

Can Remainers unite quickly? Or their cause is lost!



James Forsyth

Ever since the referendum, the two strongest political forces in Britain have been Leave and Remain. Loyalty to political parties has faded, but feelings about the referendum result are almost stronger now than they were on June 23, 2016. For Remainers, these are tense times: for years, there has been the hope of a second referendum and stopping Brexit. But if the Tories win a majority next month, then the UK will

leave the European Union on January 31. If Remainers could organise themselves into a single political force, they would be almost unstoppable: 45 per cent of the public identify as Remainers, easily enough to win a majority under first past the post. Leavers are about 41 per cent, while only 26 per cent of voters describe themselves as Tory and 23 per cent as Labour. But the Remain side has been unable to unite behind any one party or leader. This is a particular problem for them now that Boris Johnson is the Tory leader. He has largely succeed-

ed in the mission for which he was elected: to make the Tories into an indisputably Leave party and to crush support for Nigel Farage's Brexit Party. Every Tory candidate is now signed up to leaving the European Union with Boris Johnson's deal, while the doubters have been rather brutally cast out. An extraordinary 71 per cent of those who backed Brexit in 2016 are now voting Tory. Yet on the Remain side, no party can command the support of half of those who voted to stay in back in 2016. In our first-past-the-post electoral system, this asymmetry could prove fatal to Remain. There have been attempts to form a Remain alliance: the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and Plaid Cymru have stood down for each other in about 60 seats. But this pact is only likely to make a difference in a handful of places: any Remain alliance that doesn't include Labour is *Hamlet* without the

BREXIT LOOMS
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Prince. Even when it comes to tactical voting, there is no single Remain voice, no one group from which to take advice. The prospect of Remain tactical voting is much more worrying to Cabinet ministers than the Labour Party is. If this election sees a split in the centre left, then the Tories will end up with a comfortable majority. But if all Remainers vote tactically, then Boris Johnson will

fall short of the numbers he needs. But the very fact that we are having an election demonstrates the limits of Remain unity. Boris Johnson was trapped in Parliament, unable to pass his Brexit deal unamended. But he got the election he wanted when the Remain Opposition's united front against an election cracked. The Lib Dems and the Scottish Nationalists both decided to go for a December election, thinking the timing would work best for them. Labour ended up with little option but to embrace the idea. Time and time again, partisan advantage has proven fatal to the idea of a full-blown Remain alliance. The other problem is Jeremy Corbyn. He is determined to maintain ambiguity in Labour's Brexit position, so as not to alienate the Brexit voters currently being targeted by the Tories. This position is often embarrassing for him

when he's asked to spell it out. He says that he wants to negotiate his own deal, then have a referendum but — remarkably — he won't say which side he'll back in that vote. In his television debate with Boris Johnson, he risked ridicule by repeatedly refusing to answer this question. Jeremy Corbyn is Remain's fundamental problem in this campaign. The most effective strategy for denying the Tories a majority for their Brexit deal would be mass tactical voting. But that would involve a lot of non-Labour people having to vote for Corbyn's candidates and risk him ending up in Downing Street. Hence the problem: there can be no effective Remain alliance without Labour, but there can be no Labour involvement without Corbyn. The reason the stakes are so high is because the Remain faction in the Commons have refused to compromise since

the referendum. At pretty much any point in the last Parliament, they could have secured a soft Brexit. They could have engineered a deal that would have kept the UK in the customs union and made it follow EU rules in a host of areas. But they chose not to do that, betting everything on securing a new referendum and stopping the whole thing. They may well succeed in that. After all, the Tory Brexit ultras rejected the compromise that was the May deal, and are now on the verge of getting the much cleaner Brexit that they wanted. The rearguard action fought by Remainers since their referendum loss has been remarkable. But if the new Parliament backs Boris' Brexit, their cause will be lost. And this is where they will end up, unless they can find a way to turn things around in the next two weeks.

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Govt made SBI accept expired bonds sold in 'illegal' window



Nitin Sethi

This is Part 5 of the 6-part #PaisaPolitics investigative series by HuffPost. Reprinted with permission from the Huffington Post.

The finance ministry violated a vital anti-money laundering rule by allowing anonymous donors to donate expired electoral bonds worth ₹10 crore to an unidentified political party, or parties, soon after the May 2018 Karnataka state elections resulted in a hung Assembly. The ministry took this decision after the "holders" of these bonds — i.e. political parties — asked the State Bank of India (SBI), the bank tasked with stewarding the electoral bond scheme, to accept the expired bonds, documents reviewed by HuffPost India establish. That these bonds were purchased at all was because Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Office had — illegally — directed the finance ministry to break its own rules around the sale of these secretive electoral bonds by opening a "special" 10-day window for them days before Karnataka went to polls. The documents, obtained by transparency activist Commodore (Retd.) Lokesh Batra under RTI and reviewed by HuffPost India, do not name the donors or the political parties that were allowed to accept this set of expired bonds. In the politically tumultuous days immediately after the inconclusive election in Karnataka's results,

PM Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Opposition leaders accused each other of trying to bribe MLAs to cross party lines. The acceptance of these expired bonds at such a politically sensitive time, in clear violation of the rules governing electoral bonds, sold in a window illegally opened at the direction of the PMO, on the basis of an arbitrary exception signed off by the finance ministry, vividly illustrates why the Reserve Bank of India, the Election Commission of India, Opposition parties, transparency activists, and election watchdogs such as the Association for Democratic Reforms have opposed these bonds. It is worth noting that the BJP has garnered 95 per cent of the money donated through the first tranche of electoral bonds. The Supreme Court of India is currently hearing a petition on the legality of electoral bonds. Opposition lawmakers interrupted Parliament to demand a debate on electoral bonds as Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was also present in the House, looked stonily into the middle distance. **BROKEN RULES** When then finance minister Arun Jaitley first introduced the concept of electoral bonds in his February 2017 Budget-day speech, the Reserve Bank of India warned that the bonds could be used to launder funds. The scheme would work in the following way: SBI would be empowered to sell electoral bonds — literally

ELECTORAL BONDS-5
When then finance minister Arun Jaitley first introduced the concept of electoral bonds in his February 2017 Budget-day speech, the Reserve Bank of India warned that the bonds could be used to launder funds

physical pieces of paper, or "bearer bonds" — that could be purchased by any individual, corporation, trust or NGO wishing to donate money to a political party. The donor would then hand over the physical bond to the political party of their choice, who would then deposit the money in a specially designated account. As HuffPost India has previously reported, the RBI opposed this system till the very end before it finally recommended two critical precautions to limit the potential for money laundering: The bonds should only be sold to donors twice a year in specially-designated time periods, called windows, and must be deposited by the recipient political party within 15 days of purchase. In January 2018, the finance ministry published the rules governing the sale and purchase of these bonds — notably, the bonds would be sold by SBI only four times a year (with a provision for 30 additional days in general election years) and would have to be redeemed within 15 days of the date of purchase. But just ahead of the Karnataka Assembly elections in May 2018, as HuffPost India has previously reported, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Office asked for an unscheduled 10-day window from May 1 to May 10, when

anonymous donors could buy bonds to donate funds. On May 23, 2018, according to a report sent by SBI to the finance ministry, "some EB holders" with bonds worth ₹20 crores went to SBI's main branch in New Delhi. EB, or Electoral Bond, holders refers to representatives of political parties — i.e. those holding the physical bond that must be deposited in a political party's account. Half the bonds had been bought on May 3, 2018 and the other half on May 5, 2018, and both, SBI noted, had expired as their 15 calendar-day period of redemption had lapsed. But, said SBI in its report, the bond holders requested that the 15 calendar-day rule be bent, and the bonds be redeemed anyway, as they were being deposited within 15 working days. SBI's New Delhi branch informed its corporate headquarters on the same day, documents show. The very next day, on May 24, 2018, Mrutyunjay Mahapatra, then the bank's deputy managing director, wrote on behalf of SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar to the finance ministry, asking whether they should allow the redemption of these expired bonds. "A few of the holders have approached us with the interpretation that these are valid for 15 working days. We request you to clarify the matter as to whether as on the date of receipt of the bonds at our counters, 15 working days or 15 calendar days are to be counted as validity period," Mahapatra asked in the letter on behalf of the SBI chairman. The finance ministry acted with alacrity. The very same day, an official drafted a response. Vijay Kumar, deputy director in the economic affairs ministry, said, "This is clarified that the stipulation means a total of 15

days, including non-working days in between." Hence, the bonds had lapsed and as per the rules, the money was to be donated to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, an official, non-partisan fund used for charitable works, and to provide immediate relief to those affected by natural disasters. But Kumar, the deputy director, wasn't done. He then wrote, "As some amount of lack of complete clarity may have been witnessed in the bonds issue in last windows, SBI may grant credit to such bond holders of bond purchased before May 10, 2018 if the bonds were deposited in 15 working days." He added, "No such accommodation will be available in future." This letter was approved by the secretary of the department of economic affairs, S.C. Garg, the highest-ranking official in the department. The response was sent back to the SBI chairman the same day. The SBI headquarters informed its New Delhi main branch and before the day was over, the political party, or parties, involved were allowed to redeem the expired bonds worth ₹10 crore, that were bought on May 5, 2018. The other tranche, bonds worth ₹10 crores bought on May 3, 2018, was sent to the PM's relief fund, the documents show, as they were outside the finance ministry's exceptional "accommodation". "Which party was done this favour with such alacrity and speed?" Commodore (Retd.) Lokesh Batra, the transparency activist who unearthed these documents, said in an interview with HuffPost India. The answer to his questions and several secrets still remain hidden from the public eye. ■ To be continued

India must reject plea for asylum by MQM's Altaf



Bhopinder Singh

The one-upmanship ritual in the hyphenated Indo-Pak drama has seen an unending series of distractions, posturing and embarrassments afforded on each other — which do not move the needle on the fundamental concerns besetting Indo-Pak dissonance at all. However, the competitive spirit underlying these attempts to out-smart each other certainly galvanises the "mood" of the domestic constituents and cadres in "echo chambers" — that is invaluable to the politicians on both sides of the border. The symbolic "tripping" of each other ranges from debarring engagement of artistes, sportspersons, businesses and to the other end of the more dangerous and provocative practice of patronising insurgents/terrorists under the garb of providing "moral and political support". In this melee of domestic pressures, to be seen to have "sorted out the other" points to yellow journalism pertaining to frivolities like which-leader-looked-through-the-other-in-a-meeting, and can assume prime space and time on national reportage across both sides of the Line of Control. So, while Pakistan needles India on Kashmir, the Indian side retaliates by pointing out the warts in the Pakistani situation in Balochistan, minority and sectarian issues, terror "nurseries", etc. Post an action or accusation, the subsequent reaction from the international community is tallied and presented in the public space against each other, with the larger count of "supporting countries" bolstering the claims of a said country towards its moves or counter-moves.

