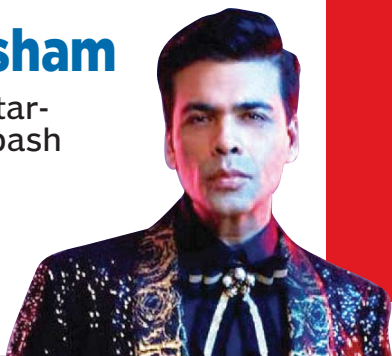


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Still standing, still funny

The world of comedy — stand-up comedy in particular — has seen plenty of ups and downs recently, but it is now looking at a revival. So we ask three popular comics to delineate the way forward, especially in comparison to the road already traversed.

RADHIKA VASHISHT

THE ASIAN AGE



Indian comedy has changed drastically over the decades — both in terms of content and its delivery across platforms. Several eras, each with its set of comedians, have come and gone, but one thing has remained constant: the importance of the genre in the entertainment industry.

Comedy in India has seen the same diversity as, well, the country itself. It has been the home ground for many rib-tickling geniuses such as Johnny Walker, Mehmood, Kader Khan and Johnny Lever. But stand-up comedy, however, has always taken a backseat on the larger screen.

Luckily, the past few years have witnessed the boom of stand-up comedy in India. "The Indian comedy scene is at a great point right now. It is growing very rapidly; every two years, the entire scene changes. Initially, we all were trying to do as many shows as possible — from Delhi to Mumbai to Bengaluru. Then few years later YouTube came up and people started making sketches, and started making videos for it, and a year later after OTT platforms like Amazon Prime came on board, stand-up specials became a big thing," shares Sapan Verma, a well-known stand-up comedian.

"In the last few years we have seen comedians becoming content creator, just like I created *One Mic Stand*, Sumukhi Suresh created *Pushpavalli*, and now it has become a world where comedians are also doing non-stand-up things and creating comedy shows and fiction," Sapan added.

The digital video revolution is still sweeping India and comedy shows are continuing to get lined up for the Indian market.

"When we see comedy in 2019 from a comedian's perspective, people are performing way more now. The quality of content is also improving. The kind of topics that we all are picking these days are from across styles and are exciting to watch from an audience's perspective. The number of people who are watching live comedy is obviously growing, we have audience coming from tier 2 and tier 3 cities also," adds Angad Singh Ranyal, another prominent stand-up comedian.

Most of the earlier comics relied heavily on slapstick or mimicry for their on-stage acts. One of the most popular talk shows of the '90s, *Movers and Shakers*, used to have stand-up comedy as a filler, not as the main attraction. But slowly, Hindi stand-up comedy found a platform — *The Great Indian Laughter Challenge*, for instance. Finally, there were stand-up comedians who looked like us and killed it on stage.

Turn to Page 18

The quality of content is also improving. The kind of topics that we all are picking these days are from across styles and are exciting to watch

— Angad Singh Ranyal, Stand-up comedian





Viewpoint

Historians erred in not properly projecting contributions of stalwarts like Savarkar, says Venkaiah Naidu

Nation

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THE ASIAN AGE

SATURDAY | 16 NOVEMBER 2019 | NEW DELHI



Let 3 leaders 'remain inside' if you see Valley is peaceful due their detention

— Jitendra Singh, Union minister

SHORT TAKES

India grants Nepal govt \$27.9m aid

Kathmandu: India has released nearly \$28 million financial aid to the Nepal government for rebuilding houses in Nuwakot and Gorkha districts that were damaged in the devastating earthquake in 2015. Over 9,000 people died and nearly 22,000 were injured in the tremor that hit the landlocked country in April 2015. The Indian government on Thursday released 3.10 billion Nepali rupees (\$27.9 million) to Nepal from the concessional Line of Credit as part of reimbursement of the third tranche of financial aid to rebuild houses in Nuwakot and Gorkha districts, the Indian Embassy here said in a press release. — PTI

Puducherry to get branch of CBI soon

Puducherry: The Central Bureau of Investigation has said it will soon set up a branch here to facilitate the public easily lodge corruption-related complaints instead of approaching the CBI branch in Chennai. Territorial lieutenant-governor Kiran Bedi announced this to mediapersons through her whatsapp on Friday. All along the CBI's anti-corruption wing in Chennai was having territorial jurisdiction covering all the four districts of Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam. The four districts of UT have large concentration of government of India tax collection units, railway and other public sector units. — PTI

2 school students drown in Kerala

Kottayam, Kerala: Two 17-year-old school students drowned and another one reported missing when they tried to take a selfie near a river here on Friday afternoon, the police said. While two bodies have been recovered, search is on for the missing student in the Meenachil river. The police said one of them tried to take a selfie using a mobile phone but fell into the river. Seeing this, the other two tried to rescue him but they also fell in, police said. The students, all aged 17, went to the river after visiting the venue of the district school youth festival here. — PTI

2 MORE HELD FOR KUSHINAGAR MOSQUE BLAST

Lucknow/ Gorakhpur (UP), Nov. 15: Two more people were held in connection with the Kushinagar mosque blast case on Friday, taking the total number of arrests to six, a senior official said. Earlier in the day, four other accused were sent to police remand for 48 hours. A man identified as Haji Qutubuddin, who is associated with the mosque and was injured in the blast, was interrogated, Inspector General, Gorakhpur zone, Jai Narayan Singh said. Qutubuddin's grandson — Ashfaq, who works in the army and was posted in Hyderabad too was called for questioning, he added. Both of them have been arrested. "Six persons including Qutubuddin and his grandson Ashfaq have been arrested in the case. No terror link has been found so far. We are probing the matter," inspector-general, law and order, Praveen Kumar said in Lucknow. Earlier in the day, the other four accused — Maulana Azimuddin, Izhar, Ashiq Ansari and Javed Ansari were sent to police remand following their arrest on Tuesday, a day after the blast rocked the mosque in Bairagi Patti village in Turkpatti of Kushinagar district on Monday. — PTI

■ Opp. slams Modi govt over detention of leaders in J&K Cong: Will Farooq attend Parl?

New Delhi, Nov. 15: The Congress on Friday attacked the Modi government over the detention of mainstream political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir, and asked whether sitting Lok Sabha member from Srinagar Farooq Abdullah will be allowed to attend Parliament from Monday.

The Opposition party also alleged that the Centre had left "no stone unturned in internationalising Kashmir" and hit out at the government for allowing European Union (EU) lawmakers to visit the Valley but not Indian leaders.

Former chief minister and senior National Conference (NC) leader Farooq Abdullah was detained under the controversial Public Safety Act (PSA).

"Kashmir has been in a lockdown situation for the last 103 days. The prime minister (Narendra Modi) is going around the world saying 'all is well,'" Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara said at a press conference.

He said the government must give reasons as to why it has kept leaders of established political parties under detention. When Farooq Abdullah



Farooq Abdullah

"sings 'Ram Bhajan' or says 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'", he does not think what the response of separatist forces will be, Khara said.

"Is it not that Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti take their oaths under the Constitution of India. Omar Abdullah has

held several positions in the Atal Behari Vajpayee Cabinet, you have been in a government with Mehbooba Mufti, and today you have put them in the same category as separatists," the Congress leader said.

During the Parliament session from November 18 to December 13, the Congress will raise its voice for all those mainstream leaders who are under detention in Jammu and Kashmir, Mr Khara said.

The Congress spokesperson hit out at the Modi government for granting a delegation of EU MPs access to

Kashmir when parliamentarians of the country were not allowed.

A delegation of 23 EU MPs made a two-day visit to Kashmir last month aimed at a first-hand assessment of the ground situation in the Valley after the revocation of the state's special status.

Most of the top level and second rung separatist politicians have been taken into preventive custody while mainstream leaders, including former chief ministers Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, have been either detained or placed under house arrest. — PTI

CBI must file FIR in Rafale case: Shourie and Bhushan

New Delhi, Nov. 15: The CBI must register an FIR in the Rafale deal, lawyer Prashant Bhushan and former BJP leader Arun Shourie said on Friday, a day after the Supreme Court gave the government a clean chit in the fighter-jet agreement.

The Supreme Court on Thursday rejected pleas, including one by Bhushan, Shourie and former BJP leader Yashwant Sinha, for a review of its judgment that gave a clean chit to the Modi government on the purchase of 36 Rafale fighter jets from France. It also said there is no ground to order an FIR by the CBI or a roving inquiry into allegations of irregularities in the controversial deal.

Mr Bhushan said it is binding on the CBI to probe their complaint despite the ruling by the three-judge apex court bench. If the CBI fails to do so, it will again approach the top court, Bhushan told reporters also addressed by Shourie. Mr Sinha was not there.

To buttress his point, Mr Bhushan referred to the judgment of Justice K.M. Joseph, one of the three judges of the bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi that gave the verdict.

Justice Joseph said the CBI is expected to act "completely independent" of the government of the day and professionalism of "highest quality", uncompromising independence and neutrality is expected of it. — PTI

■ Move necessitated due to approaching winters

Mufti moved to 'warmer' makeshift jail in Srinagar

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, NOV. 15

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti was on Thursday evening shifted to a government-owned bungalow along Srinagar's Moulana Azad Road from a makeshift prison in the foothills of Zabarwan here where she had been lodged since August 5.

The official and PDP sources said that Ms Mufti has been shifted to 5 Moulana Azad Road which is equipped with better heating and other facilities. The premises are being declared a "subsidiary jail", the official sources said.

As the Valley is reeling under biting cold following heavy snowfalls and



Mehbooba Mufti

rains past week, the authorities had come under criticism over lodging Ms Mufti at a place which was not equipped with proper heating arrangement.

Ms Mufti's daughter Iltija Mufti had recently expressed concern over what she had said were poor heating facilities available to her mother at the makeshift jail in Chashmashahi area on the foothills of Zabarwan. She had

She was shifted on Friday evening to a government accommodation in the heart of the Srinagar after it was declared a 'jail' by the administration

warned that the Government of Indian would be responsible if anything untoward happens to her mother.

Days after her detention along with hundreds of other mainstream politicians on August 4, 60-year-old Mufti was shifted to a tourism cottage in Chashmashahi from nearby Hari Nivas guesthouse. Like "Hari Nivas" the tourism cottage too had been declared a "subsidiary jail". — PTI

Ayodhya ruling in our favour as BJP is in power: Guj MP

Bharuch, Nov. 15: Mansukh Vasava, BJP MP of Bharuch in Gujarat, on Thursday claimed Supreme Court gave a verdict "in our favour" on the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute because a BJP government is at the Centre.

It drew condemnation from the Congress which demanded an apology and accused the MP of "fanning communal tension". Mr Vasava, however, later claimed he was only pointing to how the BJP government (at the Centre) was able to maintain law and order after the SC verdict was delivered on November 9.



Mansukh Vasava

Addressing BJP workers in Bharuch town on Thursday evening, Vasava said, "The Ram Janmabhoomi issue was quite old. So many years went by. The Ram Janmabhoomi movement was going on even before India got independence. So many people were martyred and many took part in the movement (to build a Ram Temple at the disputed site)." — PTI

Oldest activist of Bhopal gas tragedy stir no more

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, NOV. 15

Abdul Jabbar, a key figure in the iconic struggle for justice by survivors of 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, died literally in penury late on Thursday night after prolonged illness.

He was 63. "Jabbar Bhai", as he was famously known in city of Bhopal, died of cardiac arrest in a private hospital here while waiting for help from state government to arrange proper medical facility for him.

His death, ironically, came barely an hour after chief minister Kamal Nath announced to shift him to a specialised hospital in Delhi in air ambulance.

His never-say-die spirit had inspired the poverty-stricken survivors to carry on their fight for three and half decades, billed as the longest stir in the world, not only to get justice but also bring to book the 'high and mighty' responsible for the catastrophe.

His relentless efforts had led to revision of a verdict by Supreme Court in 1989 to fix criminal accountability on the promoters of Union



Abdul Jabbar, alias "Jabbar Bhai", as he was famously known in the city of Bhopal, died of cardiac arrest.

Carbide for causing the tragedy that had left more than 15,000 people dead and over one lakh others maimed after being exposed to the deadly methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas leaked from the pesticide plant of the multi-national company's factory in Bhopal on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984.

"My biggest regret is that I had failed to get the then chief executive officer (CEO) of Union Carbide Warren Anderson to face the law in India for the disaster", the activist had earlier told this newspaper.

He had also filed a case in a court here to bring to book the then district collector Moti Singh for 'facilitating' the escape

of Anderson, who died recently, from India.

Jabbar, as he had earlier narrated before this newspaper, was walking along with a friend to his house near the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal on the fateful night when he smelt the air pungent and suspected leakage of poisonous gas.

The activist who lost 50 percent of his vision and developed respiratory problem following exposure to the gas, had lost his mother and elder brother in the incident later.

He used to organise gathering of survivors in sprawling Shajahan Park here every Saturday for the last 35 years to keep their morale high to continue the struggle.

CPI got ₹1.47cr during LS, state polls

New Delhi: The Communist Party of India received over ₹1.47 crore as contributions during the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections held between April and May this year, and spent a little over ₹62 lakh for campaigning, according to the details submitted by the party before the poll panel.

The CPI document, however does not reflect the ₹15 crore it received as donation from the DMK. "The amount was transferred to the bank after the end of the financial year. It will be reflected next year once the state council submits the report," party general secretary D. Raja said. — PTI

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DP9181/19

Rafale dogfight: Exoneration of process, not graft



Mohan Guruswamy

On December 14 last year, the Supreme Court had ruled that there was no reason to doubt the decision-making process behind the Rafale fighter deal. It has reaffirmed its position on November 14, 2019. The Supreme Court's order, however much the government may make it seem, does not mean exoneration from corruption. It relates to the process.

Even in terms of the process, there are some questions. For instance, the Acceptance of Necessity (AON) required to set off the acquisition process, was given after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during an official visit to France in April 2015, announced that India would acquire 36 fully built Rafales citing a "critical operational necessity". The Defence Acquisition Committee (DAC) meeting chaired by the defence minister to grant AON was only held in May 2015.

Though the Defence Procurement Procedure 2013

(DPP) very clearly lays out the sequence of steps, the AON came as an afterthought. The DPP also specifies that where the procedure has been deviated from, such procurements will be done based on an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) after clearance from the Competent Financial Authority (CFA). The CFA for procurement cases valued at more than ₹1,000 crores was the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). The IGA is typically an assurance from a sovereign foreign government for assistance in case of unforeseen problems, such as international sanctions, contractor failure, the need to integrate more sophisticated weaponry, the requirement of product support, etc. The IGA also facilitates and strengthens the foreign industry's commitment for long-term support for equipment and spares via a matching commitment by a sovereign government. In the Rafale purchase, no such IGA was sought or obtained.

The Indian Air Force was hoping for a minimum of four squadrons or 72 Rafale fight-

ers, but the Narendra Modi government kept the initial order down to 36 fighters in a flyaway condition for 7.8 billion euros, or \$9.13 billion (@1 euro=\$1.17). Commenting on this, the officer who headed the intensive selection process that led to the choice of the Rafale, Air Marshal M. Matheswaran (Retd), who was involved in the original 126-fighter purchase process, said: "The original MMRCRA tender was cleared for \$10.5 billion for 126 aircraft." This is the crux of the issue. Is India paying too much for this fine fighting aircraft?

The Modi government has begun to pay French vendor Dassault 7.85 billion euros for 36 Rafale fighters, or an average per-fighter cost of 217 million euros. That is 40 per cent higher per aircraft than Dassault's quote of 19.5 billion euros for 126 fighters — or 155 million euros per Rafale — that it submitted in response to an eventually aborted tender issued in 2007.

Now something about the next controversy on the "India-specific capabilities" built into these 36 Rafales. In the Air Staff Qualitative Requirements (ASQR) provided by the IAF, there were 13 "India-specific enhancements" demanded by India during the 126-aircraft MMRCRA contract. These included radar enhancements, helmet-mounted display, towed decoy system, low-band

To insist that allowing the overall unit price to be known will reveal the true capability of the new Rafales is a complete concoction and a figment of the imagination. It's just a lie.

jammer and the ability to operate from high-altitude airfields. That these were the same for the 36 Rafales ordered by Mr Modi is made clear by the joint statement of April 10, 2015 issued by French President Francois Hollande and Mr Modi, which reads "...that the aircraft and associated systems and weapons would be delivered on the same configuration as has been tested and approved by the Indian Air Force".

The comparable costs of the 126 and 36 aircraft deals can only be assessed when all the costs are factored in. The cost of the new deal for 36 Rafale fighters is 3.42 billion euros as the cost of the bare planes; 1.8 billion euros for associated supplies for infrastructure and support; 1.7 billion euros for India-specific changes to the plane; and 353 million euros for "performance-based logistics support"; with the weapons package of 700 million euros being the extra.

What is new here are the performance-based logistics support and the weapons package. So, take 1,053 million euros out and you have the comparable cost, which means it is 7.1 billion euros. It appears the fiddle is in the India-specific costs, additional infrastructure and support, and performance logistics support. The first MMRCRA deal also would have included India-specific specifications, as is in the case of the IAF's SU30MKIs. Thus, for comparison's sake, the argument can be made that 36 Rafales now cost 7.1 billion euros while 126 Rafales in 2012 cost 7.75 billion euros.

