

OPINION 6
CRUMBLING
CHINESE DREAM**WORLD 8**CAR BOMBING IN WESTERN
AFGHANISTAN KILLS 13, WOUNDS 120**SPORT 12**BARCA, MADRID
LOSE IN LA LIGA

NEW DELHI, MONDAY OCTOBER 19, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

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DEMAND FOR
REAL STORIES:
RAJKUMMAR
10 VIVACITY

Community spread in some dists, admits Centre

Earlier, Mamata, Vijayan had claimed community transmission in their States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time, the Centre on Sunday admitted the prevalence of community transmission of Covid-19 virus in India, but said it is "limited to certain districts in limited States".

The admission, after months of denial, came in the backdrop of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's remarks that the community transmission of Covid-19 has started in the State.

Earlier, Pinarayi Vijayan, Chief Minister of Kerala, which too is witnessing a major surge, had also talked about community transmission but was denied by the Centre.

While responding to a query in his "Sunday Samvad" programme, Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said, "In different pockets across various States, including West Bengal, community transmission is expected to occur, especially in dense areas.

However, this is not happening across the country. It is limited to certain districts in limited States."

The Minister interacted with his social media audience through the Samvad.

The Health Minister's response was to the query,

"Mamata has said there are instances of community transmission in the State. Are there other States with community transmission as well?"

Earlier this week, Mamata had urged the people of West Bengal to maintain caution ahead of the upcoming Durga Puja season.

"I ask everybody to follow the Covid-19 safety protocols during the festive season. There are instances of community transmission of Covid-19 and also the contagion becoming airborne," Mamata said.

Vardhan asserted that so far, no mutation of the coronavirus has been detected in India that is either more transmission-efficient or more pathogenic.

Health Ministry officials have said the World Health Organization (WHO) has not given any standard definition of community transmission.

It permits its member nations to assess the spread of the disease, based on their own analysis of the situation, and do their reporting, which the global body shows on its website. Broadly, if it is not possible to trace the transmission chain, it means there is community transmission, officials said.

The Centre has maintained



People shop at New Market area ahead of Durga Puja festival in Kolkata on Sunday

PTI

that there are clusters of cases and there are pockets of localised transmission.

Earlier, in mid-July, Vijayan had said community transmission of the coronavirus has begun in Kerala and its capital Thiruvananthapuram was facing a "grave" situation, as the virus was spreading in coastal areas.

"Community transmission has been confirmed in the Poomthura and Pulluvu areas (of Thiruvananthapuram district)," Vijayan had said.

While the Centre had ruled it out, however, in a guidance document released in the same

Continued on Page 2

month the Health Ministry had inadvertently revealed that community transmission happened in India as early as in April. The document was later withdrawn from the website of the Ministry.

On a query why Kerala was witnessing a spike in coronavirus infections recently, Vardhan said the State was paying the "price for gross negligence" during Onam festivities when unlocking of services along with an increase in travel for trade and tourism led to the spread of Covid-19.

The panel said the upcoming festivals and winter season may increase the susceptibility to the virus but all activities can be resumed provided proper safety protocols are followed. It also found that the impact of labour migration on the total number of infections in Bihar and Uttar

Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL	
CASES: 75,46,882	
DEATHS: 1,14,621	
RECOVERED: 66,57,228	
ACTIVE: 7,73,807	



Covid past its peak, can be contained by Feb: Panel

Committee headed by IIT Hyderabad prof says lockdown worked wonders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On a day the Centre's admission about community transmission of coronavirus came, a Government-appointed committee said the Covid-19 pandemic is on decline, after having peaked in mid-September, and can be brought under control by February

2021 if all safety measures like social distancing, masks and handwashing are followed.

Going by the present scenario, by the time the epidemic ends in February next year the total number of infections would be about 105 lakh, the committee said.

The panel said the upcomming festivals and winter season may increase the susceptibility to the virus but all activities can be resumed provided proper safety protocols are followed.

India's total infections have breached the 75-lakh mark and of them, over 66 lakh patients have recovered. As of now, 1.14 lakh people have died because of the disease.

The panel, however, said further lockdowns were "undesirable" except in localised areas with heavy infection load, but not before cautioning that if the safety measures are relaxed the cases could rise significantly to as many as 26 lakh in a month.

Vidyasagar said, as of today, 30 per cent of the country is projected to have developed antibodies to the SARS-CoV-2, which is "good news" and said as per their mathematical projections, the cumulative mortality from the pandemic in India by the end of February next year would be 0.04 per cent of total cases.

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CAPSULE

PAK FAILS TO FULFIL FATF'S KEY TERMS

New Delhi: Pakistan's failure to fulfil six key obligations of the FATF, including action against two of India's most wanted terrorists Masood Azhar and Hafiz Saeed, and the sudden disappearance of more than 4,000 terrorists from its official list will most likely lead to its continuation in the "grey list" of the Global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog.

THAROOR'S REMARKS AT LAHORE SPARK ROW

New Delhi: BJP and Congress were engaged in a war of words on Sunday over MP Shashi Tharoor's remarks at a Lahore event, as the ruling party accused him of "demeaning and discrediting" India and wondered if Rahul wanted to contest elections in Pakistan.

ELDERLY PRIEST IN UP BEATEN TO DEATH

Azamgarh: An elderly priest was allegedly beaten to death by a man who was in an inebriated condition after the octogenarian refused to give him money to buy liquor, police said on Sunday.

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Har Pal Aapke Saath

Chirag downplays attack, reasons it's BJP's coalition dharma towards Nitish

PTI ■ PATNA



As the two sides prepare for the eighth round of Corps Commander level talks this week to defuse tension at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), India is not letting its guard down. On Sunday, India test-fired its BrahMos supersonic missile from a ship as part of the drill to be operational ready. The past few weeks have seen India conducting a series of successful tests of various missiles to shore up its defence.

The latest test comes at a time when India and China are readying for the next round of talks to find ways to end the five-month-old logjam at the LAC in Eastern Ladakh. In the last round on October 12, the two commanders in a joint statement said the "two sides had a sincere, in-depth and constructive exchange of views on disengagement along the LAC in the Western Sector of India-China border areas".

Both sides agreed to earnestly implement the important understandings reached by the leaders of the

Continued on Page 2

Centre rejects U'khand Govt's plan for use of Rajaji Park for Kumbh

Rawat Govt wanted temporary facilities at forest for mega event early next year

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Citing forest laws, the Centre has rejected the Trivendra Singh Rawat Government's plans to temporarily divert a patch of Rajaji National Park forest area in Uttarakhand for the construction of housing, toilets and parking facilities for the Haridwar Maha Kumbh pilgrims. The mega religious congregation is slated for early next year.

Calling it as "an exceptional case" the Uttarakhand Forest Department had sought the Union Environment Ministry's nod to the transfer of 778 hectares of Rajaji National Park

and Narendra Nagar Forest Division to the Kumbh Mela Samiti in order to initiate "temporary" construction for the devotees to the Maha Kumbh Mela.

The Rawat Government had initially estimated the arrival of 10 crore pilgrims to the Kumbh but because of the Covid-19 pandemic, officials now expect around 4 crore pilgrims to the holy town.

The temporary diversion of the Rajaji National Park was meant to ensure that pilgrims do not have any problems during the event. The State Government had sought a proposed area of the national park to remain with the Kumbh Mela Samiti for over nine months, from September 1, 2020 to May 31, 2021.

However, the Ministry returned the proposal.

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NISHAD party MLA among 3 booked for 'raping' singer

Bhadoli: Three men, including NISHAD party MLA Vijay Mishra and his son, were booked on Sunday for allegedly raping a 25-year-old singer, police said. NISHAD party is an ally of the ruling BJP.

Bhadoli Superintendent of Police Ram Badan Singh said the singer alleged that in 2014 Mishra had called her to his house for a programme, when he raped her and threatened to kill her if she ever spoke up about the incident.

She alleged that in 2015, she was raped at a hotel in Varanasi. She also claimed that once after raping her, Mishra told his son and nephew to drop her home but, both of them allegedly raped her before taking her back.

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biring. His wife and his son are accused in the case.

Mishra was shifted to Agra central jail from Chitrakoot jail around three weeks back.

In August, Vijay Mishra, his wife and son were booked on several serious charges including property grabbing on a complaint by their relative Krishna Mohan Mishra. Ramlal Mishra (wife of the MLA) is out after getting anticipatory bail from high court, while his son is absconding after his bail plea was rejected.

Mishra was arrested by the police from Madhya Pradesh and subsequently jailed.

PTI

Another accused held in Barabanki rape-murder case

Barabanki (Uttar Pradesh): A second accused has been arrested in the rape-murder of a Dalit teenager in Barabanki and POCSO Act invoked against both culprits after it was confirmed that the victim was a minor, police said on Sunday.

Additional Superintendent of Police RS Gautam said that accused Rishikesh Singh, 21, was arrested on the basis of information provided by his accomplice Dinesh Gautam, 19, who was arrested earlier in the case.

The ASP said the date of birth provided by the primary school of the victim's village revealed she was a minor, and therefore, charges under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act have also been included in the case.

The police had earlier said she was 18-year-old.

The ASP said that Dinesh confessed to his role in the crime on interrogation and also provided vital inputs on the basis of which Rishikesh, who runs a shop in the village, was arrested.

He said that the two accused committed the crime in a planned manner.

On the day of the incident, which took place under Satrik police limits of Barabanki district on Wednesday, Rishikesh allegedly informed Dinesh that the girl had gone alone to an agriculture field.

The girl's father had told police on Wednesday evening that she had gone to the fields but did not return home.

IANS

Dalit woman gangraped at gunpoint in UP

Kanpur: A Dalit woman was allegedly raped at gunpoint by two men, including a former village head, in Kanpur Dehat district of Uttar Pradesh, police said on Sunday. "The incident took place week back, but the police were informed about the alleged gang-rape on Sunday," Superintendent of Police (Kanpur Dehat) Keshav Kumar Choudhary said.

According to a complaint filed by the victim's parents, the accused duo barged into their house when the 22-year-old woman was alone and raped her one by one at gunpoint. They then left after threatening her dire consequences if she dared to speak about the incident to anyone.

A case has been registered under relevant sections of IPC and the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 in the matter, Choudhary said.

Three police teams headed by SHO Derapur circle officer and additional SP apart from SWAT team have been formed to arrest the absconding accused, he added.

The incident comes close on the heels of the gangrape-murder of another Dalit woman in Hathras that had drawn intense outrage after alleged apathy of the administration. PTI

Tension at Assam-Mizoram border as many hurt in violent clash

Aizawl/ Silchar/ Guwahati: Simmering tension prevailed on the Assam-Mizoram border after a violent clash took place between the people of the two States, injuring several, officials said on Sunday.

The situation is now under control in the area, which is in Kolasib district of Mizoram and Cachar district of Assam, they said.

A meeting, chaired by Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla, between both the state will be held on Monday to take stock of the situation, Mizoram Home Minister Lalchamliana said.

Chief secretaries of the two states will be present in the meeting, he said.

The two states have deployed security personnel, including those of the Indian Reserve Battalion, in the violence-hit areas near the Vairengte village in Mizoram and Assam's Lailapur, officials said.

"Despite the prohibitory order under Section 144 of the CrPC and policemen trying their best, the situation turned violent and became out of control as people gathered in large numbers," he said.

The incident could be the fallout of the demolition of a makeshift hut used by local volunteers who guard the inter-state border near the Saitupi 'V' village, about 3 km from Vairengte, he said.

The volunteers are guarding the border to check the movement of the people in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

assembled when some people from Assam, armed with sticks and dao, pelted stones at a group near the auto-rickshaw stand on the outskirts of the border village on Saturday evening.

The irate mob from Vairengte retaliated and set on fire about 20 temporary bamboo huts and stalls built along the national highway by residents of Lailapur despite a prohibitory order being in place, he said.

One of the injured persons, who suffered a cut in his neck, was admitted to the Kolasib district hospital and the condition was critical. Three people were being treated at a Public Health Centre (PHC) in Vairengte, he said.

"The two states have deployed security personnel, including those of the Indian Reserve Battalion, in the violence-hit areas near the Vairengte village in Mizoram and Assam's Lailapur, officials said.

Vairengte in Kolasib district is on the northern fringe of Mizoram through which the National Highway 306 (formerly 54) passes, linking the state to Assam. The nearest village in Assam is Lailapur, which is in the Cachar district.

Kolasib district deputy commissioner H Lalchamliana told PTI that a large number of Vairengte residents

PTI



Pigeons fly over a city road in the backdrop of a clear sky, in Thane on Sunday

Jammu emerging as North India's education hub: Union Minister

Jammu: Asserting that Jammu is fast emerging as North India's education hub, Union minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said with the constitutional changes in Jammu and Kashmir last year, they hoped to be able to overcome the impediment of attracting the best of faculty for recently established educational institutions.

The Union minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office was speaking after laying the foundation stone of a new education complex named after Pandit Madam Mohan Malviya at the Central University, Jammu.

"With the constitutional changes that took place after August 5, 2019, it is hoped that the biggest impediment in attracting the best of faculty

from across the country for these educational institutions will be overcome," the minister said. He said the standard of any institution can be maintained only when there is total professionalism and no compromise in the selection of scholars, and when the institution is ready to facilitate and incentivise the best of the faculty to take up teaching assignments.

Singh also noted that through the Department of Space, of which he is in-charge, north India's first Space and Research Study Centre has been started at Central University Jammu and K Radhakrishnan, a renowned space scientist who is also known as the father of Mars Mission, has been appointed as the advisor. PTI

"With the constitutional changes that took place after August 5, 2019, it is hoped that the biggest impediment in attracting the best of faculty

Andhra sees more recoveries than new cases

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh saw more recoveries than new coronavirus cases during the last 24 hours as 4,591 patients recovered and 3,986 more tested positive, health officials said on Sunday.

The state's COVID tally mounted to 7,83,132 while the total recoveries climbed to 7,40,229.

Eighteen more COVID fatalities in last 24 hours ending 9 am on Sunday pushed the death toll to 6,429. The number of active cases in the state stands at 36,474. The latest deaths were reported from Chittoor, Guntur, Krishna, Anantapur, East Godavari, Nellore, West Godavari, Kadapa, Prakasam, and Visakhapatnam districts. IANS

"With the constitutional changes that took place after August 5, 2019, it is hoped that the biggest impediment in attracting the best of faculty

Karnataka reports 7,012 fresh Covid-19 cases, 51 deaths

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka on Sunday reported 7,012 new COVID-19 cases and 51 deaths taking the total infection count in the state to 7,65,586 and the toll to 10,478, the Health department said.

The total infections comprise 6,45,825 discharges including 8,344 today and 1,09,264 active cases including 945 in the ICU. Half of the infections and mortalities were contributed by Bengaluru Urban district on Sunday with 3,535 fresh cases and 25 deaths.

Cumulatively, the city has reported 3,07,540 infections, 3,525 deaths, 2,39,579 discharges including 3,845 on Sunday and 64,435 active cases comprising 365 in ICU.

According to the health department bulletin, Mysuru reported 404 fresh cases, followed by Mandya (308), Bengaluru Rural (288), Hassan (257), Chitradurga (226), Dakshina Kannada (183), Ballari (171), Bagalkote (138), Dharwad (135), Udupi (129) and Chikkamagaluru (119).

The Health department said three deaths due to COVID-19 were reported in Dakshina Kannada and two each in Ballari, Chitradurga, Dharwad, Hassan, Kolar, Shivamogga and Uttara Kannada. One death each was reported in Bagalkote, Chamarajanagar, Haveri, Kalaburagi, Koppal, Mandya, Mysuru, Tumakuru and Vijayapura.

Ban on tourists visiting Covid-hit Mysuru lifted for Dasara

Mysuru: Ban on tourists visiting Covid-hit Mysuru lifted to enable tourists enter the cultural city of palaces in Karnataka during the Dasara fest, an official said on Sunday.

"Deputy Commissioner Rohini Sindhu revoked the ban on tourists entering the city for visiting tourist spots during the 10-day Dasara fest, which began on Saturday, on the state chief minister's direction," a district official told IANS

and others to visit the city and make-up for the huge losses they incurred during the Covid-induced lockdown over the last 7 months.

With Mysuru being the second worst-affected after Bengaluru in the state by the pandemic, the world-famous Dasara fest, including the victory parade on the Vijayadashmi day (October 26) will be confined to the Amba Vilas royal palace in the city centre to prevent large gatherings in public places.

Some of the prominent tourist spots across the city are the royal palaces, Jayachamarajendra art gallery, Mysuru zoo and Chamundeshwari temple atop the hill on the outskirts. IANS

Centre rejects U'khand Govt's plan for use of Rajaji Park for Kumbh

From Page 1

It said that the current laws do not permit such diversion of forest areas for non-forest purposes.

Refusing to list it to be taken up for discussion by the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) members, it pointed out that Rajaji National Park is a tiger reserve with a significant population of tigers and its use for non-forest purposes is in clear violation of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 both of which stress on how forest zones are inviolate and that forest land cannot be diverted under any circumstances.

On its part, the State Forest Department has already start-

ed radio-collaring of the elephants in the region to prevent man-animal conflict and keep them away from the 100-odd ghats in the holy town during the Maha Kumbh.

However, an official from the Uttarakhand Forest Department said that radio-collaring of 10 elephants is proposed to study their movement, as they usually stray in areas of human habitation.

According to an estimate, the Jumbo numbers have increased in the state and so have man-elephant conflicts. In June, according to the elephant Census conducted earlier this year, the number of elephants in the state had reached 2,026, up from the 1,839 elephants in 2017.

Chirag downplays...

From Page 1

He added that he is committed to Modi's mantra of development.

Modi is set to address a number of poll rallies with Kumar and other coalition leaders in the coming days in Bihar.

The LJP's decision to fight the Bihar polls independently after walking out of the NDA, which includes the BJP and the JD(U), has muddied the waters ahead of the upcoming assembly polls. Paswan has been making determined efforts to target the JD(U) by putting up candidates against it, while his party is not contesting on seats where the BJP is in the fray. The BJP has in the last few days accused Paswan of trying to spread confusion by harping on his claimed proximity to its senior leaders and reiterated that Kumar will become the state's chief minister again if their alliance gets the mandate.

On the other hand, Paswan has been claiming that an alliance of the BJP and the LJP will come to power after the polls. The Bihar Assembly elections are scheduled to be held in three phases on October 28, November 3 and November 7. The counting of votes will take place on November 10. PTI

Gorakhpur will be textile hub: Yogi

Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has said that Gorakhpur will be developed into a textile sector hub.

The chief minister made this announcement on Sunday during his brief visit here.