As a larger and more heterogeneous society with an unambiguous constitutional commitment towards secularism, liberalism and democratic rule, India has maintained decidedly more "high-ground" vis-a-vis the more assertively homogenous reality of Pakistan that has had multiple interruptions to its democracy, and is acknowledged even by itself to be dangerously perched on the sliding slope of societal extremism. This divide between the two nations is genealogical and the logical outcome of two extremely divergent paths chosen on the vivisection of the land in 1947, where one chose the suffocating airlessness of the "two-nation theory", while the other chose the openness of "unity in diversity". After seven decades of fundamental irreconcilability between the two nations, the interim period of Cold War leanings and manoeuvres followed by the global emergence of religio-nationalistic intolerance has only widened the chasm. In such times and resultant games, the ultimate sovereign goal happens when one of "theirs" joins "us", and in that lies the ultimate vindication of "our" position — versus "them"! These "trophies" are then paraded, spouting venom on the land of their forefathers, whilst simultaneously quenching the meaningless bloodlust of the people in the recipient country. While Pakistan has recklessly courted, supported and showcased terrorists from Indian insurgencies — the Indian response has been less beligerent and more nuanced by only "trophying" intellectuals or artistes who disagree with their Pakistani narrative. One such aspirant who wants to jump ships is the fugitive Pakistani politician, Altaf Hussain, founder of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and in exile in London. The quest to ingratiate himself to India has led the famously theatrical politician to sing "Saare Jahan Se

Acha, Hindustan Humara" on television to buttress his clownish request for asylum in India or at least secure some financial assistance from the Indian government. Knowing fully well the power of an audio-visual spectacle of a prominent Pakistani supporting the recent Supreme Court adjudication on Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi case and asking those who disagree with the same to be banished to Pakistan endears him to those who believe that his "switch" will somehow be to India's benefit. Realistically, the man who once ruled the mean streets of Karachi and had emerged as the head of the third-largest political party is well past his prime, relevance and impact, as his own party has also disowned its colourful founder. The childish antics of the one-time leader of MQM were tolerated because it was a powerful reactionary ethnic force of Muhajirs (those who had migrated from India to Pakistan), who had their own settling down woes amidst the turf wars between them — Sindhis, Pathans and Baluch who shared Karachi, in substantial numbers. Altaf Hussain had transactional, tactical and opportunistic alliances with two of the most damaging and anti-India dictators and fellow-Muhajirs i.e. Gen. Zia ul-Haq and Gen. Pervez Musharraf. But his restrictive politics that veered exclusively around the Muhajir domain allowed him to avoid other political afflictions like anti-India rhetoric, religious "Talibanisation" or Kashmir-centricity, like the adoption of the same by the pan-Pakistan parties like the PTI, PML-N and PPP. Temptation to co-opt such a recognisable and irascible politician towards the Indian cause, notwithstanding — his known past of street violence, crudity and ignobility that defines Altaf Hussain's politics should be enough to keep him at a distance. His affixation to our sovereign position and name can only diminish, devalue and degrade the "morality" of the historical Indian position. His Johnny-come-lately act of recognising Pakistan as a "cancer for the entire world" or the "epicentre of terrorism" is driven by his own compulsions and situational circumstances — he is not a credible or a mass leader in Pakistan anymore, and his ostensible "catch" by India will transform none in the tinderbox of Pakistan. On the contrary, his incorrigible antics can only trivialise and distract from the more meaningful bilateral engagement that is now required in order to end the chill that consumes the Indo-Pak freeze. Even from the perspective of an individual's personal conscience, values and personality traits — anyone who can renege, indignify and humiliate his own country openly and seek asylum in another country that is seen as its principal enemy-state speaks volumes of the desperation, pettiness and unfaithfulness of such an individual. If he could not be true to his own country, why would such a person be true to India? He is also getting pursued for terrorism, corruption and bloodletting in the UK and not in some banana military court of Pakistan, therefore his potential welcome to India does not behave the "high ground" and stand of zero-tolerance-against-terrorism that we pursue against Pakistan. Beyond comic relief and television TRPs, Altaf Hussain brings nothing to India.

The writer is a retired lieutenant-general and a former lieutenant-governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry

Is there any cure for all the sorrows of life?



Sant Rajinder Singhji

News reports we receive through TV, newspapers, magazines, blogs, the Internet, smartphones, tablets or other devices always contain breaking news about a catastrophe in some part of the world. There are always difficulties and problems receiving attention in the local, national or international news. It's hard to go through a single day without hearing of the suffering other people are undergoing. Is that all life is — but a series of disasters strung together? Is there any cure for the

sorrows of life? Here's some breaking news that's good: there is a place of safety where you can find refuge from the sorrows of life. Where can you find that place free of sorrows? That place free of sorrows is within you. It's a place where you can connect with the peace of your soul. You can find relief from the sufferings of life. You can find the peace within you by sitting in meditation. In meditation, you can experience calm and bliss. You can realise that within you is a place where there

is no pain and suffering. Meditation can help you awaken to the realisation that your existence is more than the outer world in which your body and mind undergo suffering. You have a spiritual side which is connected to the peace and happiness within you. When you emerge from meditation, you see the world in a different light. You know that the outer sorrows of life are temporary. They will pass. When you see for yourself there's a place of peace and joy within, you are strengthened with fortitude to pass through the difficult times knowing that happiness is accessible to you within. The upliftment we receive in meditation stays with us throughout the

day. This may not change the outer suffering of the world, but we are able to spend some time daily in a place of joy that we can spread to others. When we realise there is a place free of sorrows within, we can help others access that place. We see life from a different angle, and are motivated to help and serve others. Our life becomes a song of service to help relieve others of suffering. We are filled with strength to do what we can to help make the world a better place, freeing it of sorrows. **Sant Rajinder Singhji, head of Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission, works towards promoting inner and outer peace. He can be contacted at www.sos.org**





Blot on history

Calling Pragya Thakur a terrorist, Rahul Gandhi says her remarks on Nathuram Godse marked a sad day in the history of Parliament



In Parliament, courts, govt offices, business should be held in regional languages

— M. Venkaiah Naidu
Vice-President

SHORT TAKES

SIX P81 AIRCRAFT TO BE BOUGHT

New Delhi, Nov. 28: The defence ministry on Thursday approved procurement of six P 81 anti-submarine warfare jet, indigenous development of air-borne warning and control systems (AWACS) aircraft and other military platforms at a cost of ₹22,800 crores.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council chaired by defence minister Rajnath Singh.

Officials said the DAC approved purchase of six P 81 aircraft from aerospace major Boeing to bolster the Indian Navy's anti-submarine combat capability.

"These aircraft would greatly strengthen the Navy's capabilities for maritime coastal surveillance, anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and anti-surface vessel (ASV) strike," the defence ministry said in a statement.

At present, the Indian Navy operates eight P-81 long-range maritime aircraft from INS Rajali located near Arakkonam in Tamil Nadu.

The DAC also approved procurement of twin-engine heavy helicopters for the Indian Coast Guard to help the force undertake missions to prevent maritime terrorism and infiltration of terrorists by sea routes, officials said.

As a follow-up of the indigenous airborne early warning and control programme, the DAC approved procurement of at least two additional AWACS, sources said.

TRINAMUL SWEEPS BYPOLLS

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, NOV. 28

Riding the mood against the National Register of Citizens and Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in West Bengal, the Trinamul has washed away the BJP's saffron surge after the Lok Sabha polls in the state, bagging all three constituencies in the Assembly bypolls with new faces comfortably.

Of the three seats, it won two — Kharagpur Sadar in West Midnapore and Kaliaganj in North Dinajpur — for the first time, while retaining the Karimpur seat in Nadia.

While Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's party reaped benefits out of the controversy over the NRC and the Citizenship Bill at Kaliaganj, earlier with Congress, and Karimpur seats due to its proximity to the India-Bangladesh border, it also successfully decimated the BJP at Kharagpur in a prestige fight as state BJP chief Dilip Ghosh, now Midnapore MP, was the MLA there in 2016. The winners are Tapande Deb Singh at Kaliaganj, Bimalendu Singha Roy at Karimpur and Pradip Sarkar at Kharagpur.

