

IN BRIEF



A priest offers worship to goddess Durga at a puja pandal in Vaishali, Ghaziabad, on Mahaashmi on Saturday.

— G.N. JHA

Schools in Delhi not to reopen soon: CM

New Delhi: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday ruled out reopening of schools in the national capital for now. "Schools are not reopening for now," Kejriwal told reporters on sidelines of an event. The government had earlier announced that schools will continue to remain closed till October 31 in view of Covid-19 pandemic. Universities and schools across the country have been closed since March 16, when the Centre announced a countrywide classroom shutdown as part of the measures to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. A nationwide lockdown was imposed on March 25. While several restrictions have been eased in different phases of "unlock", educational institutions continue to remain closed. However, as per "unlock" phase guidelines, states can take a call about reopening schools in phases. Earlier, schools were allowed to call students from class 9 to 12 to school on voluntary basis from September 21. However, the Delhi government decided against it. Talking about AAP government's decision to not pay for CBSE examination fees this year, Kejriwal cited fund crunch due to the pandemic. — PTI

No pvt agency hired for civic work: SDMC

New Delhi: The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) on Saturday clarified that no private agency is being hired to maintain civic services in its area. The SDMC standing committee chairman, Rajdutt Gehlot denied any report of engaging private agencies to maintain sanitation works in municipal wards in its jurisdiction as Safai Sainiks (sanitation workers) are able to provide civic services properly. "Rumour is being spread that Safai Sainiks will be disengaged once private agency will be roped in but the fact is that no any such proposal is under consideration as the Civic Body is committed for welfare of its employees and have introduced many welfare schemes for them," said Mr Gehlot. According to Mr Gehlot, confusion is being created among Safai Sainiks that they will be terminated from the job but this is not true at all. "No employee should pay attention to such rumour and keep continuing his/her work. This is just an attempt to malign the image of the Corporation and derail the ongoing works," Mr Gehlot added. Mr Gehlot assured that Corporation has always been committed to protect the interests of Safai Sainiks hence there is no possibility of doing injustice with them. "The SDMC always stands with sanitation staff and works for their welfare," he said.

Over 2,000 fined for Covid norms violation

New Delhi: The Delhi Police issued over 2,000 challans on Saturday for violation of COVID-19 norms, officials said. A total of 1,856 challans were issued to those who were found not wearing masks, three challans for spitting and 117 challans were issued to those found violating social distancing norms, according to the Delhi Police data. A total of 2,066 challans have been issued for various violations till 4 pm on Saturday, officials said. Citing the collective data, the Delhi Police said since June 15, 4,23,762 challans have been issued for mask violation, 3,093 challans for spitting and 33,301 challans for violation of social distancing norms. A total of 3,71,974 masks have been distributed to needy people so far, they said. — PTI

■ Air quality in NCR oscillates between 'very poor' and 'severe'

Delhi's air quality likely to improve tomorrow

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 24

Delhi's air quality remained in the "very poor" category on Saturday with the Air Quality Index (AQI) recorded at 347. The ministry of earth sciences' air quality monitor, System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), said that some locations entered "severe" zone but that will be short lived as winds are expected to increase slightly. Some areas like Mundka, Wazirpur and Alipur recorded "severe" levels of air pollution, authorities said. It said the air quality could improve on October 26.

"The overall Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) is in the very poor category with few Delhi locations entering at higher zone but that will be short lived. This is mainly because the extremely calm local surface winds which were prevailing yesterday are likely to increase slightly and may further pick up by October 26," SAFAR said. It also said the AQI is predicted to continue to remain in "very poor" category but without further deterioration.

Rise in pollution level may cause dry eye, ocular allergy: Doctors

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 24

As air quality remains poor in the national capital, health experts warned that the rise in pollution levels can lead to irritation and burning in the eyes with increased susceptibility to develop dry eye and ocular allergy which can harm the cornea and conjunctival surface. Experts also warned that allergic lung diseases tend to get worse with rising pollution levels.

According to senior consultant and head respiratory medicine, Paras Hospital, Dr. Arunesh Kumar, like every year once again with the arrival of winter, pollution levels are going up. With Covid-19 still around this com-

pounds the problem and all the allergic lung diseases tend to get worse with rising pollution levels.

Consultant, pulmonology, HCMCT Manipal Hospitals, Dr Davinder Kundra pointed that the city is facing dual health problem on the onset of winters, firstly Covid-19 continues to be the most critical population health management and the rising pollution level in the area has all potential to pose serious health problems.

"Exposure to ambient air pollution can lead to reduced lung function, respiratory infections and aggravated asthma. People suffering such diseases have been put on a very high risk for Covid-19," said Dr Kundra.

was nine per cent.

"The boundary layer wind direction is westerly and wind speed is low. Hence, pollutant transport towards the Delhi region will remain low. The SAFAR model estimate of stubble burning share in

PM2.5 is 9 per cent for today," it said.

The air quality slipped to the "severe" category in Ghaziabad, while it remained "very poor" in Gurgaon, Faridabad and Gautam Buddh Nagar in the National Capital Region on Saturday.

In Ghaziabad, an AQI of 412 was recorded at Loni station, followed by 363 at Vasundhara, 360 at Sanjay Nagar, 358 at Indirapuram, according to the CPCB data at 8 pm.

In Gautam Buddh Nagar's Noida, the AQI was 360 at Sector 62, 356 at Sector 1 and 315 at Sector 116. The station at Sector 125 showed "insufficient" data for the last 24 hours.

In Greater Noida, an AQI of 391 was recorded at Knowledge Park V and 342 at Knowledge Park III, according to the CPCB figures. In Gurgaon, an AQI of 379 was recorded at the station in Sector 51 followed by 342 at Teri Gram, 329 at Vikas Sadan and 266 at NISE Gwal Pahari, the CPCB data showed.

In Faridabad, the AQI was recorded 380 at New Industrial Town at 8 pm followed by 368 at Sector 11, 364 at Sector 30 and 324 at Sector 16A.

— PTI



Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee workers protest against spiralling prices of onion and other essential commodities in New Delhi on Saturday.

— G.N. JHA

Kejri inaugurates flyovers at Seelampur, Shastri Park

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 24

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday threw open the much-awaited flyovers at Seelampur and Shastri Park for the public in Northeast Delhi and said the AAP government is ensuring the best facilities for the people of the city by saving money in every project. PWD minister Satyendar Jain was also present in the event.

Addressing a gathering at an event, Mr Kejriwal said his government has built the two flyovers at a cost of ₹250 crore against the sanctioned amount of ₹303 crore and that the AAP dispensation has saved ₹53 crore on the project.

"In Delhi, we built an air-conditioned hospital including all facilities with an expenditure of only ₹30 lakh per bed. Since the AAP has come to power, we have been saving money in every project. With the saved money, we have made medicines, water, and electricity free and are also building the best schools. We are providing facilities to the people of Delhi by saving money in projects," he said.

Talking about the flyovers, the chief minister said the people living in the area will benefit from the project. "The people of East Delhi used to face long traffic jams for longer hours. But now, the journey from ISBT to UP



Newly-constructed flyover at Shastri Park in New Delhi which was inaugurated on Saturday.

— PTI

border can be completed within a span of 10 minutes without any traffic jams and provides a smooth ride," he said.

The flyovers provide a major relief to commuters between Welcome in Northeast Delhi and Kashmere Gate and Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border.

PWD minister Satyendar Jain said: "Today (Saturday), two flyovers have been inaugurated by the chief minister. The Azad Market flyover constructed by MCD took 10 years and cost ₹700-800 crore. Whereas PWD took 1.5 years, out of which if we exclude six months of Covid and three months of GRAP (graded response action plan), it took only 9-10 months to build. This in itself is an achievement."

"The CM has also envisioned a children's park under the flyover and very soon that vision too will be transformed into reality," he added.

The foundation stone for the newly constructed fly-

over was laid by Mr Kejriwal on February 10, 2019. Due to the rising levels of pollution and the implementation of GRAP guidelines in 2019, construction projects were banned during the night which brought the flyover construction to a standstill. However, the flyover was 70 per cent completed until October 2019 and despite the implementation of anti-construction guidelines and a six-month halt due to the Corona lockdown, the project was completed within 19 months.

The Shastri Park flyover consists of six lanes and is constructed at a length of 700 meters while the Seelampur flyover is constructed at a length of 1,200 meters and eases the commute of vehicles traveling over the Dharampura crossing towards Shahdara. The construction of the new flyover will bring relief to around 1.5 lakh vehicles which seem to travel through the route daily.



Doctors of Hindu Rao Hospital during an indefinite hunger strike over non-payment of their outstanding salaries in New Delhi on Saturday.

— PTI

'Covid testing facility soon for international departures at IGI'

New Delhi, Oct. 24: International passengers taking their flights from the Delhi airport will soon be able to get themselves tested for Covid-19 right before their departure, Genestrings Diagnostic Center which operates the testing lab at the airport said on Saturday.

The Covid-19 testing facility, which started operating on September 12 at the Delhi airport, is available only for international arrivals currently.

Earlier in the day, Genestrings issued a press release saying, "The (testing) facility has now been extended to air travellers leaving India for other countries." However, the company later revised its press

release, saying that the testing facility "will soon" be extended to air travellers departing from India.

"Notably, international travel rules require passengers travelling from one country to another to produce Covid negative reports," it added.

The lab uses RT-PCR tests and provides reports within 4-6 hours. "The test is available 24/7 and is priced at ₹2,400 as mandated by the Delhi government," the release said.

"As more people are now taking up international travel, Delhi Airport authorities felt the need to provide the testing facility to outbound passengers as well," said Rajat Arora, director, Genestrings Diagnostic Center. — PTI

Body of youth found who went missing on Sept. 28

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 24

Nearly a month after a 23-year-old man went missing from his house in Southeast Delhi's Badarpur, his decomposed body was found hanging on the rooftop of a bank, the police said on Saturday.

The deceased, Sahil Kumar, worked at a garment shop in Jaipur and lived with his parents in Badarpur in the same vicinity from where his body was recovered, it said.

The man had gone missing from his house on September 28. However, despite efforts taken, he

could not be traced. He left his phone, wallet, and other belongings at his house, the police said.

On Wednesday, one of the bank staffers was asked to check the satellite TV system on the roof. When he went there, he saw a man's body hanging from the ceiling, it said.

Additional DCP (Southeast) Kumar Gyanesh said, "On Wednesday, we got a call from SBI bank manager that a body was found hanging on their rooftop. Our team reached the spot and found the body in highly decomposed condition. The body was approximately 25-30 days

old. Later, he was identified. We found that he lives nearby and works at a garment store."

No foul play was suspected and after post-mortem in AIIMS hospital, the body was handed over to the family, the officer said. As per the post-mortem report, it appears to be a case of suicide.

During enquiry, his family told the police that Sahil liked a girl but they were not happy with this relationship. This, they suspect, could be a reason but they were not sure why he left the house. They don't suspect anyone's involvement in the case, another police officer said.

42-yr-old man found hanging in Paharganj hotel room

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 24

A 42-year-old man was found hanging inside a private hotel room in Central Delhi's Paharganj area. Police said that they have recovered a suicide note which is being analysed by the police team. The deceased has been identified as Balvinder Singh, a resident of Mandi in Himachal Pradesh.

According to Sanjay Bhatia, deputy commissioner of police (DCP), Central district, a police control room (PCR) call was received from hotel Lal's Haweli in which they stated that a customer was not opening his room's door since morning following which a police team was dispatched for the spot.

"Upon reaching the hotel's room Balvinder Singh was found hanging from the ceiling fan with his turban. He was rushed immediately to Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital where he was declared brought dead," said the DCP.

"Ligature material was seized and deposited in the Malkhana of police station. Suicide note, running 10 pages of a notebook, was also recovered wherein he informed that no one is responsible for his death. However suicide note is being analysed," said the DCP. "Police have initiated action under section 174 of Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) at Nabi Karim police station and the dead body has been preserved at the mortuary of RML Hospital for next 72 Hours," said the DCP.

Gym owner held for duping businessman of ₹1.15cr

New Delhi, Oct. 24: A 46-year-old gym owner was arrested here for allegedly duping a businessman to the tune of ₹1.15 crore on the pretext of selling him luxury cars, police said on Saturday.

The accused was identified as Rahul Narang, a resident of Greater Kailash-II. He was carrying a reward of ₹50,000 on his arrest, they said.

Police said Narang was arrested earlier but he got conditional bail. He stopped attending court in connection with the case but later a non-bailable warrant was issued for his arrest, the police said. The incident came to light after a South Delhi businessman, Sunil Verma, filed a complaint against Narang, police said.

In his police complaint, Verma alleged that

Narang approached him for some money. In return, Narang gave Verma sale letters of six luxurious cars but handed over only one car. Thereafter, the accused neither returned the money nor did he hand over the sold cars, a senior police officer said.

Based on his complaint, deputy commissioner of police (Crime) Bhisham Singh said a case was registered under section 406 (criminal breach of trust), 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code and an investigation was taken up.