It will give an impetus to the ready-made garment industry in eastern Uttar Pradesh, he added.

Besides boosting the textile industry that also falls in the category of One District One Product (ODOP), it will also generate employment opportunities for the workers who have returned to the state from various places during the lockdown.

The chief minister, while interacting with the representatives of the Chamber of Industries (COI) of Gorakhpur, said that in order to encourage self-employment, the government is also planning to establish a big training centre.

According to a survey, about 12,000 migrant workers associated with the textile industries have come back to Gorakhpur and adjoining districts during the lockdown.

"The government is making serious efforts for employing them at places near their native places and most of them have already been employed," the chief minister said.

Community...

From Page 1

The Minister said this ought to serve as a good lesson for all the State Governments that were being negligent in planning for the festival season.

"This festive season, charity must take precedence over celebrations. My own celebrations too shall remain subdued due to the heart-rending impact of Covid-19 on lakhs of corona warriors across the world battling for us," the Minister stated.

He also assured that there is no shortage of medical oxygen in the country and that the Government is ready to scale up the production capacity to meet any further increase in demand arising due to the pandemic.

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Armed Forces in many ways. Incidentally, a new version of the BrahMos surface-to-surface missile was successfully test fired a few weeks ago. It can hit a target at more than 400 kms.

Since the stand-offs started in early May this year at the LAC and China bolstered its troop strength besides deploying missiles in the Tibet region, India too has deployed some batteries of the Brahmos, Nirbhay and Akash missiles.

Stepping up the momentum of readiness, the DRDO in the last one month also tested Rudram-1. Also, the laser guided anti-tank guided missile and nuclear capable hypersonic missile Shaurya were test fired. The successful test firing of Rudram-1 was seen as a major milestone as it is India's first indigenously developed anti-radiation weapon.

Among other missiles tested, India joined the elite league of nations including US, Russia and China when it achieved success in indigenously developing hypersonic technology demonstrator vehicle (HSTDV), which is essential to power cruise missiles and long-range missile systems. It can travel at more than three times the speed of sound.

Besides testing the new version of nuclear-capable Shaurya missile off Odisha coast, scientists also successfully tested the Nirbhay missile which has a range of 800 km.

sharp rise in infections. Fresh lockdowns should not be imposed on district and State-wide levels, unless there is imminent danger of the healthcare facilities being overwhelmed," VidyaSagar said.

10 HAFTE 10 MINUTE

Traders, shopkeepers join anti-dengue campaign

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



This time, shopkeepers of Delhi also took part in the fight against dengue, checked the shops and changed the stagnant water. By doing so, they are protecting themselves and their customers from dengue.

ARVIND KEJRIWAL

Traders and shopkeepers in Delhi joined the "10 Hafte 10 Baje 10 Minute anti-dengue campaign" on Sunday. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal welcomed the move and thanked the shopkeepers of Delhi for taking part in the campaign and protecting themselves and their customers from dengue.

The seventh week of the campaign seeks to encourage shopkeepers to inspect their shops and surroundings for stagnant water every Sunday for 10 minutes and drain it to prevent the breeding of Dengue mosquitoes around them.

"This time, shopkeepers of Delhi also took part in the fight against dengue, checked the shops and changed the stagnant water. By doing so, they are protecting themselves and their customers from dengue. Delhi is again defeating Dengue," Kejriwal tweeted.

Market associations across Delhi came forward in support of this campaign on Sunday.

"I support this campaign by Delhi Kejriwal against dengue. We are practising this in all the markets, regularly changing the deposited water and inspecting our surroundings thoroughly. We also support the 10 Hafte 10 Baje 10 Minute campaign launched by the Delhi CM. Today we have participated in this campaign and we will continue active participation in this battle against dengue," said Sushil Khatri, head of Tilak Nagar market association.

Ashu Goel, Sushil Khatri, Mohan Gandhi, Rajeev Suri, Ravneet Kaur, and other traders and shopkeepers of Tilak Nagar market association participated in the campaign. Kejriwal had also said that with the collective efforts of all the Delhites, "We have to stop the breeding of dengue mosquitoes and protect our family and the entire Delhi from Dengue." Inspecting the surrounding market areas and their shops will keep the shopkeepers as well as their customers safe from Dengue.

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Despite protests, farmers selling produce in mandis

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI



Despite protests over the new farm laws enacted by the Parliament, farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir are going to mandis in large numbers to sell their produce to procurement agencies, Government officials said.

According to the Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs, about 84.46 lakh metric tons of kharif paddy worth ₹15,947 crore was purchased at the minimum support price (MSP) from 7.38 lakh farmers so far. Unlike before, the Government is releasing the daily procurement data to send a message to farmers protesting against the new farm laws that it has no intention of scrapping procurement at MSP.

In a related development, the Punjab Assembly session scheduled to begin on October 19 will now last for two days instead of one to bring a legislation to negate the farm laws enacted by the Parliament. Farmers and civil rights organisations have been holding protests since last month. As per the Punjab government data, 47,53,651 metric tonnes of paddy has been procured and payment of ₹5,246.27 crores has been made to 3,56,516 farmers. As per data, 47,34,791 metric tonnes paddy has been procured by the Government agencies and 18,860 metric tonnes by the millers.

"So far, 96% of the total rice procurement of 3.72 million tonnes have come from Punjab and Haryana. Farmers are coming to mandis in large number in these two States to sell their produce at MSP," officials said. The official said that the procurement will fur-

ther step up when purchase starts in major rice producing states like West Bengal, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, where harvest hits the market later.

On the other hand, Bhartiya Kisan Union has alleged that farmers from UP, Bihar and Rajasthan are selling their crops to Punjab traders as there was a huge gap between the MSP in Punjab and these states. "Farmers in these states are selling their crop to Punjab traders at ₹900-1,000 per quintal. After paying the freight charges (₹200-250/ quintal), it costs the traders ₹1,150 per quintal. This means they make a profit of nearly ₹600-650/quintal," they alleged.

Paddy procurement commenced in Punjab and Haryana from September 26 due to early arrival of the crop, while in other states it began from October 1. More than 80 per cent of the country's paddy crop is grown in the kharif season. The Government through the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and state agencies undertakes procurement of paddy at MSP.

"Paddy procurement in the 2020-21 kharif marketing season is going on smoothly in the procuring states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Chandigarh

and J&K," the food ministry said. As per data, FCI has procured 4,82,656 MT in Haryana, 1545 MT in Uttar Pradesh and 1809 MT in Tamil Nadu and 25,551 MT in Tamil

Nadu till October 7. The government has set target of procuring 49.7 million tonnes rice in this kharif season - around 18% more than record procurement of 42 million tonnes in kharif 2019-20. For the current year, the Centre has fixed the MSP of paddy (common grade) at ₹1,868 per quintal, while that of A grade variety has been fixed at Rs 1,888 per quintal.

Till October 17, about 723.79 tonne of moong and urad at MSP value of Rs 5.21 crore was procured from 681 farmers in Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. Similarly, 5089 metric tones of copra (the perennial crop) having MSP value of Rs. 52.40 crore has been procured benefitting 3961 farmers in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. In respect of Copra and Urad, rates are ruling above MSP in most of the major producing States.

In case of cotton, state-owned Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has procured 165369 bales at MSP value of Rs 46697.86 lakh from 32994 farmers till October 17.

Int'l Human Trafficking Case

NIA files chargesheet against 12 including nine Bangladeshis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a charge-sheet against 12 traffickers, including nine Bangladeshis, in International Human Trafficking Case before a special NIA court in Hyderabad.

The case was registered by the NIA under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code including criminal conspiracy, sexual exploitation, exploitation of trafficked persons, forgery, using forged documents as genuine and relevant Sections of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 and the Foreigners Act, 1946.

The nine chargedheeted Bangladeshis are Abdul Barik (absconding), Mohd Yousuf Khan, Bithi Begum, Mohd Rana Hussain, Mohammed Al Mamun, Sojib Shaik, Suresh Kumar Das, Mohd Abdulla Munshi, and Mohd Ayub Shaik.

Other three chargeheeted accused are Ruhul Amin Dhalvi of West Bengal, Asad Hasan and Shareef Shaik of Maharashtra.

The case was initially registered as crime no. 477/2019 under various Sections of IPC and the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act on September 21, 2019 at Pahadishar-e Police Station, Hyderabad, following the arrest of 10 human traffickers by the Police on that day from two brothels at Jalpally village, Balapur, RangaReddy District and Mahimood colony, Balapur, in Hyderabad.

4 young Bangladeshi girl had also been rescued from the brothel.

MORE FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS-2020

In order to clear extra rush of passengers during forthcoming Festival Season, Railways have decided to run the following Festival Special Trains as per details given below:-

09717/09718 Jaipur - Daulatpur Chowk - Jaipur Special Train (Tri-Weekly) | 36 Trips

Train No. 09717	↓ STATIONS	↑ Train No. 09718
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
---- 19:30	JAIPUR	06:40 ----
12:15 ----	DAULATPUR CHOWK	---- 14:05

DAYS OF RUN: 09717 Ex Jaipur from 20.10.20 to 29.11.20 on every Tuesday, Friday & Sunday and 09718 Ex Daulatpur Chowk from 21.10.20 to 30.11.20 on every Wednesday, Saturday & Monday.

STOPPAGES: Gandhinagar Jaipur, Dausa, Bandikui Jr, Rajgarh, Alwar, Jn, Kairthal, Rewari, Jhajjar, Rohtak Jn, Julana, Jind Jn, Uchana, Narwana Jn, Keathal, Kurukshetra Jn, Ambala Cant Jn, Chandigarh, Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar (Mohali), Morinda, Rupnagar, Anandpur Sahib, Nangal Dam, Una Himachal & Amb Ambadura stations.

ACCOMMODATION: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved).

04888/04887 Barmer - Rishikesh - Barmer Special Train (Daily) | 84 Trips

Train No. 04888	↓ STATIONS	↑ Train No. 04887
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
---- 06:45	BARMER	20:30 ----
10:30 ----	RISHIKESH	---- 18:05

DAYS OF RUN: 04888 Ex Barmer from 20.10.20 to 30.11.20 on Daily and 04887 Ex Rishikesh from 21.10.20 to 01.12.20 on Daily.

STOPPAGES: Badoli, Balotra, Samadi Jn, Jodhpur Jn, Pipar Road Jn, Merta Road Jn, Nagaur, Nokha, Bikaner Jn, Lalgarh Jn, Lunkarsar, Manjhan, Suratgarh Jn, Pilibanga, Hanumangarh Jn, Sangaria, Mandi Dabwali, Bathinda Jn, Bathinda Cantt, Bhuchchu, Rampur Phul, Barnala, Dhuri Jn, Nabha, Patiala, Rajpura Jn, Ambala City, Ambala Cantt Jn, Yamunanagar Jagadhri, Saharanpur Jn, Roorkee, Jwalapur, Haridwar, Motichur & Rawal Jn Stations.

ACCOMMODATION: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved).

04519/04520 Delhi Jn. - Bathinda Jn. - Delhi Jn. Special Train (Daily) | 84 Trips

Train No. 04519	↓ STATIONS	↑ Train No. 04520
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
---- 14:00	DELHI JN.	12:15 ----
21:15 ----	BATHINDA JN.	---- 05:00

DAYS OF RUN: 04519 Ex Delhi Jn. and 04520 Ex Bathinda Jn. from 20.10.20 to 30.11.20 on Daily.

STOPPAGES: Delhi Kishanganj, Shakurbasti, Nangloj, Bahadurgarh, Sampura, Rohtak Jn, Kalanura Kalan, Bhiwani, Bawani Khera, Hansi, Sardro, Hisar, Mandi Adampur, Bhatia, Ding, Sirsa, Kalianwali & Raman stations.

ACCOMMODATION: AC 3 Tier, AC Chair Car, Chair Car & Second Seating (Reserved).

02471/02472 Shri Gangannagar - Delhi Jn. - Shri Gangannagar Superfast Special Train (Daily) | 84 Trips

Train No. 02471	↓ STATIONS	↑ Train No. 02472
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
---- 05:55	SHRI GANGANAGAR	20:35 ----
13:35 ----	DELHI JN.	---- 13:05

DAYS OF RUN: 02471 Ex Shri Gangannagar and 02472 Ex Delhi Jn. from 20.10.20 to 30.11.20 on Daily.

STOPPAGES: Abhara, Malout, Giddarbaha, Bhatinda Jn, Mau, Mansa, Budhlada, Jakhial Jn, Narwana Jn, Jind Jn, Rohtak Jn, Sampura, Bahadurgarh & Shakurbasti stations.

ACCOMMODATION: AC 3 Tier, AC Chair Car, Chair Car & Second Seating (Reserved).

02331/02332 Howrah Jn. - Jammu Tawi - Howrah Jn. Superfast Special Train (Tri-Weekly) (Via Dankuni) | 36 Trips

Train No. 02331	↓ STATIONS	↑ Train No. 02332
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
---- 23:55	HOWRAH JN.	11:30 ----
13:10 ----	JAMMU TAWI	---- 22:45

DAYS OF RUN: 02331 Ex Howrah Jn. from 20.10.20 to 28.11.20 on every Tuesday, Friday & Saturday and 02332 Ex Jammu Tawi from 22.10.20 to 30.11.20 on every Thursday, Sunday & Monday.

STOPPAGES: Asansol Jn, Chittaranjan, Madhupur Jn, Jasidih Jn, Jhajhia, Jamui, Kiul Jn, Mokameh Jn, Bakhtiyarpur Jn, Patna Sahib, Patna Jn, Danapur, Ara, Buxar, Pt, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn, Varanasi Jn, Jaunpur City, Sultanpur, Nihalgarh, Lucknow, Bareilly, Moradabad, Saharanpur, Yamunanagar Jagadhri, Ambala Cant Jn, Ludhiana Jn, Phagwara Jn, Jalandhar Cantt, Pathankot Cantt, & Kathua stations.

ACCOMMODATION: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved).

02549/02550 Kamakhya - Anand Vihar - Kamakhya Superfast Express Train (Daily) | 84 Trips

Train No. 02549	↓ STATIONS	↑ Train No. 02550
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
---- 10:00	KAMAKHYA	16:35 ----
19:20 ----	ANAND VIHAR (T)	---- 06:45

DAYS OF RUN: 02549 Ex Kamakhya from 20.10.20 to 30.11.20 on Daily and 02550 Ex Anand Vihar (T) from 22.10.20 to 02.12.20 on Daily.

STOPPAGES: Rangiya Jn, Barpeta Road, New Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, New Alipurduar, New Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri Road, New Jalpaiguri, Kishanganj, Barsoi Jn, Kathi Jn, Naugaon, Manasi Jn, Khagaria Jn, Begu Sarai, Barauni Jn, Patliputra, Danapur, Ara, Buxar, Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn, Prayagraj Junction, Fatehpur, Kanpur Central, Etawah, Tundla Jn, Aligarh Jn & Ghaziaabadi stations.

ACCOMMODATION: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved).

02422/02421 Jammu Tawi - Ajmer Jn. - Jammu Tawi Superfast Special Train (Daily) | 84 Trips

Train No. 02422	↓ STATIONS	↑ Train No. 02421
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
---- 18:10	JAMMU TAWI	08:15 ----
12:20 ----	AJMER JN.	---- 14:05

DAYS OF RUN: 02422 Ex Jammu T

UP: Elderly priest beaten to death by drunk man

PTI ■ AZAMGARH

An elderly priest was allegedly beaten to death by a man who was in an inebriated condition after the octogenarian refused to give him money to buy liquor, police said on Sunday.

They said the incident took place on Saturday night in Gularia village when the priest, Ramchandra Das (80), was returning from a neighbouring village.

The man came up to him in an inebriated state and asked for money. When the priest refused, he beat him up with a stick, and fled from the spot, police said.

The priest was admitted to the district hospital where he succumbed to injuries on Sunday. Angry villagers blocked the Azamgarh-Gorakhpur road, and kept the body there

The priest was admitted to the district hospital where he succumbed to injuries on Sunday. Angry villagers blocked the Azamgarh-Gorakhpur road, and kept the body there.

Meanwhile, Senior Superintendent of Police Sudhir Kumar Singh said that the accused was arrested on Saturday itself, and sent to jail.

7,631 more test positive in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■

KOCHE/CHENNAI

Kerala's see-saw battle with Covid-19 continued on Sunday as 7,631 new persons were diagnosed with the pandemic while the total number of patients under treatment for the disease touched 95,200. The number of fatalities were 22.

Malappuram with 1,399 patients topped the table and was followed by Kozhikode (976), Thrissur (862), Ernakulam (730) Thiruvananthapuram (685). Out of the 7,631 new patients diagnosed on Sunday, 6,685 contracted the pandemic through contact. 63 health workers too contracted Covid-19 through contact.

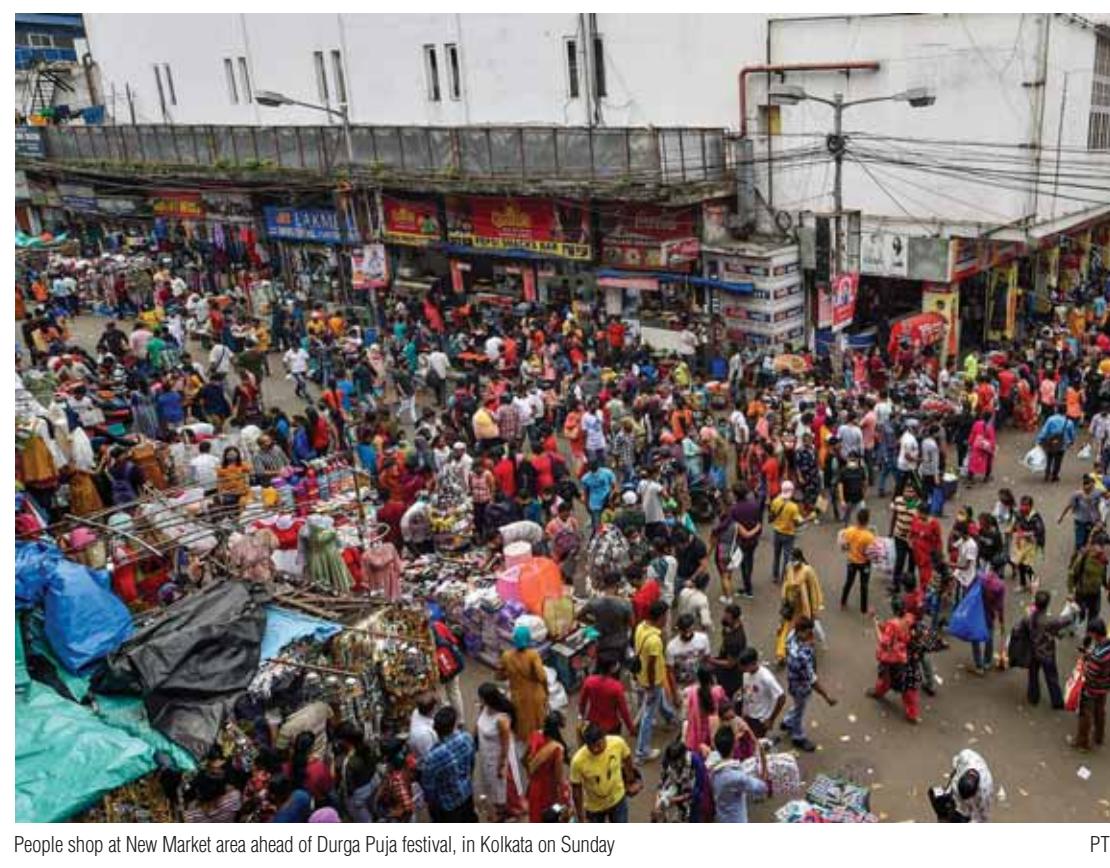
Testing remained low in the State despite experts asking the government to ramp it up to one lakh per day. On Sunday, 58,404 samples were tested while neighbouring Tamil Nadu 90,286 samples.

