COVID-19 response and the political situation are expect-

ed to be discussed.

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Facebook critics start rival, independent 'oversight board'

The group says FB panel is too limited in its scope, autonomy

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Facebook's own panel is intended to rule on thorny content issues, such as when Facebook or Instagram posts constitute hate speech.

It will be empowered to make binding rulings on whether posts or ads violate the company's rules. Any other findings it makes will be considered "guidance" by Facebook.

Its 20 members, which will eventually grow to 40, include a former Prime Minister of Denmark, the former editor-in-chief of the *Guardian* newspaper, along with legal scholars, human rights experts and journalists, such as Tawakkol Karman, a Nobel Laureate and journalist from Yemen, and Julie Owono, a digital rights advocate.

ing for "proper independent scrutiny" of the company.

The group says it was started to sound the alarm about Facebook's role in the coming election.

The announcement on Friday comes a day after Facebook said its own, quasi-independent oversight board, which has faced numerous delays since the company announced its creation in 2018, will launch in October.

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No decision on Assange extradition before U.S. poll

He faces espionage charges there

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON</

MARKET WATCH

	25-09-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	37388	2.28
US Dollar	73.61	0.37
Gold	50824	0.80
Brent oil	41.72	0.16

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	326.15	12.40
Asian Paints	1925.60	7.25
Axis Bank	415.05	12.60
Bajaj Auto	2957.40	25.55
Bajaj Finserv	5803.30	377.60
Bajaj Finance	3138.95	110.05
Bharti Airtel	439.65	20.35
BPCL	375.75	-1.50
Britannia Ind	3686.40	73.65
Cipla	770.10	36.65
Coal India	117.10	1.40
Divis Lab	3060.75	40.30
Dr Reddys Lab	5112.20	84.80
Eicher Motors	2117.50	83.05
GAIL (India)	85.20	2.20
Grasim Ind	708.15	28.45
HCL Tech.	827.70	39.40
HDFC	1652.00	15.15
HDFC Bank	1044.00	13.60
HDFC Life	577.50	-0.15
Hero MotoCorp	3002.00	83.70
Hindalco	162.05	2.95
Hind Unilever	2079.05	18.15
ICICI Bank	348.65	12.95
IndusInd Bank	514.85	24.60
Infosys	1011.45	36.05
Indian Oil Corp	74.10	2.10
ITC	170.75	4.20
JSW Steel	268.35	9.80
Kotak Bank	1253.05	6.95
L&T	889.25	38.55
M&M	592.30	17.20
Maruti Suzuki	6497.70	200.00
Nestle India Ltd.	15736.80	477.95
NTPC	84.80	2.15
ONGC	68.90	2.25
PowerGrid Corp	160.75	1.40
Reliance Ind	2201.70	20.50
SB Life	797.05	-7.35
State Bank	182.20	5.85
Shree Cement	19008.45	666.50
Sun Pharma	489.65	3.85
Tata Motors	127.25	4.45
Tata Steel	352.10	8.20
TCS	2422.30	90.05
Tech Mahindra	772.35	20.50
Titan	1109.35	13.20
UltraTech Cement	3858.50	80.70
UPL	504.65	-0.50
Wipro	313.90	9.20

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.41	73.73
Euro	85.54	85.93
British Pound	93.66	94.07
Japanese Yen (100)	69.64	69.95
Chinese Yuan	10.77	10.81
Swiss Franc	79.19	79.54
Singapore Dollar	53.40	53.64
Canadian Dollar	54.95	55.21
Malaysian Ringgit	17.61	17.69
Australian Dollar	51.90	52.13

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Small towns seeing more furniture buyers: Flipkart
BENGALURU
 E-commerce marketplace Flipkart on Friday said an increasing number of consumers from tier-2 and tier-3 markets are purchasing furniture online since the lockdown began. Flipkart has more than doubled its seller count in the furniture category since last year to more than 10,000 and increased its selection to over 3.5 lakhs products to meet consumers' evolving demand, the firm said in a statement.

