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INDIAN
EXPRESS
GROUP



THREE IS A CROWD

The effigies of Ravana, Meghnad and Kumbhakarna burn in a deserted field during a low-key Dussehra celebration in Noida on Sunday. *Gajendra Yadav*

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

THE CHINA FACTOR

BY TANVI MADAN
PAGE 8

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



On Amazon's plea, Singapore tribunal stalls Future-RIL deal

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

ISSUING AN emergency order on a plea from global e-commerce giant Amazon, the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) Sunday restrained Future Retail Group and Reliance Industries Limited from proceeding with the Rs 24,713-crore deal signed in August for Future Retail to sell its retail, wholesale, logistics and warehousing units to Reliance Retail and Fashionstyle.

Legal sources told *The Indian*

Express that the order, issued by an emergency arbitrator of SIAC, will be valid for the next 90 days until an official arbitration panel is appointed.

They said that although Indian laws do not recognise the concept of international arbitration and emergency orders issued by such tribunals, the orders are usually "respected" by business houses.

However, Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd, a unit of RIL, said that it intends to "enforce its rights and complete the

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EXPLAINED
E Small win in long battle

IN THE short term, the Singapore tribunal's order could be a setback in Future Group's attempts to cut its debt. For Amazon, the ruling marks a small victory in the longer corporate battle expected ahead.



IDEA EXCHANGE

'Many High Courts too suggest we intervene... We don't censor. We believe in self-regulation'

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR
Minister for Information & Broadcasting, Environment, Forest and Climate Change

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Arriving in Delhi today, Pompeo says share vision for an open Indo-Pacific

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

WITH US Secretary of State Michael R Pompeo and Defence Secretary Mark T Esper landing in New Delhi Monday for the 2+2 ministerial meeting with their Indian counterparts, New Delhi and Washington are working to enhance military interaction and cooperation in defence and security — with an eye on increased Chinese belligerence in the region.

Ahead of their summit with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Defence Minister



Secy of State (left); Def Secy are coming for 2 + 2 meeting



Rajnath Singh on October 27, sources said two Indian officials will be designated for counter-terrorism cooperation with the US. Pompeo and Esper will also call on Prime Minister Narendra

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Hoshiarpur rape, murder: Girl family knew accused almost since his birth

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA
JALANDHAR, OCTOBER 25

THE YOUTH arrested for the rape and murder of a 5-year-old Dalit child in a village in Hoshiarpur district was treated by her and her five elder sisters as a brother. The six, who had no brothers, had been tying *rakhi* on the 20-year-old for years, said her father, 40, a migrant labourer from Bihar's Bhagalpur district.

The youth, Surpreet, and his 80-year-old grandfather Surjit Singh, who are landlords, were arrested after the half-burnt body of the girl, who was to turn 6 on November 28, was found in a building used by his family to keep farm implements and cattle. The two have been booked under POC SO, as well as charges of murder, mitigating evidence and under the SC/ST Act.

The 40-year-old and his

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

J&K is past stage of uneasy calm, says Army Corps Commander

KRISHN KAUSHIK
SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 25

MORE THAN a year after the Central government removed the special status given to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 and split the state into two Union Territories, the region is "past that stage of uneasy calm", according



Lt General B S Raju is in charge of operations along LoC

to Lieutenant General B S Raju, Commander of the Army's Chinara Corps (XV Corps), which

is responsible for operations along the Line of Control and against militancy.

Raju was speaking to reporters a day before the Centre amended the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Raj Act to include a third tier of governance, at the district level, to set the stage for the Panchayat and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Chirag fires another salvo, warns Nitish of jail over 'corruption'

DECISION 2020
B I H A R



RAJPUT DOYEN'S DAUGHTER TRIES OUT A NEW ARENA

JAGADANAND SINGH HAS LALU'S EARS, TEJASHWI'S BACK

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FULL COVERAGE, VISIT WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PATNA, OCTOBER 25

LJP PRESIDENT Chirag Paswan said Sunday that if his party was voted to power, all those involved in "corruption" in the Nitish Kumar government's Saat Nischay scheme, including the Chief Minister himself, would be sent to jail.

Paswan was addressing a public meeting in Dumraon, Buxar. Saat Nischay or Seven Resolutions is a flagship scheme of the JD(U)-BJP government to build rural roads, drains and overall sanitation.

Paswan left the NDA in Bihar just before the elections and has been attacking the JD(U) since, including over the Saat Nischay scheme, while praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi. At the rally on Sunday, he asked the



LJP president Chirag Paswan at the Buxar rally Sunday. *PTI*

crowd, "jin logon ne Saat Nischay mein bhrashtachar kiya hai, unka kya karna chahiye (What should we do with the people involved in corruption in Saat Nischay)?" When a section of the crowd said such people should be sent to jail, the LJP chief said, "To chahiye Chirag Paswan aap logon se waada karta hai, agar LJP ki sarkar aayi, Saat Nischay

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VIJAYADASHAMI SPEECH

India jolted China, must build ties to grow bigger than Beijing: RSS chief

Attacks 'tukde tukde gang', foreign 'agents'; backs new farm legislation

VIVEK DESHPANDE
NAGPUR, OCTOBER 25

INDIA'S RESPONSE to the "encroachments" in Ladakh had "numbed and jolted" China, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Sunday, and called for a strengthening of ties with other neighbours to present a more powerful counter to the Chinese.

In his address to a small gathering of swayamsevak at the RSS's annual Vijayadashami



Bhagwat at Sangh's Dussehra event in Nagpur Sunday. *ANI*



PM paid tributes to Indira Gandhi in *Mann Ki Baat*. *ANI*

event that was shrunk by restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic this year, Bhagwat threw his weight behind the central government on the three contentious farm laws and virtually endorsed Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's theory of an "international conspiracy" against the state government — even though he did not directly mention either the new

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INSIDE



INDIA WANTS END TO LAC TENSION, BUT WON'T CEDE AN INCH: RAJNATH

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No ideology, norms, culture: Uddhav tears into BJP, says amend or abandon the GST

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 25

MAHARASHTRA CHIEF Minister Uddhav Thackeray launched a blistering attack on the BJP and the central government on Sunday, accusing them of having no ideology, norms, or culture.

Thackeray demanded that the government either fix the

problems of the GST regime or revert to the earlier system. He also accused the BJP of playing politics over the Covid-19 pandemic; and said the Shiv Sena's Hindutva was about nationalism, not "clanging bells and utensils".

Thackeray compared the exit of the BJP's old ally, the Shiromani Akali Dal, from the NDA, and its veteran Maharashtra leader

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2016 TRAIN ACCIDENT THAT KILLED 152

Panel finds welding fault but adds caveat: wait for the NIA sabotage probe

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

THE PROBE into the derailment of 14 coaches of the Indore-Patna Express that killed 152 passengers on November 20, 2016 near Kanpur was handed over to the National Investigation Agency

amid suspicions raised by the government attributing the accident to terrorist sabotage. Then Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu had said there was "possible criminal interference by outsiders" and at a UP election rally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, too, called it a "conspiracy".

While the NIA probe is still on — no chargesheet has been filed yet — the final report of the



14 coaches were derailed. *File*

Commissioner of Railway Safety is in. And it identifies a sudden catastrophic mechanical failure as the "probable cause".

The report says that a part of the welding on a coach gave way due to corrosion, fell off, and got "embedded" in the track, creating an obstruction in movement

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EXPERT EXPLAINS

AMITABH MATTOO

From *The Indian Express* panel of specialists, exclusive insight

US PRESIDENTS AND INDIA

The US relationship is the most important of India's bilateral ties. Have Republican Presidents been more pro-India than Democrats?

EXPLAINED
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GOVT & POLITICS

ALL DATES DECIDED... BE IT RAM TEMPLE OR WAR WITH PAK, CHINA: UP BJP CHIEF

PAGE 5

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

JOHNSONTA
BENGALURU, OCTOBER 25

TEN DAYS ago, a bar owner was shot outside his establishment in the heart of Bengaluru with a breach-loading gun, and then hacked with a machete. This rare underworld killing in the central business district, followed by a chilling phone call to a new gangland order is moving to take over organised crime in the tech city.

On October 15, Manish Shetty, 41, who has a history of involve-

ment in robbery and extortion and was an associate of the extradited gangster Ravi Pujari, was killed outside Duet Bar and Restaurant. Soon, a caller claiming to be Vijay Shetty, a former associate of Mumbai gangster Chhota Rajan and a self-styled "patriotic" gangster, called two local channels in Bengaluru and Mangaluru to claim that the killing was an act of revenge for a murder in coastal Karnataka last month.

On September 24, Kishan Hegde, a gangster in Udupi with alleged links to Hindutva groups, was hacked to death in broad daylight by a group of men. Udupi Police arrested associates

of Manoj Kodikere, an activist of the Hindu Jagaran Vedike with criminal antecedents, for the killing. "The murder was the fall-out of a dispute between Hegde and Kodikere for control of business activities at the Mangalore port," police sources said.

In his phone calls to TV9 in Bengaluru and Daijiworld in Mangaluru, the caller who identified himself as Vijay Shetty claimed that the Bengaluru bar-owner had allegedly orchestrated the Udupi murder. "He (Manish Shetty) provided all the support for the murder. He was the boss of Kodikere Manoj. It is under his influence that the



Ravi Pujari (left) was extradited from Senegal in February; Muthappa Rai died in May

murder was carried out. This is why we attacked Manish Shetty," the caller claimed.

In normal course, the killing



of the bar owner would have been considered an extension of Mangaluru gang rivalries that have long histories and taken

communal shades in recent years — mirroring the Mumbai gang rivalries of the 1990s.

But the circumstances, police sources say, are different. The Bengaluru killing has come at a time when the local underworld is in a state of flux following the death of former don Muthappa Rai, 68, due to cancer in May and the extradition of Pujari, 54, from Senegal in February.

The big question, sources say, is whether this is a possible power struggle for the control of Bengaluru among underworld remnants from various groups. "We are trying to ascertain if there is an attempt by different groups

to fill the vacuum in the underworld left by the death of Rai and the arrest of Pujari, and whether the fight has been extended from Mangaluru to Bengaluru," police sources said.

Pujari hails from Mangaluru, which was also Rai's hometown. Rai was extradited in 2002 from Dubai where he was an associate of Sharad Shetty, the Mumbai gangster from the Dawood Ibrahim gang. And since Rai's death, there have been reports that one of his former associates Rakesh Malli, 49, has been trying to gain control of the gang.

Malli, who was a Congress candidate for the 2018 Assembly

polls from Udupi's Kundapur, had earlier accused Rai of cheating him of his share in a property deal in Mangaluru. "There are reports that some of the persons who surrendered for the murder in Udupi on September 24 are linked to Rakesh Malli," police sources said.

Unlike Rai, who went from Bengaluru to Dubai before being extradited, Pujari was a part of the Mumbai underworld and the Chhota Rajan gang before moving abroad. He is alleged to have collaborated with Rai in the 2001 murder of the realtor Subbaraju in Bengaluru.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



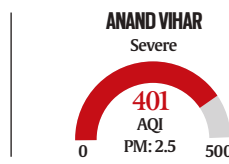


With the blood oxygen reading, it can help fight the pandemic

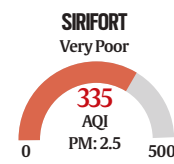
Two of the alleged killers, who were arrested within hours of the murder, were employed near Duet Bar, police sources said. "The killing of Kishan Hegde in Udipi may have been the spark to execute the Bengaluru murder which was being planned for many months. But there are hidden figures behind the curtains and we are trying to find them," a senior police officer said.



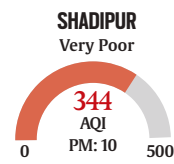
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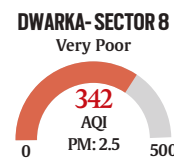
51-100 Satisfactory



101-200 Moderate



201-300 Poor



301-400 Very Poor

401-500 Severe

'SI POSTED WITH SPECIAL CELL'

Cop arrested for 'molesting' four women, minor in Dwarka

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

A 35-YEAR-OLD sub-inspector, posted with the Special Cell, was arrested for allegedly molesting four women and a minor in Dwarka on October 17 and 20. Police lodged four separate FIRs under IPC sections 354 (molestation), 354-D (stalking) and Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. One of the women refused to lodge a complaint, said police.

According to police, SI Puneet Grewal is posted with the Special Cell but is currently working with one of the DCPs (traffic unit). "The arrest was made on Saturday evening after police found concrete evidence against him. He was produced before a Delhi court and sent to judicial custody for 14 days. We will now move an application in court on Monday for a test identification parade (TIP), and are also going to record statements of all victims under CrPC Section 164. We have also written to his seniors, asking them to dismiss him from serv-



Sub-inspector Puneet Grewal

ice," said a senior police officer.

The incident came to light after one of the women posted a video message on social media on October 17, alleging that a man driving a grey Baleno harassed her when she was cycling in Dwarka.

"On October 17, around 8.30 am, I went cycling in Sector 11, near Dussehra ground. I saw a grey car with a shattered rear windshield. I continued cycling but the driver slowed down and drove close to me. I tried to ignore him but he honked. I signalled to him to go ahead but he didn't and I felt like he was chasing me. I stopped to check what

happened. The man then asked for directions, but before I could reply, he unzipped his pants and touched his genitals. I shouted at him... and noticed there was nobody around me. He started saying nasty things and I didn't know whether to leave or record the incident on my phone," alleged the woman in the video.

She claimed she was shocked when he started misbehaving with her: "He was constantly hurling abuses and saying sexually explicit things. I was near the DDA sports complex by then. I raised an alarm and was trying to cycle faster to get near people. A few locals heard me, and the man rolled up his window and started speeding. Locals tried to go after him but he fled. There was no number plate on the car. I was panicking and someone gave me water. I called 1091 at 9.30 am after telling my parents. I got a call from the PCR team. An officer told me it would be difficult to identify the accused as there was no number plate and the man can get the windshield fixed."

Initially she was reluctant, but later filed a complaint. "During

investigation, police found four more women who alleged they were molested by him on the same stretch," an officer said.

One of the victims, in her statement, alleged that she was walking when the accused, who was semi-naked, flashed her. She also alleged that he tried to grab her from his car, but she managed to escape.

"Police found that the incidents took place on October 17 and October 20. After registering an FIR, police scanned all CCTV cameras in the area. They spotted a grey Baleno but found that the registration plate was partially covered with a cloth," said an officer.

Police started looking for the car in Dwarka, while also scanning CCTV footage from adjoining areas. "After scanning footage from over 200 CCTVs, they found footage showing the car heading towards Janakpuri. Police then scanned other cameras and found where he lives. They reached his home and found the car parked inside... It was registered in his wife's name, who is a teacher. He also has a daughter," the officer said.



REVAMP

An aerial view of the walkway and street being constructed as part of the Chandni Chowk redevelopment project in Old Delhi. Officials said the 1.3 km-long stretch from Red Fort to Fatehpuri Masjid will be completed by the first week of November. *Tashi Tobgyal*

Dengue under control in capital this year: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

DELHI HAS managed to keep dengue in check this year, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Sunday. Dengue cases in Delhi so far have been the lowest in five years. The city has seen only 395 cases this year so far, as opposed to 644 in 2018. In previous years, the tally was higher.

Like last year, the Delhi government has been running a 10-week awareness programme against the vector-borne disease. Under the *10 Hafte 10 Baje 10 Minute* campaign, people are asked to check their houses for stagnant water at 10 am every Sunday for 10 weeks. Mosquito breeding is common in the city between July and November,



Kejriwal at home, Sunday

which is also when dengue cases rise.

"On the 8th Sunday of Delhi's fight against dengue, I inspected my house for accumulated water and changed it. To prevent dengue, we have to stop the breeding of mosquitoes. Just like last year, dengue is under control in Delhi. Delhi is defeating dengue for the second consecutive year," Kejriwal tweeted.

University Grants Commission
(Ministry of Education, Government of India)
Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002

Public Notice on Fake University

The University Grants Commission Act, 1956 under Section 22(1) provides that a degree can be awarded only by a University established under a Central, State/Provincial Act or an Institution deemed to be university under Section 3 of the UGC Act or an Institution especially empowered by an Act of Parliament to confer the degree.

Further, Section 23 of the UGC Act prohibits the use of the word 'University' by any institution other than a university established as stated above. Students and Public at large are hereby informed that presently 24 self-styled, unrecognized institutions are functioning in contravention of the UGC Act, have been declared as fake universities and these are not empowered to confer any degree.

The list of fake universities is at UGC website www.ugc.ac.in.

davp 21205/11/0015/2021

Sd/
Secretary

Bihar: What is at stake in India's first Covid election?

EXPRESS
explained.Live

with

Suhas Palshikar

Political Scientist

The Assembly election in Bihar will be the first big democratic exercise in India — and among the biggest in the world — since the outbreak of Covid-19. It will also be one of the most consequential.

Nitish Kumar, last of the Mandal men who have dominated Bihar for 30 years, seeks one last shot at power.

A new generation — Tejashwi Yadav and Chirag Paswan, political heirs of Lalu Prasad and Ram Vilas Paswan — believes its time has come.

The BJP wants to finally establish Hindutva as the state's dominant political narrative.

Which way will Bihar go? What role will caste, traditionally the key to voting in Bihar, play? Will this election predict the future of identity politics in North India?

Will the context of the pandemic matter in any way?

Listen to Prof Suhas Palshikar, one of India's most insightful political scientists, answer some of these questions at the next session of **Explained.Live** — on the evening before the first phase of polling.

In conversation with

Vandita Mishra

National Opinion Editor, The Indian Express

27 OCT 2020
07:00 PM

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The Indian EXPRESS
— JOURNALISM OF COURAGE —

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K L Rahul
Cricketer & RBI Employee

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4 THE CITY

ASI SUSPENDED; FAMILY ALLEGES TORTURE, POLICE DENY

Taken for questioning in car theft case, man dies in police custody

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

AN AUTO rickshaw driver who was being questioned in a car theft case died in police custody at Lodhi Colony police station on Sunday. Delhi Police has suspended ASI Vijay Kumar and sent two constables, Rajender and Sandeep, to police lines in connection with the matter.

Police said the man, Dharambir Prajapati (50), allegedly jumped from the first floor and committed suicide. He was immediately rushed to AIIMS but died during treatment. The family, however, alleged that the man was tortured. The cause of death has not been ascertained and a post-mortem report is awaited.

Police also said the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate was informed about the incident. Police said the ASI was suspended over lack of supervision. The two constables who brought Dharambir to the police station have also been sent to police lines pending enquiry.

According to police, Dharambir, who lived in Najafgarh with his family, was being interrogated by the ASI after a car was stolen from Lodhi Colony on Thursday. Police said CCTV footage near the spot of the theft revealed that the suspected car thieves reached Lodhi Colony in an autorickshaw.

"The autorickshaw was found to be registered in the name of Dharambir's son, but he had rented out the vehicle. He told us



The victim, Dharambir (50); (top) His family outside AIIMS, Sunday

Dharambir had sustained injuries to his leg and head.

On Sunday afternoon, Dharambir's family and a few locals protested outside AIIMS, alleging he was thrashed by the policemen, who also asked for a bribe of Rs 50,000. Police tried to remove the protesters, who left after the body was returned to them.

Saurav (24), Dharambir's son, alleged, "They came to our house on Saturday around 11 am and showed us a photo of our auto rickshaw. We told them we bought it a year ago but gave it to someone else to drive. They then took my father to the police station. We tried to contact him but his phone was switched off. At 7 pm, he called me and said the policemen were torturing him and asking for Rs 50,000. They tortured him for more than 12 hours."

‘He did not commit suicide’: Family stages protest outside AIIMS

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

"MY FATHER was trying to cooperate with the police. He respected the force a lot and wanted my brother to become an IPS officer. This is beyond our understanding. He was not involved in the theft case... my sister's wedding was coming up in March... I know he didn't commit suicide. How can they beat him to death?" Sachin Prajapati (21), son of Dharambir Prajapati who died in custody at Lodhi Colony police station on Sunday, said.

Hours before they found out he was dead, Dharambir's family members said he called them and told them that he was being tortured. On Sunday, his family staged a protest outside AIIMS, where his body was taken, alleging he was tortured. The 50-year-old auto driver was taken in for questioning in connection with a car theft case.

Police maintain he committed suicide. DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said, "The accused involved in the theft case came in an auto which was registered under Dharambir's son's name. He was called for questioning Saturday."

Family members said Dharambir owned two auto rickshaws, and had given the second one to another driver on rent.

His elder son Saurav (24) said they received a call from Dharambir on Saturday night. "They took my father for questioning at 11 am. We tried to call him all day but his phone was switched off. At 7 pm, he called us and said he was being tortured and police were asking for Rs 50,000. These were his last words. I was at Kalkaji temple then... I didn't know something like this would happen... When I reached home, police called and said my father was found on the ground, injured. We were later told he was at AIIMS, where he died." A BA student, he is preparing to become an IPS officer.

Dharambir lived with his Sumita and their three children in Najafgarh. His daughter Poonam got engaged 10 days ago, with the wedding planned for March next year. "My father is the sole breadwinner, he was driving an auto for the past 30 years... He encouraged me to pursue my dream of becoming a lawyer, and my brother to prepare for his IPS exam. We don't know what to do anymore..." said Sachin.

Labourer electrocuted in Ghaziabad factory

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GHAZIABAD, OCTOBER 25


A LABOURER died and three others were injured after they came in contact with a high tension wire in a fan making unit in Ghaziabad's Kavi Nagar on Saturday evening. According to police, the labourers were trying to lift steel angles on to the roof when the incident occurred.

"They were rushed to hospitals where one of them, Akash Rana (18), was declared dead on arrival. Another worker, Mangal, was referred to Safdarjung hospital where he is currently stable. Two others, Harish and Shivam, received minor injuries. An FIR has been filed against the factory officials," said Nagendra Chaubey, SHO Kavi Nagar.

Rana was staying in Khurja in a rented accommodation with his mother and sister. Having lost his father at a young age, Rana was the sole breadwinner of the family, said locals and police. He had recently found daily wage work in the industrial area of Kavi Nagar.

"It has been alleged by the family that they were not given safety gear and the right equipment while carrying out the work," said Chaubey.

CORONAVIRUS IN THE CAPITAL



| | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|
| <div> TOTAL CASES 3,56,656 </div> | | | Total | Vacant |
| | HOSPITAL BEDS | | 15,755 | 10,399 |
| | VENTILATORS | | 1,245 | 487 |
| | Daily cases | Recoveries | Deaths | Tests |
| Oct 24 | 4,116 | 3,614 | 36 | 55,461 |
| Oct 25 | 4,136 | 3,826 | 33 | 49,069 |
| Total | 26,744* | 3,23,654 | 6,258 | 43,64,408 |

**Total active cases*

*Total active cases

15,000 cases per day in the city. "Winter months that make respiratory illnesses severe; patients may come from outside to Delhi in large numbers; patients coming from distant areas are likely to be get more serious. In addition, with festival gatherings, there could be a sudden rise in cases," the report stated.