Union Minister of Health Dr

Harsh Vardhan lambasted the Kerala Government for its failure to sustain the preventive measures it had adopted during the initial phase of the pandemic. In his weekly interaction, the minister pointed out that the number of persons getting afflicted with Covid-19 due to local transmission were on the increase in Kerala.

Meanwhile, situation in Tamil Nadu is improving gradually as per the release issued by the directorate of health and preventive medicine. The number of new patients diagnosed on Sunday came down to 3,914 while the total number of patients in the State stood at 39,121.

The fatality rates too came down in the State. On Sunday, Covid-19 claimed 56 lives and this took the number of fatalities in the State till date to 10,642. An interesting development is the number of patients diagnosed in Chennai on Sunday. The 1,036 patients diagnosed in Chennai is considerably lower than that in Malappuram (1399) of Kerala.



People shop at New Market area ahead of Durga Puja festival, in Kolkata on Sunday

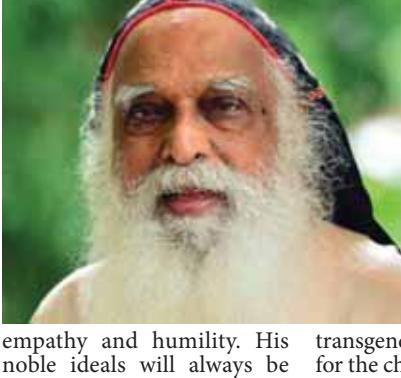
PTI

Mar Thoma Metropolitan passes away

KOCHI: Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan, supreme head of the Mar Thoma Church, passed away in the early hours of Sunday. The 90-year-old chief of the Mar Thoma Church was suffering from pancreatic cancer for sometime and breathed his last in a private hospital in Thiruvalla.

Born P T Joseph in 1931, he was ordained in 1957 and elevated as he supreme head of the Church in 2007 following the resignation of Metropolitan Dr Philipose Mar Chrysostom due to health reasons.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the death of the Metropolitan. "His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan was a remarkable personality who served humanity and worked hard to improve the lives of the poor and downtrodden. He was blessed with abundance of



empathy and humility. His noble ideals will always be remembered," said the Prime Minister who also remembered the Metropolitan's 90th birth day function in which he was the chief guest. The Prime Minister waxed eloquence on the Metropolitan's two objectives, empowerment of women and eradication of poverty.

Chief Minister Pinarayi

Vijayan and leaders of all political parties in the Syaye expressed their grief over the demise of the Metropolitan, who always had a strong presence in Kerala's social and cultural spheres.

The Metropolitan drew national attention when he fought for the rights of the

transgenders and built homes for the children of the inmates of red street. The Mar Thoma Church under his leadership initiated a number of social development programmes and he led the fight for the rights of Dalit Christians.

The Metropolitan would be interred with full State honours on Monday at Thiruvalla.

PNS

corporation who was denied his monthly pension and benefits even after seven years after his retirement.

KOCHE/CHENNAI

Social media offers opportunities to layman to get connected with the rulers and vice versa. A picture of the high-end Low Floor buses owned by the public sector Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) caught the attention of Kuttan Pillai, a farmer who is active in the social media.

The KSRTC is in dire financial situation (it tops the 58 loss making PSUs in Kerala with losses running to ₹508 crore) and owes its employees salaries and other arrears. Despite its monopoly over major routes in the State, KSRTC buses do not get proper maintenance and are dumped in garages.

Recently, the Human Rights Commission had to intervene on behalf of a bed-ridden former worker of the

The picture which made Pillai to approach Vijayan with offer to cultivate vegetables

corporation who was denied his monthly pension and benefits even after seven years after his retirement.

It is in this background that Pillai, sent a message through the social media to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan seek-

ing his permission to allow the former to undertake the cultivation of snake gourd in these parking lots. "Respected Sri

Pinarayi Vijayan, I am a farmer and mainly into cultivation of snake gourds. Since the moment I saw this picture, I feel this is an ideal place to cultivate snake gourds. If you give me permission, I am ready to launch farming operations on a lease basis in the space between the parked buses. The farming operations could be launched in 30 days." Says Pillai in his message to the chief minister.

Pillai's message to Vijayan was retweeted hundreds of times by other farmers and environmentalists who expressed their desire to be part of the snake gourd cultivation. Since messages received in the Chief Minister's Office are closely monitored by a special cyber wing, it is certain that Pillai did it with purpose and he meant business. Over to the Chief Minister.

Farmer comes forward to rescue loss making PSU in Kerala

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee hit back in equal measures hours after State Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar shot off yet another letter to her expressing concern over falling law and order situation and violation of human rights.

Stopping short of naming the Governor, Banerjee said there were some people who were engaged in defaming the police administration notwithstanding the service rendered by the men in uniform.

Addressing a small audience at Body Guard Lines the Chief Minister said "our police men are working round the clock for the people, for the society without caring for their own safety and here are some people who are out to defame them ... This is being done only for political reasons ... even if someone dies of tuberculosis they will call it a death because of failing law and order situation."

Hours before the Governor wrote to the Chief Minister drawing her attention to the custodial death of Madan Ghorai a reported BJP worker from Kanakpur village in East Midnapore district.

Alleging gross human rights violation the letter said that "Recent custodial death of Madan Ghorai ... is yet another horrifying instance of dehumanising

torture, assault and death in custody."

Claiming that there was outrage at such "lawlessness in state and outside," he also referred to the reported police excesses on a Sikh man Balwinder Singh who was reportedly heckled by the police men catching him by his turban."

The Governor further said it was "high time you redeem your constitutional oath and enforce rule of law, ensure 'democratic governance' in the state, make police and administration 'politically neutral' and accountable, sanitise power corridors of non-state actors and ensure that SSA (State Security Advisor) and Principal Advisor Internal Security do not boss over the statutorily structured police apparatus, thereby reducing the DGP and other police officials to abject subordination and to insignificance."

There has been no love lost between the Governor and the State Government ever since he came to the State last year with the two sides accusing each of interfering in other's work.

Meanwhile, in an unrelated development the condition of Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh was stated to be stable though he had some lung conditions. Ghosh was admitted to a private hospital after he was diagnosed with corona infection.

3 women among 5 Maoists killed in Gadchiroli district

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a biggest operation undertaken by them during the current year, the Anti-Naxal Squad (ANS) commandos gunned down five Maoists, including 3 women, in the Kosmi-Kisneli forests falling under the jurisdiction of Dhanora region in the naxalite-infested district of Gadchiroli in eastern Maharashtra on Sunday.

Acting on a tip-off, ANS C-60 unit commandos of the Gadchiroli police were conducting a combing operation in the Kosmi-Kisneli forests, when the Naxals opened fire at them.

The C-60 commandos of the Gadchiroli police were conducting a combing operation in the Kosmi-Kisneli forests, when the Naxals opened fire at them. The Naxals soon fled from the spot after the police team launched a retaliatory attack," the police said.

Later in the evening, the ANS

commandos recovered the bodies of 5 Maoists comprising 3 women and two men, from the bushes. "We are yet to identify the Maoists killed and verify if any cases or bounties were declared against them," a senior ANS officer said.

There were no casualties or injuries on the security personnel side. Incidentally, Sunday's was the first major operation carried out under Gadchiroli's new Superintendent of Police Ankit Goyal.

He was assisted by Additional Superintendent of Police Maneesh Kalwani.

The ANO and Maharashtra police have in recent months intensified anti-Maoist operations in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district, which is located on the border of Telangana and Chhattisgarh.

Earlier in the day, in the neighbouring Telangana state, the Security forces gunned down two Maoists in an exchange of fire that took place between them and a group of naxals in Mangat Mandal of Mulugu district.

₹1.25 crore jewels and cash recovered from inter-State robbers

Muslim family makes dress for goddess Durga in communally sensitive Aligarh

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

Aligarh: Aligarh police busted a gang of robbers and recovered gold and cash of about 1.25 crore rupees.

Police arrested 5 members of this gang and sent them to jail. This gang has a long history of robbery in various states. Many robberies have been cracked by the police.

In the Police Line Auditorium SP Rural Shubham Patel revealed the major theft crime. He told that the Dado police got information that the accused wanted in a case of theft is planning to go to Chhaura to sell the stolen jewelry. They are standing near Pulia Bamba Ataa. Sub-inspector Harikesh Kumar reached the spot with the team and arrested all the accused.

50 thousand cash and waist flower of the yellow metal was recovered from Asim son of Dilabar Khan resident of village Milk Sheikhpur police station Dado Aligarh. A mangal sutra and cash were recovered from Shahrukh.

PNS

ilies are engaged in making deities for Goddess Durga for the occasion of Navratri.

Behind the back ground of a communally sensitive city, a Muslim family of Aligarh is famous for making dress of Durga not locally but at far flung places also.

The demand of their dress for Durga increases manifold on navratri. The dresses made by Abid r/o Chowk Bundoo Khan and his younger brother Firaz r/o Civil Lines are being taken by many to Goddess Durga.

This is biggest example communal harmony in a city which is known for its riots and communal flare up.

Abid and Firaz belong to fourth generation of a Muslim family who prepare dress for gods and goddesses. Abid, Firaz and youngest Jabbar had learnt the art of making dress for goddess from their father Naim.

Now young generation is also carrying on the tradition of their forefathers.

Bengal Govt alleges human rights violation, CM hits back

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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The Governor further said it was "high time you redeem your constitutional oath and enforce rule of law, ensure 'democratic governance' in the state, make police and administration 'politically neutral' and accountable, sanitise power corridors of non-state actors and ensure that SSA (State Security Advisor) and Principal Advisor Internal Security do not boss over the statutorily structured police apparatus, thereby reducing the DGP and other police officials to abject subordination and to insignificance."

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TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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NCB seizes Marijuana worth ₹55L, two arrested

TN RAGHUNATHA ■

MUMBAI

Continuing its crackdown on the drug peddlers, a team of Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Mumbai, has intercepted Marijuana that was seized from a parcel that had arrived from Canada at a post office at Lonavla near Pune. (Insets) The two arrested persons

tions have revealed that the sender had couriered the contraband by post to avoid detection.

The NCB officials are trying to ascertain the identities of the persons to whom the contraband parcel was consigned to. More arrests are likely during the coming days.

The investigators have a reason to believe that the seized contraband in the international market is around ₹ 50 lakh to ₹ 55 lakh," a senior NCB officer said.

The preliminary investigation

6 cases registered against ex-AMUSU prez Usmani in Aligarh as per records

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

AMUL

Aligarh: Police record shows six registered cases against the former president of AMU Students' Union, Mashkoor Ahmad Usmani, who came into the limelight after being declared a Congress candidate in Bihar assembly elections. One of these cases is the action taken in defiance of the court's order. According to the police records, the police have filed a charge sheet in 4 cases, while in 1 case the final report was filed for lack of evidence.

The first case was registered in 2015 at the Kwarshi police station, in which five people, including AMU's Mashkoor Ahmad Usmani

son of Aun Ahmed, resident Faizula Chowk police station Lohar, Sarai Darbhanga Bihar hall were named. In this case of fraud, the police filed a final report for a lack of evidence.

In the year 2018, a case of

9,060 new cases, 150 deaths in Maharashtra

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The total Covid-19-triggered deaths crossed 42,0



Puja politics

Given the spate of funding to *puja* committees and pandal inaugurations, the BJP is challenging the TMC on the Hindutva plank



Bengal's unabated Coronavirus spiral would logically demand that mass-spreading events, especially the community festival of Durga *Puja*, be scaled down with the tightest protocols to limit a super contagious congregation. But it is just as big and spectacular this year and if videos on social media of preparations are any indication, then crowding is a fallout that no vigilance and protocol can prevent given the fact that the *puja* in Bengal is an emotion, not religion. But it is a wave so powerful that politicians cannot ignore it or afford to underplay it as this single event does what no rally can, takes them closest to voters. Besides, an entire sub-sector of the economy lives off the annual jamboree. So it is understandable why on the eve of the Assembly elections, the pandemic has given way to political exigency. Truth be told, the Left rule in the State had never appropriated the Durga *Puja* or the allied cultural space so evidently though it did use the pandal stalls to propagate communist literature. But in the Trinamool Congress (TMC) regime, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has ensured unprecedented Government patronage to *puja* committees, using them to entrench her appeal at the community and block levels of the State. Over the years, she has inaugurated *pujas* herself to appease majoritarian sentiment, considering she is largely defined in the public space by her pro-minority tilt. Except this time, the societal polarities are sharper and she has another opponent challenging her cultural monopoly, the BJP. The Central party made massive inroads in the Lok Sabha elections and is hoping to consolidate itself in the Assembly elections. Besides, it has realised that the Ram temple cannot quite generate the same enthusiasm in Bengal, which swears by Shakti icons, as it did in northern India. Hence it is now using Durga *Puja* to push its Hindutva agenda. In fact, the BJP has put Mamata in quite a spot, forcing upon her a logistical nightmare. Even before she had finalised the scale of festivities, the BJP ran a campaign that she was stalling the *puja* and prayers that would offer succour in COVID-stressed times. She had to publicly commit otherwise. Now if she bungles affairs, goes bankrupt funding the humongous man-management required or worse fails to contain the pandemic surge, it can always blame her for incompetence. That the BJP is dead serious is evident from the fact that none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be inaugurating the *pujas* digitally. It is debatable whether the Prime Minister should endorse any religious event at all given the constitutional mandate his role requires but in a post-Ayodhya India, where he himself reset the propriety of conduct by laying the foundation stone of the Ram temple, such questions won't be asked. In fact, by avowedly professing his faith preference, he has normalised such behaviour. So a bevy of Central BJP leaders and Ministers are expected to whip up popular opinion on their side during the *puja* through a series of virtual inaugurations. There was even talk of Home Minister Amit Shah visiting Bengal after his COVID recovery. The drive had begun last year on *Mahalaya* when BJP leaders performed *tarpan* (offering water to the dead) for 80 party workers who died in what they claim as TMC-fuelled violence. Ever since then, the BJP has followed the TMC's strategy of funding *puja* committees and this year is using Shyama Prasad Mookerjee's legacy to drive home the point that its ideological parent, the Jan Sangh, was formed in Bengal and, therefore, it is not an outsider party. Besides, with its State unit riven by faction fights, the BJP is using Modi's aura.

By no means a pushover, *Didi*, as Mamata is popularly called, is on an inauguration spree herself. In fact, she was one up on the BJP initially when she called out the Yogi Adityanath Government in Uttar Pradesh for permitting *Ramlilas* but not Durga *Puja* in public spaces and wondered whether the goddess was not part of Hindutva. The Central BJP forced Adityanath to rescind the partisan order and allow the *puja*. But quite blunderously, she has doubled the financial assistance to 37,000 *puja* committees, from ₹25,000 to 50,000. Besides, power charges and other fees are being discounted or halved. This flies in the face of her claims that Cyclone Amphan had not only flattened the physical infrastructure in the State but bankrupted the coffers. TMC leader Derek O'Brien has already made much noise about how the Centre owes Bengal ₹53,000 crore and even GST dues. The *puja* largesse has, therefore, invited sharp criticism and made her look power-hungry. Mamata has never played the majoritarian game and is a bit out of depth, walking into the BJP's Hindutva trap by reacting to every move her rival is making. By draining her on the religious agenda, the BJP is making sure that she is diverted from her own agenda. But *Didi* can still stir up the popular pulse and resonate with grassroots Bengal though she may encounter some anti-incumbency in the urban pockets and the industrial belt, where the BJP is working hard. And she scores with populism. No doubt, the BJP's vote share has risen dramatically from 17 to 40 per cent, snapping up the Left and Congress pies. But the TMC has also grown from 39 to 43 per cent. And that is a realistic testament to her iron-fisted implementation of welfarism and drive. Yet a tiny swing could cost TMC seats. But Mamata has strategist Prashant Kishor, a popular sentinel of the victim who wins back her rights and matches Modi measure for measure, the tea-seller versus the slum dweller. Will she bounce back thunderously or scrape through is the question.

Excesses on Uighurs

India should join other nations in taking up the plight of the ethnic minority to counter China on Ladakh



What China is doing to Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang can be compared to what Adolf Hitler did to Jews in Germany at different levels, restricting freedom of religion or belief, wiping out the ethnic community by depriving it of all rights and civil liberties, ostracising the remaining population and confining them to ghettos. Earlier in October, 39 countries, including Canada, Haiti, Honduras, Australia and New Zealand, had condemned China over its policies in Xinjiang, expressing "grave concern" and calling for immediate access to the region. However, despite the global uproar, the clampdown continues disproportionately, with the US now endorsing reports of forced labour and worse, a genocide. In June, the US Customs and Border Protection had detained a suspicious shipment of hair products and accessories suspected of being forced-labour products made with human hair from Xinjiang. In the light of recent events, the US National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien said that China was perpetrating "something close to" a genocide. While China blatantly denies human rights abuse, the United Nations estimates that more than a million Muslims have been detained and been at the receiving end of heinous crimes against humanity — from being subjected to birth control measures, mass internment and used as bonded labour.