Hetero unveils Favipiravir 800/200 for COVID-19

HYDERABAD
 Generic pharma firm Hetero has introduced Favipiravir 800/200, a pack containing 16 tablets of Favipiravir 800 mg and two tablets of Favipiravir 200 mg, for treatment of mild-to-moderate symptomatic COVID-19 patients. This follows DCGI approving higher strength of Favipiravir (800 mg) and is aimed at enhancing patients' adherence to the treatment regimen. The pack is priced at ₹2,640, the company said.

DRL to sell copy of Precedex sedative in U.S.

HYDERABAD
 Dr. Reddy's has unveiled Dexmedetomidine Hydrochloride in 0.9% Sodium Chloride Injection, a therapeutic equivalent generic version of Hospira's Precedex (dexmedetomidine hydrochloride) in 0.9% Sodium Chloride Injection, in the U.S. Used for sedation of patients, the Precedex market had U.S. sales of about \$210 million MAT for the 12 months ended June 2020, DRL said.

AliveCor releases personal ECG device

MUMBAI
 AliveCor, which is into personal electrocardiogram technology, has introduced a clinically-validated personal ECG device – KardiaMobile 6L in India. This is the only personal ECG device that can detect the 3 most common arrhythmias or irregular heartbeats, according to the company. Patients can record a medical-grade ECG in 30 seconds from their smartphone. The device is priced at ₹14,000.

IRDAI lists LIC, GIC, New India as systemically important

As domestic SIIIs, companies will be subject to enhanced regulatory supervision

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has identified the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC) and The New India Assurance Co. as Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIIs) for 2020-21.

Given the nature of operations and their systemic importance, the regulator has asked the three public sector insurers to raise the level of corporate governance, identify all relevant risks and promote a sound risk management culture. As D-SIIIs, they will also be subjected to enhanced regulatory supervi-



sion, IRDAI said in a state-

Too big to fail
 D-SIIIs refer to insurers of such size, market importance and domestic and global interconnectedness

whose distress or failure would cause a significant dislocation in the domestic financial system. Their continued functioning is critical for the uninterrupted availability of insurance services to the national economy.

Rana Kapoor fined ₹1 cr. for non-disclosure

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

Markets regulator SEBI on Friday imposed a penalty of ₹1 crore on Rana Kapoor, former MD and CEO of Yes Bank, for not making disclosures about a transaction with Morgan Credit.

Not disclosing the transaction to Yes Bank's board of directors, Mr. Kapoor had 'created an opaque layer' between him and stakeholders, SEBI said in an order. Morgan Credits, a promoter entity of Yes Bank, had raised ₹950 crore from Reliance MF, via unlisted Zero Coupon NCDs in April 2018.

Sensex gains 2.3% on stimulus package hopes

Infotech and financial stocks surge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Expectations of a stimulus package from the government ahead of the festive season propped up market sentiment as benchmark indices gained more than 2% on Friday after plunging almost 3% a day earlier.

The S&P BSE Sensex gained 83 points, or 2.28%, to 37,388.66. Top gainers included Bajaj Finserv, HCL Technology, Bharti Airtel, IndusInd Bank and L&T. All the stocks in the 30-share Sensex reported gains.

The NSE Nifty 50 also rose 245 points, or 2.26%, to 11,050.

"The equity markets recovered quite a bit of lost ground from the previous day," Dr. Joseph Thomas, head of research, Emkay

Wealth Management, said. "Expectations of a further fiscal package from the government ahead of the festive season is a factor that may endow the markets with some strength."

Stating that rising volatility was a sign of caution, Niral Shah, senior research analyst, Samco Securities, said, "The market is now trying to impersonate the grim ground-level realities by reacting sharply to any negative global clues."

"Markets are expected to remain under pressure in anticipation of immense liquidity being sucked out as long as the IPO party is still on... Investors should be wary of subscribing to IPOs and should look at some from a listing gains perspective," Ms. Shah said.

Faceless I-T comes into operation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

The government on Friday issued a notification operationalising 'Faceless Income Tax Appeals' system which seeks to honour honest taxpayers of the country and promote transparency in tax collection.

Under faceless appeals, all Income Tax appeals will be finalised in a faceless manner under the faceless ecosystem with the exception of appeals relating to serious frauds, major tax evasion, sensitive and search matters, international tax and Black Money Act, the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

In recent years, the Department has carried out several reforms for simplification of the tax process and ease of compliance.

