

SHORT TAKES

Shah launches mobile lab for RT-PCR test

New Delhi: Union home minister Amit Shah, on Monday, launched a mobile laboratory to conduct RT-PCR tests for Covid-19 in Delhi at an affordable rate of ₹499 and the results will be available in six hours. The testing kits and laboratory facilities have been certified by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the mobile laboratories have been duly accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL). The real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing mobile laboratory, a joint initiative of the government and SpiceHealth, came up after Mr Shah stepped in to fight the recent spurt in the number of Covid-19 cases in the city with a close coordination of various wings of the Centre and the Delhi government. The rate for an RT-PCR test, considered to be the most accurate Covid test worldwide, in other laboratories was fixed at ₹2,400 by a government-appointed committee and the report is normally available in 24-48 hours. The SpiceHealth, in a statement, said the laboratory can process up to 3,000 test reports per day and it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the ICMR.

30-yr-old kills wife in Shalimar Bagh

New Delhi: A 30-year-old man allegedly strangled his wife in Shalimar Bagh area as he was fed up with undue interference from his in-laws in their married life, police said on Monday. The accused, Ramakant, who is a labourer, was arrested on Monday, they said. He was staying with his wife and their children in rented accommodation from where the body was found on Saturday, they said. Ramakant often had fights with his wife, Soni (28), over petty issues. He allegedly killed his wife after frequently facing interference from his in-laws, police said. He had gone absconding after the incident. DCP (Northwest) Vijayanta Arya said, "Based on a statement of the deceased's sister, a case of murder was registered and an investigation was taken up." In her statement, Soni's sister said she had last seen her along with Ramakant and their children on Friday at about 10 pm and the next morning, she was found dead. With the help of human and technical intelligence, police team located the accused from a village in Jalaun district of Uttar Pradesh and arrested him on Monday, the DCP said.

Firm's director held for fraud in Gr Noida

Noida: A Delhi-based director of a construction firm has been arrested by the Gautam Buddh Nagar police in connection with a case of fraud, officials said on Monday. Roshan Prakash, who lives in Rohini area, was arrested by the Crime Branch of the police from Newtech La Palacia society in Greater Noida (West) Sunday evening, the officials said. "Roshan Prakash is the director of Vyom Infrastructure and Projects Private Limited. His company is accused of cheating multiple people to whom it had sold flats and made ₹1.42 crore by means of fraud," a police spokesperson said. The director was arrested after an FIR was lodged against him at Noida's Sector 49 Police Station on Sunday, the spokesperson said. — PTI

Man arrested with 120 kg of cannabis

Noida: The police in Greater Noida have seized 120 kg of cannabis worth ₹20 lakh and arrested a man who was allegedly transporting the contraband in a truck on Monday, officials said. The accused has been identified as Sanjay, a resident of the national capital, police said, adding that the Delhi-registered truck has been impounded. "The cannabis was seized by officials of Bsirakh police station during a check on the road when they intercepted the truck following a tip off. The seized cannabis weighs 120 kg and is estimated to be worth ₹20 lakh," DCP, Central Noida, Harish Chander said. The accused has been booked under provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, the police said. — PTI

Delhi records 4,454 cases, 121 deaths in a day

Stubble-burning led to high Covid death rate, says Jain

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 23

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Monday attributed the high Covid death rate in the city to the pollution caused by stubble-burning and expected a downtrend in it in the next two-three weeks.

The minister told reporters here that the pollution due to stubble-burning created a big problem in Delhi. It caused problems in breathing and those who had Covid inhaled the smoke, which aggravated the seriousness, he said. Its effect on the city's Covid death rate will go away in the next two-three weeks since pollution due to stubble-burning has lessened in the last few days, he said.

Delhi recorded 4,454 fresh Covid cases on Monday and a positivity rate of 11.94 per cent, while 121 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 8,512 authorities said.

"There was heavy pollution due to stubble-burning amid the Covid pan-

City records 5 deaths every hour, says health ministry

New Delhi, Nov. 23: At least five persons died due to Covid every hour on an average in Delhi in the last 24 hours, accounting for the largest chunk of such fatalities across the country, which recorded an average of 21 deaths in this period.

The analysis was based on the data from the Union Health Ministry which gave the total number of deaths recorded in the country and all states and UTs due to COVID-19 in the past 24 hours.

While a total of 511 COVID-19 deaths were recorded across the country in the past 24 hours, Delhi accounted for the largest chunk of such

demetic and it came as a double attack. Since the pollution due to stubble-burning is less now, the downtrend in deaths will

fatalities with 121 fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

According to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department, the national capital recorded 6,746 fresh Covid cases on Sunday and a positivity rate of 12.29 per cent while 121 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 8,391.

These fresh cases came out of the 54,893 tests conducted on Saturday, including 23,433 RT-PCR tests, according to the bulletin.

This was the fifth time in the last 11 days that the daily number of deaths had crossed the 100-mark. — PTI

be there in a few weeks," Mr Jain said.

Delhi recorded 6,746 fresh Covid cases on Sunday and a positivity

Local BJP worker, son murdered over personal enmity

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 23

A 50-year-old man and his son were killed after they were allegedly attacked by a group of men over personal enmity in north-east Delhi's Nandnagri area on Monday morning, police said.

The deceased, identified as Zulfikar Qureshi, was a worker of the party, Delhi BJP Media Cell head Navin Kumar said.

Local BJP leaders claimed Qureshi was also an RTI activist and had been opposing illegal scrap dealers.

Police said Qureshi was declared a "Bad Character" by the Nandnagri police station and his 22-year-old son Jabaz Qureshi, who also succumbed to injuries, was recently arrested in an auto-lifting case registered at the same police station.

The incident took place when Qureshi was on his way to a mosque in his locality.

Qureshi had gone just a few meters from his house when two to three men allegedly intercepted him following which a scuffle broke out between them. One of the attackers then shot

► **POLICE SAID** Qureshi was declared a 'Bad Character' by the Nandnagri police station

him, police said.

Qureshi was shot in the head while his son was also attacked with a sharp-edged weapon after he rushed towards his father to save him, police said.

The two were taken to a nearby hospital where Qureshi was declared brought dead by the doctors.

His son was later referred to the Safdarjung hospital where he died during the course of treatment, deputy commissioner of police (Northeast) Ved Prakash Surya said.

According to the police, the two were also involved in several criminal cases.

It is suspected to be a case of personal rivalry but all angles are being probed, Mr Surya said. "We have registered a case and efforts are underway to nab the suspects," Mr Surya said, adding that footage of CCTV cameras are also being examined to establish the identity of the suspects and ascertain the sequence of events.

25-yr-old man held for faking his kidnapping

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 23

A 25-year-old man was arrested for allegedly faking his kidnapping to make easy money, police said on Monday.

The accused, identified as Rahul Dev Singh, is a resident of Badarpur.

The matter came to light when an accountant of a firm in Mehrauli lodged a police complaint against Singh.

The complainant said that he had handed over ₹4.96 lakh to his colleague Rahul Dev Singh and asked him to deposit the amount in the company's bank account. However, when Singh did not return, the complainant contacted him but his mobile phone was found to be switched off. In the evening, Singh told him that while he was going to the bank, he was kidnapped and robbed at gunpoint.

DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said, "We registered a case under section 408 (criminal breach of trust by clerk or servant) of the IPC and after interrogation, accused Rahul Dev Singh was arrested."

2 men held for raping, molesting Mumbai-based event manager

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 23

Two men have been arrested for allegedly raping and molesting a 28-year-old Mumbai-based freelance event manager in Delhi's Aerocity area, police said on Monday.

They have been identified as Sandeep Mehta (57) and Naveen Dawar (47), both eatery owners in Haryana's Sonapat, they said. Mehta was

booked under section 376 (rape) and is in police custody, while Dawar, who was booked under section 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), has been sent to judicial custody, a senior police officer said.

The incident was reported on Friday. The woman told the police that she met Mehta on social media. She came to Delhi on Wednesday and was stay-

ing at a hotel in Aerocity. The next day, she met Mehta and his friend Dawar at Connaught Place, police said.

The woman alleged that Dawar tried to molest her. Later, Mehta came to drop her at the hotel and allegedly raped her inside her room.

Mehta took her from the hotel and after dropping her at Anand Vihar, fled, police said, adding that the woman thereafter made a PCR call.

At 6.3°C, Delhi records coldest Nov. morning

Cold wave sweeps city; lowest in Nov. in 17 years

New Delhi, Nov 23: A cold wave gripped Delhi on Monday as the minimum temperature dropped to 6.3 degrees Celsius, five notches below normal and the lowest in the month of November since 2003, according to the India Meteorological Department.

On Sunday, the national capital had recorded a minimum of 6.9 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 24.2 degrees Celsius, the lowest day time temperature so far this month.

"The Safdarjung Observatory which provides representative data for the city, recorded a minimum of 6.3 degrees Celsius, which is Delhi's lowest minimum temperature in the month since November 2003, when the city recorded a minimum of 6.1 degrees Celsius," Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre, said.

The mercury dropped to 6.4 degrees Celsius at the Lodhi Road weather station, he said.

For the plains, the IMD declares a cold wave when the minimum temperature

► **DELHI HAD** recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 11.5 degrees Celsius last year, 10.5 degrees Celsius in 2018 and 7.6 degrees Celsius in 2017 in the month of November

► **ON SUNDAY**, the national capital had recorded a minimum of 6.9 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 24.2 degrees Celsius, the lowest day time temperature so far this month. The all-time record for the lowest minimum temperature in November is 3.9 degrees Celsius recorded on November 28, 1938

is 10 degrees Celsius or below and is 4.5 notches less than normal for two consecutive days.

"However, for small areas such as Delhi, a cold wave can be declared if the criteria is fulfilled even for a day," Srivastava said.

Delhi had recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 11.5 degrees Celsius last year, 10.5 degrees Celsius in 2018 and 7.6 degrees Celsius in 2017 in

the month of November.

The all-time record for the lowest minimum temperature in November is 3.9 degrees Celsius recorded on November 28, 1938.

Srivastava said icy cold winds blowing from snow-laden western Himalayas have led to a dip in the mercury.

However, the minimum temperature will rise by two to three degrees Celsius in the next four to five days under the influence of a fresh Western Disturbance.

The minimum temperature this month, barring on November 16, has remained 2-3 degrees Celsius below normal in the absence of a cloud cover, according to IMD officials. Clouds trap some of the outgoing infrared radiation and radiate it back downward, warming the ground.

The month of October was the coldest in 58 years in the national capital.

The mean minimum temperature in October this year was 17.2 degrees Celsius, the lowest since 1962, when it was 16.9 degrees Celsius. — PTI

‘Hold Punjab, Haryana CMs liable for city pollution’

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 23

The chief ministers of Punjab and Haryana should be held accountable for causing pollution in Delhi, AAP MLA and Delhi Assembly's environment committee chairperson Atishi told a newly appointed panel on Air Quality Management on Monday.

Addressing reporters after the meeting, she said two main issues were raised — the state governments must implement Pusa Institute and Delhi

government's solution to stubble burning and that strict action must be taken if they don't comply.

Delhi's air quality deteriorated on Monday morning but remained in the "poor" category, while 14 of its 38 monitoring stations recorded "very poor" air quality, government agencies said.

AAP MLA urged the panel to hold the chief ministers of Punjab and Haryana liable for causing pollution in the national capital.

"Earlier it used to be said that there is no solution to



Atishi

the issue of stubble burning but now a solution has come so it should be implemented," she said.

According to scientists at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Pusa,

the "Pusa bio-decomposer" solution can turn crop residue into manure in 15 to 20 days and therefore, can prevent stubble burning.

The second issue which raised that said she told the commission that just giving the direction is not enough but it is the responsibility of Haryana and Punjab to stop stubble burning and if they don't do it, strict action must be taken against them.

"The commission can file FIR and imprison anyone for up to 5 years for causing pollution in Delhi-NCR

so we have asked it to hold the CMs of Haryana and Punjab liable and accountable and take strict action against them," she added.

Atishi said the commission has given assurance that it will look into the matter.

"It has also told us that it will be holding a meeting with Pusa Institute. We will be closely watching what steps the commission adopts now and we hope that when Centre has made such a powerful commission then it will take strict and fast action in the matter," she added.



An EDMC vehicle sprinkles water over a road at Ghazipur to contain pollution in New Delhi on Monday.

— PTI

32-yr-old man rams car into Safdarjung Tomb's main gate

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 23

A 32-year-old man, who was allegedly in an inebriated condition, rammed his car into the main gate of the Safdarjung Tomb in central Delhi in the hourly early hours of Monday, police said.

The man has been identified as Vijay Bahri, a resident of Rampur here, they added. According to the police, around 3 am, a car came from the direction of Lodhi Road and rammed into the main gate of the Sardarjung Tomb. The vehicle also hit the notice

board of the monument made of stone and damaged it, the police said.

Bahri was allegedly in an inebriated state and lost control over the car, the police said. He was rushed to the RML hospital, they said, adding that he did not sustain any serious injury. An FIR under section 279 (rash driving) of the IPC, section 3 of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1994 and section 185 of the Motor Vehicles Act has been registered. There was no damage to the monument, a senior police officer said.

City BJP to continue sanitation, cleanliness drive

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, NOV. 23

After the successful monitoring of the sanitation and cleanliness service by its state leaders during the festive season in all the 70 Assembly seats, BJP has decided to continue the initiative in view of the municipal elections scheduled in early 2022. Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party president Adesh Gupta said a similar drive would be undertaken every

month in parks, community centres, dispensaries, and other places.

Mr Gupta said that the party leaders, in coordination with councillors, were on the street and ensured that roads are cleaned and garbage is removed every day and in some areas garbage collection was double than the quantity usually lifted by the civic body in a day. According to Mr Gupta, a monthly drive would ensure better and effective service by the

► **BJP has decided to continue the initiative in view of the municipal elections scheduled in early 2022**

civic bodies.