The IAF's "spokesmen" have been justifying the Rafale purchase because the package includes the Meteor air-to-air missile. The Meteor is an active radar-guided beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM) developed by MBDA. It will offer a multi-shot capability against long-range manoeuvring targets in a heavy electronic counter-measures (ECM) environment with range in excess of 100 km. The Meteor is said to be five times as lethal as a conventional equivalent such as the American AMRAAM carried by the Pakistan Air Force's F-16 fighters.

The Meteor is not exclusive to the Rafale. The fact is that Sweden's Gripen has now been integrated with the Meteor and open sources indi-

cate the IAF too is contemplating integrating the SU-30MKIs and the Meteor. Even the Tejas can be fitted out with Meteors. We are therefore not buying the Rafale for the Meteor.

The cost of procuring Meteors is hard to come by. Limited figures came to light in Germany in 2013. The Luftwaffe will acquire 150 missiles at a cost of around \$323 million, plus a further \$175 million for integration. That compares favourably with a price tag of \$423 million for 180 AIM-120Ds, which the Pentagon paid in 2012. Today each Meteor will cost about 2.5 million euros each. I don't think the IAF will need more Meteor missiles than the USAF or the Luftwaffe. Missile purchases can never be part of the capital cost of a fighter. Since they are expendable, and presumably meant to be expendable, they should be part of revenue expenditure.

When Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi asked IAF officers when the last induction of advanced fighter jets happened, Air Vice Marshal T. Chalapati testified this was in the 1980s in the shape of the Mirage aircraft. No wonder Chief Justice Gogoi said: "That means from the 1980s till date there has been zero addition." This testimony is blatantly false. This interaction took place in the presence of Air Marshals Anil Khosla (vice-chief) and V.R. Choudhary (deputy chief), and defence ministry additional

secretary Apurva Chandra. They remained quiet.

The IAF inducted the SU30MKIs from the mid-1990s onwards and has over 240 of these fighters. The more recent deliveries have electronics comparable with current state-of-the-art aircraft. The jets may be classified as 3.5 Gen by the AVM, but that is because it was designed in that time period. But to impute that the same jet made in 2010 is limited to that time's capability is also rubbish. Technology moves on and even airframes, while essentially the same, change to enhance aerodynamics and stealth capability. For that matter, the Rafale prototype was up and flying in late 1980s. I saw it at the Farnborough air show in 1988. So how is it 4+ Gen? The SU27 — the forerunner of SU30 and SU35 — made its debut in Paris only in 1987.

Finally, to insist that allowing the overall unit price to be known will reveal the true capability of the new Rafales is a complete concoction and a figment of the imagination. It's just a lie. What the price will reveal, since the India-specific capabilities haven't changed since 2013, is how much the Modi government has padded up the cost.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

Is India prepared to bid the Maharajah a royal goodbye?



Shobhaa's Take

I was minding my own business and buying groceries when a familiar looking gentleman of a certain vintage walked up to me in the aisle stocking detergents. He reintroduced himself and I sheepishly trotted out my regular excuse, "Terribly sorry. I didn't recognise you... I am having a senior citizen moment". Without waiting for me to finish making a critical detergent decision, he launched into an engaging monologue about what ails Air India. He was once a top honcho at India's national carrier — the gorgeous one with the beloved Maharajah as its mascot. He mentioned he had a great deal of well-documented material on all that has gone wrong with what was once a world-class airline and which lies in tatters today. Briefly but strongly, he made an impassioned plea to make Air India a cause celebre before it was stripped still further of its few remaining assets. The worthy gentleman did not shy away from naming names, and said he had enough dope to nail the venal politicians behind the airline's downfall and scandal. He emphatically stated that what the public is being fed about the strenuous, behind the scenes efforts to "save" Air India was nothing more than adulterated hogwash. There were far too many powerful people ready to dance on the Maharajah's

grave... and they would make sure no salvage operation would work. I promptly forgot the other items on my extensive grocery list as we exchanged coordinates and talked about connecting soon. I have his card. And I believe him when he says he is ready to go public. His despair was palpable.

Story number two: On a recent flight to Jaipur, I was seated next to a dynamic, chatty couple (oh ho — there goes my much needed power nap, I groaned). We were on a short Air India flight, and I was prepared for the worst (bad reputations travel at supersonic speed). Surprise, surprise — it turned out to be a smooth, welcoming and wonderful flight with excellent on board service from an efficient, smiling crew. "Wow!" said the couple, sipping tea after a delicious, hot meal. A young flight attendant overheard us lamenting the sorry state of Air India and jumped into the conversation, but only after refilling the tea cups of passengers. He had tears in his eyes as he mentioned just how bad things are: "Imagine our plight during Diwali... we received our salaries on the 24th of the month! We were helpless and didn't know what to tell our families. We love our jobs and we love Air India. We are loyal to the airline that gives us so much! We feel proud to say we work for Air India when we travel internationally. Which is

If the government is transparent and sincere about resuscitating Air India, it should first nail the culprits who cold-bloodedly destroyed it: Yes, former ministers and top netas included. Get to the bottom of the planned and imminent murder of our beloved Maharajah.

why we feel so sad to see what is happening. Nobody is interested in saving Air India. Everyone wants to finish it off. Corruption has killed Air India." With that said, he was back on the job, politely serving passengers.

His attitude was vintage Air India. And I was so relieved that it still exists — at least in a few dedicated employees. It is, of course, very hard to ignore reports of on-board scuffles, regular no-shows by crew members, sudden sick leave absences, drunk pilots and co-pilots, stories of sexual abuse and nepotism, apart from a cavalier attitude thrown at paying passengers. Despite all of this, regulars insist there was no better service than the one offered by Air India on its non-stop flights to America. Killing Air India will serve zero purpose. Resurrecting it makes little business sense. Where are the takers? Running an airline is a high-risk proposition. It's a wonder Air India pulled it off and continues to fly till today!

Soon after both these brief encounters, came the news of the debt-laden airline's auction scheduled for November 15. Thirty-eight real estate assets will hopefully attract decent bids to

add to the kitty. Properties in this online auction include flats in Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru and Mangalore, besides land and holiday homes across India. There are 100 properties worth between ₹9K to 10K crores for sale, with 30 properties already sold for close to ₹1K crore. The reserve price this time ranges from ₹15 lakhs to ₹8 crores. Some of these properties remained unsold at a previous auction, leading the adviser/consultants (Cushman and Wakefield) to lower the reserve price. For those of us who are not in the same orbit, all of this seems a bit of a farce, besides being downright tragic, if not blatantly criminal. People in the know say they saw it coming since 2012, when Air India was told to raise ₹500 crores annually from monetising real estate. Really? Is that the only solution to salvage what used to be our nation's pride and joy? Or were vested interests grabbing what they could at bargain basement prices? Why was nobody interested in restructuring and saving this once fabulous airline that dominated the skies and made every Indian's chest puff up with pride? Who can believe the bogus story that Air India is beyond saving? If the government is transparent and sincere about resuscitating Air India, it should first nail the culprits who cold-bloodedly destroyed it: Yes, former ministers and top netas included. Get to the bottom of the planned and imminent murder of our beloved Maharajah — a murder most foul! Air India staffers should know *desh unke saath hai!*

Readers can send feedback to www.shobhaade.blogspot.com



Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings

*"Blessed are the meek
For they shall inherit the earth —
Probably a handful of it!"*

*Don't get off your high horse
A ride comes before a fall.*

*If you can count your chickens
Before they are hatched
You'll be a hedge-fund manager."*
From *Sauce for the Goose is Good Propaganda* by Bachchoo

Britain goes to the polls on December 12 and the list of candidates who will stand has now been finalised. Very many MPs of the dissolved Parliament have declared they are standing down, some because they are past retirement age but very many because they don't wish to be associated with the parties to which they have long belonged.

Both the main parties of the UK, the Tories and Labour, have suffered deep schisms over Brexit.

The Tories expelled 19 of its MPs for voting against Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Brexit policies. Similar schisms occurred in the Labour Party over Brexit policy, with MPs quitting, being thrown out and defecting to the Liberal Democratic Party.

Other Labour MPs resigned over the allegation that Labour, under the present leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, has become an anti-Semitic party, an allegation which Labour strenuously denies. Nevertheless, several Jewish MPs have left the party and will not now stand.

The more startling reason for MPs to stand down and abandon their political ambitions is new and nasty. Several women MPs say they no longer want to serve as such because in doing their duty they face a deluge of abuse and threats. Nicky Morgan, former education secretary and a minister in the Boris Johnson Cabinet, is standing down. She says for this reason. Opponents of her government's policies or just psychopaths and nasty, anonymous "trolls" have threatened her with rape, death and attacks on her family. She and several of the honourable female members are standing down for this precise reason.

The one exception to these various motives for the termination of a parliamentary career is the Labour MP for Leicester East, one Keith Vaz. He has been a controversial figure throughout his career as an MP, which began in 1987.

Mr Vaz announced last week that he will not be standing. In 2016, Mr Vaz, married with two children, was exposed by the *Sunday Mirror* as having hired two male prostitutes in his London flat and offered to buy cocaine for them.

At the time the scandal broke, he had the distinguished job of chairing the parliamentary home affairs committee. His away-from-home affair was then investigated by the parliamentary standards committee to which such matters are referred. According to the chair of that committee, Mr Vaz offered "frankly ludicrous excuses" and "did himself no favours by his inability to provide a single, consistent, plausible account". The standards committee

consequently found him to have brought Parliament into disrepute and suspended him from the House for six months. This punishment came into effect a few days before Parliament was dissolved after it voted for the December 12 election.

In his constituency in Leicester East, with a strong Asian population, Mr Vaz has a majority of 22,000 — a figure which may be reduced but would probably not be overthrown by the scandal. Nevertheless, his colleagues in the Labour Party called on him to do the right thing and fall on his sword as, if he did stand and get re-elected, he would have to serve the suspension of six months in the next Parliament.

Mr Vaz was born in Aden to Goan-Christian parents who then settled in Britain where his mother became an elected councillor, a municipal corporator, in Leicester.

Mr Vaz has the distinction of being the longest-serving British parliamentarian of Indian origin.

He also has the unofficial reputation of being a chancer — if not, in an indictable sense, a crook. In Britain, all MPs are supposed to register their financial remuneration, whether these be paid employment, inducements to lobby on behalf of some company or vested interest or indeed free trips paid for by foreign governments or their proxies. Mr Vaz, through his 32-year career, has enjoyed all these and broken the parliamentary obligation to declare them.

His first breach of the guidance or obligation on standards was failing to declare that he was paid a salary by the Leicester Law Centre while earning his MP's wages.

Between 1992 and 1997, a parliamentary committee gathered evidence that Mr Vaz would use his clout as an MP to lobby for Leicester businessmen and three separate religious groups who were seeking licences and permissions.

In 2000, Mr Vaz was seriously implicated in what the media called the "Hinduja Affair". The Hinduja brothers, billionaire residents of Britain at the time, applied for UK citizenship and then minister Peter Mandelson had to resign from the Cabinet when it was proved that he had attempted to facilitate their application in return for funding Labour government-sponsored projects. Mr Vaz's wife, a solicitor, was employed by the Hindujaas at the time and it was alleged that Mr Vaz was paid by the family to lobby on their behalf. Elizabeth Filkin, the commissioner in charge of Commons standards, said Mr Vaz and his wife were guilty of "deliberate collusion over many months to conceal this fact and to prevent me from obtaining accurate information about his possible financial relationship with the Hinduja family".

In later years, Mr Vaz was investigated on at least four counts of paid lobbying on behalf of convicted crooks and fraudsters and for falsely claiming parliamentary expenses. What his long career of dodging proves is that the bark of the watchdogs of the UK Parliament is more potent than their bite.

The MPs of parliamentary democracies, subject in our world to the party system, should surely represent their constituents and their parties' policies rather than their (undeclared?) bank balances.

It should be one of the first conditions of any parliamentary democracy to have effective mechanisms and scrutiny of the financial dealings of its members, from small bribes to major back-handers and profitable lobbying and even blackmail.

An Eastern cure for anxiety



Amrit Sadhana

Anxiety is a primitive mechanism, the "red alert" sent by the brain to the nervous system. It causes more blood to flow into the muscles while taking it away from our digestive system and skin. And because it changes blood-flow priorities in the brain, forget about easily handling the easy stuff. When the anxiety alarm is ringing, the machinery of the brain is compelled to focus on the possibility of dangers.

Anxiety as a defence mechanism is a wonder-

ful gift of nature but if it becomes a constant companion, which it has, it is more a menace than a mechanism. The more technologically advanced we become, the more we feel isolated, which leads to feeling anxious. The medical cure for anxiety is some pills or sedatives. But that's evading the problem, not resolving it. The Osho vision comes up with simple solutions to difficult problems, and anxiety is no exception. It says that we are filled with anxiety because our attention is focused on the out-

side and we are disconnected with ourselves. The doer, the ego, has grown out of proportion, which is the root of anxiety.

This sutra in *Adhyatma Upanishad* sums up the problem in a nutshell: "On cessation of the sense of doing, all anxieties cease. On cessation of the anxieties, all desires cease. The cessation of desires is emancipation — and this is called *jivanamukti*: liberation while living." While commenting on this sutra, Osho says: "We all want to destroy anxieties but we do not want to be the doer. But drop the idea of being the doer. And anxiety is the shadow of the doer. A person who thinks, 'I am doing this,' cannot save himself from anxiety. Anxieties will go on piling upon him. The

more he thinks, 'I am doing,' the more anxious he will become."

The people of the East have invented ingenious devices to cure the problems of the ego. One of them was to feel, "I am not doing, god is doing". This was a technique of meditation. They would say: "Not even a leaf of a tree moves without the permission of god." Now, there is no such god anywhere to move or stop every single leaf. But it was a device.

This statement has nothing to do with God anyway, it is simply a technique of meditation — it is a device because a person who believes that not even a leaf moves without his permission, slowly starts dropping the notion of "I am doing". Such a man believes, "I am

nothing at all. I may be instrumental at the most. If he makes me move, I move; if he makes me walk, I walk; if he makes me get up, I get up". The people in the East had become anxiety-free. The anxiety-free time that the East has known has been known nowhere else on earth, and the anxiety-laden time that the West is experiencing presently has also never been known before anywhere. If the obsession of doing drops, in other words, if the doer disappears, the anxieties die. On cessation of the anxieties, all desires cease. And that is great liberation.

Amrit Sadhana is editor of Osho Times International. She facilitates meditation workshops based on Osho insights around the country and abroad.





ART AS A LIFEBOAT:

MAGALI'S
RAISON D'ETRE

Magali Couffon has been a photographer for several years and it's a relationship she describes as 'a lifeboat in a pool of negativity'. In her latest series, *Intimate Etre*, she puts up a fight against labels, stereotypes and genres through 12 encounters, 12 portraits and 12 stories. She speaks to **Shraddha Nair** about her journey and her experiences with this series, of stories told from the homes of her subjects

Tell us about yourself as an artist - how your practice developed into creating this series today

I'm a people person, I photograph human beings and capture human stories. I always think it is important to take pictures and create images on subjects you are interested in... this conviction has actually almost put a halt to my commercial work as I like to work solo and decide my ways. The past few years I have developed an interest in people, communities which are different and who do not always have solutions to be heard. My photography practice has given me the opportunity to believe that the fact that I am interested in someone's life and develop an interaction with that person or group of people can have a therapeutic influence sometimes... The relationship between the model and the photographer is getting more and more important to me as time passes. It surely has a huge impact on what I decide to work on. I love the proximity of what the camera allows me to show, I love the way the camera shields me or exposes me. I love colour and drama. I love natural light.

To summarise anything related to human lives can become one of my subjects.

How did the concept of this photo series 'Etre' develop and why is it important today?

The concept came to me after having a number of conversations regarding the feminine, the masculine and the flow between both... it came to me after a collaborative work I did last year with a young French installation artist, it came to me because I live in this world and interact with as many people as I can. After that I decided of the elements and how to proceed. The point was to follow the same way for all the characters. I purposely wanted the series to be very very simple, a person in his or her environment with no extras...in order to simplify even more.

How was the process of creating these images informative for you as an artist - how was this process different from the rest?

It was a very enjoyable process all together as I had to meet all my 10 wonderful models. Yet it is also an open series as I could continue forever. But there are constraints, of spontaneity, space and time, for when you pop up in someone's life or home, you can't stay too long. The end product, the image became far less important than it normally is to me because sitting and chatting and explaining and understanding took over.

What is your view on the plight of the LGBTQIA community today - in India as well as globally?

Well globally things are moving and have moved a lot the past 20 years yet I still feel a lot of stigma. Globally the laws have been more and more worked on to understand and tolerate more differences except in some pockets of the world where it's probably become worse. In India because of all traditions and family rules and the importance of what image we give... it's taken more time.

The anti-defection law, Tenth Schedule, the jurisdiction of the Speaker... Karnataka politics set off an intense discussion on all three aspects as the Supreme Court weighed in and gave the go-ahead to the 17 MLAs, disqualified by then speaker Ramesh Kumar, to contest the December 5 assembly bypolls. The BJP is elated as it can look to their support - if they win the bypolls - to shore up their numbers. The opposition Congress and JD(S) will be straining every sinew to wreck their poll prospects. The Asian Age taps political and legal experts on this momentous verdict, as our elected representatives look to the main chance with the winning party.