For the last two days, Delhi has been reporting over 4,000 Covid cases daily. On Sunday, the city saw 4,136 new cases and 33 deaths, taking the total infections to 3,56,656 and the death toll to 6,258. The positivity ratio was recorded at 8.17%, while the death rate was 1.76%.

Jain said about two-thirds of the beds earmarked for Covid-

19 patients are vacant at the moment. There are 15,755 beds for Covid patients in the city, out of which 10,399 are vacant.

Talking about the national capital's fatality ratio in the last 10 days, he said: "In the last 10 days, the death toll has been 0.94 per cent while the overall fatality ratio stands at 1.77 per cent."

The health minister also declared that schools in Delhi won't reopen in the near future. "All schools shall remain closed for the time being. We had a discussion regarding the same with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal yesterday," he said.

Of the 26,744 active cases in the city, 16,115 are under home isolation.



At Lajpat Nagar market, Sunday. Abhinav Saha

Diwali round the corner, footfall in markets sees rise

ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

OVER THE past few weeks, despite a rise in Covid cases, markets across the capital have been witnessing an increase in footfall. Traders attributed this to Navratri which began on October 17 and Diwali next month, the upcoming wedding season, as well as consumers adapting to the 'new normal'.

"Things are definitely getting better, with more and more people coming to markets like Connaught Place to shop for the past 15 days or so, especially during weekends," said Atul Bhargava, president of the New Delhi Traders' Association.

"Moreover, since Connaught Place is an open area, many people are heading out with caution... they are tired of being at home for the past few months. At shops as well, we are following measures such as wearing masks and carrying out thermal checking," he added.

At the Lajpat Nagar market, the last two weekends witnessed near normal footfall and consumer sentiment, said Ashwani Marwah, general secretary of the Traders' Association of Lajpat Nagar.

"Consumer sentiments are close to normal, and has definitely picked up a lot since the Unlock period. Consumers are buying new clothes and household items, decorations for festivals and gift items. Business suffered in the past few months but we are happy to see that things are getting back to normal now; it gets crowded during the weekends too. Shops are following all precautions that have been prescribed," he said.

At Chandni Chowk, meanwhile, wedding shopping has picked up.

"For the past few weeks, the market has seen shopping for weddings that were cancelled during the lockdown months as well as upcoming weddings slated for the November-December season. Consumer

sentiment has continuously picked up," said Sanjay Bhargava, general secretary, Chandni Chowk Vyapar Mandal.

However, he said, the market has not seen many festival shoppers. "Due to the liquidity crisis in the market perhaps, festival shopping isn't happening like it used to. However, sari and lehenga shops and other wedding-related businesses are doing well," said Bhargava.

At Khan Market, traders' association president Sanjiv Mehra said, "We are witnessing more footfall. Due to the festival season, many people are buying puja items and such. But sale of electronic gift items has not picked up; restaurants are not doing so well either."

He said that due to the decrease in purchasing power amid the Covid economic slowdown, it may take a while for the sentiment to come close to being comparable to last year. "Still, we are definitely in a better position since before," said Mehra.

BRIEFLY

Man claims duped by website

New Delhi: A 46-year-old section officer from Indian Council for Agricultural Research lodged a complaint against an e-commerce website for allegedly sending him detergent soap instead of mobile phone in east Delhi's Ghazipur. A case of cheating has been registered against unknown persons.

Hit by cluster bus, man dies

New Delhi: A 40-year-old man died after he was allegedly hit by a cluster bus in Northeast Delhi's Seelampur on Saturday night. Police said the errant driver, who fled the spot, was later arrested.

Minor girl's body found in house

New Delhi: The decomposing body of a minor girl, originally hailing from Bihar, was recovered from a house in Northeast Delhi on Sunday. The girl was living with her uncle and aunt in Delhi. According to police, her aunt went out on Saturday afternoon and when she returned, the door was locked, after which she slept at her friend's place. On Sunday, the woman called the police and they found the girl's body inside. Police said the girl's uncle is missing and teams have been deployed to search for him. **ENS**

Hindu Rao docs continue protest

New Delhi: Resident doctors of Hindu Rao Hospital Sunday held a demonstration in Connaught Place and burnt an effigy of Ravana to draw attention to non-payment of salaries. **PTI**

Air pollution doubles amid Dussehra celebrations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

AIR POLLUTION levels rose in the capital on Dussehra as firecrackers were burned, nearly doubling the concentration of pollutants at five monitoring stations after 6pm on Sunday.

The rise in pollution levels were noticed even as wind speed at the five monitoring stations — a crucial meteorological factor that helps in dispersion of pollutants — remained constant and low, ranging between 0.1 and 1 metre per second, as per data from the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC).

Patparganj, India Gate, Dwarka, Najafgarh and Mundka were the five monitoring stations which recorded a sudden spike in particulate matter of 2.5 and 10 micrometres (PM2.5, PM10) — fine particles which are emitted from combustion activities, including burning of firecrackers.

With festivities being relatively hushed this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, there were fewer Ravana effigies set on fire and fewer firecrackers burned on Dussehra, as compared to the same period last year.

However, officials said that firecrackers were the only additional air pollution source that



At the Karkardooma CPD ground in east Delhi on Sunday. Prem Nath Pandey

was added to Delhi after 6pm on Sunday, meaning the rise in pollution levels do, in part, relate to the burning of crackers.

At Patparganj, the concentration of PM10 rose from 277 µg/m3 at 6pm to 509 µg/m3 at 9pm, nearly five times above its 24-hour exposure limit of 100 µg/m3.

At 6 pm, Dwarka already had PM10 levels over 10 times above the acceptable limit, at 1,320 µg/m3. It dropped to 719 µg/m3 by 9 pm. The level of

PM2.5 rose from 205 to 254 µg/m3 at the same time, against its 24-hour exposure limit of 60 µg/m3.

The spike in PM2.5 — considered more toxic than PM10 — was sharpest at Mundka, rising from 110 at 6 pm to 271 µg/m3 at 9 pm.

Officials also said other monitoring stations in the city, such as Bawana and Mandir Marg, also recorded a spike in pollution levels between 6 pm and 9 pm.

TRIED AND TESTED IN PALLA

In plan to restore Najafgarh lake, ponds in 100 acres of farm land

SHIVAMPATEL
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

THE DELHI government is planning to restore Najafgarh lake and augment the city's water supply by leasing farmers' lands and building ponds to recharge the groundwater table at Southwest Delhi's Rawta village. The proposed project is similar to the one it is undertaking at North Delhi's Palla, where a 25-acre pond, up to a depth of 1.7 metres, was created on the Yamuna floodplains to recharge groundwater through overflow from the river.

About 100 acres of Rawta's farmland close to the Najafgarh

drain, which officials said constitute the lake, is submerged for most part of the year by overflowing drain water. This has impacted farmers' income and led them to stage protests, one even recently seeking Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's intervention.

The government has now proposed to take this land on lease from farmers for Rs 77,000 per acre, with an increment of 7% per annum, and use it to restore the lake and also augment the city's water supply by around 40 million gallons per day (MGD).

The proposal was made by Minister for Flood and Irrigation Satyendar Jain and Matiala MLA Gulab Singh at a meeting held on



100 acres of Rawta's farmland is submerged for most of the year. Abhinav Saha

October 17 with farmers from the village, an official at the meeting told *The Indian Express*. "Villagers

couldn't reach a consensus at the time. The project will be taken forward when residents give their

approval," the official said.

Land for the project at Palla was also taken on lease from farmers for the same amount offered to farmers in Rawta. Officials said the project could be expanded beyond 100 acres if farmers agree.

"The land at Palla is sandy and helps in better groundwater recharge. At Rawta, because there's inflow of treated and also possibly untreated wastewater, along with flood water during monsoons, from the Badshahpur drain (in Gurgaon, which joins Najafgarh drain), there is siltation and historical sludge at the ground. This creates stagnant conditions which do not help in

groundwater recharge. If the project gets underway, the land will be desilted and historical waste removed," an official said.

Systems will also be put in place to improve water quality and reduce biochemical oxygen demand along with creation of recharge pits on the lines of the Palla project, the official said.

The National Green Tribunal had also directed Haryana and Delhi governments in September to create a joint environment management plan for Najafgarh lake. An official at the October 17 meeting said the project proposed at Rawta will follow the recommendations of an NGT technical committee, headed by

environmental scientist and Delhi University professor CR Babu, for restoration of the lake.

Rawta residents said discussions are underway. Birender Tokas, a resident, said some farmers are worried they might have difficulty leaving the lease agreement if they decide to sell their land in future.

Deepak Yadav, a resident of nearby Jhuljhuli village, said the government should offer a higher rate: "If the government can offer Rs 1 lakh per acre to farmers for installing solar panels on... their land (by private firms under Mukhyamantri Kisan Aaye Badhotri Yojana), then water is a much more valuable thing."

5 GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



PROMOTING WAYANAD

As Lok Sabha MP from Wayanad, Rahul Gandhi seems to be soft-selling his constituency to outsiders. Of late, his office has been making and promoting short films on aspects linked to the place. A film on Edakkal caves -- believed to have been created by arrows shot by Luv and Kush -- had almost 2 lakh views. Attempts are being made to promote talented youngsters -- singers, sportspersons and students who did well in exams -- from the constituency through videos. A short film made on a tribal farmer was a hit. The MP's office has made seven such films in the last few weeks. Sources said they have gathered a lot of interest even outside Wayanad.

PARTY MATTERS

AFTER THE appointment of Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury as president of the West Bengal Congress unit, lobbying has begun for a leadership change in Assam, which goes to Assembly polls next year along with Bengal. Rajya Sabha MP Ripun Bora, who is the PCC president, was appointed in 2016 and many leaders argue the party should change him - their argument being Bora was once accused in a murder case. Those close to Bora say there is no case against him now and he got a clean chit from the court. While Harish Rawat, who was AICC in charge of Assam, ruled out a leadership change in February, those eyeing for the post are hoping that the new in-charge Jitendra Singh will have a fresh look at the issue.

FLOOD FORECAST

AFTER FORECASTING the last couple of cyclones, including Amphan, with great accuracy, the Met Department and the Earth Sciences Ministry will now be making flash flood forecasts not just for the country, but for South Asia as well, including Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. The IMD will put into place an automated mode of dissemination through platforms like social media to reach disaster authorities as fast as possible.

Protests in Jammu against Mehbooba's Tricolour remarks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, OCTOBER 25

PROTESTS CONTINUED in Jammu against PDP leader and former CM Mehbooba Mufti for her remarks that she will not hold the Tricolour until Jammu and Kashmir gets back its erstwhile state flag, with ABVP members and other activists making attempts to unfurl the national flag at the PDP office. Jammu-based activist Amandeep Boparai, along with supporters, protested outside the PDP office in the morning after being stopped by the police from hoisting the Tricolour at the office. Later, a few ABVP activists sat on a dharna after being stopped by the police from bringing down the PDP flag at the party's office, and raised slogans against Mehbooba Mufti and the UT administration. However, police allowed them to hoist the national

flag at the iron fence outside the PDP office.

Amid slogans of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai", some protestors were heard warning Mehbooba against visiting Jammu.

PDP spokesperson and former MLC Firdous Tak said the BJP and its "ghost" organisations have nothing to offer to the country and the erstwhile state except "hypernationalism and Kashmir bashing". "Whether it is Delhi or Gujarat polls, they are only selling Kashmir to the people," he said, adding that it is not a surprise that miscreants under the patronage of BJP and the administration are resorting to "goondaism" to enforce their ideology.

"We don't need a certificate of nationalism from the Godse brigade who have always discredited and dishonoured the flag and constitution of this country. Our alliance is anti-BJP and not anti-national."

All Indian citizens will be given free Covid vaccine, says Sarangi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHUBANESWAR, OCTOBER 25

UNION MINISTER Pratap Sarangi Sunday said every Indian citizen will be provided free Covid-19 vaccine, days after the BJP announced it for the people of poll-bound Bihar.

The BJP announcement had kicked up a controversy, with the opposition alleging that the ruling party was using the pandemic for political reasons.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said the announcement was in order as it was an election manifesto announcement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced that all people will be provided free of cost vaccines. An estimated Rs 500 will be spent for the vaccination of each person, Sarangi told reporters after addressing a campaign meeting for the November 3 assembly bypoll in Balasore.

Sarangi, the Minister of State



Pratap Sarangi

for Animal Husbandry, Dairy, Fisheries and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, was responding to criticism levelled by Odisha Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister, R P Swain.

Swain had earlier in the day questioned Dharmendra Pradhan and Sarangi, the two Union Ministers from Odisha, for their "silence" on their party stand on free Covid-19 vaccination for the people of the state along the lines of the one being promised in Bihar.

The governments of Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Puducherry have already announced free vaccines for the people of their states. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has demanded that the measure be implemented for all citizens.

Want end to LAC tension, but won't cede an inch: Rajnath

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, KOLKATA, OCTOBER 25

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh on Sunday said that India wants an end to the border tension with China and aims to establish peace but reiterated that Indian soldiers will never allow even an inch of land to be taken by anyone.

After performing 'Shastra Puja' -- customary worship of weapons -- at the Sukna-based headquarters of the Indian Army's 33 Corps, also known as Trishakti Corps, in Darjeeling district of West Bengal on the occasion of Dussehra, the Union minister said, "At the moment there is tension on the India-China border, but India wants that it should end, peace should be established. That is our aim. But sometimes there are some nefarious acts. But I am completely convinced and I also believe that our Army's soldiers in any situation will not allow an inch of India's land to go into anyone else's hands."

Rajnath, who is on a two-day visit to West Bengal and Sikkim, also reviewed the operational preparedness of the Trishakti Corps, which is responsible for the Line of Actual Control with China in the Sikkim sector.

Greeting the soldiers on the occasion of Dussehra, the minister said, "Whatever has happened lately on the India-China border in Ladakh, I can say with concrete information about the duty performed by our soldiers, that when history is written, his-



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inspects a weapon at the Sukna Army Camp in Darjeeling on Sunday. PTI

torians will write the story of courage and valour of our soldiers in gold letters."

Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane was also present at the occasion.

The minister also inaugurated a 19.85-km alternate alignment of the National Highway-310 in Sikkim through video conference. In a statement, the Defence Ministry said it was "necessitated due to the previous alignment having seen extensive damages due to sinking and other natural hazards". "The road serves as an important link to bolster defence preparedness in the Nathula Sector in particular and in the whole of East Sikkim in general," it stated.

The ceremony was held through a video conference from the 33 Corps headquarters "due to inclement weather".

"By constructing... alternate route of NH-310, the BRO has fulfilled the aspirations of the Army and residents of East Sikkim," Rajnath said.

"Most of the border roads of Sikkim are being upgraded by the BRO to double-lane. Out of this, 65 km of road construction work is in progress in East Sikkim, and 55 km of road construction is under the action plan. The construction of 225 km double-lane road to 'Mangan-Chungthang-Yumesamdong' and 'Chuganthang-Lachen-Jima-Muguthang-Nakula' is planned under the Bharatmala project in North Sikkim. These works are planned in nine packages with an estimated cost of Rs 5,710 crore," the Defence Minister said.

He also "emphasised the government's drive towards progressing infrastructure development in far-flung areas not only to enhance defence preparedness but also for fostering socio-economic development of the region" and reiterated the Centre's "resolve to speed up infrastructure development in alignment with the Prime Minister's Act North East policy".



RINGING IN DUSSEHRA

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath performs puja at the Gorakhnath temple in Gorakhpur on Sunday. ANI

Unfortunate that Opp has become directionless, says Nadda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR, OCTOBER 25

BJP CHIEF JP Nadda on Sunday alleged that the Opposition has become directionless and has started opposing the country in its antagonism towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said that Congress leaders opposed the abrogation of Article 370 and indirectly supported Pakistan.

"At a time when the entire country was celebrating after the abrogation of Article 370, Rahul Gandhi contended that injustice was done to the people in Srinagar," Nadda said while addressing party workers in Rajasthan via video conference.

He was speaking after inaugurating two BJP offices and laying the foundation of six offices in various districts of the state.

"It is unfortunate that the Opposition has gone directionless. It has started opposing the country in its antagonism towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

PEOPLE ARE supreme in governance and there is no place for arrogance, falsehood and reneging on promises in a ruler's life, Congress president Sonia Gandhi said in her Dussehra message on Sunday.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi too extended Vijaya Dashami greetings saying truth ultimately triumphs.

In her message on Dussehra, Sonia Gandhi extended good wishes to all.

She said, "A symbol of triumph of justice over injustice, truth over falsehood and prudence over arrogance, Dussehra, after nine days of worship, also brings with it a new resolve and a vow to fulfill duties in any situation."

People, Sonia said, are paramount in governance.

"And there is no place for arrogance, falsehood and breaking of promises in a ruler's life. This



Congress president Sonia Gandhi

is the biggest message of Vijaya Dashami," she added.

She also asked people to be safe and protect themselves from coronavirus during the festivals and follow all Covid-19 guidelines.

The Congress president hoped that this Dussehra will not only bring happiness, peace and prosperity in everyone's life but also strengthen harmony and cultural values among people.

Several senior Congress leaders, including general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal and general secretaries Randeep Surjewala and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, also extended greetings to people on Dussehra.

-WITH PTI INPUTS

NSA: Will fight on our soil and beyond, for welfare of all

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, OCTOBER 25

NATIONAL SECURITY Advisor Ajit Doval Saturday said India will fight on its own soil and outside, too, but for "paramartha" -- welfare of all -- and not selfish motives.

Addressing followers of Parmarth Niketan in Rishikesh Saturday evening, the NSA said: "Aapne kaha ki hamne kabhi kisi ke upar akraman nahi kiya. Iske bare me apne ek vichaar hain ki agar kahin se khatra aa raha tha to kar dena chahiye tha (you said we never attacked anyone. There is an opinion that it should have been done if there was a threat from somewhere.)"

Doval added: "Hum wahin ladenge jahan par aapki ichha hai yeh koi jaroorat nahi. Hum wahin par ladenge jahan par se khatra aa raha hai aur hum khatre ka muqabla nahin karenge (It is not necessary that we will fight where you want. We will fight only from where we are getting threats.)"

The NSA said: "...Hum yuddh to karenge aur apni zameen par bhi karenge aur baahar bhi karenge. Lekin apne niji swarth ke liye nahi, paramartha ke liye karna padega (We will fight, on our own soil and outside too, not for selfish interest but for welfare of all)." The NSA is on a private visit to Uttarakhand.

All dates decided... 370, temples, war with China, Pak: UP BJP president

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 25

A VIDEO has surfaced purportedly featuring BJP Uttar Pradesh president Swatantra Dev Singh telling a gathering in Ballia two days back that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had set the time for war with Pakistan and China.

Singh is seen telling party workers in the video, "Yeh Modiji ne tay... Sab tithi tay hai, mittiron. Kab kya hona hai, sab tay hai... 370 dhara kab samapta hoga, Ram Mandir ka nirman kab hoga, Pakistan se yuddh kab hoga, China se yuddh kab hoga (It has been decided by Modiji... The date is set for everything, what will happen when, everything is decided... When will Article 370 be abrogated, when will Ram temple be built, when there will be a war with Pakistan, when there will be a war with China)."

As a controversy erupted on Sunday, Singh told *The Indian Express*: "I just addressed the workers and I did not say anything on the lines as is reportedly being circulated. I would have to look into the context first."

Singh was in Ballia for the bhoomi puja ceremony of a Krishna temple under the Sikandarpur Assembly constituency represented by BJP MLA Sanjay Yadav.

Campaigning is currently on



Swatantra Dev Singh was speaking to BJP workers

for by-elections to seven Assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh, and Singh has been travelling to different constituencies in the state as part of that.

In the video, Singh goes on to say that the BSP, SP and Congress have failed to meet the expectations of the people. He asks people to weigh Prime Minister Narendra Modi against others and decide who was going to give a better future to their children.

He said the BJP was working on the path shown by Lord Krishna and Ram, adding that Lord Krishna had not spared even his family and his caste, and that in case a wrong is committed, one has to rise above family and caste for the sake of the country.

He also said that the BJP would not allow any insult of the country or the poor.

Political scientist Suhas Palshikar is guest at Bihar polls Explained tomorrow

EXPRESS explained.Live

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

IT IS India's first major 'Covid' election, and could turn out to be among the most consequential in recent times. The Assembly election in Bihar could potentially signal the fading of the narrative of Mandal that has dominated the politics of the state for three decades now.

Elections in Bihar are tracked closely because national trends are often incubated and accentuated in this intensely political state. The polling which begins on October 28 is going to be especially crucial.

It will be a major test of strength for the ruling regime at the Centre after it won a second mandate in 2019 and effected sweeping changes over the last year, from removing Jammu and Kashmir's special status to amending the citizenship law. The polls are also an opportunity for an Opposition that has been struggling to find its voice.

Incumbent Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is looking for a fourth term in a political climate shaped by a three-term incum-



DATE: 27 October 2020

TIME: 7 pm

TO REGISTER:
SMS - IEXP <space> "IE"
<space> "Your name and email ID" to 56161.
Confirmation SMS will be your registration.

bency, a perceived plateauing of the state's turnaround story, the migrants' crisis which made it self seen and heard in the Covid-19 lockdown, the separation of the LJP from the National Democratic Alliance in the state, and a re-ordering of the Janata Dal (United)'s own pact with the BJP.

Could the election herald the arrival of a new generation -- Tejashwi Yadav and Chirag Paswan, political heirs of Lalu Prasad and Ram Vilas Paswan -- of leaders in Bihar and indeed, North India?

Will the BJP be able to finally

establish Hindutva as the state's dominant political narrative?

What role will caste, traditionally the key to voting in Bihar, play? And will the context of the pandemic matter in the direction in which Bihar chooses to go?

To answer these and many other questions, The Indian Express has invited Suhas Palshikar, one of India's most insightful political scientists, at the next edition of Explained.Live, the unique series of explanatory conversations that The Indian Express hosts from time to time. Prof Palshikar will be speaking with National Opinion Editor Vandita Mishra.

Expert Guests at Explained.Live sessions since the lockdown began have included IIT-Delhi Director Ramgopal Rao, Kerala's Health Minister K K Shailaja, Public Health Foundation of India president Dr K Srinath Reddy, industrialist Dr Naushad Forbes, capital markets expert Nilesh Shah, medical scientist Dr Gagandeep Kang, Mahesh Vyas, MD and CEO of the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, and Sajjid Chinoy, J P Morgan's Chief India Economist and part-time member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister.

Naqvi says Cong formed 'radical syndicate' with Jamaat-e-Islami, PFI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

CALLING IT a question of "national security", the BJP on Sunday accused the Congress of allying with "radical organisations Jamaat-e-Islami and Popular Front of India (PFI)" in poll-bound Bihar and sought to know if RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and his party are also part of such "an understanding".