INTERVIEW | D.J. PANDIAN

'One-third of funding by AIIB has gone to India'

Decisions are based on merit, not political events: Pandian

ANANTH KRISHNAN

Out of the \$20 billion in loans issued by the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), about \$6 billion has gone to India, the bank's second-largest shareholder after China, says D.J. Pandian, who, as the lender's vice-president of Investment Operations, oversees all sovereign and non-sovereign lending in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Before moving to Beijing, Mr. Pandian spent 35 years in the Indian Administrative Service. Excerpts:

Size matters: Premium underwritten and asset size are among parameters on which the SIIIs are identified. ■FILE PHOTO

How has the AIIB been involved in infrastructure projects in India so far?

■ As far as India is concerned, the pipeline of projects is very strong. We have supported around \$5 billion worth of projects in India.

The bank will complete 5 years in January 2021, and we may add another \$1 billion in India by then, and maybe it will be \$6 billion in total. The bank has just started building up the team and policies. Out of the total \$20 billion of projects approved, \$6 billion has come to India, which is almost one-third.

We are supporting unique projects, including the Chennai Metro Corridors 4 and 5 and Chennai Peripheral Ring Road, which are at an advanced stage, and the Grand Anicut scheme to modernise the canal system in the Cauvery delta region which we are preparing with the government of Tamil Nadu, which will help save almost 20% of water leakages.

The Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System is a

high-speed rail that will reduce travel time from 3-4 hours to within one hour. This is being co-financed with the Asian Development Bank.

■ This is a lesson for us, that we need to educate people about what the bank really is, and build our brand. We are very, very, apolitical. We are a multilateral bank of 103 members, of which 77 are active members. All of Europe are Bank members. Canada, Australia, New Zealand are also members.

The Vice President of Investment Operations is an Indian!

How has COVID-19 changed the projects for AIIB?

■ We have already been able to build up a pipeline of projects in Asia. Those conventional infrastructure projects that were already at an advanced stage, we were able to bring it to the Board for approval.

As soon as the COVID response facility was set up, when it began as an emergency response led by the World Bank, we have also committed almost \$13 billion, of which so far we have approved \$6 billion.

This is for both health preparedness and to provide liquidity to the governments so that they can buy equipment, particularly medical equipment, and enlarge hospital facilities to take care of their immediate requirement.

Initially, the idea of social infrastructure was not the focus of the bank, but we cannot avoid this any more; we are going to do that but we need to build up expertise within the bank to do health care and other social infrastructure projects.

CFO optimism falls to record low amid COVID-19, shows survey

Rise in infections, lockdown spillovers dampen confidence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

The optimism level among chief financial officers about India's financial and macroeconomic conditions during the third quarter this year has witnessed a decline of 15% and touched a record low level, according to a survey.

Dun & Bradstreet Composite CFO Optimism Index showed a 15% drop q-o-q to 74.2 during Q3 2020

pledged with subdued consumer demand have constrained the pace of economic activity, Mr. Singh said.

As per the survey, the macroeconomic scenario sub-index value at 87.5 is the lowest in nearly seven years, as the index was at its lowest value of 77.5 during Q4 2013.

The financial performance sub-index is at its lowest value of 67.1 during the third quarter this year.

Moreover, the psychological impact of COVID-19 is having a bearing on the confidence levels of both businesses and consumers alike," he added.

Further, the lack of space for demand stimulus cou-

Equitas SFB cuts IPO size to ₹280 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Chennai-based Equitas Small Finance Bank (SFB) has almost halved the size of its initial public offering (IPO) to ₹280 crore citing the current market conditions.

Shaw, Rabada help an inspired Delhi Capitals crush Super Kings

The opener's 64 and the pacer's three for 26 flatten Dhoni's men as Shreyas' side registers its second consecutive win; Chennai suffers its second loss

IPL 2020

SPORTS BUREAU

A commanding batting display led by Prithvi Shaw (64), backed up by disciplined bowling efforts from Kagiso Rabada (three for 26) and Axar Patel (4-0-18-1), powered Delhi Capitals to a 44-run win over Chennai Super Kings at the Dubai International Stadium on Friday.