During the investigation, it emerged that the accused had cheated several persons by mortgaging the same property. — PTI

4 arrested for cheating banks of ₹20cr by mortgaging same property multiple times

New Delhi, Oct. 24: Four members of a family have been arrested for allegedly duping several banks of over ₹20 crore by forging documents and fraudulently availing loans by mortgaging the same properties multiple times, the police said on Saturday.

In one such case, the accused fraudulently availed loan on a property which was already acquired by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), it said.

Ashwani Arora and Vijay Arora along with their wives, who were absconding for nearly four years, were arrested from different places in Ghaziabad and Delhi after the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi police conducted simultaneous raids in connection

▶ **THE MATTER** came to light after a complaint was received in 2016 from the zonal manager of Punjab and Sind Bank in West Delhi's Naraina, police said. The accused availed loans multiple times on the same property from many banks.

with a 2016 case of bank fraud, it said.

The matter came to light after a complaint was received in 2016 from the zonal manager of Punjab and Sind Bank in West Delhi's Naraina, the police said.

In the complaint, the bank alleged that M/s Riya Enterprises availed ODP (overdraft against property) limit of up to ₹70 lakh.

This limit was released against the equitable

mortgage of a property on G.T. Road in Shahdara, which was in the name of Ashwani Kumar who was also the guarantor in this loan. These limits were granted by Punjab and Sind Bank in Karol Bagh.

Similarly, over the years since 2011, the accused availed ODP amounting to several lakhs from the complainant bank on behalf of their created firms by mortgaging properties, the police said.

The bank also alleged that the properties were already mortgaged with other banks, a senior police officer said.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered and investigation was taken up, he said.

Joint commissioner of police (EOW) Dr O.P. Mishra said during the investigation it emerged

SHORT TAKES

UP girl thrown off terrace by 3 men

Mau, UP: A 15-year-old girl was seriously injured after she was allegedly thrown off from the terrace of a building by three men for objecting to harassment by them, police said on Saturday. According to police, the girl and the accused persons belonged to the same locality. The incident took place when she was returning home on Friday. Shakeel, Junaid and their one more friend forcibly took the girl to the terrace of the building and threw her off the roof after she objected to harassment by them, the police said. The minor told the police that she was also beaten up by the accused persons. The girl, who has suffered serious injuries, has been admitted to a hospital in Azamgarh, Mau SP Sushil Dhule said. The SP said a case has been registered on the basis of a complaint lodged by the girl's family and the three men have been arrested. — PTI

MP allows prison visits from Nov. 1

Bhopal: The Madhya Pradesh government has decided to allow visitors for jail inmates starting November 1, almost eight months after suspending prison visits due to the Covid-19 pandemic, an official said on Saturday. In an order issued on Friday, the state jail department also directed prison officials to ensure implementation of the Covid-19 protocol during meetings between visitors and inmates, the official from the public relations department said. Following the lockdown, the jail department had banned prison visits and in the previous order issued on August 21, the ban was extended till October 31, he said. Meanwhile, home minister Narottam Mishra said a video conferencing and telephone facility, which was started in jails during the lockdown, will continue even after November 1 when visitors are allowed. — PTI

TV NEWS' BODY URGES GOVT TO STOP CBI PROBE

New Delhi: The News Broadcasters Association urged the government to immediately withdraw the CBI probe into alleged manipulation of Television Rating Points (TRP), saying the speed with which the probe was transferred to the Central agency overnight raises doubts about intentions. The News Broadcasters Association expressed serious concern at "the open-ended FIR registered by the UP police against the media for alleged TRP manipulation". "The speed with which the case was transferred to CBI overnight raises doubts about the intentions. A complaint filed against unknown persons by an individual who has no locus standi may lead to a witch-hunt against the media, its advertisers and advertising agencies," said the NBA. "We sincerely urge the government to immediately withdraw the case referred to CBI," said the news media body, which is headed by Rajat Sharma. The NBA statement comes days after the CBI had registered an FIR into alleged manipulation of TRP on the basis of a reference from the UP police. The case, which was earlier registered at a police station in Lucknow on a complaint of an advertising company promoter, was handed over to the CBI by the UP government, officials had said. The NBA also said that it is very disturbed at the turn of events in Mumbai as the "clash between Republic TV and Mumbai police is posing a threat to the credibility and respect of two great institutions, the media and the police". — PTI

Par panel quizzes FB on India revenue, profit

JATIN TAKKAR
NEW DELHI, OCT. 24

A parliamentary panel on Friday quizzed social media giant Facebook about the quantum of their revenue, profit and tax payouts in India and asked what portion of their earnings were being used for data security in the country, sources said. Facebook India's policy head Ankhi Das appeared before the Joint Committee of Parliament on Data Protection Bill, 2019 chaired by BJP MP

Meenakshi Lekhi. She was questioned for two hours and asked some tough and searching questions by the panel members from across the political spectrum, sources said. During the meeting, a member suggested that the social media platform should not draw inferences from the data of its users for commercial benefit of its advertisers or for electoral purposes, they said. The MPs also sought to know the revenue Facebook generates from India and

what percentage of the revenue is spent on safeguards for data protection, sources told PTI. India is the biggest market for Facebook in terms of its users. The panel also asked how much tax the social media giant pays in India. During the meeting, concerns were also raised about the allegations that majority of the employees of the social media giant in the United States were inclined towards one specific political party of the country. Meanwhile, Facebook said

that the data protection law has potential to propel the country's digital economy and global digital trade. "We deeply appreciate the opportunity to discuss data regulation issues with the Hon'ble Members of Joint Committee on the Personal Data Protection Bill. We believe that India's data protection law has the potential to propel the country's digital economy and global digital trade, and we wholeheartedly support this effort," a company spokesperson said. — PTI

On Paswan turf, Nitish avoids attack on Chirag

Launches scathing attack on RJD, blames it for 'jungle raj' in Bihar



Chief minister Nitish Kumar addresses a virtual election rally ahead of Bihar Assembly polls in Patna on Saturday.

— PTI

kept contact with the Alauli constituency for many years winning from there seven times in the past.

In 2015, Paras had lost to Chandan Kumar of the RJD.

In the present polls, the constituency is witnessing three-cornered contest between the JD(U), RJD and the LJP.

Mr Kumar's party has fielded Sadhna Sada, RJD has given ticket to Rambriksha Sada while Chirag's LJP has put Ramchandra Sada on the seat that will go to vote in the second phase on November 3.

While Kumar highlighted development work done in the area and also launched a scathing attack on the RJD in his address, he abjured talking anything on the LJP. Taking a swipe at his bete noire Lalu Prasad's party, Mr Kumar said "those who neglected education, health and roads construction and spent time in encouraging 'jungle raj' are today talking about development...it's nothing but a joke."

They spent long time in power before the NDA took over the reins of the state in 2005 end, but "utilised it only for serv-

ing interest of the family". "We ended 'jungle raj' and established rule of law," Mr Kumar said and cited National Crime Record Bureau latest report that puts Bihar on the 23rd position in terms of crime to drive home the point.

He reiterated all this in his speech at Teghra in Begusarai too.

Taking a veiled dig at Opposition CM candidate Tejashwi Yadav, Mr Kumar said "we want everybody to study but a few persons want to get everything without education". Tejashwi is a Class 9 dropout. — PTI

EC suspends 2 officials of excise dept, 4 transferred

Patna, Oct. 24: The Election Commission (EC) has suspended two excise superintendents and transferred four others for not demonstrating "alertness and effectiveness" in the seizure of liquor in poll-bound Bihar, an official said.

The EC gave the directives in this regard during a review meeting held via video-conference with the observers of the 78 Assembly constituencies that are going to polls in the first round of the three-phase Bihar polls on October 28, additional chief electoral officer Sanjay Kumar Singh said in a release on Friday.

The poll panel noticed that the performance of some districts in terms of expenditure monitoring, including a control on excise activities, has been dismal, he said. "Excise in-charges of these districts have not demonstrated alertness and effectiveness in the seizure of liquor, which vitiates the electoral environment," Mr Singh said. — PTI

JDRP candidate shot dead, 2 held

Patna, Oct. 24: Janata Dal Rashtrawadi party candidate for Bihar Assembly elections Shreenarayan Singh was shot dead on Saturday at Hathsar village in Bihar's Sheohar district and two people have been arrested in connection with the case.

The incident took place under Purnahia police station and firing took place when the candidate and his supporters were campaigning for the election.

Purnahia SHO Munna Kumar said Singh's supporters got hold of one of the shooters while he was fleeing and lynched him. The attacker posed as supporters. Around five to six people were involved in the firing.

The candidate and his supporters were arrested while they were trying to escape and investigation is going on. Looking into the condition the family has decided to take him to



Shreenarayan Singh

■ **PURNAHIA SHO** Munna Kumar said Singh's supporters got hold of one of the shooters while he was fleeing and lynched him. The attacker posed as supporters. Around five to six people were involved in the firing.

Sitamarhi. Around five to six people were involved in the firing," sub-divisional police officer Rakesh Kumar said.

Bihar Assembly elections will be held in three phases — October 28, November 3, and 7 — and the counting of votes will take place on November 10. — Agencies

Modi: Govt taking steps to strengthen agri sector

Ahmedabad, Oct. 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said his government is taking initiatives to strengthen the agriculture sector in the country so that farmers do not have to face any trouble. His statement comes amid opposition to the new farm laws by farmers' groups and political parties.

Mr Modi was speaking after inaugurating three projects in Gujarat — one each related to agriculture, healthcare and tourism development — via video conference from New Delhi.

"In order to double the farmers' income and to reduce the production cost and their troubles, we will have to increase our efforts with the changing times," he said.

"Whether granting freedom to farmers to sell their produce anywhere in the country or creating thousands of farmer producer organisations, whether com-



Narendra Modi

pleting stalled irrigation projects or improving crop insurance scheme or 100 per cent neem-coating of urea or soil health card...the aim is to strengthen the agriculture sector so that farmers do not have trouble in farming. Initiatives like these are being taken continuously for it," he said.

He launched the state's Kisan Suryodaya Yojana (KSY) aimed at providing day-time electricity to the farmers in the state for irrigation and farming purposes.

The PM also inaugurated paediatric heart hospital at the U.N. Mehta Institute of Cardiology and Research Centre in

Ahmedabad, developed at a cost of ₹470 crore by the health and family welfare department.

Besides, he launched the recently-completed ropeway project on Mount Girnar, a major tourist and pilgrim site near Junagadh city. The 2.3-km long ropeway is being touted as the longest temple ropeway in Asia. Mr Modi held the Opposition responsible for the delay in completion of the Girnar ropeway project.

The project was proposed in 1983, and was delayed due to various reasons, most importantly due to the environmental concerns, before the UPA government granted it conditional approval in 2011.

"Had they not created hurdles in the Girnar ropeway project, it would not have got stalled for so many years. People and tourists should have got its benefit a long back," he said. — PTI

Rajnath reviews LAC situation

New Delhi, Oct. 24: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday reviewed the combat preparedness of the Indian Army at the Sukna-based headquarters of its 33 Corps which is responsible for guarding the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China in the Sikkim sector, officials said.

The defence minister arrived at the key military base, popularly known as 'Trishakti' Corps, in Darjeeling district in late afternoon as part of his two-day visit to West Bengal and Sikkim to review the military preparedness in view of the border row with China in eastern Ladakh as well as to celebrate Dussehra with soldiers.

Mr Singh is accompa-



Rajnath Singh

nied by Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Mukund Naravane.

The Army has significantly bolstered deployment of troops and weaponry along the nearly 3,500 km-long LAC, including in the Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh sectors.

The officials said top commanders of the 33 Corps gave detailed briefing to the defence minister and Gen. Naravane on the LAC situation in Sikkim sector as well as about deployment of troops and weapons. — PTI

Pilot to join campaign in MP Oct. 27

Jaipur, Oct. 24: Congress leader and former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot will be campaigning for the party candidates in the Assembly bypolls in Madhya Pradesh.

Mr Pilot will campaign for the Congress candidates in Bhind, Morena and Shivpuri, according to a statement issued by the party here on Saturday.

He will hold a two-day poll campaign in Narwar-Shivpuri, Shaitambada, Jora, Sumavali, Noorabad, Manbasai, Gormi and Gohad on October 27 and 28. Pilot is scheduled to address a press conference in Gwalior on October 28. Voting will be held on November 3 for the bypolls on 28 Assembly seats of Madhya Pradesh. — PTI

INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS

Sapru House, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi

REQUIRES

Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) inviting tender for selection of agency to provide Virtual Meeting / Conference / Seminar platform to organize the Council's online events such as webinars / meeting.


For details login <https://www.icwa.in/> Participate into Bid log on <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>

INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS


Sapru House, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi

NOTICE FOR APPOINTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE CONSULTANT

Applications are invited from eligible retired Central Government Officers (Under Secretary and above) to be appointed as Administrative Consultant in the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi on contract for a limited period. Applications via email may be addressed to Deputy Director General, ICWA at ddgoffice@icwa.in with copy to us@icwa.in. The last date of submitting the application is 13.11.2020 upto 4.00 PM. For details and terms and conditions, log on to "Public Announcement" column on homepage <http://icwa.in>.