"The grand old party has formed a brand-new alliance with radical organisations Jamaat-e-Islami and PFI. For power, the Congress has formed this 'radical syndicate' to support radicalism in the country," Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said during a press conference at the BJP headquarters. "We want to ask Tejashwi Yadav whether, along with Congress, his party (RJD) has also made an understanding with Jamaat-e-Islami and other 'radical elements' in Bihar. These



Naqvi during a press conference at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi on Sunday. Prem Nath Pandey

are questions of national security, not politics," Naqvi said.

The BJP leader said the Shiv Sena, which has formed a government in Maharashtra with Congress help, will also have to answer on this issue.

Referring to Rahul Gandhi's candidate from Wayanad Lok Sabha seat in 2019, Naqvi said people were "shocked" to see that there were "more flags of

Jamaat-e-Islami in his rallies" than of his own party.

In an apparent reference to the Congress leader meeting the wife of Kerala journalist Siddique Kappan, who was arrested in UP and booked under UAPA, Naqvi said Rahul never misses a chance to meet the families of PFI members and of those arrested for involvement in "anti-national" activities.

-WITH PTI INPUTS

Army conference begins today; security situation, Ladakh on table

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

THE TOP leaders of the Army will review the stand-off with China in Eastern Ladakh and the country's overall security situation, among other issues, during a four-day biannual conference that starts Monday.

The second leg of the Army Commanders' Conference—which will see the participation of top officers such as the Army Chief, the Vice Chief, commanders, and principal staff officers—will be held in New Delhi till October 29.

Sources in the Army said the

first day of the conference will focus on matters relating to management of human resources. The sources said there will be a brief review of the security situation of the country, especially the standoff in eastern Ladakh with China, which started early May.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will address the Army leadership on October 27. Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane, Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh and Chief of the Air Force, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria, will address the conference before Singh.

Among the other slated discussions is an update by the Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command—the only tri-service theatre command.

There will also be brief updates on various issues by principal staff officers.

The last day of the conference will see the Director General of Border Roads speaking about the infrastructure development projects being undertaken by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and allied formations.

Automation initiatives at various levels of the Army will also be discussed.

ARMY PROMOTIONS UNDER SCANNER

Brigadier almost misses promotion over allegations later found false

MAN AMAN SINGH CHHINA
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 25

THE INDISCRIMINATE manner in which Value Judgement (VJ) marks are awarded in Army promotions has once again come to light, with an Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) judgement revealing that a Brigadier almost lost out on promotion to the rank of Major General after a selection board awarded him low VJ marks over allegations of domestic violence and extramarital affairs, which were later found to be false.

A maximum of five marks out of 100 are allotted for VJ in the selection board for promotions in the Army, while the remaining 95 are quantified through other parameters like courses attended etc. Amidst tough competition, it is often VJ marks which become the deciding factor.

The selection board in question was evaluating 24 Brigadiers for six vacancies in the rank of Major General in the

Electronics and Mechanical Engineering (EME) corps in 2018. The board comprised the then Chief of Army Staff Bipin Rawat as chairman and Vice Chief of Army Staff and all General Officers Commanding-in-Chief as members.

During the course of discussion over each candidate, one board member mentioned the allegations of domestic violence and extra-marital affairs against a Brigadier by his wife.

The other members were swayed and awarded low VJ marks to the Brigadier, thus putting him out of contention. The move benefitted another Brigadier, who moved up one position and was hence recommended for promotion.

When the proceedings of the selection board were put up to the Ministry of Defence (MoD), this anomaly was noticed by officials. The ministry asked the Army headquarters to provide evidence of the allegations made against the officer and any action taken against him.

It was then revealed that no Court of Inquiry has been held against the Brigadier and that a pseudonymous complaint had been made against him with no evidence. It further came to light that the wife of the officer had also given a written statement that she had never filed a complaint against him. The MoD

came to the conclusion that the pseudonymous complaint was made to negatively affect the chances of promotion of the officer by misleading the selection board. Consequently, despite the selection board not changing its recommendation, the MoD changed the result of the board—the Brigadier was approved for promotion and the officer who had jumped up one place was not approved.

The entire sequence of events came to light when the officer who missed out on promotion due to MoD changing the result of the selection board moved the AFT, demanding that he be promoted. The AFT's principal bench in New Delhi upheld the decision of the MoD and dismissed the officer's petition earlier this month.

In a judgment in February, the Supreme Court had ruled that an officer cannot be overlooked for empanelment for higher rank only on the basis of the VJ marks. A bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and Hemant Gupta on February 11 ordered a fresh promotion selection board to be held for two retired Brigadiers for the rank of Major General. The bench had disagreed with government counsel's contention that deference should be shown to the selection board's decision as it comprised senior Army officers.

KATHUA RAPE-MURDER VICTIM KIN'S COUNSEL FIR against J&K lawyer for hurting religious sentiments

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, OCTOBER 25

THE JAMMU and Kashmir police have booked Advocate Deepika Singh Rajawat for allegedly hurting the religious sentiments of the Hindu community through a tweet.

The advocate, who was the counsel for the parents of the eight-year-old victim in the Kathua gangrape and murder case, on Tuesday tweeted two sketches.

A police officer said an FIR was registered following complaints by several people and added that probe is on.

Sources said Rajawat has been booked under Sections 295A and 505 (b) (2) of the Indian Penal Code. Though the sections are non-bailable, the police were waiting for a report

Bajrang Dal activists held a demonstration outside Rajawat's residence and called for action in the matter

of its Cyber Cell about the origin of the tweet, among other things, before proceeding against the lawyer and activist.

Earlier, Bajrang Dal activists held a demonstration outside Rajawat's residence and demanded action into the matter. They also lodged a complaint against her with the police.

Deepika described the FIR as "a fractured piece which will not survive in the court", adding that it was registered by way of "sheer abuse of law and under pressure from BJP and other saffron organisations".

'Public feeling cheated... No one will accept this sauda'

CAMPAIGNING AT Morena, one of the 16 bypoll-bound seats in the Gwalior-Chambal region, MP Congress president KAMAL NATH speaks to IRAM SIDDIQUE on the fall of his government, the recent row over his remark on a woman candidate and the working of the Congress. Excerpts:

What makes you confident that the Congress has a fair chance of returning to power? What numbers do you have in mind?

I don't believe in numbers and the speculation game. For that, one should ask Shivraj (Singh) Chouhan. I have contested and won elections for 40 years and no one has done it longer... I understand the voter's mood. The logic is simple: in November 2018, people sent the BJP home and then they came back after 15 months.

In the past seven months since they returned, have they done anything for the people that will make them change their mind? What they have done is purchase MLAs. Do you think the public are fools? The public is feeling cheated... Out of the 28 seats (going to bypolls), 25 are those on which 'sauda' has taken place and three are because of deaths, so what will they tell people? People made up their mind in 2018, now you have only made it worse for yourself (BJP). No one is going to accept this sauda, this betrayal.

Are these bypolls a Congress versus Scindia fight with Jyotiraditya being a major force in the Gwalior-Chambal belt?

On November 10, we'll see the results. We saw the results of Lok Sabha elections when Scindia lost his own seat. A major factor was that he didn't lose to a tiger or a very eminent person.



Sachin Pilot is your star campaigner, what impact do you think this will have, especially in the Gwalior-Chambal belt, considering his proximity to Scindia and the recent events in Rajasthan

I don't know about his proximity, but he is an unadulterated Congressman which is why he is coming to campaign.

Do you feel that you failed to sense the ambition of young leaders like Scindia and accommodate them within the party?

We had a very young cabinet, but his agenda was very different.

What do you have to say about unparliamentary language used by political parties on both sides, be it your remark on Imarti Devi or those from BJP.

I have said that when you are giving a speech you say some-

thing and at that point, I didn't remember her name. There was no insult meant to anybody and if anybody felt insulted, I regret it.

But the way unparliamentary language is being used...

This is parliamentary, item no. 1 Smriti Irani, she was referred as item no... it says so in the Lok Sabha sheet, it says so in the Vidhan Sabha sheet; item no. 1 The Prime Minister, item no. 2 so and so minister... what does it mean...

Imarti Devi has accused you of paying Rs 5 lakh to your non-ministerial MLAs to keep your government intact...

None of the MLAs say that. Imarti Devi is saying that because she is contesting elections...

You have been projected as the sole face of Congress in Madhya Pradesh for the bypolls and Digvijaya Singh is missing from manifesto to campaigns, why?

We divide the work, Digvijaya is doing his work. He is handling various issues that come up in different constituencies while I am touring. In the evening, we review our strategy, listen to complaints about misuse of police force and so on. Now the BJP is left with nothing but to try and use the police and administration to coerce voters and to buy votes....

The farm loan waiver during your 15-month tenure was delayed and came in bits and pieces which left many farmers in the lurch and thereby agitated.

Farmers were never agitated. I have waived off loans of all farmers—27 lakhs they (BJP) have said themselves. There is a process and for the first time we were doing it

with Aadhaar. There were six lakhs farmers who didn't even have an account. And there were 27 lakh people, you can't go writing-off loans without having a record. In December 2018, I proposed and then we started the process... We reached 27 lakh farmers in 11.5 months, two months of my government was the code of conduct, one month was this *saude baazi*... My government did not fall because of farmers but because of betrayers.

What do you think about the letter written by 23 senior Congress leaders to Sonia Gandhi highlighting a need for change in the working of Congress

Every party has to always be in a process of change as times change, politics change and voters change. You have to be abreast with that... and that is what they highlighted. It was not against anybody; it was highlighting the need to bring about a change.

So, you agree with their concerns raised in the letter.

I am saying that the party requires persistent change.

Do you feel Congress has failed to evolve with times which is why it is suffering at the national level.

No, it is not. We had the elections in May 2019, right. You can't start jumping into things.

Over the period, Congress has also taken to soft-Hindutva be it by welcoming Ram Mandir verdict or construction of the temple. Then there is Rahul Gandhi adorning a janeu (sacred thread).

We have just welcomed the Supreme Court's verdict. I can only talk for myself, Rahul Gandhi will have to do it for him.

BYPOLL AT MORBI, GUJARAT

As BJP leaders raise Ram temple, villagers stress on water for farms, roads

GOPAL KATESHIYA
GUNGAN (MORBI), OCT 25

CAMPAIGNING FOR the upcoming bypoll to Morbi Assembly seat, BJP candidate Brijesh Merja tried to convince voters that he "sacrificed his position as Congress MLA" for "nationalism", Ram temple and other issues espoused by the Narendra Modi government.

However, villagers confronted the party leaders with their priorities: Narmada water for farms and better roads.

After Merja addressed a gathering at Nava Sadulka village, farmer Vijay Panchotiya said, "We have no complaints... except that you weren't seen in our village even once after winning the election in 2017."

"Last year, we sowed Rabi crops in October but Narmada water reached our fields only in December after we fought our way up till Gandhinagar... You bring us water or forget support from our village," Sarpanch Dinesh Panchamiya said.

Hiren Pathak, general secretary of BJP's Morbi district unit, sought to underline that they

Ahead of MP bypolls, one more Cong MLA quits

IRAM SIDDIQUE
GWALIOR, OCTOBER 25

THE CONGRESS suffered its latest blow in Madhya Pradesh on Sunday with its Damoh MLA defecting to the BJP just days ahead of the state bypolls.

Rahul Lodhi, a first-time MLA, is the 26th lawmaker to quit the Congress since March this year.

He handed his Assembly membership resignation to protem speaker Rameshwar Sharma, following in the footsteps of his cousin Pradhyuman Singh Lodhi—also a first-time MLA from Bada Malhera who switched to BJP around three months ago.

The former Damoh MLA joined the BJP in the presence of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and state party chief VD Sharma.

Rahul Lodhi's resignation has reduced Congress's tally to 87 in the 230-member House. The BJP has 107 seats and needs just eight more to achieve a simple majority. The Congress, on the other hand, needs to win at least 22 of the 28 seats headed to the polls to eke out a bargaining position where it can try to gain the support of four Independents, two BSP MLAs and one SP legislator.

The former Damoh MLA's resignation came a month after he met with state Congress chief Kamal Nath. According to party sources, Nath had called the meeting with Rahul Lodhi, as well as Tarvar Lodhi, another MLA from Banda, amid rumours that they could be poached by the BJP.

"After assuring Nath that he will not switch sides, Rahul held a press conference to announce that he does not want his children to ask why his father became a gad-dar (traitor) and switched sides," said a senior Congress leader.

Congress spokesperson Bhubendra Gupta said: "We would like to ask Rahul Lodhi what his children will now think of his move."



Merja at a meet in Gungan. Gopal Kateshiya

were sitting in a Ram temple and that it was the BJP that kept its promise of constructing a Ram temple in Ayodhya. "We welcome the Supreme Court judgment on the Ram temple. But let us talk about Narmada water now," the sarpanch said.

In Ravapar (Nadi) village, Merja said, "I sacrificed my MLA post at the altar of Narendra Modi's yagna of Rashtravard and my sacrifice would not go in vain."

Merja and seven other Congress MLAs resigned ahead of the Rajya Sabha election. In Krushnagar village, sarpanch Hari Khimaniya said, "For five years, the condition of the road connecting our village to NH 29 has gone from bad to worse."

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, Savita Sharma W/O Rajesh Sharma R/O L2/92 Gali No 3 Shastri Nagar Delhi 110052 have changed my name to Savita. 0070718243-1

I, Rajan Paul R/o E 24 Guru Nanak Pura Janak Puri New Delhi 110058 have changed my minor son's name from Nixon Paul Diwan to Nixon Paul for all purposes. 0040552446-1

I, Kundan Kumar, S/O Prem Kumar Sharma, R/o 533, Gali-5, MS Block-3, Ranaji Enc. Najafgarh New Delhi-110043 have changed my name to Kundan Sharma. 00707182444-1

Dr. Vandana Mittal W/O, Dr. Rajiv Mittal R/o A-148, First Floor, Saraswati Vihar, Pitampura, Delhi 110034 have changed my name to Dr. Vandana Mittal for all purposes. 0040552444-1

I Prabhdeep Singh Son Of Parminder Singh Vohra Resident Of C-14ff Fateh Nagar New Delhi 110018 Have Changed My Name To Prabhdeep Singh Vohra 0050170677-1

I Nelson Paul Diwan S/O, Rajan Paul R/o E 24 Guru Nanak Pura, Janak Puri New Delhi 110058 have changed my name to Nelson Paul for all purposes. 0040552445-1

I Rajan Paul Diwan S/O, Lt. Sh. Styta Paul R/o E 24 Guru Nanak Pura Janak Puri New Delhi 110058 have changed my name to Rajan Paul for all purposes. 0040552448-1

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

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Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

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E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.

a)

| Sl. No. | Job No./Work name | Amount |
|---------|--|--------------------|
| 1. | 103/D(H)/DD(H)-III/20-21, Two year M/o Park Hosiery complex, A-34, C-106, D-121 & Sector-83, A-5, A-78 Parks. | Cost Rs.48.38 Lacs |
| 2. | 99/D(H)/DD(H)-I/20-20-21, M/o RSP (Vertical Garden) with One year maintenance, Sector-15, 16, 18 Metro Station Pillars and MP-IIInd under the Elevated Road Pillar No. 4, 37, 38, 39, 40, 56 and 57, Noida | Cost Rs.36.66 Lacs |
| 3. | 89/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2020-21, D/o Green Belt, Phase-II, Near Pusta and sector-83, (subhead Plantation) with two year maintenance. | Cost Rs.76.02 Lacs |

Which can be uploaded by date 02/11/2020 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 03/11/2020 at 11.00 AM.

b)

| Sl. No. | Job No./Work name | Amount |
|---------|--|--------------------|
| 1. | 127/D(H)/DD(H)-III/2020-21, D/o Park in Sector-91 Wetland with two year Maintenance. | Cost Rs.97.29 Lacs |

Which can be uploaded by date 09/11/2020 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 10/11/2020 at 11.00 AM.

Director (Hort.)
Noida

Office Sector-39

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

CBI lodges FIR against man for 'selling' sexually explicit images of children

MOHAMED THAYER
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 25

THE CBI on Sunday registered a case against a 30-year-old man living in Mumbai for allegedly selling sexually-explicit images of children. According to officials, the children are based out of several foreign countries, including US Europe and South Asia. The accused contacted over 1,000 people as part of the racket, they said.

According to officers, the accused claimed to be working in the film industry and exploited minors under the pretext of offering them roles through social media. The agency is looking if anyone else is involved in the crime.

An official said searches were carried out at the Mumbai residence of the accused and his mobile and laptop were seized. Prima facie forensic scanning of his devices have revealed material re-

lated to online sexual abuse, said an officer.

CBI Spokesperson RK Gaur said, "We have registered a case and further investigation is on in the matter."

"The accused would claim to be from the film industry and start chatting with children by promising to get them roles," a source said. The accused would also make video calls where he would get the children to strike compromising poses under the guise of getting them roles. He would then sell these images and videos to clients in various countries, officials added.

The police have charged the accused under the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Earlier this week, the CBI had booked another person for allegedly selling child sexual abuse material on groups in a messaging application.

Seaplane for first flight to Statue of Unity to arrive in Gujarat today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
VADODARA, OCTOBER 25

THE SEAPLANE that will connect Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad to Statue of Unity in Kevadia in Narmada district flew into Kochi in India on Sunday from Male in Maldives and will arrive in Gujarat on Monday, a week before it takes its official inaugural flight with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 31.

According to a release from the Defence wing, the seaplane, which will be operated by SpiceJet, is a Twin Otter 300.

The aircraft is 19-seater, which will be able to accommodate 14 passengers at a ticket cost of Rs 4,800 per person. The aerial distance between Ahmedabad and Kevadia is about 200 kilometres.

On Sunday afternoon, the seaplane took off from Male in Maldives and made a successful landing inside Venduruthy chan-



The seaplane bound for Gujarat lands in Kochi to refuel at a naval base on Sunday. Nitin RK

nel for a technical halt. "The seaplane was provided assistance with berthing facility at Naval Jetty and refueling for their onward journey. It is scheduled to fly to Ahmedabad where it will commence flying as a part of regional connectivity scheme between Sabarmati river front and Statue of Unity," the release said.

Representatives of Spicejet, Indian Navy, CIAL and Kochi district administration were present to supervise the transit halt.

Vice Admiral AK Chawla, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Naval Command welcomed the aircraft in Kerala.

"The run from Kevadia to Ahmedabad is expected to be about 45 minutes..." said a government official.



The Indian **EXPRESS**

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

FIREPORTING NEWS

Mumbai to Delhi to Lucknow, the police force, armed with IPC, takes cue from political masters to intimidate the press

THE MUMBAI POLICE FIR against several journalists working at Republic TV, accusing them of defamation and causing disaffection against the police commissioner, is an ominous new low even by today's standards of highly polarised politics and public discourse. If the police commissioner believes that the TV channel has crossed a line, there are means of seeking redress. Criminalising journalists for a story is just one step short of criminalising journalism itself. It is well understood that some media houses have become megaphones for the powerful and believe that the duty of the press is not to speak truth to power but let power decide what the truth should be. In this role, many TV channels reduce themselves to being handles for those in power, a role they seem only too happy and proud to play. Enter the police.

The battle between Republic and the Mumbai police is not about good or bad journalism, facts versus fake news, but, in fact, a proxy political war between the BJP and the Opposition coalition that rules the state. This is unfortunate. In an opposition-ruled state like Maharashtra, this was an opportunity for the Mumbai police and the state government to show themselves as different from the national trend. But they have ended imitating this trend, in which, for instance, the Delhi Police Commissioner, who answers to the Union Home Minister, has been happy to welcome and pose with the authors of a book that reaches certain conclusions about how the Delhi riots began, even as the police force under his charge still investigates who the perpetrators of the violence were. It is no different, for instance, from the Yogi Adityanath government filing FIRs under sedition charges or the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act in the wake of protests over the Hathras rape.

Nothing is better news for those in power than a pliable press that is hyper-partisan, a police force that's pro-active to please its masters and a politics that couldn't care less about freedom of the press. This shrinks the middle ground where free and independent media best thrive. As random petitioners seek to regulate the media, courts daily ask who should control the media, judges deliver insightful advisories on what is good journalism and ministers and politicians shed tears over press freedom, there is no question that it is that very freedom that is being sought to be circumscribed, despite the guarantees in the Constitution. That affects not just a few TV channels or the ranting of their frenzied anchors — but all of media.

ONION FEARS

Unpredictable rainfall is affecting kharif crop, retail prices.
Government must create buffer stock

ONIONS RETAILING AT an all-India average of Rs 70 per kg — they ruled at Rs 50 levels last year too around this time and had crossed Rs 100 by mid-December — has one key takeaway for policymakers. That has to do with the unreliability of kharif crop production even in supposedly normal monsoon years. The southwest monsoon season (June-September) recorded significant surplus rainfall both in 2020 and 2019. Yet, they didn't yield the desired harvests. Last year, the rains weren't good till the last week of July, but it poured thereafter and right through October. It led to the standing crop — including onions, pulses and soyabean — suffering heavy damage. Something similar has happened this time. Excess August rains took a toll of soyabean and urad (black gram) in Madhya Pradesh. In September, it was arhar (pigeon pea) and onion in Karnataka. The current month has been a washout for Maharashtra's harvest-ready kharif onions and even the late-kharif bulbs that couldn't be transplanted due to the nurseries getting flooded.

The extended monsoon rains, although not beneficial for kharif, should nevertheless help recharge groundwater aquifers and, thereby, deliver a bounty during the rabi season. Farmers did harvest bumper winter-spring crops of wheat, chana (chickpea), mustard and even onion, tomato, gourds, beans and melons this April-June; one can hope for a repeat in the upcoming season as well. Rabi production is largely dependent on access to irrigation, which has improved over the years through provision of tubewell connections, building of farm ponds/water harvesting structures and adoption of drip/sprinkler technology. Absence of flooding, mild temperatures with clear skies, and low pest and disease incidence during this period allows farmers to obtain yields higher than from the regular post-monsoon kharif season — maize in Bihar is a clear example. It is rabi, not kharif, that's going to increasingly impart stability to India's agricultural output.