Trinamul's blow to the BJP, close on the heels of its failure in government formation in Maharashtra and also within six months of its winning 18 Lok Sabha seats out of the state's 42, was such havoc that its state headquarters in heart of Kolkata wore a deserted look since Thursday morning, with the announcement of the results, similar to the scene at Ms Banerjee's residence at Harish Chatterjee Street in Kalighat soon after the Lok Sabha results.

Attributing the BJP's "arrogance" and "audacity" for its defeat, the Trinamul chief underlined the impact of the NRC and Citizenship Bill, that BJP's Kaliaganj candidate, Kamal Chandra Sarkar, also acknowledged had "damaged" the party. Ms Banerjee said: "The people are seeing how the BJP is playing politics in the NRC's name. If someone declares you are not a citizen of the country after 72 years of Independence, no one would accept it."

RAJYA SABHA TAKES UP PEGASUS ISSUE

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

The Narendra Modi government on Thursday asserted that the country will not compromise on its data sovereignty and it is committed to ensure safety and security of messaging on platforms like WhatsApp. Electronics and IT minister, Ravi Shankar Prasad, said that a WhatsApp CEO-led delegation had not mentioned about any vulnerability of their system during their meetings with the ministry, and that the government was yet to receive the names of people targeted by unnamed entities using Pegasus spyware.

Prasad made the assertion while replying to calling attention motion in the Rajya Sabha on the alleged use of spyware Pegasus to compromise phone data of some persons through WhatsApp.

He said that the government had issued a notice to Israeli technology firm NSO Group, which created Pegasus, on November 26, seeking details about the malware and its impact.

Prasad informed the House that not a single FIR has been lodged and so far his ministry has received no complaint in this matter. He said that there are adequate provisions in the IT Act to ensure the safety and security of messaging on various platforms.

Prasad also added that standard operating procedures must be followed in the interest of the nation and clarified that no unauthorised interception was done.

He said, "Digital players are welcome to contribute to the growing market of India but they have to understand that safety and security of Indians are of prime importance."

On the snooping issue, the minister informed that CERT-IN had sent a notice to Israel based company NSO on November 26 of this month seeking details about the malware and its impact on Indian users.

Responding to opposition queries on data protection bill, Mr Prasad said that work is in progress in that direction and the legislation will be robust in nature.

He also took a dig on opposition members' questions wondering why journalist, leaders and others questioning the government over reportedly snooped.

Congress leader Digvijay Singh accused the government of snooping the opposition leaders, journalists, judges who are vocal against the present regime.

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■ **THERE** are adequate provisions in the IT Act to ensure the safety and security of messaging on various platforms

BIG | CHARGE

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, NOV. 28

The Assam Public Works, an NGO, on Thursday filed an FIR with Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against former Assam NRC state coordinator Prateek Hajela.

Though the CBI is yet to take the cognisance and conduct any preliminary investigation, the APW, in its FIR demanded a high-level probe into the alleged misappropriation of funds and corruption by the then NRC coordinator.

The FIR referred some specific points for investi-



Police personnel detain activist and businessman Tehseen Poonawalla during a protest against Pragya Thakur's remarks, outside Parliament in New Delhi.

— PTI

BJP bars Pragya from its party meetings

Speaker says no scope for debate on Pragya's remarks

From Page 1

The Congress leader accused the BJP of doing politics in the name of Gandhi and appropriating his and Nehru's legacy. Chowdhury said it was because of the BJP's ideology that Ms Thakur could make such comments.

The Congress leader was backed by MPs belonging to the Trinamul Congress, DMK, Left parties, NCP and the AIMIM.

Speaker Om Birla tried to pacify the agitating Opposition MPs and said he would give his ruling, asking them to take their seats. TMC leader Saugata Roy and AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi told the Speaker that they should also be given an opportunity to speak.

The Speaker, however, said the remarks of Ms Thakur were already expunged from the record and there was no scope for any debate.

Notwithstanding the Prime Minister's warning that he "will never forgive" her for insulting Mahatma Gandhi after the Bhopal MP made a similar remark campaigning during the Lok Sabha elections earlier this year, she repeated the comments in Parliament on Wednesday. Her remarks left the

Asad: Portraying Godse as patriot is BJP's inner voice

ATHER MOIN | DC HYDERABAD, NOV. 28

Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi on Thursday slammed Bharatiya Janata Party MP Pragya Thakur Singh for her controversial comments in Parliament and called her an enemy of Gandhiji and sympathiser of his killers.

Owaisi, who is in the national capital, said that portraying Nathuram Godse as a patriot is the inner voice of the BJP speaking, and it is not the first time she is praising Godse. Not satisfied with

■ **OWAISI SAID** it reflects her mentality and shows that she is an enemy of Mahatma Gandhi and has affection for his killers. This is absurd, the AIMIM MP said.

Thakur's clarification that she was speaking about someone else, he said she was lying. He asked that the record of what she had said be verified. He termed her expulsion from the Parliamentary Committee on defence as mere eye-wash, as she has been expressing these views

repeatedly.

Owaisi said it reflects her mentality and shows that she is an enemy of Mahatma Gandhi and has affection for his killers. This is absurd and shows insolence towards the father of the nation and is against the privilege of Parliament.

Owaisi said he has given a privilege notice to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Om Birla, on these remarks. If we do not take action in the House, a time will come when a photo of Godse will hang in the Central Hall of Parliament, Owaisi said.

party embarrassed and gave rise to speculation on whether she would be suspended from the party this time, or some other action will be taken against her, as her candidature in Bhopal was apparently backed by the RSS.

After facing flak from across the political spectrum over Ms Thakur's

controversial remarks, the BJP tried to distance itself from the controversy.

"The BJP never supports such statements and we do not support this ideology. We have decided Ms Thakur will not attend meetings of the BJP parliamentary party during the session," said BJP working president J.P.

Nadda. However, after the BJP removed her from the defence consultative committee and barred her from attending its parliamentary party meetings for the rest of the Winter Session, she clarified insisting that her comment were against the "insult" to revolutionary Udham Singh.

Meanwhile, the Congress and other constituents of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) are set to move a censure motion in the Lok Sabha against BJP MP Pragya Thakur for her remarks on Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse, sources said on Thursday.

Pragya: I referred to Udham Singh

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

After her controversial remark ended up creating a major political furore, with BJP coming under fire from the opposition camp, party's Bhopal MP and Malegaon blasts accused, Pragya Singh Thakur on Thursday tried to clarify that her comments in Lok Sabha was not to "insult" revolutionary Udham Singh.

Her remark on Wednesday — a repeat of what she had said during Lok Sabha polls campaigning after which Prime Minister Narendra

Storm of lies becomes so big at times that even day appears to be night but the sun does not lose its light. People should not be swayed by this storm.

— PRAGYA SINGH THAKUR
Bhopal MP

Modi had said that he will never forgive Pragya for calling Nathu-ram Godse, Mahatma Gandhi's assassin, a true patriot — had left the party embarrassed.

"Storm of lies becomes so big at times that even day appears to be night

but the sun does not lose its light. People should not be swayed by this storm. The truth is, I did not tolerate the insult to Udham Singh yesterday," the Bhopal MP tweeted after the BJP removed her from parliamentary consultative committee and barred her from attending parliamentary party meetings of the ongoing Parliament session.

During the Lok Sabha polls campaign earlier this year, Pragya Thakur, during a roadshow, had said that Godse was a 'deshbhakt' and will remain a 'deshbhakt'. She had insisted, "Those call-

ing him a terrorist should instead look at themselves. They will be given a befitting reply in this election." The BJP had immediately got into damage control and distanced itself from her statement and asked her to tender a public apology.

Meanwhile, the Congress and other constituents of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) are set to move a censure motion in the Lok Sabha against BJP MP Pragya Thakur for her remarks on Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse, sources said on Thursday.

Sonia flays govt for fiscal failure

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

Hitting out at the Modi-Shah-led BJP government, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday said the economic crisis in the country was deepening and unemployment was growing.

"There is worsening distress among farmers, traders and small and medium businesses. Consumption, especially in rural areas, is falling. Exports are declining. And the prices of essential food commodities are rising, causing hardship to households. Instead of tackling the problem, the Modi-Shah government is busy fudging statistics or, indeed, not publishing them at all," Mrs Gandhi said addressing the Congress parliamentary party meeting here.

She said that the BJP government at the Centre was clueless on how to manage the grave problems facing the country.

"The public sector has been put on the block, in all probability, to be sold off to a few favoured business people. What will be the fate of the thousands of workers at those enterprises? Lakhs of salaried and ordinary families are worried about their

deposits in banks," the Congress president said.

Attacking the government on plans to begin a nation-wide registry of citizens or the NRC, the abrogation of Article 370, electoral bonds and snooping allegations, she said, "Because the NRC project implemented by the BJP government in Assam, monitored by the Supreme Court, has not fulfilled the RSS-BJP expectations and propaganda, there is now clamour in the ruling party for a fresh NRC in that state. The home minister is also speaking of unleashing an NRC in the entire country — a step that will only lead to more fear and panic."

She said that the ground realities were completely different from the "fictitious images" conjured up by the Modi-Shah government.

"The agony, anguish and humiliation of the people continues. Former chief ministers, who in the past were political allies of the BJP, MLAs, political workers and ordinary people who believed in the idea of India and abided by the Constitution have been under house arrest for months. Even children are not spared," she said.

Rajapaksa to meet PM today

New Delhi, Nov. 28: In his first overseas tour after taking reins of Sri Lanka over a week ago, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa arrived here on a three-day visit, signalling his intent to deepen bilateral ties with India.

On Friday, Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold extensive talks to explore ways to further expand the already close ties between the two neighbouring countries.

A plethora of issues including fulfilling aspirations of Tamil community in Sri Lanka, situation in the Indian Ocean region and steps to boost trade and investment ties are likely to figure in the talks.