The crackdown on Uighur Muslims can be traced back to the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the emergence of Central Asian nations but under President Xi Jinping, things have only aggravated. No one can forget Jinping's brazen message in 2014: "Show absolutely no mercy on Uighur people, control their violence, transform them and keep them under surveillance for life." In recent years, China has closed and demolished major shrines and mosques across Xinjiang. It has now been repopulated with Han Chinese. With more than a million Uighur Muslims in re-education and other internment camps, thousands of children are left without parents. If China doesn't abandon its plans to convert Xinjiang into another Tibet, it might find itself alienated as East Asian countries, along with Western powers, are now closing ranks to stand up to its bullying. India should also join multinational campaigns on the Uighurs to poke the dragon. Clearly, our neighbour has bitten off more than it can chew and might just choke on its meal.

It is a very regrettable fact that a former Defence Minister (Salvador Cienfuegos) has been arrested (in the US), accused of links to drug trafficking. Of course, all of this must be proven.

Mexican President
—Andrés Manuel López Obrador

opinion

06

Crumbling Chinese dream

Standing against the combined resources of numerous countries in a militaristic misadventure, statements from Beijing are reflective of pressure, not confidence



BHOPIINDER SINGH

Chinese history, taught in its formative schools, is complex, wounded and deliberately provocative as it aims to undo the "century of humiliation" that ostensibly ended with the advent of the Communists in 1949 under Chairman Mao Zedong. Seeds of revenge, insecurities and expansionist tendencies were assiduously sown and harnessed by the focussed efforts of the single-party regime. This transformational narrative of the deprived past to that of the dreams of the hegemonic "Chinese Century" (21st century) has distracted, galvanised and anchored the faith of the citizenry to the illiberal and undemocratic regime. A collateral outcome of this national passion has been the planned outreach beyond its cartographic limits in terms of trade, commerce, military and diplomacy, both welcomingly and unwelcomingly. This demanded a governance tonality of disruption, deceit and re-interpretation of all known laws of sovereignty, morality and all other forms of global operating systems. It has led to a unique situation of China having territorial disputes with at least 18 countries, while having borders with only 14. Ironically, the Chinese greed does not spare its own allies like North Korea, Philippines and most recently, Nepal.

The Chinese approach towards territorial aggrandisement has swerved from creeping, brazen, opportunistic to even innovative — but always, relentless. With such a backdrop, it was hardly surprising that Beijing stated, "China does not recognise the Ladakh Union Territory illegally set up by the Indian side and the Arunachal Pradesh." This was patently duplicitous, obstructionist and retracting Chinese diplomacy at its normal. Constant flare-ups that end up enhancing the Chinese footprint are a critical and reassuring component of its power projection, as President Xi Jinping had famously claimed, "Only if there are battles, there are opportunities."

The ensuing trade wars with the United States, sabre-rattling with Taiwan, prickly relations with Japan, a military stand-off with India and continuing belligerence in the South China Sea are carefully plotted moves in the mould of "shock and awe," to reassert the Dragon's arrival and supremacy on the global centrestage, with or without anyone's



permission. Part of this Chinese fact is to draw the opponent into a "limited" theatre and then out-muscle and out-posture the same into subservience without matters escalating beyond the defined realm. History suggests that the outcome of a long-drawn and expanded conflict has never ended in China's favour — like the China-Vietnam war in 1979. China had underestimated the Vietnamese resolve as the then Chinese Vice Premier, Deng Xiaoping, had mentioned to American President Jimmy Carter before China's ill-fated intrusion into Vietnam, "The little child is getting naughty, it's time he got spanked." By the end of the bloody conflict, most independent historians agree that the ragtag but battle-hardened Vietnamese fought and outperformed the numerically and materially superior Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).

China can suddenly seize unoccupied shoals, reefs and islands beyond its maritime limits like the Johnson Reef, Mischief Reef, Scarborough Shoal, Paracel Islands, Spratly Islands and more, and then start mega reclamation projects to enlarge the landmass into full-fledged, militarised bases. Towards this, it can discount all international treaties and norms to propound its own unique formula like the "nine-dash line" to the consternation of the rightful claimants. China will invariably posit an admixture of disputed history, vague claims and cartographic dashes that were clearly declared to be unlawful under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the

Seas (UNCLOS). Beijing disregarded the verdict of the International Court of Justice and brazenly added another 10th and 11th line dash to its claims.

China's claims on Taiwan are equally disbelieving with the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) never ever ruling the island State since the independence of either of the nations, and only alluding to an expeditionary Chinese force in AD 239 to buttress its claims.

In recent times, devious efforts to soften its expansionist image by propounding creative formula, like "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong, have been completely exposed and unmasked. Even shifty leaders like the Philippines' President, Rodrigo Duterte, who had shocked everyone by siding with the Chinese just when Manila was embroiled in a territorial dispute with Beijing or Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli of Nepal, have been forced into serious introspection of their dalliances with China. Duterte not only dialled down his anti-US rhetoric but also hailed its verdict against China as "the triumph of reason over rashness, of law over disorder, of amity over ambition." Somewhere the Dragon's free-run seems to have run into rough weather and the clouds of a push-back are looming on the horizon.

Indian armed forces are starting back, hitting back and have dug their heels. The Quad discussions (US, Japan, Australia and India) are moving from paper to spadework and the US naval warships are passing through the choppy Taiwan Straits. China is

clearly feeling the heat as Jinping was left goading his military, "Put all (your) minds and energy into preparing for war."

The situation is getting uncomfortably prolonged, inconclusive and simmering to Beijing's discomfiture, and perhaps the sense that it has bitten more than it can chew simultaneously, has dawned on the Chinese. The entire neighbourhood is seemingly on a "high alert" and this works to the detriment of the Chinese, who typically thrive on nibbling and "salami tactics" on unsuspecting, napping or trusting neighbours. Even Russia, which has its own axe to grind with the US, would not mind seeing China in a tight spot and may allow its "neutrality" to worsen the situation for Beijing. In such a situation, Sino-wary nations need to collectively stand back, ignore and blunt the provocative Chinese statements that are intended to dramatise, coerce and win bullet-less wars.

The pandemic has weakened the global economy, but for China to unilaterally stand up against the combined resources in a militaristic misadventure could be regime-threatening given the imploding undercurrents that could get unleashed with the crumpling of the "Chinese Dream." The Dragon has effectively been checkmated in its tracks, even though restoring status quo ante may not be possible. Yet the bombastic statements from Beijing are reflective of pressure and not confidence.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

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SOUND BITE

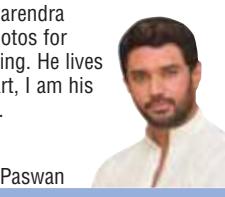
In professional boxing, beginners start in bouts that have four rounds of three minutes each and the training is very difficult.

Professional boxer
—Faizan Anwar

Be it the Congress party or any regional outfit, people are busy protecting brother-sister, mother-son, or the son. If a party office operates from a politician's residence, then the party belongs to that person.

BJP president
—JP Nadda

I don't need to use Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photos for campaigning. He lives in my heart, I am his Hanuman.

LJP chief
—Chirag Paswan

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COVID crisis

Sir — On October 16, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare deputed high-level Central teams to five States — Kerala, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal — which have been reporting a surge in the number of new Coronavirus infections in recent days. These teams will interact with the State authorities and get a first-hand understanding of the challenges and issues being faced by them. They will support the efforts made by the States towards strengthening containment, surveillance, testing, infection prevention and control measures for the positive cases. Additionally, they will guide in effectively managing the challenges related to timely diagnosis and follow-up. India has crossed the seven million mark and accounts for the world's second-highest tally after the US, where the figure is nearing eight million. It has now become imperative that the Centre and State Governments join hands to help prevent the pandemic from causing more loss of lives and employment.

Urvi Jain
Ujjain

Political wheels set in motion in Kashmir

T he Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) leaders' meeting and their press briefing on October 14 presented a picture of resumption of political activities after a lull of over 14 months. It is significant that the National Conference (NC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and four other parties closed ranks and came together to form the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration and fight for the restoration of J&K's special Constitutional status by peaceful means. These pro-India parties don't see the abrogation of Article 370 as something cast in stone or as the final settlement of the issue. They pin their hopes on the fact that politics is dynamic and not static. Former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao once said, "short of *azadi*, sky's the limit."

It is evident that the scrapping of Article 370 was a move more consistent with the notion of a single unitary and monolithic State than the idea of decentralisation of power. The BJP failed in its attempt to prop up alternative leaderships against the Abdullahs and Muffis, in the Valley. The people of J&K have exper-

enced far too much pain and suffering. Their situation must make us empathetic to their legitimate political aspirations and we must urge the Centre to meet them half way.

G David Milton

Maruthancode

Pradesh due to torrential downpour, which in turn led to waterlogging on roads and inundation of some low-lying areas. Extensive damage to properties have been reported from both the States, with broken roads and disruption in power supply in several places. Earlier, Mumbai experienced flooding due to its poor town planning and absence of culverts to drain out the rainwater. Now, heavy and incessant rains due to depression in the Bay of Bengal have resulted in flooding of many residential areas in Hyderabad. The indiscriminate mushrooming of concrete buildings in all the available spaces in the city and the destruction of lakes and water bodies in the name of urbanisation have led to lopsided development. From now onwards, the Electronic City should be upgraded into a smart city keeping in mind all the rules and regulations in force. The three capitals of Andhra Pradesh also need to be built in a planned manner so as to withstand any natural calamity.

Sravana Ramachandran

Chennai

However, this is not enough. At present, oil companies and the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas make frequent appeals for voluntary surrender of gas subsidy by those whose family income exceeds ₹10 lakh per annum. Instead of expecting voluntary compliance, consumers should be required to file affidavits. This will drastically reduce the LPG subsidy burden

on the exchequer. Also, translucent LPG cylinders made of fibre-glass should replace the old iron full-load supply.

Madhu Agrawal

Chandni Chowk

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FIRST COLUMN

A nudge in the right direction

Nationalism, sans some of its ill-effects, has constructive potential to emerge as a powerful push for policy actions and reforms



RAM KRISHNA SINHA

The concept of "nudge", presented by Nobel laureate Richard Thaler, is a relatively subtle policy shift that encourages people to make a decision. It is about making it easier for citizens to make a certain choice in their broad self-interest. It is interesting to see how Thaler's novel change-management concept is being taken forward at such a mega scale in public life in India. That nationalism could be a tool to nudge people for a targeted behavioural pattern is a fresh and interesting revelation. Leveraging it as an influencing tool in policy-making and wider political action is unique. The idea of nationalism in recent times has received traction with a strong intent for mass persuasion and influence in matters of governance and political action. Demonetisation was defended as "action against the nation's looters." The Make in India, Digital India, Start-Up India, Stand-Up India schemes were conceived to unlock India's entrepreneurial potential. An economic reform like the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was sold as "one nation, one tax, one market." The power sector reforms typified "one nation, one grid (now, water and gas grid have been added)." The payment system is described as "one nation, one card," while tracking vehicles through a unified command has been touted as "one nation, one tag." All of these have been espoused with an overt tinge of nationalism. The fervour was even higher in hailing the abrogation of Article 370 as establishing "one country, one Constitution." The logic advancing the nationalistic line runs like this: For population control, we need to nudge people to opt for a small family. Those opting for fewer children need to be honoured. Choosing to restrict the size of families is an expression of love for the nation. Family planning is thus clearly linked to nation-building. Then, for achieving a \$5 trillion economy, we need investment, particularly the private kind. Nudging the active participation of the private sector and corporates is seen as a must. If wealth is not created, it will not be distributed and by extension the poor cannot benefit. So corporates are our nation's wealth creators. They should be given pride of place. For reviving demand, consumption and creating jobs, we need to support local businesses and industry. So urging people to buy and promote local products, to be "vocal for local" is the need of the hour. This is also the time to boycott foreign (read Chinese) goods. Thus, the clarion call is "*Atmanirbhar Bharat* (self-reliant India)."

For advancing the proposal of simultaneous elections, we need to nudge the Election Commission, political parties, agents and voters to appreciate the disadvantages of frequent elections that are draining the scarce resources of the nation. Hence, the need for "one nation, one election." Nationalistic thoughts, phrases and slogans, advanced in the public domain, generally act as an effective nudge to achieve consensus or influence people to rally around the narrative of the State. Nationalism, with its different reflections in nomenclatures such as India, Bharat, Motherland and New India, gives a meaning and relevance to our identity and roots. With an attendant sense of pride, nationalism is seen playing a major part in determination of behaviour, be it economic, social or political, both at an individual and group level. The traction of *Atmanirbhar Bharat* is the latest example.

There are, of course, some questions in popular debate. Whether nationalism with its big overriding sweep clouds judgment and restricts human choices? Whether it works better for bigger goals only, like national security, sovereignty and so on? Whether nationalism compels people to see everything in terms of competitive prestige? The counter questions posed are many, too. Whether the debate on the negative side of nationalism suffers from prejudices? Whether the dark side is overhyped and exaggerated in India? Whether the debate to undermine, underrate or undervalue the constructive impact of nationalism is driven by political agenda? Surely, we need to guard against the negative effects of hyper-nationalism. Yet, blatantly undervaluing or negating nationalism and its utility seem unfair, too. Between the two extremes, a new approach can be thought through. Given the impact it has in India, nationalism can be pressed as a healthy and powerful tool to enable it to act as a nudge for overall progress.

However, some imaginative tweaks would be needed to be embedded in institutions to mitigate the debated side-effects of nationalism. For a civic nationalism to emerge, without any bias of exclusion and discrimination, our public institutions — social and political — need to introspect and revamp themselves. By nurturing a climate of tolerance, debate and reasoning in all their engagements, they can help foster a healthy nationalistic spirit needed to act as a powerful nudge to achieve national goals. High impact policy actions for economic growth, social progress and 21st Century "aspirational India" require public support, broad consensus and positive energy. Nationalism, with its constructive potential, can surely be pitched to deliver.

(The writer is a former bank executive and writes on education, learning and spirituality)



HIMA BINDU KOTA

The science of stock market investing has long been a mystery for normal retail investors and there are numerous debates about which strategy is better. There are two divergent ideologies: Active and passive investment. The passive strategy, which is mainly followed by the legendary Warren Buffet, is a long-term one that mirrors a particular index where the returns are generated due to the natural upswing of stock markets, ignoring short-term setbacks and even sharp downturns. The simplest way of embarking on a passive approach is to buy an index fund that follows one of the major indices like the S&P 500, Dow Jones and BSE Sensex or Nifty in India. These index funds automatically adjust their portfolios to any new additions or deletions to the original

index in the same proportion. Passive investment is for conservative and risk-averse people who are looking for low-risk investment and are not overly concerned with seeing rapid gains. The idea behind this is the classic value investing style, which looks at long-term benefits of holding on to undervalued stocks with huge future earning power.

Active investing, on the other hand, aims to generate above market returns by an in-depth research and analysis and using the knowledge and expertise to manoeuvre into or out of a particular stock, bond or any asset, taking full advantage of short-term price fluctuations. Since it does not necessarily mimic any index, it provides the flexibility of buying stocks which could be hidden gems. Since active investors are not stuck with index stocks, they are able to exit any sector or stocks when the risk becomes too high and can also hedge their bets using various techniques such as short sales or put options. However, all the research overheads and frequent buying and selling make active investment very expensive. It is also a highly risky affair since higher returns can only be

expected when the going is good but things can go terribly wrong during market downturns and therefore, due to its volatile nature, the active investment strategy is better suited for people who are aggressive and risk-tolerant. In passive management, one rises and sinks with the ship whereas actively managed funds have the ability to provide greater opportunity for profit, albeit, increasing the risk. According to researchers who propagate the efficient market hypothesis (EMH), stock markets are efficient in nature and, therefore, actively managed funds cannot outperform them over a long period of time.

So does active portfolio management create value? The debate about the merit of active vs passive portfolio management is supported by numerous researches worldwide. In the mid-1960s, Eugene Fama adjusted the EMH and suggested three forms of informational efficiencies: the weak form, semi-strong and strong. This hypothesis suggests that investors cannot beat the markets by actively managing portfolios, as stock markets incorporate all the publicly available and privately-held information into

price movements. Therefore, fund managers cannot beat the stock markets and generate higher returns on a long-term basis. This theory is supported by many researches. In 1966, Treynor and Mazuy studied the performance of 57 mutual funds and their sensitivity to market fluctuations and concluded that maybe, no investor, professional or amateur, can outguess the market. A similar study in 1968 by Jensen found that average mutual funds produced low returns. In a study to understand the importance of selecting a good fund manager, Dunn and Theisler in 1983 found that there is only a 50-50 chance that an active fund manager can produce better returns than the bourses. This was reiterated by the Nobel laureate, Sharpe, in 1991 who showed that active fund managers cannot give better returns than passive investment strategies, mainly due to active management being expensive.

This brings us to the question, can anyone predict the stock market movements and earn abnormal returns? Nobel laureate Samuelson quotes Aristotle in explaining this, "The whole is greater than the sum of its

parts." This means that an investor cannot do better than the bourses. Sharpe explains this on the basis of costs and says since both active and passive management generate equal returns before costs, active management loses as it is costlier, and therefore generates less after-cost returns.

Modern portfolio theory assumes that all market participants are rational in their investment behaviour and invest only in stocks at their fair value. However, in reality, the markets consist of various investors who are driven by different emotions, impulses, experiences, risk tolerance, timelines and legal constraints. Since efficient market hypothesis presumes that all available information is reflected in the stock process accurately and timely, no investor can earn abnormal returns. They can, of course, earn normal returns, which are the market returns. This assumption is used as an excuse by people who have faced losses during any meltdown, as they take a break in using their prudence, creativity and perception to invest. But there is always a gap between theory and practice. The question now arises: Are stock markets efficient? Do they reflect

all available information accurately and timely? There is evidence that market efficiencies may be lower in emerging markets that can give a chance to active fund managers to find arbitrage opportunities.

After the 2008 financial crisis, the developed world has focussed on emerging markets, which have risen as engines for global growth, driven by younger populations, higher consumption levels, modernisation of infrastructure and integration with the world economy. According to UNCTAD's *World Investment Report 2019*, FDI flows to developing economies rose by two per cent to \$706 billion in 2018. Developing Asia, already the largest recipient region of FDI flows, registered an increase of four per cent to \$512 billion, with positive growth occurring in all sub-regions. China attracted \$139 billion, an increase of four per cent. Flows to South-East Asia rose by three per cent to \$149 billion, a record level. This increase is for the third consecutive year. FDI flows to Africa expanded by 11 per cent to \$46 billion. Emerging markets, being informationally inefficient, may provide opportunities for excess returns and portfolio diversifi-

cations through market timing and stock selection.