Linked to all this is also an effective price stabilisation strategy. The lack of it is apparent from the same onions, which were retailing at Rs 100/kg in December, being dumped barely four months later by Maharashtra farmers at Rs 7/kg. The Narendra Modi government learnt the right lessons from the 2015 Bihar Assembly elections debacle by focusing on procurement of pulses and building a buffer stock. Today, it isn't arhar, but POT (potato, onion, tomato) that is giving the ruling alliance the jitters. Production fluctuations are inevitable with climate change and irregular rainfall patterns. The way to manage them is not by banning exports and imposing stock holding limits in onions or forcing cold store owners to release potatoes deposited with them. The government should create a buffer stock of not just foodgrain, but even onion, potato, sugar, edible oil, milk powder and white butter, to enable non-distortive marketing intervention.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



TANVI MADAN

A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT of the commentary in India about the upcoming US presidential election's impact has focused on what Donald Trump and Joe Biden have said or not said about Kashmir. However, that misses a crucial point: Broader foreign policy decisions will have more significant implications for India. Particularly consequential will be how a second Trump administration or a Biden administration perceive and approach China and, relatedly, the question of America's role in the world. The outcome will depend on not just who wins in November, but also the choices that the next American president makes on key personnel and policies.

For the Indian government, the Trump administration's more hawkish view of China has been welcome. It broadly converges with Indian concerns about a rising China's actions and intentions. And it has facilitated, if not driven, the Trump administration to assign India an important role in its strategic framework, including through the Free and Open Indo-Pacific concept. This, in turn, has laid the basis for defence and security cooperation, incentivised Washington to manage differences with Delhi on trade, Russia, Iran and human rights, and led to vocal American support for India in the ongoing crisis with China. Moreover, while India prefers a subtler approach to highlighting Beijing's malign behaviour, the administration's more explicit one — and the tools it has as its disposal — has put a global spotlight on Chinese assertiveness.

However, there are aspects of President Trump's China approach that have caused consternation in Delhi. There has been a persisting concern about Trump striking a deal with Chinese leader Xi Jinping since the Mar-a-Lago summit in April 2017. The administration subsequently pivoted to competition with China that summer. But questions have remained about whether the competitive approach to China has sufficient presidential buy-in or is more the result of certain Trump administration officials' preferences. These doubts have been fuelled in part by Trump's statements about his "very, very good friend" Xi, as well as his reported willingness to look

For Delhi, US election result is consequential in terms of how the next administration approaches China

Linked to the China

question is how the debate on America's approach to the world will play out in the next few years. If a re-elected Trump's instincts on alliances, immigration and trade are validated, it could mean a reduced and/or contingent American commitment in Asia, fewer opportunities for Indians in the US, and tougher demands on Delhi to secure a trade deal. If a Biden administration sees engagement with China on climate change, global health security and non-proliferation as a priority, has a transatlantic emphasis at the expense of an Asian one, and sets certain standards for its democratic partners, that will complicate the Indian government's options and require adjustments

the other way on developments related to Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Huawei/ZTE.

The other aspects of Trump's China approach that have given Delhi pause are its ideological dimensions, as well as responses like tariffs that have hurt India too, and American withdrawal from international institutions and agreements that has served to benefit Beijing.

Moreover, the China prism has had its limits — it has not, for instance, resulted in concessions to India on trade and immigration.

If Trump wins, India will carefully consider three elements: Whether Trump stays the course or again pivots on China, which officials remain in or join the administration, and how Beijing responds to a Trump victory.

Delhi will also watch China policy closely if Joe Biden wins. The former vice-president is no stranger to foreign policy or Xi. Commentators have noted his recent, more hardened view of China. He has called Xi "a thug" and written about "the need to get tough on China". His campaign has laid out specific steps it will take vis-à-vis Tibet and Taiwan, and talked of a "genocide" in Xinjiang.

And there is recognition among most Democrats that the US-China relationship today is different from what it was in 2009, 2012 or 2016. An Obama administration China hand noted that opinion in the US on approach to China has "moved from balancing co-operation and competition, to competition and confrontation".

But what a Biden administration sees as the terms of strategic competition with China and how it might choose to blend in cooperation will have implications for India. And there is a debate on this among Biden's advisors — one that will likely continue. Its outcome will depend in part on the president's views, who holds key foreign and economic policy positions, as well as Beijing's approach.

Delhi will closely watch how this debate plays out and how Biden might respond to any overtures from Beijing. It will particularly worry about any signs that Washington would be willing to limit competition or crit-

icism in return for Chinese cooperation on certain administration priorities. More broadly, it will look at whether Biden administration's Asia policy derives from its China policy or vice versa.

Other aspects of Biden's preferred approach might suit India. For instance, acting collectively with allies and partners rather than unilaterally, not imposing tariffs that hit allies and partners along with China, and recommitting to international organisations in ways that could blunt Chinese influence. Delhi might also broadly approve of — and could benefit from — the 3Ds of a Biden foreign policy that former Obama administration official Anne-Marie Slaughter has outlined: Domestic (renewal), deterrence and democracy.

Linked to the China question is how the debate on America's approach to the world will play out in the next few years. If a re-elected Trump's instincts on alliances, immigration and trade are validated, it could mean a reduced and/or contingent American commitment in Asia, fewer opportunities for Indians in the US, and tougher demands on Delhi to secure a trade deal. If a Biden administration sees engagement with China on climate change, global health security and non-proliferation as a priority, has a transatlantic emphasis at the expense of an Asian one, and sets certain standards for its democratic partners, that will complicate the Indian government's options and require adjustments.

Moreover, with either Trump or Biden, foreign economic policy choices (for example, resilience and recovery through diversification or reshoring) and budgetary ones (for example, spending at home versus abroad) will have crucial implications for India.

Finally, Delhi will need to consider what America's choice on November 3 will mean for American power and purpose — because assessments of that could determine how Beijing decides to act in the region and globally.

Madan is Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, and author of *Fateful Triangle: How China Shaped US-India Relations During the Cold War*

REINVENTING NON-ALIGNMENT

India can play a constructive role in evolving a multipolar and just world order



D RAJA

THE FACE-OFF BETWEEN India and China in Ladakh and the plans for annexation of the West Bank by Israel have brought matters of global power dynamics to the fore. In the 1990s, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, commentators such as Francis Fukuyama were quick in announcing the "end of history" and labelling ideology as unimportant and irrelevant in the conduct of global politics. The supposedly unipolar world that came into being after the Cold War, with the US acting as the global policeman and leader in all institutions, facilitated the march of capitalism on a global scale. However, events that unfolded later, for instance the 9/11 terror attacks, came to haunt the US and its allies. Non-conventional security threats challenged the established conceptions of security, war and modernity.

The 2008 global financial meltdown exposed the realities of the neoliberal world order. Most institutions of lending crumbled before the inevitable logic of capitalism — the cycle of boom and bust. The crisis rendered thousands unemployed and destitute. The state had to bail out some of the largest financial corporations of the world with public funds. The western world soon came to understand the importance of sharing responsibility and adjusting to the new global realities such as the economic rise of China and India. G-20 nations replaced the elite G-8 of rich countries in deciding the economic course of the world, though within a neoliberal framework. This was an arrangement to share power and skip responsibility, as it kept almost all poor countries of the world out of decision-making. The rich got

to decide what is best for everyone.

This established mechanism is under threat. The rise of China as the workshop of the world has made many western powers insecure. It has led to a trade war between China and the US. Of particular relevance is the route India will take in the evolving bipolar world with the US and China constituting the two poles.

India faced a similar situation at the time of Independence. Then, India refused to join the Cold War camps and opted for a non-aligned foreign policy that championed the cause of the colonised regions and the newly-decolonised parts of the world. In the recent past, the Indian government's foreign policy priorities have tilted towards the US and the neoliberal framework. Tying Indian interests to the coat-tails of America will be disastrous. The support for Palestine has been muzzled in this environment and non-alignment abandoned as the government opted to play second fiddle to the US in Asia. The US is trying to drag India into its conflict with China to protect US interests in the Asia-Pacific region. The trade deals done to please the US have resulted in the loss of livelihood, agricultural land and hard-won labour rights of Indian working classes.

What the world needs today is an international order based on the principles of mutual respect, concern and cooperation and public participation. Privatised healthcare systems imploded under the weight of COVID-19 whereas countries with a socialised or socialist public healthcare system fared better. The world needs to come together to build public

health and education infrastructure. India must reject both the unipolarity of the 1990s and the bipolarity of the current system dominated by the US and China. India should live up to its independent non-aligned credentials and play a constructive role in evolving a more inclusive, multipolar and just world order.

In his address to the 75th General Assembly of the United Nations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated the demand of India's inclusion in the UN Security Council. This demand is justified considering India's history, size, economy and potential to play a constructive role in global affairs. However, under the current dispensation, these credentials have been tainted by multiple inconsistencies, especially in the neighbourhood. India should use its UNSC chair to represent nations hitherto underrepresented or underrepresented at the high table and continue the tradition of speaking for the marginalised. Unfortunately, the course of Indian foreign policy in the last few years does not correspond with this broad, inclusive world-view based on solidarity.

In this context, India and China, as the world's two most populous countries and mega-economies, should engage in a meaningful dialogue to resolve the border dispute. India should strive to make the world more inclusive, just and sensitive to the environment. India pursuing an independent foreign policy is not only essential for the country or the South Asian region, it can have a bearing on deprived populations of the world.

The writer is general secretary, CPI

OCTOBER 26, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

TRIPATHI RESIGNS

RAILWAY MINISTER KAMALAPATI Tripathi has resigned from the Union cabinet. Criticism of the performance of the Railway Ministry by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at her news conference last Tuesday is believed to have prompted Tripathi to send in his resignation. A letter written by Tripathi was delivered to Mrs Gandhi. Tripathi is understood to have stated that Mrs Gandhi could choose a younger person to handle the ministry and, as for himself, he could have many other avenues of service under her leadership.

PRESIDENTIAL HINTS

THE PRIME MINISTER declared here that

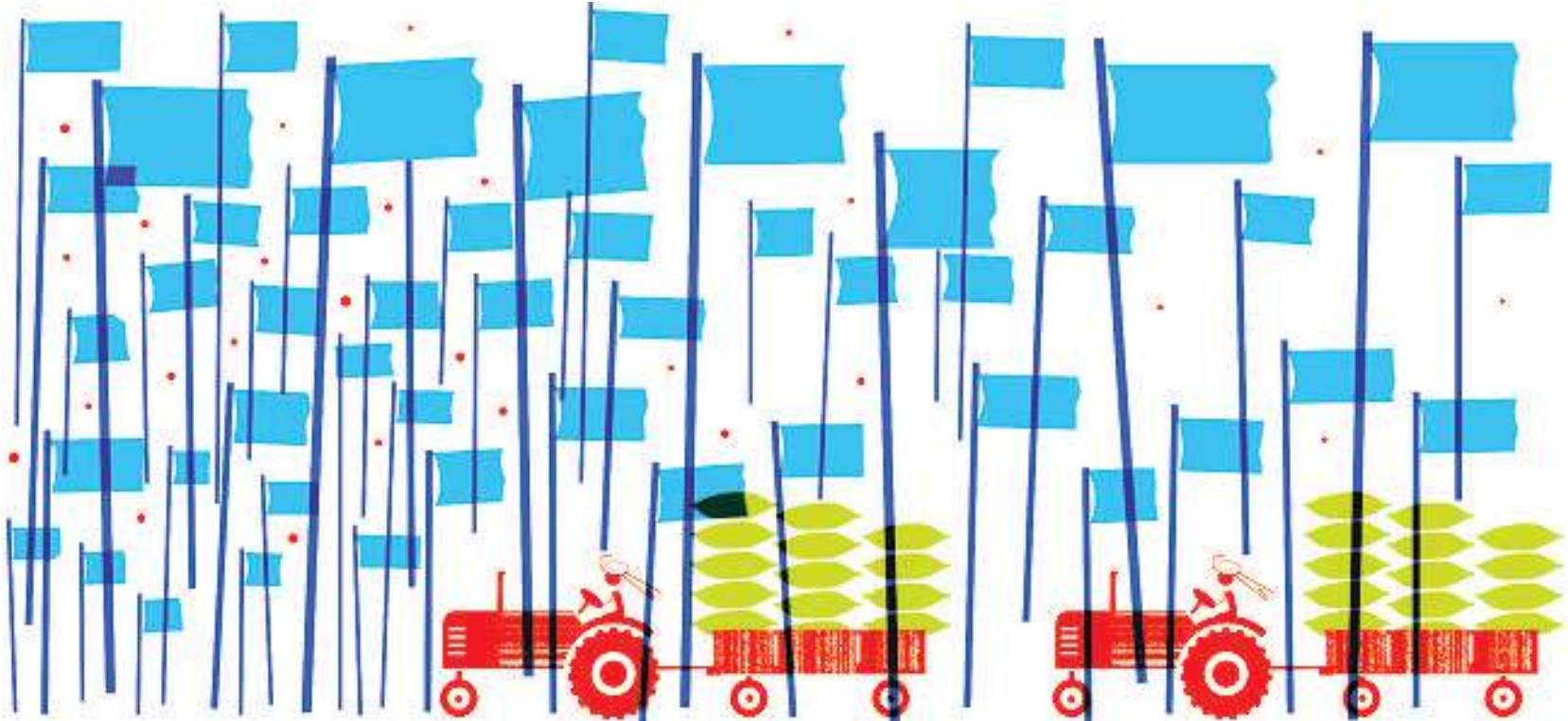
everything laid down in the Constitution need not be relevant for all time to come and called for a national debate on the question of whether there was any form of government better suited for India than the present system. Mrs Gandhi said the system handed down by the Constitution-makers had not been reviewed. She also said there was need for evolving precepts and conventions applicable to the opposition as they "increasingly resort to agitational politics". She noted that while several countries had experimented with government systems and sought more effective forms of government, in India the British style of parliamentary system had gone on without even a debate.

WAR RAGES ON

IRAQ CLAIMED ITS forces chased the fleeing defenders of Iran's major port city of Khorramshahr down the highway to the oil defining city of Abadan as air battles flared overhead. But Iran said its fighters regained key positions in the embattled city of 3,50,000 inhabitants, repelling enemy attacks on Khorramshahr's mosque, government house, tobacco company building and the Khorramshahr-Abadan bridge. A communique from the Iraqi command said Iran set waves of helicopter gunships to halt an Iraqi advance on Abadan, prompting Iraqi jets to scramble up over the desert plain and "shoot down three enemy helicopters."



9 THE IDEAS PAGE



C R Sasikumar

Let's not waste a crisis

Challenges to new central farm bills, such as those posed by Punjab, harken to socialist era. They attempt to undo agriculture's 1991 moment



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

BY PASSING ITS farm bills, Punjab has fired the first salvo against the pieces of legislation enacted by Parliament last month. Other states in which the Congress holds office, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, could follow suit soon. Notwithstanding whether President Ram Nath Kovind gives his assent to the state bills that undermine the central ones, the important issue is to sift the grain from chaff — how much of this conflict is about economics — if at all. Let me explain.

Punjab's farm bills prohibit private players from buying wheat and paddy below the MSP (minimum support price) even outside the APMC (agriculture produce market committee) markets. Anyone trying to do so will end up with three years in prison, and also levied a hefty fine. The point is that this pertains only to wheat and paddy. Why not do it for other crops, say maize, cotton, pulses and oilseeds that are under the ambit of the central MSP system? Or even extend it to milk and vegetables by declaring local MSPs for them? Because the state government is smart and knows full well that it will create a fiasco in agri-markets, which might boomerang on it politically.

Would a law for only wheat and paddy help farmers? Not really, as the Centre already buys more than 95 per cent of Punjab's wheat and paddy at MSP through the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and state procurement agencies. So, where is the economic gain for the Punjab farmer? Much of the uproar is about the Rs 5,000 crore that the state

government (Rs 3,500 crore) and *arhtiyas* (Rs 1,500 crore) squeeze annually from the FCI for wheat and paddy procurement.

Let me get to the economic roots of this politics. My reading is that the Congress and many social activists who demand that MSP be made a legal instrument (rather than indicative) actually exhibit deep distrust of the private sector and markets. This line of thinking goes back to about 50 years. It may be worth recalling what late Indira Gandhi did to wheat and paddy traders in 1973-74, when she was at the peak of her popularity. Recall that in 1971, she had won the war with Pakistan (that gave birth to Bangladesh), abolished the privy purses of the families of erstwhile princely states, given the catchy slogan of "*Garibi hatao*", and nationalised commercial banks in 1969. All this was part of the socialist era, although the word, "socialist", was inducted in the Preamble of the Constitution only in 1976.

In October 1972, Indira Gandhi announced an important agri-marketing policy step — that the wholesale trade in wheat and rice (paddy) will be taken over by the government as traders were being unscrupulous in not giving farmers their due MSP and manipulating prices. The first marketing season of the government takeover of wholesale wheat trade, in 1973-74, saw a major fiasco. Market arrivals dropped, and wheat prices shot up by more than 50 per cent. It was a bitter lesson. But Indira Gandhi learnt, and gave up the policy the very next year.

In Punjab's farm laws, I find resonances of the wheat trade takeover of 1973-74 — that was also the period of "licence raj" in industry with marginal income tax rates going as high as 98 per cent. Do we want to go back to the economic philosophy of those days in the early 1970s that gave us what my teacher, the famous agri-economist, Raj Krishna, described as the "Hindu rate of growth" or 3.5 per cent GDP growth?

It is to the credit of the Congress Party leadership under then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao that it supported the economic reforms package prepared by Manmohan Singh and his team of trusted economists in 1991. The reforms took some

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time to yield results, but, by the 2000s, India was taking 7 per cent GDP growth as its new normal — double the "Hindu rate of growth" of the 1970s socialist era of Indira Gandhi. But even the 1991 economic reforms bypassed agriculture marketing reforms.

It was only under the leadership of the late PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee that agri-marketing reforms became high on the agenda. It was triggered by the bulging stocks of wheat and rice with the FCI. In 2003, a model act on agri-marketing was circulated to the states. Vajpayee's style of functioning was an accommodative one, as he was leading a large coalition government. But that model act did not go far enough. The NDA lost the general elections in 2004.

The UPA government, from 2004 to 2014, did not pursue any major agri-marketing reforms. In food, they again turned socialist, enacting the National Food Security Act in 2013, giving 5 kg wheat or rice to 67 per cent of the population at Rs 2/kg and Rs 3/kg. One may well ask what happened to "*Garibi hatao*" of 1971, if 67 per cent of the population was still food-insecure in 2013?

The NDA government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi set up a high-level committee (HLC) under Shanta Kumar in 2014 to restructure the grain management system. The committee suggested major changes, including cash transfers in the public distribution system, and overhauling the FCI's operations with a good dose of free markets to make the system more efficient. But the Modi government could not muster courage to undertake bold reforms, except some marginal tinkering of labour rules in the FCI. It also tried going the Vajpayee way through model acts on agri-marketing reforms. But again, they did not go far enough.

The COVID-19 crisis opened a window of opportunity to reform the agri-marketing system. The Modi government grabbed it — this is somewhat akin to the crisis of 1991 leading to de-licensing of industry. Patience and professionalism will bring rich rewards in due course, not noisy politics.

The writer is Infosys chair professor for agriculture at ICRIR

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Certain forces surrounding China should realize that they will only suffer misfortune and meet a dead end if they desperately follow external powers in disturbing China."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Truth must come out

The propriety of Andhra CM's allegations against a SC judge is questionable, but they must not be swept under the carpet



REKHA SHARMA

THE CHIEF MINISTER of Andhra Pradesh, Jagan Mohan Reddy, in a letter to the Chief Justice of India (CJI) on October 6, has made serious allegations of interference in the course of administration of justice by Justice NV Ramana, the senior-most judge after the CJI and the next in line for the post. Justice Ramana, according to Reddy, is close to the former CM of Andhra Pradesh, Chandrababu Naidu, and has been influencing the sittings of the high court judges of Andhra Pradesh — including the allocation of cases important to the Telugu Desam Party — to a few chosen judges. He has referred to questionable land deals by Naidu in Amaravati before it was declared the site for the new capital of the state and has also alluded to the allotment of land to the two daughters of Justice Ramana. On October 10, the principal advisor to the CM released the aforesaid letter to the media. As a result, what was between the chief minister and the CJI has come into public domain. Although the CJI has so far not reacted, some state bar associations have passed resolutions against Reddy, describing his letter as a blatant attempt to tarnish the fair name of Justice Ramana, and an attempt to overawe the judiciary.

The Supreme Court Bar Association has also passed a resolution condemning Reddy's action in placing the letter in the public domain. It has stated that such actions by constitutional functionaries are opposed to conventions and have a serious impact on the independence of the judiciary. However, the resolution by the SC Bar is not unanimous, as its president Dushyant Dave has not endorsed it. Dave is reported to have expressed the view that so far no one knows about the truthfulness or otherwise of the allegations, and that truth will emerge only once there is an enquiry into the allegations. Till then, according to Dave, any resolution is premature and would tantamount to pre-empting the enquiry. He goes on to say that if after the enquiry the allegations are found to be false, the SC must initiate contempt proceedings against Reddy.

Last month, a bench of the Supreme Court headed by Justice Ramana delivered a judgment in which he passed directions, including a request to the chief justices of the high courts to head special benches to immediately hear criminal cases against MPs and MLAs, which are pending for decades. It also directed that the hearings should proceed on a day-to-day basis. It is being said in some circles that the

Andhra CM, who is under a scanner with more than 30 cases of corruption pending against him, is irked by this judgment, and that his allegations are highly motivated. It is also being said that Justice Ramana has been caught in the crossfire between the present and the former chief ministers of the state, and the judiciary has been unnecessarily dragged into an unseemly controversy.

While the timing and the propriety of the CM releasing the letter to the press are certainly questionable, the letter cannot be swept under the carpet. Howsoever unwarranted the allegations may appear to be, it cannot be ignored that they have been made by one constitutional functionary against another. What is at stake is not only the prestige, independence and the reputation of the honourable judge, but also the high office of the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh. The truth must come out, howsoever bitter it may appear to be. It is often said that sunlight is the best disinfectant. Justice Ramana is reported to have said at a book launch function for Justice (Retd.) R Bhanumati that judges are self-restrained from speaking in their own defence, and, hence, they are being construed as soft targets. He may be right but in the current age, allegations do fly thick and fast, and the only way to clear the air is to subject oneself to an enquiry. Those who hold high constitutional offices, specially judges, should also be ready to bear the cross if the circumstances so demand. The ball is in the CJI's court. It is for him to take a call whether to hold an in-house enquiry or to get the allegations examined through some retired judges of the Supreme Court or to hold no enquiry at all.

Recently, senior advocate and social activist Prashant Bhushan was held guilty of contempt of court over two tweets posted by him. In one, he had commented on the CJI riding a Harley Davidson motorbike without a helmet and a mask during lockdown, and in the other, he had stated that when history would be written about how democracy was destroyed without a formal emergency, the conduct of the last four CJs would be particularly marked. The Supreme Court held that the tweets could shake the confidence of the people in the judiciary. If in the wisdom of the Supreme Court, the two tweets of Bhushan were so offensive that they merited conviction and punishment, what Reddy has said about Justice Ramana is far more serious and direct. If the allegations are found to be false, frivolous and motivated, they certainly would call for initiation of contempt proceedings against him. But then, there has to be a prima-facie enquiry first. Let no one get a feeling that when it comes to its own, the Supreme Court is reluctant to act, and let Bhushan also not get the feeling that he was a soft target.