Last week, India said it was looking forward to work closely with the new Sri Lankan government and hoped that it would be able to fulfill the aspirations of the Tamil community in that country. In a tweet, before leaving for New Delhi, Rajapaksa said he was looking forward to strengthening

Leaving for my first state visit to India and looking forward to strengthening bilateral relations with Shri @narendramodi and Govt of India

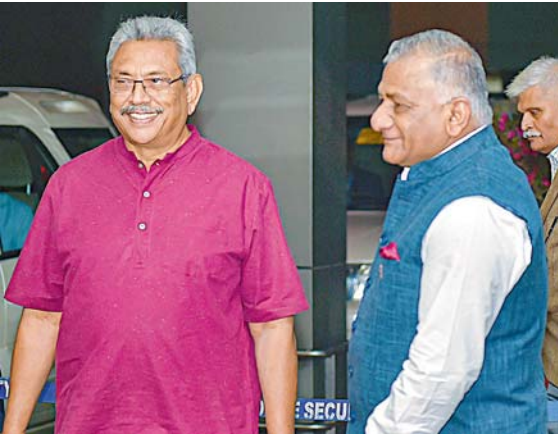
— GOTABAYA RAJAPAKSA
Sri Lankan President

bilateral relations with India. "Leaving for my first state visit to India and looking forward to strengthening bilateral relations with Shri @narendramodi and Govt of India," he said.

The Sri Lankan leader will also meet President Ram Nath Kovind. Rajapaksa, a former defence secretary who is credited with ending the country's long civil war, was sworn in as the island nation's new president on November 18, a day after he won the closely fought presidential election in island nation.

The newly-elected Sri Lankan President was received at the airport by Union minister V.K. Singh.

— PTI



Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is received by Union minister V.K. Singh, right, upon his arrival at the airport in New Delhi on Thursday.

— AP

■ **NGO files FIR against former NRC chief on irregularities in purchase of laptops, gadgets**

Hajela accused of misappropriation of funds

ASSAM GOVT TO MAKE PUBLIC NUMBER OF HINDU BENGALIS EXCLUDED

Guwahati, Nov. 28: Senior BJP leader of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said the Assam government has decided to table the district-wise figure of Hindu Bengalis excluded from the final NRC list in the current Assembly session.

Sarma, also the state finance minister, claimed that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has found "huge

irregularities" in the updation process of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state three years ago.

"We will make public the figure of those (excluded) Hindu Bengali people applying (to get their names included in the NRC) in different districts during the ongoing session of the Assembly," he said.

The winter session of the state Assembly that start-

ed on Thursday will end on December 6.

"We could not give that data earlier as the NRC had not been prepared. Now we have the data with district-wise break up," Sarma said.

It has been alleged from various quarters that a large number of Hindus have been excluded from the updated final NRC published on August 31 leaving out over 19 lakh applicants

— PTI



Clampdown

British PM Boris Johnson issued an apology for the hurt and offence caused by Islamophobia within the Conservative Party as he pledged an independent inquiry into all forms of prejudice

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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World

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Enrolled students had valid US visa

FROM PAGE 1

"This is cruel and appalling," she said in a tweet. "These students simply dreamed of getting the high-quality higher education America can offer. ICE deceived and entrapped them, just to deport them," Warren said.

The ICE had filed criminal charge sheet against eight recruiters. Seven of them have pleaded guilty.

The eight recruiters have been indicted for conspiracy to commit visa fraud and harbouring aliens for profit by the US Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan.

Students enrolled in the university, a significant number of whom were from India, came to the US legally on a valid visa issued by the US embassy in India.

The US "trapped the vulnerable people who just wanted to maintain (legal immigration) status," Rahul Reddy, a Texas attorney who represented or advised some of the students told Detroit Free Journal. "They prayed upon them," he alleged.

The fake university charged around \$2,500 per quarter for graduate programme and the average cost is \$1,000, the daily reported.

—PTI

227K INDIANS WAITING FOR GREEN CARD

Washington, Nov. 28: More than 2,27,000 Indians are waiting in line for family-sponsored Green Card or legal permanent residency, according to the latest official data. Currently, there are about four million people waiting in line for family-sponsored Green Cards against a Congressional cap of 2,26,000 per annum.

The largest number of 1.5 million wait list is from America's southern neighbour Mexico, followed by a distant India with 2,27,000 and China with nearly 1,80,000.

Majority of those in the family-sponsored Green Card waiting list are siblings of US citizens. Under current law, US citizens can sponsor their family members and blood relatives for Green Cards or permanent legal residency.

—PTI

INDIANS ABROAD

■ At 17.5 million, Indian diaspora largest in the world : UN report
■ India continues to be the largest country of origin of international migrants with a 17.5 million-strong diaspora across the world.



■ The International Organisation for Migration said in its 'Global Migration Report 2020' that the number of international migrants in 2019 is now estimated at 270 million and the top destination remains the US, at nearly 51 million.

■ More than half of all international migrants (141 million) live in Europe and North America. An estimated 52 per cent are male, and nearly two-thirds of all migrants are looking for work;

■ India continued to be the largest country of origin of international migrants. It had the largest number of migrants living abroad (17.5 million), followed by Mexico (11.8 million) and China (10.7 million). The top destination country remained the United States (50.7 million international migrants).

■ The report also noted that international remittances increased to USD 689 billion in 2018. The top three remittance recipients were India (USD 78.6 billion), China (USD 67.4 billion) and Mexico (USD 35.7 billion).
■ The United States remained the top remittance-sending country (USD 68.0 billion) followed by the United Arab Emirates (USD 44.4 billion) and Saudi Arabia (USD 36.1 billion).

■ Other important migration corridors from poorer countries to richer nations such as those to France, Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.
■ Gulf countries have some of the largest numbers of temporary labour migrants in the world, including the United Arab Emirates, where they make up almost 90 per cent of the population.

■ After nearly nine years of conflict, Syria is also the top refugee-originating country, at well over six million — dwarfing Afghanistan (at around 2.5 million) — out of a total of nearly 26 million.



Commander-in-chief Trump has 'very little understanding' of how the American military operates
— Richard Spencer
Former Navy secretary

IN BRIEF

Ex-Maldives Prez gets 5-year jail

Male: A court in the Maldives has found the country's former president guilty of money laundering and sentenced him to five years in prison. The five-member Criminal Court has also ordered Yameen Abdul Gayoom to pay a \$5 million fine. In its ruling on Thursday, the court found Yameen was guilty of laundering \$1 million in state money for personal gain. Yameen led the Indian Ocean archipelago state from 2013 to 2018. During that time he was accused of corruption, muzzling the media and persecuting political opponents. He lost last year's election to current President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.

N. Korea at it again, says Seoul

Seoul: North Korea on Thursday fired two unidentified projectiles into the sea, South Korea's military said, three days after the North said its troops conducted artillery drills near its disputed sea boundary with South Korea. The launches were an apparent attempt by North Korea to pressure the United States to make concessions in their stalemated nuclear diplomacy. Seoul's Joint chiefs of staff said in a statement that the projectiles were launched toward the North's eastern waters after lifting off from the country's northeastern South Hamgyong province. It said South Korea's military is monitoring possible additional launches by North Korea.

Mexico cartels to be terror groups

Washington: US President Donald Trump put the Mexican government on the defensive when he said he 'absolutely' will move ahead with plans to designate Mexican drug cartels as terrorist organisations. Trump said this week that tens of thousands of Americans are killed every year because of drug trafficking and other activity by the cartels. But Mexico is pushing back, worried that such a step would allow its neighbour to the north to violate its sovereignty by operating unilaterally inside Mexico. "I've been working on that for the last 90 days," Trump said on whether such a designation would be forthcoming.

CONDITIONAL EXTENSION FOR BAJWA

SHAFQAT ALI | DC
ISLAMABAD, NOV. 28

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Thursday granted a six-month conditional extension to General Qamar Javed Bajwa in his service as the chief of army staff (COAS), and ordered the government to complete the required legislation within six months for extension/appointment of an army chief.

A three-member bench comprising Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa, Justice Mian Mazhar Alam Khan Miankhal and Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah announced a short verdict on a petition filed by The Jurists Foundation through its chairman Riaz Rahi against extension of tenure of Chief of the Army Staff.

In its short order, the Supreme Court remarked: "Considering that the COAS is responsible for the command, discipline, training, administration, organisation and preparedness for war of the Army, the current appointment of Bajwa as COAS shall be subject to the said legislation and shall continue for six months, whereafter the new legislation shall determine his tenure."

Chilling out on Thanksgiving



Cars and trucks in stopped traffic on Interstate 5 near Dunsuir, California. Thanksgiving travel has been snarled in some places by two powerful storms. A winter storm blamed for one death and hundreds of cancelled flights in the West moved into the Midwest and dropped close to a foot of snow in parts of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

—AFP

'Thank you, Mr Trump'

Pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong seek global support after US laws

Hong Kong, Nov. 28: Chanting "Stand with Hong Kong," pro-democracy activists on Thursday urged the world to follow US footsteps by passing laws backing human rights in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory, as police teams began a cleanup of a Hong Kong university earlier occupied by demonstrators. Prominent activist Joshua Wong, who was among democracy supporters who lobbied for the new US laws, called them a "remarkable achievement," with human rights triumphing over crucial US-China trade talks.

President Donald Trump signed the two bills into law. One of the laws prescribes economic sanctions on Asia's top financial hub and diplomatic action on Hong Kong and Chinese officials found guilty of human rights abuses. The other bans the export of certain non-lethal munitions to Hong Kong police.