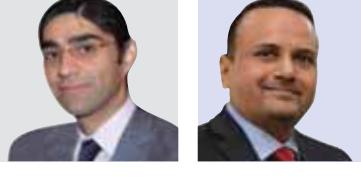
A study by Kremlitzer shows that actively managed mutual funds outperformed passive ones. The researcher, using data from TD Ameritrade Research and the Standard and Poor's NetAdvantage database on all existing US mutual funds and exchange traded funds (ETFs), dedicated to emerging markets, found that the before-tax returns of actively-managed mutual funds yielded superior returns of approximately 2.87 per cent over passively managed ETFs. So, which investment style should be chosen? An apt strategy could be to combine both active and passive investment styles, depending on the stock market conditions. Active fund management could be especially beneficial when stock markets are volatile. Passive fund management is a better strategy where the stocks and markets are highly correlated and move together.

Ultimately, it comes down to personal priorities, timelines and goals. An experienced fund manager should have the expertise to switch.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida)

POINT COUNTER POINT

INDIA HAS SENT A MESSAGE TO PAKISTAN WITH A DESIRE FOR CONVERSATION. THE TWO SIDES MUST SIT DOWN LIKE ADULTS FOR TALKS ON KASHMIR AND TERROR.
—PAK PM'S NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER MOEED YUSUF



AS REGARDS THE PURPORTED MESSAGE, LET ME MAKE IT CLEAR THAT NO SUCH MESSAGE WAS SENT FROM OUR SIDE.
—MEA SPOKESPERSON ANURAG SRIVASTAVA

Fury of the foursome

The Quad can play a pivotal role in curbing China's aggression in the strategic Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region, which is regarded as India's backyard



PRANAY SHOME

The Coronavirus pandemic has provided a unique opportunity for the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), also known as the Quad, and its participating countries, namely the US, India, Australia and Japan, to contain China in the Indo-Pacific and neutralise the threat emanating from it. But there are several caveats. It still is not as strong-willed as a cohesive force that can change global geopolitics. Yet, now is the time. History is replete with oppressors, especially in the context of nation states. It was the Roman Empire in the first century, later it was the Umayyad Caliphate in the early 10th century, Germany and the USSR in the modern age and so on. In the 21st century, China is one such oppressor. Even as the world grapples with the Corona outbreak, which has wreaked havoc across the globe, obliterating economies, putting people out of jobs and pushing health systems of countries to the brink, China is continuing its expansionist campaigns unabated. Beijing has not only been responsible for land grabs in Nepal, but has, through its quintessential "debt trap diplomacy", reduced India's allies in the South Asian region, be it Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and to some extent Afghanistan, to being its serfs.

Chinese bellicosity is a headache for the world already sickened by the contagion. In recent months, China has picked fights with a large number of nations, be it India in South Asia, Taiwan, the US in the Atlantic or its Southeast and East Asian neighbours. Chinese President Xi Jingping is determined to resurrect the glory of the "Middle Kingdom" of the fifth century. With this aim in mind, China is responsible for altering the very nature of the rules-based Westphalian international order as it existed despite all its shortcomings or fallacies. At a time when the dragon nation should join hands with the rest of the world in combating a pandemic, which it interestingly unleashed, it is instead trying to browbeat nation states into submission.

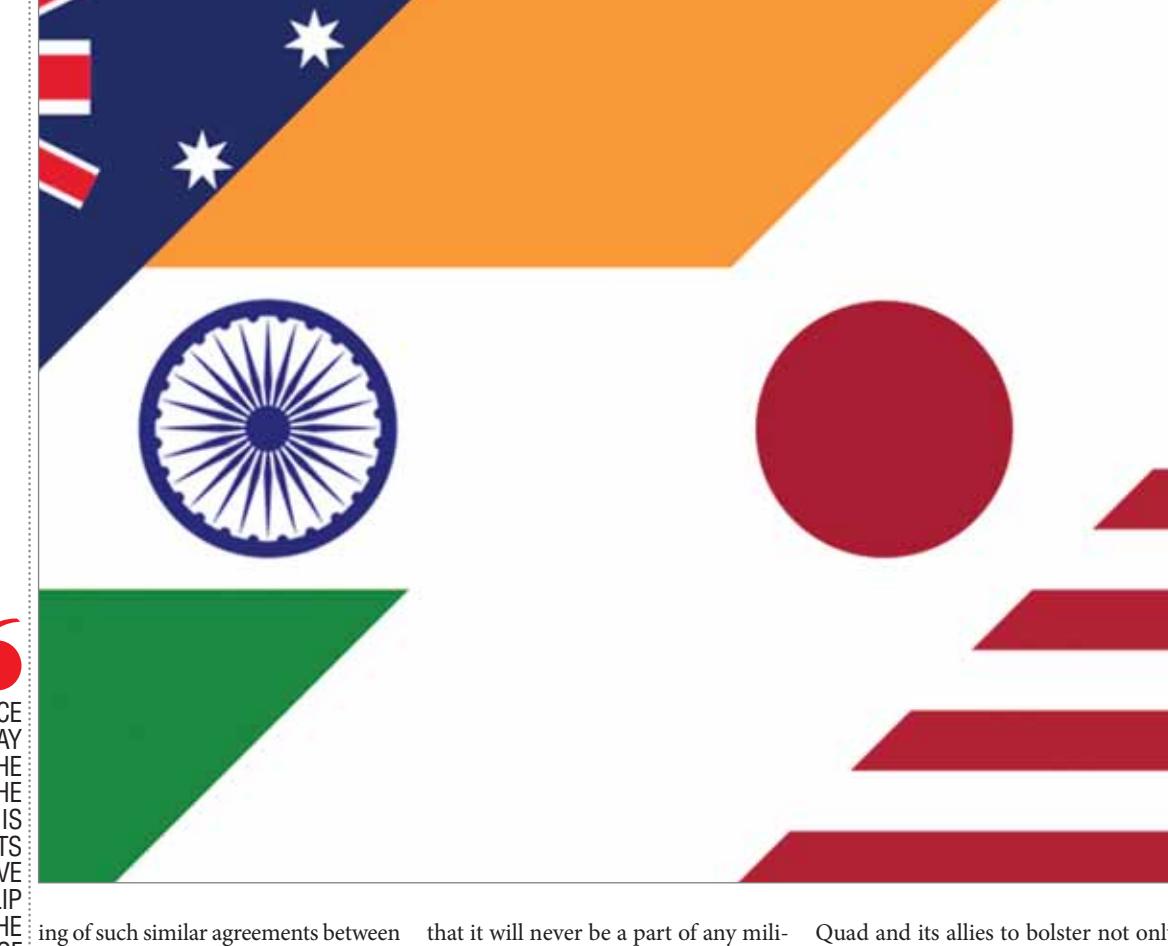
Mohammed Ayoob, distinguished Professor Emeritus, Michigan State University, had noted that it is inherent in the nature of a ruling regime to resort to nationalism and bolster its legitimacy at home. This seems to be China's case and Xi's imperialistic designs are emerging as a headache for the world.

Quad, the solid answer: Captain Alfred Mahan, one of the world's foremost naval strategists, said, "Sea power is the key to building an empire." The Quad is the answer to China's bellicosity. A coalition of democracies, the Quad developed in 2004 as the navies of India, the US, Japan and Australia collaborated. It was revived in 2007 at the insistence of the then Japanese Premier Shinzo Abe but gradually fizzled out only to re-emerge in 2017 under the ambitious Indian vision of SAGAR (Security and Assistance for All in The Region), an idea pioneered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The recent foreign ministers' meeting held in Tokyo, Japan, is regarded as a landmark moment in the evolution of the Quad grouping, as it paved the way for the signing of a new cyber security agreement between India and Japan. This pact seeks to protect not only each other's military communication systems but to bolster the cyber warfare capacity of the allies.

It perhaps needs to be followed by the sign-

“
MERE LIP SERVICE WILL NOT PAY DIVIDENDS IF THE TRAJECTORY OF THE QUAD GROUPING IS NOTED, ITS MEMBERS HAVE MOSTLY GIVEN LIP SERVICE TO THE FORMALISATION OF THIS NEW ALLIANCE OF MILITARY DEMOCRACIES. DURING THE RECENT FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING OF THE GROUP HELD IN TOKYO, THE FOUR COUNTRIES ISSUED SEPARATE STATEMENTS AND ONLY THE US HAD THE GUMPTION TO CALL OUT CHINA FOR ITS ILLGEOGRAPHIC DESIGNS. SADLY AND DISAPPOINTINGLY, THE REST OF THE MEMBERS SIMPLY BEAT AROUND THE BUSH, TRYING TO AVOID A HEAD-ON CONFLICT WITH THE DRAGON.”
”



ing of such similar agreements between India and other allies in the Quad and Quad+ areas, which will be a good deterrent *vis-à-vis* China's cyberspace offensive capabilities. The Quad can play a pivotal role in curbing China's aggression in the strategic Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region (IOR), which is regarded as India's backyard.

Pressing concerns remain: Before

emerging as the answer to China's irredentist claims, the Quadrilateral grouping must first get its own house in order.

There remain several shortcomings and loopholes that need to be dealt with before it can "securitise" the Indian Ocean and broader Indo-Pacific region.

Mere lip service will not pay dividends if the trajectory of the Quad grouping is noted. Its members have mostly given lip service to the formalisation of this new alliance of military democracies.

During the recent foreign ministers' meeting of the group held in Tokyo, the four countries issued separate statements and only the US had the

gumption to call out China for its illegal designs. Sadly and disappointingly, the rest of the members simply beat around the bush, trying to avoid a head-on conflict with the dragon.

The first thing that needs to be done is to stop wasting time and publicly name and call out the Chinese regime.

Second, India's extreme reluctance is coming in the way of upgrading the security grouping. New Delhi has refused to upgrade the talks among the

Quad nations from the foreign secretaries level to that of the heads of the

States. Further, India's recent decision

that it will never be a part of any military alliance signals that the very idea of the Quad as a grouping of developed democracies with a military dimension is doomed to remain divided for the foreseeable future. Third, the Quad countries must upgrade the grouping to a full-fledged military alliance. Beijing must remain in no doubt that the Quad seeks to curb its growth and seeks to clip its imperialist wings. It must indeed live up to its reputation of being Asia's NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation).

Fourth, four countries alone cannot contain the ambitions of the dragon.

Hence, it is imperative that the Quad is expanded to include new members such as Vietnam, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan and so on to force the Chinese regime to recognise the might of democracies and dial down its rhetoric.

Fifth, the Quad and the Quad+ members must jettison their liberal outlook of the current world order and must embrace, according to the Samuel P Huntington concept, a "Clash of Civilisations"-led realist world order.

Although New Delhi has adopted a pragmatic foreign policy outlook, other countries like Australia, South Korea and Indonesia are still carrying the misplaced notion of a Nehruvian-era liberal world order, which has no place in a world dominated by great power competition.

Sixth, economic decoupling is highly important but in a globalised world, it is easier said than done. However, a number of measures can be taken to economically punish China. One such step can be establishing a Quad Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to attract companies to invest in large sums in the

Quad and its allies to bolster not only the efficiency of the grouping, but also keep the global supply chain intact so that it is the liberal democracies that can call the shots in trade.

Finally, the newly-propounded vision of "*Atmanirbhartha*" or economic autarky envisaged by the Prime Minister must not become a recipient of shunning globalisation and allies alike. It must not follow the painful and thoughtless import substitution principle followed in trade by the Nehru regime.

The Government must be mindful of forging economic alliances, while at the same time balance the needs and requirements of "*Atmanirbhartha*".

What is required in this context is that India must become an export-oriented powerhouse. India constitutes just 1.7 per cent of the global export basket. Hence there is a dire need to raise that share, which in the long run will not only increase the country's per capita income but will help in bridging the mammoth lacuna of inequality of wealth prevalent in Indian society. It will help in making India achieve its cherished idea of "Pax Indica," which it wished to get for so long. Lastly, as Carl Von Clausewitz, a Prussian General said: "There are cases in which the greatest daring is the greatest wisdom."

The pandemic provides a unique opportunity to make a new and robust alliance work. The Quad countries should concern themselves not only to military aspects but must also address chronic deficiencies which plague the international system. This alliance can hold the key towards developing a new prosperous and stable Indo-Pacific and world order.

(The writer is a columnist)

Mix active and passive investment styles for high returns

Since market conditions are volatile, an experienced fund manager should have the expertise to switch between both the strategies to satisfy investors



HIMA BINDU KOTA

index in the same proportion. Passive investment is for conservative and risk-averse people who are looking for low-risk investment and are not overly concerned with seeing rapid gains. The idea behind this is the classic value investing style, which looks at long-term benefits of holding on to undervalued stocks with huge future earning power.

Active investing, on the other hand, aims to generate above market returns by an in-depth research and analysis and using the knowledge and expertise to manoeuvre into or out of a particular stock, bond or any asset, taking full advantage of short-term price fluctuations. Since it does not necessarily mimic any index, it provides the flexibility of buying stocks which could be hidden gems. Since active investors are not stuck with index stocks, they are able to exit any sector or stocks when the risk becomes too high and can also hedge their bets using various techniques such as short sales or put options. However, all the research overheads and frequent buying and selling make active investment very expensive. It is also a highly risky affair since higher returns can only be

expected when the going is good but things can go terribly wrong during market downturns and therefore, due to its volatile nature, the active investment strategy is better suited for people who are aggressive and risk-tolerant. In passive management, one rises and sinks with the ship whereas actively managed funds have the ability to provide greater opportunity for profit, albeit, increasing the risk. According to researchers who propagate the efficient market hypothesis (EMH), stock markets are efficient in nature and, therefore, actively managed funds cannot outperform them over a long period of time.

So does active portfolio management create value? The debate about the merit of active vs passive portfolio management is supported by numerous researches worldwide. In the mid-1960s, Eugene Fama adjusted the EMH and suggested three forms of informational efficiencies: the weak form, semi-strong and strong. This hypothesis suggests that investors cannot beat the stock market movements and earn abnormal returns? Nobel laureate Samuelson quotes Aristotle in explaining this, "The whole is greater than the sum of its

parts." This means that an investor cannot do

Trump leans into fear tactics in bid to win Midwest states



Janesville (Wisconsin): President Donald Trump leaned into fear tactics Saturday as he accused the Left of trying to "destroy the American way of life" in a late reelection pitch to voters in Michigan and Wisconsin — two Midwestern states that were instrumental to his 2016 victory but may now be slipping from his grasp.

In back-to-back rallies, Trump accused the left of wanting to "erase American history" and "purge American values." He claimed, with no basis, that Democratic rival Joe Biden would put communities at risk.

Trump offered the dark message as he faces headwinds not only in national polling, which shows Biden leading, but also in key battleground surveys. His comments come after his campaign, with far less cash than Biden's, largely retreated from TV advertising in the Midwest, shifting much of its money to Sun Belt states such as Florida, North Carolina, Arizona and Georgia, as well as Pennsylvania.

As he tries to energize his base and keep on-the-fence voters from turning against

him, Trump sought to paint Democrats as "anti-American radicals" and said moderates had "a moral duty" to join the Republican Party.

"The Democrat Party you once knew doesn't exist," he said. It was the same on issue after issue, as he claimed in

hyperbolic terms that Biden's election would spur "the single biggest depression in the history of our country" and "turn Michigan into a refugee camp." Addressing the coronavirus crisis, Trump warned that Biden would "shut down the country, delay the vaccine and prolong the pandemic."

Public health experts say the nation would be in far better shape had Trump's administration taken more aggressive action early on.

And while he repeatedly predicted victory, Trump seemed to grapple throughout

the day with the prospect that he could indeed lose in November.

In Michigan, he quipped that, in January, he "better damn well be president. In Wisconsin, he wondered how he would process a loss.

"Can you imagine if I lose? I will have lost to the worst candidate in the history of American politics," he said.

"What do I do?" Trump has continued to hold rallies despite the threat of the coronavirus, which hospitalised him for several days earlier this month.

AP

Outrage over mispronunciation of Kamala's name, supporters launch online campaign

Washington: Outraged over the mispronunciation of Democratic vice-presidential nominee Kamala Harris' name by a Republican Senator from Georgia, her supporters launched an online campaign with the hashtags 'MyNameIs' and 'IStandWithKamala.'

During an election rally of US President Donald Trump on Saturday in Macon City in Georgia, a battleground state, Senator David Perdue mispronounced 55-year-old Harris' name.

"KAH'-mah-lah? Kah-MAH'-lah? Kamala-mala-mala? I don't know. Whatever," he told thousands of his supporters.

The mispronunciation outraged a large number of Harris' supporters and her spokesperson Sabrina Singh said, "I'll keep it simple: If you can pronounce 'former' Senator David Perdue, you can pronounce 'future' Vice

PTI

President Kamala Harris." Condemning Perdue, Amit Jani — the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Outreach Coordinator of the Biden campaign — launched the 'My name is' campaign to "push back against the bigotry".

BuzzFeed on Saturday reported that Perdue, who is seeking his reelection from Georgia, is facing backlash for mockingly mispronouncing Harris' name.

AP

UN arms embargoes on Iran expire despite US objections

Tehran: A decade-long U.N. Arms embargo on Iran that barred it from purchasing foreign weapons like tanks and fighter jets expired Sunday as planned under its nuclear deal with world powers, despite objections from the United States.

The Trump administration, meanwhile, has insisted it has re-invoked all U.N. Sanctions on Iran via a clause in the nuclear deal it withdrew from in 2018, a claim ignored by the rest of the world.

While insisting it planned no "buying spree" in the region, Iran can purchase weapons to upgrade military armament dating back to before its 1979 Islamic Revolution and sell its own locally produced gear abroad. In practice, however, Iran's economy remains crippled by broad-reaching U.S. Sanctions, and other nations may avoid arms deals with Tehran for fear of American financial retaliation.

The Islamic Republic heralded the end of the arms embargo as "a momentous day for the international community... In defiance of the U.S. Regime's effort."

The Trump administration, meanwhile, has insisted it has re-invoked all U.N. Sanctions on Iran via a clause in the nuclear deal it withdrew from in 2018, a claim ignored by the rest of the world.

Today's normalisation of Iran's defense cooperation with the world is a win for the cause of multilateralism and peace and security in our region," Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote on Twitter.

AP

The Trump administration, meanwhile, has insisted it has re-invoked all U.N. Sanctions on Iran via a clause in the nuclear deal it withdrew from in 2018, a claim ignored by the rest of the world.

Arif Aber, spokesman for the provincial governor in Ghor, said the blast was so strong that its sound could heard across Feroz Koh, the capital city of the province.

It damaged and partially destroyed a few government buildings, including the police chief's office, the women's affairs department and the provincial office for refugees," Aber said.

FATF grey list," the official said. Also, the four nominating countries - the United States, Britain, France and Germany - are also not satisfied with Islamabad's commitment to taking strong action against the terror groups operating from its soil.