A win FOR BJP AND the disqualified, really?

The Supreme Court stand on the status of the 17 disqualified Karnataka MLAs was on expected lines. While the Court upheld their disqualification it has lifted the ban on their contesting elections during the term of the current Assembly. This implies that they would be free to contest the by-elections due next month.

The verdict of the Supreme Court opens up a 'world of possibilities', which merit detailed attention.

In the first place, the 17 disqualified MLAs now being eligible to contest the by-elections would immediately place pressure on the BJP to accommodate those who are keen to enter the electoral fray. If the Supreme Court had upheld the Speaker's decision, the BJP would have had a convenient excuse not to nominate them by taking shelter in the ban on their contesting. Now with that 'pretext' not available, the BJP would find it very difficult to deny them their 'reward' for helping bring down the Congress-JDS coalition government and come to power! Further, with these disqualified former MLAs likely to openly join the BJP, the factors that motivated their decision to invite disqualification become patently transparent. Will those disqualified be formally adopted and endorsed by the central leadership of the party or leave it to the state leadership to nurture and care for the new entrant will be an interesting to watch and see.

Secondly, the internal contradictions within the BJP would now clearly come out in the open. Many of those from the BJP who were defeated by the 17 disqualified MLAs have already been

appeased and accommodated by being given plum posts by the BJP government. This of course does not guarantee that they would participate actively in the by-poll campaign of those who defeated them less than a year and a half ago. Many others have not yet been rewarded and continue to put pressure for the BJP ticket in the constituencies going to the by-polls.

How does the BJP reconcile the claims of the old 'loyalists' with the new 'converts' will be keenly watched.

Thirdly, all the 17 seats that face by-polls were seats held by the Congress/JDS. Some of them were won by these parties by quite impressive margins. Many of those seats had not seen a strong BJP presence in previous elections. The by-elections would indicate whether the personality of the disqualified MLAs can actually swing the seat towards the BJP or did they win the last time around, simply because of the support that the party enjoyed in that constituency.

Fourthly, this set of by-elections will also help gauge the public mood on elected representatives switching political sides. The recent Satara Lok Sabha by-poll in Maharashtra showed that voters do not take kindly to party switching by their elected representatives. Would that trend be repeated in Karnataka or would those who switched political sides be able to convince the voters of the rationale behind their decision.

Finally, if past political history is any indication, the developments after the BJP came to power in the state in 2008 seems to be coming back to haunt the party. A decade ago, the BJP managed to hold on to power thanks to 'Operation Kamala' and the support of 'new converts' to the party. Will the same trend be repeated? Will the BJP retain its majority in the state on account of those who switched sides or will their presence be the factor that causes both internal turmoil within the party and push the party to a minority status? The by-elections - the choice of candidates, the cut and thrust of the campaign as well as the direction of the results will help address all these questions.



SANDEEP SHASTRI
PRO VICE CHANCELLOR,
JAIN UNIVERSITY

Today's Supreme Court Order says the obvious. That, when the Speaker disqualifies a legislator under the Tenth Schedule, the disqualified legislator is only disqualified for the time being; he could contest the upcoming by-poll and should he win, he could simply return to the balance term of the House from which he was disqualified. This case was unique in many ways and so, the Supreme Court must have found it easier to reach a decision.

For instance, in this case, the legislators had submitted their resignation and were keen to get out of the House. They were instead, disqualified by the Speaker and thrown out. In either scenario, they were out of the House.

In most other cases, the MLAs had wanted to stick to their membership of the House while

here, the disqualified MLAs were not legally aggrieved except by the differences between a resignation and disqualification. By the time this matter came up for judgment today, the bypoll itself was announced and scheduled and so, the Supreme Court did not find much of a complication once they saw that the Tenth Schedule does not impose disqualification for the rest of the term of the House. So, the Speaker's Order to the effect that the disqualification will run until 2023 has been set aside.

Also, the Supreme Court has observed that the Speaker had enough material with him to find that those MLAs had indulged in anti-party activity and so, were covered by the clause 2(1)(a) of the Tenth Schedule - 'voluntarily giving up membership of the House'. Though the Speaker gave lesser time to these MLAs to give their response, the Supreme Court has held that that alone is not a reason to interfere with the Speaker's Order. Also, the Supreme Court has held that if a person is liable to be disqualified, he cannot escape it by simply submitting his resignation. Though the Supreme Court has said nothing at all about the Yediyurappa tapes that were submitted to it at the fag end, it appears that the Supreme Court was very strongly influenced by it. Yediyurappa is the Chief Minister of Karnataka; he is not some low-ranking politician gossiping in the corridors, he spoke in a closed-room public gathering of his party men and, he was, of course, the biggest beneficiary of those 17 MLAs defection. His own admission of the BJP party engineering and managing the defection could not have gone unnoticed by the Supreme Court.

At this stage, it is reasonable for the public and concerned citizens to be disappointed with the fact that a MLA that is thrown out of the House for indulging in anti-party activity is given a fresh opportunity to contest in the by-poll and if elected, to go back to the same term of the House from which he was thrown out. That disappointment should not be directed towards the Supreme Court but should be directed towards the Parliament that did not express itself clearly while bringing in the

Tenth Schedule. There are several other disqualifications under both the Constitution and the Representation of People Act, 1951 and they all specify the term of disqualification. Also, whereas the Tenth Schedule doesn't specify the term, the Parliament is free to amend the Tenth Schedule if it wishes to.

Finally, soon after the Supreme Court's judgment came out, most of the 17 MLAs greeted the judgment on Television and that alone would tell you that they are unbelievably foolish and God alone knows why such foolish people - who cannot even distinguish between winning or losing a critical case in the Court - are elected as our representatives. The Supreme Court had just said that the Speaker's assessment that those MLAs have indulged in anti-party activity is based on sufficient material and yet, those very MLAs thought they were given a victory by the Supreme Court.

At this point, those MLAs are undoubtedly free to contest the polls as 'damaged goods' and whether the public will reward or shun them is to be seen now. At any rate, unlike a typical by-poll, these by-polls are equivalent to a general election itself, as the outcome in these by-polls will decide upon who forms or continues to run the State Government. Needless to say, the Speaker did what no other Speaker in India had done so far - expressly specify the end of the term as the period of disqualification. He overstepped his authority and it is good that the Supreme Court has set aside that part of his Order.



K.V. DHANANJAY
SUPREME COURT
ADVOCATE

■ IT IS REASONABLE FOR THE PUBLIC AND CONCERNED CITIZENS TO BE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE FACT THAT A MLA THAT IS THROWN OUT OF THE HOUSE FOR INDULGING IN ANTI-PARTY ACTIVITY IS GIVEN A FRESH OPPORTUNITY TO CONTEST IN THE BY-POLL AND IF ELECTED, TO GO BACK TO THE SAME TERM OF THE HOUSE FROM WHICH HE WAS THROWN OUT. THAT DISAPPOINTMENT SHOULD NOT BE DIRECTED TOWARDS THE SUPREME COURT BUT SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PARLIAMENT THAT DID NOT EXPRESS ITSELF CLEARLY WHILE BRINGING IN THE TENTH SCHEDULE.

Did our judges miss a chance to stem the rot in the system?



RAJEEV GOWDA
RAJYA SABHA MP

In their judgment on the Karnataka MLAs disqualification case, the three judge bench of the Supreme Court comprising of Justices Ramana, Sanjeev Khanna, and Krishna Murari observed: "horse-trading and corrupt practices associated with defection and change of loyalty for lure of office or wrong reasons have not abated. Thereby the citizens are denied stable governments. In these circumstances, there is need to consider strengthening certain aspects, so that such undemocratic practices are discouraged and checked."

Unfortunately, the learned judges missed out on a precious opportunity to discourage and put a check on such undemocratic practices. They agreed with the Speaker's decision to disqualify

the MLAs but did not validate his decision to disqualify the MLAs from contesting further elections to the Karnataka Legislative Assembly in its current term. However, if they had accepted this decision of then-Speaker Ramesh Kumar, they would have strengthened the Anti-Defection Law and fulfilled their stated goal.

Clearly, the Speaker was innovating when he extended the MLAs disqualification till the end of the tenure of the Assembly. Such a provision is not provided under Article 191 (2) of the Constitution which contemplates removal of members of a State Legislature when disqualified under the 10th Schedule. But, in the light of the realpolitik of defections in India, this was an innovation that would have achieved the goals of the Anti-Defection law in letter and spirit.

The purpose of the anti-defection law is to prevent the MLA from negating the voter's faith. When a voter casts a vote for an MLA candidate, that vote is both for the person and for the party. We are not in a position to separate

Prof. Rajeev Gowda

■ Any resignation by an MLA in the absence of cogent and lawful reasons violates that social contract. Elected representatives will have no incentive to honour their part of the contract if the punishment is not punitive enough. Allowing a disqualified MLA to immediately seek re-election does little to deter defections aimed at blackmailing or toppling governments.

the two. When the Speaker, acting in a quasi-judicial capacity, determines that an elected candidate has left a party because of inducements rather than a point of principle, then a suitable penalty needs to be devised. In this instance, the Yediyurappa tapes have revealed horse trading, and he is the inventor of the infamous "Operation Kamala." Judicial activism would have helped counter these egregious violations of democratic verdicts. In other contexts, the Supreme Court has framed rules to strengthen laws. It could have done the same here as well.

After all, the Speaker is the custodian of the propriety of the House and should be entrusted with powers which can allow him to effectively discharge his duties. An election is a social contract between the voters and the elected representative. The voters elect an individual to be their representative for five years. Any resignation by an MLA in the absence of cogent and lawful reasons violates that social contract. Elected representatives will have no incentive to honour their part of the contract if the punishment is not punitive enough. Allowing a disqualified MLA to immediately seek re-election does little to deter defections aimed at blackmailing or toppling governments.

Thus, the Speaker, who already has tremendous power under the Anti Defection Law, must be empowered to take necessary actions where constitutional and moral violations have taken place, as per his discretion. Such was the need of the hour. Clearly, in this instance, the learned judges have missed out an opportunity to stem the continuing rot in the domain of electoral politics.

WATCH



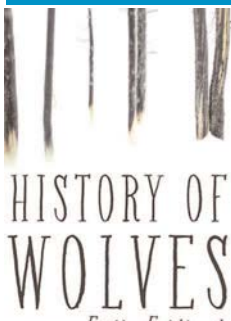
LOVE TRILOGY:
CHAINED

Director: Yaron Shani
Cast: Eran Naim, Stav Almagor, Stav Patay

A POLICE OFFICER IS FALSELY ACCUSED OF HARASSMENT

Rafi 'Rashi' Malka is a respected veteran police officer who deals with violent situations on the job. He is married to Avigail (Stav Almagor), who is undergoing fertility treatments. His tough-guy attitude brings him into frequent conflicts with his rebellious step-daughter, Yasmine (Stav Patay) and his family life is in upheaval due to the constant fighting. The situation deteriorates when two young men suspected of selling drugs claim that Rashi harassed them sexually and he is suspended from duty while Internal Affairs investigatges. The gradual loss of control over his life pushes him over the edge. Director Yaron Shani works with a cast of non-actors, who work without a script, improvising the scenes on camera. The film is shot in single-takes without rehearsals. The lead actor, Eran Naim, is a former police officer who played a main role in the film Ajami as well.

READ



HISTORY OF WOLVES

Author: Emily Fridlund
Publisher: Grove Atlantic

A TEEN'S AFFECTION FOR A TEACHER TAKES A DARK TURN

Fourteen-year-old Madeline lives with her parents in the beautiful, austere woods of northern Minnesota, where their nearly abandoned commune stands as a last vestige of a lost counter-culture world. Isolated at home and an outlander at school, Madeline is drawn to the enigmatic, attractive Lily and new history teacher Mr. Grierson. When Mr. Grierson is charged with possessing child pornography, the implications of his arrest deeply affect Madeline as she wrestles with her own fledgling desires and craving to belong. And then the young Gardner family moves in across the lake and Madeline finds herself welcomed into their home as a babysitter for their little boy, Paul. It seems that her life finally has purpose but with this new sense of belonging she is also drawn into secrets she doesn't understand. Over the course of a few days, Madeline makes a set of choices that reverberate throughout her life.

LISTEN



ONE

By: Birdtalker
Genre: Indie folk

FULL OF SELF AWARENESS WITHOUT PREACHING

Birdtalker continues to walk on the band's debut album, One. With a sound that is multi-faceted - expansive and sophisticated yet intimate and accessible - they often use soaring, anthemic melodies to temper deeply thoughtful, sometimes painful lyrics. And it works, recalling, at times, Hozier, Drew Holcomb, and other like-minded artists. Zack and Dani Green form the core of Birdtalker, joined by Andrew Hubright, Brian Seligman, and Jesse Baker. While Zack's physical voice is the most prominent throughout One, he credits Dani with writing 90 percent of the lyrics, with the band taking collective ownership over the arrangements. The music and lyrics swell with self-awareness and social consciousness but avoiding the preaching or self-help spiel message. Their music is pure and clear, and seems to come from an overwhelming desire to be honest and to make a real connection with others.

Untimely rains hit rabi crops, delay rural recovery

Telecom stocks rally on operational improvement

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	40,356.69	+0.17
Nifty 50	11,895.45	+0.20
S&P 500	3,114.28	+0.57
Dollar (₹)	71.78	-0.26
Pound Sterling (₹)	92.43	-0.27
Euro (₹)	79.14	-0.20
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	38,875.149	-0.38
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.23	+1.53
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.519	+0.061
US 10-Yr T-bill yield	1.845	+1.653

* As of 9:30 pm IST

Govt holds back consumer spend survey

The Statistics Ministry (Mospi) said it has decided not to release the Consumer Expenditure Survey results of 2017-18 due to data quality issues. Media reports said consumer demand in villages fell 8.8% between July 2017 and June 2018 compared with 2011-12. Urban consumption rose by 2%, but overall per capita monthly spending slipped 3.7%—the first since 1972-73.

Forex kitty touches a new high of \$448 bn



Foreign exchange reserves continued their upward march surging \$1.710 billion to touch a new high of \$447.81 billion in the week to Nov. 8, according to weekly data released by the Reserve Bank. In the previous week, the reserves surged by \$3.515 billion to reach \$446.098 billion. The increase was mainly on account of a rise in foreign currency assets.

NCLT asks banks to consider Haldiram offer

The NCLT has directed the lenders of Kwallity Ltd to reconsider the revised Rs 145-crore offer by Haldiram Snacks to acquire the debt-ridden dairy firm. The Delhi-based bench of the tribunal has also extended the Corporate Insolvency Resolution period by another three weeks and directed the Committee of Creditor to reconsider the enhanced offer.

TiE Global launches TiE Women

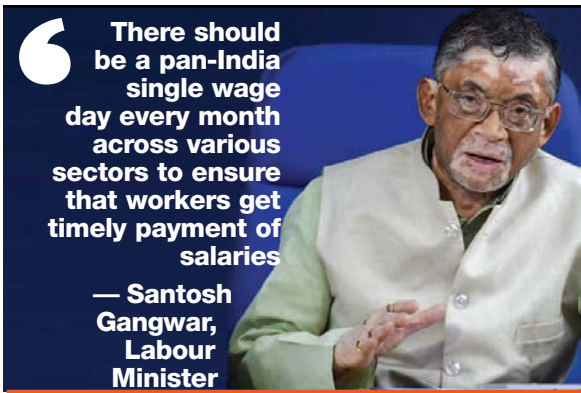
TiE Global on Friday launched TiE Women, a programme aimed at promoting women entrepreneurs across its 61 chapters globally. The initiative saw a fundraiser of \$70,000, contributed by TiE Charter Members during its two-day event. "Women represent the greatest opportunity for our ecosystem to make a huge impact, globally," TiE Global Chairperson Nitin Rai said.

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Minister says Modi is keen to get legislation passed One Nation, One Pay Day rule in the works

New Delhi, Nov. 15: To safeguard the interest of workers in formal sector, particularly working class, the Centre is planning to introduce 'One Nation, One Pay Day' system, Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar said on Friday.

"There should be a pan-India single wage day every month across various sectors to ensure that workers get timely payment of salaries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is keen on this legislation to get passed soon. Similarly, we are also looking at uniform minimum wages across sectors which will safeguard better livelihood of workers," said Gangwar addressing at 'Security Leadership Summit 2019' organised by the Central Association of Private Security Industry (CAPSI). The central government is in the process of implementing Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code, and Code on Wages. Parliament has already



passed the Code on Wages and rules are being framed for its implementation. The OSH Code was introduced in the Lok Sabha on July 23, 2019. The Code will streamline the private sector by enhancing the coverage of workers manifold by merging 13 central labour laws relating to safety, health and working conditions into a single code. The OSH Code has many new initiatives like mandatory issues of appointment letter by employers, annual free medical check up of workers and broadening coverage of all type of workers in the country under it. Gangwar mentioned that since taking the office in 2014, Modi government has consistently worked on reforming labour laws. "We have taken up 44 complex labour laws to reform them. We are talking to all stakeholders to make these laws more effective and useful. Similarly, we are preparing a 'Single Page' mechanism for various sectors to complete various compliances to ensure ease of

SC paves way for Arcelor takeover of Essar Steel

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, NOV. 15

The Supreme Court on Friday paved the way for steelmaker ArcelorMittal SA to takeover bankrupt Essar Steel, setting aside the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal's (NCLAT) July 4 ruling that had provided for equal distribution of proceeds between financial and operational creditors in the distribution of ArcelorMittal's bid amount.