Wong said he hopes the laws will spur Britain and other Western nations to follow suit. "Now is the



People assemble for a gathering of thanks at Edinburgh Place in Hong Kong.

—AFP

time for the Western world to stand with Hong Kong," he said.

Echoing Wong's call, dozens of office workers and activists chanted "This is what democracy looks like" and other slogans during a daily lunchtime rally downtown. Some urged Washington to penalise the city's embattled leader, Carrie Lam, over the government's handling of the crisis. A protester held a placard saying "Thank You Mr. Trump, Sanction #1 Carrie Lam."

More than 5,000 people

have been detained since the unrest began in June over a China extradition bill seen as an erosion of freedoms promised when the former British colony returned to Chinese control in 1997.

The movement has since expanded its demands to include democratic elections and an independent investigation of police conduct. Hong Kong's government called the US legislation "unreasonable" meddling, saying it sends the wrong signal to protesters and won't help to ease the crisis.

—AP

Angry China calls US ambassador

Beijing, Nov. 28: China reacted furiously to President Donald Trump's signing two bills aimed at supporting human rights in Hong Kong, summoning the US ambassador to protest and warning the move would undermine cooperation with Washington.

The clash comes at a sensitive time and could upset already thorny trade negotiations between the two nations.

Chinese vice foreign minister Le Yucheng told US ambassador Terry Branstad that the move constituted "serious interference in China's internal affairs and a serious violation of international law," a foreign ministry statement said.

Le called it a "nakedly hegemonic act." He urged the US not to implement the bills to prevent greater damage to US-China relations, the ministry said.



Terry Branstad

The US Embassy said, "The Chinese Communist Party must honour its promises to the Hong Kong people."

The US "believes that Hong Kong's autonomy, its adherence to the rule of law, and its commitment to protecting civil liberties are key to preserving its special status under US law," it said. "I signed these bills out of respect for President Xi, China, and the people of Hong Kong," Trump said.

—AP

IRAN CONDEMNS BURNING OF ITS CONSULATE

Baghdad, Nov. 28: Iran condemned the burning of its consulate in southern Iraq hours earlier, which came amid an escalation in Iraq's anti-government protests that erupted nearly two months ago.

Protesters had set fire to the Iranian consulate in the holy city of Najaf. The Iranian staff were not harmed, and escaped out the back door.

Iraq's ministry of foreign affairs condemned the torching of the consulate, saying it was perpetrated by "people outside of the genuine protesters," in a statement, adding that the purpose had been to harm bilateral relations.

—AP



Donald Trump

ble vote on charges of "high crimes and misdemeanors."

The lawyers told the president about the complaint, explaining that they were trying to determine whether they were legally required to give it to Congress, the officials said. The aid was released on Sept. 11 amid growing pressure from lawmakers.

—AP

Trump knew of whistleblower Sondland accused of sexual abuse

Washington, Nov. 28: A US ambassador nominated by President Donald Trump who provided key testimony in his impeachment hearings was accused of sexual misconduct by three women. Gordon Sondland, the US envoy to the European Union, denied the allegations, with his lawyer alleging that the accusers were trying to taint his credibility in the inquiry.

The *Portland Monthly* published named accounts by three women who said that Sondland, a wealthy

hotel owner from Seattle, retaliated against them professionally after they rejected him sexually.

Sondland in a statement rejected all the accusations and accused Vogel of "underhanded journalism" out of anger that he did not invest in the magazine. "These untrue claims of unwanted touching and kissing are concocted and, I believe, coordinated for political purposes," he said, adding, "They have no basis in fact and I categorically deny them."

—AFP

NO LOOKING | BACK

The initiative trains women in business skills to help them create their own employment

'Sari for Change' helps fight poverty in South Africa

Johannesburg, Nov. 28: An initiative to recycle used saris from India into female and male fashion garments has helped fight poverty and unemployment in South Africa.

Founded by Rayana Edwards in 2014, the 'Sari for Change' initiative has grown from an initial call for donation of used saris for up-cycling into new garments to a skill development and entrepreneur-

ial project with the ability to scale as it lifts people out of poverty in South Africa.

The impact of this initiative is visible in the steady income it has provided for women who have been up-skilled to produce garments out of its dedicated workshop in North Riding in northern Johannesburg.

This success has led to a second workshop in the

sprawling Black township of Soweto in the south of Johannesburg where six women are currently being trained to join the fashion line production of the 'Sari for Change', with 20 more to be admitted next year.

Edwards said women from all over the world — primarily in India — contribute their gently worn saris or family heirlooms to women in South Africa.

The journey of the sari continues once they arrive at 'Sari for Change' workshops, where they are first sorted and cleaned. Then the sari fabric is identified to determine the specific new garment it will become.

The initiative has also partnered with the Laudium Women's Network near Pretoria, comprising mainly South African-Indian women, in

the collection of high-end saris and as a way of expanding the project's sales and marketing network. 'Sari for Change' has also found support from Khulekani Kenneth, a Durban-based designer who has started a men's range from the saris sent to him.

"Although our garments are beautiful and highly covetable for their unique African, Arabic and

Indian aesthetics, we are aspiring for more than simply an ethical, sustainable fashion product," Edwards said.

'Sari for Change' is providing an important service through training women in business skills and needlecraft to enable them to create their own employment. These women either become entrepreneurs, sole proprietors, suppliers of

skills or distributors in our value chain," she said.

Although its intention is to impact unemployment and the inequality that persists in South Africa, the programme is also gaining a reputation in the world of fashion for the women who turn them into garments wearable in all cultures. 'Sari for Change' has already walked two international fashion weeks.

—PTI

Tax sleuths to go after GST dodgers

Carlyle to gain from SBI Cards' ₹9,000-cr IPO

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	41,130.17	+0.27
Nifty 50	12,151.20	+0.42
S&P 500	3,153.63	+0.42
Dollar (₹)	71.77	+0.30
Pound Sterling (₹)	92.89	+0.97
Euro (₹)	79.11	+0.24
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	37,664	+139
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	\$63.41	-0.65
IN 10-Yr bond yield	+6.453	-0.014
US 10-Yr T-bill yield	+1.767	0.00

* As of 9:30 pm IST

ABFL first to list commercial papers on SEs

Aditya Birla Finance (ABFL), the NBFC arm of Aditya Birla Capital, became the first company to list its commercial papers (CPs) on the stock exchanges. The move comes after BSE and NSE came out with a framework for listing CPs to broaden investors' participation. ABFL said it has listed CPs with value date of Nov. 28 and maturity date on Feb. 7, 2020.



Amid vehement opposition by the Congress and other parties, Union Labour Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar introduced the Industrial Relations Code Bill 2019 in the Lok Sabha. Congress and other opposition parties demanded that the bill be referred to the parliamentary standing committee on labour. This bill is part of the government's labour reform initiative.

No plans to cut retirement age in BSNL, MTNL

FC BUREAU
HYDERABAD, NOV. 28

Despite the current gloom in Indian economy, Kerala-based NBFC, Muthoot Fincorp, expects its assets under management (AUM) to grow at a healthy 17 per cent during the current financial year, a senior official said here on Thursday.

Speaking to the media, Muthoot Fincorp COO Vasudevan Ramaswami said, "We grew at 16 per cent last year (in terms of AUM). This year also we expect to grow at 15 to 17 per cent... We disbursed close to Rs 27,000 crore last fiscal with over 90 per cent towards gold loan"

Fuelled by the growth, Muthoot Fincorp, which has over 3,600 branches in India, is now planning to expand its presence in the two Telugu states further.

"We have been opening about 200 branches every year. We should be opening another 60 odd branches in AP and Telangana out of which Telangana will have 27," Mr Ramaswami said.

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Centre also seeks one-time waiver for realty loans

Govt wants RBI to buy out NBFCs' bad loans

AFTAB AHMED
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

The central government wants the Reserve Bank of India to set up a fund to buy out stressed assets of the country's top 25 shadow lenders and revive the financial sector, a government source told reporters on Thursday.

The government has also asked the central bank to consider a one-time waiver to banks from classifying some real estate loans as bad loans, the source said.

The non-banking finance sector has been battling a credit crunch ever since one of the sector's biggest firms Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services collapsed in late 2018 amid fraud allegations.

The Ministry of Finance has proposed a bailout plan on the lines of the US Troubled Asset Relief Programme following the 2008 financial crisis to pull India's financial sector out of a deep slump and get credit flowing back into a weak economy, the source told a group of reporters.

"Talks are on and various rounds of discussions have happened with the central bank on a mini TARP-like programme," the source who is involved

BEAST OF BURDEN

► Finance Ministry has proposed a bailout plan on the lines of the US Troubled Asset Relief Programme in 2008

► United States Treasury Department had worked out a \$700-billion bailout plan to address the financial crisis

► RBI feels the step is too drastic and more discussions are required

in the discussions told reporters. "RBI could be the buyer of last resort," the source, who cannot be named in line with his service rules, said.

In 2008, United States Treasury Department had worked out a \$700-billion bailout plan to address the financial crisis.

The government has been considering measures to revive the financial sector to boost economic growth after five straight quarters of declines. A further decline in the growth rate is forecast for the July-September period, in data due out on Friday.

Shadow lenders, or NBFCs, account for a large chunk of India's credit

market, accounting for a 30 per cent share of auto loans and more than 40 per cent of home loans as of December 2018, according to the central bank.

The government official said that the RBI has been reluctant to open its balance sheet for a large bail out programme for the shadow banks as it feels the step is too drastic and more discussions are required.

The RBI declined to comment on the government source's remarks.

