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COUNTERPOINT



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WEATHER

Max: 24°C
Min: 15°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: 20%

Forecast: Mostly sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Vikari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Margasira Shudda Tadiya till 5.44 pm
Star: Moola till 7.34 am
Variyam: 5.58 am to 7.34 am and 5.27 pm to 7.06 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.45 am to 9.29 am and 12.26 pm to 1.10 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
SUNSET TODAY 5.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.54 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 9.21 AM
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Will keep Hindutva close to my heart, vows Sena supremo Uddhav sworn in as CM of new 'secular govt' in Maha

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, NOV. 28

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But Beijing lashed out furiously, summoning the US ambassador, threatening unspecified "firm countermeasures" and warning Washington not to implement the legislation.

"The nature of this is extremely abominable, and harbours absolutely sinister intentions," the Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement.

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Pragya gets axed from LS panel, pulled up by BJP

MP barred from party LS meets

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Child marriage

Over 1,500 cases of child marriage reported between 2013-17, says Union minister Smriti Irani



For India's sustained growth, tech and innovation have to become all pervasive

— Harsh Vardhan, Union minister

IN BRIEF

Govt extends ban on Ulfa for 5 years

New Delhi: The Centre has extended the ban on the Assam-based insurgent outfit Ulfa for five years for continuing subversive activities, including killings, kidnapping and extortions. In a notification, the MHA said the Ulfa has been indulging in various illegal and violent activities intended to disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India in furtherance of its objective of liberating Assam. A ministry official said the ban has been extended for five years. The home ministry said in its notification that the Ulfa has aligned itself with other unlawful associations of the north-eastern region. — PTI

NC MPs protest Farooq's detention

New Delhi: Two National Conference MPs on Thursday protested in Lok Sabha against the detention of their party chief Farooq Abdullah, who is an MP from Srinagar. The two MPs — Hasnain Masoodi and Mohammad Akbar Lone — came to the first row of Opposition benches to lodge their protest against the continuous detention of Abdullah. “Sir, Farooq Abdullah is a senior member of the House. He has been under detention for four months. Please do something,” Masoodi told Speaker Om Birla. However, the Speaker ignored their protests and continued with the proceedings. — PTI

Nuclear plants in country safe: Govt

New Delhi: The government on Thursday assured the Rajya Sabha that nuclear plants in the country are absolutely safe and steps have been taken to ensure their safety after a “malware infection” was reported in the administrative network of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant. “Let me assure the House that the nuclear plants in the country are completely safe,” minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh said during Question Hour in Rajya Sabha. — PTI

377 SITES WITH CHILD PORN TAKEN DOWN

New Delhi: As many as 377 websites hosting child pornography material have been taken down and 50 FIRs filed, women and child development minister Smriti Zubin Irani said on Thursday as she urged immediate reporting so that swift action can be taken. Intervening on a Zero Hour mention by Vijila Sathyananth (AIADMK) on rise in child abuse cases due to easy access to pornography on mobile phones and Internet, Irani said methodology of reporting such incidents is being shared with the district administration for prompt action. She said, “377 websites have been taken down and 50 FIRs filed.” Ms Sathyananth cited recent incidents of sexual assault of minor girls to seek complete ban on Internet and social media carrying such content so as to “save our children.” She said there are rising crimes against children due to easy access to pornography. Ms Irani said she would have the administration act immediately if details of incidents are provided. In a separate Zero Hour mention, G.V.L. Narasimha Rao (BJP) raised the issue of English being made a medium of education up to Class VI in Andhra Pradesh saying the move undermines regional languages and should be reviewed. “It has to be reviewed because it has been criticised from all quarters,” he said. — PTI

Modi reiterates India's strong support for Palestinian cause

Palestinian envoy blasts US admin, accuses it of ‘regional apartheid’

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

A day after Indian consul general in New York Sandeep Chakravorty had made comments — in a personal capacity — that advocated the implementation of the “Israel model” in Jammu and Kashmir causing much embarrassment to the ministry of external affairs (MEA), Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday expressed “strong support” and “solidarity” with the Palestinian cause and reiterated the Indian Government's consistent stand that a “sovereign, independent, united and viable” Palestinian State be formed that would “co-exist peacefully with Israel”. PM Modi's message was released at a function in the Capital on Thursday ahead of the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Rajya Sabha during the ongoing Winter Session on Thursday. — PTI

International Solidarity Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People that is observed annually on November 29. PM Modi's message was read out by the MEA's joint secretary (West Asia and North Africa) B. Bala Bhaskar in front of a gathering of Arab diplomats, in what is being seen as a reassurance to the Arab and Muslim world that

New Delhi would continue to stand with the Palestinian cause. On the occasion, Palestinian ambassador Adnan Abu Alhaijaa expressed “gratitude to the government and people of India who stood by Palestine.” The Palestinian envoy blasted the Trump administration and accusing it of “regional apartheid”. “The United States, with its

malignant activities has pushed Europeans (too) to a corner. For decades, they (Europe and the US) were in a transatlantic alliance. Even they (the Europeans) have realised they cannot manage Cancer. You have to eradicate it,” the Palestinian envoy remarked. Lashing out at both the United States and Israel, the Palestinian envoy said, “Years of association (of the US) with Israel has rubbed off on it (the US)”. “There has been one right-wing coup after another in Latin America... Israel is lurking from behind the curtains,” the Palestinian envoy said.

Blasting the Trump administration in the US, the Palestinian ambassador said, “Palestine is not yours to give (to Israel). It is not Carolina or Virginia that can be given away. ... Palestinians know no fatigue and will resist (Israeli policies).”

Gotabaya arrives in Delhi, talks with PM Modi today

Meet to focus on ways to further expand ties

New Delhi, Nov. 28: In his first overseas tour after taking the reins of Sri Lanka over a week ago, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa arrived in New Delhi on a three-day visit, signalling his intent to deepen bilateral ties with India. On Friday, Mr 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 fulfil the aspirations of the Tamil community in that country.

In a tweet, before leaving for New Delhi, Mr Rajapaksa said he was looking

Modi, Abe meet likely to be held in Guwahati in mid-Dec.

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

There are indications that the annual summit between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to take place in the Northeast, probably in Guwahati, Assam, in mid-December. This will take place after the 2+2 dialogue between the two nations at the foreign and defence ministerial level this Saturday in New Delhi.

If the summit is indeed held in Guwahati, it will follow the pattern of Summits with world leaders that are held in various parts of the country. Just last month, the second informal summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and PM Modi was held at Mamallapuram near Chennai.

forward to strengthening 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.

Mr Rajapaksa, a former defence secretary who is credited with ending the country's long civil war, was sworn in as the new President on November 18, a day after he won the closely fought presidential poll in island nation.

Three days later, he appointed his elder brother Mahinda Rajapaksa as the PM. — PTI

SC reserves verdict on Chidambaram's bail plea

‘PC’s crime as grave as Ranga-Billa’

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday told the Supreme Court that the allegation of money laundering against former finance minister P Chidambaram in the INX Media case was as grave as the crime of kidnapping and murder committed by “Ranga-Billa” in the national capital in 1978.

Thursday was the 100th day of incarceration of Mr Chidambaram, who was arrested on August 21, 2019.

Describing the offence committed by Mr Chidambaram falling in the “gravest of grave” category, solicitor-general Tushar Mehta told a



P. Chidambaram

bench of Justices R. Banumathi, A.S. Bopanna and Hrishikesh Roy that the crime committed by “Ranga-Billa” could not be the test of the gravity of the offence as economic offences were a separate class in themselves and have a wider repercussion for the society and the nation's economy.

Taking exception to the high court findings on the

► **Former finance minister, who was arrested on August 21, has challenged Nov. 15 Delhi high court order rejecting his bail plea on the grounds of the gravity of the case**

gravity of the case and saying that it would send a wrong message to the people of the country, if the former finance minister was released on bail, Mr Chidambaram had on Wednesday lamented that it was being projected as if his offence was as heinous as that of “Ranga-Billa”.

Placing the economic offences — attributed to Mr Chidambaram — as

grave as the kidnapping and murder, Mehta said that “murder a heinous crime could be committed in a heat of the moment, but an economic offence is “pre-meditated and calculated”.

As Mr Mehta made a strong plea against the grant of bail, the court reserved its order on Mr Chidambaram's plea for bail. The former finance minister has challenged November 15 Delhi high court order rejecting his bail plea on the grounds of the gravity of the case.

However, the high court by its November 15 order had said that Mr Chidambaram was not a flight risk (could not flee from the country), tamper with evidence and influence the witnesses.

I defended Udhham Singh not Godse, says Pragya

AGE 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 Sadvi Pragya on Thursday tried to clarify that her comments in the Lok Sabha was not to “insult” revolutionary Udhham Singh. Her remark on Wednesday — a repeat of what she had said during Lok Sabha polls campaigning after which Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that he will never forgive Sadhvi Pragya for calling Nathuram 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 Udhham Singh yesterday,” the Bhopal legislator tweeted after the BJP removed her from Union defence minister Rajnath Singh's 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, Sadhvi Pragya, during a roadshow, had said that Nathuram Godse was a “deshbhakt” and will remain a “deshbhakt”.

Sedition case against Pragya

Indore, Nov. 28: Amid a raging row over BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur's remarks on Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse, Congress workers on Thursday lodged a complaint of sedition against her.

The BJP legislator triggered controversy on Wednesday with her remark in the Lok Sabha during DMK member A. Raja's narration of a statement by Nathuram Godse before a court on why he killed Mahatma Gandhi. Her remark was expunged by the Speaker. — PTI



Trinamul Congress MP Nusrat Jahan with her husband Nikhil Jain at Parliament House in New Delhi on Thursday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

Labour bill tabled in LS amid opposition

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

Amid vehement opposition by the Congress and other parties, Union labour minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar on Thursday introduced the Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2019, in the Lok Sabha. The proposed legislation aims to amalgamate 44 legislations related to labourers into four codes.

While the Congress, Trinamul Congress legislators as well as RSP legislator N.K. Premachandran termed the legislation as “anti-labour”, and demanded that it be sent to the parliamentary standing committee, Mr Gangwar tried to pacify the agitated Opposition members by saying that the proposed legislation had been

brought after extensive parleys with various unions and once discussions would be held in both the Houses of Parliament as part of passage of the bill, lots of aspects would be cleared.

Congress' leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said that the entire legislative document is riddled with various anomalies fraught with controversies, “and it is detrimental to the welfare of labour in our country. Here, the government is going to introduce ‘hire and fire’ syndrome by inducing a new incarnation called ‘fixed-term employment’”.

Mr Premachandran, RSP legislator from Kollam, said that the concerned state governments have not been consulted before arriving at the contents of the code.



PARLIAMENT DIARY

— BY GAUTAM LAHIRI —

MPs CURIOUS ABOUT CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL



Home minister Amit Shah will start consultation meetings with all stakeholders of Northeastern states from today on the proposed Citizenship Amendment Bill. The meetings, the first of which will be held at Mr Shah's residence after 9 pm, will continue for some days. Most chief ministers, union presidents of all political parties and citizen groups of the Northeastern states have been invited. When the chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Venkaiah Naidu, had called a business advisory committee meeting, many leaders had asked about the controversial bill, but there was no answer from the government. Some leaders were told that the bill might come suddenly at the home minister's meeting. They leaders then advised the government that the legislation should not be brought like Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill. The only answer they received was that the Cabinet was yet to pass the bill.

BILL TO ENHANCE POWERS OF GOVERNORS IN AUTONOMOUS DISTRICTS TO BE DELAYED

As there was no consensus on the proposed 125th Constitutional Amendment Bill, on the request of Anand Sharma, the chairman of the standing committee on home affairs, RS Chairman Venkaiah Naidu, has extended the deadline for presenting the report by a month. The report was supposed to be presented by December 12. Now, the committee will present it before January 12, 2020. The bill sought to empower governors to increase the financial and executive power of all autonomous districts created under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. These districts are in Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram. This amendment was required to take the tribal population into confidence.

VICTORY GESTURE COMES BACK TO HAUNT ROY AMID BYPOLL DEBACLE



Former TMC MP Mukul Roy was captured on Wednesday assuring home minister Amit Shah of victory in the bypolls to the West Bengal Assembly. Mr Roy was photographed with three fingers up, indicating all the three seats that were going to the polls would be won by the BJP. When the results were declared, where the TMC trounced the saffron party by comfortable margins, the picture was regurgitated on social media.

An MP commented that Mr Roy was actually correct when he predicted a three-seat haul, but was wrong about which party was the victorious one.



Congratulation

Former PM Manmohan Singh congratulates Uddhav Thackeray, hails his visionary leadership



Is Rahul scared that hugging Uddhav Thackeray is equivalent to hanging himself?

— G.V.L. Narsimha Rao
CPI(M) gen secy

BRIEF

6 former Maha CMs attend swearing-in

Mumbai: Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray's swearing-in ceremony as Maharashtra chief minister saw six of his predecessors from the state gracing the event held at the Shivaji Park here on Thursday evening. NCP patriarch Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena leader Manohar Joshi, Congress leaders Sushilkumar Shinde, Ashok Chavan and Prithviraj Chavan and BJP's Devendra Fadnavis are the six former CMs who headed the state at different times. Thackeray succeeded Fadnavis (2014-2019). Pawar has headed the state four times, while Ashok Chavan and Fadnavis became chief ministers twice. — PTI

Alma mater of Uddhav celebrates

Mumbai: As the Shivaji Park ground in central Mumbai gears up for swearing-in of Uddhav Thackeray as Maharashtra's new chief minister, a mood of celebration also prevails at his school, the nearby Balmohan Vidyamandir. Not only Thackeray, who heads the Shiv Sena, but Jayant Patil of the NCP, who is likely to take oath as minister, is also a former student of this school. Thackeray, a 1976-batch student of Balmohan school, was announced as nominee for chief minister's post at a meeting of the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi three days ago. — PTI

Didi congratulates Thackeray & Pawar

Kolkata: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday congratulated Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray, NCP chief Sharad Pawar and Congress leader Balasaheb Thorat for coming together and forming the government in Maharashtra. Banerjee said she was looking forward to a "pro-people and stable government" that would work for the all round development of Maharashtra under their leadership. Congratulations to @OfficeofJT, @PawarSpeaks and @bbp_thorat for forming the government in Maharashtra, she tweeted. — PTI

BJP TAKES DIG AT RAHUL ABSENCE, TIEUP WITH SENA

New Delhi: The BJP sought to corner the Congress on Thursday over the Shiv Sena praising Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse in the past and wondered if this was why Rahul Gandhi was "ashamed" to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the Maharashtra government. The Congress-NCP alliance in Maharashtra has joined hands with the Sena, a long-time Hindutva ally of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) before they split, and Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray was sworn-in as the chief minister on Thursday. "Stop being a hypocrite Rahul Gandhi. You are making someone with identical views chief minister of Maharashtra. Udhav Thackeray, Editor-in-Chief of *Saamana*, wrote that Godse was a patriot. Is that why you are ashamed to attend swearing-in," BJP spokesperson G.V.L. Narsimha Rao said in a tweet. Mr Gandhi had earlier attacked the BJP over its MP Pragya Thakur's praise for Godse, saying her remarks represented the "heart and soul" of the saffron party. Hitting back, Rao said, "Is Rahul scared that hugging Uddhav Thackeray is equivalent to hanging himself? Sena is wanted for grabbing power but is an untouchable. This is how Sultanates treat slaves, not partners. This is the ultimate insult to the legacy of Balasaheb Thackeray, the pride of Maharashtra (sic)." — PTI

Sonia, Rahul maintain 'safe distance'

Cong yet not 'certain' of alliance's stability', agenda of Sena

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

In a bid to maintain a "safe distance" from the Shiv Sena led government, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday skipped the swearing-in ceremony in Maharashtra. While officially, the Congress claimed that Mrs Gandhi had to skip the ceremony due to health reasons, sources revealed that the Congress president at this juncture wanted to "maintain a distance" as the party was not yet "certain" of the "stability of the alliance", and the "agenda of the Shiv Sena", despite the Common Minimum Programme CMP.

The CMP states in its preamble that all the alliance partners will follow the "secular" principles as enshrined in the Constitution. Before the alliance was cemented several senior Congress leaders had reservations about aligning with the Shiv



Congress MP Rahul Gandhi at Parliament House during the Winter Session in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

Sena. But after consultations with the elected MLAs of the party it was decided to go ahead with the alliance. However, Mrs Gandhi has sent a letter to the Maharashtra chief minister, Mr Thackeray congratulating him. In the letter she said, "Aadiya met me yesterday and extended your

kind invitation to attend the swearing-in ceremony. I regret that I am unable to be present at the function." She further added, "the three parties have come together under quite extraordinary circumstances at a time when the country is facing unprecedented threats from the BJP." She also wished the

alliance and hoped that the new government will fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the people of Maharashtra.

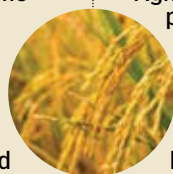
Congress leader Mr. Rahul Gandhi and former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh also wrote to the Maharashtra chief minister expressing regret for not attending the function. Mr Thackeray had sent his son Aadiya to personally invite Dr. Manmohan Singh and Mrs. Sonia Gandhi for the swearing-in ceremony.

Earlier in the day addressing the CPP, Mrs Gandhi flayed the BJP for "shameless attempts to subvert democracy" in Maharashtra and blatantly sabotage the three-party alliance from coming to power in the state. Addressing the Congress Parliamentary Party meeting in Parliament House, she also attacked the governor of the state, Bhagat Singh Koshyari.

COMMON MINIMUM PROGRAMME

► Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi, the Sena-NCP-Congress alliance, has come out with its much-awaited common minimum programme. And against all speculations and reports, it begins with stress on "secularism". Sena initially had reservation about it. ► Key focus areas in the CMP are farmers' issues, unemployment, health, industry, social justice, women, education, urban development, tourism art and culture.