Attention!



Hon'ble Supreme Court Guidelines

FOR SALE & USE OF FIRECRACKERS

- ▶ **No item(s) other than the Reduced Emission firecrackers (Improved crackers) and Reduced Emission firecrackers Green crackers: Safe Water and Air Sprinklers (SWAS) as prescribed and approved by the Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organization (PESO) shall be sold in the premises.**
- ▶ **Categories of firecrackers banned/not permitted**
 - **Joined Firecrackers (series crackers or laris)**
 - **Fireworks containing barium salts/lithium/arsenic/antimony/lead/ mercury**
 - **Firecrackers manufactured earlier but non-permissible as per above Hon'ble Supreme Court judgement.**
 - **Possession and sale of fireworks of foreign origin.**
 - ▶ **Incidence of possession and sale of above fireworks may be reported to nearest police station.**
- ▶ **Only those crackers permitted to be sold whose decibel (sound) level are within the permissible limits (125 dB(AI) or 145 dB(C)pk at 4 meters from the point of bursting)**
- ▶ **Bursting of fireworks not allowed in silence zones : Silence Zone is an area comprising not less than 100 meters around hospitals, educational institutions, courts, religious places or any other area which is declared as such by the competent authority.**
- ▶ **Timings of Firecracking as per directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court:**

From 08.00 PM till 10.00 PM	on Diwali Days
From 04.00 AM till 05.00 AM	on Gurburab
From 09.00 PM till 10.00 PM	
From 11.55 PM till 12.30 AM	on Christmas Eve & New Year Eve.
- ▶ **Community fire cracking to be undertaken at pre-identified areas/fields as far as possible.**

ALL CONCERNED TO PLEASE NOTE & ABIDE.

National directives for COVID-19 management shall be followed during community Fire-Cracking viz. :

- 1. Wearing of face cover is compulsory in public place.**
- 2. Individuals must maintain minimum distance of 6 feet in public place.**
- 3. Spitting in public places will be punishable with fine.**

FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112
TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 1090

SHORT TAKES

C'garh: DRG jawan killed, another hurt

Narayanpur: A District Reserve Guard (DRG) jawan was killed and another injured in a gunfight with Naxals in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district on Saturday, police said. The skirmish took place around 10 am near Tador village under Orchha police station limits, where a team from the DRG was out on a counter-insurgency operation, Narayanpur superintendent of police Mohit Garg said. A group of ultras ambushed the patrolling team when it was on its way back after the operation, which led to the gun-battle between the two sides, he said. As the security personnel started zeroing on them, the ultras escaped from the scene, he said. "DRG personnel Santu Vadde was killed in the gunfight, while constable Bajju Ram Kachlam sustained minor injuries," Garg said. — *PTI*

C'garh woman raped, attacked in Raigarh

Raigarh: A 22-year-old man and his minor relative have been detained for allegedly raping a woman and attempting to kill her in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district, police said on Saturday. The accused identified as Santosh Yadav and his teenaged relative were apprehended by the police on Friday, Raigarh (ASP) Abhishek Verma said. The 40-year-old victim, who works with Chhattisgarh State Rural Livelihood Mission 'Bihan', was found unconscious with grievous injuries on her face, near Khalakhiya village in Lailunga area on October 18, he said. The woman was admitted to Raigarh district hospital and a case of attempt to murder was registered against unidentified persons, the official said. — *PTI*

BJP demands Mufti's arrest

■ **Continued from Page 1** the erstwhile state was stripped of its special status and split up into two Union Territories on August 5 last year.

Narinder Raina, president of BJP's J&K unit, termed Ms Mufti's remarks as "seditious" and said that she should be booked for the same and arrested immediately. Asserted that "no power on earth can either hoist the state flag again or restore Article 370", he told reporters in winter capital Jammu, "I request lieutenant governor Manoj Sinha to take cognisance of the seditious remarks of Mehbooba Mufti, book her for the seditious act and put her behind bars." Mr Raina pledged to "shed every drop of our blood for our flag, country and motherland" and said that J&K is an integral part of the country and, therefore, only one flag can be hoisted here and that is the national flag. He further said that the BJP will "not tolerate such nefarious designs aimed at instigating the people of Kashmir."

The BJP leader said that if Kashmiri leaders are feeling insecure in India, they could go to Pakistan and China.

A group of BJP activists held a protest demonstration against the PDP chief in frontier district of Kupwara.

The J&K Pradesh Congress also criticised Ms Mufti over her remarks and said these were highly provocative and irresponsible and have hurt the sentiments of the people and hence are condemned. "Such statements are intolerable and unacceptable in any society," JKPCC chief spokesperson Ravinder Sharma said.

He asserted that the tricolour is the symbol of "honour for the country and reminds of the sacrifices of crores of Indians to achieve freedom and to protect the dignity, honour and the territorial integrity of the country". He added the statements like the one made by the PDP chief will defeat the democratic and constitutional struggle for achieving any just right and urged her to desist from such utterances.

Ms Mufti was also trolled widely on social media. But defending herself, she tweeted on Saturday that the tricolour "stands for diversity and peaceful coexistence amongst all. If anyone has insulted the tiranga it is BJP that persecutes minorities and sows division and hatred." She added that the national flag was "disrespected the day BJP leaders carried it (at a rally) to justify rapists of a 9-year-old (nomadic girl in J&K's Kathua district). Spare me the lessons".

■ **Asserts it is not anti-national, Mehbooba to be vice-president**

Farooq to lead J&K alliance fight against BJP, Art 370

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, OCT. 25

Jammu and Kashmir's half a dozen mainstream regional political parties along with the CPIM's local unit on Saturday formally structured their alliance and unanimously elected former chief minister Farooq Abdullah as its president.

Mr Abdullah, who heads the erstwhile state's oldest political party National Conference (NC), told reporters, "Ours isn't an anti-national group. Our aim is to ensure that the rights of people of J&K and Ladakh are restored."

He alleged that attempts are being made to drive a wedge between various communities in what are



MP and president of National Conference Farooq Abdullah along with Mehbooba Mufti, Omar Abdullah and other members after a meeting for Gupkar Declaration in Srinagar on Saturday.

— *PTI*

now known as twin Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh and said that the new alliance would defeat such designs as well. He said, "Attempts of dividing us in the name of reli-

gion will fail. It's not a religious fight."

The signatories of "Gupkar Declaration" met at the residence of former chief minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti

here earlier to discuss the political situation and other important issues faced by J&K and Ladakh.

A spokesman of the group said that during the meeting the participants put forth their valuable suggestions for consolidating the movement taken up for restoration of Articles 370 and 35A and other rights of the people of J&K, which now stands divided into two UTs. He added, "Also, the Alliance was given a formal shape and its member parties reposed their faith in Dr Farooq Abdullah and elected him as president.

Mehbooba Mufti was elected as vice-president while People's Conference chairman Sajad Gani Lone as its spokesman".

Income-tax return filing date extended till Dec. 31

New Delhi, Oct 24: In a relief to taxpayers, the government on Saturday further extended the deadline for filing returns by individual taxpayers for FY 2019-20 by a month till December 31.

Also, the due date of furnishing Income Tax Returns (ITRs) for taxpayers whose accounts require to be audited has been extended till January 31, 2021.

The government had earlier in May extended various due dates for filing ITRs for FY 2019-20 from July 31 to November 30, to give compliance relief to taxpayers due to the Covid pandemic.

In a statement, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said, "The due date for furnishing of Income Tax Returns for the other taxpayers [for whom the due date (i.e. before the extension by the said notification) as per the Act was July 31, 2020] has been extended to December 31, 2020."

The due date for furnishing of ITRS for "the taxpayers (including their partners) who are

Due date for filing 2018-19 annual GST returns extended till Dec. 31

New Delhi, Oct. 24: The government on Saturday extended the deadline for furnishing GST annual returns for FY 2018-19 till December 31.

The government had last month extended the last date for filing GST annual return and audit report for the 2018-19 fiscal by a month till October 31, 2020. In a statement, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said the government has been receiving a number of representations regarding need to extend due date for filing Annual Return

required to get their accounts audited [for whom the due date as per the I-T Act is October 31, 2020] has been extended to January 31, 2021", it added.

Also the due date for furnishing of ITRs for the taxpayers who are required to furnish report in respect of international/specified domestic

(Form GSTR-9) and Reconciliation Statement (Form GSTR-9C) for FY 2018-19. The representations have been made on the grounds that due to the Covid pandemic related lockdown and restrictions, normal business operations have still not been possible in several parts of the country, it said.

The statement said it has been requested that the due dates for the same be extended beyond October 31, 2020 to enable the businesses and auditors to comply in this regard.

— *PTI*

transactions has been extended to January 31, 2021.

"The date for furnishing of various audit reports under the Act, including tax audit report and report in respect of international/specified domestic transaction, has been extended to December 31, 2020," the CBDT said.

— *PTI*

Covid recovery rate nears 90%

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 24

India's national recovery rate has reached close to 90 per cent after 70.16 lakh persons have recovered from novel coronavirus out of the total positive cases detected so far.

On Saturday, India's total Covid tally reached 78.15 lakh with detection of 53, 370 fresh cases. In comparison to fresh cases, 67, 549 persons were discharged from medical supervision taking the national recovery rate to 89.78 per cent.

The total deaths due to the virus have reached 1.18 lakh out of which 650 fatalities took place in the last 24 hours. The Covid case fatality rate has further declined to 1.51 per cent.

India's 5-day moving average of daily rate of addition to total cases stands at 0.7%.

India's doubling time for total cases stands at 101.1 days, and for deaths at 125.4 days.

▶ **THE TOTAL deaths due to the virus have reached 1.18 lakh out of which 650 fatalities took place in the last 24 hours. The Covid case fatality rate has further declined to 1.51 per cent**

Overall, five states with the biggest 24-hour jump in total cases are Kerala (8511), Maharashtra (7347), Karnataka (5356), West Bengal (4143), and Delhi (4086).

According to the union health ministry, the active cases are less than 7 lakh for the second consecutive day and stand at 6.81 lakh and active cases comprise only 8.71% of the total positive cases of the country. 61% of the total recovered cases are from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. Maharashtra has contributed the maximum with more than 13,000 single day recovery.

In Odisha's Baripada, Muslim man leads Dussehra fest

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO
BARIPADA, OCT. 24

A 65-year-old Muslim man has been at the forefront of the Dussehra festivities for decades at Tentulidinga village near Baripada in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district. The man, Kohinoor Islam, diligently supervises each and every detail of the puja—from the selection and making of the idols to their immersions.

While the Sarbajanina Saradiya Durga Puja Pandal or community puja pandal at Tentulidinga vil-

lage epitomises the communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims in the region, Mr Islam appears to be the torchbearer. It all started in 1984 when Mr Islam evinced his interest in organising Durga puja at his village.

With support from elders, he went ahead in promoting communal harmony with this unique idea. Since then, Mr Islam has been initiating special measures for the conduct of Durga puja in the village.

"On the request of villagers, I took the responsi-



Kohinoor Islam at a Durga Puja pandal in Baripada.

bility of conducting the Dussehra festival at the Sarbajanina Saradiya Durga Puja Pandal. None has ever any issues with

Maha MLA who pledged support to BJP joins Sena

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, OCT. 24

In yet another jolt for the Maharashtra BJP, Geeta Jain, an independent MLA who was party's staunch supporter, joined the ruling party Shiv Sena on Saturday. This is a second blow to the BJP in as many days, as veteran heavyweight Eknath Khadse had joined the NCP on Friday.

Ms Jain was inducted into the Shiv Sena in the presence of Chief Minister and party president Uddhav Thackeray at his residence Matoshree. She was accompanied by Sena minister Eknath Shinde and Thane MLA Pratap Sarnaik.

Ms Jain was elected as an independent MLA from Mira-Bhayandar constituency in the 2019 Vidhan Sabha polls. As



Geeta Jain

she was denied a ticket by the BJP, she rebelled against the party and contested against the party candidate and then sitting MLA Narendra Mehta. She defeated Mr Mehta by over 15,000 votes.

After the polls, Ms Jain had declared her support to the BJP. However, according to political sources, she was upset over the negligence shown towards her by the local and top party leadership since last year.

Ms Jain is the former BJP corporator and the former mayor from Mira-Bhayandar Municipal Corporation. Her entry is expected to strengthen the Shiv Sena in Mira-Bhayandar as some of the BJP corporators are reportedly in touch with her. Though the BJP has a majority in the civic body, Ms Jain could change the equations if a large number of corporators join her in Sena.

Recently, water conservation minister Shankarrao Gadakh, who had won from the Nevasa assembly seat as Krantikari Shetkari Paksh's candidate, had also joined the Shiv Sena.

Mr Jain's decision to join the Shiv Sena is a second blow to the BJP as Mr Khadse joined the NCP, which is part of the ruling coalition in the state.