Any new measure is likely to help such as Indiabulls Housing Finance, Piramal Enterprises, Reliance Capital, Shriram Transport Finance and

Tax sleuths wake up to fake invoice GST racket

RITWIK MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA, NOV. 28

Tax sleuths across the country are girding up their loins to put checks and balances on growing cases of fake invoices in GST—fake B2B invoices and fake E-way bills—which are depriving State exchequers of increasingly larger amount. The basic framework of these cases have some common features, tax department

officials said.

"The fake invoices are mainly B2B invoices. Here a seller sells a product to the genuine buyer (say A), without raising an invoice. The products in question are generally intermediate goods (that are processed to make the final product) like plastic granules or metals, for which there is high demand but few suppliers. As no invoices are raised and no GST is collected in

this transaction, this is the first leg where government loses its revenue," these officials pointed out.

"Buyer A undertakes further sale of these goods without raising invoices. It may also collect GST from its buyer but may forgo this credit from the input tax, given that it is already earning huge profit and thus feels no need to set off his output tax or evade it," they added.

It is known that every

registered person (subject to conditions) can take credit of input tax on supply of goods or services to him, which are used or intended to be used in course or furtherance of business.

Input tax credit can be used to offset the input tax with output tax. This aspect is exploited and it promotes the generation of fake invoices to claim input tax credit.

Explaining the modus

operandi, Arupa Banik, a young chartered accountant, said, "The seller enters into an agreement with another buyer (say B), who wants to evade GST and thus needs input tax credit (ITC), which is not actually due to him. Buyer B transfers the funds (as mentioned in the fake bills) through RTGS to the account of the seller. The seller, in turn, reimburses this amount to B in cash. The seller earns a

commission from this bogus transaction, while Buyer B earns a net profit (amount of GST evaded in the form of ICT availed, less the commission paid to the seller). Thus, the whole racket enriches the two unscrupulous parties, while leaving the government deprived of its revenue."

GST officials are also perturbed and are working on ways to curb raising fake invoice bills.

Govt notifies WTO about intent to make gold hallmarking must

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, NOV. 28

The Indian government has notified to the World Trade Organisation its intention to implement mandatory hallmarking for gold jewellery and artefacts to be sold across the country.

Though the government has not mentioned a date for adoption of mandatory hallmarking, industry experts feel that the country is getting closer to it.

In a notification to the WTO, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs said the government intends to bring in "compulsory selling of precious metals articles of gold (jewellery and gold artefacts) through cer-



tified sales outlets and with hallmark".

This will help consumer protection through prevention of deceptive practices, customer satisfaction through third party assurance for the marked purity/fineness of gold and enhance the credibility of gold jewellery.

The decision will come into force with effect from the date of its publication in the official gazette. However, the government said it has not decided when it would publish this in the gazette. Other member countries in WTO can raise their objection, if any, to this decision. They have been given 60 days from the date of notification to raise objection.

"None of the members are likely to raise objection as most of the countries currently have mandatory hallmarking. Among large consumers, China too had recently made hallmarking mandatory," said Somasundaram PR., Managing Director, India, World Gold Council.

CHIT FUNDS BILL PASSED

Maximum chit amounts raised to ₹3 lakh & ₹18 lakh

New Delhi, Nov 28: Parliament on Thursday passed a bill which provides for raising the monetary limits for chit funds to three-fold and hiking commission for foreman.

The Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed by voice vote in the Rajya Sabha. The bill got the Lok Sabha's nod on November 20.

The maximum chit amount is proposed to be raised from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 3 lakh for those managed by individuals or less than four partners, and from Rs 6 lakh to Rs 18 lakh for firms with four or more partners.

The maximum commission for foreman, who is responsible for managing the chit, is proposed to be raised from 5 per cent to 7 per cent.

The bill also allows the foreman a right to lien against the credit balance from subscribers.

The bill also introduces words such as 'fraternity fund, rotating savings and credit institution to make chit funds more respectable.

The Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2019 also introduces words such as "fraternity fund", "rotating savings" and "credit institution" to make chit funds more respectable, said Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur in his reply to the House on the bill.

Piloting the bill, he said that chit funds are legal and one should understand that these are different from unregulated deposit schemes or ponzi schemes. The bill provides for sub-

stituting terms like 'chit amount', 'dividend' and 'prize amount' with 'gross chit amount', 'share of discount' and 'net chit fund' respectively. It further proposes to allow subscribers to join the process of drawing chits through video-conferencing.

About members' objection to this clause, Thakur told the House that all subscribers should be present at the time of draw of chit fund but if some people are busy or unable to attend those then they should have the option of video conference. He also told the House that the bill removes the limit of Rs 100 (which was set in 1982), and allows the state governments to specify the base amount over which the provisions of the Act would apply.

—PTI

Drugmakers cut prices by 61% to get on China list

Drugmakers, including AstraZeneca and Roche Holding, agreed to cut prices of some of their newest innovative drugs in China by an average of 61 per cent as the government expanded the number of treatments covered under national insurance.

Some 70 new therapies were added for coverage by China's state-run medical insurance fund after months-long negotiations over prices, according to a notice on the National Healthcare Security Administration's website on Thursday.

The drugs that made it onto the list included AstraZeneca's roxadustat, an anemia medicine that was approved in China ahead of the US, and Roche's lung cancer treatment alectensa.

Other western medications added were hepatitis C treatments from Gilead Sciences Inc and Merck & Co, and AbbVie's Humira injection pen for rheumatoid arthritis. There are more than 2,700 medicines on the list after the latest adjustments.

Both domestic drugmakers and multinational

giants are eager to get their treatments on the list even at steep discounts in order to gain access to China's \$132 billion pharmaceutical market, the world's second-biggest. Drugs on the list are almost fully paid for by China's 2.34 trillion yuan (\$333 billion) national medical insurance fund. The list has been annually updated with new entries since 2017, when Beijing accelerated its campaign to bring the best drugs to its growing middle class as quickly and cheaply as possible. Prior to 2017, the

list was updated sporadically and only every several years. But since a regulatory revamp starting around 2016, China has sped up drug approval reviews to meet consumer demand and included more novel, imported therapies on the reimbursement list. China is home to the world's most diabetes patients, nearly 4 million new cancer patients and an ageing population.

The latest negotiated price cuts made the imported drugs "the cheapest in the world," the notice said. Three hepati-

tis C treatments dropped prices by an average of more than 85 per cent while tumor and diabetes therapies fell by an average of 65 per cent.

Chinese drugmakers' shares slumped due to the magnitude of the price cuts. "The drugmakers are falling on the news about the national reimbursement list. It shows that they need to lower prices meaningfully to be able to join the list," said Kelvin Chen, an analyst at Bocom International.

The national medical insurance fund, which cov-

ers 95 per cent of 1.4 billion Chinese, is demanding deep price cuts to avoid bankrupting the safety net.

That in turn has put pressure on foreign drugmakers. New drugs are often brought to the China market at prices lower than they are sold in the West, but still face competition from a growing legion of Chinese biotech firms developing similar drugs that can be sold even cheaper. Global pharmaceutical companies' older drugs that have gone off-patent are also facing price cuts.

—Bloomberg



Onion 2.0: Price surges to ₹120/kg; Centre gives up

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

Households battling the impact of pervasive economic slowdown got a rude shock this week when onion prices spiked unexpectedly to Rs 110-120 a kg. Adding to their woes, the Centre has washed its hands off the issue, saying that there is nothing much for the government to do to control the onion prices at this moment.

Leaving consumers a teary-eyed, soaring onion, in its second phase, is retailing at Rs 110-120, after stabilising around Rs 80-90 a kg in the previous weeks, in almost all states and major cities like Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar and Pune, reports from mandis show.

The price surge comes soon after the government on November 19 announced an estimated 26 per cent fall in onion output in the kharif and late-kharif seasons of this fiscal, saying that there may be some impact in both supply and prices of onion across almost all parts of the country.

As part of measure to arrest rising prices of the kitchen staple, the government is learnt to have extended the ban on onion exports indefinitely. Earlier, the Centre had extended it till February, sensing a surge in domestic prices following mass

damage of the bulbs due to untimely incessant rains and floods.

"We have no option but to extend the ban on onion exports indefinitely as domestic prices have skyrocketed sharply in many parts of the country. Besides, the farmers have suffered a lot in their summer harvest, which was delayed and the crop got damaged heavily by untimely rains," said a senior official of the agriculture ministry, requesting not to be named.

"Even on Thursday, consumers in almost all states are paying Rs 90-110 or above for a kilo of onions while the prices are even higher in south Indian states, where it is retailing at Rs 120-130 per kilo. In Delhi, onion prices are retailing at Rs 70-90 per kilo," the official added.

However, by the official data, the average selling price of onion is Rs 70 per kg while Panaji has recorded the maximum rate of Rs 110 per kg.

Consumer Affairs Ministry data says onion is selling at Rs 76 per kg in Delhi, Rs 92 in Mumbai, Rs 100 in Kolkata and Rs 80 per kg in Chennai.

While Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal accused the Centre of stopping the supply of the kitchen staple at controlled price, the government countered it, saying that it is taking all possible steps to normalise prices. "It's not in our hand, the government is making maximum efforts, but who can win nature," said Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan.

According to sources, in order to fight the onion crisis, the government is expected to order for about 6,090 tonnes of onions from Egypt and the consignments are likely to arrive in December. Department of Consumer Affairs Secretary A.K. Srivastava also hinted that the imported onions would be sold at Rs 52-55 per kilo in Delhi.

RIL becomes first to hit ₹10 L crore market cap

ASHWIN J PUNNEN
MUMBAI, NOV. 28

Business tycoon Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries on Thursday became the first Indian company to hit the Rs 10 lakh crore market capitalisation mark, driven by a sharp spike in its share price.