Lifting the stay on the acquisition process, the apex court approved ArcelorMittal's Rs 42,000 crore bid for Essar Steel and said that the operational creditors cannot be treated on par with financial creditors of a bankrupt company. The ruling provided relief to lenders and would have far-reaching ramifications for India's insolvency code. Now, the takeover would take place according to the October 23, 2018, resolution plan of ArcelorMittal. The judgment by a bench headed by Justice R F Nariman also pronounced that there is no doubt that the ultimate discretion on distribution of proceeds is with the committee of creditors (CoC). In addition, the apex court also relaxed the timeline of 330 days to



find a resolution plan as prescribed under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). Homi P. Ranina, Senior Lawyer, Supreme Court of India, told *Financial Chronicle*, "The Supreme Court has ruled that the decision of the CoC is final and cannot be challenged. The CoC is supposed to work out the facts and details with due diligence and these would be final. This is a very important judgement of the Supreme Court. Promoters of insolvent companies drag the resolution process, as a result the insolvency proceedings were getting prolonged. But, now matters will be resolved much earlier. The judgement will serve as a benchmark for all cases." Rajnish Kumar, Chairman, State Bank of India, said, "The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, in a landmark judgement has held that the secured and unsecured financial creditors are differentiated when it comes to amounts to be paid under a resolution plan, together with what dissenting secured or unsecured financial creditors are to be paid. It has been held that the CoC can distribute amongst the secured financial creditors as per their commercial wisdom as CoC is not restricted from classifying creditors as financial, operational, secured or unsecured." "This much-awaited judgement also settles to rest numerous points of law under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code which were tested in various courts. This should significantly reduce the scope for long drawn litigations under IBC and would eventually lead to faster resolutions of stressed assets," added Kumar. The acquisition of Essar Steel will make Arcelor the fourth biggest producer in India.

Resolution road map soon for key non-banks

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, NOV. 15

The Centre on Friday notified rules under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code to deal with resolution of systemically important financial service providers, except banks. The Corporate Affairs Ministry, which notified the rules, said it would provide a generic framework for insolvency and liquidation proceedings of systemically important financial service providers (FSPs) other than banks. Notification of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Insolvency and Liquidation Proceedings of Financial Service Providers and Application to Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2019, comes at a time instances of financial stress are reported from certain financial services entities. Corporate Affairs Secretary Injeti Srinivas, in a statement, said, "The special framework provided under Section 227 for financial service providers is essentially aimed at serving as an interim mechanism."

FM rules out quick recovery for economy

SIDDHARTHA SINGH NOV. 15

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said it was too early to say if the slowdown in the economy had bottomed out. Companies are planning new investments after \$20 billion worth of corporate tax cuts announced in September, Sitharaman told reporters in New Delhi on Friday. Actual investments may take some time to materialise, she said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has unveiled several steps since August to revive economic growth from the weakest pace since 2013. The surprise decision to lower taxes for companies raised concerns about fiscal discipline, with Moody's Investors Service cutting the country's sovereign debt outlook to negative last week amid concerns over slowing growth and revenues. Sitharaman said it's a bit too soon to say whether Asia's third-largest economy would be able to stick to its fiscal deficit targets. However, the government's asset sales program — key to plugging a gaping hole in

Insurance cover on bank deposits to be hiked

New Delhi, Nov 15: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the government will bring legislations on raising insurance cover on bank deposits from the current Rs 1 lakh and regulating multi-state cooperative banks amidst a crisis in PMC Bank affecting lakhs of depositors. These legislations will be brought during the Winter Session of Parliament starting Monday, the minister told reporters here. "Work is on and we shall go to the Cabinet for approval to introduce a legislation in winter session. The legislation will amend the necessary Acts and the laws to

make sure that banking functions undertaken by cooperatives sector will be brought under the Banking Regulation Act for complying with prudential norms," she said. Unless the prudential norms are applied, many of the things that are emerging in the light of the Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank crisis will never be addressed and this legislation will ensure that no PMC like case happens in the future, she added. With regard to deposit guarantee insurance limit hike, Sitharaman said it may not be part of cooperative bank legislation but part of some other laws.

the budget — is moving ahead comfortably, she said. Government intends to bring the nation's cooperative banks under the purview of the Reserve Bank of India, she said.

Currently, state governments share regulatory functions with the central bank over cooperative banks, many of whom are failing because of fraudulent lending practices. — Bloomberg

IHH's Fortis takeover faces fresh hurdle after SC order

ARI ALTSTEDTER & UPMANYU TRIVEDI NOV. 15

India's Supreme Court refused to remove a barrier to the takeover of embattled hospital chain Fortis Healthcare Ltd. by Malaysian operator IHH Healthcare Bhd, the latest twist in one of the country's most contentious corporate sagas. The court held Fortis' founders—Malvinder Singh and Shivinder Singh—guilty of contempt of court and said it could start similar proceedings against the company, according to a judgment on Friday. This effectively halts IHH's open offer to Fortis shareholders that would have brought its holdings in India's second largest hospital company above 50 per cent. IHH is already Fortis' largest shareholder with a 31 per cent stake. Fortis shares fell 8 per cent in Mumbai, the biggest drop since March 2018. IHH is awaiting the written judgment from the court and will thereafter "consult its advisers for its next course of action," according to its spokesman. Fortis didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comments. The court said contempt proceedings have been initiated against Fortis for violation of its December

2018 order to maintain status quo on the deal with IHH. Daiichi had argued that certain transactions between IHH and Fortis violated the court's directions. Also named in the contempt verdict was Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd., the lender who accepted Singh brothers' Fortis shares as collateral and then seized them when they failed to repay. This went against an earlier judicial order that had forbid the Singh brothers from selling or diluting their shareholding in Fortis. To avoid penal action, Indiabulls can deposit the proceeds from the sale of founders' pledge shares in Fortis while Singh brothers and their two holding companies can pay up Rs 11.7 billion (\$163 million) each. The court has set February 3 as the next hearing date. Fortis, at its end, now will have to prove that it has not violated any court orders and can request that the open offer be allowed to go through, in future hearings. It can also seek review of the verdict by the same court bench or pay a fine to avoid penal action. The block comes just as

IHH's efforts to turn around Fortis' fortunes through cost-cutting was starting to show results. It will hobble the company's attempt to move past a scandal in which it was allegedly defrauded of millions of dollars by its founders. The Singh brothers are no longer shareholders in Fortis. IHH's attempt to become Fortis' majority shareholder was halted last year, when Japanese drug-maker Daiichi Sankyo Co. contested the deal as part of its efforts to recover \$500 million from the Singh brothers. Daiichi Sankyo said that it had been promised some Fortis shares by the Singhs in a decade-old fraud claim, before the shares were seized by the brothers' creditors. The takeover fight for Fortis Hospitals has seen as many as four separate bids, two scrapped deals, and the replacement of most of the company's board. Shareholders finally approved Malaysian hospital operator IHH's takeover offer in August 2018, and the company has since embarked on a thorough revamp. — Bloomberg

Tax officials find targets too taxing, some quit

ALEXANDRA ULMER & BHIRUP ROY MUMBAI/KOLKATA, NOV. 15

India's tax officials are facing a taxing issue. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government wants them to collect 17 per cent more in direct taxes this year as New Delhi seeks to shore up revenues amid a sharp economic slowdown. The target has been maintained even though Modi recently approved a massive cut in corporate taxes, which are part of direct taxes, and warned officers not to harass businesses in their drive to collect revenue. Over a dozen tax officials interviewed by Reuters

said they are stuck between a push to meet unrealistic collection targets, which influence their appraisals and transfers, and the fear of being accused of over-zealousness if they crack down on evasion. Critics say Modi's demands of his tax officials are symptomatic of the confusion surrounding his government's economic policies, and that the bungling has contributed to a slowdown in growth. Twenty-two top-level tax department officers have opted for voluntary retirement so far this year and around 34 did so in 2018, according to data provided by Bhaskar Bhattacharya,

Vice President of the Income Tax Gazetted Officers' Association. Bhattacharya was unable to provide comparative data but said bureaucrats ditching jobs usually considered prestigious and powerful was rare. "Even seasoned officers after working for 25-30 years cannot take this pressure anymore," he said. "There are applications for voluntary retirement coming in one after the other despite the fact that there is no voluntary retirement or golden handshake scheme in the

department." The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) did not respond to requests for data and comment on the resignations. The CBDT, the Finance Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office did not respond to questions about tax targets and alleged harassment by tax officials. Only a small fraction of the tax department's few thousand senior officers have quit, several officials in the tax department said the departments provided a snapshot

of broader discontent that has also led to internal transfers as well as resignations among lower-level employees. "The level of impatience in the government has gone up... Anyone who has any alternate option says: 'Why should we stay in the department?'" said one officer who has quit the job and plans to go tend the family farm. He said the stress had "become unbearable." "The pressure is getting greater. To achieve our targets we are under pressure, so we do some things that we don't want to do," said another tax official in northern India. The two men asked to

remain unnamed for fear of reprisals from the government. Unorthodox tactics being used by the department included asking companies for advance tax payments, as well as delaying refunds, other tax officials said. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has been touring tax offices saying that the revenue target is realistic and therefore collectors "need not overstretch." But there is no clear definition of over-reach, so confused officers are hesitant about how to handle truant taxpayers, said Bhattacharya of the tax officers' association.

"In an effort to erase the fear psychosis in the public, tax officers are now going through a fear psychosis themselves," he said. Indian businesses were complaining about sometimes high-handed tactics used by tax officers to crack down on evasion long before Modi came to power. But it became a hot-button issue after a prominent coffee magnate committed suicide earlier this year, purportedly leaving behind a letter blaming persecution by tax officers. Tax authorities said at the time their probe was based on credible evidence of concealed transactions. — Reuters

Trade deficit better than estimated

VRISHTI BENIWAL
NOV. 15

India's trade deficit widened less than estimated last month, as a third-straight month of decline in exports offset a sharp plunge in imports amid weak global demand conditions.

The gap between exports and imports was at \$11 billion in October from \$10.9 billion in September, data released by the Commerce Ministry showed Friday. That was lower than the median estimate for a \$11.9 billion deficit in a *Bloomberg* survey of 20 economists.

Imports declined 16.3 per cent from a year ago to \$37.4 billion, compared with a 13.9 per cent fall in September, showing muted demand in the domestic economy.

Exports fell 1.1 per cent to \$26.4 billion, against a 6.6 per cent drop the previous month.

The numbers are the latest in a slew of data that points to weaker economic activity with purchasing managers' surveys earlier signaling muted activity in manufacturing and services sectors.

— *Bloomberg*

GroupM India elevates 2 to President roles

FC BUREAU
MUMBAI, NOV. 15

GroupM India, the media investment group of WPP, has appointed Sidharth Parashar as President-Investments and Pricing and Ashwin Padmanabhan as President-Partnerships and Trading. As part of this elevation, both Sidharth and Ashwin will join the GroupM Executive Committee.

Prasanth Kumar, CEO of GroupM South Asia, said, "The elevation of both Sidharth and Ashwin is a testament of GroupM's continued investment in its talent which has helped build a strong leadership pipeline, creating leaders to take our business into the future."

Sidharth and Ashwin have been leading GroupM's pricing-investment and partnerships-trading practices over the years. Sidharth has been with GroupM for over 15 years.

GMR's Q2 loss widens to ₹457 crore

Hyderabad, Nov. 15: GMR Infrastructure Limited net loss for the quarter ended September 30 widened to Rs 457 crore against Rs 334 crore in the July - September period last fiscal, a filing with the bourses said.

The consolidated gross revenues for the quarter under discussion was Rs 2,018 crore. It was Rs 1,904 crore in Q2FY19, it said. Revenues from the Airports segment stood at Rs 1,494.7 crore against Rs 1,315.5 crore, while the Power vertical garnered Rs 167.4 crore against Rs 178.2 crore in Q2FY19.

Traffic at the Delhi Airport remained flat YoY at 17.3 million in Q2FY20 whereas grew by 10 per cent QoQ indicating the negative impact of Jet Airways is behind the company.

The airport generated cash profit of Rs 135 crore in Q2FY20 vis a vis 88 crore in Q2FY19.

Hyderabad International Airport traffic grew by 3 per cent YoY to 5.4 million in the quarter and generated cash profit of Rs 217 crore.

— *PTI*

BSE Telecom Index gains 8.4% as Voda, Airtel vault Telecom stocks rally on operational improvement

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, NOV. 15

Telecom stocks rallied 8 to 25 per cent despite reporting record second quarter losses, on account of improvement in operational performance of the companies during the second quarter and talk that the government may announce a relief package and also fix a minimum floor price for data services provided by telecom companies to customers/users.

Vodafone India rallied over 30 per cent intra-day to touch a high of Rs 3.90 on NSE and Rs 3.89 on the BSE as traders went for short covering and finally closed at Rs 3.68, up 24.75 per cent.

Bharti Airtel gained 8.42 per cent, closing at Rs 393.2. Bharti Infratel gained 9.10 per cent, closing at Rs 227.70 while MTNL fell 4.99 per cent closing at Rs 10.47.

The BSE Telecom index ended with a gain of 8.40 per cent.

Aditya Birla Group Company Grasm Industries, which has 11.55 per cent stake in the Vodafone Idea joint venture, also gained 2.96 per cent to close at Rs 756 on BSE.

As per reports, the government may step in with a floor price mechanism for data and voice call services. If a floor price comes, it will improve the long-term

No DoT word on floor price: Trai

New Delhi, Nov. 15: The telecom department has not yet approached the regulator for its views on floor price for tariffs, Trai Chairman R. S. Sharma said on Friday.

"We have not received anything," Sharma said when asked if the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has approached the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India for its opinion on floor price or minimum tariff fixation for mobile services.

— *PTI*

The government has constituted a committee of secretaries to explore a financial bailout package for the telecom sector. Last month, when the high-level panel was set up, an official source had said that sector regulator Trai is expected to examine prescribing minimum charge for voice and data services, which will ensure long-term viability and robust financial health of the sector.

fundamental of the telecom sector and will be beneficial for incumbents like Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel, who reported a combined loss of Rs 74,000 crore for the second quarter ended September 30, 2019 after the Supreme Court asked telecom companies to pay Rs 92,000 crore to the government as adjusted gross revenue (AGR).

Vodafone Idea shares also rallied due to comments made by its CEO during a conference after the second quarter results that government wants at least three private telecom operators and a public company in

the telecom sector. According to analysts the operational performance of telecom companies improved during the second quarter. Vodafone Idea's second quarter loss of Rs 50,921 crore was its biggest, but the company's revenue from operations surged more than 37 per cent at Rs 10,844 crore in the same quarter last year.

Bharti Airtel reported a loss of Rs 23,044 crore in July-September quarter due to provisions of Rs 28,450 crore made by the company towards payment to be made to the government as per the supreme court order, the company's

RCom posts ₹30,142-cr loss

New Delhi, Nov. 15: Debt-ridden Reliance Communications on Friday posted a consolidated loss of Rs 30,142 crore for July September 2019 due to provisioning for liabilities after the Supreme Court ruling on statutory dues.

The company had made a profit of Rs 1,141 crore in the corresponding three months a year ago.

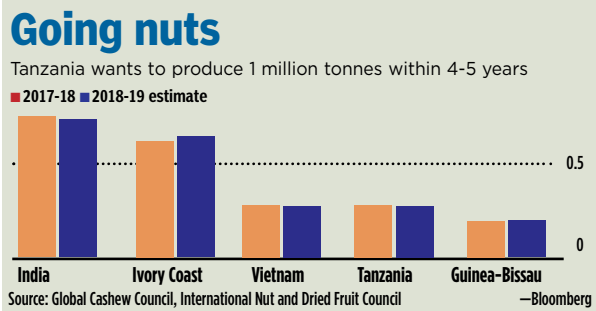
During the quarter, RCom set aside Rs 28,314 crore on account of provisioning following the Supreme Court order on calculation of annual adjusted gross revenue (AGR) of telcos.

The apex court last month upheld the government's position on including revenue from non-telecommunication businesses in calculating the annual AGR, a share of which has to be paid as licence and spectrum fee to the exchequer.

— *PTI*

consolidated revenue from operations grew 4.9 per cent from a year earlier to Rs 21,131 crore during the second quarter of FY20.

Tanzania aims to be top cashew exporter



KENNETH KARURI
NOV. 15

Tanzania plans to more than triple output of cashews to 1 million tonnes over the next four to five years, and potentially become the biggest exporter of the nuts.

Output will increase from an estimated 2,90,000 tonnes this season as the government encourages cultivation in more provinces and enhances transparency in the trade, according to Agriculture Minister Japhet Hasunga.

Tanzania's target could affect pricing and supply chains in a market whose 2017-18 global output was 3.3 million tonnes, according to the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council. More than half of the nuts came from African countries including Ivory Coast and Guinea-Bissau. India and Vietnam are the other main producers.

"We are aiming to grow the crop in at least 17

provinces," Hasunga said in an interview. Only five of the East African nation's 30 provinces currently grow the kidney-shaped nuts.