► The common minimum programme of the Maha Vikas Aghadi promises 80 per cent reservation in jobs for local/domicile youth. The new government promises to bring a law to ensure the reservation. ► The programme consists of complete loan waiver to farmers in the state as well as one rupee clinics, which will provide basic health screening of people across the state, alliance leaders said.



► Shiv Sena's most discussed poll promise of offering a full meal at ₹10 also figures in the CMP.

Cong, NCP pay tribute to Balasaheb Thackeray

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, NOV. 28

Congress and NCP leaders paid rich tribute to Shiv Sena supremo, the late Balasaheb Thackeray, as both parties prepared to form an alliance government with the Sena on Thursday.

NCP MP and party chief Sharad Pawar's daughter Supriya Sule remembered how "Balasaheb and Maasaheb (the late Meenatai Thackeray)" treated her like a daughter. "Maasaheb and Balasaheb — missing you so much today. Both of you should have been here today. They treated me with so much love and affection — more than a daughter! Their role in my life will always be special and memorable!" she tweeted. Sharad Pawar also hailed the Shiv Sena founder, describing him as a man who kindled pride in the Marathi mannos and gave direction to society and politics through his courageous personality.

Congress's Balasaheb Thorat said that former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Balasaheb Thackeray had a cordial relationship and Balasaheb Thackeray supported her. "Whenever needed, they stood by each other," he said. The Sena founder had supported the Emergency.

The alliance of the Sena with the Congress as part of the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi was seen as an unlikely combine as the two parties share opposite ideologies.

Both the Congress and NCP had paid respect to Balasaheb Thackeray on his seventh death anniversary and also through social media platforms.



Balasaheb Thackeray

Ajit will stay away from govt for time being

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, NOV. 28

Despite the insistence of his supporters, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) did not include former rebel leader Ajit Pawar in the state council of ministers. Ajit Pawar himself made it clear that he would not be a minister.

"I will not take oath. Only Chhagan Bhujbal and Jayant Patil will take oath as ministers from the NCP," Mr Pawar said after a meeting of NCP leaders at party chief Sharad Pawar's residence.

Ajit Pawar also dismissed reports that he was disappointed over not being sworn-in as the deputy chief minister on Thursday. "I am not at all disappointed. Do you see disappointment on my face?" he asked.

The former deputy chief minister also refuted reports about his 'revolt.' Ajit Pawar joined hands with the BJP to form a government last Saturday, but quit it earlier this week, citing 'personal reasons,' leading to collapse of the Devendra



Fadnavis-led government.

"It was not a revolt. I was in the NCP. I am in the NCP and will remain in the NCP," he said, adding that he would attend the swearing-in ceremony in the evening with his cousin and Lok Sabha MP Supriya Sule. There were speculations over the next move by Ajit Pawar after he had returned to the NCP by resigning from the BJP government. Despite his rebellion, several of his supporter MLAs had demanded that he should be given the deputy CM's post in the Uddhav Thackeray-led government.



(From left) MNS chief Raj Thackeray, former Maharashtra CM Manohar Joshi, MP chief minister Kamal Nath, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, former CM of Maharashtra Ashok Chavan and Congress leader Ahmed Patel during the oath-taking ceremony of Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray as Maharashtra chief minister and other ministers of his Cabinet at Shivaji Park in Mumbai on Thursday. — RAJESH JADHAV

No fresh Adarsh scam probe: ED

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, NOV. 28

The Shiv Sena Friday said that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigation against Congress leader Ashok Chavan in connection with the Adarsh scam was yet another example of misuse of government machinery by the BJP government. According to

sources, Mr Chavan was not sworn in Friday because of the Adarsh case.

Sena's Sanjay Raut asked why the case had suddenly been opened. "As soon as they came to know that we are forming the government, they started using the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) and ED against us. Let them do it," he said.

However, the ED

Thursday clarified that it had not initiated any fresh probe into the Adarsh Society scam. It issued a press note after media reports surfaced, showing its officers visiting the society premises Thursday for some measurements and related activities. "This is to clarify that no fresh investigation has been taken up by the ED in the Adarsh Society scam," it said.

LOST & FOUND

NOTIFICATION

IT is Notified for the information that my original Marksheet and Passing certificate of main Senior secondary exam. (12th class) year 1999 Roll No 6207426 pass out from CBSE Delhi has been Actually Lost. Vikramjeet Singh 18/051, Spring Fields Society, Sector -Zeta 1st, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh Mobile: 9582555158

Uddhav faces uphill task as CM

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, NOV. 28

Uddhav quits *Saamana* editor post

Mumbai: After becoming the head of the state, Uddhav Thackeray has quit as the editor-in-chief of Shiv Sena mouthpiece, *Saamana*. The responsibility will now be held by party leader Sanjay Raut, who has been the executive editor of the newspaper for 30 years.

The move came after Uddhav was slated to take oath as the chief minister

of Maharashtra, being the first member of the Thackeray family ever to become CM of the state.

Hereon, Uddhav's name will not be mentioned in the credit line as editor-in-chief of the Sena daily. Uddhav began his political journey as the editor of *Saamana* when he used to take potshots at the then Sena CM, Narayan Rane, in 1999.

rainfall last month, crops covering an area of 94.02 lakh hectares suffered extensive damage result-

ing in losses to the tune of ₹8,000 crore. More than one crore farmers have been affected by this

vagary of nature. According to sources, if the government decides to provide a minimum aid of ₹10,000 per hectare to the farmers, it will have to make a provision of ₹9,400 crore per year. If the aid is increased to ₹25,000 per hectare, the provision will have to increase to a whopping ₹23,500 crore per year. Even when the Devendra Fadnavis government was in power, the BJP-led government at the Centre had offered aid of only ₹6,000 crore. With the Sena in the Opposition camp now, it will be interesting to see how much the Union government will respond to the state government's pleas in future.

Crowd cheers 'Sena's Tiger'

Mumbai: Shivaji Park saw the surreal coming together of hordes of jubilant Shiv Sena, Congress and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) supporters and activists on Thursday as the curtains descended on a month-long political drama with the swearing-in ceremony chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday.

Slogans such as "Kon Ala re Kon Aala Shiv Senecha Wagh aala (Who has come forth? Shiv Sena's tiger!)" and "Hi takat konachi, Shiv Sena chya vaghachi (Who is the strongest? The Shiv Sena's tiger!)" rent the air as partymen from every

corner Maharashtra thronged the city's iconic ground armed with the flags of their respective parties to witness the historic ascent of the three-party alliance government. Dadar resident and a roadside shop owner Rohini Panvelkar said she was beside herself at the prospect of a Shiv Sena chief minister. "I am confident that he will implement good policies and decisions that will help single women," she stated. Donning a saffron muffler, cap and badge, Mohammad Shakil Qureshi greeted people and posed for selfies with the common folk and partymen alike.

UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY

General public is hereby informed that an unknown male person was found dead at an footpath in front of petrol pump, Khyber pass between Pathan Wali Masjid to Kamla Nagar Ridge, Maurice Nagar, Delhi on dated 15.11.2019. In this regard a DD No. 12-A on Dated 15.11.2019 has been lodged at P.S. Maurice Nagar, Delhi



The description of the dead person is given as under Name: Unknown, S/o Unknown, R/o Unknown, Age: 35 Yrs., Height: 5'6", Complexion: Sallow, Wearing: Red with Green Colour Check Shirt & Bare Footed.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the dead person but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this dead person please inform undersigned.

SHO

P.S. Maurice Nagar, Delhi Ph.:011-27667178, 8750870128

DP/685/N/19

HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LTD. BEAS VALLEY POWER CORPORATION LIMITED

(A Subsidiary Company of HPSEBL)
"NOTICE INVITING BIDS"
Sealed bids are hereby invited on behalf of Managing Director, BVPCL, Joginder Nagar, H.P. for the under mentioned works from the dealers/registered supplier/registered contractors, who are registered with Excise & Taxation Department for taxation obligations. The bids shall be opened on the scheduled date and time mentioned below in the presence of intending bidders or their authorized representatives, who may wish to be present at the time of opening of bids. Bid documents (Hard/Soft copy) can be had from the office of Sr. Executive Engineer, P&M, Electrical Division, Uhl-III, BVPCL, Chullah, Tehsil-Lad-Bharol, District -Mandi (HP)-175015 on any working day by hand/registered post/email during normal working hours on submission of a written application accompanying with the proof of Bid document cost paid, which can be made through crossed demand draft (non-refundable) in favour of the Chief Financial Officer O/o Managing Director, BVPCL, Joginder Nagar (HP) payable at any Nationalized/Scheduled Bank, Joginder Nagar (HP)-175015 or by depositing Bid Document cost in the bank account of the Managing Director, BVPCL, Joginder Nagar (HP)-175015 A/C No: 11449942145, IFSC code: SBIN0005163, SBI, Jogindernagar (HP).

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Name of Work	Bid Security	Completion Period	Cost of Bid Document in G.S.T.
1.	02/2019	Supply, Testing Calibration and Certification before Supply, Shop Inspection, Transportation, Insurance, Delivery at Consignee's Store and trouble-free warranty of 12 months for, Mechanical T&P Items, Welding Sets and Personal protection equipment along with associated accessories, Test/Calibration Certificates etc. at 3 x 33.33 MW Uhl Stage-III HEP.	2.5% of total quoted Amount	75 days	Rs. 1180/-
		Date of Sale of Bid Document	29-11-2019 to 26-12-2019		
		Date of Receiving of Bid Document	02-01-2020 (up to 3:00 P.M)		
		Date of Opening of Bid Document	02-01-2020 (at 3:30 P.M)		
2.	03/2019	Supply, Testing Calibration and Certification before Supply, Shop Inspection, Transportation, Insurance, Delivery at Consignee's Store and trouble-free warranty of 12 months for, Electrical Measuring Instruments along with associated accessories, Test/Calibration Certificates etc. at 3 x 33.33 MW Uhl Stage-III HEP.	2.5% of total quoted Amount	30 days	Rs. 1180/-
		Date of Sale of Bid Document	29-11-2019 to 18-12-2019		
		Date of Receiving of Bid Document	23-12-2019 (up to 3:00 P.M)		
		Date of Opening of Bid Document	23-12-2019 (at 3:30 P.M)		

The detailed terms and conditions & clarification can be obtained from the office of Sr. Executive Engineer, P&M (E) Division, Uhl Stage-III, BVPCL, Chullah, Distt. Mandi (H.P.).

Sr. Executive Engineer, P&M (E) Divn. UHL Stage-III HEP, BVPCL, CHULLAH, Tehsil-Lad Bharol, Distt. Mandi (H.P.)-175015. E-mail : xenprnm@gmail.com Contact No. 01908-270750. Energy Saved is Energy Generated



Peace in Valley

Kashmir Valley peaceful like never before, says BJP leader Subramanian Swamy



Number of Hindu Bengalis excluded from final NRC to be made public

— Himanta Biswa Sarma
BJP leader

IN BRIEF

Sikh pilot asked to remove turban

New Delhi: A Sikh pilot of Air India was allegedly asked to remove his turban during a manual security check at the Madrid airport, the Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee (DSGMC) has told external affairs minister S Jaishankar. DSGMC president Manjinder Singh Sirsa requested Mr Jaishankar to raise the matter with the Spanish government that happened with Air India's Captain Simranjeet Singh Gujral recently. "The Madrid airport officials demanded him to remove his turban and asked for a manual check of his turban which is an offence in the eyes of Sikhs," Mr Sirsa. — PTI

Muzaffarpur case: CBI to book cops

New Delhi: The CBI, probing the Muzaffarpur shelter home sexual abuse case, is set to register cases against certain district police officials for their alleged role in the crime. Sources said that the investigations by the CBI have revealed that certain district level police officials failed to perform their duties while probing the cases. "One can not deny the fact that district police officials botched up the probe, following which the investigation was handed over to the CBI," sources said adding that the role of senior police officials is also being probed by the investigators. The agency have identified junior-level officials, who did not investigate the case properly, sources added.

Army successfully test-fires Spike

New Delhi: The Indian Army has successfully test fired two Spike long-range anti-tank missiles at Mhow in Madhya Pradesh which are expected to further boost its combat prowess, officials said on Thursday. Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat and several commanders witnessed the firing of the newly acquired missiles on Wednesday. Spike is a fourth generation missile which can engage any target with precision at ranges up to 4 km, the officials said. — PTI

BJP RETAINS PITHORAGARH SEAT IN U'KHAND

Dehradun: BJP's Chandra Pant on Thursday beat her Congress rival Anju Luthi by over 3,000 votes to win the Pithoragarh Assembly bypoll and retain the seat for the party. The bypoll was necessitated by the death of sitting BJP MLA Prakash Pant in June, following which the party fielded his wife Chandra Pant. Chandra Pant polled 26,086 votes against Ms Luthi's 22,819, defeating her by a margin of 3,267 votes, Pithoragarh district magistrate cum returning officer V.K. Jogdande said. Voting was held on November 25, with over 47 per cent of the electorate exercising their franchise. Chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat said the victory was expected. "The seat was ours and we are happy to retain it. The margin is big. We thank people of the constituency for reposing their faith in us once again," he said. Reacting to the win, an emotional Chandra Pant said, "It is the result of developmental works done by my late husband in the constituency, besides the relentless hard work of party workers. I would try to meet the expectations of the voters who showered their love and affection on me," she added. Chandra Pant's candidature from Pithoragarh in Kumaon region of Uttarakhand was seen by political experts here as the BJP's bid to garner sympathy votes in the wake of the sitting MLA's untimely demise. — PTI

Economy in deep trouble: Sonia

'Distress among farmers, traders, small and medium businesses'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

Claiming that the Modi-Shah-led BJP government was "bankrupt" of decency, 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 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 prob-

15 locals join terror group after revoking of Article 370

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

After the abrogation of provisions under Article 370, 15 locals in Kashmir have joined terrorist groups, according to security agencies.

There was a fear of an upsurge in local recruitment to militant groups after article 370 was removed from J&K and the state was bifurcated into two Union territories.

For the whole year, 110 locals have joined the militant groups, said security

leaves 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 upon lakhs of salaried and ordinary

agencies.

This is nearly half the number of locals who had joined terrorist groups in 2018. In 2018, 214 local had joined terrorist groups. In fact, local recruitment was a bit higher in June before abrogation of Article 370 on 5th August.

In June 2019, local recruitment was 20 against 44 in the same month last year, as per security forces. In May 2019, the number of locals joining militant groups was just 8 against 34 in the corresponding month last year.

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 snoop-

ing 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".

Mrs Gandhi 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 continue. 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 of India have been under house arrest for months. Even children are not being spared in the crackdown," she said.

JD-U to consult leaders across India over NRC

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, NOV. 28

While BJP has been demanding implementation of National Register of Citizenship (NRC) across India, it's alliance partner JD(U) is in dilemma over the issue.

JD(U) leaders in Patna said that the party would clear its stand on NRC after consulting leaders all across the country. Chief minister Nitish Kumar, who has been maintaining silence on the issue, also gave similar hints while talking to reporters on the issue.

Several JD(U) leaders including the party's national vice president Prashant Kishor had earlier reacted strongly to the exclusion of around 19 lakh people from the final list of NRC in Assam.

He had termed the exercise as "botched up" and said that NRC has left Lakhs of people as foreigners in their own country.

Recently after Home minister Amit Shah gave a statement in the Rajya Sabha and claimed that the NRC process will be carried out across the country, Prashant Kishor had raised his opposition and said, "15 plus states with more than 55 per cent of India's population have non-BJP ministers. Wonder how many of them are consulted and are on-board for NRC in their respective states."

His statement was earli-

Ex-coordinator Hajela lands in fresh trouble

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, NOV. 28



There is no record of the nature of job done by the advisors and this expenditure has not been audited by the CAG, it said.

The FIR further claimed that no remuneration has been paid to the teachers who were engaged in the process of updating the NRC where as huge amount of money was said to have been spent on paying reenumeration to teachers.

The APW FIR has also alleged huge financial irregularities in purchasing of laptops, different electronic gadgets and electric generators.

In process of updating the NRC, the ministry of home affairs had released about ₹1,600 crore to the NRC authorities.

er taken as JD(U)'s official line on NRC. However, Kishor said, "15 plus states with more than 55 per cent of India's population have non-BJP ministers. Wonder how many of them are consulted and are on-board for NRC in their respective states."

Analysts are of the opinion that JD(U) has to be careful in order to keep its secular vote bank intact

in Bihar. Sources claim that chief minister Nitish Kumar has been worried after BJP leaders recently adopted an aggressive approach and demanded NRC to be implemented in Bihar especially in the Seemanchal region, which accounts for more than 40 per cent Muslim population.

Odisha woman has 19 toes, 12 extra fingers in hand

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAOO
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 28

Strange as it may appear, but it's true! A 75-year-old woman in Odisha's Ganjam district has 19 toes in her feet and extra 12 fingers on both hands. This rare disorder, according to doctors, is termed as polydactyl.

What's worse, and even shocking, is the elderly woman identified as Kumari Naik is also born-dumb.

With such an abnormalities, Kumari, who hails from Kadapada village in Buguda block of Ganjam district, used to stay with her sister-in-law. However, she was

later shifted to an old-age home. "Things turned worse after her sister-in-law suffered a paralytic attack which left her physically unfit to do any work. After that, she was shifted to Hatia old-age home," informed Kumari's relative.

Sources said it was only after the intervention of local MLA Srikant Sahu that Kumari was shifted to the old-age home on August 4. Kumari also receives ₹500 as a pension from the government. "Kumari is very poor. We request the government to increase her pension quota amount which will be helpful for her," said a local.

MHA invites N-E CMs, groups for meet on CAB

New Delhi, Nov. 28: The home ministry has invited chief ministers of northeastern states besides leaders of socio-cultural bodies, students' organisations and political parties from the region for discussions over the next two days on the plans to amend the Citizenship Act, officials said on Thursday.