Chasing 176, the Super Kings produced yet another sub-par batting performance and never seemed in the hunt at any point.

Openers M. Vijay and Shane Watson struggled and fell cheaply as Super Kings scored just 35 in the PowerPlay.

Faf du Plessis and Ruturaj Gaikwad were sluggish too before the latter was run out. From overs 6-10, the Chennai side managed only 12 runs.

With left-arm spinner Axar and leg-spinner Amit Mishra bowling, it was surprising to see the left-handers – Sam Curran and Ravindra Jadeja – sitting in the dugout.

Perfect balance

Earlier, having been put in, Shaw mixed caution with aggression to come up with a knock of 64 (43b, 9x4, 1x6) as Capitals posted 175.

Shikhar Dhawan (35, 27b,



Going ballistic: Prithvi Shaw provided a blazing start to the Delhi Capitals innings before Rishabh Pant improvised and innovated towards the end. ■ BCCI/IPL



SCOREBOARD

DELHI CAPITALS

Prithvi Shaw st. Dhoni b Chawla 64 (43b, 9x4, 1x6), Shikhar Dhawan lbv b Chawla 35 (27b, 3x4, 1x6), Rishabh Pant (not out) 37 (25b, 5x4), Shreyas Iyer c Dhoni b Curran 26 (22b, 1x4), Marcus Stoinis (not out) 5 (3b, 1x4); Extras (lb-5, w-3): 8; Total (for three wkt. in 20 overs): 175.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-94 (Dhawan, 10.4 overs), 2-103 (Shaw, 12.2), 3-161 (Shreyas, 18.6).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING

Chahar 4-0-38-0, Curran 4-0-27-1, Hazlewood 4-0-28-0, Chawla 4-0-33-2, Jadeja 4-0-44-0.

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

M. Vijay c Rabada b Nortje 10 (75b, 1x4), Shane Watson c Hetmyer b Axar 14 (16b, 1x4, 1x6), Faf du Plessis c Pant b Rabada 43 (35b, 4x4), Ruturaj Gaikwad run out 5 (10b), Kedar Jadhav lbw b Nortje 26 (21b, 3x4), M.S. Dhoni c Pant b Rabada 15 (72b, 2x4), Ravindra Jadeja c Mishra b Rabada 12 (9b, 1x4), Sam Curran (not out) 1 (2b); Extras (lb-1, w-4): 5; Total (for seven wkt. in

20 overs): 131.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-23 (Watson, 4.2 overs), 2-34 (Vijay, 5.6), 3-44 (Ruturaj, 9.1), 4-98 (Jadav, 15.4), 5-113 (du Plessis), 6-130 (Dhoni, 19.3), 7-131 (Jadeja, 19.6).

DELHI CAPITALS BOWLING

Rabada 4-0-26-3, Axar 4-0-18-1, Nortje 4-0-21-2, Avash 4-0-42-0, Mishra 4-0-23-0.

Toss: CSK.

Man-of-the-Match: Prithvi Shaw.

DC won by 44 runs.

Innings scan

DC	C SK
36	Dots 46
19	Fours 12
2	Sixes 1
36/0	PP 34/2
8.75	RR 6.55

Next assignment

DC: Sept. 29 vs. SRH

Abu Dhabi, 7.30 p.m. IST

CSK: Oct. 2 vs. SRH

Dubai, 7.30 p.m. IST

from overs 11 to 15.

However, Hazlewood, who had gone for only seven in his first two overs, faced the fury of Pant's blade, conceding 21 off his last two as Capitals established a firm grip over the proceedings. It didn't loosen till the end.

trying to play a reverse sweep.

Shaw was stumped after he inside-edged on to his pads and the ball rolled back to Dhoni.

However, Chawla struck twice in the next two overs, removing the openers. Dhawan was trapped leg-before

PowerPlay, the two batsmen amassed 52 runs to take Capitals to 88 at the halfway stage and set the stage for a big finish.

Shaw then swept the left-arm spinner on the leg-side for a maximum.

In the four overs after the

first two overs.