"After the success of the first round, the party has resolved to make this exercise a regular feature. After discussion within the party, we will choose one service—community centres, dispensaries, schools, or parks—every month for monitoring," said the Delhi BJP

president.

BJP councillors representing municipal wards with best civic facilities will be rewarded by the state leadership and the worst performers will be pulled up.

These leaders include current and former office bearers, former MLA and councillors, and senior leaders. The names of some leaders, who were entrusted with the responsibility, includes Delhi BJP vice presidents Virender Sachdeva,

Ashok Goel Devraha, and Sunil Yadav, general secretaries Kuljeet Chahal, Harsh Malhotra, former MLA Subhash Sachdeva, former mayor and general secretary Ravinder Gupta, and spokespersons Pravin Shankar Kapoor, Harish Khurana, and Aditya Jha.

Mr Gupta pointed out that the party is taking this exercise very seriously and appointment of leaders for monitoring of a ward would be done on a rotational basis.

category may cause breathing discomfort to most people on prolonged exposure, while "very poor" may cause respiratory illness on prolonged exposure.

The AQI for each city is based on the average value of all stations there.

Noida, Faridabad, Ghaziabad have four stations each, while Gurgaon has three and Greater Noida two, according to the app.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

NADDA LIKELY TO VISIT ODISHA NEXT MONTH

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 23

BJP national president J.P. Nadda is likely to visit Odisha during December or January as part of his 120-day nationwide tour to strengthen the party's organisational machinery with an eye on the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

State BJP General secretary Prithviraj Harichandan on Monday informed that Mr Nadda would be in the state for three days although the itinerary of his visit is yet to be finalised.

Mr Harichandan said that Nadda would chalk out strategies for strengthening the organisational structure of BJP in Odisha. He will also hold discussions with the party workers about Mission-120 and 'Double Engine' government of BJP at the Centre and the state.

"When Amit Shah was the national president of the party, he had also undertaken extensive nationwide tours during his tenure and assigned us tasks and subsequently reviewed it. Similarly, J.P. Nadda will also visit Odisha for two to three days to review the pending works related to Mission-120 and chalk out strategies to take it forward," stated Harichandan.

Mr Nadda is likely to begin his nationwide tour in the first week of December and Uttarakhand will be the first state on his itinerary, BJP general secretary Arun Singh had told media persons on Sunday.

KANGANA, SISTER MOVE BOMBAY HIGH COURT

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, NOV. 23

Actress Kangana Ranaut and her sister Rangoli Chandel moved the Bombay High Court on Monday, seeking to quash an FIR registered against them by Mumbai Police for allegedly trying to create hatred and communal tension through their posts on social media.

The duo also challenged Bandra magistrate court order directing the police to carry out an inquiry against them by one Munnawar Ali Sayyed.

Bollywood casting director Sayyad had moved Bandra magistrate court last month seeking FIR should be registered against Kangana and her sister for posting messages on twitter as well as giving TV interview which creates communal tension in the society.

In his complaint, Sayyed pointed out to the court several posts published by Ranaut and her sister on their social media accounts on actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death case, an incident of lynching of two seers in Maharashtra's Palghar district, and a post comparing Mumbai with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Following which, FIR, under sedition charges, was registered along with IPC sections 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race), 295-A (deliberate acts hurting religious sentiments) and 124-A (sedition), 34 (common intention) against Kangana and her sister Rangoli.

ED TO INITIATE PROBE AGAINST WAQF EX-CHIEF

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, NOV. 23

Days after the CBI registered two FIRs, naming Uttar Pradesh Shia Waqf Board's former chief Waseem Rizvi and others regarding alleged anomalies in the sale, purchase, and transfer of properties by the Board, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is all set to initiate its money laundering probe against Mr Rizvi in a day or two.

Sources in the agency said, "ED sleuths are in touch with CBI officials probing cases against Rizvi and others. The ED is preparing to register a separate case against Rizvi and others under the stringent provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in a day or two." Immediately after registering a money laundering case, the agency will initiate the proceedings to attach assets linked to Mr Rizvi and others, they added. The CBI recently registered two FIRs against Waseem Rizvi in connection with the alleged illegal sale-purchase and transfer of Waqf properties in UP.



Health workers collect samples from passengers for the Covid-19 test at Anand Vihar Bus Terminal in New Delhi on Monday, as coronavirus cases surge across the national capital.

— PTI

Maha makes Covid-19 negative report mandatory for travellers

New rule applies to passengers from Goa, Delhi, Rajasthan and Gujarat

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, NOV. 23

The Maharashtra government on Monday made it mandatory for all travellers coming to the state from Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Goa to carry RT-PCR negative reports.

Fearing second wave of Covid-19 in Maharashtra, the state government issued new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which states that every passenger arriving from Delhi-NCR, states of Goa, Rajasthan and Gujarat will have to mandatorily carry a Covid-19 negative report while travelling with either rail, road or train.

For domestic air travellers, the RT-PCR sample

collection should have been done within 72 hours before the scheduled time of landing at airports in Maharashtra. Passengers not having the RT-PCR test reports will have to compulsorily undergo RT-PCR tests at concerned airports at their own costs.

"The Airports Authority of India is requested to check for the report before allowing the passengers to board the flight. Only after taking the test, the passengers will be allowed to go home by the Airport Operator," the government notification said.

Passengers arriving in the state via rail will have to carry an RT-PCR negative test report from a sample collected 96 hours before the scheduled

arrival in the state. Those rail passengers who do not have an RT-PCR test negative report will be screened for symptoms including body temperature at the alighting railway stations.

"Passengers not having the RT-PCR test negative report shall be screened for symptoms and body temperatures at the alighting railway stations. Passengers without symptoms will be allowed to go home," the notification said.

Railway passengers showing symptoms shall be segregated and made to undergo antigen test. Passengers whose antigen test report will be negative will be allowed to go home, the government said. It

said that passengers not testing/found Covid-19 positive, shall be sent to Covid-19 care centres and the cost shall be borne by the commuters themselves. Similarly, for those travelling by road, the state government added that the concerned district collectors of state's border districts shall make arrangements to ensure that the passengers coming from these four states shall be tested for symptoms including body temperature.

Those with symptoms will have to undergo an antigen test and will be allowed entry in the state only if the report is negative. People with Covid-19 symptoms seeking to enter the state from Delhi,

Rajasthan, Gujarat and Goa would be turned back, the notification said.

The new guidelines were issued a day after chief minister Uddhav Thackeray warned people of the "tsunami" of Covid-19 cases in the state if precautions are not taken. He urged the people of the state not to lower their guard against Covid-19 and follow the safety protocols strictly so that there will be no need to impose another lockdown.

Maharashtra's Covid-19 tally rose to 17,84,361 with the addition of 4,153 new cases on Monday, the state health department said. With 30 fresh deaths reported during the day, the state's fatality count increased to 46,653.

Cyclone Nivar: TN & Andhra on high alert

NDRF deutes 30 teams for relief

New Delhi, Nov. 23: Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry are on high alert as Cyclone Nivar is expected to make landfall in the region on the afternoon of November 25.

The depression over the Bay of Bengal is likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm by Tuesday and cross the coast as a severe cyclonic storm a day after.