The writer is a former judge of the Delhi High Court

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A NEW LOW

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The wrong dose' (IE, October 23). The BJP has got two issues mixed up — employment and vaccine — in the run-up to the Bihar assembly polls. Bihar actually needs an employment vaccine. But there seems to be no roadmap for this "jumla". As per CMIE data, India has 40 crore jobs, of which only 4 per cent (1.5 crore) are governmental and semi-governmental. The commitment of 19 lakh jobs is a total farce, similar to the one Narendra Modi announced in the run-up to the general elections, of 2 crore jobs per annum. The BJP, by singling out Bihar for the vaccine promise, has taken political rhetoric to its lowest ebb.

Rajiv Boolchand Jain, Zirakpur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Vaccine isn't poll sop' (IE, October 22). The BJP's poll promise of a free COVID-19 vaccine to all Bihar residents, if voted into office, is a new low in Indian democracy. While it's not new for Indian voters to be promised "freebies" during election season, bringing the pandemic into this dirty game is deplorable. It's clear that BJP has completely lost the positive attributes of its celebrated tagline, "party with a difference".

Kiran Ransing, Ahmदनगर

POWER VS FRATERNITY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The answer is fraternity' (IE, October 22). The inclusion of the word "fraternity" in the Preamble of our Constitution only shows the foresight of the founders of the Republic of India. Its importance, therefore, cannot be lost on those who believe in equal rights for all citizens, irrespective of their religion, caste and creed. But unfortunately, it is anathema to people for



PARTHA P MAJUMDER

A FORMER POSTDOC of mine, who is now a professor in the Calcutta University, was infected with SARS-CoV-2 a couple of months ago and had recovered from COVID-19. She asked me, "After our antibody level against the coronavirus goes down, would it be desirable to take an influenza vaccine?"

When a virus or bacteria infects someone, the body fights back. The immune system produces antibodies that are critical to fighting and clearing the virus. The antibodies are often specific. That is, an antibody produced to fight a virus may be ineffective or less effective to fight another virus.

My family and I had also tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. We are all above 65 years, my father is 98. But none of us had any major symptoms of COVID-19. We have all recovered. I have been wondering whether any past action on our part may have helped us recover without serious symptoms. When my former postdoc asked me about the flu vaccine, my answer was that I am not sure if it will protect you from being reinfected by SARS-CoV-2, but it will certainly protect you against the flu virus. I also mentioned to her that my whole family has been taking the flu vaccine annually for over 10 years. It dawned on me that this may have been the passive action that helped us smoothly tide over our COVID-19.

The influenza viruses — of the four types, A, B, C and D, only A and B can cause severe disease — and SARS-CoV-2 are all RNA viruses.

The other vaccine

Research suggests that a flu shot can offer a shield against severe COVID-19

That is, instead of double-stranded DNA, these viruses are made up of a single-stranded RNA genetic material. Is it then possible that the influenza vaccine can also be protective against the coronavirus? Since both are RNA viruses, is it possible that the body mounts similar immune responses?

Almost immediately after the coronavirus outbreak was declared a pandemic, many scientists and public health experts claimed that those who have received the influenza vaccine are more susceptible to infection by the coronavirus. This claim was quickly refuted by conducting focused scientific experiments — and by an analysis of data and specimens from over 10,000 residents in Canada.

Scientists have observed many interesting commonalities between immune response in patients with COVID-19 and those with influenza infection. Recently, scientists and clinicians of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity in Australia studied the immune responses in the blood in a COVID-19 patient. They conducted this study in the same patient at different points of time when the coronavirus was active in the patient. They found that significant changes in different cell types related to immune response in this patient compared to those without SARS-CoV-2 infection. For example, there was a large increase in numbers of antibody-secreting cells and follicular helper T-cells. They also detected immunoglobulin M (IgM)

and IgG antibodies that bound the COVID-19-causing coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 in blood before symptomatic recovery. These immunological findings were similar to those that have been found earlier in patients with influenza virus infection — as well as in individuals who received a vaccine against influenza.

A large study conducted recently in Brazil comprising 92,000 COVID-19 patients has concluded that the influenza vaccine protects against getting severe COVID-19. A similar conclusion was reached in a study conducted earlier in Italy. The Brazilian study found that if a person takes a flu shot before contracting SARS-CoV-2, the chance of death from COVID-19 reduces by 20 per cent. When a person takes the shot after the onset of COVID-19, the chance of death reduces by 27 per cent.

The influenza vaccine is a cocktail of inactivated viruses, that is, dead viruses. Since the RNA of the influenza virus changes (mutates) rapidly to evolve into new strains, the cocktail also changes every year. In 2019-2020, the influenza vaccine provided globally was a quadrivalent, containing four inactivated strains of flu virus — two strains each of influenza A and B.

The jury is still out on how the flu vaccine can protect against severe COVID-19. A vaccine against a virus that is composed of one or more inactivated strains of the virus fails to produce specific immunity against the virus. Instead, it produces non-specific immunity,

which refers to the immunity that a vaccine generates against a larger set of pathogens, not necessarily only against the one for which it was designed. Thus, the cocktail of inactivated strains of the flu virus confers protection not only against the influenza virus but also against other viruses. While such non-specific protection may, in some cases, be desirable, it compromises providing protection against the virus for which it was designed. It is thought that because of this non-specific immune response of the flu vaccine, recipients of the flu vaccine can recognise SARS-CoV-2 efficiently and also fight the coronavirus infection better. Hence, flu vaccine recipients infected by the coronavirus can clear away the coronavirus rapidly. Therefore, their COVID-19 clinical symptoms are less severe.

There is not yet a treatment for COVID-19 or a vaccine against SARS-CoV-2. We are having to rely on preventive measures such as wearing a face mask, hand-washing and maintaining physical distance. Every year, WHO recommends mandatory flu shots for the elderly, children and pregnant women; the subsection of any population who are at high-risk for influenza. This season, get a flu shot not only to protect yourself against influenza, but also to prevent severe COVID-19.

The writer is distinguished professor, National Institute of Biomedical Genomics, Kalyani



City Centre Mall. File

MAHARASHTRA Mumbai mall blaze doused after 56 hours

Mumbai: Nearly 56 hours after a fire broke out at the City Centre Mall in Mumbai, it was doused by fire personnel early Sunday morning, an official said. This is among the longest fire-fighting operations in the city in recent times. Earlier this month, a blaze at a cutlery market in south Mumbai took almost 45 hours to be extinguished. The fire at the City Centre Mall in Mumbai Central area broke out on the second floor of the basement-plus-three-storey structure at 8.50 pm on Thursday. "It was a level-5 (massive) blaze and was doused around 5 am on Sunday," a fire brigade official said. Around 14 fire engines and 17 jumbo tankers were engaged in the operation, he said, adding that cooling operations are underway. Five fire brigade personnel were injured during the operation, but all of them have been discharged from hospital. **PTI**

WEST BENGAL Low-intensity blast at shop in Kolkata suburb

Kolkata: A low-intensity blast took place inside a medicine shop in at Kamarhati in the northern fringes of the city on Sunday afternoon as the state celebrated Mahanavami. North 24 Parganas district police said there was no report of any casualty. A bag kept inside the shop went off at around 1 pm and preliminary investigation suggested that there were some illegal firecrackers inside the bag, a senior police official said. "A team of forensic experts will soon visit the spot. We have registered a suo motu case and started an investigation," he added. **PTI**

UTTAR PRADESH 5-yr-old girl raped by minor in Fatehpur

Fatehpur: A five-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a teenage boy in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Fatehpur district, police said on Sunday. "An FIR was registered on Saturday on a complaint against a 13-year-old boy, who allegedly raped the girl. We have detained him," a police official said. According to the FIR, the local residents even tried to quieten the matter. The girl was playing near her house when the accused took her to a secluded place and allegedly raped her, the kin alleged. **PTI**

In attempt to control potato prices, government cracks whip on hoarding

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

AFTER TAKING stringent measures to control onion prices, the government is now cracking the whip on potato hoarding, with Uttar Pradesh — the largest producer of the tuber in the country — asking private cold stores to off-load the stock by October 31 in an attempt to bring down prices in the market.

According to the Department of Consumer Affairs website, under the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, retail prices of potato were recorded at anywhere around Rs 30 to Rs 60 per kg in cities across the country on Oct 24.

"States have been asked to take action against hoarding and blackmarketing in view of the amended Essential Commodities Act. Several states are taking ac-

Need for holistic mechanism

Retail prices have gone up due to several reasons, including lower production, disrupted supplies, reduced acreage and rise in inflation — vegetable wholesale prices increased by more than 36% in September. With seed prices

EXPLAINED going up, production in the upcoming season is also likely to be affected. The way ahead is to put in place a mechanism to give farmers access to credible forecasts of opening stocks, domestic consumption and export demand for all crops.

tions," said a senior official at the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, when asked about the measures being taken to control potato prices.

While these steps are yet to yield significant results with potato retail prices rising steadily in the current financial year amid low production this year, farmers in the

potato belt are apprehensive of a negative impact of such measures, saying they are getting a good price due to lower production.

For instance, Uttar Pradesh, as part of its actions against hoarding, has asked cold stores to off-load the potato stock by October 31. But farmers say that most of this stock is seed-potato which they will need for sowing.

"Under the Cold Storage Act, the period of potato storage in private cold storage of the district should be kept effective till October 31, and effective action should be ensured in respect of the arrival and sale of tomatoes, onions and potatoes so that hoarding is controlled," UP Horticulture and Food Processing Additional Chief Secretary Manoj Singh said in orders sent to all District Collectors on October 10.

According to UP government estimates, there was a stock of 22 lakh metric tonnes of potato in cold storage across the state in October against a monthly consumption of about 6-6.5 lakh metric tonnes. However, Mohammad Alamgeer, general secretary of Aloo Utapaadak Kisan Samiti, Agra, said, "Normally, 30th November is the last date by when farmers are supposed to take out their potato stock from the cold storage... This is our seed, if we sell

it, how we will sow the next crop."

Alamgeer said potato sowing was delayed "due to prevailing high temperatures in October". "Sowing will continue till November. So if we take out the stock by October 31, then our seed will get rotten."

Doongar Singh, a potato farmer in Khandoli village in Agra, said the state government is "bullying the farmers". "This is the first time in the last four years that potato farmers have got a good price. This is because of lower production this year," Singh told The Indian Express over phone.

According to estimates, cold stores across India have stocked only an estimated 36 crore bags (of 50 kg each) of potato from the main rabi (winter-spring) crop harvested in February-March. This was against 48 crore in 2019, 46 crore in 2018 and the record 57 crore bags of the 2017 post-demonetisation crop.

RBI Governor tests positive, asymptomatic

Mumbai: Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das has tested positive for Covid-19 and is in home quarantine.

"I have tested Covid-19 positive. Asymptomatic. Feeling very much alright. Have alerted those who came in contact in recent days. Will continue to work from isolation. Work in the RBI will go on normally. I am in touch with all Deputy

Governors and other officers through VC and telephone," Das tweeted.

Das till recently chaired virtual meetings of the Monetary Policy Committee and the RBI's central board. Last week, Das said the country is at the doorstep of economic revival on the back of accommodative monetary and fiscal policies being pursued by the central bank and the government. **ENS**



Shaktikanta Das

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Tarun Gogoi discharged from hospital

Guwahati: Former Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, who was undergoing treatment for Covid-19 and other post-recovery complications, was discharged from hospital on Sunday after exactly two months.



Former Assam CM

His residence, a senior doctor said. "His blood pressure, sugar and other vital parameters are normal at present. He is completely fine now. However, our doctors and nurses will continue to monitor his health at his residence," the doctor informed.

The three-time chief minister had tested positive for Covid-19 on August 25. **PTI**

Bareilly teen, youth booked for her 'abduction' found in Ajmer, claim marriage

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 25

DAYS after a mob ransacked a police station in Bareilly after alleging police inaction in the investigation into the alleged abduction of a teenage Hindu girl by a youth from another community, the police found the two at a hotel in Ajmer.

While the girl's family said in their complaint that she is 17-year-old, police said the girl has told them that she is 19 and went with the youth willingly. The two also claimed that they married.

On Saturday, the two were brought to Bareilly. Police said they recovered Rs 3 lakh in cash and two fake Aadhaar cards of the girl. Police have now also charged the youth with forgery.

The youth was produced before a local court which sent him to judicial custody. The girl has been sent to a protection home after she refused to go with her parents.

"The youth has been booked on forgery charges because he got a fake Aadhaar card of the girl made. He is currently in judicial custody," said Assistant SP Ravindra Kumar.

He added that while the girl and the youth claimed to have married, they could not produce

any documentary proof.

Police said the girl claimed to have married the youth after conversion.

During questioning, the girl, who is pursuing graduation, said she is a major and willingly went with the youth, said police. "She produced her education certificates to claim she is a major. All documents need to be verified," said an officer.

The girl, police said, denied to go for a medical examination.

"We will produce her in court on Tuesday to get her statement recorded. The next step would be taken as per court directive," said Circle Officer, Bareilly, Saad Mian Khan.

On October 17, the girl's father lodged an FIR, stating that a local youth kidnapped his daughter from near his house. He said his daughter had Rs 8 lakh in cash and jewellery when she was kidnapped. On the basis of the complaint, a case was lodged against the youth and his family.

On October 20, a mob barged into the police station and ransacked it. Local BJP leaders claimed that although they were present at the police station at the time, those who created ruckus were outsiders and not party workers. The protesters damaged furniture and tore up documents.

Withdraw TRP fraud case referred to CBI, NBA asks govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

THE NEWS Broadcasters Association (NBA) has asked the government to withdraw the case of alleged TRP manipulation that has been referred to the CBI.

In a statement Saturday, the NBA said, "The speed with which the case was transferred to CBI overnight raises doubts about the intentions. A complaint filed against unknown persons by an individual who has no locus standi may lead to a witch-hunt against the media, its advertisers and advertising agencies. We sincerely urge the government to immediately withdraw the case referred to CBI," the statement said.

The NBA said the Broadcast Audience Research Council, which measures and publishes TRP, "has a mechanism to deal with such cases". The statement comes against the backdrop of the government transferring the case to the CBI after an FIR was filed in Hazratganj based on the complaint by an employee of an ad agency based in Delhi. Based on a reference by the UP government, the CBI filed an FIR against unidentified people Tuesday.

Since then, Maharashtra government has withdrawn its "general consent" to the CBI to investigate cases in the state. Mumbai Police has been investigating the

MEDIA AGENCY OWNER ARRESTED

Mumbai: Mumbai Police on Sunday made another arrest in the TRP scam, taking the total number of arrests in the case to 10. The latest person to be arrested is Abhishek Kolavde, owner of a small media agency. An officers said, "During the auditing of accounts of some of the accused we have arrested as yet, we found some suspicious transactions to their account from Kolavde. We wanted to interrogate him about the same." **ENS**

TRP case; its commissioner Param Bir Singh mentioned earlier this month that Republic TV was one of the three channels involved in the alleged manipulation. Now, five channels are under probe.

On Friday, Mumbai Police booked Republic Media Network's executive editor, an anchor, two reporters and other editorial staff for broadcasting alleged defamatory news content against the police department.

The NBA statement said it is "very disturbed at the turn of events in Mumbai as the clash between Republic TV and Mumbai police is posing a threat to the credibility and respect of two great institutions, media and police".

NCB arrests six, including TV actor, in Mumbai drugs case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 25

THE NARCOTICS Control Bureau (NCB) on Sunday registered two cases in which six people were arrested under sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. Those arrested include a TV actor and a Tanzanian national.

According to an NCB official, 4 grams of cocaine were seized at Mohammad Ali Road in south Mumbai, and Bruno John Ngwale, a Tanzanian national, was arrested on Saturday. On the same day, 4.4 grams of ecstasy and 1.88 grams of MDMA were seized at Versova, Andheri, and one Rohit Hire was arrested in connection to the same.

Another NCB Mumbai team seized 325 grams of ganja, 32 grams of charas and five grams of methamphetamine, as well as Rs

12,990, from a vehicle. One more person was arrested in connection to this, the official said.

In a separate case, based on input regarding supply of marijuana in Versova, a Mumbai Zonal Unit team on Saturday apprehended two persons at Macchimar colony in Versova. "The team seized 99 grams of ganja from their possession," an official said.

The official said that the supplier, Faisal (20), and the receiver, Preetika Chauhan (30), were arrested and produced before a court. Chauhan has worked in several TV serials, including Maa Vaishnodevi.

During interrogation, it was revealed that the ganja was sourced from one Deepak Rathaur, also a resident of Versova. According to an official, Rathaur has also been arrested in the past by the Mumbai Anti-Narcotics Cell for allegedly supplying drugs.

PUJA, WITH PRECAUTION

A priest wearing a mask and a face shield performs Nabami puja at a pandal in Kolkata on Sunday. Partha Paul



Maharashtra approves Rs 103 cr aid to kin of cops who died on Covid duty

MOHAMED THAYER
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 25

THE MAHARASHTRA government, which is providing Rs 50 lakh compensation to the families of police personnel who died due to Covid-19, has till October 21 approved a payout of over Rs 103 crore to 205 families.

As per details obtained from the Home department, applications were received from 223 families, of which 205 were approved, five were rejected while 14 have been forwarded to the health department to get clarity on the cause of death. Of the 223 claims, 80 were related to the Mumbai Police.

An official from the Home department said, "So far, upwards of Rs 103 crore have been sanctioned by the Maharashtra government for families of those policemen who passed away on Covid duty."

The official said that in order to qualify as a corona warrior, the

government had specified a few conditions, including that the personnel should have been on duty for 14 days prior to falling ill, the personnel should be on Covid duty and the death certificate should clearly mention the cause of death as Covid-19.

"In the four cases that have been rejected until now, either the officer had been on leave and passed away or was not on Covid duty. In such cases, the application made by the family members was rejected," an official added.

"In some cases, the cause of death was not clearly mentioned or the person died due to multiple factors. There were 14 such cases which we then passed on to the health department where experts will take a closer look. Depending on what they say, we will either approve or reject..."

Families of policemen who died due to Covid-19 are also being given Rs 10 lakh by the Maharashtra Police from its welfare fund.

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

237 DAYS SINCE PANDEMIC BEGAN
CASES: 78,64,811
RECOVERED: 70,78,123
DEATHS: 1,18,534
TESTS: 10,25,23,469 | **DOUBLING RATE: 104.16****



| KEY STATES TOWATCH | TOTAL CASES | SURGE IN 24 HOURS | 7-DAY AVG GROWTH* | DOUBLING TIME** |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| ■ Maharashtra | 16,38,961 | 6,417 | 0.47% | 154.03 |
| ■ Andhra | 8,04,026 | 3,342 | 0.45% | 159.98 |
| ■ Karnataka | 7,98,378 | 4,471 | 0.73% | 98.19 |
| ■ Tamil Nadu | 7,06,136 | 2,886 | 0.47% | 154.23 |
| ■ Kerala | 3,86,087 | 8,253 | 2.08% | 34.58 |

* Compounded Daily Growth Rate over last 7 days ** Calculated over 7-day growth

| CASE FATALITY RATIO 7 DAYS EARLIER: 1.52 NOW: 1.51 | POSITIVITY RATE 7 DAYS EARLIER: 7.95 NOW: 7.67 | DAILY IN, DAILY OUT DETECTED TODAY 50,129 RECOVERED TODAY: 62,077 |
|--|--|---|
| Deaths as a ratio of positive cases (in %); indicator of progress in averting deaths | Positives against number tested (in %); indicator of the spread of disease | Becoming sick vs recovering; more recoveries for 14 days may signal the peak |

Data as on October 24, released by Union Ministry of Health, ICMR and states. Often daily numbers include data from previous days. As such, trends based on daily numbers are indicative, not definitive

Wish I hadn't let her go: mother of woman jailed in Qatar drug case

SRINATH RAO & SAGAR RAJPUT
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 25

MOHAMMAD SHAREEQ and Oniba Qureshi were never supposed to go on a second honeymoon. Not after Oniba found out two days before their flight to Qatar last July that she was pregnant with their first child. But the "sponsor" of their trip, Shareeq's paternal aunt Tabassum Riyaz Qureshi, did not react to the news with happiness.

"I've spent so much money for you and Oniba to have a good time in Qatar. If you cancel now, I will

lose a lot of money. And are you telling me that pregnant women don't fly?" Qureshi is alleged to have told her nephew.

In the end, the young couple was forced to travel to Bengaluru in an air-conditioned bus and catch their flight from the Kempegowda International Airport. "Before leaving, Tabassum handed them a bag which she said contained tobacco. She said that once they checked into their hotel room in Qatar, someone would come and collect the bag from them," said Oniba's mother Parveen Qureshi.

What happened once Shareeq and Oniba arrived at the Hammad



Mohammad Shareeq and Oniba Qureshi

International Airport in Qatar on July 6, 2019, was a scene that countless unwitting drug mules have had to face at airports around the world while carrying a piece of luggage entrusted to them at the last minute.

The local drug enforcement

agency searched the bag and found 4.1 kilogrammes of hashish inside. Despite the couple's protestations of innocence, the Supreme Judiciary Council of Qatar found them guilty and sentenced them to life imprisonment in December last year. While in jail, Oniba had a baby girl named Ayat Qureshi earlier this year.

Back in her home in Mumbai Central, Oniba's mother Parveen rues not stopping her daughter from going to Qatar. The couple, both 29 years old, had married in May 2018 and gone to Bangkok for their honeymoon. Shareeq, an administrative consultant with the Japanese financial technology

firm Hyosung, was due to be promoted before his arrest. Oniba had quit her job as an assistant manager with a private firm in Mumbai after her marriage.

"Oniba did not want to go. But since Shareeq's aunt was insistent on giving them a wedding gift, I told her to go. I wish I hadn't let her go," she said.

Since December, both Shareeq and Oniba's families had written to the Prime Minister's Office, the Union Home Minister and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), seeking help for their children.

On September 27, 2019, Oniba's father, Shakeel Ahmed Qureshi, filed a complaint with the

12 IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR, MINISTER FOR INFORMATION & BROADCASTING, ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Many high courts too suggest we intervene... We don't censor. We believe in self-regulation

The Union Minister believes pollution on account of stubble burning will be less this year because of Centre's measures, asserts the country will see "minimum loss" because of Covid-19 in winter months, and says Congress not the BJP is raking up Pakistan in Bihar polls. The session was moderated by Special Correspondent Krishn Kaushik

KRISHN KAUSHIK: How would you assess the government's communication strategy in the past six months of the pandemic?

The Prime Minister spoke from the heart and addressed people directly. It had a lot of impact. India minimised its losses due to people's participation on the Prime Minister's appeal.

Even for the (coronavirus) challenge in the winter months, he has already talked from the bottom of his heart to the people.