Cashew production in Tanzania dropped to 2,25,000 tonnes in the last season from a peak of 313,223 tonnes, valued at \$57.8 million, in 2017-18 after farmers halted sales in protest against low prices.

The government intervened by spending about \$251 million to purchase almost 1.57 million tonnes at rates 65 per cent higher than traders' offers. The state blamed secretive trading processes that forced unfavorable terms on the farmers, and amended the system for the current season.

Bids are now announced openly. "Once the farmers agree on the quoted prices then the deal is sealed," Hasunga said. "We believe this move will eliminate corruption and enhance transparency."

— *Bloomberg*

Syndicate Bank has no VRS plans: CEO

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI, NOV. 15

Syndicate Bank has no plans to introduce a voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) on account of its proposed amalgamation with Canara Bank from April 1, 2020.

Speaking to reporters here on Friday, the bank's Managing Director and CEO Mrutyunjay Mahapatra said the proposed amalgamation does not envisage displacement of the staff at the branch levels or other areas of the hierarchy.

Expressing confidence about net NPA (Non Performing Asset) level getting below 5 per cent

due to recovery measures taken by the bank, Mahapatra said the average recovery rate is now Rs 26 crore per day compared with Rs 18 crore earlier.

The net NPA on the second quarter ending September 30 stood at 5.98 per cent (12,481.35 crore) down from 6.38 (13,321 crore) in the same period a year ago. He also said the increased provisioning would take care of the NPAs.

Mahapatra remained optimistic about a positive turnaround in credit-off take in the next two quarters.

He earlier inaugurated the zonal office of the bank in Kerala.

Govt sets up development council for bicycles

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, NOV. 15

Puzzled by deteriorating air quality in key cities, government is promoting eco-friendly means of transport. It has set up a development council for bicycles, which will look into developing bicycles of global standards for export and domestic markets and enabling safe and segregated cycle infrastructure in the country.

Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has set up the council for vision planning in design, engineering and manufacturing of lighter, smarter, value added, safe and faster premium bicycles which are comparable with global standards for exports and domestic market.

The council will stimulate value chain and demand growth of Make-in-India bicycles to improve competi-



tiveness and level of services. It will transform Indian bicycle technology and its value chain and ensure development of holistic ecosystem through close, coordinated and continuous stakeholder persuasion.

The council will also undertake all possible measures for leveraging bicycle demand and enable safe and segregated cycling infrastructure and operations.

It will also look into

enhancing export competitiveness of bicycle through support of schemes and favourable trade policies.

Popularising benefits of cycling through the campaigns and development of medium and small industries to usher in a new mind-set through innovative schemes in a structured and synergistic way also will be areas of interest for the council.

It will also look into ways to develop skilled human

resources development for bicycle manufacturing and repair shops and identify and study best international practices and successful story to adopt for bicycle manufacturing, recycling and infrastructure development in India.

The 23-member council will be headed by secretary DPIIT and has been constituted for two years. The council will have 9 ex-officio members from DPIIT and Department of Commerce, Ministries of Housing and Urban Affairs, Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Health and Family Welfare, Road Transport and Highways, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Bureau of Indian Standards. The Council will also have 7 expert domain members and 4 nominated members.

Untimely rains hit rabi crops, delay rural recovery

RAJENDRA JADHAV
KALAMB, NOV. 15

Heavy rains in October and November have brought more misery to India's farmers, after summer-sown crops such as soybean, cotton, rice and vegetables suffered rain and flood damage during the wettest June-September monsoon season in 25 years.

"We couldn't harvest soybeans last month due to continuous rainfall," said Shantabai Chikhale, 65, while harvesting with her son on a one acre plot in Maharashtra, India's second large-

st soybean production state.

Chikhale had been expecting a bumper crop, but now estimates that two-thirds of the soybean pods on her farm in Kalamb village were knocked off by the rains, while much of the remaining crop has been damaged.

The recent wet spell is also forcing farmers, like Chikhale, to delay sowing winter crops, placing a further drag on the rural economy at a time when India's economic growth has slumped to a six-year low.

After the ample monsoon rains, The Solvent Extractors' Association (SEA) had

expected India soybean harvest to be more than 10 million tonnes, just a little down on 2018's 10.3 million tonnes.

But heavy recent rains damaged the crop in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, which account for more than 85 per cent of India's output, and forced the trade body to cut that estimate to below 9 million tonnes, said B.V. Mehta, Executive Director of the SEA.

As a result local soybean

prices have risen to their highest in 3-1/2 years, making exports of soymeal uncompetitive, traders said.

Lower soybean production could force India, the world's biggest importer of edible oils, to import more in 2019/20 marketing year that started on October 1, said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm. The deluge also hit cotton in the world's biggest producer.

Cotton bolls were damaged by late rains in Maharas-

htra and Gujarat, which account for over half of the country's output, said Arun Sekhsaria, managing director of exporter D.D. Cotton.

Until a few weeks ago, industry officials such as Pradeep Jain, President of Khandesh Ginning and Pressing Factory Owners and Traders Association, were expecting a 20 per cent jump in cotton production in 2019 from a year ago.

But now Jain says the production could rise by 10 to 12 per cent.

Cyclone Bulbul also soaked the eastern states of Odisha and West Bengal last

Lower soybean production could force India to import more in 2019/20 marketing year that started on Oct. 1

India can't get by without a big bang

DHIRAJ NAYYAR

The Indian economy continues to slow. The monthly Index of Industrial Production fell to an eight-year low in the month of September, contracting by over 4 per cent. According to India's central bank, growth in bank credit to industries in the same month fell to 2.7 per cent, the lowest in a year. While the numbers for services are a little better, even they stand at a two-year low.

Economists have little faith that things will turn around on their own. The government desperately needs to revive investment. The only way to do so is to embrace something it's avoided thus far: a true reform "big bang."

Officials can honestly say that they've implemented

plenty of reforms since Prime Minister Narendra Modi first came to power in 2014. In his first term, the government inaugurated a new bankruptcy code and a nationwide goods-and-services tax. It's recapitalized and consolidated state-owned banks. In September, it slashed corporate tax rates from 30 per cent to 22 per cent for existing companies and to just 15 per cent for new companies; that finally makes India competitive with the rest of Asia. The government also announced relief measures for the stressed real estate sector and unveiled new rebates for exporters.

Modi clearly prefers an incremental approach to reform, one that lessens the chances of a political backlash. He has to fear support-

ers as much as, if not more than the radically weakened opposition. Influential voices within the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and its affiliates strongly oppose sweeping trade deals such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the

privatization of state-owned companies. While helpful, though, these measures by themselves aren't strong enough to revive the animal spirits of Indian and foreign investors. India's problems are simply too deep. The dividends from the limited reforms carried out in the 1990s and early 2000s have dwindled. The country is more integrated with the global economy - it's signed free-trade agreements with

Southeast Asian nations, Japan and Korea - which only highlights its lack of competitiveness.

Investors, including Indians who have more options now because of considerable capital account liberalization, may find it more profitable to invest elsewhere in Asia. This is particularly true of manufacturing but also of services: Even in areas such as information technology, where India was once a world-beater, rising wages have made it a less attractive place to do business.

Of course, there are multiple dimensions to this challenge. The problem of stifling corporate taxes has been addressed. But unless the cost of capital, cost of

labor and cost of land come down, the overall competitiveness of the economy won't improve enough to stimulate the interest of investors. Equally, the codding of subpar government companies compromises the efficiency of entire sectors of the Indian economy.

The reforms required to address these problems are well-known by now. The market for capital has to be overhauled by privatizing at least two of the largest state-owned banks. The market for labor requires more flexible laws that would persuade companies to use India's cheap and abundant workers instead of scarce and expensive capital. If China and other rivals provide land to industry for free, India cannot have a system where a huge multiple of the mar-

ket price needs to be paid for land. Both failing and successful public-sector companies need to be sold.

Right now, despite recent pro-business measures, the government is sending mixed signals. Its decision to stay out of RCEP will look defensive and in favor of the status quo unless it is followed by a spate of domestic reforms. That impression could undermine the reforms already undertaken, deter foreign investors in particular and reinforce the vicious cycle which is dragging growth down.

A big bang package of reforms is more possible than nervous ministers may believe. They can spend the next two months before the next budget developing credible plans in consultation with busi-

ness, civil society and the state governments. And once unveiled, the changes don't all need to be implemented at once. A calibrated approach over 12 to 18 months would suffice; the important thing is to signal to the market that the government is serious and ambitious. By then, too, the BJP should have a clear majority in the upper house of Parliament, which will making passing bills easier.

Modi remains massively popular and can claim to have fulfilled most of the BJP's social agenda already. But for his government to be considered truly transformative, it must revive economic growth and put it on a higher trajectory for the next two decades. There are no longer any excuses for delay.

— *Bloomberg*

OPENING
BELL
PROJECTION FOR TODAY

Range-bound moves in equity market likely

The market closed with modest gains on positive global cues after a volatile trading session.

After climbing over 363 points during the day, the Sensex ended 70.21 points, or 0.17 per cent, higher at 40356.69, while the Nifty rose 23.35 points, or 0.20 per cent, to end at 11895.45.

Top index gainers included Bharti Airtel, SBI, Kotak Bank, Sun Pharma, Tata Motors, M&M and Tata Steel, rising up to 5.19 per cent. On the other hand, Hero MotoCorp, Bajaj Auto, Maruti, ITC, Vedanta, NTPC and Tech Mahindra fell up to 1.85 per cent.

Sectorally, BSE telecom index rallied the most at 8.40 per cent, followed by bankex, tech, healthcare and finance, rising up to 0.90 per cent.

Technical View

After showing weakness in the last session the Nifty shifted into a consolidation and closed the day decently higher. A small positive candle was formed on Friday with lower shadow, which indicates a formation of high wave type candle pattern, analysts said.

Nagaraj Shetti, Technical Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said, "The key lower area of 11850 has been acting as a support with intraday violation. Though, Nifty witnessed minor upside recovery from the lows today, the negative short term chart set up has not been changed. The short term trend of Nifty weak amidst a range bound action. A sustainable move below 11850-25 levels could open sharp weakness in the near term."

Market View

Global markets showed mixed performance during the week as markets saw profit booking on conflicting signals regarding progress on a trade deal between the US and China.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services Ltd., said, "Post the recent rally, the gap between valuation and earnings growth has enlarged. Influencing investors to stay cautious ahead of heavy economic data being released this week. Weak economic data and concerns over slowdown in earnings growth is hurting investor sentiments. Despite a series of rate cut from RBI, core sector growth remains muted and inflation is inching higher which may incline RBI to be watchful in the future."

— *ASHWIN J. PUNNEN*



Director Mamoru Oshii has stated that he used Hong Kong as a model of the futuristic city in *Ghost in the Shell* (1995)

OUR CRITIC'S RATING Outstanding ★★★★★ | Great ★★★★ | Good ★★★ | Okay ★★ | Poor ★ | Truly Terrible TT

A stinky dustbin of '80s Bollywood

SUPARNA SHARMA

If, for some reason, you have an urgent craving for a rather tacky and soulless recap of Bollywood in the half-decent late-Seventies and its quick descent into the terrible Eighties, you could try to sit through *Marjaavaan*, otherwise a cretin of a film that is a complete waste of time, energy and money.



There is nothing, and I mean NOTHING, absolutely nothing original in this film. The story, no item of clothing, no character, not even a weapon, plot line, villain, hero, location... nothing. Even four of the six songs are what's now called "reloads" of old hits.

Marjaavaan's story is insipid and stupid. There once was a *lawaris* child lying in a Mumbai gutter who was rescued by a bad guy, Anna (Nassar). But Anna didn't adopt the kid. He didn't even give him a bedroom or a bed in his house. Instead he made him his minion. When the kid grew up, he became Anna's chief minion, Raghu (Sidharth Malhotra).

Marjaavaan (U/A) 136 min
CAST: Sidharth Malhotra, Riteish Deshmukh, Tara Sutaria, Rakul Preet Singh, Nassar, Shaad Randhawa, Ravi Kishan, Varinder Singh Ghuman, Nora Fatehi
DIRECTOR: Milap Milap Zaveri
RATING: ★★

There is nothing, and I mean NOTHING, absolutely nothing original in this film. The story, no item of clothing, no character, not even a weapon, plot line, villain, hero, location... nothing. Even four of the six songs are what's now called "reloads" of old hits.

Marjaavaan is set in Mumbai and the location is split between two places — the strange apartment of Anna, which is on some very high floor of a building that's under construction and doesn't have a lift, but his house is nicely done up except for the balcony wall. There is no balcony, and there is no wall. It's just an open season to toss out men who irritate. The basti is where Raghu lives, with three besties who behave like his orderlies, and Arzoo (Rakul Preet Singh), the dance bar girl who dotes on him. Despite this, Raghu doesn't think twice before dumping her for the *samaj sevika* from Kashmir, Zoya (Tara Sutaria).

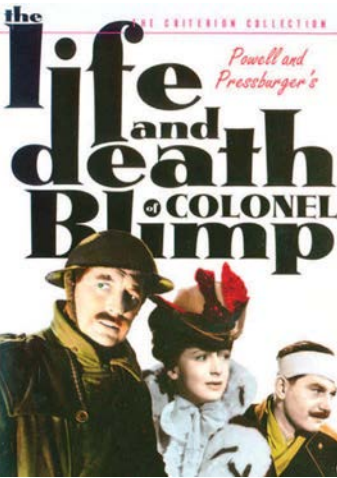
Zoya is speech impaired and yet she proceeds to ask long-winding *pahelis* in sign language. Thankfully, she has a curly-haired human translator always in tow. She also has a purpose — she wants to exchange all guns in all bloody hands with harmonicas. She hands one to Raghu. Zoya, like most nubile newcomers paired with established male actors in desi action thrillers, is a prop, an impetus. First she must make the hero, who is on the wrong path, to think of living a lovey-dovey life with her and thus, must, piss off his boss. Having done that, she must die. Because only then will the climax have some *raison d'être*. There is also a cop in the scheme of things. We could call ACP Ravi Yadav (Ravi Kisen) The Empathetic Gyani. He gives *gyaan* to all and doesn't impede upon any proceedings involving sharp objects, firearms and dead bodies. In fact, so bored is he of *Marjaavaan* that I think he and his entire *thana* went on Keto diet and lost several kilos.

If you borrow things from not one but multiple sources, and have not a single original thing or thought, is it called plagiarism or dacoity? Just asking. Raghu's character is a rag doll created from various desi action avatars, especially those created by Mannohan Desai for Amitabh Bachchan, including his Ali-Bajrang Bali films secularism. Though his bandana is very Jaggu Dada (Jackie Shroff, *Hero*), the red *sando* vest (*Amar Akbar Anthony*), the matchstick he sucks on (a la Vijay's beedi in *Deewaar*) are Big B's. At some point one of his three friends turns into Abdul (Mazhar Khan's

one and only memorable character in Ramesh Sippy's *Shaan*). Vishnu, the evil midget who talks big and is always waving about a pistol with a long nozzle, is without menace or meaning. A big *pheku*, he is very crying about his daddy not loving him and talks only in long monologues in which he likes to expound upon "What is the height of... Kamingi, deewangi..." I wish he had also asked: What is the height of stupidity? The five people in the hall would have screamed in unison, "You, your character, your acting, your dialogue..."

Though *Matrjaanvaan* is an action film, its fight sequences are bad and bizarre. In the first one, Raghu's minion arrives with a First Aid because *woh "marta bhi hai, aur jodta bhi hai"*. So pain relief is sprayed before he kicks a goon, crepe bandage is wrapped around another's neck before he twists it so that he can inspect his behind. The film's climax is dull because in Indian films people don't like to just kill their main enemy. They like to sit down for some *baat-cheet*, unload *mann ki baat* and generally talk about life and stuff going on around us. It just goes on and on, much like the film's dialogue. My guess is that the *bhoot* of Kader Khan was hovering around the writer and kept administering invisible slaps until each and every dialogue was made verbose and baffling and the hero and villain always spoke in rhyme. Sample: "*Main maroonga toh mar jayega, Dobara janam lena se dar jayega*" And, "*Main badla nahin, inteqam loonga Zoya. Inteqam.*" *Hain?*

Roger Ebert's Great Movies



THE LIFE AND DEATH OF COLONEL BLIMP
Released in 1943
Review written on October 27, 2002

One of the many miracles of *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* is the way the movie transforms a blustering, pigheaded caricature into one of the most loved of all movie characters. *Colonel Blimp* began life in a series of famous British cartoons by David Low, who represented him as an overstuffed blowhard. The movie looks past the fat, bald military man with the walrus moustache, and sees inside, to an idealist and a romantic. To know him is to love him. Made in 1942 at the height of the Nazi threat to Great Britain, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's work is an uncommonly civilised film about war and soldiers — and rarer still, a film that defends the old against the young. Its hero is a blustering old windbag Clive Wynne-Candy, a war-horse of the Army since the Boer War, now twice retired from regular duty and relegated to leading the Home Guard. As the film opens, the General has ordered military training exercises and announced, "War starts at midnight". A gung-ho young lieutenant decides that modern warfare doesn't play by the rules, and jumps the gun, leading his men into the General's London club and arresting him in the steam room. When Wynne-Candy bellows, "You bloody young fool — war starts at midnight!" the lieutenant observes that the Nazis do not observe gentleman's agreements, and insults the old man's belly and moustache. Wynne-Candy is outraged. "You laugh at my big belly but you don't know how I got it! You laugh at my moustache but you don't know why I grew it!" He punches the young lieutenant, wrestles him into a swimming pool — and then, in a flashback of grace and wit, the camera pans along the surface of the water until, at the other end, young Clive Candy emerges. He is thin and without a moustache, and it is 1902.