Policeman had stopped accused for riding without helmet Woman beats up Mumbai traffic cop

SAURABH JOSHI
MUMBAI, OCT. 24

A woman rained slaps on a traffic policeman alleging that he abused her, soon after he had intercepted their two-wheeler for riding without a helmet in south Mumbai's Kalbadevi area on Saturday. The video of a woman beating up the policeman went viral following which the 30-year-old woman and her 26-year-old friend were taken into custody. The officials said that the policeman Eknath Parte who was posted at the busy Kalbadevi Naka when he intercepted the two-wheeler being driven by Mohsin Khan on which Sadhavika Tiwari was pillion. When Parte stopped them and confronted the rider not wearing a helmet, he picked up a fight with the official.

Subsequently Tiwari got violent and manhandled Parte alleging he had hurled abuses at her. Soon after she began slapping him with people witnessing the same. The bystanders shot video

a helmet.

The officials said that the policeman Eknath Parte who was posted at the busy Kalbadevi Naka when he intercepted the two-wheeler being driven by Mohsin Khan on which Sadhavika Tiwari was pillion. When Parte stopped them and confronted the rider not wearing a helmet, he picked up a fight with the official.

Subsequently Tiwari got violent and manhandled Parte alleging he had hurled abuses at her. Soon after she began slapping him with people witnessing the same. The bystanders shot video

▶ **THE VIDEO of a woman beating up the policeman went viral following which the 30-year-old woman and her 26-year-old friend were taken into custody**

clips of the incident which later went viral. In the video, the woman is seen claiming that the constable had verbally abused her, while the latter is seen refuting her allegation.

Other policemen who were present nearby rushed to the spot and a woman police constable intervened in the incident. "The incident of policemen being beaten would

be dealt with strongly and such attackers would be prosecuted criminally," said a police officer.

The officials will also look into the allegation of the woman of him abusing her, which led to the assault. Meanwhile, the traffic police in an official release said Parte had not used foul language and had addressed both the accused in a polite manner. Joint commissioner of police (traffic) Yashasvi Yadav praised the constable for not losing his temper and being patient, while being thrashed and abused by the accused woman, the release stated.

RPF nabs IIT alumnus for railway tatkal ticket fraud

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 24

The Railway Protection Force personnel have unearthed a tatkal ticketing scam and arrested an alumnus of IIT-Kharagpur in Tiruppur on Saturday. In a joint operation the RPF intelligence officials of Tiruppur and officers of RPF cyber cell at Southern Railway headquarters, Chennai, arrested S.Yuvarajaa of Pothiyapalayam, Kangeyam taluk, Tiruppur and seized a laptop and other gadgets from him.

According to sources, Yuvarajaa completed BE (aeronautical) in Anna University and M.Tech (aerospace) from IIT-Kharagpur. He developed two android applications 'Super Tatkal' and 'Super Tatkal Pro' to run the racket.

▶ **YUVARAJAA COMPLETED BE (aeronautical) in Anna University and M.Tech (aerospace) from IIT-Kharagpur. He developed two android applications 'Super Tatkal' and 'Super Tatkal Pro' to run the racket.**

The fake apps had enabled the customers to obtain confirmed tatkal e-tickets owing to the speed of the application.

According to the modus operandi, the users of both the fake mobile applications had to purchase prepaid coins pack (10 coins worth Rs 20). For each booking, 5 coins were deducted from their coins balance. The payment mode for both the android apps was "Instamojo" payment gateway through

which Yuvarajaa got the payments credited to his savings bank account. He swindled nearly ₹20 lakh from 2016 to 2020. Approximately one lakh customers had downloaded the fake apps. The accused has been arrested and a case was registered against him under section 143 (2) of Railways Act.

Personnel at RPF Cyber Cell, Chennai played a key role in analysis of data and identification of the fake app developer's location and also collected digital evidence including server source code, application source code, end-users list and bank statements of the accused. Both the illegal apps - 'Super Tatkal' & 'Super Tatkal Pro' apps have been deactivated in the play store as well as in browser.



A priest performs 'kumari puja' at a Durga Puja pandal amid Covid pandemic in Ranchi on Saturday.

— *PTI*

GST fraud of ₹42 crore unearthed in Rourkela

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR, OCT. 24

In yet another incident of alleged multi-crore tax evasion, a dishonest businessmen have committed a GST (Goods and Services Tax) fraud of ₹42 crore in Odisha's Rourkela city.

According to reports, the culprits have opened 18 bank accounts in the name of some students and daily-wage earners and operated their business on those accounts to swindle GST. The matter came to light after Urban Cooperative Bank authorities lodged complaints with the local unit of state GST vigilance wing.

Soumyajit Swain and Sarada Prasad Swain, two college students, said they have come to know from the GST authorities that two business firms - Ganapati Traders and Basudev Minerals - made GST transactions on their bank accounts have availed GST benefits to the tune of several crores.

Pak violates ceasefire in 3 sectors along LoC and IB

Jammu, Oct. 24: Pakistani troops violated ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked firing and mortar shelling in three sectors along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Saturday.

The Indian Army and the Border Security Force (BSF) retaliated effectively, they said.

"At about 6.30 pm (on Saturday), Pakistan initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and shelling mortars along the LoC in the Degwar sector in Poonch district," a defence spokesman said.

He said the Indian Army retaliated befittingly and the cross-border shelling between the two sides was going on when last reports were received. — *PTI*

THE ASIAN AGE

25 OCTOBER 2020



Kushalrani Gulab

Off the beaten track

A woke Navratri, and a happy Dussehra!

As a responsible citizen aiming to be a non-participant in the pandemic (I suffer absolutely no FOMO or fear of missing out, particularly when it comes to Covid-19, thank you very much), you will not be surprised to learn that I have set not so much as the tip of a toe anywhere near a puja pandal this Navratri / Durga Puja.

To be fair to the SARS-CoV-2 virus — which has had bad press since the moment it was born and needs to be shown by us woke people that circumstances of birth alone is no reason to be cast out of society — I also have not been near any puja pandal in the last 30 years if not longer, because I am the Indian version of Scrooge. From the moment we hit August every year, which, depending on what the lunar calendars are up to at the time, marks the beginning of the festive season, you hear me bah, humbugging all over the place, with emphasis on the 'bah'.

I do not enjoy crowds. I especially do not enjoy crowds in a hot and sweaty climate punctuated by distinctly uncooling monsoon showers that set my sinuses aflame and cause me to sneeze like a machine gun on speed. I do not enjoy amplified *aartis* by priests so *besura* that even Cacophonix the bard would be dashing about with gags and ropes to tie them to trees while Asterix and Obelix stuff their ears with broccoli and tuck into roast boar. I do not enjoy the 'talent shows' organised by cooperative housing societies in which uncles attempt stand-up comedy so bad that the YouTube shows look good in comparison, aunties explore their inner item girl and give themselves displaced vertebrae for life and children run even more amuck than they normally do, only this time on a stage with amplifiers.

Finally, I absolutely do not enjoy my eardrums being shattered day after day by the techno-Bollywood remixes that our gods and goddesses are apparently fond of, according to puja and dandiya organisers, with *Sheila ki jawani* at No. 1 on the pandal charts, *Lungi dance* at No. 2 and *Chammak challo* at No. 3, all at ear-splitting volume.

So I was delighted when I read the rules for Navratri in Mumbai this year. Keep it low key, urged the state government. Do not do anything that involves mass gatherings; there will be no garba and no dandiya; discuss viruses and dengue-bearing mosquitoes whenever it appears that a crowd is gathering — that will send everyone home.

Meanwhile, in Kolkata, the high court demanded barricades outside the pandals and a maximum of only 45 people inside at any point depending on the size of the pandal, thus ensuring that 90 per cent of the population of the city would push and shove their way to the barricade, thus maintaining what we might now name 'antisocial distance' just to add another virus-related phrase to the Oxford English Dictionary.

"Aha," said my Scrooge, rubbing its hands with glee as it read these rules in the newspapers. "Maybe I'll get through this year with my eardrums and sanity intact."

And so far, dear reader, this whole puja season I have not had to use my ear plugs at all. Instead, there is a blessed silence every day — or at least what passes for silence in urban India with its daily aural mix of shattering power drills, blaring car horns, screaming food processors, piercing pressure cooker whistles and the occasional cawing crow.

And I have to admit it: I am bored witless.

Where are the social media posts about divine *bhog* that I look forward to every year with my tongue hanging out? *Bhog* is not permitted, say the state governments. It might contain a certain virus.

How will I know if *Sheila ki jawani* is still No. 1 on the pandal charts 10 years after it first released or if *Chammak challo* has finally climbed to the top, pulling the lungi down and revealing its underwear and banian, all modesty damned?

How can I perfect my sneer at the residents of my cooperative housing society when it's time for them to display their untalents on Navratri nights? (Note for grammar Nazis: if you can unfriend people on social media, you can certainly display an untalent.) I usually get a refresher course during the festive season, but not this year.

I feel so bereft without everything I hate about Navratri and the pujas, that I might actually do the unthinkable today: 30 years or more after I told my parents that if I was old enough to vote, I was old enough to stop participating in the annual family pandal hop, I might just step out of the house and visit a puja pandal. Since it's the last day of the puja, I doubt if there will be a crowd.

And with a little bit of luck, I will not be hit by an unseasonable monsoon shower, find my sinuses inflamed, sneeze like machine gun on speed, and be arrested for spreading a certain virus.

Kushalrani Gulab is a freelance editor and writer who dreams of being a sanyasi by the sea

Subhani

AIR IN INDIA IS FILTHY — TRUMP

COVER YOUR NOSE PROPERLY



Will the BJP use Nitish to get own CM in Patna?



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

There are two somewhat related perspectives to keep in mind with regard to the coming Bihar Assembly elections, where the first votes are to be cast on Wednesday, October 28. These have been largely overlooked in the media and in the facile opinion polls, which appear to have partly relied on the 2015 polling data on caste arithmetic as if this was the sacred *gayatri mantra* itself, besides strongly hinting that the presumed magic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi could safely take the ruling alliance home.

As we'll see below, at least some crystal-gazers may be rather hoping that it will be just one part of the NDA — namely the BJP — that will reach the dry shores, no matter what the overt optics.

The first consideration stares us in the face, though we have been oblivious. It is quite simply the fact that the failure of the three-time chief minister Nitish Kumar's government in coping with the dreaded Covid-19 pandemic, besides the mass return home of the poor from the country's major cities regarded by Bihar's massive pool of the labour force as the nation's employment capitals in the absence of any worthwhile prospects at home, and the recent floods that played havoc with people's already wretched lives, are stark truths that frame the real narrative for this election. Without ambiguity

these point to the Nitish government's casual disregard of the suffering of some of the poorest people that there are in the country. This can be seen in leaders of the ruling alliance speaking without pause about roads repaired or built more than 10 years ago, and their breathlessly recalling the serious uptick in crime that was relevant two decades ago, before the new generation of voters was born.

Parroting pre-history is part of an untidy and scarcely convincing strategem of the JD(U) and BJP to hide policy failures and executive inaction, and meant to help them smoothly glide over the wretchedness they have presided over for most of their 15 years in office — in other words, to trick voters.

Does the trick work? Among some sections, yes — defined in the main by class. The bulk of these are the state's upper caste and upper crust, not that anyone's vote can still be thought of as being immutable.

But ordinary folk have not forgotten the humiliation and the hurt caused by the CM urging them not to come trudging back to the state though, with the national lockdown suddenly announced by the Prime Minister in March, it was clear that they had no money to pay rents in metropolitan cities and no money to eat. They also calculated that, if the disease took them, it was better to die in their unpretentious homes in

the village than on the uncaring roads of the big cities. Mr Kumar's self-serving statements are being recalled at election time.

With the aim of building a strong caste support base of the poorest sections in his favour, Mr Kumar's self-serving administrative decisions divided and sub-divided the big chunks of the OBCs and the SCs into super-fine strips till they could not be sliced up any further and gave them some benefits in the early part of his tenure to secure their undying loyalty.

However, if the wildly cheering, pressing, crowds at the poll rallies of young RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, the CM candidate of the Mahagathbandhan — the alliance of the RJD, Congress, and all shades of the Left in Bihar, which are ranged against the ruling NDA — are any indication, then attempts to chisel the caste arithmetic may prove to be of little avail for the chief minister.

And the reason for this is plain enough. Mr Yadav speaks only of the crushing burden of unemployment, which has made even the upper castes reel, as he promises a million jobs on arrival (as CM — replacing Mr Kumar). It is this which makes the sentiment for "*badlao*" (change) in Bihar palpable, although elections

Ordinary folk have not forgotten the humiliation and the hurt caused by the CM urging them not to come trudging back to the state after the national lockdown was suddenly announced by the Prime Minister

are notoriously hard to call. The media, except in the past few days, and the opinion polls, missed this, though it was out there, large as a football.

So gobsmecked is the ruling alliance that the BJP is now promising the Covid vaccine free (only) for Bihar, such is the desperation. In the event of an anti-climax, it is the EVM factor that is likely to be blamed, and people are watching keenly. The political timbre and makeup of Bihar is different from next-door Uttar Pradesh, although both are Hindi-speaking. Bihar can be volatile across the board. This is where Jayaprakash Narayan's all-encompassing movement was bred, and also Communists of every hue.