Azhar, Saeed and Lakhvi are most wanted terrorists in India for their involvement in numerous terrorist acts, including the 26/11 Mumbai terror strikes and the bombing of a CRPF bus at Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir last year.

With Pakistan's continuation in the grey list, it is increasingly becoming difficult for Islamabad to get financial aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the European Union, thus further enhancing problems for the neighbouring country which is in a precarious financial situation.

The FATF will also judge if competent authorities in Pakistan were cooperating and taking action to identify and take enforcement action against illegal money or value transfer services and had proven implementation of cross-border currency and bearer negotiable instruments controls at all ports of entry, including applying effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions.

The country's outstanding action areas also include effective implementation of targeted financial sanctions (supported by a comprehensive legal obligation) against all 1,267 and 1,373 designated terrorists and those acting for or on their behalf, including preventing the raising and moving of funds, identifying and freezing assets (movable and immovable), and prohibiting access to funds and financial services, another official said.

PTI

Pak fails to fulfil key mandates of FATF

No action against Masood Azhar, Hafiz Saeed

NEW DELHI: Pakistan's failure to fulfil six key obligations of the FATF, including action against two of India's most wanted terrorists Maulana Masood Azhar and Hafiz Saeed, and the sudden disappearance of more than 4,000 terrorists from its official list will most likely lead to its continuation in the grey list of the Global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog, officials said on Sunday.

The mandates which Pakistan has failed include action against all UN-designated terrorists like Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Azhar, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) founder Seed and the outfit's operational commander Zakir Rehman Lakhvi.

The virtual plenary of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), to be held on October 21-23, will take the final call on Pakistan's continuation on its grey list after a thorough review of Islamabad's performance in fulfilling the global commitments and standards in

fight against money laundering and terror financing.

The FATF had given Pakistan a total of 27 action plan obligations for completely checking terror financing of which so far it has cleared 21 but has failed in some of the key tasks, an official privy to the developments said.

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Besides, FATF has strongly noted the fact that there was sudden disappearance of the names of more than 4,000 terrorists from its original list of 7,600 under Schedule IV of its Anti Terrorism Act.

"Under these circumstances, it is almost certain that Pakistan will continue in the

Car bombing in western Afghanistan kills 13, wounds 120



Afghan security inspects the site of a suicide car bombing in Ghor province western of Kabul, Afghanistan on Sunday

Armenia, Azerbaijan blame each other for truce violations

Yerevan (Armenia): Despite a second attempt at a cease-fire, Armenia and Azerbaijan traded accusations Sunday of violating the new truce in their destructive conflict over the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The latest truce, which was announced Saturday and took force at midnight, was the second attempt to establish a cease-fire since heavy fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh on Sept 27.

The fighting and shelling has killed hundreds of people — both combatants and civilians — and marks the biggest escalation of a decades-old conflict over the region in more than a quarter-century.

The fighting, involving heavy artillery, rockets and drones, has continued despite repeated calls for cessation of hostilities coming from around the globe. It also raises the specter of a wider conflict that could draw in Russia and Turkey and threaten Caspian Sea energy exports.

Armenian military officials on Sunday reported artillery shelling and missile strikes by Azerbaijani forces in the conflict zone overnight. In the morning, "the enemy

launched an attack in the southern direction," and there were "casualties and wounded on both sides," Armenian Defense Ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanian said.

Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry, in turn, maintained that Armenian forces used mortars and artillery in the conflict zone overnight despite the cease-fire and in the morning attempted attacks in several directions.

The ministry accused Armenia of using large-caliber weapons to attack the positions of the Azerbaijani army in two regions north of Nagorno-Karabakh along the border, a claim Armenian military officials denied.

The Azerbaijani military also said it downed an Armenian Su-25 warplane "attempting to inflict airstrikes on the positions of the Azerbaijan army in the Jabrayil direction," but Stepanian dismissed the statement as untrue. Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a war there ended in 1994. According to Nagorno-Karabakh officials, 673 of their servicemen have been killed in the renewed fighting.

Thai protesters carry on demonstrations despite warnings

Bangkok: Pro-democracy activists in Thailand launched their fifth straight days of protests on Sunday, scheduling demonstrations not just in the capital but also at several other locations around the country.

The demonstrators received a new warning from police that they are violating the law. On Saturday, however, few people were arrested as peaceful rallies were held at several points around Bangkok, the capital, with several thousand people taking part.

The protest movement — which is calling for the prime minister's resignation, a more democratic constitution and a reformed monarchy — began in March at universities around the country. After a lull due to the coronavirus crisis, it was revived in late July, building up strength, particularly in Bangkok.

On Sunday, rallies were called in at least a dozen provinces, including Chiang Mai, a popular tourist destination in northern Thailand.

The authorities in Bangkok

tried in vain to keep people from gathering by selectively shutting down stations on Bangkok's elevated and underground mass transit lines. On Saturday, after protest organizers urged followers to meet at the city's Skytrain stations, they ordered all stations to be closed, to little avail.

The current cycle of confrontations began before dawn Thursday, when police broke up an overnight rally outside Government House, which hosts the offices of Prime Minister Prayuth Chaon-ocha.

It led Prayuth to declare a state of emergency, banning gatherings of more than five people and allowing the government extra powers to keep

the peace.

Protesters ignored the emergency decree and gathered Thursday night in large numbers at a major intersection in Bangkok's central shopping district. Overcoming half-hearted resistance by thin lines of police.

A Friday night rally at a nearby intersection was crushed by a large force of riot police backed by a truck-mounted water cannon.

The use of force was condemned by rights organizations.

Police made no efforts to break up Saturday's gatherings, which ended peacefully at 8 p.m., as scheduled by organizers.

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RBI's loan recast framework to support Covid-hit realty projects

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India's framework for loan recast or stress resolution for the Covid-19 related stress which allows banks to restructure loans of real estate companies at the project level comes as a major relief for developers who have been hit amid the pandemic and their specific projects have come to a halt due to liquidity crunch.

According to Anuj Puri, Chairman of Anarock Property Consultants, the RBI's move to permit banks for restructuring of loans of real estate companies at the project level rather than the entity level is "indeed a good move".

"It will help restart projects which have been stuck due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both buyers and developers will stand to gain when stuck projects will eventually see the light of the day," he said.

He noted that from a buyers' standpoint, they will no longer have to wait for an

Overall, it will ease liquidity within the cash-strapped real estate sector which was already struggling even before the pandemic set in

indefinite period for their homes. As for developers, they will get the requisite liquidity to eventually complete their projects.

Overall, it will ease liquidity within the cash-strapped real estate sector which was already struggling even before the pandemic set in. COVID-19 had only worsened its woes further, Puri noted.

He, however, said that, although the RBI has given its nod to the banks, it will have to be seen how different banks carry this forward.

According to RBI, the requirement of an inter-creditor agreement (ICA) in respect of the entity to which lending institutions have exposure is a basic feature of Prudential Framework for Resolution of Stressed Assets dated June 7, 2019, and consequently that of

the resolution framework for covid-related stress.

"There is sufficient flexibility to the lending institutions to formulate ICAs in respect of a legal entity to which they have exposure that address the specific requirements of each borrowers on a case to case basis, including designing different resolution approaches for different projects under the same borrower within an ICA," RBI said in its FAQs on Resolution Framework for Covid-19 related stress.

Similarly, apart from the escrow account required to be set up at the legal entity level as required by the resolution framework, there is no prohibition in setting up additional separate escrow accounts at each project level, if the lenders desire so.

"Only in respect of borrowers belonging to real estate sector, and have both residential and commercial real estate business, the prescribed thresholds for the financial parameters may be applied at the project level," RBI said.

Active subscribers are calculated based on reported Visitor Location Register (VLR), a key metric reflecting the number of active users on a mobile network.

ACTIVE USERS' TALLY

Jio gains 2.5 mn subscribers in July as Airtel, VIL slip

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Jio gained 2.5 million active subscribers in July, reversing the decline seen in the previous month, while rivals Airtel and Vodafone Idea lost 0.4 million and 3.8 million active users respectively, latest reports based on TRAI data said.

Although industry's overall wireless subscribers rose nearly 3.5 million in July -- the first month of such gains since February -- the total 'active subscribers' count in July actually fell 2.1 million, as per TRAI data.

"Industry's active subscriber base...In July was down 2.1 million at 956 million after decline of 2.8 million month-on-month in June," Axis Capital said in its recent report, crunching TRAI's monthly data.

Active subscribers are calculated based on reported Visitor Location Register (VLR), a key metric reflecting the number of active users on a mobile network.

"As per TRAI data, Rjio



gained 2.5 million active subscribers, while Airtel/ VIL lost 0.4/ 3.8 million active subscribers in July. Airtel's reported subscriber addition was up 3.3 mn month-on-month offset by reduction in VLR by 114 bps (basis points)," Axis report said.

As per the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), out of the total wireless subscribers of about 1,144 million, 955.8 million wireless subscribers were active (measured on the date of peak VLR) in July 2020.

The proportion of active wireless subscribers was nearly 83.54 per cent of the total wireless subscriber base, TRAI

said. active users, against Jio's 310 million and VIL's 273 million, as per Axis Capital report.

In an earlier report, Axis Capital had attributed Jio's lower active user ratio to multi factors such as data-only subscribers being higher on the network (meaning devices may be closed at the time of collection of data), rural users of JioPhone switching off devices at particular times, and its "commercial churn policy".

Meanwhile, Nomura, in its note on telecom subscriber numbers, said Jio was the only telco with higher active subscribers on the date of peak VLR in the month of July 20," TRAI said.

Against this, the proportion of active users for Reliance Jio was at about 78 per cent and for Vodafone Idea at 89.3 per cent, TRAI data showed.

In absolute terms, this pegged active subscriber count for Jio at 313 million users in July, as compared to Airtel's 310 million users, and VIL's 269 million.

In June this year, Airtel had led the tally with 311 million

SECL plans 8 projs worth ₹3,100 cr for improving coal evacuation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Coal India-arm SECL is executing eight 'first mile connectivity' projects with an estimated capital outlay of ₹ 3,100 crore to evacuate dry fuel, especially incremental production under the proposed plan to scale up the maharashtra firm's output to 1 billion tonnes.

The move will also help power plants at farther most locations in northern and western regions to avail recently notified rail concessions for distance beyond 1400 km.

"Company is executing many coal evacuation projects under the First Mile Connectivity (FMC) in order to evacuate coal, especially huge incremental production under proposed 1BT plan....The FMC projects (8nos.) shall be executed with an estimated capital outlay of more than ₹ 3,100 crore," South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL) said in a report.

India's gold imports halve to \$6.8B in Apr-Sep FY21

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold imports by India declined 57.12 per cent in the first half of the current financial year (2020-21) to \$6.77 billion as demand has been largely hit by the pandemic.

During April-September FY20, the value of gold imports stood at \$15.80 billion.

As per the Commerce Ministry data, import of the yellow metal last month stood at \$601.43 million, 52.85 per cent lower on a year-on-year basis.

Sellers from tier II towns and beyond see jump in orders in Flipkart, Amazon festive sale

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Walmart-owned Flipkart and Amazon India on Sunday said lakhs of sellers, including a significant chunk from tier II cities and beyond, have received orders during the initial days of festive sale on their platforms.

The festive season sees Amazon India and Flipkart compete head on and roll out a number of offers and schemes to woo customers to shop on their platforms.

Amazon India on Sunday said over 1.1 lakh sellers on its platform received orders during the first 48 hours of its 'Great Indian Festival' sale, with a bulk of these sellers being from smaller parts of the country.

Flipkart, on the other hand, said over 3 lakh sellers received orders during the first three days of its 'The Big Billion Days' (TBBD) sale.

About 66 per cent of new Prime sign-ups were also from small towns like Tawang and Changlang (Arunachal Pradesh), Mokokchung (Nagaland), Baran (Rajasthan),

and will go on for about a month to coincide with the festive season. Amazon Prime members were provided early access to the sale from October 16.

Flipkart's annual TBBD sale began on October 16 and will end on October 21.

Speaking to PTI, Amazon India Vice President Manish Tiwary said, "These 48 hours were the biggest ever for Amazon in its seven-year history. We had created a buildup for the sale for our Amazon sellers...Over 1.1 lakh sellers received orders, and 66 per cent of them (sellers) came from small towns."

Amazon India, which has over 6.5 lakh sellers on its platform, registered its biggest spike in new customers, with 91 per cent of them coming from small towns (beyond the metros and top 40 cities), he added.

About 66 per cent of new Prime sign-ups were also from small towns like Tawang and Changlang (Arunachal Pradesh), Mokokchung (Nagaland), Baran (Rajasthan),

Pudukkottai (Tamil Nadu), Una (Himachal Pradesh) and Jaunpur (Uttar Pradesh), Tiwari said.

In a statement, Flipkart said over 3 lakh sellers received orders during the first three days of its sale.

"The seller base reach has expanded by 20 per cent this year totalling up to 3,000+ pincodes. In just about 2 days of TBBD 2020, marketplace sellers have witnessed growth that they saw during the 6 days of TBBD 2019, showcasing the pent up demand they have seen from consumers across India," it added.

This festive period has seen over 70 sellers become crorepatis and about 10,000 became lakhs through 'Early Access' and the three days of TBBD 2020, it added.

However, the players did not disclose the volume of orders received so far during their sale. E-commerce companies see a large chunk of their business coming in during the festive sales, and they make significant investments ahead of time to ramp up their capacity to be able to handle the spike in orders.

Amazon India on Sunday said over 1.1 lakh sellers on its platform received orders during the first 48 hours of its 'Great Indian Festival' sale

Flipkart, on the other hand, said over 3 lakh sellers received orders during the first three days of its 'The Big Billion Days' sale

Festive season sees players holding multiple sale events, timed around Dussehra and Diwali.

A report by RedSeer estimates that festive sales this year are expected to almost double and touch USD 7 billion in gross merchandise value (GMV) as compared to USD 3.8 billion in the same period last year.

Tiwary said about 1.4 million people had shopped from small and medium businesses (SMBs) on its platform in the 10-day run up to the 'Great Indian Festival'.

Jio planning to sell 5G smartphones for ₹2,500-3,000 apiece: Company official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Jio is planning to launch a 5G smartphone for less than ₹5,000 and gradually reduce the price to ₹2,500-3,000 a unit when it scales up the operation, according to a company official.

The company will target 20-30 crore mobile phone users who use 2G connection at present.

"Jio wants to bring the device for less than ₹5,000. When we scale up the sales, it can be priced in the range of ₹2,500-3,000," a company official said on the condition of anonymity.

An email query sent to Reliance Jio did not elicit any response.

At present, 5G smartphones are available in India in the price range starting from ₹27,000.

Jio was the first company that launched 4G mobile phones in India free for consumers where they were required to pay a refundable deposit of ₹1,500 for a Jio Phone.

At 43rd Annual General meeting, Reliance Industries Chairman and managing director Mukesh Ambani had asserted to make India "2G-mukt" (free of 2G connections) and emphasised on the need to accelerate migration of 350 million Indians (currently using 2G feature phone) to an affordable smartphone, at a time when India stands at the doorsteps of the 5G era.

Ambani had also announced ₹33,737 crore investment by Google for a 7.7 per cent stake in Jio Platforms, and said Jio will partner with the US tech giant to build an Android-based smartphone operating system.

The company is also working on its own 5G network equipment and has asked the Department of Telecom to allocate spectrum for testing before exporting these products. The government is yet to heed to the request of Reliance Jio.

Under the scheme, 100 per cent guarantee coverage will be provided by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC) for additional funding of up to Rs 3 lakh crore to eligible MSMEs and interested Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) borrowers in the form of GECL facility.

for companies with an annual turnover of Rs 250 crore as against the earlier threshold of Rs 100 crore.

Banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) have approved loans worth about Rs 1,87,579 lakh crore while disbursement stood at Rs 1,36,140 crore as on October 5.

On May 20, the Cabinet approved additional funding of up to Rs 3 lakh crore at a concessional rate of 9.25 per cent through ECLGS for MSME sector.

The maximum amount of guaranteed emergency credit line (GECL) funding under the scheme is ₹25 crore.

The scheme is meant to provide financial support to businesses, primarily Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), impacted by slowdown triggered by the coronavirus pandemic.

The sources said the objective is to provide support to all those affected and if there are no takers for the scheme, there is no need to extend the scheme even though there is some room left.

Announced as part of the government's Rs 20.97 lakh crore economic package in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the scheme was later tweaked to be made applicable

OMCs continue to hold petrol, diesel prices across metros

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil marketing companies (OMC) kept petrol and diesel prices unchanged across the four metros on Sunday.

Petrol prices have been unchanged for 26 days at a stretch while diesel prices were the same for the 16th consecutive day.

Price of petrol in the national capital was at Rs 81.06 per litre.

In Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, the fuel was sold for Rs 87.74, Rs 84.14 and Rs 82.59 per litre, respectively.

Diesel prices in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata were at Rs 70.46, Rs 76.86, Rs 75.95 and Rs 73.99, respectively.

Raw material crisis may lead to closure of many SME steel wire units: Industry body

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Steel wire makers, belonging to the labour-intensive small and medium enterprises sector, are facing acute raw material shortage that may lead to the closure of several units, a senior industry body official said on Sunday.

About 100 units in the organised sector that offer employment to about five lakh workers in the country are already operating below 50 per cent of their rated capacity, and if the crisis prolongs, then many will have to close down, the official said.

The wire makers have sought government intervention to ensure raw material supply, and a window for imports of specialised items that are not produced in the

Cold storage demand to rise on online sales, cloud kitchens

New Delhi: The demand for cold storage facilities in India is likely to rise on the back of increase in online grocery and fresh food deliveries and the emerging trend of cloud kitchens, said a report.

As per a CBRE report, the capacity of cold storage real estate is likely to double by 2023. The overall cold storage (CS) capacity in India stood at about 37-39 million tonne in 2019. States including Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana and Karnataka accounted for 91 per cent of the total cold storage capacity in India in 2019.

Following the Covid-19 outbreak, the segment is

expected to witness robust demand on the back of a surge in online grocery and fresh food sales, it noted.

Online Food Delivery (OFD) revenues in India are likely to grow by more than 60 per cent by 2023 and the increasing demand for OFD services will further boost the overall cold storage capacity.

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman, India & South East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE said, "CS facilities play an integral role in improving the shelf life of products and are an important enabler for several industries working across fresh food production and delivery; along with healthcare and other products such as flowers and chemicals.

Govt unlikely to extend credit guarantee scheme for MSME sector beyond Oct

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is unlikely to extend the ₹3 lakh crore Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) for MSME sector beyond October even though the sanctioned amount so far is only nearly 65 per cent of the target, sources said.