The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp has four story threads. It mourns the passing of a time when professional soldiers observed a code of honour. It argues to the young that the old were young once, too, and contain within them all that the young know, and more. It marks the General's lonely romantic passage through life, in which he seeks the double of the first woman he loved. And it records a friendship between a British officer and a German officer, which spans the crucial years from 1902 to 1942. This is an audacious enough story idea to begin with, but even more daring in 1942, when London was bombed nightly and the Nazis seemed to be winning the war. Powell at first wanted Laurence Olivier to play his title role, but the screenplay ran into fierce opposition from Winston Churchill, and the ministry of war refused to release Olivier from military duty. Then Powell cast Roger Livesay, a young actor who had worked for him before, and as the German officer, an emigre Austrian actor named Anton Walbrook.

That led to an encounter between Churchill and Walbrook, recounted by the British film critic Derek Malcolm: "Churchill's reaction was furious. He is said to have stormed into Walbrook's dressing room when he was appearing in a West End play demanding: 'What's this film supposed to mean? I suppose you regard it as good propaganda for Britain.' Anton's reply was quite telling, he said, 'No people in the world other than the English would have had the courage, in the midst of war, to tell the people such unvarnished truth'."

Ah, but he praised his adopted homeland too soon. Churchill continued to resist. Powell could not borrow gear and trucks from the Army, "so we stole them". The film was at first banned, then reluctantly released in a shorter version, and in the US, it lost 50 minutes of its 163-minute running time; the entire flashback structure was replaced by a chronological storyline. Only in 1983 was the film finally restored, and hailed as a masterpiece. "It stands," wrote the critic Dave Kehr, "as very possibly the finest film ever made in Britain".

The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp is a film of balance and insight — a civilised film, which even in a time of war celebrates civilised values. What it regrets is the loss, in two World Wars, of a sense of decency and fair play that had governed the European military classes. Near the film's end, the German refugee corrects the sentimentalism of the old general, telling him from first-hand experience that Nazism is the greatest evil the world has ever known, and saying there is no point in playing fair when the enemy plays foul, if that means you lose, and evil wins.

Despite this sober undercurrent, *Colonel Blimp* is above all a comedy of manners, and Powell and his writing and producing partner Pressburger conduct it with style and humour. Jolly music underlines an opening sequence in which motorcycle messengers distribute news of the war games, and there is wit in the movie's ingenious flashbacks and flash-forwards. Photographed by Georges Perinal with help from Jack Cardiff, the movie is one of the best-looking Technicolor productions ever made, its palate controlled to make wise use of bright contrasts in a world of subdued harmony.

Several scenes surprise us by how they pay off. Note the early duel between the British and German officers (they do not even know one another; the German was drawn by lot to respond to an insult to the German Army).

The most poignant passages involve the General growing older. He looks like a caricature to younger officers — with his beefy face, pink complexion, moustache (grown to hide the duelling scar) and raspy voice. But in his heart he is still young, still in love, still idealistic. At the end of the movie he looks at a water pool in the basement of his bombed-out house, and is reminded of a lake across which he once pledged love. And he insists to himself that it is the same lake, and he is the same man. Rarely does a film give us such a nuanced view of the whole span of a man's life. It is said that the child is father to the man. *Colonel Blimp* makes poetry out of what the old know but the young do not guess: The man contains both the father, and the child.

'Ford v Ferrari' is a very pleasant (fast) ride

Ford v Ferrari (U/A) 155 min

CAST: Matt Damon, Christian Bale, Roberta Sparta, Caitriona Balfe,
DIRECTOR: James Mangold
RATING: ★★★★★

MARK KENNEDY

Cops might do well to position their speed traps near movie theaters wherever the new film *Ford v Ferrari* is playing. They might fund their whole year's budget busting speeders peeling out of the parking lots. This infectious and engrossing story of the 1966 showdown on a French racetrack between car giants Ford and Ferrari is a high-octane ride that will make you instinctively stomp on a ghostly gas pedal from your movie seat. But you don't need to be a motorhead to enjoy Matt Damon and Christian Bale as a pair of rebels risking it all for purity and glory. Yes, director James Mangold takes you down onto the raceway, with cameras low to the ground and care to show the crack of gear shifts and feet on pedals. Yet he's not created a *Fast and Furious* film — this is more a drama about a pair of visionaries who fight against a smarmy bureaucracy. That vision happens to be on a track.

The first three-quarters of *Ford v Ferrari* sets the stage for the furious 40-minute restaging of the exhausting Le Mans race — a 3,000-mile, 24-hour slalom through country roads. So meticulous have the filmmakers been that they built an entire accurate Le Mans in Georgia because the original has been too altered in the intervening years. (There are not many cases when Georgia acts as a stand-in for La France.) Damon plays the legendary American driver and car designer Carroll Shelby, who won Le Mans in 1959 but gets sidelined from driving due to a bad heart. He considers the best driver in the world to be Ken Miles, a daredevil British missile played by Bale. If Damon is a bad boy, then Bale is a bad-bad boy, a role perfectly in his wheelhouse, another intense, almost-over-the-top role. But it's Damon, almost subdued with little fireworks necessary, who shows real compassion as a man caught between corporate responsibility and honour. Le Mans by the mid-1960s was a plaything of Ferrari, which dominated year after year. Lee Iacocca, then an executive with the Ford Motor Company, convinces his boss, Henry Ford II, to enter the racing world and win Le Mans — not necessarily for glory but to make the company appealing to young buyers. "James Bond does not drive a Ford, sir," Iacocca (played by Jon

Bernthal, perfectly cast, showing layers) tells Ford. "We need to think like Ferrari." Ford initially tries to do that by just buying Ferrari — but Italian head Enzo Ferrari tells the Ford delegation to "go back to Michigan, back to your big ugly factory." Boo! That naturally ruffles the feathers of Henry Ford's son (Tracy Letts, lighting up every scene with unpredictable energy) and so Ford is now ready to build its own race team. The screenwriters Jez Butterworth, John-Henry Butterworth and Jason Keller have fleshed out the tale with glimpses into the personal costs to Miles' family (the enchanting Caitriona Balfe as his wife and their young son.) Their quiet moments at home may be a little hokey but are a welcome relief to the roar of the track. You can tell the writers have some stage chops



— AP

Shaadi ki story: It's about the quibbling family

Motichoor Chaknaachoor (U/A) 135 min

CAST: Athiya Shetty, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Vibha Chibber, Navni Parihar, Vivek Mishra, Karuna Pandey, Sanjeev Vats, Abhishek Rawat, Sapna Sand, Usha Nagar
DIRECTOR: Debamitra Biswal
RATING: ★★★★★

SUPARNA SHARMA

Name me an Indian family that doesn't have a *shaa-di* ki story and a *dahej* grouse to narrate and I will ask Dharti Ma to split and swallow me. They won't call it *dahej*, of course. They call them gifts, and recall them often as insulting, hurtful memories that include thin *pital*-type gold chains, thinner *shagun* ka *lifafas*, bad/cold food or *ghatiya*/stale *meethai*, cheap sarees and suit lengths, baratis returned *khali haath*... *Motichoor Chaknaachoor*, directed by Debamitra Biswal, is a love story that involves a tug-of-war between a *lalchi* (greedy) mummyji after *dahej* and an unscrupulous, spoilt girl who is seeking a groom to settle abroad. The film has a small town quality to it which it gets that from the

banter of its female characters, and the *nashta* of many fried items that everyone is having all the time. It's warm, feels real and is very funny. It's also super smart and sharp. In Bhopal, MP, live the Awasthis, a family of three squabbling women and a quiet man. On the other side of their knee-high boundary wall are the Tiwaris. The Awasthi family has a daddy, mummy Sulbha (Navni Parihar), a *mausi* (Karuna Pandey) and the spoilt brat, Annie *urf* Anita (Athiya Shetty). *Mausi*, who is mostly in a nighty, is unmarried and unrepentant. Her *jiji* (elder sister) keeps bringing up the 27 prospective grooms she rejected every time Annie rejects a boy. *Jiji* keeps accusing *mausi* of trying to create a club of unmarried women, a sort of gang of *avi-vaahit mahilas*, except that Annie is really desperate to marry, but only if the groom lives abroad. That's her ambition. That's her dream. That's the one thing she wants from life. She will marry anyone as long as they are settled in London, Canada... Even Dubai, Nepal... Indu Tiwari has a son, Pushpinder (Nawazuddin Siddique), who works abroad. An accountant who is introduced by

his mother as a chartered accountant settled in Dubai. Boys come to see Annie and she rejects them the moment they talk of moving back, not taking her abroad... Pushpinder is 36-years-old and has been going around to see girls for seven years, but his mother keeps rejecting them because of failed *dahej* negotiations. He's desperate to get married, to have sex. She's desperate for a visa in her passport... The story of *Motichoor Chaknaachoor* is simple but its plot is full of gentle little twists and turns that surprise, delight and take the film in unexpected directions. The film's main story — of a boy and a girl — is rather dull for a long time, a n d

comes alive right at the end. Yet their story, and the film, is made exciting and entertaining and because of the mummies, daddys, *bhuas*, *behens*, *mausi* involved. It's their aspirations, feelings attached to Annie and Pushpinder's lives and choices that give the film a pulsating heart. *Motichoor Chaknaachoor* has a very authentic small-town vibe that it gets from the setting, the clothes everyone wears, schemes and scenes where neighbours borrow cars, and plates of *samosas*, *kachoris*, *jalebis* that are passed around, but mostly from the women's voices, concerns, melt-downs. They create and manage tensions in the middle of busy domesticity, while delivering taunt-laced insults with that uniquely desi *apnapan*. All the women are good, but Vibha Chibber, Navni Parihar and Karuna Pandey speak so fast and fabulous that I feel I need to watch the film again to catch stuff I missed. In the middle of all the banter, the

film shows the normalcy of demands of *dahej* because of its cyclic nature — brother's *dahej* will be used to marry off the sister — and inserts a very poignant scene when a girl's father, almost shamefacedly, offers money to the groom, hoping that it'll be accepted as a favour to him. This shame of Indian families is very nicely captured in a moving scene. The film also usurps relations and resets power equations, like when the angry *saas* and *bahu* conspire together. But it's the film's dialogues, superb and often raunchy, that stay with you. Like *mausi*'s advice to Annie on her *suhaag raat*, when she calls to complain of her inability to conjure any carnal or romantic feelings — "just close your eyes and think of Burj Khalifa". I fell off laughing. Athiya, who made a very disturbing debut in *Hero* (2015), has really come into her own here. She holds on to a tough MP Hindi dialect throughout the film and despite Nawazuddin's very apparent reluctance, tries to forge some chemistry. For most of the film, Nawazuddin seems quite out of it, as if he decided to give the film and his role just 20 per cent. That makes Athiya's job harder, and yet she carries the film, succeeding in selling us this very odd, awkward pair.





Her last summer

Jean Fergusson, *Last of the Summer Wine* actress dies, aged 74



I love you (Sania Mirza) because you are real in a sea of fake

— Parineeti Chopra, Actor

IN BRIEF

Gladiator's Branko Lustig dies at 87

Los Angeles: Branko Lustig, producer of Hollywood classics such as *Schindler's List* and *Gladiator*, has passed away. He was 87. The news of his demise was shared on the official website of Festival of Tolerance, where Lustig served as president since 2008. He passed away at his residence in Zagreb, Croatia on Thursday. Born in Osijek, Yugoslavia to a Jewish family in 1932, Lustig had spent two years as a prisoner at Auschwitz concentration camps during World War II. Most of his family members disappeared in camps. — PTI

Friends originally cast Hanks as Sandy

Los Angeles: Freddie Prinze Jr has revealed that Hollywood veteran Tom Hanks was originally approached to play the role of Sandy in *Friends*. Prinze Jr played the titular role of Sandy in the 200th episode *The One With the Male Nanny*. In the episode, Rachel (Jennifer Aniston) and Ross (David Schwimmer) hire a male nanny named Sandy. The actor said he feels lucky to have landed a role in one of the most popular shows. — PTI



Drake locks 10 year LA residency

Los Angeles: Rapper Drake has responded to the people who booed him recently during a concert here at the Camp Flog Gnaw Carnival by signing a 10 year residency. The 33-year-old rapper, who performed at the venue on Sunday, was booed and frequently interrupted by the crowd during the gig. "Like I said, I'm here for you. If you want to keep going, I will keep going tonight," a visibly annoyed Drake told the crowd. But after continued booing, he left the stage, saying in the end, "...I love you..." — PTI

SCARLETT: WAS SEXUALISED IN MY CAREER

Los Angeles: Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson is already being considered as one of the major contenders for best actress Oscar for her performance in *Marriage Story*, but she says it was tough for her to get out of being an "ingenue" and play performance-oriented parts. During the *Hollywood Reporter's* Actress Roundtable, Johansson, 34, said she was "hyper-sexualised" initially in her career due to the narrative "crafted for me by probably a bunch of dudes in the industry". "I feel when I was working in my late teens/early 20s, I felt that I sort of got, somehow, typecast. I was very hyper-sexualised. Which, I guess, at the time seemed OK to everyone. It was another time. Even though it wasn't a part of my own narrative, it was kind of crafted for me by probably a bunch of dudes in the industry." "And I guess that worked then, but it was really difficult for me to try to figure out how to get out of being an ingenue or the other woman, because it was never anything that I had intended," she said. The actor believes the opportunities for women has broadened. — PTI



Scarlett Johansson

For the 1st time, Prince Andrew speaks of his ties with Epstein

'No holds barred' interview, recorded at Buckingham Palace, airs on BBC today

London: The Duke of York has answered questions about his links to Jeffrey Epstein for the first time, in a BBC interview.

He spoke to BBC *Newsnight's* Emily Maitlis in an interview recorded at Buckingham Palace on Thursday.

Maitlis said it was a "no holds barred interview", which will be broadcast on BBC Two at 21:00 GMT on Saturday.

The duke faces serious claims over his ties to the 66-year-old US financier, who took his own life while awaiting trial on sex-trafficking charges.

In 2015, Prince Andrew was named in court papers as part of a US civil case against Epstein.

One of Epstein's accusers, Virginia Roberts - now Virginia Giuffre - said she was forced to have sex with the duke three times



▶ In 2015, Prince Andrew was named in court papers as part of a US civil case against Epstein
▶ One of Epstein's accusers, Virginia Roberts said she was forced to have sex with the duke 3 times between 1999 and 2002

Andrew (centre) speaks to BBC *Newsnight's* Emily Maitlis in an interview recorded at Buckingham Palace on Thursday.

between 1999 and 2002, in London, New York and on a private Caribbean island owned by Epstein, the BBC reported. At the time she was under-age according to Florida state's law.

The details were later officially struck from the court records when a judge ruled they were unnecessary to the case,

saying they were "immaterial and impertinent" to the "central claim".

Separately, a woman called Johanna Sjöberg alleged that the duke touched her breast while they sat on a couch in Epstein's Manhattan apartment in 2001 in documents from a defamation case. Buckingham Palace

has issued strong denials of all allegations against the duke. In 2015 a statement said that "any suggestion of impropriety with underage minors" by the duke was "categorically untrue". The duke first met Epstein in 1999 and they saw each other on several occasions after that. — Agencies

Chile singer goes topless in protest at Latin Grammys

London: A Chilean singer has bared her breasts in a red carpet protest at the Latin Grammy awards in the US.

Mon Laferte uncovered her chest emblazoned with the words "In Chile they torture, rape and kill" on Thursday.

Chile has seen almost a month of protests that started after a rise in subway fares and have grown into anti-government demonstrations.

On Friday, Chile announced it would hold a referendum on the constitution. The protest took place as Mon Laferte walked the red carpet at the awards show in Las Vegas.

Also, as she accepted the award for best alternative album, Mon Laferte read a poem from Chilean writer La Chinganera, saying: "Chile, your pain hurts me."

She was one of several artists at the Latin



Mon Laferte

▶ Mon Laferte uncovered her chest emblazoned with the words 'In Chile they torture, rape and kill'

▶ The singer also read a poem from Chilean writer La Chinganera, saying: 'Chile, your pain hurts me' while accepting her award

Grammys who spoke about the current political climate in Latin American countries.

Protesters have been taking to the streets of Chile for almost a month, demanding greater social reform and a change to the country's constitution, the BBC reported.

The constitution dates back to the pre-democracy era of the military leader, Augusto Pinochet.

It does not currently establish the state's responsibility to provide healthcare and education,

which are two demands from the protesters.

On Friday, the government announced it would hold a referendum on the constitution in April next year.

According to Senate President Jaime Quintana, the referendum will ask voters whether they think the constitution should be replaced.

It will also ask voters who think it should be replaced to choose between three different bodies to draw up a new constitution. — Agencies

'Smelly sock': French Airbus sent back to resolve odour

Noumea, New Caledonia: A new Airbus plane will be sent back to engineers in France following complaints of a "smell of wet sock" from cabin crew in the Pacific island territory of New Caledonia.