At market close, the oil-to-telecom conglomerate's market valuation surged to Rs 10,01,555.42 crore on the BSE.

The RIL stock closed at Rs 1,579.95, up 0.65 per cent after gaining 0.90 per cent intra-day to touch an all-time high of Rs 1,584.

So far this year, the Reliance Ind stock has gained nearly 41 per cent, outperforming Sensex that rose 14 per cent in 2019.

TCS is the country's second most valued firm with a market valuation of Rs 7,79,501.64 crore, followed by HDFC Bank with a market cap of Rs 6,92,853.48 crore, Hindustan Unilever (Rs 4,51,482.38 crore) and HDFC (Rs 3,98,994.81 crore).

According to analysts, the stock is gaining on the back of the windfall making on the past investments in consumer-facing sectors like telecom and retail. "These investments have yielded fruitful results for the company and has been consistently increasing their share in the overall profits," according to Ajit Mishra, VP Research, Religare Broking.

For the past few sessions, the company's market valuation has been hovering near the Rs 10-lakh crore mark.

The company is still ahead of British energy major BP Plc in terms of market valuation. BP Plc's m-cap was at \$127.86 billion at close of trade on the NYSE.



Debut

Daryl Mitchell, son of England rugby coach, has been named to make his debut for New Zealand in the second Test against England on Friday

Games

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He (Jofra) has dealt with it very well; he'll be absolutely fine to play.

— Joe Root, England captain says Jofra Archer is ready to fire in the second Test against Kiwis despite suffering racist abuse

SHORT TAKES

WI T20 tickets live from 10 am today

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 28

Tickets for India's first T20 match against the West Indies, to be played on December 6th, at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Uppal, Hyderabad, are set to go live from 10 am today. Over the counter tickets will be available at the Gymkhana, Secunderabad from 10 am to 6 pm while the tickets will go live on www.eventsnow.com from 11 am.

STAND RATES

South Pavilion East (Ground floor): ₹12,500; South Pavilion (First floor): ₹5,000; South Pavilion (Terrace): ₹1,000; North Pavilion (Terrace): ₹800; North Pavilion (First Floor): ₹4,000; North Pavilion (Ground floor): ₹7,500; West Pavilion (Ground floor): ₹1,500; West Pavilion (First floor): ₹1,000; East Pavilion (Ground floor): ₹1,500; East Pavilion (First floor): ₹1,000; South Pavilion (Corporate box): ₹12,500; North Pavilion (Corporate box): ₹10,000.

Rajiv, Senthil set for Thailand leg

Buriram, Thailand: India's Rajiv Sethu will be hoping to end the Asian Road Racing Championship 2019 on a high and add to his points tally in the seventh and final round, beginning at the Chang International Circuit here on Friday.

Participating in the Asia Production 250cc class, the Idemitsu Honda Racing driver has so far collected 33 points, which includes a top-seven finish in the third round at the Chang Circuit.

Sethu, in his third season in the ARRC, became the first Indian rider to finish in the top 7, with a new fastest lap time (1:53:573).

He is already in the top 16 from among the 40 riders in the AP 250cc class - which is an improvement from his overall 27th place in 2018.

Meanwhile, this weekend will provide an opportunity for Sethu's teammate Senthil Kumar to aim for a top 25 finish in his maiden season as he is familiar with the track.

The 18-year old said his aim was to get among the points in the season's final round. — PTI

CITY TO HOST 38th ROWING NATIONALS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 28

Over 500 rowers — in both men's and women's categories — are all set to be a part of the 38th senior national rowing championship to be held at the Hussainsagar lake in Hyderabad from December 2.

Top rowers including the likes of Arjun Lal, Arvind Singh, Sawarn Singh and Sukhmeet Singh, and have confirmed their participation in the weeklong event. The event is being held under the aegis of the Telangana Rowing Association. The championships would be held in 2,000 metres and 500 metres in the categories of single scull, double scull, light weight, open and civil double scull among others, he said. Top performers would go for the camp (Bhopal or Pune) and subsequently get shortlisted/selected for the qualifiers to be held in South Korea in April next year for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The organising committee of the championships has introduced GPS technology to track the precise movement of the rowing shell using integrated sensors.

Middle-order puzzle

Chief selector MSK says Shreyas can settle No. 4 debate in ODIs and T20s

New Delhi, Nov. 28: Chairman of selectors MSK Prasad says Shreyas Iyer can be the solution to India's no.4 problem in the limited-overs line-up given his fine growth as a player in the past two years.

Iyer made his India debut in November 2017 with a T20 International against New Zealand and in the following month, played in his maiden ODI series, scoring back-to-back half centuries in the home rubber against Sri Lanka.

The 24-year-old played three ODIs in South Africa two months later before he was sidelined, only making a comeback in the ODIs against the West Indies in August this year following India's campaign in the World Cup.

"If you recall, we had inducted Shreyas Iyer (when Virat Kohli was rested) 18 months back into the ODI squad and he has done reasonably well. Unfortunately we couldn't continue with him. Having said that, he has evolved as a player now and he can be the solution to our number 4 slot in both ODIs and T20s," Prasad said in an interview.

The highly-rated batsman kept piling on the runs for Mumbai in domestic cricket and also for India A besides expressing disappointment at not getting enough chances at the highest level. Now he is back in the thick of things and has done well in both ODIs and T20s since the West Indies tour.

Prasad, who was appointed chief selector in 2016 and is now nearing the end of his tenure, said it was unfortunate that Iyer missed out in the period leading up to the World Cup. During the Prasad-led selection committee's tenure, India scaled new heights by winning a Test series in Australia, assembled a world-class pace attack (by giving Jasprit Bumrah a go in Tests), regained the world number one ranking in Tests but was not able to win a major global event.

Asked if India's lethal Test attack is the most significant legacy of the selection committee, Prasad said: "The primary duty of the selection committee is to identify right talent, groom them through a systematic process, induct them at an appropriate time into the senior squad and trust them to deliver by backing them."

"Except Bumrah, the other fast bowlers (Ishant, Umesh, Shami) had been in the circuit even before our committee took over. Only thing is that they all have combined well as a unit during our tenure...we have been instrumental in helping Bumrah to evolve into a top-class bowler across all formats," said the 44-year-old former India wicketkeeper-batsman. — PTI

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Pant running out of time: Laxman

New Delhi, Nov. 28: Former Indian batsman VVS Laxman says Rishabh Pant is fast running out of time to justify the time invested in him by the team management and might lose his place to Sanju Samson if he doesn't regain his form soon.

Laxman said Sanju Samson's selection in the squad for the three T20 Internationals against the West Indies is a "strong message" for Pant to either perform or perish. "The team management and the selection committee have passed on a strong message that we got a backup in the form of Sanju. Pant has been given a lot of opportunities and I'm sure that they will be communicating and giving him that security within that group," Laxman told *'Star Sports'*.

"But then ultimately the player has to justify the faith the team management, the selection committee has been imposing on him," he said.

"Unfortunately, Rishabh hasn't been able to do that, but he is that X factor. I still feel that he is an exclusive batsman who can come and change the course of the match just by his ability to hit good balls out of the park."

Not so long ago, Pant was India's number one wicket-

I still feel that he is an exclusive batsman who can come and change the course of the match just by his ability to hit good balls out of the park.

—VVS LAXMAN



Rishabh Pant

keeper batsman in all three formats but has endured an erratic run of form for some time now. With Wriddhiman Saha back in the team, Pant has now lost his place in the Test eleven and his place in the limited-overs format has also been questioned for lack of runs and his poor work with the gloves.

"As a batsman — there's no clarity of thoughts, there's no doubt that he's under pressure, because how many times have you seen Pant, when he is in full flow, play and he has a different mindset and technique against the spinners. I feel he will be under tremendous pressure to retain his place in the playing eleven," Laxman said. — PTI



Skipper Kohli also affected by failures

New Delhi, Nov. 28: He hasn't seen too much of it but India captain and batting mainstay Virat Kohli says he is not immune to being affected by failure, the most recent instance being India's semifinal exit from the ODI World Cup.

The swashbuckling batsman said the loss to New Zealand lost by 18 runs was hard to deal with. "Do I get affected by failures? Yes, I do. Everyone does. At the end of the day, I know my team would need me. I had the feeling so strong in my heart that I am going to come not out and make India go through that tough phase (in the semi-final)," Kohli said.

"But then again, maybe that was I my ego talking because how can you predict something like that? You can only have a strong feeling or maybe it was a strong desire to do something like that," he added.

"I hate losing. I don't want to walk out and say I could have done this. When I step out on the field, it's a privilege," the Indian skipper further stated. — PTI

Will look into allegations: HCA boss

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 28

The Hyderabad Cricket Association president Mohammad Azharuddin said that he will look into the corruption charges made by Ambati Rayudu against his governing body after hosting the December 6th T20 series opener between India and the Windies.

India batsman Ambati Rayudu had recently accused Hyderabad Cricket Association of "rampant corruption" and urged Azharuddin to "isolate himself from the seasoned crooks" and clean up the mess.

However, Azharuddin, who is gearing up to host the first T20 match on December 6, said he doesn't want to take the focus away from the match by talking about the issue related to corruption.

"Since this is a T20 game which we are holding, I don't want to take anything away from the game. I want you to report only on this game, focus on the game," said the former India skipper.

"I am sure you must have come very well prepared. After the sixth, if there is anything, we will have another press conference. I will address the other things which have been happening in the recent past," Azhar added.