The second factor to watch out for, mentioned above — relating to JD(U) leader and CM Nitish Kumar's unravelling — is the ambition nursed in the BJP's bosom to have its own chief minister in Bihar for the first time, even if as part of an alliance. Other than Punjab and J&K (now, alas, only a UT), Bihar is the only state in North India where there has never been a CM from the BJP. That is Bihar's uniqueness among the Hindi-speaking states.

If this is understood, then the side-court play — the Chirag Paswan phenomenon and the rushing of key RSS people to get the election nomination of Mr Paswan's LJP, otherwise no great shakes as a political force — does not remain obscure. It is not clear how it will pan out, but one thing is clear — Mr Kumar may get to rue that he let the BJP ride the waves stepping on his shoulders even as he fooled himself that he stood for secular politics and secular values while canoodling with the BJP-RSS.

LETTERS

CRISIS FOR IMRAN

Pakistan's politics is on the boil. Eleven Opposition parties have come together to call for an ouster of the Imran Khan government. Amid massive wheat and sugar shortages, rising prices and failing law and order, public unhappiness over the performance of the government is high. And now, Nawaz Sharif, who is in exile in London, has done the unthinkable. In a speech delivered remotely to tens and thousands of people in a rally, he accused the Army chief and the ISI chief of "rigging elections". Will this result in further souring of relations between the Army and Imran Khan? It is wait-and-watch time.

Shovanlal Chakraborty
Kolkata

ARBITER OF THE HOUSE

AS THE WAR ON Covid-19 rages on, governments have another foe at their gates; onion selling at Rs 100/kg. The vegetable seldom sticks to price discipline and as often plays havoc, political as well as economic. Onion prices were regarded as the decisive factor in the 1998 state elections in Delhi and Rajasthan, and in bringing down the central government in 1980. The Bihar elections could thus be jeopardised for the government in power. This staple ingredient of every meal which is seasonal in output cannot delight the farmer and the consumer at the same time. It will remain the merciless arbiter of the house, domestic or legislative.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

QUESTION OF LOVE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Pope and family values" (Oct. 24). Pope Francis has become the first pontiff to endorse same-sex civil unions. For India, with a sizable Christian population, the Pope's words will send out a much-needed message and blunt the edge of prejudice for many. For that alone, it is immensely welcome. Let us open our arms of friendship towards our LGBTQIA brethren. It must be remembered that their choice of sexual partners is at its core just a matter of love.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

DASAIN CARNIVALS

DUSSEHRA IS actually the festival of the Kshatriyas. But all Hindus observe this festival with great joy. Traditionally, in Indian culture, Dussehra was always celebrated with carnivals and folk dances, where the whole community mixed together, met and mingled. But because of external influences and invasions over the past 200 years, we have lost that charming tradition.

Jubel D'Cruz
Mumbai

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

IN BRIEF

Actor Arnold feels 'fantastic' after op

Los Angeles: Veteran Hollywood star Arnold Schwarzenegger has revealed that he underwent a second heart operation and is now feeling absolutely fine. In a post on Instagram, the 73-year-old actor said he had been given a new aortic valve. "Thanks to the team at the Cleveland Clinic, I have a new aortic valve to go along with my new pulmonary valve from my last surgery," Schwarzenegger said. "I feel fantastic and have already been walking the streets of Cleveland enjoying your amazing statues. Thank you to every doc and nurse on my team!" he added. The actor also shared photos that showed him giving a thumbs-up from his hospital bed and exploring Cleveland.

Cameroon arrests ivory smugglers

Yaound: Cameroon authorities arrested four ivory smugglers attempting to transport nearly 120 elephant tusks through the country's south, officials said on Friday. The group had trafficked nearly 675 kilograms (1,500 pounds) of the illicit cargo from neighbouring Gabon, which is home to more than half of Africa's remaining forest elephants. They hid their haul in the bottom of a van with a false compartment, state television reported. It was the biggest ivory seizure in the West African nation for five years, customs officer Jean-Claude Ekoube said. Ivory trafficking is fuelled by strong demand in Asia and the Middle East, where elephant tusks are used in traditional medicine.

Roadside bomb kills 9 in Afghan

Kabul: A roadside bomb killed nine people in eastern Afghanistan on Saturday, after it struck a minivan full of civilians, a local official said. Ghazni province police spokesman Ahmad Khan Sirat said that a second roadside bomb killed two policemen, after it struck their vehicle that was making its way to the victims of the first explosion. Sirat added that the bombings had wounded several others, and that the attacks were under investigation. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks. The provincial police spokesman claimed the Taliban had placed the bomb. The upsurge in violence between Taliban and Afghan forces comes as representatives of the two warring sides are beginning peace talks in Doha to end the decades-long war in Afghanistan.

INDIAN BOY'S EASY SOLUTION TO HANG HEAVY OBJECTS

Dubai, Oct. 24: A sixteen-year-old Indian boy based in the UAE has come up with an innovative solution to hang weighted items from the wall without drilling holes, as part of a school assignment, which has now become a business idea for his family, according to a media report.

Ishir, a student of GEMS World Academy in Dubai, had to submit an innovative project for his Grade 10 International Baccalaureate (IB) course when he noticed how walls get damaged when nails are drilled into them, the *Khaleej Times* reported. "While screw and nails have been in use since time immemorial, they pose problems for people on a daily basis such as damage to walls, outsourcing labour, dust pollution and other dangers of drilling," Ishir told the daily, adding that he wanted a non-intrusive solution to this issue.

Though Ishir had a fair idea as to how he wanted to execute the project, he reached out to his elder brother Avik, an engineering student at Purdue University in the US, for further guidance.

"When we put our minds together, the solution, like all great ideas, was elegantly simple," Ishir told the *Khaleej Times*. The solution included two steel tapes and a strong magnet which holds the entire assembly together. "The steel tape that adheres to the wall is known as the 'alpha steel tape' and the one on the object to be hung as the 'beta steel tape'."

"The neodymium magnet holds the entire assembly together, including the object being mounted," Ishir elaborated. This non-intrusive method to hang weighted objects from the wall has been named 'KLAPIT' based on the 'clap' sound produced when the two magnets click.

Biden promises free vaccine for everyone in US if elected

Biden slams Trump for his policies to combat Covid pandemic

Washington, Oct. 24: Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has pledged that if elected as president in the November 3 election, he will ensure free Covid-19 vaccination for all Americans, laying out his pandemic response plan just days before the US presidential polls.

In a major policy speech on the Coronavirus in his home state of Delaware, Biden on Friday flayed US President Donald Trump for his policies to combat the Coronavirus pandemic that has killed over 2,23,995 people and has had a devastating impact on the country's economy. "President Trump said we're rounding the corner, it's going away, we're learning to live with it. They are quotes. But as I told him last night, we're not learning to live with it. We're learning to die with it. This is a dark winter ahead," Biden, 77, said.

Already more than 2,20,000 people in the US have lost their lives to this virus. Worse yet, a new study from Columbia University suggests that between 1,30,000 and 2,10,000 of those deaths were avoidable, he said.

"Once we have a safe and effective vaccine, it has to be free to everyone, whether or not you're insured," the former vice president said. He said that if elected, he would direct the federal government to "bulk-purchase as many doses as necessary of the Covid-19 vaccine so we can provide it free to those who are uninsured, under-insured or Medicaid-eligible."

"Covid-19 dwarfs anything we've faced in recent history and it isn't showing any signs of slowing down. The virus is surging in almost every state. We passed 4.8 million cases. And when Trump was asked this week what he'd do differently to get the pandemic response right from the start his answer was and I quote, 'Not much. Not much.'" he



Jeremy Bines, choir director of the Deutsche Oper, and singers from the choirs of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the choir soloists of the Komische Oper Berlin and the RIAS Kammerchor Berlin sing with protective face masks during an acappella demo concert #KulturVerbindetAlle (Culture brings all together) at the Gendarmenmarkt on Saturday.

— AFP

US sets infection record as fatalities near 2,24,000

Boise (US), Oct. 24: The US Coronavirus caseload has reached record heights with more than 83,000 infections reported in a single day, the latest ominous sign of the disease's grip on the nation, as states from Connecticut to the Rocky Mountain West reel under the surge. The US death toll, meanwhile, has grown to 2,23,995, according to the Covid-19 Dashboard published by Johns Hopkins University. The total U.S.

caseload reported on the site Friday was 83,757, topping the 77,362 cases reported on July 16.

The impact is being felt in every section of the country — a lockdown starting on Friday at the Oglala Sioux Tribe's reservation in South Dakota, a plea by a Florida health official for a halt to children's birthday parties, dire warnings from Utah's governor, and an increasingly desperate situation at a hospital in northern

Idaho, which is running out of space for patients and considering airlifts to Seattle or Portland, Oregon.

"We've essentially shut down an entire floor of our hospital. We've had to double rooms. We've bought more hospital beds," said Dr. Robert Scoggins, a pulmonologist at the Kootenai Health hospital in Coeur d'Alene. "Our hospital is not built for a pandemic."

— AP

said. Alleging that Trump does not have a plan to fight the coronavirus, Biden said the longer he is the president, the "more reckless" he gets.

"We don't have to be held prisoner by this administration's failures. We can choose a different path. We can do what

Americans have always done: come together and meet the challenge with grit, compassion, and determination," he said.

Revealing his plan, Biden said he would immediately put in place a national strategy that will position the country to finally get ahead of this

virus and get back the lives. Biden said he will ask the new Congress to put a bill on his desk by the end of January with all the resources necessary to see how both the public health and economic response can be seen through the end what is needed.

— PTI

Indian-Americans stand with Biden, call Trump 'foe'

Washington, Oct. 24: Joe Biden and his running mate Senator Kamala Harris have the best understanding of the Indian-American community, the diaspora leaders supporting the two Democratic candidates have said, describing US President Donald Trump as a "foe" who criticises India on the world stage.

With less than a fortnight to go for the November 3 presidential election, Indian-Americans on Friday asserted that Biden, first as a US Senator and thereafter as the vice president, has a strong track record of helping the community.

"After four years of the Trump administration, we know our children and

● **WITH LESS** than a fortnight to go for the November 3 presidential election, Indian-Americans on Friday asserted that Biden, first as a US Senator and thereafter as the vice president, has a strong track record of helping the community.

grandchildren will not have the same opportunities as we had. We need a leader who understands our community, our values, our pride and appreciates our hard work and gives equal opportunity and say in his administration," said Ajay Jain Bhutoria, a Silicon Valley-based entrepreneur. Bhutoria said that Biden and Harris are the leaders who will lead the country

out of this mess and restore its soul, revive the middle-class economy and re-establish America's leadership on the world stage and best relationship with India.

Referring to the final presidential debate between Trump and Biden on Friday, Bhutoria said that the president criticised India on the world stage.

"The community understands who the real friend of India is, who the foe. Trump is a foe. Most recently on the debate stage saying: you cannot trust India's Covid-19 numbers and India is filthy. He has suspended the H1 Visa Programme, put trade deals with India in jeopardy, and has used (Indian Prime Minister Narendra) Modi's friendship for photo opportunities only," he alleged.

— PTI

US finds first ever nest of hornets

Los Angeles, Oct. 24: After months of meticulous tracking, authorities in the western US state of Washington on Friday said they had uncovered the first ever nest of the deadly Asian giant hornet in the country.

The nest was found on Thursday by Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) entomologists on a property in Blaine, near the border with Canada, the agency said in a statement.

It added that an attempt to eradicate the nest of wasps — the world's largest hornet species also known as the "murder hornet" — would take place on Saturday.

"The successful detection of a nest comes after a WSDA trapper collected two live Asian giant hornets on October 21

(Wednesday), caught in a new type of trap the agency had placed in the area," the statement said.

"Two more hornets, also living, were found in another trap the morning of October 22 when WSDA staff arrived in the area to tag the previously trapped hornets with radio trackers and follow one back to its nest," it added.

Scientists in the state have been actively searching for the Asian giant hornet since the first such insect was detected in December 2019 and after one of the wasps was trapped in July in Whatcom County, where Blaine is located.

Several more of the invasive pest not native to the US were subsequently caught, all in the same region.

— AFP

Ethiopia says will not 'cave in' after Trump slams dam

Addis Ababa, Oct. 24: Ethiopia vowed on Saturday not to "cave in to aggressions of any kind" after US President Donald Trump lashed out over the country's Nile River mega-dam and suggested Egypt might destroy it.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's office defended the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, set to become Africa's largest hydropower plant, and said Ethiopia was working to resolve longstanding issues over the project with downstream neighbours Sudan and Egypt.

"Nonetheless, occasional statements of belligerent threats to have Ethiopia succumb to unfair terms still abound. These threats and affronts to Ethiopian sovereignty are misguided, unproductive, and clear violations of international law," his office said in a statement. "Ethiopia will not cave in to aggressions of any kind," the statement added. A separate version of the statement issued in Amharic featured more muscular language.