Cyclone Nivar is expected to cross the Tamil Nadu-Puducherry coast between Karaikal and Mamallapuram on Wednesday with a wind speed of 100-110 kmph gusting to 120 kmph.

Indian meteorological department has issued a red alert for Tamil Nadu — a label that urges the authorities and residents to jump into action — for Tuesday and Wednesday.

Owing to the onset of Cyclone Nivar six trains have been fully cancelled and nine trains have been partially cancelled in Tamil Nadu. The South Central Railway said the Bhubaneswar-Puducherry-Bhubaneswar trains have been partially cancelled between Chennai Egmore and Puducherry on November 24 and 25. The Puducherry-Howrah express has been cancelled partially between Puducherry

► FISHERMEN HAVE been directed to not venture out to sea for the next few days

and Villupuram on November 25.

Fishermen have been directed to not venture out to sea for the next few days.

The NDRF has earmarked 30 teams to launch rescue and relief operations in view of the cyclone 'Nivar' that is expected to hit the coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry between Tuesday and Thursday, officials said on Monday.

A senior National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) officer said while 12 teams have been pre-deployed, 18 are on standby in these states and the Union Territory of Puducherry. These teams will further be deployed in coordination with local authorities for relief and rescue works, including assistance in evacuation of locals from affected areas.

A NDRF team has about 35 to 45 personnel, depending on the task at hand, and they are equipped with tree and pole cutters, basic medicines and other tools to help affected people.

— Agencies

Bharti Singh, husband get bail in drugs case

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, NOV. 23

Comedian Bharti Singh and her husband Haarsh Limbachiyaa, who were arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau over alleged possession and use of marijuana, were on Monday granted bail by a Mumbai court.

The NCB had arrested Singh on Saturday and her husband Limbachiyaa on Sunday. Both were remanded to judicial custody on Sunday after which both applied for bail.

When their bail applica-

tions came up for hearing on Monday, the probe agency claimed before the court that the two have confessed to consuming ganja.

Singh has also told officers that she would smoke weed procured by her husband.

Limbachiyaa has claimed to have said that he purchased ganja from one peddler and that he would keep one bag of the contraband at his office and another at his house for consumption.

Since there was no need for their custody for further investigation and the

drugs seized from them were of small quantity for consumption only, the court granted them bail.

It may be recalled that search operations were carried out at the couple's properties following a tip-off. The NCB recovered a bag with 65 gram of ganja from Limbachiyaa's production house in Versova.

Later, another search was carried out at his residence, Oberoi Springs in Andheri, from where another bag consisting 21.5 gram of cannabis and unaccounted cash of ₹1.49 lakh were seized.

Temple kissing row: MP cops book 2 Netflix staff

Bhopal/Indore, Nov. 23:

An FIR was registered in Madhya Pradesh on Monday against two executives of OTT platform Netflix for allegedly hurting religious sentiments through its web series A Suitable Boy which showed kissing scenes purportedly on the campus of a temple, an official said. The FIR has named Monika Shergill, vice-president, content (Netflix) and Ambika Khurana, director, public policies (Netflix), MP home minister Narottam Mishra said.

Meanwhile, collector of Khargone district Anugraha P. said that the controversial kissing scenes do not appear to have filmed inside a temple in Maheshwar town in the district.

Earlier in the day, Shergill and Khurana were booked by Rewa police on a complaint filed by Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha national secretary Gaurav Tiwari who demanded apology from Netflix and the makers of the series, and removal of "objectionable scenes", which he stated were also "encouraging love jihad".

"I had asked officials to examine the series A Suitable Boy being streamed on Netflix to check if kissing scenes in it were filmed inside a temple and if it hurt religious sentiments. The examination prima facie found that these scenes are hurting the sentiments of a particular religion," Mishra said in a video statement.

"On the basis of a complaint filed by Gaurav Tiwari, an FIR is being registered under section 295 (A) (malicious acts to outrage and insulting the religious feelings and beliefs) of the IPC in Rewa against Netflix officials — Monika Shergill and Ambika Khurana," he added.

Rewa superintendent of police Rakesh Kumar Singh told reporters that the FIR has been registered and further investigation is underway.

On Saturday, Gaurav Tiwari had submitted a memorandum to the Rewa superintendent of police demanding an apology from Netflix and makers of the series, and removal of "objectionable scenes" from A Suitable Boy. — Agencies

AIMIM head in West Bengal quits, joins TMC

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, NOV. 23

The Trinamul Congress on Monday roped almost the entire West Bengal leadership of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin (AIMIM) including its state "face" Sheikh Anwar Pasha in its fold, dealing a severe blow to Asaduddin Owaisi's outfit to stop it from snatching the Muslim votebank away from its command in the next year's Assembly Election in West Bengal.

With an eye on the 30 per cent Muslim population in the state, the TMC had started cultivating Mr Pasha, who was the AIMIM head in the state, and 17 other senior functionaries quietly in wake of the AIMIM's victory in five seats in the recently concluded Bihar Assembly polls.

Among other leaders who quit the AIMIM and joined the TMC included Murshid Ahmed, Sheikh

Hasibul Islam, Jamshed Ahmed, Intekhab Alam, Abul Kashem, Syed Rahman and Anarul Mondal.

At the Trinamul Bhawan in the city, state minister Bratya Basu sitting next to Mr Pasha said, "He was the face of AIMIM and its pillar here. Shunning communal and divisive politics, however, he and others joined our party influenced by of our party supreme and CM Mamata Banerjee's vision for peace and development."

Tearing into Mr Owaisi Mr Pasha alleged, "A section of people is taking our country to the path of destruction by misusing our faith. Lot of powers including those who wear saffron or green are eyeing Bengal. They are trying to create a division. AIMIM played a role in the polarisation of votes in Bihar which helped the BJP in forming the government there. But it will not happen in Bengal."

MIM MLA wants 'Bharat' in place of 'Hindustan'

NAYEAR AZAD PATNA, NOV. 23

Newly elected All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul-Muslimin (AIMIM) MLA Akhtarul Imam stoked a controversy on the first day of the Bihar assembly session when he objected to the word "Hindustan" while taking oath on Monday.

The situation occurred when he expressed his desire to take oath in Urdu instead of Hindi and raised objections to word "Hindustan" and urged Protest speaker Jitan Ram Manjhi to replace it with "Bharat".

"While taking oath in Hindi and Maithili people use Bharat but in the letter of oath handed to me in Urdu, the word Hindustan is mentioned. I would like to use the word Bharat while taking an oath", AIMIM MLA Akhtarul Imam said during the oath ceremony in the state assembly on Monday. Reacting to his request Protest speaker Jitan Ram Manjhi pointed out that the elected members have been using "Hindustan" while taking oath in Urdu in the past as well. The Chair, however, later allowed him to use the word "Bharat" instead of "Hindustan".

Later while talking to reporters after his oath Mr Imam clarified that he intended to point out that Preamble of the Constitution mentions the word "Bharat" and that he wanted to use the same term while taking the oath in the name of Constitution.