The scheme is meant to provide financial support to businesses, primarily Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), impacted by slowdown triggered by the coronavirus pandemic.

The sources said the objective is to provide support to all those affected and if there are no takers for the scheme, there is no need to extend the scheme even though there is some room left.

On August 1, the government widened the scope of the

Rs 3 lakh crore scheme by doubling the upper ceiling of loans outstanding and including certain loans given to professionals like doctors, lawyers and chartered accountants for business purposes under its ambit.

Trend Blazer

'People want to see real characters'

Actor RAJKUMMAR RAO once again plays a relatable character in his forthcoming film, *Chhalang*, and says there is a demand for stories with real characters.

In the Hansal Mehta-directed social comedy set in Haryana, he portrays the role of a PT teacher who initially doesn't take sports too seriously. Says he, "I was into sports. I did my schooling in Haryana, so I could relate to it. The PT teacher's accent... there is a lot of nostalgia and fun."

He further adds, "Audience want to see real characters. That's why new generation writers and filmmakers are making films about real people and cultures."



'I would be lying if I say that I am satisfied with my journey. There's still a long way to go.'

I really want to do good roles, especially the roles based in North India. I am from Delhi and I speak fantastic Hindi. It feels disappointing sometimes when makers do not cast me for such roles.'

—Rahul Dev

Dancer-actress NORA FATEHI, in her latest social media post, has shared what she wants to do.



In a new Instagram post, Nora shared a picture. In the image, she looks gorgeous in a latex corset and harem pants. She completed her look with bright red hair, minimal make-up and ankle length peep-toe shoes.

"I wanna dance and love and dance again," Nora wrote alongside the image.

Up next for her is the Ajay Devgn-starrer *Bhuj: The Pride Of India*. The film tells the tale of Indian Air Force pilot Vijay Karnik.

We are quiet but okay: Chrissy

Model CHRISSY TEIGEN has updated fans with information on how her family is coping after she lost her baby last month.

"We are quiet but we are okay. Love you all so much," Teigen wrote on Instagram. She also shared a screen-grab of some recent tweets from husband and singer John Legend.

"This is for Chrissy," the singer had tweeted on Thursday along with a YouTube link of his performance of *Never break at Wednesday's Billboard Music Awards*.



LORD RAM IS ONLINE

With most organisers getting permits late, they have decided to do away with the physical form of Ramlila. Some are recording at venues for a phygital experience. By TEAM VIVA

This time, there will be no merry-go-round, no cotton candy or shoot-the-balloon stalls in the expansive grounds as you watched Ravana stomp the stage in the distance. Neither is anyone reciting the *Ramayana* nor is a Bollywood import being brought in to portray Lord Ram. Did you ever imagine your navratras, the time that marks the beginning of festivities in India, to be so dull? Especially, when just a year ago, the vibe in the capital around this time was so different with episodes of the epic being played out in each neighbourhood. The virus has changed all that. The question then arises is why are traditional Ramlila committees not risking it although the Delhi Government has given the nod for setting up low-key celebrations, listing the necessary safety guidelines and protocols. Ashok Aggarwal, President, Luv Kush Ramlila Committee, says there is just too little time to put together everything. Besides, COVID protocols mean more expenses and without sponsorships, the budget has forced many committees to revise their plans.

Aggarwal says that he expected at least two months prior information from the authorities so that things could have been carried out smoothly within time. He adds, "Every year, we apply for our programme during January–February, and this year too, we did the same. I understand that there's a pandemic at hand but the

government should have told us about the permit well in time. I got my ground booking letter the day before yesterday. How can they expect us to do the arrangements at such a short notice? COVID-appropriate management means a huge preparatory drill. There is no time for that scale."

Mahadeb Das, founder member of Paschim Vihar Bengali Association, argues that given the pandemic, organisers should have been given permits long before to manage the show in the new normal. "Preparations begin at least two months or one month in advance. The stage, seating area, costumes, make-up, props and a lot of other minute details are taken into account, which demand time. And this year, we needed extra time to act as per the new normal with proper sanitisation and social distancing arrangements. However, that was not the case. And now, we are left with no time and would rather not pose a public health risk," says she.

Aggarwal shares that the committee's suggestion of streaming Ramlila live online wasn't even taken into consideration. "Wrong move!" he laments.

However, with no Ramlilas taking place, there is Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra (SBKK) which doesn't want to give a break to their year-long tradition. This time, too, it is organising its dance drama on Lord Ram, directed by Padma Shri Shobha

Deepak Singh. "We noted earlier that the government would give the permission to hold Ramlila with necessary precautions and social distancing. So we were ready with our stage, lighting, costume, choreography and every other detail," says Singh, who was personally sure about the government's decision as she claims herself as optimistic.

Right from the preparation and seating arrangement to safety and sanitisation, a lot has changed under the shadow of the pandemic. "We ensure that all our members are COVID negative, be it the backstage crew or the actors on stage. The show is directed in such a way that physical contact is minimal. The choreography and seating arrangement is done keeping social distancing in mind. We sanitise the whole set at regular intervals. Welcome to the new normal," says she.

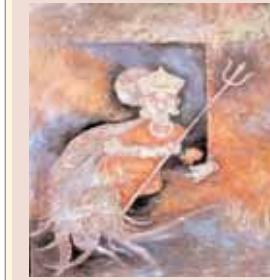
Just as 2020 is turning out to be the "digital year," festive events are also taking that route. The Sanskriti Kala Sangam has decided to go digital for the first time and has been shooting scenes for two days on the Yamuna bank. Singh, too, has agreed for the first time to record this year's Ramlila at SBKK. "It's important to be in sync with the changing times. We had earlier thought of an alternative in case we didn't get the permission. It was to record the whole performance and upload the video on YouTube. Even now we'll go ahead with this plan; the editing work is in process," says she.

THE DURGA QUARTET

Artist DIPTO NARAYAN CHATTOPADHYAY's dramatic Durga image captures the decisive moment in the narrative of the deity, who is an eclectic mix of the cosmic and the contemporary. By UMA NAIR

Durga, also known as *Devi* or *Shakti*, is more than the symbol you see in pandals. This warrior goddess, atop her *valaha* or a lion, often carrying weapons, is seen as a manifestation of Mahishasuramardini, slayer of the shape-shifting buffalo demon

Mahishasura. But there are many identities and emotions that she embodies, making her a complex and enriching version of femininity. It is her many facets that artist Dipto Narayan Chattopadhyay has captured over the years but he discusses four for Vivacity.



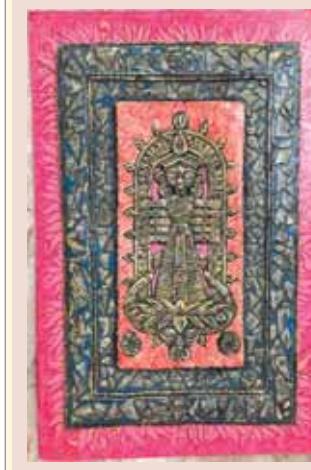
DURGA 1

Dipto's first Durga created in 2008 is a hybrid study of Mahishasuramardini. "I created it in mixed media on board (In my technique layer upon layer colour, wastage paper and waste polythene carry bags)," says the artist. He chose to depart from convention and create a contemporary Durga which he exemplified in his own expressive, evanescent as well as delicately sculptural style. This image reveals the honesty and the elegant essence of his forms. He uses reductive geometry to maintain purity of form.



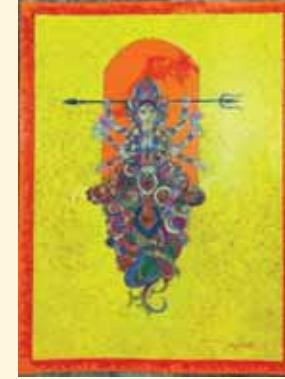
DURGA 2

His second Durga is again a mixed media on board created in the year 2005. "This painting is in the collection of H.E.Traian Basescu (the former president of Romania)," says Dipto, who gave us a metallic relief flavour as he particularly balanced and beautifully carved her many arms and torso that convey both strength and suppleness. The metallic tint of an alloy itself has a glow to it even now and the carving is executed with the minute detail and fine modelling that are typical of the period. Everything from her jewellery to her finely chiselled eyes is precisely articulated.



DURGA 3

Dipto's third Durga is again a sculptural entity which he calls trash to treasure. "This is an example of art from recycled materials" he explains. "I use recycled or reused objects to make alluring pieces of contemporary art and design and literally turn everyday trash into creative treasures... during last Navratri and Durga puja one of my demonstrations to my interior designing students was how to turn waste materials into precious art and design. I feel simultaneously they should learn the application of the seven elements of design, which are line, shape, space, value, form, texture and colour." Durga here is seen standing on the head of the buffalo atop a flower. The figure of the demon is also rather whimsical, with his vivid expression and animated head. It's rare to come across a sculptural Durga whose image is so lively and in which every element is treated with such skill and attention.



DURGA 4

The artist's last Durga is beauty condensed in contemporary choreography. Durga here is such a small, pretty and fragmentary entity. At one level, we may imagine that he is demonstrating this carefully modelled Durga with an embellished body of colours and contours. It is both fragile as well as foundational in energy, tone and spiritual fervour. Her face and her ornate dress perfectly capture her renewing prowess. It's almost as if Durga is in the essence of things. The subject is the articulation of the spiritual glow, the depth of truth that comes from mythic history.

Life returns to normal

Back in India after *Bellbottom* shoot, actor LARA DUTTA recalls how safe and sanitised the experience was

The studio behind films like *Coolie No. 1*, *Hero No. 1*, *Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein*, and many more — Pooja Entertainment — became the first production house to start shooting during the COVID-19 pandemic. The film in question is actor Akshay Kumar starrer *Bellbottom*.

Directed by Ranjit M Tewari, the spy thriller is being shot extensively in Scotland. The young producers Jackky Bhagnani and Deepshikha Deshmukh are ensuring that the cast and crew feel totally safe on and off the sets.

Shooting in the thick of a global pandemic sounds daunting but Lara Dutta recounts how the challenges during this unusual time were dealt with professionalism and personal attention.

She says, "Initially, it was normal to feel a little anxious considering that the COVID-19 cases are rising rapidly in India. But I felt immediate reassurance and confidence when I saw the many protocols in place and how correctly things were being handled. Ours was the first film to be shot after the lockdown but despite the nervousness, we were all eager to get back to work. We were all taken in a chartered flight to Scotland to retain and contain the safety bubble. On landing, we were tested again and sent into a two-week quarantine. It did not however feel that we were imprisoned as we had the company of each other. Akshay and Deepshikha had brought their kids and so had I. It was like being with an extended family and since all of us had



tested negative, we spent time with each other and kept the circle tight and safe for each other and especially the children. So this gave me a sense of security."

On about the thrill of returning to work, she says, "When the shooting finally began, I was the first actor on the sets. It was hugely gratifying. I felt grateful to be on a set where every single precaution possible was being taken, sanitisation was meticulous and the cast and crew were checked every day. Everything was secure, right from the food delivery on sets to the drivers who took us to and fro. Yes, we had to remove our masks during scenes but because we felt safe in a strictly regulated environment, we just wanted to do our job to the best of our abilities."

When asked, what it was like to shoot in this kind of environment, Lara said, "It was a surreal experience and I hope this is not going to be the new normal. I felt immense gratitude towards every member of the crew for taking such good care of us. We have done some good work and am excited to see how the film turns out."

The film written by Aseem Arora & Parveen Shaikh finds itself in the company of a handful of international, mega-budget films that got back on the floors during the pandemic such as Tom Cruise's *Mission: Impossible 7* and *Jurassic Park: Dominion*, managing to shoot in an unprecedented environment.

WEBBED

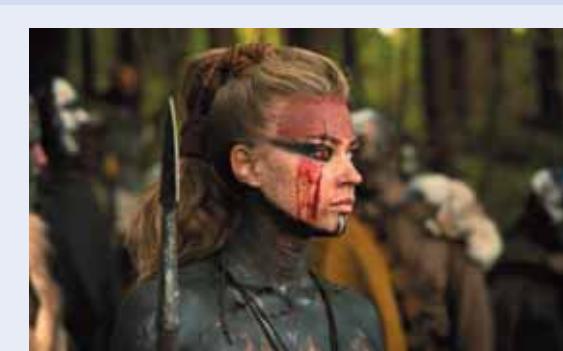
MY NEXT GUEST NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION (SEASON 3)

TV legend David Letterman teams up with fascinating global figures for in-depth interviews and curiosity-fueled excursions in this talk show. Starring Kim Kardashian West, Robert Downey Jr and Dave Chappelle, the series releases on October 21 on Netflix.



CADAVER

When a peculiar hotel dinner show draws crowds during a postapocalyptic famine, one family discovers they'll pay much more than the price of admission. Starring Gitte Witt, Thomas Gullestad and Thorbjørn Harr, the film releases on October 22 on Netflix.



BARBARIANS (SEASON 1)

Torn between the mighty empire that raised him and his own tribal people, a Roman officer's conflicted allegiances lead to an epic historical clash. Created by Arne Nolting, Jan Martin Scharf and Andreas Heckmann, the drama releases on October 23 on Netflix.



A PERMANENT ROUTE

The residents of Poonch in J&K are awaiting the completion of a road that does not get washed away during the winter or monsoon, says SYED BASHARAT UL HASSAN BUKHARI

In August last month, Jammu & Kashmir Chief Secretary, BVR Subrahmanyam shared that with the help of the centre, Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh UT administration are planning to connect all picturesque tourist resorts through a new 600 km-long highway circuit. The ₹8,000 crore road project will aim at connecting Gulmarg with Kargil and Drass in Ladakh making it favourable for the tourism industry in the region. The news certainly brings hopes for the residents of the two newly-announced UTs, especially the ones dependent on tourism for their livelihood. He also shared that the Jammu & Kashmir administration has intensified construction of rural roads. This statement, in particular, brought back hopes for thousands of residents of a distant village in J&K's border district Poonch who have been waiting for a road for almost eight years now.

Located 250 km from Jammu, Poonch is known across the country for the cross-border conflict and the cease-

fire violations. Located few kilometers from the main town, Khanetar village was awarded the status of a 'Model Village' in 2012. A village is categorised as a Model Village if it has adequate physical and institutional infrastructure, in which minimum needs of all sections of the society are fully met; they live in harmony with each other, as also with the environment. The village is known to be progressive and dynamic. One of the requirements under physical infrastructure is that the village should be connected to the nearest major road by an all-weather road. Likewise, in case of a multi-hamlet village, all hamlets should be connected with each other by an all-weather road. But in this Model Village of Khanetar, the expectations are way different from the reality in which there are no such model roads.

As per the villagers, in 2008-09, the administration had started the construction of a 12-kilometer-long road from the Tanda Sokha Choha in Khanetar till the Charon Gali in Mendhar block. An



enormous amount of time was spent to cut the road, which was followed by the process of laying the blacktop. After completing mere four km, the construction came to a halt. It's been almost 12 years, and the work on the remaining eight km is yet to be completed. The vehicles continue to run on the unpaved road jeopardizing the life of the locals.

Road travel in hilly region is already considered a risky task. This risk increases several folds during extreme weather

conditions like rainfall and snowfall. Undoubtedly, this road has become a threat to the life of travellers. Water flows right through the middle of this road, making it difficult to spot the giant potholes. A few years ago, five lives were lost in an accident on this road. However, no action has been taken by the concerned authorities.

"Work on this road was started under the Public Works Department, Roads and Building Department and the

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) scheme. The four km of blacktop road that was completed in 2016-17 has already worn-out and lies in a dilapidated condition. When we try to share the issue with the concerned departments, they tell us that they cannot do anything due to lack of funds," shared Sarpanch of Dapriyan Khanetar Panchayat, Jan Bahad.

This path affects a population of more than 20,000 people and is considered to be significant in connecting people residing in remote corners of this mountainous region. "This is an important route connecting Mendhar Tehsil to Charon, thereby making it easier for the people to reach Poonch City Headquarters," said Mohammad Arif Kohli, Panch of Dapriyan Panchayat. If the condition of the road is improved, then the lives of people living in distant and difficult areas like Kalaban, Kasbalari, Chhanghan, Charon, Barela, Shindra Top and Pathana Teer will become less stressful. They will have access to health, education and other infrastructure available in city.

Nazir Ahmad, a driver by profession, while sharing his experience of driving on this dangerous road said, "Around 10 vehicles run from Tanda to Charon on this route and on an average, each vehicle needs repair every third day. To repair the road, all the drivers have come together. In August, we had collected ₹35,000 and the basic work was done but soon the torrential rains that ravaged the entire city, mercilessly destroyed our efforts too."

It's not just the road, but in the absence of a bridge at the Tanda bus stand, vehicles have to wade their way through water and have to wait for long time due to high water level. Locals believe a bridge should also be constructed to ensure longevity of the road.

Many believe that roads and other ways of connectivity boost development in any region, particularly the mountainous ones. Here, more than the development, they make lives of the villagers a lot easier. The villagers of Poonch are awaiting completion of this road for the last 12 years. Now, as people welcome construction of highways connecting tourists to the unexplored beauty of this state, they are equally hopeful about the interest of the government in intensifying the construction of pending rural road projects. All they wish for is a road that stays with them for a little longer and doesn't get washed away in the next monsoon or winter season.

—Charkha Features



Share the word responsibly

In a world where fake news is taking over the real one, it's time nations introduce mandatory spiritual practices for people to not let such content affect their mental peace, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

We all remember the terrorist attack on the office of the French satirical weekly newspaper, *Charlie Hebdo*, in 2015. The worldwide media was shocked and in awe. There was hardly any media organisation that did not express its opinion on the subject. A lot was said, discussed and deliberated on the potential reasons for such an event.

Of course, the views vary widely and due to that, many nations even snapped the diplomatic relationship between each other because of their differences of opinion. However, one thing that the incident surely reflected is that the power of the written or spoken word is tremendous! In today's world, where means of communication are growing faster and are highly developed, opinions easily take rounds over the internet and are capable of grabbing the attention of the masses.

This points towards the increasing need to use one's freedom and power of expression, after applying a sound judgement.

The newspaper's piece of caricature was adjudged as derogatory to a particular religion and its founder. And hence, the followers of that religion, at large raised their voice against the publication.

However, there are many other publications or books or magazines, which may not be against any community in particular. This might lessen the chances of large-scale protests against them everywhere. There could be many writings or lessons, which, though not so gloriously and grossly opposed to the teachings of a particular Prophet, could exert a negative influence on the mind of large sections of society. Similarly, there could be a lot of content online which affects the minds of a high percentage of people who might interpret it wrongly. It could also include a lot of violence, sex, anger, etc, in them. The repetition of such material in one film after another sooner or later corrodies the moral fibre of man and corrupts his mind.