"There are two facts that the world has certified. The first is that there has been no one who has lived in peace after provoking Ethiopia. The second is if Ethiopians stand united for one purpose, it's inevitable, they will triumph," it said.

Abiy's office did not explicitly mention Trump, but its statement came the morning after the US president weighed in on the dam dispute in support of Egypt.

"It's a very dangerous situation because Egypt is not going to be able to live that way," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office Friday during a

TRUMP CALLS 'BORAT' STAR AN UNFUNNY 'CREEP'

Washington, Oct. 24: President Donald Trump says he thinks Sacha Baron Cohen, the comedian behind the "*Borat*" films, is "a creep." Baron Cohen's new movie, "*Borat Subsequent Moviefilm*," shows Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani in a compromising position in a hotel room with a young woman acting as a journalist.

Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One on Friday night that he didn't know what happened with Giuliani.

"But, you know, years ago he tried to scam me," Trump said of Baron Cohen. "And I was the only one that said, 'No way. This guy is a phony guy.'" "I don't find him funny," Trump said, adding, "To me, he's a creep."

Trump appeared briefly on HBO's "*Da Ali G Show*" in 2003, but walked away from an interview with Baron Cohen's Ali G character after just a minute.

One scene in Baron Cohen's new movie scene shows Giuliani on a bed, tucking in his shirt with his hand down his pants after the woman helps him remove recording equipment. Giuliani called the scene "a hit job" and said he realised he was being set up.

— AP

ceremony marking a breakthrough normalisation deal between Israel and Sudan.

— AFP

UK's famous Diwali event turns virtual

London, Oct. 24: They are referred to as the biggest Diwali celebrations outside of India but this year the city of Leicester in the UK will be marking the festival of lights virtually, in keeping with the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Leicester City Council said that with strict measures in place to stop the spread of Coronavirus, crowds will not be gathering on Belgrave Road this year for the traditional entertainment and fireworks.

But instead Leicester residents and others are being invited to be part of the city's first virtual "Diwali Day" celebration from the "safety of their homes". "We all need to find different ways to celebrate important festivals like Diwali and Christmas this year. Although we can't meet up with our extended families in person this year, our virtual Diwali celebration will help bring people together for an experience they can share with a family member or a friend — wherever they are in the world," said Leicester's Indian-origin Deputy City Mayor, Councillor Piara

● **AS PART** of the celebrations for Diwali Day on November 14, people can send in their personal video messages, which could feature in an hour-long package of entertainment that will be streamed on the Visit Leicester portal.

Singh Chair.

As part of the celebrations for Diwali Day on November 14, people can send in their personal video messages, which could feature in an hour-long package of entertainment that will be streamed on the Visit Leicester portal.

People are being encouraged to use their video to wish a friend, or a family member, a Happy Diwali — or they could share their tips for a socially-distanced, yet joyful, Diwali celebration with people around the world.

"We hope that people will enjoy recording their messages, and we look forward to sharing as many of them as possible as part of our Diwali Day programming," added Singh Chair.

— PTI

HUNGRY | BIRDS

More than 400 diners checked in at Changi Airport for lunch

Travel starved diners eat in parked jets

Singapore, Oct. 24: Hundreds of travel-starved diners ate lunch and watched seat-back films aboard two parked Singapore Airlines jets turned into pop-up restaurants on Saturday.

With the aviation industry in deep crisis due to the Coronavirus pandemic, airlines have turned to alternative ways to raise cash, from offering "flights to nowhere" to tours of aircraft.

Singapore's flag carrier, which has cut thousands of jobs and grounded nearly all its planes this year, offered passengers the chance to dine on board two A380 superjumbos — the world's biggest passenger jet.

On Saturday more than 400 diners checked in at Changi Airport and went through the usual security checks before arriving at



A Singapore Airlines stewardess smiles while serving food in business class during the inaugural lunch at Restaurant A380 @Changi onboard a Singapore Airlines Airbus A380 plane at Changi International Airport in Singapore on Saturday.

— AFP

the aircraft for lunch.

"The food is pretty amazing, it's better than the one they serve during the flight," Zhou Tai Di, a 17-year-old student in econo-

my class, said as he tucked into his soy sauce-glazed chicken with spicy fried eggplant and rice.

Some settled in for a nap while waiting for their

meals to be served, while others watched movies on the seat-back entertainment systems.

About half the seats were left empty, in keeping with social-distancing guidelines.

Calvin Teo, a 29-year-old civil servant and aviation buff, paid Sg\$321 (\$236) to be served a six-course meal in business class, saying he missed flying and hoped to recreate the experience.

"Of course the feeling of actually flying will be better, because there's the excitement of going to a new destination, to explore a new destination, and even though we can't do it now due to Covid, this is a good substitute for now, to recreate the feels of taking a long-haul flight," he said.

The most expensive option is a Sg\$642 eight-

course meal in a first-class suite, while the cheapest costs Sg\$53 and consists of a three-course meal in economy class. A limited number of diners were also able to tour the double-decker aircraft and take selfies with pilots in the cockpit.

The tarmac meals proved surprisingly popular — the airline announced six additional sessions after more than 900 lunch tickets sold out within 30 minutes of bookings opening earlier this month.

The airline is also offering home deliveries of plane meals, but it has ditched plans for "flights to nowhere" — short journeys starting and ending at the same airport — following an outcry over the potential environmental impact.

— AFP

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

Suitably nostalgic, suitably Bollywood

A Suitable Boy

CAST: Tanya Maniktala, Ishaan Khattar, Tabu, Mahira Kakkar, Ram Kapoor, Danesh Razvi, Gagandeep Riar, Shubham Saraf, Rasika Dugal, Vivek Gomber, Aamir Bashir, Geeta Agarwal Sharma, Shahana Goswami, Namit Das, Vivaan Shah, Mikhail Sen, Vinay Pathak, Joyeeta Dutta, Vijay Varma, Vijay Raaz, Manoj Pahwa, Ranvir Shorey, Namit Das

DIRECTOR: Mira Nair

RATING: ★★★★★

Streaming on Netflix in English and Hindi



SUPARNA SHARMA

Can time, as in a particular period, a few years in the life of a nation and its people, one that is not too distant and whose inhabitants are still alive, turn into an artefact?

In Mira Nair's rendition of Vikram Seth's 1,488-page book, two years — 1951 and 52 — in a newly Independent India feel like an artefact, an endearing oddity. One that she dusted and cleaned, added colour to its fraying, fading bits, and then swirled around it waving her magical Bollywood wand, bringing to life its world, complete with the *tehzeeb*, the music, the petty corruption, rising bigotry, the idealist politician, gorgeous, young men and women who seek and find love, and then lose some.

It's a world that buzzes with evening chatter over chai, where mornings smell of harshringar, and evenings are rich with the sound of the tonga and ghazals by Saeeda Bai (Tabu).

But Nair's A Suitable Boy opens on an artificial note. The pretty, wide-eyed Lata (Tanya Maniktala) is talking to a monkey who is chewing pieces of mango (or is it orange) she is tossing to him. Her super expressive, one-sided banter is a bit too precious and sets off the series on an artificial note.

This spurious, synthetic note stays with A Suitable Boy throughout, irritating us in the midst of worlds and characters that feel real. It is sometimes injected by characters that are reduced to caricatures, or unbelievable scenes — like lip-to-lip kissing between a Muslim boy and a Hindu girl on a busy ghat.

A Suitable Boy's main concern is *shaadi*, and that's what it opens and closes with.

Savita Mehra (Rasika Dugal) is getting married to Pran Kapoor. Savita is Mrs Rupa Mehra's daughter, and Prof. Pran Kapoor is the son of the state revenue minister, Mr Kapoor (Ram Kapoor). In attendance are Savita's brothers — Arun (Vivek Gomber) with his wife Meenakshi (Shahana Goswami), and younger brother Varun (Vivaan Shah).

From the boy's side there is the groom's younger brother, Maan (Ishaan Khattar), among others.

Written for the BBC by Andrew Davies — who has adapted several other big books for British television, including *Pride & Prejudice*, *House of Cards*, *War and Peace* — A Suitable Boy is an adaptation of a book that is second perhaps only to Mahabharata in the deep

love and respect it generates.

The book was written in English, and so is the serial. But, apart from the put-on air which encases some of its characters, the English dialogue throughout the first episode are shockingly trite, stagey. At one point Mr Kapoor asks his friend, Nawab Saab (Aamir Bashir), "Something is troubling you my friend. What is it?"

This hold-your-breath-in formality at a very Indian celebration — *beti ki shaadi* — relaxes a bit when Mrs Mehra (Mahira Kakkar) says to Lata, "Tu bahut mazak karti hai". We too exhale.

A Suitable Boy's home is the fictional town of Brahmpur by the Ganges in Purva Pradesh. But it travels to Kolkata, Lucknow, Benaras, mostly in search of a suitable boy for Lata, and sometimes for India's first general elections.

But its setting really is a newly independent India as it struggles with the pain and devastation of Partition, the schism left on a nation's psyche, the feeling amongst some Hindus that India now belongs exclusively to them, and who feel emboldened to openly challenge Muslims' right to live in their own nation.

It's here, in Brahmpur, that Lata, clutching books to her chest, goes to a college where James Joyce is not considered suitable reading for young ladies.

This is also where the free-spirited Maan, with his curly hair, mulmul Lucknavi kurtas, living on the joy and swag of youth, falls in love with Saeeda Bai, whose nose-pin and sensuous voice carry a hint of the bedroom. This is also where Maan saves and later hurts his friend Firoz (Shubham Saraf).

Brahmpur is where Lata meets the passionate and temperamental Kabir Durrani (Danesh Razvi). And it's in Brahmpur that Maan's decent and honourable Baaji pours over documents till late at night to challenge the Zamindari system.

And it's at the Brahmpur legislative Assembly that he expresses worry over the actions of the Raja of Marh (Manoj Pahwa), who is building a Shiv temple next to a mosque.

I remember reading A Suitable Boy in 1993, because it was written by the man who had the audacity and genius to write *The Golden Gate*.

The book was riveting in its detailed characterisation, dialogue, elegant writing, but also excruciatingly demanding in attention and interest. I recall lots of details, some characters, but what has stayed with me the most is the feeling of entering and living in an India that was meant to be decent.

While the research and sharp political commentary that went into writing the 591,552-word novel gave it literary gravitas and heft, at its core A Suitable Boy is a very Bollywood, very melodramatic story.

Mira Nair has retained the essence of that world, that story, but has given a big Bollywood *jhappi* to a book that, though insanely impressive, was also a wrist-challenging tome with pages after pages devoted to how the tannery industry functioned, how land reforms were implemented.

She bypasses all that but enhances the romance and increases the seduction quotient by placing gorgeous people in gorgeous spaces.

As we stay with Lata's confusion between the forbidden, passionate Muslim, the impressive but unstable poet Amit, and the reliable but dull shoemaker Hareesh (Namit Das), and a Muharram procession clashes with Ram Lila, Mira Nair's series is a wet-eyed memorial to Nehru and Gandhi's India.

Like the watercolor on canvas of the opening credits, Nair's series conjures up a simpler time and it yearns for the decency and friendship of men like Mr Kapoor and Nawab saab, and the benign irritation of Mrs Mehra.

Lots

has

been left out, of course. And some bits that have been retained haven't been given the care and context they deserved — like the entire track with Rasheed (Vijay Varma). And when Nair's A Suitable Boy travels to Calcutta, it seems that it does so merely to poke at the pretensions of the *bhadralok* who, for a long time, pretended to be British.

Most of the characters in Calcutta are single-note and few actors are able to break through the few lines and costumes assigned to them.

Amit Chatterji (Mikhail Sen) is almost a joke, and Arun Mehra (Vivek Gomber) with his jaw perennially twisted into disapproval of all *desis* around him is boring. Mrs Mehra is almost funny in how bad she is. Mahira Kakkar contorts her face a lot, but only into three expressions — happy, sad, angry.

Not surprisingly, similarly limited characters assigned to Bollywood actors fare much better. Mrs Kapoor (Geeta Agarwal Sharma), for example, and Shahana Goswami's Meenakshi whose *pallu*-dropping, bed-hopping diva act is energising.

Sultry and sexy, Shahana Goswami's "Minxy" is like a naughty evening breeze that ruffles hair and ignites loins as it twirls about.

She brings lots of sizzle to what would have otherwise been rather drab outings to Calcutta and even reminded me of Rekha when she suddenly arrived crooning in a Calcutta club (*Parineeta*).

The stars of A Suitable Boy, however, are Ishaan Khattar, Tanya Maniktala and Tabu (whose singing voice is provided by Kavita Seth of *Itkara* fame from *Wake Up Sid*).

Khattar's Maan is the prodigal son who takes the story forward. Things don't happen to him, he happens to them, all in the pursuit of pleasure and love.

Tanya Maniktala's big, bright eyes, protected by thick, long eyelashes, are the lens through which we view A Suitable Boy. When they sparkle, we smile, and when she bats them gently, we pause.

Tabu, well, what can I say about her, except that she is Saeeda Bai, the resident of the haveli with pink walls and green interiors.