Those who have been invited for discussions on Friday and Saturday include Northeast Students' Organisation, All Bodo Students' Union and students bodies from Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

The meetings with the chief ministers will be held on Saturday, an official said.

Leaders of several political parties — both regional and state chiefs of national political parties — and heads of socio-cultural organisations have also been invited for the discussions, the official said.

The home ministry has convened the meetings in the wake of strong protests registered by many organisations against the bill in the Northeast.

Union home minister Amit Shah is expected to be present in the meetings, another official said. The bill seeks to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955, in order to grant Indian nationality to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians who come to India after facing religious persecution in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan even if they don't possess proper documents. This was an election promise of the BJP in the 2014 and the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

A large section of people and organisations in the Northeast have opposed the bill, saying it will nullify the provisions of the Assam Accord of 1985, which fixed March 24, 1971, as the cut-off date for deportation of all illegal immigrants irrespective of religion.

Congress, TMC, CPI(M) and a few other political parties have been steadfastly opposing the bill, claiming that citizenship can't be given on the basis of religion. — PTI

IN BRIEF

Meghalaya may shut schools with less than 10 kids

Shillong, Nov. 28: The Meghalaya government is planning to either shut schools or withdraw funds to those having enrolments below 10 and use that sum for development of other educational institutes, a senior state minister said on Thursday.

State education minister Lakmen Rymbui said that 221 lower and upper primary schools in the state have a single-digit enrolment of students.

"The education department will soon place a proposal before the state Cabinet for either closing down or withdrawing grant-in-aid to these schools," he said.

The minister said that the state government incurs ₹20 crore annual expenditure on these schools, which could be used for the development of other educational institutes.

He, however, said the decision regarding the closure of schools or withdrawal of aid to them will be taken as per the guidelines of the Right to Education Act and no student will be deprived. — PTI



Vehicles move slowly on a snow-covered road following heavy snowfall in Manali on Thursday.

— PTI

7K engineers, graduates apply for 549 sanitary worker posts

Coimbatore, Nov. 28: A total of 7,000 engineers, graduates and diploma-holders have applied for 549 posts of sanitary workers in the city corporation.

The corporation had called for applications for the posts of 549 grade-I sanitary posts and 7,000 applicants appeared for the three-day interview and verification of certificates, which began on Wednesday, official sources said.

On verification, it was found that nearly 70% of the candidates have completed SSLC, the minimum qualification, and most of them were engineers,

post-graduates, graduates and diploma-holders, they said.

In some cases, it was found that the applicants were already employed in private firms, but the government job attracted them as the starting salary is ₹15,700.

Those already working as the contract sanitary workers for the last 10 years have also applied for these permanent jobs.

On the other hand, sanitary workers job fetches a salary of nearly ₹20,000 with the work timings of three hours in the morning and three hours in the evening. — PTI

Uddhav sworn in as CM of Maha

■ Continued from Page 1 also took the oath as ministers. Mr Thackeray, 59, took the oath as the state's 18th chief minister, paying tribute to 17th century Maratha emperor Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and remembering his parents. His wife Rashmi and sons Aaditya, who is an MLA, and Tejas were also present. Mr Thackeray became the third Sena leader after Manohar Joshi and Narayan Rane to occupy the CM's post in the state.

It was a show of strength for all three parties which comprise the MVA government, with hordes of their supporters flocking Shivaji Park since the afternoon. The set for the event was a fort-like structure of 6,000 sq ft, designed by renowned artist Nitin Desai.

Among dignitaries, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath, Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel and DMK president M.K. Stalin were the most prominent. NCP chief Sharad Pawar — who was instrumental in bringing together the Sena, NCP and Congress to form the government — was also present, along with his nephew, former Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, and daughter MP Supriya Sule. Congress leaders Mahmed Patel and Ahmed Karjun Kharge were there as well.

Former chief minister and BJP leader Devendra

Fadnavis, who resigned on Tuesday, three days after being sworn in again as chief minister, was present at the event as were three other former chief ministers — Mr Joshi and Congress' Ashok Chavan and Prithviraj Chavan.

Interestingly, the biggest round of applause from the spectators was reserved for Mr Thackeray's estranged cousin, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray, and Ajit Pawar, who had rebelled from his party to form a shortlived government with the BJP.

After the ceremony, Mr Thackeray headed to the famous Siddhivinayak temple where he, along with Rashmi and Aaditya, offered prayers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to Twitter to congratulate Mr Thackeray on taking the oath as chief minister, saying he was confident that the Shiv Sena chief would work diligently for the bright future of the state. "Congratulations to Uddhav Thackeray Ji on taking oath as the CM of Maharashtra. I am confident he will work diligently for the bright future of Maharashtra," he tweeted.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi, who did not make it to the event, said in a congratulatory letter to Mr Thackeray that the country was facing "unprecedented threats" from the BJP.

TMC sweeps 3 byelections

■ Continued from Page 1 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."

She elaborated: "We have got the votes of Hindus, the minority community, Rajbanshis, tribals, non-Bengalis (in case of Kharagpur) and others. Winning few seats the BJP however started displaying arrogance and audacity. They are setting Central agencies after anyone they want and sending whosoever to jail.

People from here were killed in Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. In democracy, one party comes to power while another cannot. But there is a sweetness."

She added: "The people's mandate is the biggest verdict. We never won Kaliaganj and Kharagpur since our party's foundation. We lagged at Kaliaganj and Kharagpur by around 57,000 and 47,000 votes respectively earlier. So we had to overcome a huge margin in the bypolls. This is the first time the people from there reposed their faith in us. We are indebted to them. We dedicate this victory to them."

Pragya gets axed from LS

■ Continued from Page 1 the nation. How can she dare to say such things, that too inside the House? We demand action," he said.

The Congress leader accused the BJP of doing politics in the name of Gandhi and appropriating his and Nehru's legacy. Mr 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 AIMIM.

Speaker Om 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

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.

RAFALE DELIVERY ON TARGET, ON SCHEDULE: FRENCH AMBASSADOR

The India-France relationship, which Emmanuel describes as the 'strongest partnership possible,' growing even more in the backdrop of an understanding between the leadership in Paris and Delhi, with France throwing its weight behind India getting a seat at the UNSC

NEENA GOPAL
BENGALURU

The first Rafale will be handed over to India "on time, right on schedule, on Indian soil in May 2020. We are on target", the new French envoy to India, Emmanuel Lenain, said in an interview, where the long-time China hand, who served in the U.N., backed India's stand on getting a seat on the United Nations Security Council and its abrogation of Article 370, while calling for a relook at the original deal to acquire not 36 but 126 nuclear-capable fighter aircraft.

Mr Lenain sees the India-France relationship, which he describes as the "strongest partnership possible," growing even more so in the backdrop of a far firmer understanding between the leadership in Paris and Delhi, with France throwing its weight behind India getting a seat at the UNSC high table and working on squeezing Pakistan on its export of terror. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly cited Pakistan's use of terrorist groups against Jammu and Kashmir as one of the reasons for the more stringent security in that state.

"We support India's right to decide on its path forward," the French envoy said on the Modi government's move to alter the status of Jammu and Kashmir to an Union Territory, adding that "as anywhere else, we want human rights to be respected and we think the sooner the situation comes back to normalcy, the better."

France and Germany are on the same page on this, he said, echoing comments by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, during her recent visit to India on the need to return the state of Jammu and Kashmir to a semblance of normalcy. Interestingly, in a clear rejection of U.S. President Donald Trump's repeated proffer of third party mediation, Mr Lenain said the issue is a bilateral one with Pakistan, and that both countries should find a resolution through a peaceful discussion following that up with his India-leaning coup de grace — "There is no ben-

efit in internationalising the issue." But it was on the issue of the long-standing relationship on defence, that was not predicated only on the Rafale fighter jet, that the French envoy made a telling point. Saying it was not the first defence deal between the two countries, the French envoy pointed to the sale to India of the Mirage 2000 fighter jet in 1984, in response to Pakistan's acquisition of the F-16 from the U.S. "We have been in India since the 1950s. We are one of the oldest suppliers to India and we have been always there when you needed any sort of equipment because we have the strongest partnership possible," Mr Lenain said, speaking to this newspaper, in India's defence manufacturing hub, adding that France remains committed to ₹30,000 crore offset deal to provide 36 Rafale fighters to the Indian Air Force. These 36 Rafale jets (include two trainer variants) would be fitted with 'Meteor' BVRAAM (beyond visual range air to air missiles), the active electronically scanned (AESA) radar for supremacy in the air, and most important, its ability to carry out nuclear strikes.

Induction of Rafale jets to the IAF's fleet would serve as a deterrent to



We already signed a contract for 36 (Rafales); but at one point of time the number was 126. It's up to the Indian government to decide. The discussions for this contract have been going on since early 2001 and then the Indian government decided what its needs are, and how it shall be procured. The French company offered, as they always do, the maximum part of the procurement under 'Make in India'. But eventually given the technological aspects, it was decided that the planes would be produced in France but with off-sets in India.

— Emmanuel Lenain, Ambassador of France to India

hostile neighbours, because of its capability to deliver nuclear weapons in the event of a war. France, which was the point of attack by the Opposition Congress on the \$4.5 billion Rafale deal in a bruising 2018 election campaign, has remained committed to the delivery and training of IAF fighter pilots on Rafale.

"We share analysis, intelligence, technologies with your country as much as with any other country," he said. "At various moments we have been very supportive; Like with your nuclear tests in 1998. We were there. A few years later, when you had the operations against Pakistan in Kargil, we were there with French aircraft, Mirage. We made sure that we worked together during the operation. It was another example of this great partnership with India. But Rafale, obviously has been the most advanced technology and this collaboration is a big signal." On taking the Rafale deal forward, the envoy said: "We already signed a contract for 36 (Rafales); but at one point of time the number was 126. It's up to the Indian government to decide.

The discussions for this contract have been going on since early 2001 to be precise and then the Indian government decided what its needs are, and how it shall be procured. The French company offered, as they always

do, the maximum part of the procurement under "Make in India". But eventually given the technological aspects, it was decided that the planes would be produced in France but with off-sets in India."

The first Rafale was handed over to the Indian Air Force in Bordeaux Merignac, on October 8, when Defence Minister Mr Rajnath Singh travelled to Merignac. "We could have done it earlier; but that was his decision — he wanted to have it on the Air Force Day," he explained. The first Rafale will fly into Indian territory in May 2020. Why the delay? "Only because between now and May, the Indian pilots and Indian technicians are getting trained on site in Bordeaux. But after that the delivery to India will be very regular — 1 or 2 planes per month and it will be done on time.

And in terms of schedule, we couldn't do any better," he said. Originally, the two governments agreed on an offset requirement of 30 per cent of the deal value to be invested by France in Indian aerospace and defence companies and creation of infrastructure for operating the fleet. The Indian government, however, increased this figure to 50 per cent while evincing interest in procurement of 50-plus Naval variant of Rafale fighters in



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future.

France and India share concerns over the rising terror graph, reflected in France's tough line on freezing the assets of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar; and pushing the Financial Action Task Force on putting Pakistan on the grey list, the ambassador said the asset freeze is decided by the sanction committee of the UN, created by the Security Council of the U.N. Resolution 1267, which he knew all too well, given that he had personally worked on the resolution for three years.

"We faced and we are still facing terrorism. We stand side by side with India on this," he said, adding that on keeping Pakistan on the FATF grey list, when faced with "some countries opposing the move", France alongside several other countries kept up the pressure on Pakistan, giving it until February next year to clean up its act. Between India and France, "there is a strategic dialogue going on since 1997. The idea is to take up the most strategic issues, which means that your Prime Minister and my President decided to work jointly last summer and adopted a roadmap on two important matters — digital and cyber terrorism."

France's invitation to the Indian premier to attend the G8 summit in Biarritz was at one level, a reaffirmation of the personal chemistry between the French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Modi, but equally it demonstrated how far the South Asian power had come on climate change and biodiversity, issues that affect the first world as much as developing countries, in tackling urbanisation, water sanitation, smart grids, clean transportation.

Economic and business ties are also on the upswing, Mr Lenain said, with more than 500 French companies employing close to 350,000 people in India. "One of the largest employers in this city is Capgemini — that's close to 1,50,000 employees in India. Trade is lagging slightly behind; it is true that there are some barriers (tariffs) but we are working with the Indian authorities and we can make progress with that, in everybody's interest." With the French language taught in a slew of international schools in the city, and across the country, the French envoy said his priority remained people-to-people exchanges. "This year, 10,000 Indian students will be coming to France as they have every year. We have a very ambitious target — to reach the figure 20,000, by 2025. To

achieve this, we are going to help universities, colleges, schools find partners in France. Most importantly, students who do enroll in schools and universities will be allowed to stay on in France for two years and work in that country, which makes it easier for young people to find employment in French companies once they are back in India, he said. In a further bid to up tourists' numbers from India, Mr Lenain says "all visas will be delivered in 48 hours soon."



'Baby boys born to older mothers likely to develop heart problems later'

Changes occur in the placenta in older pregnant mothers which leads to a greater likelihood of poor health in their male offspring

New Delhi: Women who get pregnant in old age generally suffer changes in the placenta, which in turn, means that baby boy being born to such mothers are more likely to develop heart problems later in life, a new study has found.

Changes occur in the placenta in older pregnant mothers which leads to a greater likelihood of poor health in their male offspring, pointed out the study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

Both male and female fetuses do not grow as large in older mothers, but there are sex-specific differences in changes to placental development and function. These are likely to play a central role in the increased likelihood of later-life heart problems and high blood pressure in males.

Women over 35 are considered to be of advanced maternal age and in this study, researchers looked at pregnant rats of a comparable age wherein, the placenta of female fetuses showed beneficial changes in structure and function that would maximise the support of fetal growth.

In some instances, the placenta even supported the female fetus better than the placenta of a younger mother. In the case of male fetuses however, the placenta showed changes that would limit fetal growth in the aged preg-



Pregnancy in older mothers is associated with a heightened risk of complications like blood pressure for both the mother and baby

nant rats.

Pregnancy in older mothers is associated with a heightened risk of complications for both the mother and her baby with conditions like preeclampsia — raised blood pressure in the mother during pregnancy, gestational diabetes, stillbirth and fetal growth restriction.

"With the average age of first

pregnancy in women becoming higher and higher, and especially so in developed countries, it is very important to understand how the age of the mother and the sex of the baby interact to determine pregnancy and later-life health of the child," said study's lead author Dr Amanda Sferruzzi-Perri, a Royal Society Fellow in the Centre for

Trophoblast Research at the University of Cambridge's Department of Physiology, Development and Neuroscience.

The placenta transports nutrients and oxygen from mother to fetus, secretes signalling factors into the mother so she supports fetal development, and is the main protective barrier for the fetus against toxins, bacteria, and hormones — such as stress hormones — in the mother's blood.

It is highly dynamic in nature, and its function can change to help protect the growing fetus when conditions become less favourable for its development, for example through a lack of nutrients or oxygen or when the mother is stressed.

The study found that advanced maternal age reduced the efficiency of the placenta of both male and female fetuses. It affected the structure and function of the placenta more markedly for male fetuses, reducing its ability to support the growth of the fetus.

"We now know that growth, as well as gene expression in the placenta, is affected in older mothers in a manner that partially depends on sex: changes in the placentas of male fetuses are generally detrimental," said first author Dr Tina Napso, post-doctoral fellow at the University of Cambridge. — ANI



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 SBI’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 outsmart 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 artists, sports persons, 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 countermoves.

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 artists 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 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. Even in our own lives, we are

always hearing of someone close to us — whether family or friends — who is facing challenges. As the world turns, each moment carries some sorrow for someone somewhere in the world. Some often feel that every moment of life is filled with sorrow, except for a brief break here and there where we are happy. The news seems to be filled, one moment after the other, with the tragedies people face. It seems that life brings nothing but sorrow. People facing these challenges accuse

life of bringing only suffering.

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



War of Karmapas has divided the Himalayas



Phunchok Stobdan

extract

The growing inter-Tibetan sectarian strife has become another instability factor in the Buddhist Himalayas. Of course, there is a strategic calculation involved in this. It is an old Chinese method of playing on various fault-lines to keep the Tibetans divided, while at the same time furthering their own key objectives. This author has witnessed in Kazakhstan the Chinese managing to break up over 2,50,000 people of the Uyghur diaspora into at least 18 different factions.

Sectarian suitors of all sorts—most likely armed with foreign funding—seem to have found a way to build their network while skilfully manipulating Indian law and influential individuals, politicians and local institutions. They have built mega-religious infrastructure all along, from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh.

To top it all, they have brought in sectarian discord among people hitherto devoid of any such differences. This is a major cause for worry that could push local communities deeper into the throes of anxiety and tear apart Himalayan stability. For example, in the western Himalayas, a small incident took a critical turn in 2015 when the Dalai Lama issued a virtual gag order against facilitating the visit of the rival Karmapa, Trinley Thaye Dorje.

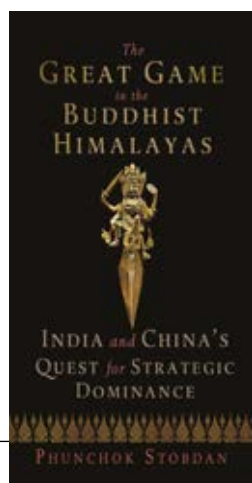
While the majority for a variety of reasons did not ignore the Dalai Lama's directive, the other sects, barring the Gelug sect — Drukpa Kagyu, Drikung Kagyu, Nyingma and even the Sakya — defied the gag and accorded a reception to Trinley Thaye Dorje. The incident almost risked the society getting divided and led to a split in the All-Ladakh Gompa Association (LGA), which is the equivalent of a local sangha. The LGA office remained locked to avoid any direct conflict for several years.

The main motive for the Dalai Lama's actions couldn't be ascertained. It could either be meant to under-

mine the Kagyu hold in Ladakh or relate to the dual appearance of the Karmapa. The Dalai Lama and China had recognized Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the true Karmapa and not Trinley Thaye Dorje.