At the other end, Dhawan

greeted Ravindra Jadeja with a six and a four off his opening over.

Jadeja then swept the left-

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Bottas sets the pace in practice

Mercedes teammate Hamilton ends the day second overall



Driving to the gallery: Valtteri Bottas speeds around the Sochi circuit, with a significant number of fans catching the action, on Friday. ■ GETTY IMAGES

RUSSIAN GP

REUTERS
SOCHI

Valtteri Bottas set the practice pace on Friday for a Russian Grand Prix that could see Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton equal Michael Schumacher's all-time record of 91 Formula One wins.

Bottas was quickest in both sessions, with Hamilton ending the day second overall – 0.267 slower – after tyre problems in the morning left him 19th.

It was the sixth race weekend in a row that Bottas, who has so far won only the opening race in Austria in July, had topped the first session timesheets, and Mercedes again looked the team to beat.

Australian Daniel Ricciardo signalled the emerging threat from Renault by posting the second fastest time in the morning and third in the afternoon when McLaren's Carlos Sainz and Lando Norris were fourth and fifth.

Sainz had hit the barriers

in an interrupted first session, damaging his car's rear wing.

Big crowd expected

The Russian GP will be the first race of a COVID-hit season with a significant number of fans present and organisers, who had aimed for a 30,000-strong crowd, said all tickets were sold out.

Mercedes has won every race at the Sochi circuit since the first in 2014, with six-time World champion Hamilton triumphant on four

occasions. Red Bull's Max Verstappen was third fastest in the morning, when Canadian Nicholas Latifi crashed and brought out red flags, but dropped to seventh after lunch.

Mexican Sergio Perez was fourth and sixth fastest in the sessions for Racing Point.

Sebastian Vettel was the highest Ferrari driver in ninth in the morning but teammate Charles Leclerc ended the second session eighth.

TV PICKS

Russian Grand Prix: Qualifying, SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 5.20 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 5 p.m., 7.30 p.m., 10 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)
Serie A: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m., 9.30 p.m. & 12.15 a.m. (Sunday)
NBA: Sony Six (SD & HD), 6 a.m.
Hamburg Open: Sony Six (SD & HD), 5 p.m.
MotoGP: Eurosport (SD & HD), 4 p.m.
PGA Tour: Eurosport (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)
Australia vs New Zealand: 1st women's T20I, Sony Six (SD & HD)

F1 drivers write to race director after Mugello chaos

We were kind of lucky that we didn't end up with someone being hurt: Grosjean

REUTERS
MUGELLO (ITALY)

Formula One drivers have written to race director Michael Masi seeking to discuss possible improvements to safety car re-starts after chaos at this month's Tuscan Grand Prix.

That race at Italy's Mugello circuit was twice halted, once because of a four-car crash at a restart following a safety car period.

Grand Prix Drivers' Association (GPDA) director Romain Grosjean told reporters at the Russian Grand Prix he had discussed the matter with fellow director Sebastian Vettel and chairman Alexander Wurz.

"We wrote a letter to Michael Masi and tried to find out what we can do better," said the Haas driver.

Lot of small things

"It was a lot of small things that led to a big crash at the end, but maybe a few tweaks in some of the rules could possibly help. And that's what we want to discuss, to avoid such a scary moment.

"I guess we were kind of



Not in control: Haas driver Romain Grosjean, top left, and Red Bull's Max Verstappen go off the track during the Tuscan GP on Sept. 13. ■ AP

lucky with everything, that we didn't end up with someone being hurt, because it was quite a high-speed crash."

The matter is set to be discussed also at Friday's drivers' briefing.

Grosjean's teammate Kevin Magnussen said it would be good to look at the restarts from a safety perspective and McLaren's Spaniard Carlos Sainz, another involved, agreed.

"I definitely think we need to have a proper look all together, have all our thoughts, brainstorm a bit of how can we try and avoid it

next time," said Sainz.

"I personally want to wait for the drivers briefing to hear everyone's opinion and to analyse what some drivers have to say..."

Mercedes' six times Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton said at the time that he felt the safety car lights were being turned off later and later.

In Mugello, race leader Valtteri Bottas backed the pack up, delaying his getaway for maximum effect but with backmarkers accelerating too soon in the mistaken belief the race had re-started.