Kuldeep Yadav

This IPL is going to be big for Kuldeep: Bangar

New Delhi, Nov. 28: Former India batting coach Sanjay Bangar has reckoned that next year's IPL is going to be massive for Kuldeep Yadav, saying a good outing there will earn him a place in the T20 World Cup squad.

Kuldeep recently returned to India's T20I squad for the West Indies series after a gap of nine months. He had last played the shorter format against New Zealand in February early this year.

"I'm a massive Kuldeep Yadav fan and in terms of strike rates you



see he is the quickest to 100 ODI wickets and even in the shorter format, if you look at the match we won in England, he picked up five wickets at a time where the opposition was running away from the match,"

I'm a massive Kuldeep Yadav fan and in terms of strike rate you see he is the quickest to 100 ODI wickets.

—SANJAY BANGAR, former India batting coach

Bangar told *'Star Sports'*. "I wouldn't count out Kuldeep Yadav, it's just that he's had a couple of poor games in the IPL last season. For him, this IPL is going to be a massive factor and if he does really well, it

will be very hard to keep him out."

Bangar also believed Ravinder Jadeja's bowling prowess makes him a better option than Krunal Pandya in India's World T20 squad.

"You require a wrist spinner in the T20 format, it has been a very major component in India's success wherein 2 wrist spinners played a massive role in most of the one day's and T20 series the team has had across conditions hence you will need a bowler who is capable of bowling the complete 4 overs and also bat at No.7," he said. "Hence, I feel Ravinder

Jadeja edges over Krunal Pandya here as Krunal hasn't been able to deliver the complete 4 overs at times and Jadeja has been in great form recently."

However, batting great VVS Laxman said it is going to be tough for Kuldeep to earn a place in India's squad for next year's T20 World Cup. "Kuldeep Yadav hit two blows when the team was under pressure; he and Krunal Pandya got those important runs at the finishing stage of the India's innings against West Indies in the first T20 International last year," he said. — PTI

Oz unchanged for second Test

Adelaide, Nov. 28: Australia on Thursday named an unchanged team for the day-night second Test against Pakistan after trouncing them in Brisbane, but took a risk by releasing concussion substitute Cameron Bancroft.

The home side easily won the first Test by an innings and five runs inside four days, but selectors resisted the urge to rest one of their strike bowlers or add a fourth to help share the load at Adelaide Oval.

That means swing bowler Michael Neser will be 12th man when the Test starts on Friday, with paceman James Pattinson and batsman Bancroft released to play domestic cricket.

"We're unchanged," said skipper Tim Paine. "Obviously we thought we played a pretty good game of cricket last week (in Brisbane)."

"Our attack is all feeling good and fresh and they have all got great pink-ball records so no need to change."

Bancroft's departure to play for Western Australia in Perth means there will be no immediate batting substitute in case of a concussion.



Australian captain Tim Paine inspects the pitch on the eve of the second Test match against Pakistan in Adelaide.

— AFP

Paine joked that "we'll just get someone out the crowd", before adding: "Bangers" is a couple of hours away on a plane so if anything does happen, we will be able to get him back pretty quickly."

The decision comes just days after Bangladesh were forced to use two concussion substitutes in one day, with Liton Das and Nayeem Hasan both forced out of their day-night Test against India in Kolkata.

The task facing Pakistan is ominous with Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon all in the world's top five wicket-takers in day-night Tests, while Pat Cummins is the world's top-ranked bowler.

Australia have won all five pink-ball Tests they have played since the concept was launched four years ago, with Paine warning his pace attack was relishing the chance to bowl under lights on a

home wicket. "That (Adelaide) wicket looks a little bit perhaps drier than it was for the last pink-ball Test we played here against England," he said.

"But as we know, the pink ball always offers enough. Our fast bowlers certainly enjoy bowling with it, particularly under the lights and the games tend to go quite quickly."

— AFP

Brooks, spinners put Windies in command

Lucknow, Nov. 28: A maiden Test century by Shamir Brooks and wily spin bowling put the West Indies in firm command of their one-off Test against Afghanistan on Thursday.

Brooks made 111 as West Indies managed a lead of 90 after they were 277 all out in the second session of day two in the northern Indian city of Lucknow, which has been hit by heavy air pollution over the past month.

Spinners Rakheem Cornwall and Roston Chase then took three wickets each to leave Afghanistan tottering at 109 for seven at stumps on day two. The Afghans lead by just 19 runs in their second innings.

Opener Javed Ahmadi made 62 before falling to Chase's off spin on the final delivery of the day dominated by West Indies, who resumed on 68 for two in response to Afghanistan's 187.

Afghanistan slipped from none for 53 to stare down the barrel, losing seven wickets for 56 runs in a dramatic collapse.

"Once they were 50 for no loss, we thought we had to



West Indies' Shamir Brooks celebrates his century against Afghanistan in Lucknow on Thursday.

— AFP

hang in there and get one wicket and you never know," Brooks said at the end of day.

Cornwall, the heaviest man in Test cricket — weighing 140 kilograms (300 pounds), and 1.96 metres (six feet six inches) tall — rattled the Afghanistan top-order and improved his match haul to 10 so far.

The 26-year-old Cornwall,

who returned figures of 7-75 with his off spin on day one, struck in three successive overs.

He trapped Ibrahim Zadran for 23 after a brisk start by the Afghan openers and then got Rahmat Shah and Asghar Afghan back in the pavilion for scores of zero.

Chase also took three wickets in his three overs. — AFP



New bond

Harry Kane (in pic) wants to build “strong relationship” with new manager Jose Mourinho that will help take Tottenham to the next level

Games

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Lionel King

Messi rules again, Barca in quarters

Paris, Nov. 28: A Lionel Messi-inspired Barcelona booked their place in the Champions League knockout stages on Wednesday by crushing a desperate Borussia Dortmund 3-1, while RB Leipzig made the last 16 for the first time in their history with an incredible stoppage time comeback.

Lucien Favre's position as Dortmund coach looks increasingly in peril following the thumping at the Camp Nou orchestrated by a sensational Messi that ensured Barca's progress to the last 16 as Group 'F' winners.

The Argentine scored one and set up the other two for Luis Suarez and Antoine Griezmann to inflict a punishing defeat on Dortmund and move up to 11 points, four ahead of the Germans and Inter Milan, who won 3-1 at Slavia Prague.

Messi got the ball rolling with a neat pass which allowed Suarez to open the scoring in the 29th minute, before the Uruguayan returned the favour four minutes later to lay on Messi for his 613th Barca goal on his 700th appearance.

Messi was also at the heart of the goal which extinguished Dortmund's hopes of a result in the 67th minute, as Griezmann found the back of the net. — AFP

THE RESULTS

Barcelona 3
(Suarez 29, Messi 33, Griezmann 67)
Borussia Dortmund 1
(Sancho 77)

Liverpool 1
(Lovren 65)
Napoli 1
(Mertens 21)

Valencia 2
(Soler 40, Wass 82)
Chelsea 2
(Kovacic 41, Pulisic 50)

Genk 1
(Samatta 85)
Salzburg 4
(Daka 43, Minamino 45, Hwang 69, Haaland 87)

Slavia Prague 1
(Soucek 37-pen)
Inter Milan 3
(Martinez 19, 88, Lukaku 81)

RB Leipzig 2
(Forsberg 90-pen, 90+6)
Benfica 2
(Pizzi 20, Carlos Vinicius 59)

Zenit Saint Petersburg 2
(Dzyuba 42, Ozdoev 84)
Lyon 0

Lille 0
Ajax 2
(Ziyech 2, Promes 59)

Srikanth advances, Kashyap bows out

Lucknow, Nov. 28: Former champion Kidambi Srikanth and Sourabh Verma advanced to the quarterfinals but young Lakshya Sen bowed out of the men's singles contest at the Syed Modi International Badminton tournament here on Thursday.

Third seed Srikanth, who had lifted the title in 2016, eked out a thrilling 18-21, 22-20 21-16 win over compatriot

Parupalli Kashyap, who is also a former two-time champion here.

The world no 12 Indian will next square off against seventh seed Son Wan Ho of Korea in the Super 300 tournament.

Sourabh, a winner at two Super 100 events in Hyderabad and Vietnam this year, defeated fellow Indian Alap Mishra 21-11, 21-18 to set up a clash with Thailand's

Kunlavut Vitidsarn, who accounted for World Championships bronze medallist B Sai Praneeth 21-11, 21-17 in another round two match.

In women's singles, Shruti Mundada and Rituparna Das entered the quarterfinals with straight game wins.

While Shruti beat Belgium's Lianne Tan 21-18, 21-14, Rituparna defeated Tanvi Lad 21-16, 21-13 to set

up an all-Indian face-off.

Young women's pair of Simran Singhi and Ritika Thaker also progressed to the final eight after beating compatriots Riya Mookerjee and Anura Prabhudesai 21-12, 21-15 in 33 minutes.

Simran and Ritika, who win the All India Junior (U-19) Ranking in Tamil Nadu, will face Germany's Linda Efler and Isabel Herttrich next. — PTI

SANIA LOOKS TO MAKE A COMEBACK AT HOBART

Mumbai, Nov. 28: Indian tennis ace Sania Mirza on Thursday confirmed that she will be back to competitive tennis at Hobart International in January 2020, two years after taking a maternity break.

The 33-year-old, who last played at China Open in October 2017, will team up with Ukraine's Nadiia Kichenok. Sania, married to Pakistani cricketer Shoaib Malik, gave birth to their first son, Izhaan, in October last year. "I am playing in Hobart, then I am playing the Australian Open. I am planning to play a tournament in Mumbai, which is a \$25,000 (ITF women event) next month," Saina said. — PTI



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