Mr. Imam further said that he has "no objection to the word Hindustan"

● The NDA leaders criticized Akhtarul Imam for refusing to use the word "Hindustan". "The word Hindustan is used by everyone but some people want to create controversy unnecessarily by raising questions on the issue", JD(U) MLA Madan Sahani said.

● The BJP also reacted and said that "those who have a problem using the word Hindustan should go to Pakistan".

and that he has grown up reciting lines from Iqbal's famous poem "Saare Jahan Se Acha Hindustan Hamara".

When asked about his stand on Congress MLA Shakeel Ahmed Khan taking oath in Sanskrit instead of Hindi he said that "it was his personal choice".

Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM has entered Bihar assembly for the first time by winning five seats in the Seemanchal and Kosi region of the state. Akhtarul Imam who has won from the Amour constituency is the party's state president.

Reacting sharply, the NDA leaders criticized Akhtarul Imam for refusing to use the word "Hindustan". "The word Hindustan is used by everyone but some people want to create controversy unnecessarily by raising questions on the issue", JD(U) MLA Madan Sahani said.

The BJP also reacted and said that "those who have a problem using the word Hindustan should go to Pakistan".

'JEE-Main may be pushed to Feb'

New Delhi, Nov. 23: The Joint Entrance Exam (JEE)-Main for admission to engineering colleges across the country is likely to be held in February instead of January, according to officials.

Rising number of Covid-19 cases and engineering admission for this year still being underway, are among

the reasons behind authorities contemplating the move. "As the engineering admission is still underway, it is being considered that JEE-Main of 2021 be pushed to February. This will give a chance to students who were not satisfied with the choice of branch or their score," a senior official said. — PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE	
The Sr. Divisional Engineer-IV, Northern Railway, Delhi Division for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender on prescribed form for the following work.	
Invitation of tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)	
1. Name of work with its location	1. Elimination of Manned by providing LHS on L-xing no. 65,198, 209 & 219 on DLI-BTI section. (NIT 34-W-IV-20-21) 2. Elimination of Manned by providing LHS on L-xing no. 65,198, 209 & 219 on DLI-BTI section. (NIT 35-W-IV-20-21)
2. Approx. cost of work	(1) Rs. 11,47,52,959.27 (2) Rs. 11,47,52,959.27
3. Earnest Money	1. Rs. 7,23,800.00 2. Rs. 7,23,800.00
4. Date and Time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Bidding Start date for work no. Up to 15:00 hrs. on 04.12.2020 opening of e-Tender at 15:00 hrs. on 18.12.2020.
5. Website particulars, published e-tender, notice location etc. complete details of tender can be seen and web site where the tender form can be downloaded	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
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SHORT TAKES

SC EXTENDS PAROLE OF RAJIV KILLER BY 1 WEEK

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, NOV. 23

The Supreme Court on Monday extended by one week the parole of A.G. Perarivalan – a convict in Rajiv Gandhi assassination conspiracy case – so that he could meet doctors for his treatment.

A bench headed by Justice L. Nageswara Rao and also comprising Justice Hemant Gupta and Justice Ajay Rastogi extended Perativalan's parole as bench was informed that he could not get himself treated because he was not provided with a police escort that is mandatory for him to go to the hospital.

The top court ordered the extension of parole by one week as senior counsel Gopal Sankaranarayanan appearing for Perarivalan told the bench that he was granted parole by Madras High Court on November 9 till November 23 for going to hospital but he could not reach the hospital on the appointed date as there was no police to escort him to the hospital.

“We are informed that the High Court extended the parole of the petitioner (Perarivalan) from 09.11.2020 to 23.11.2020, since the police escort was not provided to the petitioner, he could not visit the hospital to meet his doctor, we further extend the parole of the petitioner by one week from today and direct Tamil Nadu to provide the necessary police escort to the petitioner to enable him to visit the hospital for treatment”, the court said in its order.

HAL kicks off crucial testing of jet trainer

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 23

The indigenous Intermediate Jet Trainer (IJT) designed and developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) to replace the ageing Kiran aircraft fleet of the Indian Air Force (IAF) commenced spin flight testing in Bengaluru.

The spin testing of an aircraft is the most crucial phase of its flight testing. During the first flight, initially the aircraft was taken through one turn spin to the left and right hand sides to test the spin characteristics.

The testing will be gradually progressed to assess the behaviour of the aircraft till six turn spins to either side to meet the targeted requirement

The flight was piloted by HAL's test pilots Gp. Capt H.V. Thakur (Retd) and Wg. Cdr P. Avasti (Retd).

The IJT has already been tested to its full envelope in terms of speed, altitude and load factor and has also been integrated with drop tanks as well as bombs.

For spin test, HAL redesigned the aircraft by moving the vertical tail aft and extending the rudder surface. These changes for ensuring a satisfactory spin behaviour required extensive redesign of the rear fuselage and the rudder.

SC pulls up states

■ Continued from Page 1 this?” Justice M.R. Shah asked the counsel appearing for the state. The court was also informed that the situation in Assam was “deplorable”, and that the situation was not improving as hospitals were short of ICUs. Former Assam CM Tarun Gogoi died on Monday due to Covid-19.

In a desperate measure, the Delhi government first ordered the shutting down of heavily crowded markets in West Delhi — Nangloi and Punjabi Basti markets — after it was found that wearing masks and social distancing were not being followed there. These orders were, however, later withdrawn. However, street vendors were stopped from setting up stalls to prevent crowding in several parts of Delhi, an order that was widely defied.

Maharashtra minister Vijay Wadetiwar said the authorities will take a call on allowing flights, trains and road travel to Maharashtra in eight days, while the state government made it mandatory for inbound traffic coming from Delhi, Goa, Gujarat and Rajasthan to carry a Covid negative certificate with them.

Himachal Pradesh has imposed night a curfew in four districts — Shimla, Kullu, Mandi and Kangra — that are witnessing high cases and are fast emerging as hotspots. Incidentally, a high number of tourists too have rushed to these places after lockdowns were lifted to beat work from home and lockdown boredom.

Kashmir Valley receives season’s first snowfall

Srinagar, Nov. 23: Most of the plain areas in Kashmir experienced the season's first snowfall on Monday, even as the higher reaches witnessed heavy precipitation, leading to the closure of Srinagar-Leh road which connects the valley with Ladakh, officials said here. The MeT office has issued an ‘Orange colour’ weather warning for the higher reaches of J&K and Sonmarg-Zojila axis on the Srinagar-Leh road, asking the administration and people to be prepared and to maintain vigil.

An official said light to moderate snow with heavy falls at isolated places was reported from many areas of Kashmir, a few places of Jammu and Sonmarg-Dress axis.

The famous ski-resort of Gulmarg, in north Kashmir, recorded four inches of fresh snowfall during the night, while Pahalgam tourist resort in south Kashmir, recorded 10 cm of snow, the official said.

He said most of the areas in the plains of the valley also received light snowfall. It was still snowing, especially in the higher reaches, when the last reports came in and the weather system is likely to continue, he said. — PTI



People walk down a road amid fog and snowfall on the outskirts of Srinagar on Monday. The Srinagar-Ladakh road was closed due to heavy snowfall on the higher reaches and rains in plains. — PTI

India shows foreign envoys proof of Pak role in J&K plot

New Delhi, Nov. 23: Foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Monday briefed top envoys of key nations, including the US, Russia, France, and Japan on the planned terror attack by Pakistan-based terrorist group JeM in Nagrota in Jammu which was foiled by security forces on November 19, sources said.