Similarly, Sikkim has been on the boil for decades over contesting sectarian parties claiming rights to Rumtek's ownership. In Nepal, the Chinese have been supporting Buddhist projects through Tibetan monks. In May 2016, Drukhang Thubten Khedrup Rinpoche, vice chairman of the Buddhist Association of China (BAC), supervised the Buddha Jayanti celebration in Lumbini. In Bhutan too, though less successfully, the Chinese have been using the Tibetans to influence the trend of Buddhism.

A rift within the Dalai Lama's own Gelug ranks has widened after he banned the worship of the sect's protector deity, Dorje Shugden, in 1996. He has good political reason to do so, but his opponents in this regard, mostly Western converts, have been trumpeting the iniquity of the Dalai Lama, calling him a 'Muslim' and 'the worst dictator' in modern times.

THE GREAT GAME IN THE
BUDDHIST HIMALAYASBy PHUNCHOK
STOBDAN
Penguin Vintage
pp.312, ₹599

The Tibetan presence makes the situation in the Indian Buddhist Himalayas rather perilous and one whose end is not in sight. Worse, no finger can be raised in such issues for it would be dubbed as 'China's hand'. For example, the unrest in Tawang in May 2016 in which a monk was killed was described as the handiwork of China.

In the coming years, such recurring issues would inevitably spark pent-up sectarian and inter-ethnic strife, and convert the Himalayas into a bigger tinderbox, while India's own Buddhist institutions are speedily undermined to the detriment of its interests. This is where China would try to win both the Tibetan and the Himalayan Buddhist games.

To be sure, a power struggle among various Tibetan sects will get heightened in the post-Dalai Lama scenario, for the issue is linked to the Gelugpa sect retaining its supremacy over the Tibetan order.

Future of the Dalai Lama Himalayan stability would also depend on the future of the Dalai Lama. So far, the Dalai Lama's ambivalent stance on his next birth has confused everyone. It is clear that the Tibetans would certainly need and want a Dalai Lama to lead them, and Beijing too is determined to find a successor of its own choice.

Given the Tibetan track record of ensnaring India in its murky agenda, there would be every attempt to build a case for the rebirth to occur in India. The simple logic for the Americans to play Tibet politics in future would depend on controlling the Tibetan leader's next reincarnation. Not surprisingly, the Dalai Lama has already hinted that he expects his reincarnation to be born in India. Clearly, this would mean he will be born in the Indian Himalayas, either in Arunachal Pradesh or in Ladakh, and possibly also among the Tibetan refugee population in India. No one knows what it would mean but it will cause the Himalayas to become further prone to conflict. And it would animate the sectarian cause of retaining the Himalayas as a Kagyu bastion, as against the Gelug taking control of the region.

In the past, the news of the Dalai Lama possibly installing his chosen Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley

Dorje, to be the next interim leader was stiffly resisted by the Gelug faction. They would not like the Dalai Lama's selection process to be handled by non-Gelug Lamas. A situation where he could be chosen from outside their area of influence would be strongly resisted by the Gelugpas. In fact, a media report highlighted communication between the Dalai Lama's aide and the chairman of the Gelug Monastic Disciplinary Council, Jangchup Choeden, and Chinese authorities about a joint project, for 'offerings in monasteries in Tibet', to decide the successor of the Fifteenth Dalai Lama.14 Choeden later denied having such a communication about warming up to the Chinese. All in all, the Buddhist Himalayas will continue to remain a contested geo-cultural landscape between the various competing narratives of India and China. However, in the current scenario, India's interests in the Buddhist Himalayas remain even more compromised than during the colonial period, when British strategists were able to play the Himalayan game more perceptively.

For example, in the early twentieth century, the viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, was able to visualize the Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Sikkim, Bhutan and the north-east frontier as an 'inner defence line for India protected by a Tibetan buffer region'.

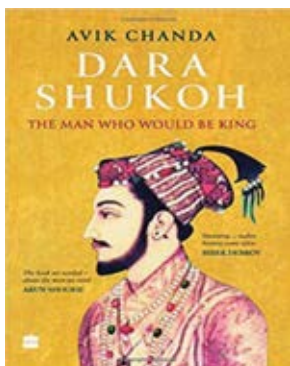
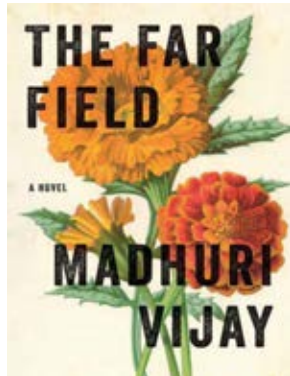
However, in the contemporary situation, India's lack of sufficient wherewithal to understand the critical interplay between Buddhism and the Himalayas may have led it to weigh heavily on the minds of the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile. Of late, the 'Tibet card' is being redefined, albeit on the grounds of Buddhist diplomacy.

The 2017 Doklam crisis brought into focus what will be one of the most difficult issues that will unfold in the Himalayas in future. It indicated the tensions rising from conflicting territorial claims by both India and China which will almost certainly keep recurring and continue raising the risk of war.

Excerpted with permission from the publishers, Penguin Random House, from The Great Game in the Buddhist Himalayas

INDIAN TOP 10 BESTSELLERS

NON-FICTION

1 **DARA SHUKOH: THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING**
Avik Chanda,
Harper Collins, ₹6992 **THE ANARCHY**
William Dalrymple,
Bloomsbury, ₹6993 **REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹5994 **GOOD ECONOMICS FOR HARD TIMES**
Abhijit V. Banerjee,
Esther Duflo
Juggernaut, ₹6995 **POOR ECONOMICS: RETHINKING POVERTY AND THE WAYS TO END IT**
Abhijit V. Banerjee,
Esther Duflo
Penguin, ₹4996 **R.N. KAO — GENTLEMAN SPYMASTER**
Nitin Gokhale
Bloomsbury, ₹5997 **TALKING TO STRANGERS**
Malcolm Gladwell
Allen Lane, ₹7998 **NOBODY CAN LOVE YOU MORE: LIFE IN DELHI'S RED LIGHT DISTRICT**
Mayank Austen Soofi
Penguin, ₹2999 **SHAHJAHANABAD**
Rana Safvi
HarperCollins, ₹99910 **KHAKI FILES: INSIDE STORIES OF POLITICAL INVESTIGATIONS**
Neeraj Kumar
Blue Salt, ₹399

FICTION

1 **THE FAR FIELD**
Madhuri Vijay
4th Estate UK, ₹5992 **GIRL, WOMAN, OTHER (BOOKER PRIZE 2019 WINNER)**
Bernardine Evaristo
Hamish Hamilton, ₹7993 **THE TESTAMENTS (BOOKER PRIZE 2019 WINNER)**
Margaret Atwood
Chatto & Windus, ₹7994 **A MINUTE TO MIDNIGHT**
David Baldacci
Pan Macmillan, ₹5995 **GRAND UNION (STORIES)**
Zadie Smith
Hamish Hamilton, ₹6996 **SUN-CATCHER**
Romesh Gunasekera
Bloomsbury, ₹5997 **BLUE MOON (THE NEW JACK REACHER THRILLER)**
Lee Child
Bantam Press, ₹5998 **AGENT RUNNING IN THE FIELD**
John Le Carré
Penguin, ₹5999 **MUSIC TO FLAME LILIES**
Megha Rao
Tara - India Research Press, ₹29910 **NOTHING VENTURED**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹399
Bahrison, New Delhi

Liberation songs: Freda and the theris were not to be deterred



Sridhar Balan

meanwhile

The actor Kabir Bedi once wrote a very moving piece on his mother in an issue of *JS* (now defunct) in the late 1960s which was reprinted after his mother died in 1977. His mother was ordained as a Buddhist nun in 1966 and Kabir recalled the deep anguish, bewilderment and shock his mother's decision (she was of English origin) caused the family. He had been a student at St Stephen's College then and recalled that theirs had been a happy family with three children that had begun with a whirlwind romance that had begun at Oxford and culminated in marriage.

I was intrigued then with the life of this remarkable woman Freda and resolved to read up on her some day. We are now fortunate that Andrew Whitehead, a journalist and a former BBC correspondent in India has written a wonderful biography, *The Lives of Freda — the Political, Spiritual and Personal Journeys of Freda Bedi*. In the book, Whitehead states that Kabir had been told at the college hostel to go and see his mom who was in town. She was

staying in Nizamuddin and Kabir recalls, "I went there and I suddenly saw her and she had shaved her hair and she was in Tibetan Buddhist robes. Firstly, there was the shock of seeing her like that, and secondly, was the feeling of betrayal that she hadn't told me before she did it."

He was angry and said so. "Why, why now?" Freda responded, "It is something I felt I had to do and I knew if I started discussing it with everybody, God knows what might have happened." Indeed. The words, "It is something I felt I had to do," are very impressive and if the earliest women to be ordained as nuns in the Buddhist tradition had not felt the same way, women may never have become nuns.

Freda hints that there may have been opposition or at least some pressure to make her change, had her decision been discussed in the family. The early women nuns faced determined opposition to the setting up of a separate holy order.

The opposition came from the Buddha himself. Buddha preached in Pali so that his message could be understood by the common

people. And people included everyone. Everyone regardless of caste, status or gender, was united in Buddhism, the Buddha preached, "as are the rivers in the sea". The three authorities of Buddhism were the Buddha himself, the "Dhamma" or the rules of Buddhist life, and the "Sangha" or the ascetic community. The Buddha believed that both men and women could attain 'nirvana' and were capable of receiving rigorous training and philosophical education and could even be entrusted with the task of preaching the Buddhist doctrine. Yet, when there was a request from a woman to be ordained and to join the holy order or the "Sangha", the Buddha refused.

Susie Tharu and K. Lalita in their pathbreaking book *Women Writing in India — 600 B.C. to the Present* record that this request did come early in Buddha's life and to the Buddha himself. Based on records of exchanges in the Sangha and on the status of women, Tharu and Lalita note that Mahapajapati Gotami, the Buddha's royal foster mother, wanted to join the Sangha. She, of royal blood, walked long distances through the heat and dust to find the Buddha and request him but he would not hear of it. Repeated requests were refused repeatedly. There was no moving the Buddha who was steadfast in his decision.

At the time, we must



Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, the 16th Karmapa, with Gelongma Karma Kechog Palmo (aka Freda Bedi) at Rumtek Monastery, Sikkim, in 1971

remember that all of the Buddha's preachings were oral in character. There were no written-up texts. The texts or the "*Sutras*" only came up later after the 'Sakyamuni's death at the initiative of the disciples who felt that succeeding generations should not deviate from what the Buddha had preached. It was one such disciple Ananda, prodigious of memory, and perhaps moved by Gotami's pleas and entreaties, mustered up the courage to argue with the Buddha. There was nothing in the tenets of the Buddha's preachings, said Ananda that forbade women from entering the Sangha or ascetic order. Today, it's interesting to note that when entry of

women to a holy shrine is a matter that is decided by the highest court in the land, Ananda's appeal was to the Buddha himself, the highest court at the time. We do not know what were the arguments Ananda marshalled in his defence, for there were no written texts, but powerful and persuasive they must have been. And all this against one who was the originator of the preachings themselves!

The Buddha was finally compelled to agree but he laid down eight very stringent laws which all women would have to obey. Among them were a few that illustrate that the status of men and women in the Sangha were not quite equal. No 'theri' or woman monk could rebuke a 'thera' or

male monk, but the converse did not apply no matter how senior the theris may be. After a very stringent two year novitiate, a theri was to seek confirmation from both the male and female congregations but the thera had to submit himself to an examination by the male congregation only. But the women were not to be deterred. Gotami willingly accepted all the conditions and joined the Sangha happily thus beginning a long line of women monks that endures to this day.


The first Buddhist women monks were extremely creative too. Charles Hallisey has translated and published for the Murty Classical Library, *Therigatha — Poems of the*

First Buddhist Women. Written in the sixth century BCE, by senior women monks, the poems, many of them written by monks who were contemporaries of the Buddha, are songs of their experiences in the Sangha and outside. Dhammapala, the sixth-century commentator on the *Therigatha* considered the poems "inspired utterances". The poems which ranged from one verse to 40 verses, conveyed a sense of joy and euphoria felt by the women monks and were poems of liberation.

It was this great tradition of women Buddhist monks Freda Bedi joined when she was ordained as a Buddhist nun by the 16th Karmapa Lama at the Rumtek Monastery in 1966. The literary output of these remarkable women has continued over the years, as we were reminded during a visit to Kyoto in Japan this summer. *The Tale of Genji* written by a remarkable woman court attendant, Murasaki Shikibu in 1000 CE in Kyoto is considered by many to be the first great novel in world history. Not many know that the protagonist became a Buddhist nun half-way through the novel and later died but the novel continued beyond her lifetime!

The writer is a senior publishing industry professional who has worked with OUP and is now a senior consultant with Ratna Sagar Books

Tax sleuths to go after GST dodgers



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

Overleaf

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	+0.37
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.

Industrial Relations Code Bill placed in LS



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

The government on Thursday said it is not planning to reduce retirement age of employees of BSNL and MTNL to 50 years. "The government is not planning to change the retirement age of BSNL and MTNL employees to 50 instead of the current age of 60," Minister of State for Communications Sanjay Dhotre said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

Cotton output pegged at 360 L bales in 2019-20

The cotton output is estimated to go up by 9 per cent at 360 lakh bales in the crop year 2019-20, beginning from Oct-ober, on back of better yield following good monsoon, compared to the previous year, said the Cotton Advisory Board (CAB). The total cotton production in 2018-19 was 330 lakh tonne, the CAB said. The total yield is estimated to go up by 10 per cent to 486.33 lakh bales.

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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

Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services.

Shares of Piramal rose nearly 5 per cent to Rs 1,830.70 a share, while Shriram Transport Finance company rose 1.3 per cent to Rs 1,155 a piece from Rs 1,140, after the news before paring some gains.

The new proposal comes after the government's Rs 1 lakh crore partial credit guarantee scheme under which state run banks would buy high-rated pooled assets of financially sound shadow lenders, failed to take off.

Banks, which are burdened with over Rs 9 lakh crore of bad loans of their own, remain risk averse.

— Reuters

Ambani in talks to sell news assets to Times Group

BAIJU KALESH, ANTO ANTONY & P R SANJAI NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, NOV. 28

Mukesh Ambani is in talks to sell his news media assets to Times Group, as the billionaire plans to unload a business that's been losing money, people familiar with the matter said.

Bennett Coleman & Co., the publisher of the Times of India, is looking to hire advisers for due diligence on the news properties of Ambani's Network18 Media & Investments Ltd, the people said, asking not to be named as the discussions are private. Ambani is considering various options, ranging from an outright exit to a stake

sale, one of the people said.

Talks are at an early stage and may not result in a deal, the people said, adding more suitors may emerge. A representative for Bennett Coleman didn't immediately respond to a request for comments, while a spokesman for Reliance Industries said the parent of Network18

evaluates opportunities on an ongoing basis and declined to comment further. The company later said the story is "baseless and false," without elaborating.

The tycoon's plan to dispose of his news assets comes as he pursues talks to sell a stake in Network18's entertainment division that encom-

passes various movie, music and comedy channels to Sony Corp. Bloomberg reported last week that the Japanese giant is currently examining the books of the Indian media company and is considering several potential deal structures. Network18 reported a group loss of Rs 178 crore (\$25 million) in the year

ended March, while its net debt stood at Rs 2008 crore, according to the company.

Network18, acquired by RIL in 2014, owns and operates 56 local channels spanning news and entertainment. News properties include MoneyControl, News18, CNBCTV18.com, CricketNext and Firstpost.

— Bloomberg

Govt notifies WTO about intend 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 certified 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 P.R., Managing Director, India, World Gold Council.

"Almost 40 to 50 per cent of the gold in the market are hallmarked. It would take 8 to 12 months to get the rest of the stocks to be hallmarked. Government is likely to keep this in mind while announcing the deadline," he said.

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 substituting 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.

He said the bill provides that the chit fund operator has to have secured deposit to the size of scheme, which is a sufficient safeguard for people subscribing to the scheme.

— PTI

Rupee being crushed by central bank's high reserves

KARTIK GOYAL NOV. 28

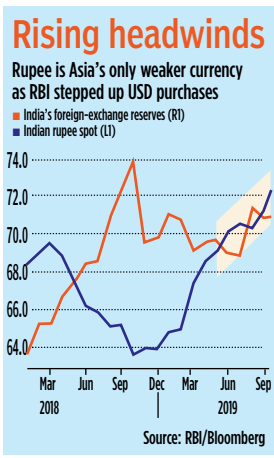
The Reserve Bank of India's efforts to support the flagging economy are turning out to be a bane for the rupee. The currency is the worst performer in emerging Asia this quarter, and analysts say that's because the central bank is mopping up dollars gushing into local stocks and bonds.

The RBI bought has about \$18 billion of foreign exchange since the end of September, according to estimates by Bloomberg

Economics. While the purchases have propelled reserves to a record, the rupee has fallen about 0.7 per cent since September 30.

Weakness in the rupee despite robust inflows is seen as a sign the central bank wants to curb a sharp appreciation in the currency that can hurt exports. With slow of economic activity, boosting shipments is high on agenda for the government.

"Part of the rupee's under-performance is deliberate," said Mitul Kotecha, a senior EM



strategist at TD Securities in Singapore. "Higher reserves prove that the central bank is probably making determined efforts to keep the rupee's competitiveness."

The RBI has said it does not target any particular level of exchange rate and steps in only to curb undue swings in the currency.

Though, as the rupee was heading for its worst quarterly decline in a year in the three months ended September, Governor Shaktikanta Das said September 19 that the currency is fairly valued, indicating toler-

ance for a weaker rupee.

India's exports have shrunk for three months in a row, contributing to further deepening of a growth slowdown. A report on Friday is likely to show GDP grew 4.6 per cent, which would be the weakest pace of expansion since January-March 2013.