The various worlds of A Suitable Boy are lit by goodness, gorgeousness and a warm glow of nostalgia that women in sleeveless blouses and men with pants pulled up to their diaphragm, carry with them. This is courtesy Nair's old collaborator, costume designer Arjun Bhasin whose work always stands out for its fluidity, and who dresses characters characters here only to seduce us.

Inhabiting Mira Nair's world for six hour-long episodes left me with a deep sense of longing and loss for the spaces, characters and India she creates. But then, when Mrs Mehra shuts the door on Kabir without even acknowledging him, I thought, *shayad, hum aise hi hain, shayad hum aise hi the*.



Did we need another Rebecca? No, we didn't

Rebecca

CAST: Armie Hammer, Lily James, Kristin Scott Thomas

DIRECTOR: Ben Wheatley

RATING: ★★

JAKE COYLE

It's asking for trouble remaking Hitchcock, but with "Rebecca" you might be able to see a sliver of an opening. It's justly revered as a ghostly Gothic masterpiece and the only film of Hitch's to win best picture. Yet Hitchcock, himself, said it's not "a Hitchcock picture." He called his adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's 1938 book "a novelette, really" and noted that, besides, the Oscar didn't go to himself but to producer David O. Selznick.

And it's true, to a certain degree. More than any other top-tier (OK, second-tier) Hitchcock, "Rebecca" — the director's first Hollywood film — isn't a full expression of the filmmaker's devastating mischief, his clinical mastery of suspense. For that you'd be better off turning to "Notorious" or "Vertigo" or "Shadow of a Doubt" or "Psycho." Selznick insisted on too faithful of an adaption for Hitchcock to really sink his teeth in "Rebecca."

But let's not get carried away. "Rebecca" is still really good. Hitchcock, in movement and shadow, heightens the psychology of du Maurier's characters until every interaction quivers with tension. Joan Fontaine is exquisite, and Judith Anderson's frightfully poised Mrs. Danvers is a quintessentially Hitchcockian creation. Laurence Olivier ain't bad either. So did we need another "Rebecca"? No, of course not.

Ben Wheatley's "Rebecca," out Wednesday on Netflix, is a limp, gauzy retreat that never has half as firm a handle on the material as Hitchcock's terrifically taut film. A script by Jane Goldman, Joe Shrapnel and Anna Waterhouse

lends a slightly more faithful adaptation (Hitchcock was restricted by the Hays Code in the film's final act). But throughout the film there's only ever a sense of searching vainly for a purpose. The best this "Rebecca" can come with is some florid production design, showy camera-work and several fine, very well-outfitted actors spread out across Southern France and the coastal English countryside. There is some quite nice light in this "Rebecca." But does anyone ever watch a grand Gothic fairy tale and think, "If only it had a bit more afternoon sun in it?"

The film's central trio — Lily James, Armie Hammer, Kristin Scott Thomas — is far from shabby. James plays the low-class young woman rescued from her job as a lady's companion (Ann Dowd plays her wealthy, unpleasant employer) by the rich and galante widower Maximilian de Winter (Hammer) in a fast-unfolding romance that's practically rom-com on the Cote d'Azur but grows dark as a horror film back home at Maxim's enormous estate, Manderley. There, the spirit of de Winter's dead first wife looms everywhere, none more so than in the personage of Mrs. Danvers (a regal, menacing Thomas). James' never-named protagonist can't live up to Rebecca's always-looming image of beauty and grace, and she's helpless in the estate management her precursor handled so easily. A crippling feeling of inadequacy is at the heart of "Rebecca."

It's less the casting that feels wayward. James, holds the film reasonably together even as Wheatley — a British filmmaker known for high-stylized thrillers — works to fill the film with a distracting sheen. A work of fierce interiority has been turned into a hollow exercise in exteriority. One could argue about the authorship of the original "Rebecca," but this one is most definitely not "A Hitchcock picture." —AP

The Chicago Seven trial gets the Aaron Sorkin touch

The Trial of the Chicago 7

CAST: Joseph Gordon-Lewitt, Sacha Baron Cohen, Yahya Abdul Mateen II, Frank Langella, Eddie Redmayne, Mark Rylance, Jeremy Strong, John Carroll Lynch, Daniel Flaherty, Noah Robbins, Alex Sharp, Michael Keaton, Alex Sharp, Noah Robbins

DIRECTOR: Aaron Sorkin

RATING: ★★★★★

LINDSEY BAHR

If anyone was born to make a film about the infamous federal trial surrounding the protests outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention, it's Aaron Sorkin.

The grandstanding of the celebrity revolutionaries Abbie Hoffman and Tom Hayden, the clash of disparate personalities and protest styles, the earnestness of the anti-war cause and the general chaos of the trial itself are all perfectly suited to his brand of storytelling. That he actually got to do it and release it in a year when police and protesters and riots are once again in the news, is almost too on the nose for even a Sorkin joint.

But sometimes things just fall into place perfectly and "The Trial of the Chicago 7," which Sorkin wrote and directed, is like a little gift in this



very complicated year — relevant, smart and very entertaining. And seeing it only requires a Netflix subscription.

As he did in "Molly's Game," Sorkin starts his film in a sprint, energetically introducing the audience to key players getting ready to go to Chicago: "Yippies" Hoffman (Sacha Baron Cohen) and Jerry Rubin (Jeremy Strong), Students for a Democratic Society members Hayden (Eddie Redmayne) and Rennie Davis (Alex Sharp), the conscientious objector David Dellinger (John Carroll Lynch) and Black Panther co-founder Bobby Seale (Yahya Abdul-Mateen II).

But instead of taking us with them to the protests, the film skips ahead to 1969 when Richard Nixon's Attorney

General, John N. Mitchell (John Doman) decides he wants to charge the anti-war all-stars, or "the school-boys" as he calls them, with conspiracy to cross state lines to incite violence. It's some masterful exposition that sets up a trial that not even the lead prosecutor Richard Schultz (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) believes is winnable or right. Schultz will later try to convince the jury that the eight people on trial are just the "radical left in different costumes."

Sorkin does a fine job of bringing to life the circus of the trial, with Judge Julius Hoffman (Frank Langella) doling out contempt of court charges and defendants talking back and cracking jokes (mainly Hoffman and

Rubin).

Mark Rylance as the defense attorney William Kunstler has the perfect combination of affability and gravitas to bring balance to a trial that was on one hand ridiculous and on another gravely serious. Seale was there without representation and the judge couldn't have been less interested in that fact.

The script assumes at least a little bit of knowledge about the players but also tells you everything you need to know to stay engaged. And it's a joy watching actors stretch with different types of roles (and accents). Strong has fun going full stoner and Redmayne is effortless as the more buttoned-up American. Baron-Cohen perhaps is the most exciting as Hoffman, the activist/showman who even his fellow activists seemed to underestimate.

But the whole production is stacked with brilliant actors in both big and small roles. Kelvin Harrison Jr. appears too briefly as the Illinois Black Panther head Fred Hampton, as does the always wonderful Caitlin FitzGerald as an undercover cop, to name a few.

As in any Sorkin joint there are at least three lines of dialogue that might make your eyes roll into the back of your head and your body produce an involuntary groan so extended that you will likely have to rewind. But it just goes to show how good the rest of it is that a few clunkers could stick out that much. —AP



SHORT TAKES

Captain can't run away, says Dhoni

Sharjah: The usually indefatigable Mahendra Singh Dhoni conceded to being hurt at the way Chennai Super Kings' IPL campaign has hurtled from one disaster to another but ruled out benching himself from the remaining three games, saying "a captain can't run away". CSK are all but out of reckoning from a play-offs spot and Dhoni said the three remaining games would be an exercise in understanding how the side should plan for the next season. They next take on Royal Challengers Bangalore on Sunday. "We have to make the most of the next three games and it is good preparation for the next year. Identify the batsmen, who will bowl at the death and hopefully the players will soak up the pressure," he said after the 10-wicket loss to Mumbai Indians here on Friday. "Captain can't run away, so I'll be playing in all the games," he added. — *PTI*

Indian teams in online chess final

Chennai: B. Adhban and R. Vaishali shone bright as the top-seeded Indian men and women teams entered the finals of the Asian Nations (Regions) Online chess championship with victories over Kazakhstan and Mongolia respectively on Saturday. While the men beat Kazakhstan 2.5-1.5 and 3-1, the women's side posted 3.5-0.5 and 4-0 wins over Mongolia. Adhban notched up important victories over Rinat Jumabayev on the top board in both his matches. In the first match, India rode on Adhban's win while Nihal Sarin, S.P. Sethuraman and K. Sasikiran drew their games. The Indian team, led by Surya Sekhar Ganguly, faces Australia in Sunday's final. Ganguly didn't play any match on Saturday. In the women's semifinal, India were in dominant form and won both the matches comprehensively. — *PTI*

Honda's Nakagami clinches first pole

Alcañiz, Spain: Japanese rider Takaaki Nakagami grabbed his maiden MotoGP pole position for Sunday's Teruel Grand Prix, while championship leader Joan Mir could only qualify in 12th place on Saturday. The 28-year-old Nakagami, who signed a new deal with Honda's satellite team earlier this week, posted a fastest lap of one minute and 46.882 seconds. "It's an incredible feeling," he said. "Everything is going pretty well so far. "I'm very proud but the most important thing is tomorrow (Sunday)." Italian Franco Morbidelli, who was quickest in practice, qualified second, just 0.063 seconds slower, as Alex Rins rounded out the front row. Of the four likely world title contenders, Spaniard Maverick Vinales qualified best. — *AFP*

Brady, Sabalenka in Ostrava semis

Ostrava, Czech Republic: Third-seeded Aryna Sabalenka recovered from a slow start to stage a big comeback, defeating qualifier Sara Sorribes Tormo 6-6, 6-4, 6-0 in the Ostrava Open quarterfinals. The 73rd-ranked Sorribes Tormo from Spain was cruising at 6-0, 4-0 up until the 12th-ranked Sabalenka found her rhythm to rally and win 12 straight games. — *AP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Royal Challengers Bangalore vs Chennai Super Kings from 3.30 pm; Rajasthan Royals vs Mumbai Indians from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Southampton vs Everton from 7.30 pm; Wolverhampton vs Newcastle from 10 pm; Arsenal vs Leicester from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 2, HD

FORMULA ONE

Portuguese Grand Prix: Main Race from 6.35 pm on Star Sports 3, 2 HD

WWE

Hell In A Cell: Bouts from 4.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. And Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C - 9, Sector - III, Noida - 201301. Editor - T. Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.

Varunaway victory

Chakravarthy's five-for demolishes DC as KKR win big

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 24: Mystery-spinner Varun Chakravarthy dished out the best bowling performance of this IPL with a five-for after his batting colleagues stepped up in style as Kolkata Knight Riders beat Delhi Capitals by 59 runs here on Saturday.

Promoted to open the innings, Nitish Rana revelled in his new role as he overcame a personal tragedy to smash a whirlwind 81 and shared a game-changing 115-run stand with Sunil Narine (64) to lift KKR to an imposing 194/6 after being put in to bat.

Chasing a stiff target, Chakravarthy (5/20) and Pat Cummins (3/17) gave the Delhi Capitals batsmen a torrid time to restrict them to 135 for 9 in 20 overs.

Cummins gave a perfect start, dismissing both the openers Ajinkya Rahane (0) and in-form Shikhar Dhawan (6) in his first two overs.

Then Chakravarthy played the finisher's act in the back-end of the innings to choke the DC run chase.

Coming on the back of a horror batting show against Royal Challengers Bangalore when they crumbled to 84/8, KKR ticked all the boxes to keep their playoff hopes alive by securing their sixth win, with three matches left. For DC, this was their second successive loss but they still maintained the second spot. — *PTI*



Varun Chakravarthy of Kolkata Knight Riders celebrates the wicket of Shimron Hetmyer of Delhi Capitals in an IPL match at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Saturday. — *BCCI*

SCORECARD

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shubman Gill c Patel b Nortje 9, Nitish Rana c Deshpande b Stoinis 81, Rahul Tripathi b Nortje 13, Dinesh Karthik c Pant b Rabada 3, Sunil Narine c Rahane b Rabada 64, Eoin Morgan c Rabada b Stoinis 17, Pat Cummins (not out) 0. **Extras:** (lb-1-w-6) 7. **Total:** (for 6 wks, in 20 overs) 194. **FoW:** 1-11, 2-35, 3-42, 4-157, 5-194, 6-194. **Bowling:** Tushar Deshpande 4-0-40-0, Anrich Nortje 4-0-27-2, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-33-2, Axar Patel 1-0-7-0, Marcus Stoinis 4-0-41-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 3-0-45-0.