The heads of missions were provided with a comprehensive “information docket” giving the details of the incident, and also list of items and munition recovered from terrorists, clearly indicating their Pakistani origins.

The envoys were sensitised about India's concerns regarding Pakistan's sustained efforts to “destabilise” the situation in J&K and to “subvert” upcoming local elections and democracy in the Union Territory, sources said.

“In terms of the bigger picture, it was clear that the terrorists were planning the biggest terror attack in India since Pulwama in February 2019



Arms and ammunitions along with other items recovered from militants killed in Nagrota, Jammu. — PTI

and the implications can be guessed,” said a source, adding that details of JeM's involvement in previous such incidents were also shared with the envoys.

Four suspected JeM terrorists, who were hiding in a truck, were killed by security forces near Nagrota in an encounter on Thursday morning after which the government asserted that a major terror attack was foiled by the Indian security forces.

It was the first of several briefings to be conducted by the ministry of exter-

led India to believe that the terrorists, who had planned the attack in Nagrota, belonged to Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad, a terrorist organisation proscribed by the UN, they added.

According to sources, the planned attack was part of ongoing efforts to sabotage the local elections and to carry out a terror attack aimed to coincide with the anniversary of the 26/11 Mumbai strikes.

The envoys were briefed about markings on the recovered AK47 rifles and other items, sources said.

The foreign secretary also briefed the envoys about the possible implications of these planned attacks on security, diplomacy and the battle against terrorism, they said. “It was pointed out how the incident of November 19 is part of Pakistan's ongoing terror campaign in J&K and that in the year 2020 itself, there have seen 200 incidents of terrorist violence and neutralisation of 199 terrorists,” the source said. — PTI

Raut rules out ‘Love Jihad’ law in Maha

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, NOV. 23



Sanjay Raut

After the demand made by some state BJP leader to bring a law against “Love Jihad” in Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena on Monday ruled out enactment of any such law in the state. Senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said that he had a discussion with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on the issue and there was no need to bring the law even if BJP-ruled states take such a step.

BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis last week had reportedly said that incidents of ‘Love Jihad’ were taking place in the country and therefore, laws to curb the practice were justified.

“Key BJP leaders in Maharashtra are asking when a law against Love Jihad will be passed. I spoke to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray in the morning. On this issue, we only want to say that let the laws be formed in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. But, when a law will be framed

in Bihar, when Nitish Kumar ji will frame it, we will study that law in its entirety. After that we will think about it in Maharashtra,” Sanjay Raut said.

Some BJP-ruled states have announced plans to prevent the so-called ‘Love Jihad’, which refers to an alleged conspiracy to convert Hindu women by marrying them.

Mr Raut also took pot shots against Fadnavis, who has said that his party believes Karachi will be a part of India one day. Mr Fadnavis had made the remark when he was asked a question regarding a Shiv Sena activist asking owners of Karachi Sweets outlet in Mumbai to rename it and justified the demand by calling Pakistan a country of terrorists.

Shah’s visit to tribal family a show off: Didi

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, NOV. 23

In a blistering attack, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday called Union home minister Amit Shah's lunch during his visit to Bankura in his last tour to the state earlier this month at a tribal family's home a “show off” and his garland tribute to a hunter's statue, passed off by the BJP as of Birs

Munda, an “insult” to the tribal freedom fighter, . Charging Shah of “lying”, the Trinamul Congress supreme announced that her party would build a statue of Birs

Munda in the district to woo the tribal votebank.

She also declared the tribal icon's birthday to be celebrated by her government as a state holiday from next year.

“Few days ago our honourable Union home minister came here for a ‘show off.’ *Dikhane ke liye aaye the!* He had brought cooked food and people including Brahmin from outside to a Dalit family's home. He did not allow the family to do anything,” she alleged at Khatra in Bankura after launching a list of government projects.

Lashing out at Shah, Banerjee claimed, “The poor man's daughter suf-

fered from a disease like Thalassaemia. With the assurance of help, he was told that the minister would have his lunch sitting at his home. Though it was shown that vegetables were chopped for

cooking his lunch, he (Shah) did not have the food made of it. Neither coriander leaves nor cabbage was used in cooking. From the newspapers I found he had Basmati rice and Postor Bora (Poppy Seed Fritters).”

The Chief Minister told the audience, “He (Shah) also garlanded a statue which you later said was not of Birs Munda. The statue might be of a hunter. I respect a hunter also because he is my brother too. But why do you lie? It can not be accepted that you would vandalise Vidyasagar's statue and garland a different statue instead of Rabindranath Tagore and

Birs Munda.”

She added, “A statue of Birs Munda will be built in that place by the followers of Maa-Mati-Manush in revenge of the insult you (Shah) inflicted. On my government's part, I declare Birs Munda's birthday will be a state holiday because we respect him.”

Among the projects launched by the Chief Minister is *Dore Dore Sorkar* (government at doors) to reach out to the public ahead of the next year's Assembly Election. Daily camps will be run in each district in between 11 am and 3 pn from December 1 to January 30, 2021.

2014-29 period ‘very important’ for India: Modi

New Delhi, Nov. 23: Asserting that the 2014-29 period between the 16th to 18th Lok Sabha is “very important” for a young democracy like India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the last six years have been “historic” for the country's development and a lot remains to be done in the remaining period.

As the age of 16, 17 and 18 years is very important for the youth, so is the time between the 16th and the 18th Lok Sabha for a young nation like India, he said while digitally inaugurating 76 multi-storied flats in the national capital for members of Parliament.

The 16th Lok Sabha (2014-19) has been historic for the country's progress, and the 17th Lok Sabha has already become a part of history due to a number of decisions it has taken, he said, referring to the passage of landmark legislations aimed at reforming farm and labour sectors besides abrogation of Article 370 and the citizenship law.

“I am confident the next Lok Sabha (2024-29) will also play a very important role in taking the country ahead in this new decade... There is so much for the country that we have to achieve. Be it ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’ campaign, or economic targets or many other pledges like these, we

ED SENDS FRESH NOTICE TO TMC LEADERS IN NARADA PROBE

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, NOV. 23

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has sent fresh notices to three Trinamul Congress heavyweights including a state minister and an MP, directing them to furnish their asset-properties and income-expenditure details in connection with the Narada sting operation case which had exposed a dozen ruling party leaders allegedly accepting cash for favour.

The Central agency's step comes within a week of West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh's warning to the TMC leaders to spend the rest of their lives in jail after the ED would trace out their illegal wealth and properties.

The three TMC leaders who were served ED notices are Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim, who is also the urban development minister, Prasun Banerjee, TMC MP of Howrah and former state transport minister Madan Mitra, also a key Saradha chit fund scam accused.