We will succeed then too, and India will see minimum loss. We will win this war against the coronavirus.

KRISHN KAUSHIK: What can the government do to ensure that TRP data is more robust? Secondly, even as an investigation into the alleged rigging of TRP continues, you as a Union minister along with the BJP president tweeted about it. Why the need to come out and defend one person and an organisation?

No... Let me make it very clear that the government doesn't take sides. I'm saying it very clearly that repression of press is not welcome. That is the only message of my tweet. I have not mentioned any channel or person.

The BARC (Broadcast Audience Research Council) is an independent institute founded by advertisers and broadcasters. It is the job of both these stakeholders to run BARC efficiently; we have not interfered in it.

Two of my representatives, not as part of Ministry but as broadcasters of Doordarshan, participate in BARC proceedings. But other than that we don't interfere in their affairs. Are you inviting me to interfere?

LIZ MATHEW: Why did the BJP feel the need to raise Pakistan in the Bihar poll campaign when, as you claim, you have a good governance report card to take to the people?

We are not creating problems, it is the Congress party that is creating problems for themselves. Who spoke in Lahore (Think Fest)? It was Shashi Tharoor... When you are talking about Article 370 or any other thing like Pakistan, if you are speaking the language of Pakistan, there will be definite reactions. So, we are not digging up something that they spoke about 10 years ago, we are just reacting to their recent tweets, recent utterances... And we are asking questions on why they are talking Pakistan's language on Kashmir.

LIZ MATHEW: In the 2015 Bihar elections too, then BJP president Amit Shah had said that if the BJP loses, there will be fireworks in Pakistan. The party's own assessment was that the comment may have backfired. So why bring up Pakistan again?

But we are not saying it... The Congress is speaking, Rahul Gandhi said... P Chidambaram and Digvijaya Singh tweeted that we will restore Article 370 (the Congress said it had only objected to what the provision was abrogated). So, I challenge them to write this in the Bihar manifesto. What is wrong in giving political reaction to a political tweet or political speech?

ESHA ROY: The draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2020 received a record number of objections and suggestions. Is the Ministry looking at including these recommendations and, maybe, overhauling the draft completely?

See, as far as the EIA draft is concerned, we welcome all suggestions and criticism. We have appointed a committee to go through all of them. What we have found is that 98% (objections, suggestions) have the same wording and matter, but we have taken cognizance of everything. But let me tell you things will take little time because the quantum (of suggestions) was large.

We cannot say that 30-40 days... But the analysis will take some time and after that we will announce our decision on the subject. We will also explain to the people what the EIA actually proposes, what is the change from 2006 to 2014, and that we have just consolidated many of the things which were already done in the



WHY

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR

As I&B Minister, Javadekar has been the govt's face in the pandemic, communicating Centre's measures to check spread of the virus to people. As television news grapples with TRP scam, his Ministry has asserted need for better self-regulation in the industry. He also holds the MoEF portfolio, and Ministry's draft EIA, 2020, has come under criticism in recent months

2012-13 period...

But let the things come to that stage, then we will discuss with the people, not now.

KRISHN KAUSHIK: The issue of air pollution has come up again in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and NCR.

Basically, the acceptance of a problem is also the beginning of solution. In 2015, the Prime Minister launched the national Air Quality Index. Till that time there was only manual, voluminous data available. There wasn't one figure for air quality index... Based on findings from various towns and cities, we have chalked out the national clean air programme for 100 cities. On August 15, the Prime Minister said that in thousand days or in three-four years, we are going to improve the air quality in these hundred cities. This includes special focus on the Delhi-NCR region...

We have taken so many steps, let me enumerate. First, throughout the country we have launched BS-VI fuel as well as (compliant) vehicles. It is a revolutionary step and will reduce vehicular pollution by 50-60-70% on various parameters.

Secondly, close to 60,000 vehicles that had no work in the city would pass through it and add to the pollution. Now, because of completion of the Western Peripheral Expressway, which was not completed in 10 years, and which we

completed in four years, such vehicles don't enter Delhi...

Thirdly, we have closed the Badarpur and Sonapat thermal power plants. More importantly, we have created 87 Gigawatt of renewable power throughout the country; it's not a small thing. It is completely natural, pollution-free... We have also arranged more than 40 crore LED bulbs saving tremendous power, which also reduces pollution.

We have brought in construction and demolition waste management rules for the first time. We have borrowed the good practices of Metro construction... So, curtains are being put up, there are sprinklers to prevent dust... Delhi also has a geographical problem.

We have the Himalayan winter coupled with dust in the air and the moisture from the rivers... If you download the Sameer app, it provides the present position of pollution in more than 122 cities. You will understand that the alluvial soil region, that is the gangetic plains, has the maximum pollution load compared to other provinces with the same traffic, same industries, same population load... Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai don't get this much pollution. So, (in the Delhi-NCR belt) geographical factors are also responsible (for causing pollution).

The Central government has taken action in every field... To curb stubble burning, we have given Rs 1,400 crore for machines and many farmers are using machines (to remove stubble). When this year's stubble burning season is over, there will be lesser pollution on account of it. That is what scientists are expecting.

So, let us wait and see. But we have taken action on all fronts.

SHIVAM PATEL: It seems that while Delhi has taken a lot of steps to check pollution — banning diesel generators, shutting down Badarpur plant, plying more CNG buses — the other NCR towns have not been so proactive. What can be done about that?

There are some local issues... It is not one state versus another state. It is not about a blame game. We all have to work together because air-shed doesn't understand political or geographical boundaries.

ADITI RAJA: The Gujarat government applied for environment clearances for water aerodromes at Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad and near Sardar Sarovar dam in Kevadia colony for the seaplane project only in July, even as the inaugural run is planned for October 31. With MoEF clearances pending for the Sabarmati terminal of the project, would the project not be in violation of the EIA Notification?

When a proposal is submitted officially, we give our decisions officially. So when that will come, you will understand what has happened. But more importantly, my question to you all is whether we want to explore new kinds of tourism or not?

The seaplane causes no pollution, it's a wonderful thing... Of course, there are

precautions which need to be taken. So we will definitely work with the Gujarat government in this regard... Seaplane is a wonderful avenue not just for tourism but will be useful in providing local services.

PRABHA RAGHAVAN: The Power Minister had made a recommendation to your Ministry in August to extend by two years the deadline for thermal power plants to install the flue-gas desulfurization (FGD) systems to minimise pollution from their operations, for over 300 thermal power units. Is there any update on that?

The status is that some plants already have FGDs installed in their systems, while many others had given orders for it but their plans were disrupted because of the pandemic. So, there will definitely be some delay in procuring the machinery. There are some plants which are yet to place their orders and are preparing the DPR, and a small number of plants have not prepared the DPR. So, the plants are at different stages. We are in continuous touch with the industry. They have also been in recession as we know... (The extension) depends on a case-to-case basis. We have already done the reviews, and I mentioned the four stages in which the plants are... I am very sure that Indian industry will be cleaner... We are investing Rs 46,000 crore in new technology called 'coal-to-

Quantum (of suggestions, criticism) for EIA draft was large. A panel is analysing them. Things will take time... Will discuss with people when time comes

ity in the elections.

We should have been ruling. Instead, the Shiv Sena ditched the BJP and went with those who we defeated, the Congress and the NCP... So it is the Shiv Sena which is answerable, not the BJP.

MANOJ C G: A Delhi-based journalist working with Malayalam news outlets was booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act

(UAPA) while on his way to Hathras. As the I&B Minister have you tried to speak to the Uttar Pradesh government about this case?

We have received information of the case and you can also ask the government, the government is open to it... But what we are asking the Congress is that while you are making noise on Hathras, 10 places in Rajasthan have seen worse crimes. So the Congress cannot have selective amnesia. They have to condemn all incidents.

AAKASH JOSHI: How do you see the politicisation of the Sushant Singh Rajput case ahead of the Bihar elections?

The case is under investigation by three Central agencies. People have faith in them, let them give their final report. The matter is in court, and the agencies will submit their report in the court... Yes, there may be a local reaction of people or voters to a certain case in a certain way. But we do not see it as one state versus another.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: It's been five-and-a-half months since the border standoff with China began. Has the issue been discussed in the nearly 20 Cabinet meetings that have taken place in this period?

China is being closely monitored. China has also understood that India today is not the India of pre-2014. There has been a change. We have given a fitting response. And the government has made it very clear that we have not succumbed an inch... The Cabinet Committee on Security always keeps track of developments, practically every minute, every day, and takes decisions. The issue is discussed in the Cabinet Committee of Security in which all the member Cabinet ministers are present... The government has made it clear that not a single inch of Indian land has gone anywhere.

KRISHN KAUSHIK: Your party announced free vaccine in Bihar as part of its election manifesto. Will people outside Bihar get free Covid-19 vaccine?

If the vaccine comes, it will be for everyone, not for one state... You will have to ask (Health Minister) Harsh Vardhanji about it (the BJP's poll promise in Bihar).

If the party mentions something in its manifesto, it is an intended programme. Now somebody has to subsidise that government programme. If the government decides to subsidise it, that is a different matter. Let the vaccine come. Then every state will help their citizens differently.

KRISH KAUSHIK: There is a lot of talk these days about what media should do, what it is doing, what is it not doing...

That is what my question to the media is. Every day many high courts are also suggesting that the Ministry intervene, not only in the TRP scam and BARC, but even other areas of programming. We don't censor. We believe in self-regulation.

Now whether self-regulation works or not... Recently, two prominent news channel owners had come to me.

They wanted to give me a letter urging the government to intervene to save the industry from going down. I told them, broadcasters and advertisers are the two stakeholders. Who gets how much is a private thing, it has nothing to do with the government. Therefore, we never intervened.

There have also been discussions about OTT platforms. I have called them twice to talk about a credible self-regulation method, but they have not come up with a proposal.

Illustration: Suvajit Dey

If vaccine comes, will be for everyone... Ask Harsh Vardhanji about (BJP's Bihar promise). Let vaccine come. Every state will help its citizens differently

liquid' that will reduce pollution to a great extent. So, on all avenues we have started taking action. Today, the absolute coal consumption of America is little more than what India uses.

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN: Recently, veteran Maharashtra politician Eknath Khadse quit the BJP, and has now joined the NCP. Did the BJP make enough of an effort to retain him? Doesn't his departure dent the party in Maharashtra, or was it that you wanted to make an example out of him? Secondly, the BJP has been saying that the ruling coalition government in Maharashtra is very unstable and that it will collapse anytime now. But we also hear that there are others from the BJP waiting in the wings to jump ship.

As far as Eknath Khadse is concerned, he is our senior leader and has worked for the party for 40 years. There were some problems and if he has taken a decision, it is his decision, it was not forced by the party.

As far as people waiting to jump ship is concerned, actually the reverse is happening... See let us understand the election results in Maharashtra properly. The Shiv Sena won on Narendra Modi's posters. The BJP-Shiv Sena got a majority. We fought as an alliance and the alliance got 160 seats. We got a full major-

TOPOF THE
WORLD

Opposition candidate Wavel Ramkalawan casts his vote as he holds his son. *Reuters*

SEYCHELLES

Opposition wins presidential election for 1st time since 1977

THE SEYCHELLES elected an opposition candidate as president for the first time since 1977, authorities announced on Sunday, and winner Wavel Ramkalawan reaffirmed a pledge to hike the minimum wage after Covid-19 stifled the tourism-dependent economy. Ramkalawan, a former Anglican priest, defeated President Danny Faure after three decades of unsuccessful runs for the presidency of the East African nation, an Indian Ocean archipelago famed for its natural beauty and rare wildlife. **REUTERS**

BRITAIN

Doctors demand free meals for children during school holidays

PEDIATRICIANS ARE urging the British government to reverse course and provide free meals for poor children during school holidays as the Covid-19 pandemic pushes more families into poverty. Some 2,200 members of the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health have written an open letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson, saying they were shocked by his "refusal" to back down on the issue. The House of Commons last week rejected legislation that would have provided free meals during all school holidays from October through the Easter break. **AP**

VATICAN

Pope names new cardinals, putting his stamp on Church's future

POPE FRANCIS named 13 new Roman Catholic cardinals on Sunday, including nine under the age of 80 who are eligible to enter a conclave to elect his successor after his death or resignation. They will be elevated to the high rank at a ceremony known as a consistory at the Vatican next month. The nine electors come from around the world and increase the possibility that the next pope will be a person who will continue Francis' policies. **REUTERS**

'Not how you talk about friends': Biden slams Trump for remarks on India's air

Says deeply values India partnership



RACE FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 25

SLAMMING US President Donald Trump for his comment on India's air pollution, former vice president and Democratic Party presidential nominee Joe Biden on Saturday said he and his running mate Kamala Harris deeply valued America's partnership with India.

"President Trump called India 'filthy'. It's not how you talk about friends and it's not how you solve global challenges like climate change," Biden said in a tweet, two days after Trump, during a presidential debate, accused China, India and Russia of not taking care of their "filthy" air.

"Kamala Harris and I deeply value our partnership and will put respect back at the centre of our foreign policy," Biden said on Twitter Saturday as he retweeted his op-ed in the latest issue of the *India West* weekly.

"The Obama-Biden years were some of the best we've ever had between our two countries. A Biden-Harris administration will build on that great progress and do even more. We can and should be natural allies," Biden wrote in the op-ed. "That's why if elected President, I will continue what I have long called for: The US and India will stand together against terrorism in all its forms and work together to promote a region of peace and stability where neither China nor any other country threatens its neighbours." **PTI**

Afghanistan says senior Al-Qaeda leader killed

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KABUL, OCTOBER 25

AFGHANISTAN CLAIMED Sunday it killed a top Al-Qaeda propagandist on an FBI most-wanted list during an operation in the country's east, showing the militant group's continued presence there as US forces work to withdraw from America's longest-running war amid continued bloodshed.

The reported death of Husam Abd al-Rauf, also known as Abu Muhsin al-Masri, follows weeks of violence including an IS-claimed bombing on Saturday near Kabul that killed 24 people. This threatens the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Qatar. It also complicates US' efforts to withdraw from Afghanistan.

Details about the raid that led to al-Rauf's alleged death remained murky, hours after Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security intelligence service claimed on Twitter to have killed him in Ghazni province. Al-Qaeda did not immediately acknowledge



LINES STRETCH FOR BLOCKS AS NEW YORKERS TURN OUT FOR EARLY VOTING: Thousands of New Yorkers flooded polling places and waited hours in long lines Saturday, the first day of early voting. Lines stretched for blocks outside polling sites as election officials contended with malfunctioning electronic poll machines and tried to calm anxious voters. The hurdles for voters and poll workers on the first day of voting reflected the challenges of a holding a contentious presidential election in the middle of a pandemic. But many people remained undeterred by the delays and the coronavirus, some waiting as long as five hours and some rushing to get in line before polls closed. *Reuters*

Virus surge colours campaign's final stretch

Pence's top aide tests positive, Vice President to keep travelling despite contact

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WAUKESHA, OCTOBER 25

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump assured supporters packed shoulder to shoulder at weekend rallies that "we're rounding the turn" on the coronavirus and mocked challenger Joe Biden for raising alarms about the pandemic, despite surging cases around the country and more positive infections at the White House.

Trump's remarks came Saturday, hours before the White House announced that a top aide to Vice President Mike Pence had tested positive for the virus. Pence has been in close contact with the adviser, the White



Trump and Biden have been campaigning in swing states days ahead of the November 3 election. *AP*

House said, but still planned to keep travelling and holding rallies around the country.

The revelation of another high-ranking administration official testing positive for the virus coupled with the administration's decision to continue business as usual punctuated a day that



marked the starkly different approaches that Trump and Biden are taking to campaigning in the age of the novel coronavirus.

Pence's office confirmed late Saturday that his chief of staff, Marc Short, had tested positive. Trump commented on Short early Sunday after his plane

landed in Washington. "I did hear about it just now," he said. "And I think he's quarantining. Yeah. I did hear about it. He's going to be fine. But he's quarantining."

The revelation bookended a day in which Biden and Trump demonstrated remarkably different attitudes about what they saw as safe behaviour in the home-stretch of a campaign that has been upended by the pandemic.

"We don't want to become superspreaders," Biden told supporters at a "drive-in" rally in Pennsylvania, picking up a term that has been used to describe the Rose Garden event in late September in which Trump announced his latest Supreme Court nominee.

TURKEY'S ERDOGAN ALSO SLAMS FRENCH PRESIDENT

Imran accuses Macron of attacking Islam

REUTERS
ISLAMABAD, ISTANBUL, OCTOBER 25

PAKISTANI PRIME MINISTER Imran Khan said on Sunday that French President Emmanuel Macron has "attacked Islam" by encouraging the display of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad.

Khan's comments come days after Macron paid tribute to a French history teacher beheaded



Pakistan PM Imran Khan

by an Islamist radical who wanted to avenge the use of cartoons depicting the Prophet

Muhammad in a class on freedom of expression.

"Sadly, President Macron has chosen to deliberately provoke Muslims, incl his own citizens, through encouraging the display of blasphemous cartoons targeting Islam & our Prophet PBUH," Khan said on Twitter. Khan said Macron could have shown a "healing touch" to deny space to extremists but had instead "chosen to encourage Islamophobia by attacking Islam rather than the

Gunmen storm school in Cameroon, killing seven children

BLAISE EYONG & JOSIANE KOUAGHEU
KUMBA, OCTOBER 25

GUNMEN STORMED a school in Cameroon on Saturday and opened fire indiscriminately, killing at least seven children and wounding about 12 more in a region where separatist insurgents operate, officials and parents said.

Arriving on motorcycles and in civilian clothes, the attackers hit the school around midday in the city of Kumba in South West Region, according to the accounts, including from one parent outside the school at the time.

Some children were injured jumping from second storey windows.

It was unclear if the attack was linked to an ongoing struggle between the Army and groups seeking to form a break-away state called Ambazonia in the English-speaking west.

But it was a grim new low in a region that since 2017 has seen hundreds die and thousands displaced because of the conflict, with many children unable to attend school. The attack has drawn widespread condemnation and is likely to pile further pressure on the government to do more to end the conflict.

"They found the children in class and they opened fire on them," city sub-prefect Ali Anougou told Reuters.

Isabel Dione ran into the school to search for her 12-year-old daughter when she heard about the shooting. She found her on the floor of a classroom, bleeding from the stomach.

"She was helpless and she was shouting 'mum please help me', and I told her 'only your God can save you now'," Dione told Reuters. The girl was rushed to hospital where she is undergoing treatment for a gunshot wound. **REUTERS**

Police injured in London lockdown protests, 18 held



At a protest in Trafalgar Square, London, on Saturday. *AP*

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, OCTOBER 25

SCOTLAND YARD said its officers policing anti-lockdown demonstrations in London have made 18 arrests, with some officers receiving minor injuries following clashes with the protesters.

Large groups of protesters were seen marching through the city on Saturday with banners and placards calling for "freedom" and an end to Covid-19 restrictions, which has currently placed the UK capital under Tier 2, under which

any gatherings of more than six people are prohibited.

The Metropolitan Police said it made arrests for a variety of offences, including breaching coronavirus regulations and assaulting an emergency service worker.

"One demonstration in particular attracted a large number of protesters and I became increasingly concerned that those in the crowd were not maintaining social distancing or adhering to the terms of their own risk assessment," said Commander Ade Adelekan, leading the Met Police's operation over the weekend. **PTI**



King Al-Sultan Abdullah (left) and PM Muhyiddin Yassin

Malaysia's king rejects PM's request for emergency rule

JOSEPH SIPALAN & ROZANNA LATIFF
KUALA LUMPUR, OCTOBER 25

MALAYSIA'S KING Al-Sultan Abdullah rejected on Sunday a proposal by Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin for him to declare a state of emergency in response to the coronavirus crisis, saying that he did not see the need.

Critics say Muhyiddin's request for emergency rule, which would include suspending parliament, is an attempt by the premier to stay in power amid a leadership challenge.

Malaysia is seeing a resurgence in virus infections and on Saturday reported its biggest daily jump in cases with 1,228 new cases.

The palace said Muhyiddin made the request for emergency rule to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, but that the government has been handling the crisis well.

"Al-Sultan Abdullah is of the opinion that there is no need at the moment for His Majesty to declare an emergency in the country or in any part of the country of Malaysia," the palace said in a statement.

"His Majesty is confident in the ability of the government under the leadership of the Prime Minister to continue to implement policies and enforcement efforts to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic."

The king's decision came after a meeting with other senior royals. The constitution gives the king the right to decide if an emergency should be declared, based on threats to security, economy or public order. **REUTERS**

DEBATES IN THE STATE HAVE LONG BEEN LEADING INDICATORS OF SOCIAL ISSUES ROILING AMERICA

Also on California ballot: Gig economy, race in admissions

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
SAN FRANCISCO, OCTOBER 25

SHOULD UBER drivers be considered employees? Should public schools consider race when accepting students? Should 17-year-olds who will turn 18 by the time of a presidential election be allowed to vote in the primaries? Should prisoners be able to pay cash to get bail?

Other than choosing between presidential candidates Donald Trump and Joe Biden, in what is being called the contest for "America's soul", these are some of the questions Californians will be voting on come November 3.

Debates in this Democratic state have long been leading indicators of social issues roiling America — and the propositions on the ballot this time are no different.

"To study California initiatives and referendum is to study a microcosm of the major... issues that people and politicians have cared about," wrote historian John Altschuler in his book on the state's proposition system.

This year's propositions, put on the ballot by citizens who garnered at least 623,212 signatures in support of each, come from a tradition of direct democracy in the country. US citizens can suggest propositions — or legal measures — to be put to popular refer-



Supporters of "pro-black" initiatives on the ballot at an event hosted by the California Democratic Party Black Caucus. *AP*

endum in a state, bypassing the legislature. California was the second state (after its close liberal sister Oregon) to institute the system in the late 1800s and has used it

most frequently. A series of propositions in the 1900s dealt with politics over oil exploration and insurance companies. In 2008, Proposition 8 was one of the first

legislative debates about gay marriage. In 2010, voters were asked to choose between emission standards and employment rates — all issues that eventually made their way to international discourse.

This year, the most contested proposition, Prop 22, has voters asking if Uber drivers should have flexibility or stability. With stickers on Uber vehicles and on bags of online grocery service Instacart, app-based companies have spent \$181 million — the most in California's history on a proposition campaign — to get voters on their side. If it passes, it would exempt companies like Uber from providing employee benefits to their drivers. A group of gig work-

ers sued Uber for \$260 million on Thursday for the company's aggressive in-app messages asking riders to support the prop.

Currently, companies like Uber, Lyft and food delivery firm DoorDash use a contracting model so that they don't have to pay their workers unemployment insurance, overtime, or compensation. The companies claim most of their drivers, a million Californians, would prefer the flexibility of contract work over the stability of employee benefits.