Delhi Capitals: Ajinkya Rahane lbw b Cummins 0, Shikhar Dhawan b Cummins 6, Shreyas Iyer

c Nagarkoti b Varun 47, Rishabh Pant c Shubman Gill b Varun 27, Shimron Hetmyer c Tripathi b Varun 10, Marcus Stoinis c Tripathi b Varun 6, Axar Patel b Varun 9, Kagiso Rabada c Tripathi b Cummins 9, Ravichandran Ashwin (not out) 14, Tushar Deshpande c Morgan b Ferguson 1, Anrich Nortje (not out) 0. **Extras:** (lb-1, nb-2, w-3) 6. **Total:** (for 9 wks, in 20 overs) 135. **FoW:** 1-0, 2-13, 3-76, 4-95, 5-95, 6-110, 7-112, 8-132, 9-135. **Bowling:** Pat Cummins 4-0-17-3, M Prasidh Krishna 2-0-19-0, Kamlesh Nagarkoti 2-0-11-0, Lockie Ferguson 4-0-30-1, Sunil Narine 4-0-37-0, C.V. Varun 4-0-20-5.

IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Mumbai Indians	10	7	3	0	14	+1.448
Delhi Capitals	11	7	4	0	14	+0.434
Royal Challengers Bangalore	10	7	3	0	14	+0.182
Kolkata Knight Riders	11	6	5	0	12	-0.476
Kings XI Punjab	11	5	6	0	10	-0.103
Sunrisers Hyderabad	11	4	7	0	8	+0.029
Rajasthan Royals	11	4	7	0	8	-0.620
Chennai Super Kings	11	3	8	0	6	-0.733

Tabulated as Played, Won, Lost, No Result, Points, Net Run Rate

RAJASTHAN FACE MIGHTY MUMBAI IN MUST-WIN TIE

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 24: Skipper Rohit Sharma's fitness would be a concern for defending champions Mumbai Indians as they aim to continue their dominant run, while a Rajasthan Royals would hope to stay afloat when the two teams clash in an IPL match here on Sunday.

MI roared back to form by crushing CSK by 10 wickets on Friday after their Super Over loss to the KXIP. Rajasthan, on the other hand, lost to the Sunrisers Hyderabad by 8 wickets in their last game.

MI are on course to make it to the play-offs but the game is crucial for RR, who are languishing at seventh place and a loss would mean a step closer to elimination.

Questions remain on whether Rohit, who suffered a hamstring injury and missed the game against CSK, will be available on Sunday for MI.

But Rohit's absence was hardly felt on Friday as the young Ishan Kishan (261 runs) launched into CSK bowlers with gusto. — *PTI*

SRH meltdown hands Punjab a thrilling win

Dubai, Oct. 24: Arshdeep Singh and Chris Jordan took three wickets each as Kings XI Punjab bowled out Sunrisers Hyderabad for 114 and kept their play-off hopes alive in an Indian Premier League match here on Saturday.

Chasing 127, skipper David Warner (35) and Jonny Bairstow (19) added 56 runs for the opening wicket partnership but after that Sunrisers failed to produce any solid partnership as wickets were falling at regular intervals. All the five bowlers scalped wickets for KXIP with Mohammed Shami, M. Ashwin and Ravi Bishnoi taking one apiece.

Earlier, Sunrisers bowlers also produced a clinical performance to restrict KXIP to a modest 126 for seven. SRH bowlers responded impressively to their skipper Warner's decision to field first, picking wickets at regular intervals to control the

SCORECARD

Kings XI Punjab: K.L. Rahul b Rashid Khan 27, Mandeep Singh c Rashid Khan b Sandeep Sharma 17, Chris Gayle c Warner b Holder 20, Nicholas Pooran (not out) 32, Glenn Maxwell c Warner b Sandeep Sharma 12, Deepak Hooda st Bairstow b Rashid Khan 0, Chris Jordan c Ahmed b Holder 7, Murugan Ashwin run out (Shankar) 4, Ravi Bishnoi (not out) 0. **Extras:** (b-1, lb-1, w-5) 7. **Total:** (for 7 wks, in 20 overs) 126. **FoW:** 1-37, 2-66, 3-66, 4-85, 5-88, 6-105, 7-110. **Bowling:** Sandeep Sharma 4-0-29-2, Khaleel Ahmed 4-0-31-0, Jason Holder 4-0-27-2, Rashid Khan 4-0-14-2, T Natarajan 4-0-23-0.

Sunrisers Hyderabad: D. Warner c Rahul b Ravi Bishnoi 35, J. Bairstow b Ashwin 19, M. Pandey c sub (J Suchith) b Jordan 15, Abdul Samad c Jordan b Mohammed Shami 7, V. Shankar c Rahul b Arshdeep Singh 26, J. Holder c Mandeep Singh b Jordan 5, P. Garg c Jordan b Arshdeep Singh 3, Rashid Khan c Pooran b Jordan 0, Sandeep Sharma c Ashwin b Arshdeep Singh 0, T. Natarajan (not out) 0, K. Ahmed run out (Ravi Bishnoi) 0. **Extras:** (w-4) 4. **Total:** (in 19.5 over) 114. **FoW:** 1-56, 2-58, 3-67, 4-100, 5-110, 6-112, 7-112, 8-114, 9-114, 10-114.

Bowling: Mohammed Shami 4-0-34-1, Arshdeep Singh 3.5-0-23-3, M. Ashwin 4-0-27-1, Ravi Bishnoi 4-0-13-1, C. Jordan 4-0-17-3.

innings. KXIP skipper K.L. Rahul (27), Mandeep Singh (17) and Chris Gayle (20) all got starts but their innings never got going as they failed to grab the momentum.

SRH perfectly planned Gayle's dismissal who came at one down. They kept the big-hitting bats-

man quiet for a long time, consistently bowling wide of the off stump and in the process frustrated him.

Gayle repeatedly tried to force his way out of the shackles but was dismissed by his West Indian teammate Jason Holder (2/27). — *PTI*

EMBATTLED CSK TAKE ON RCB IN SEARCH OF PRIDE

Dubai, Oct. 24: Their house in complete disarray after eight defeats from 11 outings, Chennai Super Kings will look to give their forgettable campaign a semblance of respectability when they take on in-form Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL here on Sunday.

CSK, with six points from 11 games, still have a theoretical chance to make it to the playoffs, provided they do not lose any of their remaining three games, improve their net run-rate and all other match results go their way.

The three-time IPL winners have struggled in all departments of the game, leading to heavy criticism towards skipper M.S. Dhoni for not showing enough faith in the youngsters.

They run into a RCB squad which has grown in confidence as the tournament has progressed. Virat Kohli and his men are placed third on the points table with 14 points, the same as the table toppers Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals. — *PTI*

Zidane at ease with Real win

Barcelona, Oct. 24: Real Madrid averted a crisis in the best possible way on Saturday by beating Barcelona 3-1 in the first empty Clasico, landing an early blow in La Liga's title race.

Barca had the chance to inflict a third consecutive defeat on their rivals and increase the pressure on Zinedine Zidane.

Instead, Madrid's win earns them a six-point lead over the Catalans, having played one game more.

Sergio Ramos' penalty and a late Luka Modric goal finished off Barcelona after Federico Valverde and Ansu Fati had traded early strikes in a frantic game that defied those expecting further evidence of two heavyweights in decline.

Barcelona might feel hard done by, especially as Ramos' penalty was awarded after a check by VAR and a hugely exaggerated fall by Madrid's captain after Clement Lenglet tugged his shirt.

But aside from an impressive spell in the first half, when an inspired Lionel Messi threatened to win the game on his own, Madrid were dominant for longer spells and pulled

away when it mattered.

This was Ronald Koeman's first Clasico as Barcelona coach and some of the pressure Zidane would have felt from a loss is now transferred to the Dutchman, who has overseen only three wins from his first six games in charge.

Barcelona face Juventus on Wednesday in the Champions League, without the suspended Gerard Pique.

Every Barca set-back is now seen through the lens of Messi's future too. The Argentinian, who failed in his attempt to leave last summer, has still to score from open play this season.

Mundo Deportivo had declared the match "The least Clasico of Clasicos" on its front page on Saturday morning.

The coronavirus pandemic meant the biggest football stadium in Europe was silent for the game that La Liga president Javier Tebas had claimed is "still the biggest football match in the world".

In the previous week, Real had lost to Shakhtar Donetsk and newly promoted Cadiz, while Barca were beaten by Getafe last weekend. — *AFP*



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (centre) vies for the ball with Real Madrid's Raphael Varane and Nacho (right) during their La Liga match at Camp Nou in Barcelona on Saturday. Real won 3-1. — *AP*

Hami on pole for record victory bid

Portimao (Portugal), Oct. 24: Lewis Hamilton claimed a thrilling last-gasp pole position on Saturday to give him the perfect launchpad for his bid to win a record 92nd race in Sunday's Portuguese Grand Prix.

In denying his Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas in the final seconds of qualifying, Hamilton moved to within three of his 100th career pole.

The six-time champion, who had trailed the Finn in all three practice sessions and in the two opening parts of qualifying, reeled off a stunning best lap in one minute and 16.652 seconds at the new Algarve International Circuit.

It was enough to outpace the Finn by 0.102 seconds and, as so often this year, to deliver heartbreak again after the pair had swapped from soft to medium tyres

for their final runs.

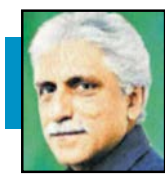
Hamilton had gone out ahead of Bottas for the final session and took advantage by taking two flying laps, the second completed after the chequered flag fell producing his clincher.

Hamilton's ninth pole of the season sets him up to move clear of Michael Schumacher's 14-year-old record of 91 which he equalled in the Eifel Grand Prix at Nurburgring last time out.

"Yes, we have a great car, but we have to drive the nuts off of it. I have been digging and digging and digging to find that extra time," said Hamilton.

Max Verstappen took third for Red Bull ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and Sergio Perez of Racing Point with Alex Albon sixth in the second Red Bull. — *AFP*

MSD's captaincy has looked confounding this season



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

Chennai Super Kings' premature demise in the tournament has been the big story of IPL2020. Perhaps this description doesn't quite convey how disappointing the performance has been, so let me pick on some adjectives to make this clearer.

Shocking, disastrous, calamitous come to mind immediately, and all three can be taken in conjunction to show the trajectory the team has traversed in the past five weeks.

Last year's runners-up, CSK began on a strong

footing, beating Mumbai Indians by 5 wickets in the opening game of the tournament.

Since then, they've won only two more matches, and that after much huffing and puffing.

The margin of defeats, meanwhile, kept getting bigger, culminating in the resounding 10 wicket thrashing by Mumbai on Friday when CSK imploded badly and could barely get into three figures.

There are quite a few teams that have struggled in this tournament. Yet, CSK has been the only

team which has looked bereft of energy and chutzpah, barring the odd individual performance. The three wins have come so intermittently, that they've been laggards right through.

Inability to raise performance — individual and collective — at crucial junctures has made this the worst-ever season for CSK in the IPL. Consequently, the three times title winners and five times runners-up have failed to reach the play-offs for the first time.

Why has the team performed so abjectly?

On the face of it, neither the batting nor bowling has clicked, and the fielding has been ragged. Key players have underperformed, or been injured, youngsters haven't shaped up well, and in these circumstances, the captaincy

has looked confused or confounding.

However, there is much more that goes into the making of a successful or failing side. There are below the surface complexities and nuances that can make or mar performance which can't be glossed over.

These have to do with squad selection, chemistry between players, strategies and tactics, captaincy, support staff, management decisions. All these contribute in how a team fares.

Each of these is important in itself. Without getting into the nitty gritty of each, I see a broader reason — which would include all of those mentioned earlier — to explain CSK's flop show.

This is the absence of 'forward planning', which was always their strength

for so many season when they entered each campaign with meticulous preparation in advance.

An ageing team was always going to be a problem sooner rather than later. Having won the title in 2018 and finishing runner-up in 2019, CSK delayed bringing in fresh talent.

Several of CSK's players are not playing regularly, only in T20 leagues, starting with M.S. Dhoni himself. Watson, Rayudu, Bravo, Tahir. The Covid pandemic, made it worse since it kept all players indoors.

This was true for all teams, of course, but hurt CSK the most. Fresh legs and fresh lungs should have been acquired in the last auction. Loyalty of players who've done well can be rewarded/honoured in other ways.

In hindsight, the absence of Raina and Harbhajan also hurt. While there might be good reason why the franchise chose not to engage them as the season progressed, could substitutes not have been found instead of relying talent available?

Lack of stamina and substance in the team was evident right from the start and not helped by big guns in the team falling way short of expectations.

Spin bowling, always CSK's strength, was a let-down as Chawla, Karn and Jadeja (most disappointing) picked up only 14 wickets between them. The batting was up and down too.

Watson and Rayudu had a couple of blistering innings but weren't up to the mark consistently. And this is the first season where one hasn't seen a

spectacular knock or two from Dhoni.

All in all, a lamentable performance by a team that prided itself on resolve, resilience, canny selection, ambition, strong captaincy, players rapport.

This is not to say that the CSK story is in terminal decline. It's a wonderful legacy created by the owners, with captain Dhoni as bedrock of excellence, and all players who have been part of the franchise over the years.

For this to be preserved, rebuilding has to start asap starting with reimagining the vision, recasting the team, rediscovering the mojo which made them the most feared team in the IPL.

CSK version 2.0 for the next IPL in March can then be as strong as version 1.0 was for a decade and more.