The Airbus A330neo came into service on October 4 as part of a fleet renewal at Air Caledonie International, the french territory's international airline.

However "a smell of 'wet sock' has repeatedly inconvenienced crew members during take off and landing", ACI's general manager Didier Tappero said.

An investigation was carried out and identified oil fumes. — AFP

NEWS NUGGETS

VIETNAM JAILS MUSIC TEACHER FOR 'UNDERMINING' STATE

Hanoi: Vietnam sentenced a music teacher to 11 years in prison on Friday for Facebook posts that allegedly undermined the one-party state, which has been accused of tightening the noose on online dissent.

Communist Vietnam has long jailed its critics but has come under fire recently for targeting users on Facebook, a popular forum for activists in the country where all independent media is banned. Nguyen Nang Tinh is the latest activist jailed for his Facebook comments.



Nguyen Nang Tinh

'NASA OVERPAID BOEING BY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO DEVELOP SPACESHIP'

Washington: Nasa "overpaid" Boeing by hundreds of millions of dollars on a fixed contract to develop a spaceship to carry astronauts to the International Space Station, an audit report has said, compensation it called "unnecessary".

The US has relied on Russia to transport its crews to the ISS since

the end of the Space Shuttle program in 2011, but has hired Boeing and SpaceX under multi-billion dollar contracts.

"We found that Nasa agreed to pay an additional \$287.2 million above Boeing's fixed prices to mitigate a perceived 18-month gap in ISS flights anticipated in 2019," the report said. — AFP

RAPPER FACES JAIL FOR INSULTING COPS; AMNESTY BRANDS IT 'ABSDURD'

Sale, Morocco: A Moroccan rapper who co-authored a song criticising the kingdom faces two years in prison after appearing in court Thursday charged with offending public officials. Mohamed Mounir, widely known as Gnawi, was charged in Sale near Rabat over the publication of a video in which he insulted police. Amnesty International called his arrest "absurd" and an "outrageous assault on free speech." — AFP



Mohamed Mounir

GERMAN INSTA STAR JAILED FOR ILLEGAL BEAUTY PROCEDURES

Berlin: A German Instagram influencer has been sentenced to four years in prison for conducting illegal beauty treatments.

Michael Rehaag, a spokesperson at the district court in Bochum, told CNN the 29-year-old woman confessed to injecting hyaluronic acid as "filler" into the lips and noses of at least 35 women.

The pregnant social media star, who cannot be named under German privacy law, had 1,00,000 Instagram followers, Rehaag told CNN.

She used the social media platform to advertise her services between 2017 and April 2019, charging between 300 and 450 Euros (\$330 to \$495) for the injections, which she initially carried out in her living room. — Agencies

Shekhar charged ₹1,672 for 3 eggs at 5-star hotel

Ahmedabad: Music composer Shekhar Ravjiani of the famous Vishal-Shekhar duo on Friday took to Twitter, claiming that a luxury hotel in the city charged him an "eggsorbitant" ₹1,672 for three boiled eggs.

It reminded many Twitter users of a similar protest by actor Rahul Bose who had to pay ₹442 for two bananas at a hotel in Chandigarh some months ago.

The management of Hyatt Regency, Ahmedabad, where Ravjiani claimed to have had his three eggs, however, did not comment.

"Rs 1,672 for 3 egg whites??? That was an Eggsorbitant meal," tweeted Ravjiani.

He also shared a photograph of the bill, issued on November 14.

As per the bill, the price of three boiled eggs was



Shekhar Ravjiani

₹1,350, service charge was ₹67.50 and state GST and Central GST accounted ₹Rs 127.58 each.

"Seems like chicken are fed banana from the hotel where Rahul Bose stayed," said a witty Twitter user, replying to Ravjiani's tweet.

Some commentators defended the hotel, saying customers pay for ambience and service rather than food, while others suggested Ravjiani patronize road-side hawkers if he wanted to save money. — PTI

A rubbish story: China's mega-dump full 25 years ahead of schedule



The Jiangcungou landfill in Shaanxi Province, which is the size of around 100 football fields, was designed to take 2,500 tonnes of rubbish per day,

a BBC report said. But instead it received 10,000 tonnes of waste per day — the most of any landfill site in China. The Jiangcungou landfill in

Xi'an city was built in 1994 and was designed to last until 2044. Landfill serves 8m citizens. It spans an area of 7,00,000 sq m. — Agencies



New role

Ex-Arsenal star Thierry Henry has been appointed coach at MLS franchise Montreal Impact on a two-year contract, the Canadian club announced

Sport

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THE ASIAN AGE

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Teams release Miller, Unadkat

New Delhi, Nov. 15: Chris Lynn, David Miller, Jaydev Unadkat and Chris Morris were among the 71 players released by their respective franchisees on Friday ahead of next month's IPL auction.

Friday was the deadline for releasing, trading and retaining players. A total of 127 players have been retained including 35 foreigners.

Lynn, the big-hitting Australian opener, was released by Kolkata Knight Riders after five fruitful seasons when he got the team off to a flying start on umpteen occasions.

The other 10 released KKR players include West Indian Carlos Brathwaite, South African Anrich Nortje, former India players Piyush Chawla and Robin Uthappa, who struggled to get going last season.



David Miller

have released England cricketers Sam Billings and David Willey besides three Indian players including 2015 World Cupper Mohit Sharma. With 20 players already in their squad, CSK go into the auction with a meagre purse of Rs 14.60 crore.

Virat Kohli-led Royal Challengers Bangalore have let go of their 12 players including seven foreigners. They roughly have Rs 28 crore to work with at the auction.

Delhi Capitals, who had traded in Ravichandran Ashwin and Ajinkya

Big purse for Kings

Kings XI Punjab go into the auction on December 19 with a purse of Rs 42.70 crore, the biggest among the eight teams after they released eight players including South Africa's Miller, Englishman Sam Curran and mystery Tamil Nadu spinner Varun Chakravarthy, who was bought for a whopping Rs 8.4 crore last year. Miller went on to become one of the batting mainstays for Kings XI Punjab over the past eight seasons, scoring 1850 runs in 79 games at a strike rate of 138.78.

"Kings XI Punjab now have the highest salary cap available going into the auction while Royal Challengers Bangalore have the most number of player slots (12) available (including 6 overseas slots). After today's deadline, Chennai Super Kings have the largest squad size (20)," read a BCCI statement.



Jaydev Unadkat

Rahane from KXIP and Rajasthan Royals respectively, have retained young Prithvi Shaw.

Rajasthan Royals have released 11 players including Jaydev Unadkat, whom they had bought back for ₹8.4 crore in 2019 after paying ₹11.5 crore for him in 2018. —PTI

RELEASE LIST

Chennai Super Kings: Chaitanya Bishnoi, David Willey, Ojunay Shorey, Mohit Sharma, Sam Billings, Scott Kuggeleijn.
Dehi Capitals: Anshu Bains, Bandaru Ayyappa, Chris Morris, Colin Ingram, Colin Munro, Hanuma Vihari, Jai Sakana, Manjot Kalra, Nathu Singh.
Kings XI Punjab: Agnivesh Ayachi, Andrew Tye, David Miller, Moises Henriques, Prabhshir Singh, Sam Curran, Varun Chakravarthy.
Kolkata Knight Riders: Anrich Nortje, Carlos Brathwaite, Chris Lynn, Joe Denly, KC Cariappa, Matt Kelly, Nikhil Naik, Piyush Chawla, Pritvi Raj Varra, Robin Uthappa, Shrikant Mundhe.
Mumbai Indians: Adam Milne, Alzarri Joseph, Barinder Sran, Ben Cutting, Beuran Hendricks, Evin Lewis, Jason Behrendorff, Pankaj Jaswal, Rasikh Dar, Yuvraj Singh.
Rajasthan Royals: Arjuman Birla, Ashton Turner, Ish Sodhi, Jaydev Unadkat, Liam Livingstone, Oshane Thomas, Prashant Chopra, Rahul Tripathi, Shubham Ranjane, Stuart Binny, Sudheshan Midhun.
Royal Challengers Bangalore: Akshdeep Nath, Colin de Grandhomme, Dale Steyn, Heinrich Klassen, Himmat Singh, Kulwant Khejroliya, Marcus Stoinis, Willard Kumar, Nathan Coulter-Nile, Prayas Ray Barman, Shimron Hetmyer, Tim Southee.
Sunrisers Hyderabad: Deepak Hooda, Martin Gupthill, Ricky Bhui, Shakib Al Hasan, Yusuf Pathan.

RCB release most

"Of the eight franchises, Royal Challengers Bangalore (12) have released the most players while Sunrisers Hyderabad (5) have released the least players from their squad," it added.

Defending champions Mumbai Indians have retained 18 players including veteran Sri Lankan pacer Lasith Malinga despite his fitness issues while releasing 12.

They roughly have Rs 28 crore to work with at the auction.

Three-time IPL champions Chennai Super Kings

SAFETY | WORLD SERIES

Blake to promote T20 cricket event

Mumbai, Nov. 15: World and Olympic 100m and 200m champion sprinter Yohan Blake will be in India to promote the Road Safety World Series — a T20 cricket event to be held in February next year.

Blake, a favourite to win gold in 100m and 200m events at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, will arrive in India during the first week of December.

The 29-year-old Jamaican will undertake various activities to create awareness towards road safety in the country where around 1,50,000 people are killed and more than 4,50,000 people are critically injured in road accidents every year.

He will promote the Road Safety World Series which will be played between legends of India, Australia, South Africa, West Indies and Sri Lanka. In the first edition, the series will be played in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Pune.

Blake was shocked when he heard that one person dies every four minutes in India and out of every hundred people dying in



Yohan Blake

the world, 30 are Indians. "I have heard a lot about India and I always wanted to visit this wonderful country. I should thank the Road Safety World Series team for making this happen," Blake said.

"I am aware about the number of deaths due to road accidents in India, I am also aware of cricket's popularity in the country and how the fans idolise cricketers here.

"I am sure that the organisers will be able to achieve what they intend to through this series. Now that I am associated with this cause, I will do my best to spread the word, in India and across the globe." —PTI

Knicks sink Mavs

■ Porzingis booed in his first game back in New York

New York, Nov. 15: Marcus Morris sank a clutch three pointer with 13 seconds left to lift the New York Knicks to a 106-103 win over Kristaps Porzingis and the Dallas Mavericks on Thursday.

Porzingis, the former face of the New York Knicks, received a rude New York welcome in his first game back in the Big Apple on Thursday.

Knicks fans screamed "Go back to Latvia" and "Traitor" at the 24-year-old in his first appearance at Madison Square Garden since being traded in February.

"I wouldn't say it affected me," Porzingis said. "I heard it of course. It was pretty loud. But I tried to play my game, stay focused and not think too much about what's going on on the outside." The Latvian finished with 20 points and 11 rebounds and teammate Luca Donicic, of Slovenia, tallied his fifth triple double of the season with 33 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds.

But it wasn't enough to stop the Knicks, who won for just the third time in 12 games this season, with two of those victories at the expense of the Mavericks.

New York traded Porzingis, its first-round pick in the 2015 draft, to Dallas in February in a blockbuster deal involving six players and two first-round picks.

He was booed every time he touched the ball and every time he took a shot on Thursday.

"I get it around this league," Knicks forward Marcus Morris said, "but it was a different level." On Wednesday, Porzingis said that if social media were any indication, he expected a



Dallas Mavericks' Kristaps Porzingis (centre) drives past New York Knicks' RJ Barrett (left) and Julius Randle during the first half of an NBA game on Thursday. — AP

negative reception.

Morris' game-winning shot capped a back-and-forth fourth quarter in which there were five ties. Seth Curry put back a Tim Hardaway miss to level the score at 101-101 with 38 seconds left.

Morris dribbled for a few seconds before taking a step back and hitting the go-ahead shot. Donicic sank a basket to pull the Mavericks within one point with five seconds left.

Frank Ntilikina then hit two free throws with three seconds left to ice the win.

Heat hold on

Elsewhere, rookie Kendrick Nunn had 23 points and eight assists as the visiting Miami Heat held on for a 108-97 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

The Heat, who have won six of their past eight games, improved to 8-3 on the season. Miami's Bam Adebayo collected 16 points and 15 rebounds, and rookie Tyler Herro scored 16 points in his return from a one-game absence caused by a sprained ankle.

Jimmy Butler had 14 points and six assists for the Heat, who led 68-44 at the half.

Kevin Love had 21 points and 10 rebounds while Collin Sexton chipped in with 15 points for the Cavaliers.

Larry Nance came off the bench to finish with 14 points and eight rebounds for Cleveland, who lost for the fifth time in seven contests.

Also, Jrue Holiday scored 36 points to spoil Paul George's season debut and lead the New Orleans Pelicans to a 132-

127 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers.

George was playing for the first time since signing as a free agent with the Clippers because he'd been recovering from shoulder surgery last spring.

George finished with 33 points in 24 minutes but turned the ball over three times late in the game to Holiday.

Holiday finished with six steals, including another one on Lou Williams' attempted pass in the final seconds to clinch the win. —AFP

KWABENA STARS AS GHANA STAY IN GAMES RACE

Johannesburg, Nov. 15: Owusu Kwabena came off the bench to score twice in a 2-0 win over Mali on Thursday that took Ghana closer to a first appearance at the Olympic Games football tournament since 2004.

The victory, coupled with Cameroon losing 2-1 to hosts Egypt at another Cairo stadium, gave Ghana second place in Group A by the slenderest of margins.

Ghana and Cameroon finished level on four points — five behind Egypt — but the Black Meteors (plus one) edged the Indomitable Cubs (level) on goal difference.

The Ghanaians were indebted to Spain-based Kwabena, and Egypt wonder boy Aftmost Mohamed, who scored both goals for his team, with Eric Auk levelling for Cameroon in between.

The eight-nation league will decide which three countries represent Africa in Tokyo. —AFP



Sergio Ramos who plays for Spain national side struggles during Real Madrid's Spanish La Liga soccer match against Eibar on Saturday. — AP

Ramos, Spain's all-time record appearance maker with 168 international caps.

"We hope that it will be settled as quickly as pos-

sible, but our country finds a balance in every sense of the word, in all regions.

"After that, whether to play in Barcelona, why

not?" Spain, who have already booked a spot at Euro 2020, play Malta in their penultimate qualifying game on Friday in Cadiz. —AFP

SPANISH LEAGUE

Villareal match in US called off

Madrid, Nov. 15: The match between Villarreal and Atletico Madrid in the United States next month was called off Friday after the Spanish league lost a court battle against the Spanish soccer federation.

The league said a Madrid court denied an injunction to force the federation to approve the staging of the match abroad. It had accused the federation of unfair competition.

The league said the case against the federation will continue despite Friday's ruling. It hopes to be able to stage a regular-season game in the U.S. beginning in February, when the case is expected to be settled.

Last season, the league unsuccessfully tried to



La Ceramica Stadium is home to Spanish League club Villarreal soccer club. — AP

take a match between Girona and Barcelona to Florida, an attempt also hindered by the federation's lack of approval.

The league has a 15-year partnership with the group Relevant to pro-

mote soccer and bring games to the United States.

"Staging an official LaLiga match abroad is part of a long-term LaLiga strategy for international growth," the

BARCELONA SITUATION

Not ideal moment to play: Ramos

Cadiz (Spain), Nov. 15: Spain captain Sergio Ramos said on Thursday he thinks the national side could play in Barcelona for the first time since 2004 once current political tensions have eased, but admitted that now is not the "ideal" time.

The first El Clasico of the season between Barcelona and Real Madrid, originally scheduled for October 26 at the Camp Nou, was postponed until December 18 due to violent pro-independence protests in Catalonia.

The Spanish national team, the 2010 World Cup winners, have not played in Barcelona since a friendly against Peru at the Olympic Stadium 15 years ago, and have not graced the Camp Nou since a game against the Netherlands in 1987.

"This may not be the ideal moment, since we have even suspended a Clasico for obvious reasons beyond our control and our opinions," said

BRAZIL TO PLAY MEXICO IN U17 WORLD CUP FINAL

Sao Paulo, Nov. 15: Brazil and Mexico will face off Sunday in the U17 World Cup final. Brazil advanced Thursday night with a 3-2 win over France.

France opened the scoring with Arnaud Kalimuendo-Muinga and Nathanael Mbuku, but Kaio Jorge, Gabriel Veron e Lazaro put Brazil in the final.

Earlier, Mexico beat the Netherlands 4-3 on penalties after a 1-1 draw in regular time. Youri Regeer opened the scoring for the Dutch at 74 minutes, but Efrain Alvarez tied the game a short time later.

Goalkeeper Eduardo Garcia saved three penalties to give Mexico a place in the final.