Another contentious measure, supported by Democratic Vice-President nominee Kamala Harris, would allow public entities in employment, contracting and edu-

cation to consider race, sex, colour, ethnicity, or national origin to address diversity. In other words, it would allow affirmative action, giving preferential treatment to historically disadvantaged groups. The state had outlawed this practice in the 1990s. The system is different from quotas, which are banned by American federal law.

This is most often brought up in the case of university admissions. Many Asian Americans believe affirmative action measures hurt them, as their higher scores are de-valued for another's identity. Others say diversity should focus more on class, not race.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

14 ECONOMY

OCTOBER 31 DEADLINE FOR ECLGS WORTH ₹3 LAKH CRORE APPROACHING

To maximise liquidity for MSMEs, govt may extend credit scheme deadline

SUNNY VERMA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

THE GOVERNMENT plans to extend the deadline for Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) for MSMEs beyond October 31 in case the targeted loan sanction amount of Rs 3 lakh crore is not achieved, sources said.

Banks have sanctioned 62.52 per cent of the targeted Rs 3 lakh crore under the ECLGS for stressed MSMEs, while disbursements were at 45.38 per cent of the total amount as of October 5, up from 47.7 per cent sanctions and 32.9 per cent disbursements recorded as on August 12. Sources said the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC), which is implementing this scheme, is running an aggressive campaign this month to enable increased funding to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Launched on May 23, the

ECLGS is open until October 31 or until Rs 3 lakh crore has been sanctioned, whichever is earlier.

“The NCGTC has increased its outreach substantially this month. The idea is put the entire Rs 3 lakh crore to use so that liquidity can reach the maximum number of enterprises. Loan sanctions have picked up after individuals were allowed to take benefit. But even if we reach Rs 2.90 lakh crore of sanctions, then also there is a ground for extension of scheme,” a senior government official said.

As on October 5, 12 public-sector banks, 24 private banks and 31 non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) sanctioned Rs 1.87 lakh crore under the scheme, of which Rs 1.36 has been disbursed to 27.37 lakh borrowers, government data showed. The amount of loan sanctions by private banks continued to remain higher when compared to state-owned ones.

While public sector banks (PSBs) sanctioned loans of Rs

62.52% OF FUNDS SANCTIONED

■ Banks have sanctioned 62.52% of the targeted Rs 3 lakh crore under the ECLGS for stressed MSMEs, while disbursements were at 45.38% of the total amount as of October 5

■ Sources said the NCGTC, which is implementing this scheme, is running a campaign this month to enable increased funding to MSMEs

81,648 crore, private bank sanctions were Rs 95,510 crore. Disbursals by PSBs and private banks were at Rs 68,814 crore and Rs 62,848 crore, respectively. The

Rs 3-lakh crore ECLGS provides additional 20 per cent collateral-free credit to MSMEs fully guaranteed by the central government against loan losses.

Of the total 27.37 lakh loan accounts which received disbursement under the scheme, PSBs catered to 22.19 lakh accounts — or 81.09 per cent of total accounts — while private banks served 3.89 lakh customers. Share of disbursement by state-owned banks has come down from around 90 per cent in earlier months, while private banks and NBFCs have stepped up lending.

A total of 1.64 lakh individual borrowers were sanctioned Rs 17,460 crore and disbursed Rs 5,939 crore under the scheme.

The Centre had amended the ECLGS scheme in August to cover individual entrepreneurs, who run a large chunk of the over 6.3 crore MSMEs across the country. This enabled NBFCs to provide funding to borrowers who mostly

take loans in their individual capacity, for instance, truck drivers, small shopkeepers, taxi drivers, lawyers, agriculture equipment owners and doctors and engineers with loans on equipment.

According to a recent survey published by the National Institute of Bank Management, micro enterprises have been the biggest beneficiary of the ECLGS, but it has been used mostly for immediate liquidity support, rather than business growth. The survey also highlighted various concerns — disbursement patterns being unequal as a large proportion of borrowers have received a small share of the total loan; low utilisation rate for the smallest borrowers and manufacturing firms.

Though under the ECLGS banks are not supposed to take any collateral from borrowers, it allows extension of charge on security for the existing loans which involves documentation and registration and stamp duty charges.

How key policy actions led to rise in income levels during a pandemic-hit global economy

ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25

THE PANDEMIC and the subsequent lockdown may have had a devastating impact on people's livelihoods and incomes globally, but there has also been a paradoxical rise in household wealth in India, according to the findings in Credit Suisse Group AG's 2020 Global Wealth Report released last Thursday. India and China are reported to have seen gains in household wealth in the first half of the year, up 4.4 per cent and 1.6 per cent, respectively.

Globally, household wealth has held up in these six months even as South America suffered badly on this metric due to local currency devaluations, with individual wealth taking a hit across geographies during this period.

There are other global trends that run counter to the generally established norms:

■ A major distortion is that stocks and bonds have moved in tandem during much of the last six months, which does not typically happen.

■ Then there is a twist in the otherwise synchronised choreography involving copper and gold prices. Almost always, when one rises, the other tends to fall. So, generally in an economic downturn, while gold typically surges as investors flock to a safe haven investment, copper prices slide as manufacturing and construction slows down. But the Covid-19 pandemic has triggered a surge in both gold and copper that are moving up in tandem.

■ Despite the devastation of jobs and employment prospects, savings have gone up across geographies. In the US, seven in 10 American job-loser in the recession would earn more from unemployment-insurance payments than they had done on the job.

What explains these trends

There are cogent explanations for some of these observations.

For instance, the phenomenon of stocks and bonds moving in tandem and the surging wealth of billionaires can be traced back to broadly the same trigger — the record quantitative easing from central banks. As a result of this unprecedented action by the US

Fed and other western central banks, and the force of these monetary interventions, all asset classes are surging. These central bank emergency responses included cutting interest rates to zero and undertaking to buy unlimited amounts of bonds, which has translated into all assets — stocks, bonds and even alternatives — moving up in tandem.

The surge in wealth of the richest Americans is being driven by the sharp bounceback of the US stock market, primarily driven by the unprecedented action by the Fed. Investors have been buying equities, with Big Tech companies and those linked to healthcare — Big Pharma and hospital stocks — among the major beneficiaries. Most of the global rich own stocks in their own companies and others, thereby benefiting from the surge in market valuations.

The trend of rise in household wealth, as reported by the latest Credit Suisse report, too can be traced back to the concerted government and central bank actions to mitigate the Covid-19 fallout.

These monetary interventions have resulted in global wealth rebounding from an initial slump in the first quarter of the year, adding \$1 trillion by June after ending 2019 at \$399.2 trillion. Anthony Shorrocks, economist and author of the report, said, “Given the damage inflicted by Covid-19 on the global economy, it seems remarkable that household wealth has emerged relatively unscathed. Wealth acts as a form of self-insurance that households can draw upon when times are hard. Initially, the impact of the pandemic was felt mainly via the sharp worldwide decline in equity prices.”

Household wealth in India is dominated by property and other real assets, although financial assets have grown over time, now forming 22 per cent of gross assets. In 2019, non-financial assets rose by 12.5 per cent compared to 8.6 per cent growth in financial as-

sets. A caveat is that the latest findings are based on provisional household balance sheets for the quarter issued by few countries. Besides Latin American countries, among the major global economies, the United Kingdom has seen the biggest relative erosion of wealth.

On the concerted movement of copper and gold prices, as against the general trend of one rising and the other falling, there are two overlapping triggers. The trigger for gold is predictable: fears of a prolonged downturn as the virus continues to spread and uncertainties over the impending global recovery is forcing investors to flock to the yellow metal as they seek out a safe haven. But, unlike during a typical downturn, when copper prices dip as manufacturing and construction slow, the upturn in copper's trajectory has one key driver — China.

Hit first by the virus, China is recovering first — having clocked a second successive quarter of growth at nearly 5 per cent during July-September, according to data released Monday. Due to a very strong infrastructure demand recovery in China from the Covid-19 pandemic and the red metal's fundamental role in electrification, copper prices should remain “very robust” for the foreseeable future, trading company Trafigura's executive chairman and CEO Jeremy Weir told participants in the virtual FT Commodities Global Summit September 29.

Added to that is another trigger: supply constraints. As copper production is concentrated mostly in South America, supply is short as some mines in Peru and Chile are shut because of the virus, and are only slowly resuming production, according to a Reuters report that quoted Susan Bates of Morgan Stanley. A Chinese recovery augurs well for gold too, given that the country is the biggest consumer of the yellow metal.

HIGH COURT ALSO PULLS UP SEBI OVER CRITICISM BY UNITHOLDERS

Karnataka HC order on Templeton schemes: Fund house may move SC

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 25

FRANKLIN TEMPLETON AMC has indicated that it will move the Supreme Court against certain aspects of the Karnataka High Court's order on the issue of the closure of six credit risk schemes.

“While we are still in the process of studying the order, basis our initial review, we believe it may be necessary to appeal aspects of the order in the Supreme Court,” the fund house said in a letter to investors.

“It will also be our endeavor to seek appropriate directions from the court regarding return of cash of over Rs 5,200 crore currently accumulated in the four cash positive schemes, and with regard to any additional cash we may receive while the matter remains under the consideration of the Court,” it added.

The Karnataka HC on Saturday

ruled that the trustees of Franklin Templeton must take the consent of unitholders by a simple majority for winding up of the six debt funds.

However, the high court has stayed the operation of this order for six weeks and clarified that no redemptions, borrowings or creating liability in the said six schemes can be initiated by the fund house.

In its order, the HC also said as a watchdog, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) was expected to play a very proactive role by questioning the AMC, trustees and sponsor about the compliances with the provisions of the mutual fund regulations.

The unitholders of the (six) schemes will be justified in their criticism that Sebi was a silent spectator, the high court added.

It said Sebi did not respond to the email dated April 14, 2020 sent by the AMC and the regulator was not even possessing a

copy of the resolution dated April 23, 2020 passed by the Board of Directors of the Trustees providing for winding up.

A week ago, Franklin Templeton had said its six shut schemes received Rs 8,302 crore from maturities, pre-payments and coupon payments since closing down in April.

Part of this amount has been utilised to repay borrowings and post repayment, Rs 5,116 crore is available for distribution to unitholders in four cash positive schemes — Franklin India Ultra Short Bond Fund, Franklin India Dynamic Accrual Fund, Franklin India Low Duration Fund, Franklin India Credit Risk Fund — subject to fund running expenses.

The fund house had closed six debt mutual fund schemes — in which close to Rs 28,000 crore of investor money is stuck — on April 23, citing redemption pressures and lack of liquidity in the bond market.

441 infra projects show cost overruns of ₹4.35 lakh crore

Amid delays in execution and other constraints, as many as 441 infrastructure projects have been hit by cost overruns of over ₹4.35 lakh crore, as per the MoSPI report for August

539 Number of projects that reported time escalation, of which:

128: delayed by one to 12 months

128: delayed by 13 to 24 months

167: delayed by 25 to 60 months

116: delayed by 61 months and above

43.18 months: Average time overrun of all projects

1,661 Total projects worth ₹150 crore and above monitored by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

₹20,90,931.27 crore: Total original cost of implementation of the 1,661 projects



₹25,26,063.76 crore: Anticipated cost of implementation of all projects

₹4,35,132.49 crore: Overall cost overruns, i.e. 20.81 per cent of original cost

₹11,48,621.70 crore: Expenditure incurred on all projects till August 2020, 45.47% of anticipated cost

Source: MoSPI/PTI

BRIEFLY

‘IndusInd Bank stake sale reports untrue’

Mumbai: The promoter of IndusInd Bank, the Hinduja group, has “reaffirmed its unstinted support to the bank” and ruled out any sale of stake. Referring to reports that Kotak Mahindra Bank was exploring taking over IndusInd Bank, the Hinduja group said, “The promoter of IndusInd Bank, IndusInd International Holdings Limited (IHL), completely denies the said rumour and considers it malicious, untrue and baseless.” IHL is promoted by the Hinduja. **ENS**

‘LIC IPO a big issue ... will take time’

New Delhi: Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said that the initial public offering (IPO) of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is a big issue and it will take time.

LTC cash voucher: FinMin releases FAQ

New Delhi: The Expenditure Department, under the Finance Ministry, has issued a set of FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) on the LTC (Leave Travel Concession) cash voucher scheme, clarifying that a government employee can also avail the scheme utilising the applicable LTC fare without leave encashment. **PTI**

DHFL lenders unimpressed by low offers, against huge haircut; may invite fresh bids

GEORGE MATHEW & SANDEEP SINGH

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, OCT 25

THE COMMITTEE of Creditors which is supervising the resolution plan of scam-hit Dewan Housing Finance Corporation (DHFL) is against handing over the company at a huge haircut of over 70 per cent to the four bidders. It is considering various options, including inviting fresh bids, takeover of DHFL assets by lenders themselves or continue operating under the administrator appointed by the RBI.

The four bids offer a very low recovery value, ranging from as low as Rs 75 crore to the highest of Rs 15,800 crore. The recovery rate from these bids for lenders will be in the range of 3 per cent to 16 per cent. This means lenders will suffer a loss of Rs 68,000-70,000 crore which, in turn, will push up the non-performing as-

sets (NPAs) of the banking system.

Sources say that bankers are not in favour of accepting the bids as they feel that the amount is too low. There is a feeling among the bankers that the retail assets of around Rs 30,000 crore of the company are a good portfolio and the administrator is running the company well. The low bids by the Adani group, Piramal group, US-based Oaktree and Hong Kong-based SC Lowy to buy DHFL assets “for a song” shocked the lenders as the company cash worth over Rs 10,000 crore.

A source said that the bankers will ask the interested bidders to revise the bid or will like the administrator to run the company for some more time, adding, “The bids are too low and the bankers are not willing to take such a big haircut of around 70 per cent, especially when they feel that the retail portfolio of DHFL is strong.”

DHFL had total assets of Rs 93,000 crore, comprising retail as-

set portfolio of Rs 33,000 crore, wholesale asset portfolio of Rs 48,000 crore, and cash and cash equivalent of Rs 12,000 crore.

The Adanis offered to pay Rs 750 crore within one year and the balance Rs 1,500 crore would be payable after eight years. Piramal Enterprises has bid for DHFL's Rs 33,000 crore retail portfolio for only Rs 6,000 crore. Piramal Enterprises has also offered Rs 9,000 crore out of Rs 12,000 crore available with the company to the lenders. The Piramal bid would result in recovery of only around 6 per cent for the lenders. SC Lowy has submitted the bid that comes with so many conditions that it is unlikely to be considered.

There's also a view among bankers that DHFL has an attractive zero risk retail portfolio and it should be acquired by the banks themselves instead of offering that to any bidder at such a low valuation. Bids received are far lower than the fair value (FV) and

liquidation value (LV) arrived at by the independent valuers on behalf of the lenders.

In November 2019, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) superseded the board of directors of DHFL — which has liabilities of close to Rs 84,000 crore — and initiated the bankruptcy proceedings “owing to governance concerns and defaults by DHFL in meeting various payment obligations”.

The RBI, which stepped in after the banks and DHFL failed to agree on a resolution plan to bring the firm back on the rails, appointed R Subramaniam, former MD and CEO of Indian Overseas Bank, as the administrator to run the affairs of the company.

Although DHFL promoter Kapil Wadhawan, who is in judicial custody, had recently written to the RBI administrator offering family assets “valued at Rs 43,000 crore” to facilitate the resolution process of DHFL, lenders have not considered this proposal.

Samsung chairman, who turned company into a global powerhouse, passes away

JOYCE LEE, CYNTHIA KIM & HYUNJOO JIN
SEOUL, OCTOBER 25

LEE KUN-HEE, who built Samsung Electronics into a global powerhouse in smartphones, semiconductors and televisions, died Sunday after spending over six years in hospital following a heart attack, the company said.

Lee, who was 78, grew the Samsung Group into South Korea's biggest conglomerate and became the country's richest person. But he was also convicted of bribery and tax evasion, and he and the empire he built were vil-



LEE KUN-HEE
1942-2020

ified for wielding huge economic clout, and for opaque governance

and dubious transfers of the family wealth.

“Lee is such a symbolic figure in South Korea's spectacular rise and how South Korea embraced globalisation, that his death will be remembered by so many Koreans,” said Chung Sun-sup, chief executive of corporate researcher firm Chaebul.com.

Samsung Group affiliates' 326.7 trillion won (\$289.6 billion) in 2019 revenue was worth about 17 per cent of South Korea's gross domestic product, according to Fair Trade Commission data and a Reuters calculation.

Lee died with his family by his side, the conglomerate said. At

around 5 p.m. (0800 GMT), Lee's son Jay Y. Lee, vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, wearing a face mask, walked into the Samsung Medical Center where a memorial was being held. The area for the memorial was limited to 50 people, a sign said.

The funeral will be a small family affair, Samsung said. It did not say when or where the funeral would be. The presidential office said South Korean President Moon Jae-in had plans to send condolence flowers to the funeral, and send chief of staff Noh Young-min and senior presidential secretary Lee Ho-seung to pay respects on his behalf. **REUTERS**

INTERVIEW WITH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BHARAT BIOTECH

‘Trying to raise manufacturing capacity above 500 million doses as soon as possible’

BHARAT BIOTECH, which recently received approvals to conduct late stage human trials of Covaxin — its Covid-19 vaccine candidate — has committed “significant” investment towards expanding its ability to make the vaccine, according to the company's executive director, SAI PRASAD. In an interview to PRABHA RAGHAVAN, Prasad details the company's discussions with the government to bring out the vaccine here, as well as its discussions with other countries to supply Covaxin globally. Edited excerpts:

Has the government made any commitment, in interactions, towards procuring a specific number of doses of Covaxin at-risk? If yes, how many?

No, we are producing Covaxin at-risk. We do have certain quantities of stock already manufactured and kept ready, but we've not had a commitment towards procurement of specific doses.

We've had many discussions with the government, but not about procurement of a certain fixed quantity as of yet. We've had discussions on ... what kind of quantities we can produce a vaccine in, what timelines the vaccine will be available ... what kind of product profile will it be available in, what will be the formulation, what will be the stability, packaging, distribution systems — many different aspects of the vaccine.

There are several ministries that we are discussing with, and they are all very proactive in terms of how they are supporting us.

They want to know our cold chain footprint, what the packaging dimensions will look like, whether we have storage capacity ... I think those are discussions



Sai Prasad

that we've already had, and discussions on ... any new facilities and investments that we are making.

What is your cold chain and manufacturing capacity? Are you expanding this and how much have you invested towards Covaxin so far?

In terms of manufacturing capacity, we are at about 150 million doses per year right now. We have an existing facility, and we're also building a brand new facility in Hyderabad itself right next to (it). That is going to be online during December. We're also exploring another facility in another city, which is very early stage exploratory work, to see whether we can make Covaxin over there. So, I think we are trying our best to increase this capacity north of 500 million doses as soon as possible.

We've also committed a significant amount of investments, because (for) our phase 3 clinical trial alone, the budget is approximately Rs 150 crore in terms of the conduct of the clinical trial (for) 25,000-26,000 subjects and all other ancillary aspects of a clinical trial of that size.

In terms of capex and opex, while we are using the existing facility now, this new facility (in Hyderabad) is also costing us any-

where between Rs 100-250 crore. I think we're geared up to supply good quantities to the government when it is acquired.

I think, in terms of our own cold chain capacity, we have two locations in Hyderabad ... which have large cold chain capacities. We're also building a very large integrated warehouse right on our campus right now, and that is supposed to come online by mid next year, so I think we will have enough capacity in Hyderabad. We have a very similar kind of capacity in Bangalore — we have another site where we do other kinds of products over there. We also have a site in Ankleshwar in Gujarat, which is the Chiron Behring (site) that we acquired recently from GSK.

Does the lack of certainty on procurement impact your approach to at-risk manufacturing and the timelines you've set for your vaccine's development and launch?

It absolutely does. The more positive reinforcement we get in terms of volumes and procurement commitments, the faster we can work, because that air of uncertainty can be removed. But, our teams are discussing with other countries ... and there is a lot of interest from other countries to try to get Covaxin. Some countries were also talking about technology transfer and getting it manufactured locally in their respective countries, so we're not trying to look at this purely as an India issue. Obviously, India is our home country, we will supply, but we're also looking at other countries.

Full interview on www.indianexpress.com

Khabib calls time on undefeated MMA career

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ABU DHABI, OCTOBER 25

UNBEATEN LIGHTWEIGHT champion Khabib Nurmagomedov retired from mixed martial arts after stopping Justin Gaethje with a triangle choke early in the second round at UFC 254 on Saturday night.

Nurmagomedov (29-0) made the announcement immediately after he impressively finished his first fight since the death of his father and lifelong coach in July. Abdulmanap Nurmagomedov had a heart problem exacerbated by COVID-19, and his son was overcome by tears in the cage moments after choking Gaethje unconscious 1:34 into the second round of his third UFC title defense.

This is my last fight," Nurmagomedov said. "There's no way I'm going to be back without my father. I spoke to my mother. She doesn't know how I fight without father, but I promised it's going to be my last fight, and if I give my word, I have to follow it."

The 32-year-old Nurmagomedov was active with strikes and with grappling against Gaethje (22-3), the dangerous brawler who had knocked out four consecutive elite opponents while winning the UFC's interim lightweight title.

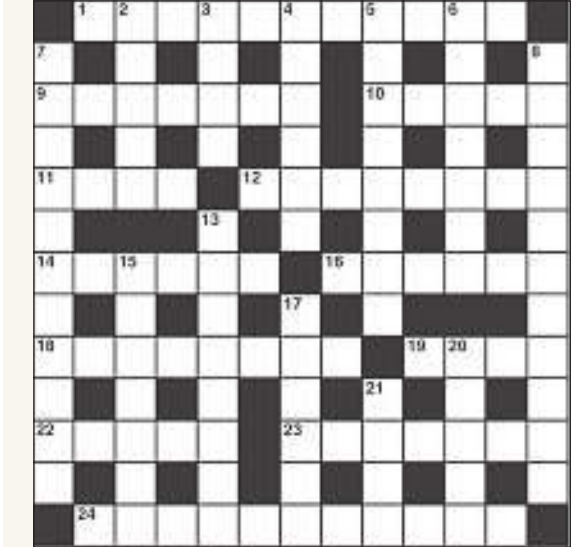
After spending the first round largely trading punches and kicks with the aggressive Gaethje, Nurmagomedov used his unparalleled wrestling skills to take down Gaethje early in the second round and then worked into position for the finishing choke.

Gaethje appeared to tap out at least twice before the referee noticed and stopped the bout, by which time Gaethje was unconscious. He bounced up quickly and shared a moment of mutual respect with the dominant Russian champion. "I know he was in a bad spot, but whether he was or not, he did what he needed to do," Gaethje said. "I know his father is so proud." Also at UFC 254, former middleweight champion Robert Whittaker made his case for another title shot with a solid unanimous decision over fellow contender Jared Cannonier in the penultimate bout on Fight Island.