As a result, man's thinking processes are polluted and subsequently, the whole society reels under its damaging effects. Since it doesn't seem like mind-poisoning to people, they hardly raise any strong objection. Instead, the makers of such content always believe that the masses like it even though the fact is that it is these makers who have actually vulgarised the taste of the masses by means of their bizarre content. The same can be said about many written works, novels, adult magazines, films and such things that are viewed by a large number of people. For some, it might definitely affect or influence their certain intentions or even morals. Especially, in a world where fake news has become such a prominent player that it is becoming harder to differentiate between the real and fake one now, it's important that such content does not affect our mental peace.

It's only a process like meditation that can provide relaxation to people and have a health-promoting effect on all their physical and mental systems. Something as negative as such violent content is certainly injurious to one's mental health. It also could be dehumanising emotionally for many. And yet, we pay very less attention to how our actions need to function in cooperation with a healthy mind, body and heart. A control over emotions is the only way which can help the world understand humanity better and avoid making impulsive decisions like the terrorist attack at *Hebdo*.

It is high time that countries around the world pay attention to meditation and make it mandatory for everyone to devote complete attention to this problem lest all their efforts to establish values and to give a spiritual touch to people's lifestyle would go in vain. They would just be carried away by the typhonic effect of such a reading or viewing material.



A reinvented apple

Supply brands are noticing the rise of tomatoes and turnips in vegetable gardening this year



thing you've had hoped for."

As far as flower seeds go, the eye-catching Zesty Zinnia Mix comes as the next top seller. While the most popular vegetable and flower seeds have remained consistent every year, sales of wildflowers and lettuce increased more quickly than

other seed types, which can be called as reflection of gardeners trying their hands with easy and fast-growing plants.

Lettuce, she pointed out, can be grown in a windowsill container, so it works well in apartments as well as yards.

Given that gardening has surged

in popularity this year, experts say that people have sought out an escape and productive activities during quarantine, and have found both in DIY gardening projects that connect them with nature while providing food and beauty at the same time.

Many brands have also seen an influx of new customers across all age groups. Supplies that get the family involved in gardening, such as seed starting kits, are a hit. "These customers are most excited about heirloom varieties and our salad bowl mix, which includes a blend of

mustard greens, arugulas and lettuces," said a brand. Some gardener supply companies simply said that in more than 35 years of business, they have never been this "busy!"

Some of the most functional and preferred items are raised beds, tomato cages and water irrigation systems, folding benches, which help save a gardeners' knees. Well, they sold surprisingly well. Currently, companies are running out of stock on some of its greenhouses, too. A home goods retailer saw a surge this year in consumers looking to grow their own food, including high demand for seed starting, raised garden beds and tomato cages.

A website called It's My Sustainable Life, about organic gardening and sustainable living, recently ran an article on how to save tomato seeds for future use. It said the founder grows up to 150 tomato plants every year in her garden. "My love of all things tomatoes has no bounds," the founder said and added, "Call me the crazy tomato lady."

And if we go back to looking at the tomatoes and their varieties — many swear by heirloom varieties, whose seeds have not been altered from their parent plants. The Brandywine, which dates back nearly 140 years, are becoming one of the favourites. Pruden's Purple, Black Krim, Cherokee Purple, Blue Beech paste and San Marzano are among the increasingly chosen ones. Others are some hybrid indeterminate varieties such as Sungold Cherry and Black Cherry — as some call them, the flavour superstars!

—AP

If you are not willing to risk the usual, you will have to settle for the ordinary.

—Jim Rohn

HEART DEFECTS NOT LINKED TO COVID-19

People born with heart defects had a lower-than-expected risk of developing moderate or severe COVID-19 symptoms, as per a study conducted on 7,000 patients.

Congenital heart defects are present at birth and can

affect the structure of a baby's

heart and the way it works,

according to the US Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Throughout the pandemic,

evidence has shown that

individuals with heart disease

have a higher risk of life-threatening illness and

complications from COVID-19. But the impact of SARS-CoV-2 infection on individuals with congenital heart defects, who are generally younger than those with adult-onset heart disease, was unknown.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, many feared that

congenital heart disease would be as big a risk factor for

severe COVID-19 as adult-onset cardiovascular disease,"

said co-leader of the study Matthew Lewis, Assistant Professor of Medicine at Columbia University Vagelos

College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York.

COVID PATIENTS' ANTIBODIES AFFECT IMMUNITY

Researchers have found that people seriously ill with COVID-19 have antibodies that are blocking so-called interferons, which are an important part of the body's immune mechanism.

While most people

dying from COVID-19 are elderly, up to five to 10 per cent of younger adults and

children can also be seriously infected by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the study, published in the journal *Science*, reported.

Researchers from all over the world have tried to determine why some people become very ill and others are barely affected by COVID-19. "Deaths and severe Covid-19 are more frequent among men than women. Our study has shown that men have more of these antibodies," said study author Eystein Husebye from the University of Bergen in Norway.

Husebye was involved in this study because he has had long experience with patients suffering from the immune disease APS1, which is a serious, but rare, immune disease. Patients with APS1 have a high concentration of antibodies against interferons.

BLOOD TEST PREDICTS COVID'S SEVERITY

In the fight against the novel Coronavirus, scientists have developed a score that can accurately predict which patients will develop a severe form of COVID-19.

The measurement, called the Dublin-Boston score, is designed to enable clinicians to make more informed decisions when identifying patients who may benefit from therapies, such as steroids, and admission to intensive care units.

Until this study, no COVID-19-specific prognostic scores were available to guide clinical decision-making. As per the findings, published in the journal *EBioMedicine*, the Dublin-Boston score can now accurately predict how severe the infection will be on Day Seven after measuring the patient's blood for the first four days.

"The Dublin-Boston score is easily calculated and can be applied to all hospitalised COVID-19 patients," said study author Gerry McElvaney from the RCSI University in Ireland. The blood test works by measuring the levels of two molecules that send messages to the body's immune system and control inflammation.

EXCESS HAND HYGIENE CAUSES SKIN PROBLEMS

The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder to the fact that one of the most effective ways to stop the spread of the virus is also one of the simplest: Hand hygiene.

Amid the pandemic, washing hands and maintaining hand hygiene has become all the more important. As per experts, it is the first line of defence against coronavirus till the time a vaccine is developed. However, excess of everything has its repercussions.

Dermatologists have observed an influx of cases coming with adverse effects of following excessive hand hygiene.

Nandini Barua, a senior consultant in the department of dermatology at Paras Hospital, Gurugram, said that people have developed an obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) for rigorous hand hygiene, suffering several skin ailments as a result.

POOR DIET TOP CONTRIBUTOR TO HEART DEATHS

Poor diet is a top contributor to heart disease deaths around the globe, say researchers, adding that more than two-thirds of the deaths from heart disease worldwide could be prevented with healthier diets.

The findings, published in the *European Heart Journal*, highlights the importance of affordable and sustainable healthy diets for all.

"Our analysis shows that unhealthy diets, high blood pressure, and high serum cholesterol are the top three contributors to deaths from heart attacks and angina — collectively called ischaemic heart disease," said study author Xinyao Liu from the Central South University in China.

"This was consistent in both developed and developing countries," Liu added.

For the results, the research team analysed data provided by the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017, which was conducted in 195 countries between 1990 and 2017.





TODAY

VS

Live from 7:30pm
STAR SPORTS 1
IPL
2020


KL Rahul

525 runs

Kagiso Rabada | 19 wickets



I was sitting inside and I was pretty nervous. I knew if Shikhar stayed till the end, we would win, but the way Axar came out and hit those sixes, it was brilliant



A positive was Sam's last over. He needs convincing he can execute the wide yorkers. He is not usually confident with that, but today he did well with that



Unfortunately Dwayne Bravo got injured so he could not bowl the last over that's the way our season has been going, we are having challenges thrown at us



Axar Patel has been a great asset, whenever we demand good overs from him, he does the job. He is normally very economical. Having a quality all-rounder makes a big difference

DUGOUT**MOTION PICTURE**

Umpire Pashim Pathak, who takes spotlight during KKR and Sunrisers on Sunday for his hairstyle chats with Andre Russell and other KKR players

IPLT20.com

Kings XI Punjab

+ Maxwell well well, how about that @JimmyNeesh?

@CocaCola_Ind

#ShareACoke #SaddaPunjab

#IPL2020 @Gmaxi_32

**BRAVO OUT FOR COUPLE OF WEEKS**

Chennai Super Kings' death bowling expert Dwayne Bravo could be "out for a few days or a couple of weeks" due to a groin injury, according to head coach Stephen Fleming. Bravo's inability to bowl the final over cost CSK their IPL game on Saturday as Delhi Capitals knocked off the required 17 runs. "He (Bravo) seems to have a right groin injury, obviously it was serious enough to keep him from coming back to the field, he is just really disappointed that he was not able to bowl the final over, that's pretty much for what he is in the team for," Bravo said. "He would have to be reassessed going forward, at this stage, you would imagine that it would take a few days or a couple of weeks," Fleming said after CSK's five-wicket loss.

TIM SEIFERT REPLACES ALI KHAN

New Zealand wicketkeeper-batsman Tim Seifert has replaced injured USA fast bowler Ali Khan at IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders. According to ESPNcricinfo, Seifert has been roped in as replacement for USA fast bowler Khan, whose maiden stint at the lucrative league ended without any game time due to a side strain that he suffered while playing in the Caribbean Premier League. A report in Stuff had said Seifert's domestic team, Northern Districts, had "confirmed" that the cricketer "was another absentee".

NARINE CLEARED FOR SUSPECT ACTION

West Indian spinner Sunil Narine was on Sunday cleared by the Indian Premier League's suspect bowling action committee after being reported last week. But, in a relief for the player as well as for his franchise, the IPL committee found his bowling action to be clean. "Sunil Narine, the Kolkata Knight Riders player, has been cleared by the IPL's suspect bowling action committee," the IPL said in a statement.

POINTS TABLE

		P	W	L	NRR	PTS	
1		DC	9	7	2	+0.921	14
2		MI	9	6	3	+1.201	12
3		RCB	9	6	3	-0.096	12
4		KKR	9	5	4	-0.607	10
5		SRH	9	3	6	+0.008	6
6		KXIP	9	3	6	-0.262	6
7		CSK	9	3	6	-0.386	6
8		RR	9	3	6	-0.778	6

KINGS PASS SUPER MI TEST

Mayank makes difference first in field to save Pollard's final ball six and then with two fours to win second Super Over game for Kings XI

PTI ■ DUBAI



Kings XI Punjab showed nerves of steel as they defeated defending champions Mumbai Indians in an edge-of-the-seat IPL game that was decided via a second Super Over for the first time in the history of the tournament here on Sunday.

Kieron Pollard helped MI score 11 for one in the second Super Over bowled by Chris Jordan after both the teams ended at the same score in the regulation 20 overs as well as in the first Super Over.

Chris Gayle then hit the first ball bowled by Trent Boult for a six before Mayank Agarwal cracked successive fours as KXIP notched up an incredible win to keep their IPL play-off hopes alive.

This was after Jasprit

Bumrah dismissed Nicholas Pooran and KL Rahul in the first Super Over to leave MI with a six-run target.

However, Mohd Shami bowled an equally incredible over as KXIP defended the five runs to take the match to a second Super Over.

Earlier, Rahul smashed a scintillating 51-ball 77 to take KXIP on the brink of a successful chase but team-mates Deepak Hooda and

Jordan could only level the scores at 176 for six in the stipulated 20 overs.

Bumrah (3/24) snared three crucial wickets during the regulation 20 overs after opener Quinton de Kock (53 off 43) hit his fourth half-century of the season to restrict KXIP.

Opting to bat, MI were reduced to 43 for 3 but opener de Kock scored a 43-ball 53 and shared a 58-run stand with Krunal Pandya (34)

to steady the ship.

Pollard (34 not out off 12) and Nathan Coulter-Nile (24 not out off 12) then provided the late flourish, adding 57 off 21 balls in the death overs as MI posted 176 for 6.

Chasing 177, Rahul,

who currently holds the orange cap, blasted seven fours and three sixes in his knock to cross 500 runs this season and almost single-handedly take KXIP home.

He, alongwith Gayle (24), took KXIP to 75 for one in nine overs after losing Mayank Agarwal (11) early in the innings.

However, Gayle was sent packing by Rahul Chahar in the 10th over and then Bumrah returned to dismiss Nicholas Pooran (24 off 11) to leave Punjab at 108 for 3. Needing 24 off 15 balls, Hooda and Chris Jordan (13) tied the match.

Knight in shining armour

PTI ■ ABU DHABI



A fast and furious Lockie Ferguson produced one of the most incredible bowling performances of this IPL edition to lead Kolkata Knight Riders to a thrilling Super Over win over Sunrisers Hyderabad, here on Sunday.

Ferguson proved to be the "Knight in Shining Armour" with his storehouse of variation as he dismissed David Warner and Abdul Samad in the Super Over, leaving KKR with only a three run-target to chase.

This was after David Warner's unbeaten 47 and 18 runs off the final Andre Russell over saw Sunrisers level the scores at 163 with KKR in the stipulated 20 overs.

Ferguson was magnificent during the regulation 20 overs also as his 3/15 in 4 overs had SRH in all sorts of trouble. He bowled a first spell in which he dismissed Kane Williamson with a short ball, got rid of Priyam Garg with a slower one and saw the back of Manish Pandey with a yorker.

His five wickets in the game got KKR the much-needed two points to take their tally to 10 while Sunrisers stay put on 6 points and are in serious danger of missing the play-offs.

Earlier, Ex-captain Dinesh Karthik's carefree approach was well complemented by skipper

Eoin Morgan's grace as Kolkata Knight Riders managed a par 163 for five after being put into bat.

Karthik (29 not out) and Morgan (34 off 23 balls) joined forces at 105 for four and added 58 runs in the last five overs after 150 was looking a tall-order at one stage.

Morgan's innings had three fours and a flicked six over mid-wicket off Basil Thampi while Karthik hit a couple of sixes and equal number of boundaries.

T Natarajan (2/40) was the most successful bowler but it was Vijay Shankar (1/20 in 4 overs) who was the most economical.

Rahul Tripathi (23 off 15 balls) gave the first charge in the Powerplay as he hit Natarajan for

a straight six and a pulled boundary while Shubman Gill (36 off 37 balls) struggled to time the ball, save an over from Thampi when he got three successive fours.

Tripathi couldn't maintain the momentum as an ugly cross-batted hoick off Natarajan only ended in the bails flying off.

Gill however after those flurry of fours found it difficult to up the ante. Nitish Rana (29 off 19 balls) looked in good nick after a gap of few games.

He straight away took on rival team's best bowler Rashid Khan and deposited him straight for a six and also found a couple of boundaries.

But Gill's inability to rotate strike did put KKR in a spot of bother as he tried an inside out lofted shot off Rashid. Priyam Garg, running towards his left from long-off, took a brilliant diving catch to see the opener's back.

Gill's dismissal was followed by Rana's who mis-timed a shot off Vijay Shankar and was again caught by Garg, who ran forward to take a well-judged catch.

Andre Russell's (9 off 11 balls) season just got bad to worse as his shot off Natarajan's slower one landed in the hands of Shankar at deep mid-wicket boundary. From a stable 87 for 1 in the 12th over, KKR had slumped to 105 for 4 at the end of the 15th over.

CSK, RR on edge of the cliff

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Sailing in the same boat, Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals lock horns in the Indian Premier League here on Monday with the knowledge that any more slip-up could dash their slim play-off hopes.

Both CSK and RR have failed to live up to the expectations so far and are placed seventh and eighth on the points table in the eight-team competition.

The two struggling teams have six points from nine games, but the defending champions are placed above on the net run rate.

With just five matches each remaining for both the teams, the road ahead is definitely going to be a tough and tricky one, and they know that they cannot afford any more lapses from hereon.

Both teams lost their respective last matches on Saturday. While the Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led side lost to table toppers Delhi Capitals by five wickets, Rajasthan Royals were defeated by seven wickets by Royal Challengers Bangalore.

The blow for CSK is bigger as their influential all-rounder, Dwayne Bravo, has been ruled out for at least a few days due to a groin injury.

After bringing life to their campaign with a win over Sunrisers Hyderabad, courtesy Dhoni's smart captaincy, CSK were done in by sloppy fielding and

Shikhar Dhawan's scintillating 101-run knock while chasing a competitive 180-run target.

Dropped a number of times, Dhawan hit his maiden IPL hundred while Axar Patel smashed three sixes in the final over bowled by Ravindra Jadeja, to hand CSK their sixth loss.

It was a nightmarish outing for CSK fielders as they dropped Dhawan on 25 and 79, apart from failing to latch on to a half chance and a run-out opportunity, and Dhoni would certainly seek improvement in that department.

"Shikhar's wicket was important but we dropped him quite a number of times. If he keeps batting, he will keep the strike rate high. Also the wicket played better in the second half, but we can't take the credit away from Shikhar," Dhoni had said after the last game.

RR also find themselves in a very difficult situation and desperately need to explore ways to close down games.

One good thing for RR is the return to form of their skipper Steve Smith, who made 57 on Saturday, but star all-rounder Ben Stokes is yet to fire after having joined the team late. While Jos Buttler has not been consistent enough with the bat.

Sanju Samson has been subdued after his early exploits while Robin Uthappa seems to have found some form at the top, scoring 41 off 22 balls against RCB.

SPURS COLLAPSE



AP ■ LONDON

Tottenham was transformed by Gareth Bale's homecoming, just not in the way that Jose Mourinho had imagined.

Cruising 3-0 when Bale came off the bench in the 72nd minute against West Ham, Tottenham incredibly collapsed in a game it had been in control of to draw 3-3 in the Premier League on Sunday.

It was with almost the last kick of the game that Manuel Lanzini blasted a shot from distance into the roof of the net to snatch a point that seemed extremely unlikely when Son Heung-min scored in the first minute and Harry Kane netted twice by the 16th

minute. Agonizingly for Bale, after Fabian Balbuena pulled one back in the 82nd and Davinson Sanchez scored an own-goal three minutes later, the on-loan forward from Real Madrid had a golden chance to score the fourth.

Released by Kane, Bale sent Angelo Ogbonna sliding to the turf as he drilled into the penalty area but managed to drag a shot wide.

Rather than any joy for Bale on his return to Tottenham after seven years, West Ham was celebrating in a way that seemed unimaginable in the first half.

Earlier on Saturday late night fixture, Manchester United beat Newcastle United 4-1 at Old Trafford.

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