Expectations that the government will continue to take steps to revive growth has prompted foreign funds to pump \$4.6 billion into local shares and more than \$600 million into debt this quarter. The purchases have pushed up the

nation's equities to a record, and sent the rupee to a three-week high. The currency fell 0.4 per cent to close at 71.77 per dollar on Thursday.

The RBI will continue to soak up the inflows to address the rupee's over-valuation, according to Kotak Securities. "When you have decent inflows, there is no reason for the rupee to depreciate and the RBI's sharp dollar purchases are the predominant reason behind the weakness," said Anindya Banerjee, a currency analyst at Kotak.

— Bloomberg

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 Aji 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.

HDFC panel to find Puri's successor

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, NOV. 28

India's largest private lender HDFC Bank has set up a six-member panel to identify a successor to managing director Aditya Puri who is set to retire in October 2020.

The bank's chairperson and former RBI deputy governor Shyamala Gopinath, additional director Sanjiv Sachar, former Infosys CFO MD Ranga-nath, Sandeep Parekh, Srikanth Nadhamuni and HDFC's representative Keiki Mistry have been named members of the search committee. Puri will act as an advisor to the search committee, the private lender said in a statement.

"The Search Committee, over the next few months, shall evaluate internal and external candidates to ensure a smooth transition," the bank said in a statement.

HDFC Bank is on a global search to find a successor to Founder & Chief Executive Officer Aditya Puri, as he would turn 70 next year.

Nelco to roll out in-flight data services

New Delhi, Nov 28: Tata group company Nelco Ltd on Thursday said it expects to roll out in-flight data connectivity services by January but did not divulge the air-lines it would partner with for the offering.

The company had, earlier this year, obtained a licence from the DoT for providing in-flight and maritime connectivity (IFMC) services.

Nelco said it hopes to roll out in-flight services in the next one-and-a-half months but refused to comment on tariffs saying the modalities are being fine-tuned.

"We are hoping to start in-flight connectivity services around January timeframe. We will start with data services," Nelco Managing Director and CEO P J Nath said on an event here.

On March 6 this year, the company announced it has obtained licence from the government for providing in-flight and maritime connectivity (IFMC) services. The licence enables connectivity solutions to the individual users on-board the aircraft and ships. —PTI

NBCC asked to offer more land

New Delhi, Nov 28: Lenders of Jaypee Infratech on Thursday asked state-owned NBCC Ltd to offer more land with clear title and debt-free Yamuna Expressway, while homebuyers want compensation for huge delay in completion of flats, sources said.

NBCC and Mumbai-based Suraksha Realty are in race to acquire Jaypee Infratech through insolvency proceedings. They submitted fresh bids on November 17 as per direction of the Supreme Court.

A meeting of Committee of Creditors (CoC) was held here to negotiate with the two contenders. In the meeting, sources said bankers sought many clarifications from NBCC on its resolution plan and asked it to sweeten the bid. To settle an outstanding claim of nearly Rs 9,800 crore to bankers, NBCC has offered 1,426 acre land worth Rs 5,000 crore.

It has also offered 75 per cent of 858 acre land, which has been pledged by promoter Jaiprakash Associates and is likely to be transferred back to Jaypee Infratech. —PTI

■ Fake B2B invoices & E-way bills under lens

Tax sleuths to go after GST dodgers

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 off-



set 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 ITC availed of, 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 per-

turbed and are working on ways to curb raising fake invoice bills. "This is the issue of generation of fake e-way bills with the names of transporters, who are non-existent or not in business any longer. Since in most cases, the seller and the buyer B are in different states, to make the entire picture look real, the seller generates an e-way bill and furnishes details with respect to the fake consignment on the common GST portal and includes the name of a dummy transporter in the e-way bill," said Banik.

The tax officials need to be more vigilant with respect to those bills which involve a consignment of exorbitant amount or where the volume and frequency of transactions are unusually high. The transporters mentioned in these e-way bills may be summoned and interrogated, which can help the department to track down the real defaulters and break through this whole sham transaction, she felt.

ONGC raises \$300 mn at 3.375% coupon

New Delhi, Nov 28: State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) on Thursday said it has raised \$300 million in overseas borrowing at a coupon rate of 3.375 per cent, the lowest by any Indian issuer.

The 10-year bond will mature in 2029, the company said in a statement.

"ONGC has priced its maiden offering of USD bonds in the aggregate principal amount of USD 300 million for meeting capital expenditure in accordance with the External Commercial Borrowing guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India and successfully achieved its objective to set a fresh benchmark," it said.

At 3.375 per cent interest rate, this is the tightest coupon for 10-year or longer tenor offering from India ever achieved by any Indian corporate. "The mix of investors is diverse, from across Singapore, HK, London, Taiwan, Japan and Middle East which includes 77 per cent bid from Asian investors and 23 per cent from EMEA investors. The Bankers to the deal were – Citi, DBS Bank Ltd, MUFG, SBI-CAP and Standard Chartered," it said.

ONGC Chairman and Managing Director Shashi Shankar said the company funds its operations from internal accruals and it has capacity to do the same in future also. "The offering of USD bond however was important to set a benchmark for ONGC Group," he said. —PTI

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

NUPUR ANAND
MUMBAI, NOV. 28

SBI Cards and Payment Services, the credit card arm of State Bank of India, aims to raise roughly Rs 9,000 crore (\$1.25 billion) in an initial public offering, according to a source familiar with the matter, in a deal set to make a bumper profit for US private equity firm Carlyle Group.

SBI Cards is 74 per cent owned by SBI, while Carlyle Group owns the remaining 26 per cent, a stake which it bought in 2017 from the lending arm of General Electric for about Rs 2,000 crore.

SBI will divest 4 per cent, while Carlyle is set to sell a 10 per cent stake as part of the IPO process, which will also include a sale of fresh equity worth Rs 500 crore, according to a draft prospectus published by the book runners of the deal.

SBI Cards, which filed the



draft prospectus on Nov. 27, did not give valuation details, but based on the anticipated proceeds the IPO is likely to value Carlyle's 26 per cent stake at close to seven times its 2017 purchase price, and rake in about Rs 6,000 crore from the 10 per cent stake sale alone.

The IPO, which is still awaiting regulatory approval, is poised to be India's biggest this financial year.

SBI Cards is the second-largest credit card issuer in the country, with 9.4 million outstanding cards as of the end of September.

—Reuters

Muthoot Fincorp to expand ops

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.

FM seeks Parliament nod for additional ₹21,246 crore

New Delhi, Nov 28: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday sought Parliament approval to spend an additional Rs 21,246.16 crore, including over Rs 8,820 crore in the newly formed union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, in the current fiscal ending March 2020.

Sitharaman tabled the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for the financial year 2019-20 in both the Houses of Parliament saying of the total spend, cash outgo will be about 19,000 crore.

The government has sought Rs 8,820.62 crore as grants for Union territories Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh in lieu of the erstwhile state's share of 14th Finance Commission Award.

Another Rs 4,557 crore will be

infused in the IDBI Bank through recapitalisation bonds, while Rs 2,500 crore will go into recapitalisation of state-owned insurance companies.

The Union Budget for FY20, presented in July, had estimated a total government spending of Rs 27.86 lakh crore, excluding expenses of public-sector companies.

The Finance Minister sought Rs 1,500 crore to meet the additional expenditure towards payment of pay and allowance of armed forces and another Rs 666 crore for meeting expenditure of Department of Space.

As much as Rs 3,387.46 crore has been provided in the supplementary demands for grants for meeting expenditure towards salaries and cost of the ration of police.



Nirmala Sitharaman

About Rs 1,000 crore has been sought for providing additional funds under the scheme for free LPG connection to poor households. A sharp cut in corporate tax rates

and lacklustre growth in goods and services tax collections, amid a marked downturn in the economy, have squeezed government finances this year.

The Indian economy expanded by 5 per cent in April-June, its slowest annual pace since 2013 and the projections are that it may have slowed down further in the second quarter, making six consecutive quarters of slowing growth, a first since 2012. This despite a recent series of fiscal stimulus, including a reduction in corporate tax rates.

Growth outlook has weakened sharply this year, with a crunch that started with the non-banking finance institutions spreading to retail businesses, car-makers, home sales and heavy industries.

—PTI

HPCL, MRPL workers join BPCL protest

V. SIVARAM & CHRIS THOMAS
KOCHI/BENGALURU, NOV. 28

Thousands of employees across India on Thursday protested an upcoming stake sale at state owned refiner Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), fearing loss of jobs and benefits.

In what is seen as the biggest privatisation push in India in decades, the government last week approved the sale of BPCL and four other state-run companies.

The sales are seen as a way to plug a widening fiscal gap as New Delhi looks to revive a slowing economy.

Unions of other state-run companies such as Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd and Mangalore

Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) joined forces with BPCL workers to protest against the privatisation plans.

Employees at BPCL's Kochi refinery—the company's largest with a capacity of 15.5 million metric tonnes per year—fear that privatisation will strip them of various benefits and result in job cuts.

"The government should notice our agitation, as should private players looking to take over BPCL," said Aji M.G., General Secretary of the Kochi refinery's workers association.

In Kochi, protesters tried to block the passage of BPCL management arriving at work before police cleared the way into the refinery.



Some 400 kilometres away, employees blocked the gates of refiner MRPL in the port city of Mangalore.

"Today it is BPCL, tomorrow it could be us," said Sudhendu K.V., employee union president at MRPL.

"We want the government to revoke its decision. No public sector company should be privatised."

BPCL employees also

marched in the financial capital of Mumbai, where the company runs another refinery, a union member at BPCL said.

A BPCL spokesman said operations at its Kochi refinery were running smoothly despite the protests. The government has not given details of any prospective buyers.

Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan indicated this

month that international energy firms would be invited to participate in privatisation of state-owned oil companies.

India faces tax shortfalls of around Rs 2 lakh crore in the current fiscal year, making the stake sales critical to relieving the deficit.

The country has set a target of raising \$14.6 billion by March 2020 through these stake sales.

Moody's on Tuesday said it was reviewing BPCL's 'Baa2' rating for possible downgrade due to the government sale.

"A change in ownership could result in the company revising its business strategy or financial policies, which could have implications for its standalone profile," the rating firm said.

—Reuters

OPENING
BELL
PROJECTION FOR TODAY

Immediate support for Nifty around 12070

The market continued its record-breaking run for the second day on Thursday, helped by gains in index heavyweights ICICI Bank and Reliance Industries.

The Sensex rose to an all-time intra-day high of 41,163.79 before setting at 41,130 up 109.56 points or 0.27 per cent.

The NSE Nifty closed at a fresh life-time high of 12,151.15, up by 50.45 points or 0.42 per cent over the previous close.

Buying was seen in broad market with Smallcap and Midcap indices closed higher.

Sustained inflow of foreign investment and short-covering amid the expiry of November derivatives contracts also contributed to the rally, traders said.

For the month of November so far, foreign inflows in the cash segment have totalled \$2 billion, while FII positioning in index futures has turned to net long after a gap of six months.

The market capitalisation of the BSE-listed companies went up by Rs 1,87,370.56 crore to Rs 1,55,57,484.15 crore.

Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices rose up to 0.97 per cent.

BSE telecom, metal, realty, tech and capital goods indices rose up to 3.49 per cent. BSE auto index ended in the red.

Technical View

"In this month, the index first consolidated within a range and is now all set to end the month on a high note. Traders are advised to continue to trade with a positive bias as we continue with our positive view for the targets of 12180-12200 first and then towards 12290. The immediate supports for the index are now placed around 12070 and 12000," Ruchit Jain Equity Technical Analyst, Angel Broking said.

The government's efforts to maintain fiscal prudence and stimulus measures may help to extend the breadth of the rally, analysts said.

"We're eyeing 12,300 in Nifty and reiterate our preference for banking, metal and pharma counters for long trades. Upcoming macroeconomic data and global cues may result in the marginal profit taking or consolidation. Traders should utilise such opportunities to accumulate quality stocks on dips," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Market View

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said, "Market stayed positive despite expiry led volatility & the announcement of GDP data tomorrow as investors got a sense that increasing global liquidity will provide support in every consolidation."

—Ashwin J Punnen

Drugmakers cut prices by 61% to get on coveted China list

Nov. 28: Drugmakers, including AstraZeneca Plc and Roche Holding AG, 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 alecensa.

Other western medications added were hepatitis C treatments from Gilead Sciences Inc and Merck & Co, and AbbVie Inc'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 hepatitis 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 covers 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. In a separate national campaign in which China's public hospitals bulk-buy generic medications, prices have been driven down by as much as 90 per cent.

—Bloomberg



Fresh start
Girl band Pussycat Dolls
reuniting after nine years,
Instagram account created



Q Aims to back marginalised voices and bring them to the 'front and centre'
— Sterling K. Brown, Actor

IN BRIEF

Bella to compensate for carbon footprint

Washington: Flagging concerns regarding the climate crisis, American model Bella Hadid is turning into an environmental saviour as she is set to donate 600 trees to compensate for her carbon footprint from air travel. On Wednesday, Hadid on Instagram announced that she will donate 600 trees to make up for the carbon released due to the flights she's taken over the past three months. With this, the model plans to cover her emissions through the end of the year. She also asked fans to suggest her if they can come up with locations that need plantation, be it in any country. — ANI

Idris Elba trying to quit social media

New York: Actor Idris Elba says he is trying to step back from social media as it makes him feel "dep-ressed". The *Hobbs & Shaw* star said he doesn't like receiving news via social media apps like Twitter. "I've been trying to wean myself off. I used to post a lot more, but it's been putting me off lately. Twitter's just not how I want to receive my news. I read the news on my iPad, but I can't check it constantly — I'm not proud of it, but it's true because it makes me feel depressed," Elba told Fast Company magazine. — PTI



Andy Samberg to host food contest show

Los Angeles: *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* star Andy Samberg will host food competition series *Biggest Little Cook-Off* at Quibi. According to Deadline, the show will see two top chefs battle to create the most mouth-watering meals in a single bite of food. The challenge for the chefs will be to make meals such as spaghetti and meatballs on a plate the size of a dime or sushi on a single grain of rice. Samberg will also executive produce the series, which hails from Triage Entertainment. — PTI

AVRIL LAVIGNE AND SAROFIM CALL IT QUITS

Washington: Pop singer Avril Lavigne has reportedly called it quits with her billionaire boyfriend Phillip Sarofim. According to Fox News, the former couple, who was together for less than two years met through a mutual friend. The son of Texas billionaire investor Fayeze Sarofim and Lavigne first fuelled dating rumours after they were spotted at a dinner date in Los Angeles in March 2018, as per People magazine. The two were last seen together back in June while they were shopping in West Hollywood, California. Prior to that, they were also spotted attending the Race to Erase MS Gala at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. Before their abrupt split, they celebrated their one-year-anniversary on Valentine's Day, according to Us Weekly, which first reported their break-up. The singer has endured her share of high-profile relationships. She tied the knots with Canadian musician, Deryck Whibley but later called it quits in 2009. — ANI



Avril Lavigne

Trump posts pic of himself as Rocky

Post retweeted 161,300 times, received 542,000 likes ■ US Prez didn't include text with pic



■ Some in the media speculated that it was in reference to his ability to fight off controversy during the ongoing impeachment inquiry in Congress

■ Others suggested that the image alluded to comments he made on Tuesday about his health during a rally in Florida, where Trump said doctors told him he had a 'gorgeous chest' during a recent physical

■ No president has ever fought as hard as President @realDonaldTrump on behalf of hardworking, taxpaying, Constitution supporting, God-fearing, middle- and working-class, patriotic, everyday, American citizens
Allen Sutton, editor StewardshipAmerica.com

Trump's physique to that of former President Barack Obama. Who knows how we should interpret it? Perhaps, the 45th President suffered a blow to the head this morning. Or perhaps he wants us to

know he's a fighter. Maybe he's upset about of all the low blows thrown his way during his tenure, with people saying mean things like "why does he grab women by the pussy?" Whatever he meant, it led to an outpouring of

commentary from the Twitterati. Some people found Mr Trump's post a little more than ironic. At least Rocky was willing to fight the Russians, they figured. "This is all wrong," tweeted the comedian

Nick Pappas. "Rocky defeated Russia — Trump continues to hand them victories." White power at the heart of the first Rocky movie is Balboa's fear of being replaced, in a competitive sport where he — a working-class Italian American — looks increasingly like an outsider. Of course, Balboa is triumphant against the newcomers, so his sense of insecurity is eased and his pride reasserted.

Some believe that the Rocky films also speak, therefore, to a problem close to Mr Trump's heart: the (many) anxieties of white voters.

Actor Sylvester Stallone, who said, "I love Donald Trump" in a 2016 interview with Variety, played Rocky Balboa in the *Rocky* movie series, about a washed-up fighter in Philadelphia who rose up the ranks to win the heavyweight champi-

onship of the world. *Rocky IV*, in which Balboa beat Russian Ivan Drago, opened in theatres on November 27 in 1985, which could explain why Trump posted the image on Wednesday.

Trump, however, did not include text in the post. Some in the media speculated that it was in reference to his ability to fight off controversy during the ongoing impeachment inquiry in Congress.

Others suggested that the image alluded to comments he made on Tuesday about his health during a rally in Florida, where he said doctors told him he had a "gorgeous chest" during a recent physical.

For anyone not sure what to make of all of this, there is a final thought. Leadership takes many forms. No further comment needed.

— Agencies



Madonna cancels 3 shows in Boston

Los Angeles: Pop star Madonna has cancelled her three performances in Boston and apologised to her fans for the "unexpected turn of events".

The shows were scheduled to take place at Boch Centre Wang Theatre from November 30 to December 2 as part of her "Madame X" tour. In an Instagram post, the 61-year-old singer said she is in "overwhelming" pain and her doctor has advised her to take rest.