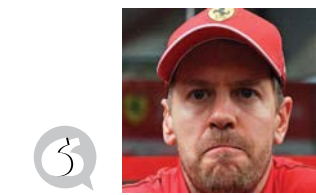
Sunday's decider will be at the Bezerro stadium in Brasilia. —AP

Taekwondo trials from Dec. 1-10

New Delhi: The IOA-appointed ad-hoc panel for taekwondo will conduct open trials to select athletes for the 13th South Asian Games (SAG) to be held in Nepal from December 1 to 9. The selection trials will be held at Aurangabad Sports Authority of India (SAI) Centre from November 18 to 20. The trials will be followed by a coaching camp from November 22 to 30. In July this year, the Indian Olympic Association was forced to form a five-member ad-hoc panel to run the affairs of taekwondo in the country and conduct the federation's election within six months following the faction-ridden national federation's suspension by the Sports Ministry. —PTI

TOP DRIVERS FOR JK TYRE FESTIVAL

New Delhi: For the first time in the history of Indian motorsports, all its leading personalities, starting from India's first F1 driver Narain Karthikeyan, ace rally driver Gaurav Gill to multiple national racing champion Anindith Reddy, will come together and set the track ablaze in the JK Tyre Festival of Speed (JKFOS) later this month. A first of its kind extravaganza, the Festival of Speed is a massive bouquet of every possible racing discipline being laid out: X1 Formula Racing Cars, LGB-Formula 4 cars, 1000 & 600cc Super Bikes, Gixxer Cup and lots more. "The JKNRC finale is known as the biggest sports spectacle, not counting cricket matches, in the Capital. It draws over 40,000 fans and we offer each of them a wholesome package of entertainment, which includes pure racing, stunts, entertainment and top celebrities. This year with more partners joining in, we decided to repackaging the entire weekend as the JK Tyre Festival of Speed and can assure our fans that it is going to be biggest motorsport extravaganza in the country," Mr. Sanjay Sharma, Head- Motorsport, JK Tyre said on Friday. —Agencies



I personally don't have any motivation to prove them wrong.

— Sebastian Vettel defended Ferrari on Red Bull driver Max Verstappen claims

SHORT TAKES

Vettel hits at cheating claims

Sao Paulo: Sebastian Vettel and his Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc defended their team Thursday, dismissing suggestions that the Italian outfit had done anything suspicious to generate extra engine power this year. Speaking ahead of this weekend's Brazilian Grand Prix, four-time world champion Vettel declined to go into any detail, but made clear his feelings on "cheating" claims made by Red Bull's Max Verstappen in the wake of the United States Grand Prix two weeks ago. "I don't think there is much to be said about it," said Vettel. "I think that comment was very immature... I ignore it because it is irrelevant. We want to answer on the circuit," he added. —AFP

Fabio quickest in first practice

Valencia: French rider Fabio Quartararo posted the quickest time in first practice for the season-ending Valencia Grand Prix on Friday, with world champion Marc Marquez third on the timesheets. The 20-year-old, who is bidding to cap a breakthrough season with his maiden win this weekend, edged out Jack Miller in the opening session. Three-time MotoGP world champion Jorge Lorenzo was only 18th-fastest the day after announcing he will retire after the race. Marquez, who was crowned top-class world champion for a sixth time last month, is looking for only his second MotoGP win in Valencia and was just 0.077 seconds slower than Quartararo. —AFP



Ridhima champion

Ridhima Dilawari wins the 15th and final leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour to win her fifth title of the season



He was the better player in all aspects and absolutely deserved to win.

— Novak Djokovic, World No.2, after his 4-6, 3-6 defeat to Roger Federer at the ATP Finals

SHORT TAKES

City lose Financial Fair Play appeal

Lausanne: Manchester City have lost their appeal against the decision of UEFA to refer the English champions to its adjudicatory chamber over alleged Financial Fair Play violations, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) said on Friday. City reacted angrily when they were referred to the adjudicatory chamber of UEFA's club financial control body by its investigatory chamber in May. The club said it would appeal to CAS, but the sports court dismissed their initial appeal, saying on Friday that City had not "exhausted the legal remedies available to it prior to the appeal". It means City have failed in their attempt to stop UEFA from investigating the allegations they supplied false financial information, with CAS saying their appeal was "inadmissible".

The investigatory chamber had also recommended that City be sanctioned by UEFA. Possible punishments include a suspension from the Champions League, a transfer ban or a fine. — AFP

Ashalata gets AFC player nomination

Kuala Lumpur: Indian women's football team captain Loitongbam Ashalata Devi was on Friday nominated for the AFC Player of the Year at the AFC Annual Awards to be held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on December 2.

The 26-year-old footballer from Imphal has enjoyed an impressive year by leading India to the Olympic 2020 Qualifiers Round 2 and winning the 2019 SAFF Championship title. The defender was also instrumental in helping her club, Sethu FC, win the Indian Women's League crown. She was subsequently voted as the Women's Player of the Year for the 2018-2019 season by the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

China's Li Ying, who was part of the team in the FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019 and Japan captain Saki Kumagai were also nominated for the AFC Player of the Year award in women's category. — PTI

PARA ATHLETE SHARAD WINS SILVER

Dubai: India's celebrated para high-jumpers Sharad Kumar and Mariyappan Thangavelu qualified for next year's Tokyo Paralympics after claiming the silver and the bronze medal respectively in the World Para-Athletics Championships here. Two-time Asian Para Games champion Sharad Kumar cleared the bar with season's best effort of 1.83 metres, while Mariyappan, a Rio Paralympic gold-medallist, settled for the bronze, also with a season's best performance of 1.80 metres here on Thursday evening. The gold went to Sam Grewe, who won the top honours with a championship record of 1.86 metres.

Sharad, the former world no.1, stayed in the lead initially clearing the bar at 1.67m until 1.83m before Grewe surged ahead with 1.86m to be on top. Mariyappan, who failed to clear 1.83 metres in his last attempt, later admitted that he couldn't perform his best. Also performing in the same event was Ramsingh Padhiya, who settled for the fifth place with an effort of 1.77 metres. Earlier in the day, Lal Vinay Kumar, the Asian Para Games bronze-medallist, claimed the bronze in men's 400m T44 event, and a Tokyo 2020 spot, finishing in 55.49 seconds. After the penultimate day's action, India has nine medals — two gold, two silver and five bronze — from the Championships. China lead the medals tally with 53 medals including 23 gold medals, followed by Brazil (37). — PTI



England's Harry Kane (left) shoots to score his third goal during their UEFA Euro 2020 qualifying Group 'A' match against Montenegro at Wembley Stadium in London on Thursday. England won 7-0.

— AFP

CR7 does the 'trick

Ronaldo nets his ninth hat-trick for Portugal

Faro (Portugal), Nov. 15: Cristiano Ronaldo scored his ninth international hat-trick as Portugal moved to the brink of qualifying for Euro 2020 with a 6-0 thrashing of Lithuania in Faro on Thursday.

The reigning European champions were made to wait for qualification however as Serbia battled to a 3-2 win over Luxembourg in the other game in Group 'B'.

Ronaldo had been substituted in his last two club games by Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri, with the Italian claiming the striker had been struggling with a knee injury.

He reportedly left the stadium before the final whistle after being taken off by Sarri during Juve's 1-0 Serie 'A' win over AC Milan at the weekend.

Portugal sit second in the standings behind Ukraine, who have already qualified, and one point clear of Serbia, but can secure their spot at next year's finals with victory in Luxembourg on Sunday.

Ronaldo has now scored 98 international goals and will be hoping to become the second-ever player to reach 100 this weekend.

Iranian great Ali Daei holds the all-time record with 109 international strikes. Ronaldo got Portugal underway with a seventh-minute penalty after being brought down in the area himself, before adding a fantastic second midway through the first half with a curling effort into the top corner.

Benfica midfielder Pizzi drilled in a fine third less than seven minutes into the second period.

Goals from Goncalo Paciencia and Bernardo Silva made it five just after the hour mark, and Ronaldo was allowed the freedom of the Lithuanian area to complete the 55th treble of his



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo reacts during their Euro 2020 Group 'B' qualification match against Lithuania at the Algarve stadium in Faro, Portugal, on Thursday. Portugal won the game 6-0.

— AFP

I knew he (Cristiano Ronaldo) was able to play. His match put an end to the doubts about his physical condition, for those who had doubts. I personally had none.

— FERNANDO SANTOS

Portugal coach on Cristiano Ronaldo

career. Ronaldo has scored 13 goals in his last seven Portugal appearances. Meanwhile, at Wembley, England manager Gareth Southgate revelled in his side's ruthlessness as a 7-0 thrashing of Montenegro sealed qualification for Euro 2020 in style in the 'Three Lions' 1,000th match.

Harry Kane moved into sixth in the all-time list of England goalscorers with a first half hat-trick to take his tally for the qualifying campaign to 11 in seven games.

Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, Marcus Rashford, Aleksandar Sofranac's own goal and Tammy Abraham's first at international level rounded off the scoring as Southgate's men sealed top spot in Group 'A' with a stunning record of 33 goals in seven games.

Meanwhile, Turkey booked their place at Euro 2020 after a goalless qualifying draw with Iceland which also sent world champions France to next year's finals.

World champions France, who lost the Euro 2016 final as hosts to Portugal, were guaranteed a ticket to next year's tournament before kick-off in Paris following a 0-0 draw between Turkey and Iceland.

However their hopes of turning the final home qualifier into an evening of celebration at a chilly Stade de France were compromised when Vadim Rata punished abject defending to give Moldova a shock ninth-minute lead.

Raphael Varane levelled for France 10 minutes before half-time, triggering furious protests from Moldovan players and their coach who argued goalkeeper Alexei Koselev was fouled by Giroud.

The Chelsea forward grabbed the winner from the spot 11 minutes from time after Lucas Digne was cut down in the box to leave France two points clear of Turkey at the top of Group 'H'.

— AFP

GERMANY FACE BELAURS IN GROUP 'C' ENCOUNTER

Dusseldorf (Germ-any), Nov. 15: Joshua Kimmich says Germany hope to seduce home fans with "sexy football" to brush Belarus aside on Saturday, in an attempt to boost both flagging attendance figures and their bid to qualify for the Euro 2020 finals.

With two qualifiers left, European powerhouses the Netherlands, who face Northern Ireland in Belfast on Saturday, and Germany are level at the

top of Group 'C' on 15 points with the top two teams will be progressing.

So far, the Dutch and Germans have only lost to each other, with Germany's 3-2 win in Amsterdam last March avenged when the Oranje enjoyed a 4-2 victory in Hamburg in September.

The Germans will claim their Euro finals berth on Saturday with a win provided the Dutch don't lose in Belfast.

— AFP

Federer has the last laugh in Paris

London, Nov. 15: Roger Federer produced a near-flawless performance as he avenged his Wimbledon defeat by Novak Djokovic and qualified for the last four of the ATP Finals with a 6-4, 6-3 victory on Thursday.

The Swiss started the tournament with a chastening straight-sets defeat to Dominic Thiem but found his best form when it mattered.

Defeat for the second seed spells the end of his bid to overtake Rafael Nadal and finish as year-end number one.

Roared on by a raucous packed house at London's O2 Arena, six-time champion Federer looked in the groove from the start, cranking up the pressure on Djokovic's serve and dropping just three points on his own serve in the whole set.

The Serbian upped his game at the start of the second set but Federer saved the one break point he faced and broke twice to canter to victory.

The third seed, making his 17th appearance at the ATP Finals, is into his 16th semifinal at the year-end event.

Djokovic needed to win the title to have a chance at knocking Nadal off the top spot, but now the Spaniard is guaranteed to finish the year as the top-ranked player for the fifth time, tying him with Federer, Djokovic and American Jimmy Connors.

"Great atmosphere, great opponent. It was definitely incredibly special. I enjoyed it from the beginning. I played incredible and I knew I had to because that's what Novak does. It was definitely magical. You guys made it super special. I can't thank you enough," said Federer.

Speaking about what was

I won match point I guess. It was so close at Wimbledon. It was a privilege to play that match, so many ups and downs. I couldn't be more happy right now.

— ROGER FEDERER

after his win over Novak Djokovic at the ATP Finals

different from Wimbledon, he said: "I won match point I guess. It was so close at Wimbledon. It was a privilege to play that match, so many ups and downs. I couldn't be more happy right now."

Federer finishes second in Group Bjorn Borg, behind Thiem, who also beat Djokovic earlier this week. The Swiss will face the Group Andre Agassi winner on Saturday.

Djokovic looked nervy at the start of the winner-takes-all contest, double-faulting twice in the third game, in which he was broken to love.

As cries of "Let's go Roger, let's go" rang around the cavernous stadium, Federer was dead-eyed on his serve, hitting eight aces, including a second-serve ace, in the first set.

Federer's service level dipped in the second set and Djokovic earned his first break point of the match in the fourth game, which the Swiss saved.

He broke Djokovic again in the fifth game to take an iron grip on the match and repeated the trick to take the second set 6-3.

Djokovic, who now holds a 26-23 advantage, had won their past five meetings, including their epic five-set battle in the final at Wimbledon in July, during which he saved two championship points. — AFP



Roger Federer celebrates his straight sets win over Novak Djokovic in their men's singles round-robin match of the ATP World Tour Finals tournament at the O2 Arena in London on Thursday. Federer won 6-4, 6-3.

— AFP

Srikanth in Hong Kong semifinals

Hong Kong, Nov. 15: Indian ace Kidambi Srikanth progressed to the semifinals of the \$400,000 Hong Kong Open after Olympic champion Chen Long of China decided to quit the contest owing to an injury, here on Friday.

Unseeded Srikanth, ranked 13th in the world, was leading by a game when Chen decided to concede the match, thus handing the Indian a place in the last-four of a BWF World Tour event for the first time since March.

The last time Srikanth crossed the quarterfinal stage was at the India Open Super 500. He had finished runners-up at the event. Friday's triumph was Srikanth's second career win over the Chinese shuttler. The Indian still trails Chen 2-6 in head-to-head win-loss record.

The former World No.1 will next face local favourite Lee Cheuk Yiu on Saturday.

Lee defeated former world champion Viktor Axelsen of Denmark 21-14, 21-19 in another quarterfinal.

Srikanth had beaten the 23-year-old Lee in straight games at the India Open last year in their only career meeting.

In the match, Srikanth opened up a 2-0 lead early on and kept extending it as Chen struggled with his movement.

The Indian quickly jumped to a 15-4 lead at one stage and eventually sealed the opening game comfortably. Just after Srikanth pocketed the first game in just 15 minutes, World No.4 Chen hung up his racquet to put an end to the contest. — PTI

Joshi, Khan impress in golf event

Gurugram, Nov. 15: Nine Indians, including defending champion Khalin Joshi and in-form Rashid Khan, fired a matching five-under 67 to share the fifth spot with two others at the smog-hit Panasonic Open India, which was reduced to a three-day affair on Friday.

The first round of the Panasonic Open India resumed at 11am with players, who were scheduled for the afternoon rounds on the opening day, beginning their challenge at the Classic Golf and Country Club here.

Joshi and Rashid along with Karandeep Kochhar, Kshitij Naveed Kaul and Vikrant Chopra joined Shiv Kapur, Arjun Das, M Dharma and Shankar Das at tied fifth. Hung Chien-yao of Chinese Taipei and Wang Wei-Lun are the non-Indians in the group tied at fifth. The presence of nine Indians in Top-15 increases the chances of an Indian winner for the eighth time in nine years in the event. — PTI

Rijiju wants improved state-centre relations

New Delhi, Nov. 15: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday called for collective efforts from the centre and the states in making India a fit nation and help build a sporting culture in the country.

Rijiju made the appeal during his inaugural address at the Conference of Ministers and Secretaries of the States and Union Territories in charge of Youth Affairs and Sports here on Friday.

Stressing that India is a young nation and the need of the hour is to channelise the energy of youth for national development, Rijiju called upon the states to sync their activities with the centre's programmes for better implementation.

"The Youth Affairs and Sports departments have large human capital at their disposal, which more than makes up for the dearth of the financial resources. We should recognise our strength," he said.



"There are over 80 lakh volunteers working in various programmes of the Centre. On 2nd October this year, over 24 lakh volunteers participated in the plogging programme, making it one of the largest human participation in the world in a single programme," the Sports Minister added. Rijiju said Fit India should become a citizen movement. On the Khelo India programme, the Minister said that the initiative has started yielding results. Rijiju said that the country

The Youth Affairs and Sports departments have large human capital at their disposal, which makes up for the dearth of the financial resources. We should recognise our strength.

— KIREN RIJIJU Sports Minister on building a sporting culture

should aim to be among the top 10 performers in the 2028 Olympics Games.

He called upon the states to give sports priority in their scheme of things, and create sports culture.

On the issue of sports and fitness equipment being in the highest tax bracket in the GST, he called upon the states to take it up with their respective finance ministers, who can then make recommendations to the GST council to lower the tax burden.

— PTI

Squad for tri-nation hockey

New Delhi, Nov. 15: India on Friday named a strong 18-member junior women's team for a tri-nation hockey tournament to be held in Canberra, Australia from December 3 to 8.

Besides India, the other competing teams are hosts Australia and New Zealand. The tournament will see India play a total of four matches — two each against Australia and New Zealand.

In the tournament opener, Australia will take on New Zealand while India will play their first match on December 4 against New Zealand. The Indian team junior women's team will be captained by Suman Devi Thoudam while Ishika Choudhary has been named as the vice-captain. — PTI

TEAM: Suman Devi Thoudam (captain), Ishika Choudhary (vice-captain), Bichu Devi Kharibam, Rashanpreet Kaur, Priyanka, Mahima Choudhary, Marina Lalramnghaki, Gagandeep Kaur, Prabheen Kaur, Mariana Kujur, Chetna, Reet, Baljeet Kaur, Ajmita Kujur, Beauty Dungdung, Sharmila Devi, Deepika Lalrindiki.