They have been directed to submit their financial details to the ED office at CGO Complex in Salt Lake within a week without fail, according to sources. The central agency earlier sent similar notices to the trio before and during Covid-19 lockdown but got no response which forced it to send it again.

TMC, Adhikari meet inconclusive

Kolkata, Nov. 23: (PTI) Talks between the ruling TMC and West Bengal minister Suwendu Adhikari, who has been maintaining a distance from the party and not attending meetings of the state cabinet, held on Monday remained inconclusive and more meetings are likely to take place soon, sources said.

Senior TMC MP Sougata Roy, who has been tasked with the job of holding talks with Adhikari, met the minister on Monday evening at a place in north Kolkata and held a nearly two-hour-long discussion, party sources said. — PTI



Narendra Modi

have to achieve them during this period,” he said to an audience of parliamentarians, including ministers and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

People of J&K have also joined the mainstream of development, with many new laws coming into effect in the Union Territory for the first time, he said in a reference to the abrogation of Article 370.

“It is our responsibility that when history evaluates different terms of Lok Sabha, this period is remembered as a golden chapter in the nation's development,” he stated.

The second term of the Modi government is scheduled to end in 2024 when the next general election will be held.

The ruling BJP has already set its sight on the next Lok Sabha polls with its president J.P. Nadda set to undertake a 120-day nationwide tour to tone up the saffron party's organisational machinery with a focus on regions and seats where it had not done well in 2019.

— PTI



THE ASIAN AGE

24 NOVEMBER 2020

Kerala's dropping law to punish dissent welcome

The decision by Kerala's Left Democratic Front government led by the CPM to put on hold its controversial ordinance amending the Kerala Police Act 2011 is extremely welcome. The ordinance was intended to insert a section in the law giving the police wide powers to proceed against those who defame people through various media, including the social media, and another to make it a cognisable offence.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who announced the decision, said the government was forced to bring in the ordinance in the background of complaints about widespread misuse of social media platforms to attack individuals, especially women and children. The government must now complete the legal process which leads to the nullification of the ordinance.

The new Section 118A in the law had made a communication which "caused injury to the mind" of not only the target but also of "any other person in whom they have interest" a cognisable offence, giving the police undefined powers to initiate criminal proceedings against unsuspecting people.

It evoked instant condemnation from civil rights activists and Left sympathisers as well as the Opposition, who said that it could be misused to stifle voices of dissent. The Communist Party of India, the second largest LDF constituent, had also publicly voiced its dissent. The protests forced the CPM central leadership to promise a relook at the law.

That a government led by the CPM, which has consistently opposed every single move against freedom of speech, had dared to bring in such a law could perplex an outsider. But a close look at the way the police has behaved in Kerala under the current government would show that the new law was a continuation of the pattern of its behaviour, which has nothing to do with the published policy of the party that leads the government. The police shot and killed two Maoists in the forests of Nilambur in an encounter just three months after the new government had taken over.

Though Left parties oppose encounter killings, the party offered no explanation while the Chief Minister said the government will do nothing that would affect the morale of the police. Encouraged perhaps by the words of the Chief Minister, who also holds the home portfolio, the police conducted more encounters in the following years, in which six more people were killed. Two youngsters were incarcerated last year for about 10 months under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 for allegedly possessing Maoist literature though the CPM has been in the forefront of agitations against its misuse.

While it is true that the Vijayan government has finally given in to public pressure against a draconian law, the CPM leadership needs to do a serious rethink why the Kerala police, which functions directly under one of its most senior leaders, gets to do whatever it feels like, even breaking the party's own policies. It must also be a lesson for all governments in this country which find voices of dissent an unnecessary evil. They might do well to recognise that freedom of speech is a vital part of democracy, guaranteed by the Constitution, and that all attempts to smother it will face stiff resistance.

J&K: What kind of democracy?

Jammu and Kashmir has taken a long break from democracy. There has been no popular government there since 2018's summer, and in August 2019, without going through any laid-down procedure, the Centre scrapped the former state's autonomy, vivisected it, and converted it into a Union territory. Now, when polls are to be held for District Development Councils, which didn't exist in the past, non-BJP parties are vociferously complaining that they aren't allowed to campaign while BJP candidates face no hurdles.

Mostly these are the Gupkar Alliance parties, and they complain that their candidates, in the name of security, are practically facing internment. This is Kashmir's first real test at procedural democracy in 29 months and it was expected that the leaders of Kashmir's mainstream parties, who have sworn by India and paid the price, with thousands of them killed by terrorists over the years, would have every opportunity to have their say in the DDC polls.

In an eloquent letter to lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha, stalwart National Conference leader and former chief minister Farooq Abdullah, president of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), the conglomerate of Kashmir's non-BJP parties working for restoration of Kashmir's autonomy, has said that the story of democracy in Kashmir is soaked in the blood of representatives of the same parties whose candidates are being physically restrained from campaigning. Other PAGD parties have also complained bitterly. The elections are imminent.

If this grievance is made up, it will be appropriate for the L-G to go on record to say so, and then to substantiate his stand before the public. Else, the impression is apt to go around that the ruling party is intent on winning the election by hook or by crook, for it will be a big blow to the BJP if it loses the election after the party pursued its ideological agenda to denude J&K of its historical autonomy. And why has the Election Commission gone to sleep in the face of such complaints?

THE ASIAN AGE

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Printer & Publisher: K. SUDHAKAR
THE ASIAN AGE office is located at:
New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 25211124.
Published and Printed on behalf of and for
Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.
London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.
RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Subhani



Beyond the RCEP: India matters in Indo-Pacific



Sreeram Chaulia

Since the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement by 15 nations on November 15, criticism of India for sitting out the mega free trade pact has arisen in some quarters. Myths have been propagated that deserve to be debunked.

The first line of attack is that India has hacked at its own feet because remaining outside the pan-regional integration process will hamper India's economic growth and transformation. This argument is not supported by empirical evidence from previous free trade agreements. Barring the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (Safta), which came into force in 2006, all the other FTAs have produced trade deficits for India.

By 2019, India had a deficit of \$22 billion with Asean, thanks to the India-Asean Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), which has been operational since 2010. Likewise, the India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), in vogue from 2011, and the India-South Korea CEPA, in effect from 2010, have engendered progressively larger deficits for India. Signing these FTAs did increase overall trade volumes between India and its partner countries, but India's market became more open to imports without reciprocal benefits for Indian exports.

Liberal proponents of consumer welfare contend that the deficits should not matter as Indian consumers gain from the influx of cheaper foreign-made goods. But the widening trade deficits have adverse implications for India's macro-economic stability and ability to strategically plan its economic future.

External affairs minis-

ter S. Jaishankar explained the crux of the matter by reminding us that past FTAs led to "de-industrialisation" of sectors of the Indian economy by pumping in cheap foreign goods and removing economic incentives to build our own indigenous manufacturing base.

The challenge, Mr Jaishankar rightly says, is "whether India will become a first-class industrial power or not". Multiple studies have shown that if India joined the RCEP on the bargaining terms we got after six years of negotiations, the already alarming surge of Chinese goods would have swamped India and rendered it permanently uncompetitive and crippled.