"Please forgive this unexpected turn of events. Doing my show every night brings me so much joy and to cancel is a kind of punishment for me but the pain I'm in right now is overwhelming and I must rest and follow doctors orders so, I can come back stronger and better and continue the Madame X journey with all of you. #madamextheatre" Madonna wrote in the post. Event management company, Live Nation, confirmed the news and said they are unable to reschedule the cancelled shows.

"As we are unable to reschedule the Boston dates due to the tight scheduling through the balance of the year, refunds will be automatically issued to the credit card on which they were ordered," Live Nation said in a statement. Madonna had earlier this month said that she was suffering from a torn ligament and knee problems after she wrapped up a three-night stand at San Francisco's Golden Gate Theatre. — PTI

Police backs its 2015 move in Andrew case

London: London police are defending the decision not to pursue a full investigation of allegations made against Prince Andrew by a woman, who says she was trafficked by the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Police acknowledged on Thursday that they received a complaint in 2015 from a woman alleging she was the victim of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

The woman, Virginia Roberts Giuffre, has said she was trafficked by Epstein and had sex three times with Prince Andrew starting in 2001, including once in London. She says she was 17 when they first had sex.

Metropolitan police commander Alex Murray said police concluded in 2016 after looking into the matter and consulting prosecutors that the London-based force was the wrong agency to investigate. "Following the legal advice, it was clear that any investigation into human trafficking would be largely



Prince Andrew

focused on activities and relationships outside the UK," he said. The London police, he added, would not be the "appropriate authority" to investigate. Epstein, a wealthy financier, died in prison in August in what the New York City coroner ruled as a suicide. He faced trafficking charges. The Met's Murray said police reviewed its decision after Epstein's death and decided not to change policy.

Andrew, 59, has repeatedly denied the allegations, most recently during a TV interview broadcast nearly two weeks ago in which he lost public support by defending his friendship with Epstein and by not expressing sympathy for Epstein's many young female victims. The prince has since stepped down from royal duties because of the scandal. — AP



A blue plastic bag and a toilet seat hangs from the statue of the Swedish football player Zlatan Ibrahimovic in Malmö on Wednesday. A fence has been placed around a statue of Zlatan Ibrahimovic and security guards have been keeping watch after it was vandalised by Malmö soccer fans furious at the Swedish soccer star buying a stake in a rival club. — AP



A light artwork titled 'Big Bang' on display during the Amsterdam Light Festival on Wednesday.



Cartoon film characters from the *Minions* entertain visitors during the launch of 'Universal Christmas' at Universal Studios Singapore on Thursday. — AF



Singer Philip H. Anselmo (above) of Philip H. Anselmo & The Illegals performs during a stop of Slayer's Final World Tour at MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas on Wednesday. — AFP



Bollywood actors Arjun Kapoor and Kriti Sanon during a promotion of their upcoming film *Panipat* in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

■ Animals carrying sensors can fill many gaps through natural behaviour

Animals may help monitor unmapped oceans

London: Animals such as penguins, turtles, or sharks carrying sensors could help humans monitor the oceans by transmitting information, according to a study, which assessed 183 species and the areas they are known to inhabit. The researchers, including those from the University of Exeter in the UK, said while ocean monitoring is mostly done by research vessels, underwater drones and thousands of floating sensors drifting with the currents, large areas still remain under-sampled, leaving gaps in our knowledge. The study, published in the journal *Global Change Biology*, noted

that animals carrying sensors can fill many of these gaps through their natural behaviour like diving under ice, swimming in shallow water or moving against currents.

"We want to highlight the massive potential of animal-borne sensors to teach us about the oceans," said study lead author David March from the University of Exeter. "This is already happening on a limited scale, but there's scope for much more," March said. The researchers looked at 183 species — including tuna, sharks, rays, whales and flying seabirds — and the areas they inhabit. "We have processed more than 1.5 million

■ Researchers said while ocean monitoring is mostly done by research vessels, underwater drones and thousands of floating sensors drifting with the currents, large areas still remain under-sampled.

■ Animals such as penguins or turtles carrying sensors could help monitor oceans by transmitting information

■ Researchers looked at 183 species, including tuna, sharks, rays, whales and flying seabirds, and the areas they inhabit.

■ We want to highlight the massive potential of animal-borne sensors to teach us about the oceans," said study lead author David March from the University of Exeter.

measurements from floating sensors to identify poorly sampled areas (18.6

per cent of the global ocean surface)," March said. The study identified

poorly sampled areas where data from animal sensors would help fill gaps. The researchers found these areas by comparing the data from floating measurements with gaps in current observations. "These include seas near the poles (above 60 degree latitude) and shallow and coastal areas where Argo profilers are at risk of hitting the land," said Brendan Godley, study co-author from the University of Exeter. "The Caribbean and seas around Indonesia, as well as other semi-enclosed seas are good examples of places where Argo profilers struggle because of these problems," Godley said. — PTI

NEWS NUGGETS

'CLIMATE CHANGE MAY TURN EARTH INTO HOTHOUSE'

London: The "cascade" of changes sparked by global warming could threaten the future of humanity, say scientists, who warned on Thursday that more than half of the climate tipping points identified a decade ago are now "active". In an article published in the journal *Nature*, the researchers noted that climate change threatens the loss of the Amazon rainforest and the great ice sheets of Antarctica and Greenland, which are currently undergoing unprecedented changes much earlier than expected. The other active tipping points include Arctic sea ice, permafrost, warm-water corals. — PTI

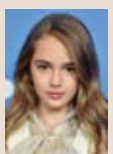
SYDNEY EASES DRINKING RULES TO BOOST NIGHTLIFE

Sydney: Sydney's lacklustre nightlife received a long-awaited boost on Thursday, when officials announced an end to rules severely limiting where and when people can drink alcohol. New South Wales premier Gladys Berejiklian announced pubs' trading hours would be extended and laws of after-midnight drinking would be eased in central Sydney. "We need to ensure we have a vibrant nighttime economy that reflects our position as Australia's only truly global city," said Berejiklian. For a city famed for its New Year's Eve parties and weaned on alcohol — Sydney is surprisingly dead at night. Measures were introduced in 2014 to limit alcohol-related violence. — AFP

JULIA BUTTERS DIDN'T KNOW DICAPRIO, PITT UNTIL ONCE UPON A TIME... AUDITION

Los Angeles: Child actor Julia Butters, who had one of most scene-stealing moments in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, says she was unaware who superstars Leonardo DiCaprio and Brad Pitt were, until she auditioned for the film.

The 10-year-old Butters featured as a committed child actor Trudi Fraser in Quentin Tarantino's 1969-set drama. She said she had no idea about DiCaprio and Pitt until she told her math tutor that she was going to audition for the film. "This is the weird way I found out. I told my math tutor that I was going up



for the part and he said, "Oh, that's the movie with Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio!" "I didn't know who they were," Butters said. As far as I was concerned, Leonardo DiCaprio was Leonardo da Vinci," Butters told The Hollywood Reporter. Butters, who has a scene with DiCaprio in the film, also said, "I'm not as starstruck as most adults would be." The young actor said she tried to be a true professional like her character. — PTI



SPORT | Cricket

This IPL is going to be big for Kuldeep: Bangar

14



SPORT | Basketball

Anthony scores 41 points as Lakers beat Pelicans

15

GUIDE TO FORTUNE

Tick the answer and check them below.

1 Since the 1840s, on which day of the week have U.S. presidential elections been held?

- Tuesday
- Monday
- Sunday

2 What animal did William F. Cody's Wild West show introduce to audiences in London?

- Bison
- Elephant
- Yak

3 Which structure was destroyed in the September 11 terrorist attacks?

- The World Trade Centre
- The Pentagon
- The Chrysler Building

SHORT TAKES

25-year-old gun smuggler arrested

New Delhi: A 25-year-old man was arrested for allegedly smuggling firearms in the national capital and 20 pistols, along with 100 bullets, were recovered from his possession, police said on Thursday. The accused, identified as Raju Deshi, is a resident of Burhanpur district in Madhya Pradesh, they said. Police received information that Deshi would come near Akshardham Temple to deliver a consignment of arms on Tuesday evening, Pramod Singh Kushwah, DCP (special cell) said. A trap was laid and the accused was arrested, he said. Deshi was involved in smuggling firearms for the past two to three years. He used to procure pistols at ₹6,000-9,000 and sell them at ₹15,000-20,000 per piece, the DCP said.

Scrap dealer held for stealing cables

New Delhi: A 37-year-old scrap dealer has been arrested for allegedly stealing system cable wires from the PTI office in central Delhi. The accused was identified as Shokeen, a resident of Sita Ram Bazar, Delhi. During probe, the police team checked the CCTV footage and obtained details of the scrap dealer appointed by PTI to remove furniture from the main hall of first floor. It was noticed that during the work of removing the furniture, three workers of the scrap dealer entered the server room and cut-off the system cables lying under the floor of the main hall and server room. With the system cables removed the internet service got interrupted and work of the news agency got affected. The scrap dealer informed that he had sub-tendered the work to another scrap dealer Shokeen, subsequently a raid was conducted and Shokeen was nabbed.

80-yr-old woman united with family

New Delhi: The Delhi Police reunited an 80-year-old specially-challenged woman with her family in Safdarjung Enclave area. DCP (PCR) Sharat Kumar Sinha said that the MPV staff received a call about a missing woman. The staff reached the spot where they found an elderly specially-challenged woman with the caller. The staff started searching for the family and even announced through public address system of MPV. On hearing the announcement, a woman came and said that she had seen the elderly woman near DDA Flats, Safdarjung Enclave. Further, she was identified by her daughter-in-law.

THE ANSWER TO TODAY'S GUIDE TO FORTUNE

- The World Trade Centre
- Bison
- Tuesday

Illegal colonies: LS passes bill on ownership rights

BJP, Congress in war of words during discussions on the issue

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

The Lok Sabha on Thursday passed a bill to grant ownership rights to residents of 1,731 unauthorised colonies. The National Capital Territory of Delhi (Recognition of Property Rights of Citizens in Unauthorised Colonies) Bill, 2019, was passed by a voice vote.

Moving the bill, Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri said that the process of digital mapping of 1,731 unauthorised colonies of Delhi will be completed by December 31 this year. The process to map these colonies digitally should have started in 2008, Mr Puri said. He said that though the process has been initiated now, he is confident that it will be completed by December 31 and images would be uploaded on a newly created portal. He said that more than 600 colonies have been digitally mapped so far. The minister asserted that digital mapping is an important process before ownership rights can be granted to those living in such dwellings.

Bill aimed at reaping poll benefits: Cong, AAP

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

The Congress's Delhi unit alleged that the unauthorised colonies bill, passed in Lok Sabha on Thursday, was a "fraud" and that it was aimed at reaping electoral benefits in the Delhi Assembly elections scheduled for early next year.

The party also claimed that the "half-baked" bill had nothing about regularisation of the unauthorised colonies and its scope was limited only to ownership rights.

"The Bill is a fraud, it has nothing for regularisation of colonies. The BJP is least bothered about helping residents of these colonies," alleged Delhi Congress president Subhash Chopra.

Delhi Congress chief spokesperson Mukesh Sharma claimed that no layout plans were prepared for the colonies. "There is nothing about regularisation of unauthorised colonies in the Bill. The boundaries of colonies are yet to be worked out and layouts of only 13 of 1731 such set-

tlements are ready. The BJP has got passed an election provision bill to help it in Delhi's Assembly polls," accused Sharma.

The AAP on Thursday questioned BJP's motive behind introducing the bill ahead of the Assembly elections.

AAP spokesperson Raghav Chadha told reporters: "The Centre was sitting on the bill for the past four years even when we completed all formalities from our side (Delhi government) years ago and woke up right before the polls."

Participating in the discussion, BJP member Ramesh Bidhuri attacked successive Delhi governments for allegedly failing to extend ownership rights to people residing in unauthorised colonies here, drawing a sharp response from Congress.

Mr Bidhuri targeted various city governments. He also said that former

Delhi chief minister Shiela Dikshit did not think about those people and distributed provisional certificates prior to the 2007 elections despite the fact that Congress was ruling at both the Centre and in Delhi. At this point, Congress MP Hibi Eden raised a point of order on which Lok Sabha chair A. Raja stated that he will

look into the records and if found derogatory against any person, it will be expunged.

Parliamentary affairs minister Pralhad Joshi said the member was only expressing "historical views" on the important legislation. Adhir Ranjan of Congress said the BJP member is using derogatory words.

Fake call centre busted in Noida; 45 arrested, 29 mobiles seized

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NOIDA, NOV. 28

A fake call centre was busted here on Thursday and 45 people, who allegedly duped people in the guise of popular shopping portals such as Flipkart and Myntra, were arrested, the Noida police said.

The fake call centre, operating from Sector 6, was busted by a team of the cyber cell and Knowledge Park police station, a senior officer said.

Gautam Buddh Nagar senior superintendent of police Vaibhav Krishna said that 45 people have been arrested and 16 walkie-talkies, 29 mobile phones and two computer systems have been recovered from the spot. The modus operandi adopted by the gang was to dupe people in the name of cashback, security money and lucky draw using popular online shopping sites. The SSP said the gang has duped "thousands of innocent people" and exact details are being assessed.

In another incident, a criminal, carrying a reward of ₹12,000 on his head, was arrested on Thursday after a brief exchange of fire with police in Ghaziabad district, an official said.

Price touches nearly ₹100 in last 4 days

AAP govt requests Centre to provide onions at lower rate

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

Amid rise in onion prices, the city government requested the Centre on Thursday to resume supplying the kitchen staple and make it available to Delhi at ₹15.60 per kg instead of ₹60 as conveyed to the AAP dispensation.

In a letter to Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan, Delhi food and civil supplies minister Imran Hussain said that a government should not be seen as making profit over an essential commodity.

He alleged that the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) has stopped the supply of onion, saying it will be able to make it available to the Delhi government after procuring from the markets in Alwar and later from the stock of onions to be imported

from Egypt.

On Wednesday, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had accused the Central government of stopping the supply of onions at controlled price to Delhi.

Onion price in the national capital has again increased from ₹40-50 per kg to nearly ₹100 a kg over the past few days. Mr Hussain said that the NAFED had been supplying onion to the Delhi government at ₹15.60 per kg and the city government was retailing these onions to the residents at ₹23.90 per kg for providing necessary relief from the price rise.

Mr Hussain said the Centre's decision to make onion available at such high price will adversely affect the supply of onions to the citizens of Delhi.

"I would therefore seek your kind personal intervention in the matter and also request to kindly

direct NAFED to continue supplying onions at ₹15.60 per kg in Delhi as before in larger public interest. Consumers will be hit hard by the sudden increase in retail prices of onions through government outlets. The government should not be seen as doing business with profit motive over an essential commodity," he said.

In view of this, Mr Hussain said there is an immediate need to review the matter and activate the price stabilisation fund (PSF) mechanism under which onion was earlier being supplied to Delhi.

He said that the AAP government has undertaken retailing of onions in Delhi since September onwards supplied by NAFED from the Central buffer to manage their prices and availability situation.



Schoolchildren at Parliament House lawns on Thursday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

BJP councillors march to secretariat over dues

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

BJP councillors of all three corporations of the national capital, on Thursday, marched from Civic Centre to the Delhi Secretariat against the Delhi government to demand their due funds of ₹9,195 crore. Eighty-six councillors of the ruling BJP participated in the protest march.

The Leader of House in the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, Tilak Raj Kataria, said that the total amount of ₹3,649.48 crore of the North Delhi Corporation is due with the Delhi government which is not being provided by it. Owing to this, the development works are getting hampered.

Mayor of North Delhi Avtar Singh said that the difference of the fourth Finance Commission of ₹968.97 crore was not given by the Delhi government till date along with ₹90.90 crore, which was not given to the corpora-

▶ North Delhi mayor Avtar Singh said that the difference of the fourth Finance Commission of ₹968.97 crore was not given by the Delhi government till date along with ₹90.90 crore for 2018-19

tion under the plan head for the year 2018-19.

"As per the assurance of the Delhi government, whatever reduction in property tax on the implementation of the unit area method will be met by the government, it is ₹1,285.97 crore which is still pending. With this, the corporation's share in transfer duty was reduced from five per cent to three per cent, after which the Delhi government had to pay ₹1,620 crore, which has not been given yet," Mr Singh added.

Air quality improves further due to light rains

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 28

Light rains in parts of the national capital on Thursday morning further improved the city's air quality for the second consecutive day, officials said.

The air quality index (AQI) in Delhi stood at 136 at 8.47 am which falls under the "moderate" category.

An AQI between 0-50 is considered "good", 51-100 "satisfactory", 101-200 "moderate", 201-300 "poor", 301-400 "very poor" and 401-500 "severe". An AQI above 500 falls in the "severe plus" category.

The AQI at NSIT Dwarka, Anand Vihar, Wazirpur and Vivek Vihar were registered at 201, 170, 170 and 164 respectively. In the National Capital Region (NCR), Noida (131), Ghaziabad (169) Greater Noida (162), Gurgaon (128) and Faridabad (133), the AQI was in the "moderate" band.

Rains and favourable wind speed on Wednesday had improved Delhi's air quality which was recorded in the "moderate" category.

In the last 24 hours, the maximum temperature was recorded at 27.4 degree Celsius, two notches above normal and the minimum was recorded at 16.2 degree Celsius, six notches above normal, a senior MeT official said.

The MeT department has forecast generally cloudy sky with light rain on Friday.

Rare surgery saves 7-yr-old accident victim

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV 28

Timely surgical intervention by a team of highly experienced doctors and the right selection of procedures saved life of a seven-year old Delhi girl.

Tajveen Kaur suffered a traumatic road accident as a rod pierced through her chest breaking her rib cage and crushing the right subclavian artery and surrounding veins.

According to senior consultant and paediatric surgeon at BLK Super Speciality Hospital Dr. Prashant Jain, the girl's condition was very criti-

cal when she came to us and the rod had exposed her right rib cage while crushing the chest area badly. Her chest was full of blood due to external and internal bleeding.