Messi has another go at Barca hierarchy

Lashes out at the club over Luis Suarez's departure

FOOTBALL

REUTERS
BARCELONA

Lionel Messi has launched his latest attack on Barcelona's hierarchy by criticising the way the club treated strike partner Luis Suarez, who left for LaLiga rival Atletico Madrid this week.

Captain Messi, who threatened to leave Barca last month and recently hit out at president Josep Maria Bartomeu's leadership of the club, said the Uruguayan, the club's third-highest scorer of all time, was harshly treated by Barca.

No longer wanted

New coach Ronald Koeman called Suarez several days after getting the job to inform the striker, who had one year left on his contract, that he was no longer wanted.

Bartomeu had left Suarez off a list of players he considered not for sale in the aftermath of the 8-2 defeat to Bayern Munich in the Champions League in August.

"You deserved a farewell



Raw deal: Lionel Messi says that Luis Suarez did not deserve Barcelona throwing him out like it did. ■ AP

befitting who you are: one of the most important players in the history of the club, achieving great things for the team and on an individual level," Messi wrote on his official Instagram account on Friday.

"You did not deserve for them to throw you out like they did.

"But the truth is that at this stage nothing surprises me anymore."

Suarez had paid tribute to Messi in his farewell news conference on Thursday, recalling that everyone had

told him the Argentinian was difficult to get on with, but declaring they had become best friends as well as prolific strike partners.

"It will be strange to see you in another shirt and even stranger to come up against you on the pitch," Messi added.

"I had already begun to imagine it but today I went into the dressing room and it truly dawned on me."

"It's going to be so difficult not to continue to share every day with you both on the pitch and away from it."

Postponed CL games can be played in January: UEFA

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GENEVA

UEFA will let Champions League group-stage games be played deep into January to complete any fixtures postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

UEFA ratified emergency competition rules on Thursday that allow for seven extra weeks to make up games beyond the scheduled sixth and final round of fixtures on December 9.

Any game which cannot be played by January 28 will be forfeited as a 3-0 loss by the team responsible for the failure. The same rules apply to the Europa League.

Several clubs whose players tested positive for COVID-19 and had squads isolated in quarantine have forfeited games in recent weeks during the tightly scheduled qualifying rounds when there was little chance to reschedule

Nadal eyes absent Federer's record, 15 years after first Roland Garros crown

The 'King of Clay' is one title away from matching the Swiss' all-time Slam record

FRENCH OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

The undisputed king of clay, Rafael Nadal is one title away from matching Roger Federer's all-time Grand Slam record (20), but 15 years on from the Spaniard's first French Open triumph he appears more vulnerable than ever at his beloved Roland Garros.

Nadal owns an astounding 93-2 record in Paris dating back to his debut in 2005, when, still a teenager, he became the first player to win the French Open on his first attempt since Mats Wilander in 1982.

Fast-forward to the present day, and his 19 Grand Slam crowns – a record 12 of which have come at Roland Garros – coupled with Federer's absence after knee surgery leave him on the brink of history at a venue where he has won each of the past three years.

Various factors

Yet a multitude of factors, mostly beyond his control, have conspired against Nadal and offered hope to his chief rivals – Novak Djokovic and recent US Open winner Dominic Thiem.

Boris Becker suggested the rescheduled tournament – pushed back from its traditional spring billing due to the coronavirus pandemic – will be tougher than usual for Nadal.

Djokovic suggested the sense this is the least intimidating version of Nadal at the French Open in recent times, Djokovic remains adamant the 34-year-old is again the favourite to lift the Coupe des Mousquetaires.

"The record that he has there, the history of his results, you just can't put anybody in front of him," said Djokovic, himself vying to add to his lone 2016 triumph at Roland Garros.

"But, you know, definitely



Happy hunting ground: Rafael Nadal has won a record 12 Grand Slam crowns at Roland Garros, with an astounding 93-2 win-loss ratio on the Parisian clay. ■ AFP

Nadal will head into the French Open without a clay title under his belt for the first time, having lost in straight sets to Diego Schwartzman in the quarterfinals at Rome – his first tournament in six months.