Nurmagomedov's first fight in 13 months would be an appropriate farewell for one of the most dynamic competitors in recent MMA history.

The Dagestan-born grappling specialist developed a well-rounded game under the tutelage of his father and a Bay Area-based MMA gym, culminating in his ascent to the UFC title in 2018.

CROSSWORD 4259



- ACROSS
- DOWN
- 1 Informative clue to Diana perhaps (11)

9 Oration composed in Canada (7)

10 After getting bail somehow I find an excuse (5)

11 Agrees that no beds be removed (4)

12 Not in favour of being on the other side (8)

14 I should be, when small (6)

16 The medicine man holds entertainment (6)

18 Ten girls gone astray yet still of excellent character (8)

19 To turn us in or turn us out? (4)

22 Dutchman who is relatively reproachful (5)

23 Merger that is found in fur conglomerate (7)

24 Didn't succeed in crossing the ice? (4,7)
- 2 Old-fashioned but popular with the boys (5)

3 Criticise the fish (4)

4 They may advance or stop if ordered (6)

5 One who talks one round to composing some music (8)

6 Inane is another way of putting this (7)

7 Proceeded to argue like Siamese twins? (6,5)

8 Call the bosses; those who crack the whip (11)

13 Twin bores? Fancy that! (4,4)

15 Sweet concoction that upset Electra (7)

17 It's sufficient to upset one with an expression of disgust (6)

20 Gun is out of order in practice (5)

21 Swimming pool with nothing under cover (4)

Solutions Crossword 4258: Across: 1 Listed, 4 Eggshell, 9 Swathe, 10 Fiendish, 12 Take, 13 Ghost, 14 Moor, 17 Man overboard, 20 Anthropology, 23 Odin, 24 Cargo, 25 Wash, 28 Proceeds, 29 Window, 30 Emotions, 31 Nearby. Down: 1 Lose time, 2 Spunking, 3 Echo, 5 Gainsborough, 6 Sent, 7 Edison, 8 Lahore, 11 Churchwarden, 15 Event, 16 Arson, 18 Colander, 19 By the way, 21 Couple, 22 Kimono, 26 Yeti, 27 Mite.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip. The policy of being too cautious is the _____ of all - Nehru (8,4)

CSAEE

GHISTT

OSIRR

IINGKS

SOLUTION: CEASE, ORRIS, TIGHTS, SKING. Answer: The policy of being too cautious is the greatest risk of all - Nehru



Driving into record books

By winning the Portuguese Grand Prix, Hamilton overtakes Schumacher with a historic 92nd F1 win

REUTERS
OCTOBER 25

SIX-TIMES world champion Lewis Hamilton became the most successful Formula One driver of all time in terms of race wins on Sunday with a dominant 92nd career victory at the Portuguese Grand Prix.

The Mercedes driver, who took the chequered flag a huge 25.592 seconds ahead of second-placed team mate Valtteri Bottas, had equalled Ferrari great Michael Schumacher's record 91 wins at the previous race at the Nuerburgring. Victory, with a bonus point for fastest lap, stretched the Briton's championship lead over Bottas to 77 points with five races remaining. "You are re-writing the history books," Mercedes told Hamilton over the team radio, with team boss Toto Wolff adding: "Lewis, 92. 92." "I owe it all to these guys here and back at the factory," said Hamilton. "It's just been such a privilege working with them," added the Briton, who was joined on the podium by race engineer Peter 'Bono' Bonnington. "Today was tough but it was all about temperatures."

Dutch youngster Max Verstappen finished third for Red Bull at the Algarve circuit near Portimao that was hosting the country's first grand prix in 24 years.

Hamilton lapped all but the three drivers behind him but it had not looked so simple at the start when he dropped to third from pole

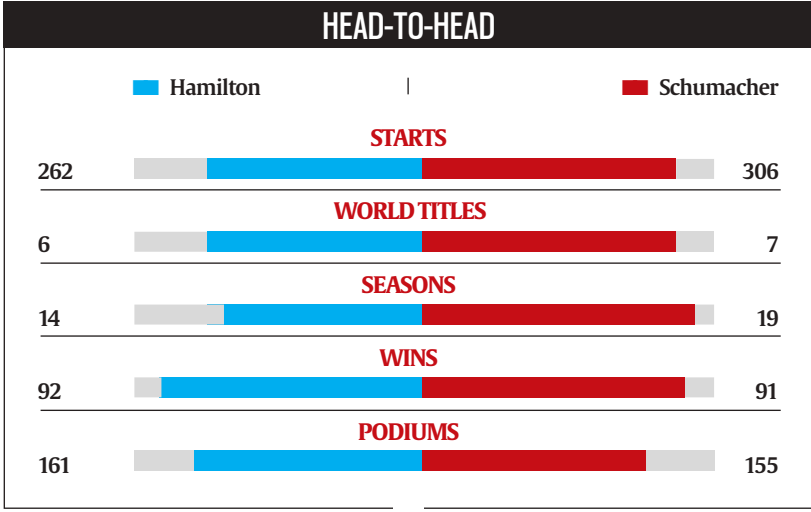


For Lewis Hamilton, a seventh world title would equal another Michael Schumacher record. Reuters

position on a lively opening lap with occasional rain complicating matters.

Bottas, who had gone ahead, was then passed on lap two by McLaren's Spaniard Carlos Sainz, who had started seventh on the soft tyres, with the Mercedes pair struggling to get heat into the medium rubber.

Hamilton, whose father was at the circuit to see his triumph, reported cramp with seven laps to go but then proceeded to set a series of fastest laps. "I could never have dreamed of being where I am today," he said after his eighth win of the season and 71st since he joined Mercedes.



Arshdeep: KXIP's young man for the tough jobs

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 25

WITH 14 runs to defend in the last over, the Kings XI seamer Arshdeep Singh was surrounded by Chris Jordan and the captain KL Rahul. Arshdeep was all ears as he was the previous time the trio had converged a few overs back. The plan then was for Jordan to bowl yorkers as he had to contend with short leg-side boundaries and for Singh to dig in the slower ones on the dry track to make use of the longer leg-side boundaries.

The pair stuck to the plan to drag the contest in their favour and Singh was intent on finishing it off on a high in the last over. He removed Sandeep Sharma with a slower-short ball and prised out Priyam Garg next ball with a slow cutter to seal the game.

It was for the first time in his IPL career that the six feet, three inches tall Singh was bowling the last over in the innings.

In the six matches in this IPL, he has bowled 16 of his 19 overs in the powerplay or in the last five overs. In this game, in the 18th over, Singh had got the match-turning wicket of the well-set Vijay Shankar with a short-of-length delivery bowled from around the wicket. Singh has earned the captain's trust that he can execute any plan. After their previous game against Delhi Capitals, Rahul had said, "To come and nail six out of six yorkers is a really good job". "You can't have fear in this format," Arshdeep tells *The Indian Express*.

"It's a batsman-dominated format and the idea is to stop runs and make them play under pressure. I love the challenge of bowling in powerplay and death overs. I trust my slow balls and yorkers and that's what (Mohammad) Shami *bhai* has also told me to believe," says Arshdeep.

Working with truck tyres

In 2015, when Singh had approached the coach Jaswant Rai at his Sector 36 Academy in Chandigarh, the skill and love for variations was the first thing which Rai noticed but it also posed a problem.

"I was impressed by his height and the way he bowled the nip-backer. Initially, he would think about bowling different six balls in one over. The U-16 coaches will say that he was a bit erratic. After some time, I made him sit down and told him that he has to be accurate first. We concentrated on him bowling bit short of good length and bowling for 2-3 hours at the same spot," adds Rai. It was the feat of taking 27 wickets in six matches for Punjab U-23 team in the Col CK Nayudu trophy in 2018 that catapulted Singh to the limelight.

But he suffered a hamstring injury before the U-19 Challenger Trophy last November.



While defending 14 runs in the final over against SRH, Arshdeep removed Sandeep Sharma and Priyam Garg to orchestrate a remarkable win. BCCI

In the six matches in this IPL, Arshdeep Singh has bowled 16 of his 19 overs in the powerplay or in the last five overs. In the game against SRH, he bowled in the 18th over, in which he got the match-turning wicket of Vijay Shankar.

"He lost some pace after the hamstring injury. In July, when we resumed training, the focus was to make his run-up a bit fast as due to the injury, his muscle memory was making him run in a touch slower. We worked on getting his arm rotation and run-up better."

The next step was cross fit training to get ready for the IPL. "He told me to arrange for car tyres for the cross fit. After 15 days, he wanted truck tyres! And I arranged it from a kabaadi shop (scrap dealer). Now, see, he is running like new tyres in the IPL," Rai says.

Picking Shami's mind

In this IPL, Singh's variations have got Rohit Sharma, Manish Pandey, and Andre Russel among others and he shared his thinking process.

"We had planned to bowl wide against power hitters like Russel and hit the hard length areas, with some swing, against batsmen like Rohit," says Singh. "Use the slower

cutters on slow pitches."

In the time between matches, Singh has been picking the brains of Shami and other seamers. "To be honest, I have asked so many questions and sought tips in the last one and half months that they have started saying 'Oh no, not again,' (laughs). I have been asking Shami *bhai* about how he keeps the seam really good and the kind of pace he gets. Sheldon Cottrell has told me about how to control the action as a left-hander. Chris (Jordan) always tells me to be accurate in death overs. One thing which all of them say is that I should not complicate things much. Every bowler is unique and you are good enough that's why you are playing here," says Singh.

Targeting increase in pace

His coach Rai believes that Singh can regain the pace he had. "He had touched 140 during the U-19 World cup and Challenger trophy and he can reach that pace again. I have been working on his wrist position and he can bowl close to 142-144 KPH. Last year, when he was picked up by KXIP, it was on the insistence of then coach Mike Hesson who believed that Arshdeep has a huge potential.

As for Singh, he has been a fan of Irfan Pathan and Wasim Akram and hopes to meet them one day. "I started as a pacer as I idolized Irfan Pathan sir after his hat-trick against Pakistan and would also watch Wasim Akram sir's bowling. The way he used to swing the ball remains a benchmark for all. I hope I can meet them one day," says Singh.

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Everything in your chart shouts about the need to get on with other people. In point of fact, you're entering a period during which competition will get you nowhere and co-operation will yield continual dividends. It will help to take a look at the bigger picture.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

You could be walking a romantic tightrope, and others are bound to challenge your habits and preconceptions. But even in the most awkward moments, please try to realise that they are only acting for the best. People who are out only to help themselves will gain nothing in the long run.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

If you should feel that the short-term advantage is slipping away from you, don't worry, for the long-term position is looking just fine. In particular you can look forward to improvements in relationships with children — but you might have to take the lead.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

You'll be caught on the horns of a dilemma; not exactly sure of how far current changes should go. Start by considering which domestic improvements should be at the top of your list, and persuade a partner you're right. And if they don't listen, try again.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

You are used to people standing in your way, and when you entered on your current domestic path, no one pretended that everything would be easy. In many respects, though, a partner's awkward behaviour will do you a good turn! You might even work out just where you stand on a particular problem.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

One cycle of opportunity is now almost over, and it's up to you to assess if the chances you've had have been to your liking and, therefore, whether you wish to continue to pursue them. Plus, remember, nature abhors a vacuum, so when one phase comes to an end, another must begin.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Your financial situation is looking more and more complicated. There's little in the stars to indicate whether you're heading for a small loss or a major profit, but it will help to keep your feelings under control. You don't want to risk embarrassment, now, do you?

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

This week certain circumstances seem to be united in pushing you towards a passionate explosion, so don't be surprised if you begin to feel confused. Still, there's lots to get on with and you'll feel happier if you make an early start, no matter what you're doing.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

You must get on with your own affairs and avoid trying to run someone else's life. Above all, it's a day for putting your plans into action, and if you are content to do no more than fantasise, you'll end up nowhere.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Domestic necessities represent the most urgent demand on your funds, so if you have any other spending plans you must make extra cash available. Even at home, peace can be bought by a simple matter of bribing your relations. That might be manipulative — but it could also be necessary.

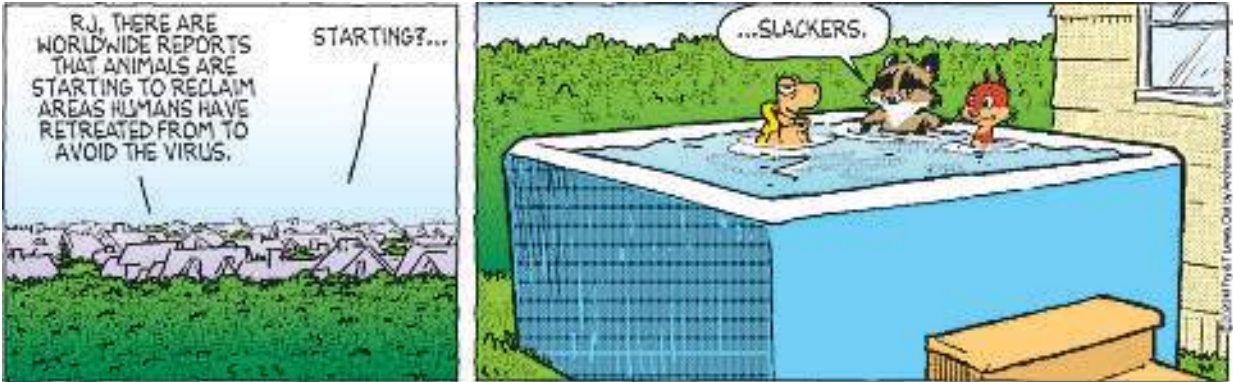
AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

You may put your foot down at home. You could be a little unsteady emotionally, but you know what you want, and you know how to get it. At work you may now begin to plan your next step, but you can, perhaps, take your time. If you make a premature judgement you might have to change it later.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Today's stars are simultaneously active and reclusive, which suggests that you will probably be getting on with goals which make a lot of sense to you, but not to other people. You may now carve out your own path through the jungle of everyday life.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4274

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4273

Difficulty Level 5s

Instructions

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

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BRIEFLY



Former India pacer Chetan Sharma tweeted this photo of Kapil Dev. *Twitter/Chetan Sharma*

Kapil Dev discharged from hospital

New Delhi: India's first World Cup winning-captain Kapil Dev was on Sunday discharged from a city hospital, two days after undergoing angioplasty following a heart attack. The 61-year-old complained of chest pain on Thursday following which he was taken to Fortis Escorts Heart Institute's emergency department. He is doing fine now. "Mr. Kapil Dev got discharged today afternoon. He's doing fine and can resume his regular daily activity soon. He'll be under regular follow-up consultation with Dr. Atul Mathur," the hospital said. Angioplasty is a procedure to open blocked arteries and restore normal blood flow to the heart. Following his admission, Kapil's condition was evaluated and an emergency coronary angioplasty was performed by Dr. Mathur, who is the director of cardiology department in the Fortis Escorts Heart Institute.

Zverev beats Sinner; sails into final

Cologne: Top seed Alexander Zverev reached his second final in the space of a week in Cologne with a clinical 7-6(3) 6-3 victory over Italian wild card Jannik Sinner in the semi-finals of the bett1 HULKS Championship on Saturday. The German world number seven claimed his first ATP crown of the year after besting Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-3 6-3 to win the bett1 HULKS Indoor title at the same venue last Sunday.

AGENCIES

Crumbs of comfort

CSK get something to cheer with a facile win over Kohli's RCB

SYNOPSIS

When pace was a curse for Bangalore and the lack of it a blessing for Chennai.

SANDIP G
OCTOBER 25

THE MATCH turned out to be a balm that fleetingly soothed the pain of a premature tournament exit for Chennai Super Kings. "A perfect match", as captain MS Dhoni would later reflect. It was also the perfect conditions for their bowlers, and the most imperfect for their adversaries, Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Lack of pace, a blessing

If Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers, among the batting royalty of this generation, are striking the ball at a rate less than 120 in a T20 game, something should be wrong with the world. They faced 79 deliveries, scored only 89 runs, found the rope thrice and cleared it once. In a normal world, de Villiers is capable of smacking a hundred in 39 deliveries. Kohli would not have been too far behind.

But it was not a normal world. It was not a normal T20 hit-through-the-line surface. The IPL caravan is a month and week old, and the sun-dried strips are progressively slowing down, especially in Dubai that has a history of producing slow turners. There was not much turn — in that case, batting would have been slave labour — but the slowness was enough to make even the best of batsmen struggle for runs. It was not a struggle, though. Kohli and de Villiers batted as intelligently as they would on a slow, low surface — the bouncer lobbed gently over the back of the batsman, and bounced again before reaching Dhoni — but the big difference in the end was Chennai's bowlers.

The surface seemed designed straight from their book of dreams. The innate slowness of their attack was a blessing than a curse. And they took the pace off the ball even more. The fastest the Bangalore batsmen faced in the entire innings was 138.2 kmph, bowled by Sam Curran who took three wickets. It's the ball's pace when it lands, it would be even slower by the time it reached the batsmen. He bowled at an average speed of 132, while pace-bowling colleagues Monu Kumar and Deepak Chahar ranged from 125-130. They hardly cared for a



Ruturaj Gaikwad and MS Dhoni took CSK past the finish line without any fuss. *BCCI*

| POINTS TABLE | | | | | |
|--------------|---------|-----|------|----|--------|
| Team | Matches | Won | Lost | NR | Points |
| MI | 11 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 14 |
| DC | 11 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 14 |
| RCB | 11 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 14 |
| KKR | 11 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 12 |
| KXIP | 11 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 10 |
| RR | 12 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 10 |
| SRH | 11 | 4 | 7 | 0 | 8 |
| CSK | 12 | 4 | 8 | 0 | 8 |

slower ball, for it would not have made any marked difference.

The spinners were equally sharp in harnessing the best of conditions. Mitchell Santner varied his pace and length beautifully while Ravindra Jadeja probed a flatter trajectory, compressing them for width to loft or room to cut. Leg-spinner Imran Tahir's over-spun deliveries created an illusion of uneven bounce. Beating his compatriot de Villiers a couple of times with extra bounce, he made him look mortal. Tahir also made Kohli mistime half a dozen of his drives. And when Kohli mistimes a drive, it's a tell-tale sign that the surface is on the slower side.

Shrewd as ever, Dhoni got the drift of the game and set aggressive fields to prevent cheap singles. That Kohli and de Villiers still managed to smuggle singles and twos, besides kicking along at a rate of over six runs an over, only de-

finied their adaptability. In these circumstances, on such a sluggish surface and against a bunch of bowlers born to maximise it. For their defeat, they can only blame the disposition of their own bowling unit.

Pace, a curse

If the pitch was too difficult for even Kohli and de Villiers, how did Chennai's batsmen manage to bat so freely? There was no pace on the surface, but there was pace in the fast bowlers who operated against them. Navdeep Saini's slowest delivery clocked 142 - his fastest was a fraction under 150 — while Chris Morris was consistently 145 or thereabouts. Without swing on offer, Mohammed Siraj was listless. And none of them are reputed to take the pace off the ball. Both Morris and Siraj were duly targeted, and ended up conceding 55 runs in 5.4 overs. RCB's spinners, barring the wonderful Yuzvendra Chahal, turned out to be uninfluential too.

Making the most of the modest target and bowling was Ruturaj Gaikwad, who furnished a good account of his crisp strokeplay. He drove and cut splendidly while Ambati Rayudu executed his sweeps fluently. Their 67-run alliance was enough to tighten CSK's grip on the match. Bangalore had revelled in their pace prowess throughout the tournament. Here, it was their undoing.

BRIEF SCORES: RCB 145/ 6 (Kohli 50, de Villiers 39, Curran 3-19, Chahar 2-31) lost to CSK 150/ 2 (Gaikwad 65*, Rayudu 39) by 8 wickets.

Rajasthan royalty comes to the fore as Stokes takes MI down

SYNOPSIS

Big Ben tolls after Hardik blitz trumps Jofra stunner.

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
OCTOBER 25

A SCINTILLATING 59-ball hundred from Ben Stokes helped Rajasthan Royals beat Mumbai Indians by eight wickets and stay alive in the IPL. Chasing 196 for victory, RR won with 10 balls to spare. An unbroken 152-run partnership (82 balls) between Stokes and Sanju Samson took the game away from MI. RR's win officially slammed the playoffs door shut on Chennai Super Kings.

Big Ben tolls

"I didn't sleep for a week and my head wasn't really in it," Stokes was quoted as saying by *Weekend Herald* after his father Ged was diagnosed with brain cancer. He left the England team during their home series against Pakistan and missed a sizeable chunk of this IPL. His ailing father "encouraged" Stokes to return to cricket.

In the previous five matches, the left-hander had barely made an impact but on Sunday, he more than made up for a slow burn. His innings started with a flurry of boundaries against Trent Boult and the ton came with a six off James Pattinson. Yet again, he proved to be the man for the big occasion.

Spare a thought for Samson, whose 31-ball 54 not out complemented Stokes brilliantly. The latter created the space for Samson to play himself in and an excellent partnership ensued.

Hardik blitz trumps Jofra stunner

Earlier, Rajasthan Royals had managed to pull the game back for a brief while, riding on a Jofra Archer stunner.

But Mumbai Indians have game changers aplenty. On Sunday, Hardik Pandya came to the party.

Archer made a one-handed grab with the leap of a goalkeeper, to draw a football analogy. Ishan Kishan had flat-batted a short delivery from medium pacer Kartik Tyagi and Archer had initially misjudged it.

But his recovery was stunning, a jump upwards and back to take the catch at square third man.



Ben Stokes' second IPL century came off just 59 balls. *BCCI*

MI were going at almost nine runs per over during the 83-run second-wicket partnership between Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav. Inspired by Archer's effort, RR bounced back. Leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal dismissed Yadav and Kieron Pollard inside four deliveries in his third over and the game was on an even keel before Hardik exploded at the death.

Rahul Tewatia couldn't hold on to a mistimed slog from Hardik against Tyagi when the batsman was on five. Tewatia had earlier dropped Yadav at sweeper cover, but this one proved much more costly.

It was Saurabh Tiwary who wrested the initiative for MI in the 17th over, hitting a couple of fours and a six off Archer. Then Hardik took over. Seamer Ankit Rajpoot was at the receiving end of his blitz.

A high full-toss went over long-on followed by three consecutive sixes off the last three balls of that over. Archer bowled a brilliant 19th over, but Hardik was waiting for Tyagi. Three sixes and two fours, and another 27-run over took MI's total to 195/5. Hardik motored to a 20-ball half-century.

BRIEF SCORES: MI 195/5 (Hardik Pandya 60 not out, Jofra Archer 2/31, Shreyas Gopal 2/30) lost to RR 196/2 (Ben Stokes 107 not out, Sanju Samson 54 not out) by 8 wickets.

MARUTI SUZUKI

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