"Her right limb was cold and pulse could not be detected. Initially, 4-5 units of blood was transfused to stabilise the patient and wounds were cleaned as pieces of glass were also there in the body due to the car accident. Tajveen's right subclavian artery and surrounding veins were badly crushed which could have led to the loss of the right limb," said Dr

Jain.

Senior consultant and director, cardiothoracic and vascular surgery, Dr. Sushant Srivastava said: "We planned to put a graft and in such cases preference is always given to the native tissues. So a graft was taken from her lower limb and was replaced with crushed subclavian artery. However, a CT scan showed blockage of the graft. She was re-explored within 24 hours and a synthetic graft was put in place of the previous graft and attached to the main arteries. This graft worked and the blood supply was regained."



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

Cricket

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THE ASIAN AGE

FRIDAY | 29 NOVEMBER 2019 | NEW DELHI

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.

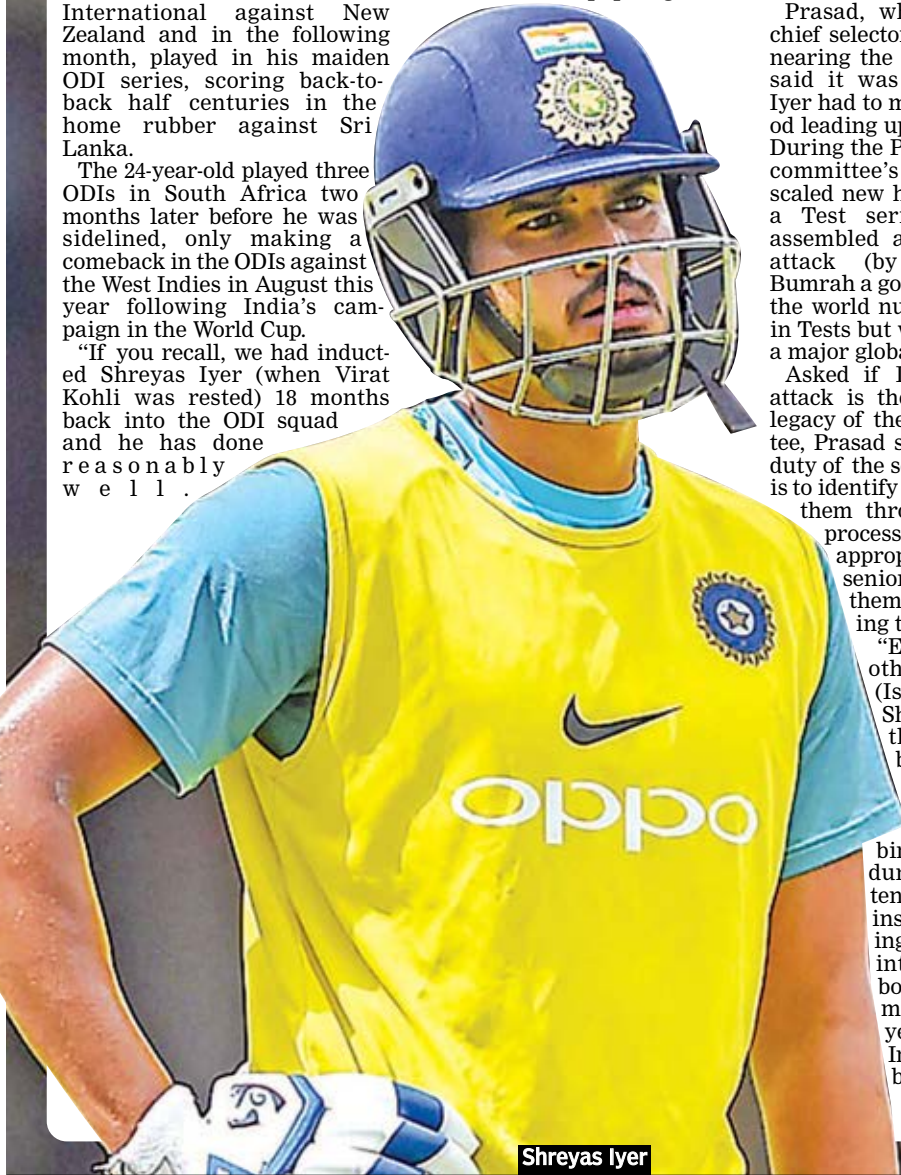
The highly-rated batsman kept piling on the

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 had to miss 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 (Shant, 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



Shreyas Iyer

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



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

Azhar to address corruption charges

Hyderabad: HCA chief Mohammed Azharuddin on Thursday said he would address the alleged corruption charges against his governing body after hosting the December 6 T20 series opener between India and West Indies. 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." — PTI

David says IPL teams missing trick

Lucknow: Batting great Rahul Dravid is disappointed at the lack of opportunities for Indian coaches in the IPL and feels the franchises are "missing a trick" by not involving them in their support staff. According to the former captain and the current National Cricket Academy (NCA) director, most of the Indian coaches were as good as any in the world. "I believe we've got some very good coaches, a lot of good people. I'm fully confident (in their ability). Just as we have a lot of talent in the cricket department, we have a lot of talent in the coaching department," Dravid was quoted as saying by 'ESPNCricinfo'. "We need to give them confidence and time to flourish. I'm sure they will do it. It does sometimes disappoint me when a lot of our boys don't get opportunities as assistant coaches in IPL. "Honestly, there are so many Indian players in the IPL, there's so much of local knowledge (among our coaches). I feel a lot of teams could actually benefit from using a lot of our Indian coaches in the IPL." — PTI



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," Bangar told 'Star Sports'. "I wouldn't count out

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

—SANJAY BANGAR, former India batting coach

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

● **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.**

"When I walk out, I want to have zero energy. We want to leave behind a legacy that future cricketers will say we want to play like that."

Kohli and his men recently notched up their 12th successive Test series win, beating Bangladesh 2-0 in a two-match rubber earlier this month. The team is currently gearing up for the limited-overs series against the West Indies starting December 6. — PTI

Oz remain unchanged for pink-ball 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.

Paine joked that "we'll just get someone out the



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

— AFP

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

Pakistan recall Abbas to add consistency

Adelaide, Nov. 28: Pakistan were set to recall paceman Mohammad Abbas on Thursday for the second Test against Australia as they look to add consistency to their bowling attack under lights at Adelaide Oval.

Skipper Azhar Ali will also drop down the order to bat at number three in the day-night Test starting Friday, with Imam-ul-Haq set to get the nod to open the innings alongside Shan Masood and Harris Sohail dropped.

"Definitely there will be some changes," Azhar said of the team line-up, which will be announced on Friday. Asked if Abbas would be one of those changes, he replied: "Yes."

"He's (Abbas) done well in Test matches, he can definitely bring a lot of control and he has worked a lot since the last Test match on his rhythm and he is feeling better," he said. — 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 five 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



Virat Kohli

I too get affected by failures: Kohli

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 semifinal)," Kohli told 'India Today'.

"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 said.

Talking about his desire to leave behind a legacy, Kohli, who has so far scored 11,520 and 7,202 runs in ODIs and Tests respectively, said: "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."

"When I walk out, I want to have zero energy. We want to leave behind a legacy that future cricketers will say we want to play like that."

Kohli and his men recently notched up their 12th successive Test series win, beating Bangladesh 2-0 in a two-match rubber earlier this month. The team is currently gearing up for the limited-overs series against the West Indies starting December 6. — PTI



Shoulder surgery

World MotoGP champion Marc Marquez underwent his second shoulder operation in the space of a year

ATHLETES | DOPING

Will ensure Russia at Olympics: Chief

Moscow, Nov. 28: Russia's Olympic Committee will do all it can to ensure Russian athletes take part in the 2020 Games, its chief said Thursday, as the country faces a four-year doping ban.

"We will do everything in our power to ensure our team is in Tokyo under the Russian flag," news agency RIA Novosti quoted Stanislav Pozdnyakov as saying.

He said there were no "objective obstacles" to the "vast majority" of Russian athletes fully participating in the Olympics.

The compliance review committee at the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) on Monday recommended a four-year sporting ban over falsified lab data it received from Russia.

If WADA chiefs adopt the committee's recommendations at a meeting in Paris on December 9, Russia faces exclusion from key sporting events including the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The scandal has tainted Russia's sporting reputation since the revelation of large-scale state-sponsored doping aimed at improving Russia's medal performance at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

Russian track and field athletes were barred from competing at the Rio Olympics in 2016 although Russians competing in other events were allowed to take part.

The ban was widened to

● If WADA chiefs adopt the committee's recommendations at a meeting in Paris on December 9, Russia faces exclusion from key sporting events including the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

include all events at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, though Russian competitors who could prove they were above suspicion were able to compete as neutrals under the Olympic flag.

Monday's call from the WADA review panel came after Russian authorities were accused of falsifying laboratory data related to the country's doping scandal, which were handed over to investigators in January.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has said it backs "the toughest sanctions against all those responsible for this manipulation," while cautioning against blanket sanctions that would punish the innocent.

If Russia challenges an eventual suspension by WADA the case will go to the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport, whose decision will be binding on sports bodies including the International Olympic Committee. — AFP

Russia hits back at proposed ban

Moscow: Russia on Thursday hit back at a proposed four-year ban on the country's athletes, denouncing accusations of a doping cover-up as a politically motivated attempt to block its athletes from competing.

A committee of the World Anti-Doping Agency on Monday made a bombshell recommendation for Russia to be barred from all sporting competition for four years.

It accused Moscow of falsifying laboratory data handed over to investigators as part of a probe into the doping allegations that have plagued Russia for years.

If WADA chiefs adopt the committee's recommendations at a meeting in Paris on December 9, Russia faces exclusion from key sporting events including the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Speaking to reporters in Moscow on Thursday, foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused other nations of pursuing doping claims so they don't have to face off against Russian athletes.

"This is about the politicisation of this issue in order to squeeze Russia out. There is a term for such a thing: unfair competition. This is a battle without rules, maybe even already a war."

— MARIA ZAKHAROVA
Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman



This is about the politicisation of this issue in order to squeeze Russia out. There is a term for such a thing: unfair competition. This is a battle without rules, maybe even already a war.

— MARIA ZAKHAROVA
Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman

other countries are not discussed at all," she added.

The scandal has tainted Russia's sporting reputation since the revelation of large-scale state-sponsored doping aimed at improving Russia's medal performance at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

Russian track and field athletes were barred from competing at the Rio Olympics in 2016 although Russians competing in other events were allowed to take part. — AFP

RAJIV, SENTHIL GEAR UP FOR THAILAND LEG

Buriram (Thailand), Nov. 28: 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 week-end 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. Iso, the Honda Racing team enters the final round in ninth spot among 20 teams (with 33 points) and will be hoping to add as many as possible.

The AP 250cc title fight heads for a close finish as Irfan Ardiansyah and Andy Muhammad are tied at the top. — PTI

Davis stars on return

Anthony scores 41 points as Lakers beat Pelicans

Los Angeles, Nov. 28: Los Angeles forward Anthony Davis shrugged off the boos that greeted his return to New Orleans on Wednesday, scoring 41 points to power the Lakers to a 114-110 NBA victory over the Pelicans.

"Man it feels so good," said Davis, who finished his night by grabbing an attempted inbound pass from New Orleans' Jrue Holiday with 4.2 seconds left and then sinking two free throws to close out the come-from-behind win.

Los Angeles had trailed by as many as 16 early in the third quarter but opened the fourth on a 9-0 scoring run as they trimmed the deficit to one point.

Kyle Kuzma's three-pointer knotted the score at 91-91, but the Pelicans pushed their lead back to four points before Davis returned from treatment on his right elbow and stuffed a dunk off a pass from LeBron James.

The Lakers took the lead for good when Kuzma drained a three-pointer to make it 111-109 with 1:07 to play.

"They made shot after shot, big shots," said Davis, who was booed by Pelicans fans in the opening introductions and every time he touched the ball thereafter.

"We showed our resiliency tonight and we were able to get the win," he added.

Davis, who had been booed by Pels fans last year when he tried to engineer a trade from the club — a move that finally happened in the off-season, said he was prepared for the reaction.

The Lakers won their ninth straight and improved their league-leading record to 16-2.

CELTICS EDGE PAST GRIZZLIES

Brooklyn's Kyrie Irving didn't make it back to Boston for a scheduled rematch with his former team.

He cast a long shadow at TD Garden, but it was Boston guard Kemba Walker who starred in the Celtics' 121-110 triumph.

The game would have been Irving's first in Boston since he departed



LeBron James (left) of the Los Angeles Lakers goes for a basket past J. J. Redick of the New Orleans Pelicans at Smoothie King Centre in New Orleans, Louisiana, on Wednesday. The Lakers won 114-110.

the Celtics as a free agent in the off season.

But he missed a seventh straight contest with a shoulder injury — an absence greeted with skepticism by many Boston fans who chanted

Around the arena, fans carried signs comparing Irving unfavorably with Walker — who was back in action five days after he was stretchered off with a neck injury after a scary collision in a loss at Denver.

Walker, who took over

Irving's job in Boston, scored a season-high 39 points.

That included 13 in the third quarter, when Boston rallied from an eight-point deficit with 10:05 to play in the period. Jaylen Brown scored 22 points and pulled down 10 rebounds and Jayson Tatum added 16 points for the Celtics, who remained unbeaten in seven home games this season.

The Nets led 83-82 with 3:13 remaining in the third, but Boston scored

the next nine points. The Celtics took a 104-101 lead into the fourth and ruthlessly pulled away.

In Memphis, the Los Angeles Clippers ground out a 121-119 victory over the Grizzlies to stretch their win streak to seven games.

PHILADELPHIA DOWN SACRAMENTO KINGS

The Philadelphia 76ers remained unbeaten at home, improving to 8-0 at Wells Fargo Center with a 97-91 victory over the

Sacramento Kings.

Joel Embiid bounced back from an embarrassing scoreless performance in Monday's loss at Toronto, scoring 33 points and grabbing 16 rebounds.

Embiid, who had missed all 11 shots from the field on Monday and gone 0-for-3 from the free throw line, seemed determined to make amends.

He finished the first quarter with six points and eight rebounds and secured his 10th double-double this season. — AFP

Don't tinker with policy, says Rana

New Delhi, Nov. 28: India's junior team pistol coach Jaspal Rana feels the national shooting federation will be better off not tinkering with the existing policies and programmes that brought the country a record 15 Olympic quotas.

The likes of Manu Bhakar, Chinki Yadav and Saurabh Chaudhary, who have all secured quotas for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, have prospered under the tutelage of the former pistol ace.

Seeking to protect them from exploitation and distractions in the run-up to next summer's Games, National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) president Raninder Singh said recently that the shooters will not be allowed to sign any new commercial deals without the federation's permission and the parents will also have to sign a bond that no exploitation will be done for "financial gains". "I think this could have been done long time back. Right now, even if there are shooters who are

I think this could have been done long time back. Right now, even if there are shooters who are already contracted, who will give them the money? How do you expect them to come out of contracts before the time of their expiry?

— JASPAL RANA
India's junior team pistol coach

already contracted, who will give them the money? How do you expect them to come out of contracts before the time of their expiry?," asked Rana said.

Raninder also said the shooters, prior to the Olympics, will have to train in India only as he believed few may have lost their focus while training abroad in the past. "While I understand the federation is trying to protect the shooters but, end of the day, it may affect the shooters' preparations before the Olympics," Rana said. — PTI

Mairaj, Gurjoat shoot 100/100 in Nationals

New Delhi, Nov. 28: Olympian Mairaj Ahmad Khan of Uttar Pradesh and Gurjoat Singh of Punjab, maintained their clean slates shooting down 100 out of 100 targets over two days and four rounds of qualifying, to lead the 110-strong Men's Skeet field at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range (DKSSR), where the 63rd National Shooting Championship Competitions (63rd NSCC) for Shotgun events is currently underway.

Punjab also led all other Skeet shooting categories with Rajveer Singh Gill leading the Men's junior field while Ganemath Shekhon led both the Women's and Women's junior categories with one more round to go on Friday, followed by the finals on the same day.

Mairaj and Gurjoat began Thursday sharing the top spot with India international Smit Singh, who had also shot



Mairaj Ahmad Khan

two perfect rounds on Wednesday.

However, after Thursday's rounds, Mairaj and Gurjoat were the only two left across categories, yet to miss a target.

Smit missed a couple on the day to be part of a chasing pack of four with 98 hits. Others alongside him include Tokyo 2020 quota winner

and joint finals world record holder Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and yet another India international Amarinder Singh Cheema, besides the youngster Rajveer.

Rajveer was most impressive, returning three perfect rounds on the bounce, including two on Thursday to also lead the Men's junior field. — PTI

Vikas to box at South Asian Games

New Delhi, Nov. 28: Decorated Indian boxer Vikas Krishnan has made his first breakthrough in the amateur circuit since putting his professional career on hold by getting selected for the upcoming South Asian Games (SAG) in Nepal in a new weight category.

The 27-year-old, who fought two winning bouts

in the US pro circuit before returning to the amateur fold earlier this year, said that he would not attempt another professional stint until after the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Vikas also revealed that he will now compete in the 69kg category instead of 75kg, the division in which he won a gold medal in the

Commonwealth Games last year in Gold Coast.

"I have decided to compete in the 69kg category because that is my division in the professional circuit," Vikas, who won bronze at the 2011 world championship said.

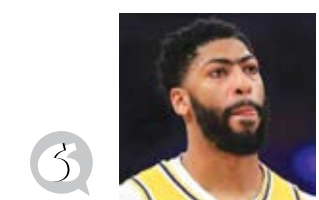
The South Asian Games are scheduled in Kathmandu and Pokhara, starting with the opening

ceremony on December 1.

Vikas had turned pro after the Asian Games last year, signing up with Hall of Famer Bob Arum's Top Rank Promotions in the USA. He won two bouts before a back injury forced him to reevaluate his goals. "It wasn't easy. Professional boxing is about hitting continuously in the ring, which

requires loads of stamina and I realised that I need to work a bit more on that before considering a full-time stint," he said.