Djokovic's take

Despite the sense this is the least intimidating version of Nadal at the French Open in recent times, Djokovic remains adamant the 34-year-old is again the favourite to lift the Coupe des Mousquetaires.

"The record that he has there, the history of his results, you just can't put anybody in front of him," said Djokovic, himself vying to add to his lone 2016 triumph at Roland Garros.

"But, you know, definitely

Diego showed that Nadal is

beatable on clay," added the Serb.

Another championship run for Nadal, not accounting for potential walkovers, would take him to a century

of match wins at the French Open. Only Federer, Serena Williams, Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert have hit triple digits in wins at a single major in the Open era.

Virus slashes crowd size once again

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS

Already repeatedly trimmed, crowd sizes at Roland Garros have been reduced once again – to just 1,000 spectators per day – because of the worsening pandemic here.

The new limit, reduced from 5,000 per day, was

first announced by Prime Minister Jean Castex on Thursday night.

His office confirmed on Friday that the reduction relates only to spectators, not to players, coaches, organisers and others working at Roland Garros, as Castex first said, causing initial confusion.

Langer calls Dean Jones 'the stuff of legend'

Maxwell and Australian media pay tributes to the Australian cricketer



Dean Jones...liked and respected. ■ FILE PHOTO

helped Australia win the 1987 World Cup.

"Jones could be subtle and brutal in the space of a minute. He dictated terms, using the width of his crease and the full 360 degrees to set new standards," wrote Jackson.

"Nobody batted like Deano. Nobody danced down the pitch to take the game on like Deano. Nobody provoked bowlers like Deano. Nobody could talk like Deano," wrote The Australian.

Sydney Morning Herald's Andrew Wu admitted Jones was one of the few athletes that could make him set aside journalistic impartiality and embrace his inner fanboy. "Deano was the player you wanted to be."

of its greatest characters, a totally original maverick talent whose knockabout demeanour concealed a keen cricketing mind bursting with innovative ideas.

"Deano" was remembered as a fierce competitor whose knockout demeure concealed a keen cricketing mind bursting with innovative ideas.

The ABC's Russell Jackson said Jones' daredevil batting

was the stuff of legend.

He was the first time Gurpreet received the award, becoming the second goalkeeper after Subrata Paul in 2009 to be named the AIFF Player of the Year.

Gurpreet also detailed how compensation could be paid to a home team if a group-stage game must be played in a neutral country because of travel restrictions imposed by the away team's home nation.

Broadcasters are due rebates from UEFA totaling €575m for pandemic disruption and fewer knockout games last season.

Gurpreet also detailed how compensation could be paid to a home team if a group-stage game must be played in a neutral country because of travel restrictions imposed by the away team's home nation.

The compensation could amount to 10% of the fixed starting fee that UEFA pays to each club that qualifies – equivalent to €1.45m in the Champions League, and €275,000 in the Europa League.

Gurpreet and Sanju win top AIFF awards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Indian men's team goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu and women's midfielder Sanju were on Friday declared the winners of the All India Football Federation (AIFF) Footballer of the Year awards for the 2019-20 season.

This is the first time Gurpreet received the award, becoming the second goalkeeper after Subrata Paul in 2009 to be named the AIFF Player of the Year.

"There was always a desire to reach this point and this is an award which I have always looked up to," Gurpreet said.

Meanwhile, national women's team midfielder Sanju was named the winner after an excellent season.

Ratanbala Devi won the 2019-20 Emerging Women's Footballer of the Year Award.

Sanju said, "Personally, it's a big milestone for me. This award is proof that all the work we have been putting in over the last few years has indeed paid off."

Mid-fielder Anirudh Thapa was named the Men's Emerging Footballer of the Year.



Gurpreet Singh. ■ REUTERS

Australia reschedules series against Afghanistan, NZ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Cricket Australia on Friday postponed a one-off Test against Afghanistan and an ODI series against New Zealand, citing complexity of scheduling international matches during the global coronavirus pandemic.

Australia was to host Afghanistan later this year at Perth in November while the Kiwis were to arrive in January 2021 but both the assignments have been postponed to the next summer (2021-22).