India's entry in the 69kg category for the Olympic qualifiers will be decided by a trial as none from the country could fetch a medal at the world championships earlier this year. — PTI



Man it feels so good. I just tried to play through it and calm my nerves and play basketball.

— Anthony Davis, LA Lakers player, after scoring 41 points

SHORT TAKES Champ Hami eyes Abu Dhabi hoorah

Abu Dhabi: Lewis Hamilton heads into this weekend's season-ending floodlit Abu Dhabi Grand Prix seeking to mark his 250th Formula One race with a memorable performance as Mercedes bid to bounce back from an off-form outing in Brazil.

The six-time world champion, whose future beyond 2020 when his current contract expires has been a subject of intensifying speculation, has conceded that he faces a battle with his advancing age next season against the sport's new generation of younger tyros. "I feel like I'm still able to kick it with these guys right now and so I am excited about the future," said 34-year-old Hamilton.

"But you know it's inevitable that the youngsters are going to come through," he added. Speaking after he finished third on the road in Sao Paulo, before being penalised and dropped to seventh for a late clash with Red Bull's Alex Albon, Hamilton made clear also that he still relishes on-track battles and hopes next season will see a multi-team multi-driver scrap for glory. — AFP

Leclerc vows to drive better

Abu Dhabi: Charles Leclerc pledges to behave better at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix this weekend, vowing there will be no repeat of the crash which sent both Ferraris spinning out of the last race.

Leclerc wants to end an impressive first season with Ferrari on a high in the last race, but knows he simply can't chase a victory at all costs given what happened two weeks ago at the Brazilian GP. He made a stunningly bold but clean move to overtake on the inside of Ferrari teammate Sebastian Vettel nearing the end of the race at Interlagos. The veteran German driver, perhaps feeling usurped by his far younger teammate, then moved back across Leclerc as he sought to regain position through a narrow gap down the right.

They collided fighting for only fourth place, and ended up scoring no points in an embarrassing outcome for the proud Italian manufacturer which has once again finished considerably behind Mercedes in the Formula One drivers' and constructors' championships. Matters have not been helped by the track tussle between Vettel and Leclerc for supremacy within Ferrari. — AP

CYCLING BODY TO RETEST SAMPLES

Paris: The international cycling federation (UCI) said it has ordered the re-testing of samples over two seasons following new revelations linked to the Aderlass doping scandal. The UCI said it had asked the Cycling Anti-Doping Centre on Wednesday to re-analyse samples for the 2016 and 2017 seasons.

The move was prompted by "new information and documents received from Austrian police involved in the Aderlass operation," the UCI said.

The 'Aderlass' scandal erupted in February when authorities raided the Nordic skiing world championships and Seefeld, Austria.

They uncovered evidence of a major blood-doping operation linked to German doctor Mark Schmidt.

Schmidt, detained by police in Erfurt, is suspected of facilitating blood doping for at least 21 athletes of eight nationalities and across five different sports. Professional cyclists suspended as a result of the operation include Austrians Stefan Denifl and Georg Preidler, Slovenian Kristijan Koren and Croatia's Kristijan Durasek. — AFP



New bond

Star player Harry Kane wants to build “strong relationship” with new manager Jose Mourinho that will help take Tottenham to the next level



Seven hundred matches for Barcelona is not normal and neither is what (Messi) did on the pitch.

— Marc-Andre ter Stegen, Barcelona goalkeeper

ASIAN ARCHERY

DEEPIKA, ANKITA SECURE OLYMPIC QUOTA BERTHS

Bangkok: The seasoned Deepika Kumari struck gold, while Ankita Bhakat bagged a silver after securing India an Olympic quota place at the Continental Qualification Tournament held on the sidelines of the 21st Asian Championships here on Thursday.

Three individual places were up for grabs from the qualifications and Indian archers, who are competing without a flag due to the national federation's suspension, made a big statement with top seed Deepika and sixth seed Ankita's stellar show.

Entering the brackets as the number one ranked woman, Deepika put up a flawless show to defeat Nur Afisa Abdul Halil of Malaysia 7-2, Zahra Nemati (Iran) 6-4 and local girl Narisara Khunhiranchaiyo 6-2 to make the last four, thereby securing an Olympic quota. “We were a little bit nervous earlier in the day... There was too much wind also. I just concentrated on my breathing and told myself ‘just do it!’” Deepika said.

It was before the final round against the local challenger Narisara, Deepika promised her fiancé and teammate Atanu to shoot a 28 but Deepika did one better by hitting two perfect 10s and one nine to seal the issue. “We wanted to give our best. Also I promised (mixed team partner and fiancé) Atanu that I will shoot 28. He told me go and shoot. He understands my mind too and it turned out nicely,” she said. “Now we hope to qualify a team berth from the Berlin stage of the World Cup next year,” she added.

Later in the day, Deepika stormed into the final with another one-sided 6-2 win over Nguyenet.

Ankita, on the other hand, defeated Lam Shuk Ching Ada of Hong Kong 7-1, Nguyen Thi Phuong of Vietnam 6-0 and Anastasiya Bannova (Kazakhstan) 6-4 and Karma of Bhutan 6-2 to make it an all-Indian final. — PTI

SRIKANTH MAKES MODI QUARTERS, LAKSHYA LOSES

Lucknow: 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 medalist B. Sai Praneth 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 Singh 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 will face Germany's Linda Efler and Isabel Hertrich next.

Lakshya, 18, who has been on a roll with title wins at Belgian International, Dutch Open, SaarLorLux Open and Scottish Open last week, couldn't produce his best and went down 14-21, 17-21 to the experienced Son Wan Ho, a former world number one. — PTI

LIONEL KING

Messi rules as Barca enter Champions League last 16

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 and leaves the Germans in danger of not qualifying.

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.

Dortmund are level on seven points with Inter after the defeat but slip down to third behind Antonio Conte's side, who roared to a fine win which keeps alive their hopes of a place in the next round.

Romelu Lukaku's first Champions League goal for Inter and a Lautaro Martinez double saw off a spirited Slavia side that had levelled through a VAR-awarded Tomas Soucek penalty after Lukaku thought he had doubled his side's lead.

LEIPZIG BACK FROM THE DEAD

Leipzig made the knockout stages in dramatic style after Emil Forsberg fired them back from two goals

THE RESULTS

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

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

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

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

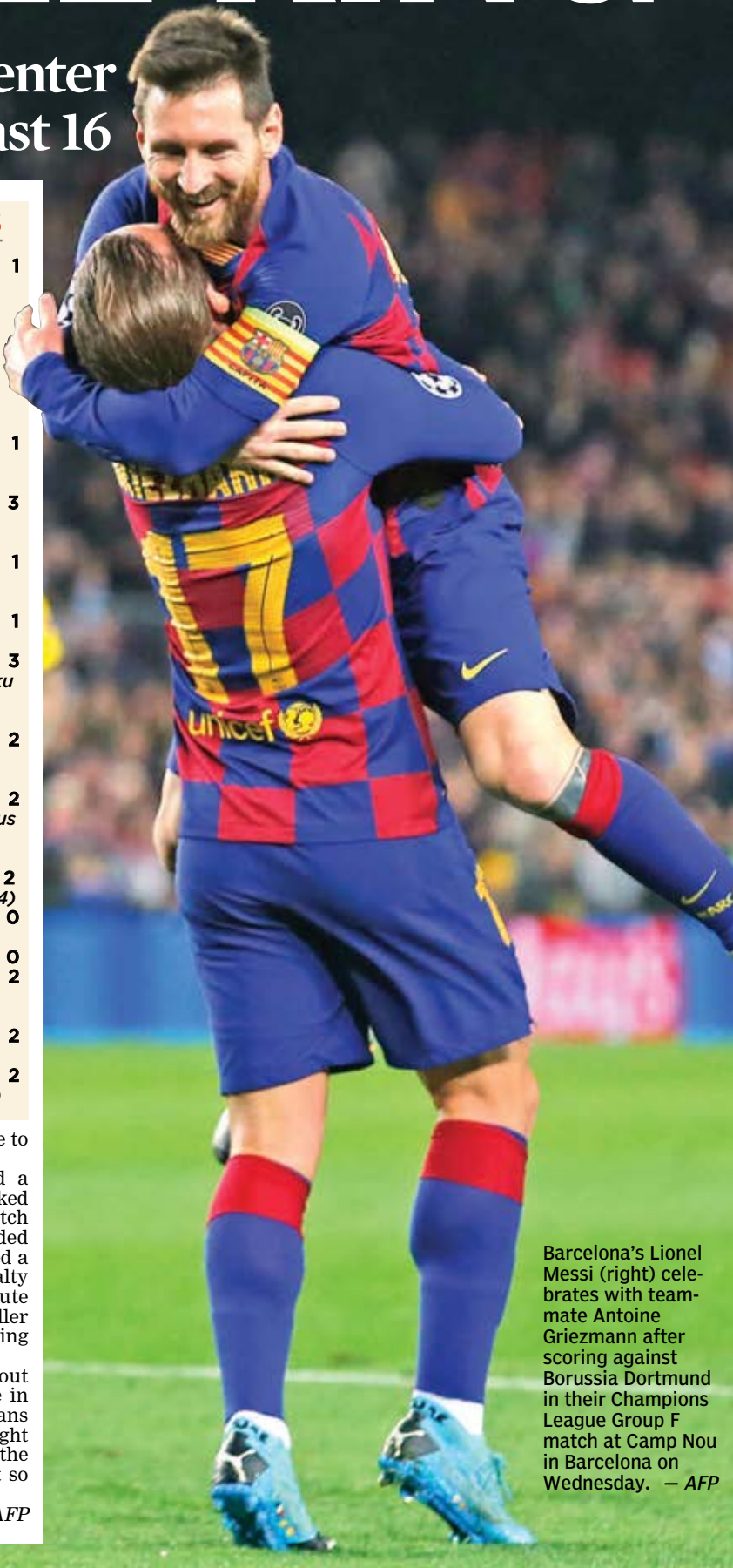
Lille 0
Ajax 2
(Ziyech 2, Promes 59)

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

down in the final minute to draw 2-2 with Benfica.

The Germans needed a point to qualify but looked down and out as the match dragged towards added time, but Forsberg pulled a goal back from the penalty spot in the 90th minute before hitting the leveller six minutes later, sparking wild celebrations.

“Reaching the knockout stages for the first time in the club's history means that we're doing the right things and moving in the right direction. I'm just so proud,” said Forsberg. — AFP



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (right) celebrates with teammate Antoine Griezmann after scoring against Borussia Dortmund in their Champions League Group F match at Camp Nou in Barcelona on Wednesday. — AFP

Mumbai City FC added to Man City football empire

Mumbai, Nov. 28: The owners of English Premier League champions Manchester City on Thursday made Indian Super League franchise Mumbai City FC the eighth club in their global football empire.

Abu Dhabi-controlled City Football Group announced the takeover of the Indian side the day after a US equity fund pumped \$500 million in new cash into CFG, taking its value to \$4.8 billion.

On top of the English champions, CFG also own New York City FC, Melbourne City in Australia, Yokohama F Marinos in Japan, Sichuan Jiuniu in China, Spanish second division side Girona and Club Atletico Torque in Uruguay.

Analysts say the 65 per cent stake taken in Mumbai is new proof that CFG wants to build a global football-based entertainment conglomerate.

Mumbai's former owners, Bollywood actor Ranbir Kapoor and Bimal Parekh, a fund manager for Bollywood stars, “will hold the remaining 35 per cent of shares,” said a CFG statement.

Kapoor and Parekh founded Mumbai when the Indian Super League was created in 2014. At the start they hired foreign stars including Nicolas Anelka, Freddie Ljungberg and Diego Forlan with English manager Peter Reid but could not buy success. — AFP



Odisha FC's Xisco Hernandez (right) tries hard to score against Chennaiyin FC in their ISL match in Chennai on Thursday.

ODISHA FIGHT BACK TO WIN A POINT IN CHENNAI

Chennai, Nov. 28: Chennaiyin FC and Odisha FC shared the spoils after a thrilling Hero Indian Super League encounter finished 2-2 here on Thursday.

After a barren first-half, Nerijus Valskis (51') handed Chennaiyin the lead. But Odisha equalised through Xisco Hernandez (54'). Valskis thought he had given Chennaiyin the win with a second goal in the 71st minute, but Aridane Santana (82') ensured Odisha returned from Chennai with a point. The result sees

Chennaiyin climb to eighth spot in the table with five points from six games while Odisha, who played out a third consecutive draw, are sixth with six points.

Odisha, as expected, had most of the early possession and the first real chance did come their way. Masih Saighani gave away the ball in midfield in the eighth minute, allowing Jerry Mawihmingthanga to intercept and move forward. The ball eventually fell to Xisco Hernandez inside the box and his snap-shot was saved by an alert Chennaiyin goalkeeper Vishal Kaith. — PTI

DOUBLES | TENNIS

Sania eyes return at Hobart event

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, the current world number 38.

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, but I am 50-50 about it, so let's see how my wrist behaves. We will see, but Hobart and Australian Open (for sure),” she said.

Sania, the winner of six Grand Slam titles, said she is back to

her best shape. “There are a lot of changes when you have a baby. Your routine and sleep pattern changes. I (now) feel fit, my body is where it used to be before I had the baby. It was only six-seven months ago, where I thought about it as a realistic possibility,” she said.

Sania will partner American Rajeev Ram for the mixed doubles at the Australian Open.

Sania said she encountered a bout with Chikungunya fever recently.

“Three months ago I got this virus Chikangunya, that was a setback because for two weeks I was sick. I have left wrist pain out of the blue, because of this virus and it can last up to three months to one year. All and all I feel good. today I can tell you that I am ready to compete again. Of course, it will take me time to the level that I was playing (before), but it is good start for me to feel good physically,” she said. — PTI



DAVIS CUP

Paes & Co. look to steamroll Pakistan

Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan), Nov. 28: A formidable India is expected to demolish the challenge of a depleted Pakistan in a Davis Cup tie starting here on Friday, after the fixture was shifted to a neutral venue following a drama-filled build up.

The uncertainty over the venue remained till the last moment and it only added up the confusion regarding players selection in both the sides.

Eventually, the International Tennis Federation moved the tie to Nur-Sultan after its independent tribunal rejected Pakistan Tennis Federation's review appeal.

While it resolved the security concerns, the shifting of the tie did no good to the competition. India, with players of the caliber of Sumit Nagal, Ramkumar Ramanathan and veteran Leander Paes, was already expected to win easy but pulling out of Pakistan top players Aisam-ul-haq Qureshi and Aqeel Khan has made it a no-contest.

While the Indian players have Grand Slam experience behind them, the Pakistanis are still struggling to make a mark even at the ITF Futures level.

It will be a learning experience for Pakistan's junior players, who will lead their country's challenge in the tie, the winner of which will travel to Croatia in March 2020 for the World Group Qualifiers.

The tie will offer 46-year-

● **The tie will offer 46-year-old Paes a chance to further better his Davis Cup record for most doubles win.**

● **He stands on top with 43 wins, which he had achieved last year while playing against China**

old Paes a chance to further better his Davis Cup record for most doubles win. He stands on top with 43 wins, which he had achieved last year while playing against China.

A 44th win beckons Paes, the owner of 18 Grand Slam trophies, as he will be partnering Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan, who is set to make his Davis Cup debut.

In-form Nagal has an opportunity to earn his first Davis Cup win as he has lost both his singles matches so far — against Spain (2016) and China (2018).

Ramkumar, who will go into this tie as the number two singles player, can also better his win-loss record. So far he has 7-7 record in eight ties.

Ramkumar will open the tie on Friday against Muhammad Shoaib, who has not even won a single match in the main draw of an ITF Futures tournament. The 17-year-old has not played a single match in the entire 2019 season.

In the second singles, Nagal will take on Huzaifa Abdul Rehman, who did well on the junior ITF circuit. — PTI



Leander Paes strikes a pose with tennis court covered in ice in Nur-Sutan on Thursday. — Twitter

BHUPATHI CRITICISES AITA FOR SACKING HIM

Mumbai, Nov. 28: Former Davis Cup captain Mahesh Bhupathi on Thursday said India's tennis players were abandoned by their federation and the government when they expressed security concerns about travelling to Pakistan for a Davis Cup tie, which was eventually shifted due to security concerns.

Bhupathi also said that he still cannot get over the “hurt” caused by the All India Tennis Association's manner of sacking him but it was hardly a surprise given how the body has dealt with players in the last two decades.

“India-Pakistan is a unique scenario. Tension has been there since inception of Pakistan. No other sporting team has toured there for two decades and all of a sudden they are saying India tennis team should go, and everybody is criticising the boys for taking a stance, that was very unfair,” Bhupathi said on the sidelines of an event here.

The 45-year-old was removed from the captain's position for refusing to travel to Pakistan for a Davis Cup tie on security grounds. The tie is now being held in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan starting Friday.

“I am still in touch with the boys on a daily basis. I was disappointed with the way the Federation dealt with it. When they wanted me to become captain,

I don't mind if they think that it is time for me to step out, but a courtesy phone call saying ‘listen we think it is time to put someone new in the system’ and I would have respected that but I didn't even get that call.

— MAHESH BHUPATHI, Ex Davis Cup captain

they flew down to Hyderabad, had a meeting with me,” he said.

“I don't mind if they think that it is time for me to step out, but a courtesy phone call saying ‘listen we think it is time to put someone new in the system’ and I would have respected that but I didn't even get that call.

“Honestly the way the federation has dealt with not only me but everyone in Indian tennis for the last 20 years, there is no surprise. But at some level it kind of hurts,” he added.

Bhupathi said neither the federation nor the government supported the players when they expressed reservations about travelling to Islamabad, the original venue of the tie.

“It is unfair that the AITA did not back the team, unfair that the government didn't say anything... So everyone kind of put their hands up, that shows how important tennis is in higher scheme of things in our country,” added Bhupathi. — PTI