Already, even without an FTA, China had a worrisome trade surplus of \$48.6 billion with India in the 2019-2020 financial year. With China sitting as the 800-pound gorilla in RCEP, which doesn't prohibit China's notorious state subsidies to its exporters and doesn't block Chinese exports rerouted via other RCEP members, India would have committed strategic suicide by entering the club.

All the hopes pinned on Prime Minister Modi's "AtmaNirbhar Bharat" and "Make in India" drives would have been eviscerated had we been in RCEP. For example, the billions of dollars of incoming FDI flows to India to manufacture consumer electronics for sale in our domestic market and for export would evaporate if our gates were wide open for tariff-free Chinese mobiles, laptops or television sets.

Protectionism and import-substitution indeed failed in earlier eras and stunted India from developing world class export-oriented products. But the record FDI inflows and improvements in "Ease of Doing Business" in the Narendra Modi era

are rays of hope for a late industrialisation renaissance, which needs at least one more decade before judging its success. In this intervening decade, we ought to be cagey about FTAs involving predatory exporting giants.

The second myth about India not joining RCEP is that the other RCEP members — the Asean nations, South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand — have been deeply disappointed and India has marginalised itself by abandoning these partners when they needed it the most to counter the Chinese behemoth from within. This too is a misrepresentation. India already has FTAs with 12 out of the 15 RCEP members. Only Australia and New Zealand lack FTAs with India, but its trade with them too has been growing. We have already been quite generous with all RCEP members and remain committed to elevating our strategic partnerships with many of them. Just because we are not in RCEP does not mean India has lost its appeal in the eyes of these countries.

Admittedly, there is far greater economic cooperation potential to be unlocked by India with RCEP members other than China. But one must not downplay the defence and geopolitical dimensions of India's salience in the Indo-Pacific region. The recently strengthened "Quad" security dialogue mechanism has spurred enthusiasm in Japan and Australia, which are speeding up military interoperability for balance in the Indo-Pacific. Japan and Australia may have signed RCEP, but China is far from neutralising the "Quad" or softening opposition from Asean biggies like Vietnam and Indonesia to Chinese intimidation.

The present multilateral and multipolar international environment is complex, and countries

RCEP is not a talisman for India's economic or geopolitical rise. We should move past what was lost by missing the RCEP bus.

often hold overlapping memberships in a variety of groups. Owing to the interests of private corporations and big businesses, RCEP members see economic value in trading and investing with China. But there is also deep fear and anxiety among their national security establishments and ordinary citizens about China's territorial aggrandisement and economic blackmail. This is why, after the Covid pandemic hit, Australia, Japan and India formed the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) to avoid dependence on a single hegemonic power. India is bang in the middle of these new structures and not a sideshow.

The third myth about India and RCEP is that we are rudderless if we do not coalesce into the Asia-wide economic connectivity network because the US and Europe will provide scant solace. It is true that India has not had much joy getting market access to Western countries due to their protectionist politics. But trade experts believe India might secure better terms than what was offered in RCEP if it moves forward FTAs with the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). One must be unsentimental in the pursuit of national interests, which is what the Modi-Jaishankar duo is trying to do.

Another heartening shift is that the Europeans want to permanently deploy military assets in the Indo-Pacific alongside the US to restrain China. France, Germany and the Netherlands are advocating accelerated trade and political linkages with democratic nations like India and Indonesia to contribute to rebalancing in the Indo-Pacific.

RCEP is not a talisman for India's economic or geopolitical rise. We should move past what was lost by missing the RCEP bus. There are other conducive regional and global vehicles to propel India as a "leading power", and it is on its way.

The writer is professor and dean at the Jindal School of International Affairs

LETTERS

BJP'S RED HERRING

Apropos the article 'Get priorities straight in time of a pandemic' by Patralekha Chatterjee (November 22), it is really astonishing that at a time when the country is fighting a pandemic and over 1.3 lakh people have died, the priority of BJP chief ministers is a law against what they they call "love jihad". Hospitals are fully packed. Beds are not available for patients. Public health experts are saying that India is far from being on the top of the pandemic and the governments at the Centre and in states must focus on addressing these exigencies. They should leave alone the adult women of this country to take a call on who should be their life partner.

M.C. Joshi
Lucknow

ALERT OVER NEPAL

IN THE time of the coronavirus, India is not only devoting its full energies for the benefit of its citizens but also offering support to other countries in the same mission. Neighbouring countries Pakistan and China are not happy to see a self-sufficient India. But Nepal has proved to be a friend. Even though China has been engaged in provoking it, relations with it have still remained on the right track. However, Chinese defence minister Wei Fenghe's upcoming visit may upset equations. What will be India's counter-move?

Sunil Chilwal
Haldwani

A DRACONIAN MOVE

KERALA GOVERNOR Arif Mohammed Khan has recently signed an ordinance amending the Kerala Police Act to effect five years of imprisonment or a fine of ₹10,000 or both for any social media post that is seen as offensive, especially ones that vilify women and children. This is a draconian measure and will hurt free speech as well as press freedom. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan needs to rethink this move.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Neha Jamal (Nov. 21). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Aakar Patel



From testing to travel, India's Covid handling process is faulty

Hong Kong banned Air India flights again last week, after Indians landing there tested positive for Covid-19 for the fifth time since August. Passengers are supposed to board the aircraft only after taking a test that confirms that they are negative, but the testing does not appear to be done at our end with any sort of rigour. The passengers who boarded the flight and landed in Hong Kong had certificates showing they were Covid negative, but this turned out to be untrue.

I was not surprised by this because there is no standard process that India is following for testing and for flying, and I can vouch for this from personal experience. For the last few months I have been going to Surat every month to attend to a case that has been filed against me. The first time I went was the first time I flew after the Covid-19 outbreak and had to find out what the process for flying was. I was told by the airline

that an app from the Surat Municipal Corporation would have to be downloaded, and a form that was self-attested which said that I was not bearing any symptoms would also be needed to be signed and submitted. I tried downloading the app, but it was a fairly crude piece of software and my phone refused to download it.

On landing in Surat, I was not asked to show either the app or the form but instead all passengers above 50 were told to take a rapid test, and their phone numbers and addresses were taken down. On leaving Surat, I was asked to show if I had downloaded the Aarogya Setu app, which I did not have and did not know I was supposed to have. On landing back in Bengaluru, nothing was asked for.

That was the first time I had travelled. The second time, the following month, on landing in Surat there was nobody at the airport to check anything and I walked about without the test or any form. The

One airline gave face shields but did not insist that passengers use them. Another airline forced all passengers to wear the shield over their mask. Each time there was a different process

third time, which was in October, there were people at Surat airport who were taking the temperatures of passengers who were getting off the plane but no testing or taking down of addresses or phone numbers. This time, on leaving, nobody checked for the Aarogya Setu either.

One airline gave out face shields but did not insist that all passengers use them. Another airline forced all passengers to wear the shield over their mask. Each time there was a different process and even that process wasn't followed with any kind of rigour. It is random and does not reflect the seriousness with which the rest of the

world has taken the virus. This could be one reason why China has 100 times fewer infections than India and why Hong Kong has had to repeatedly ban Air India.

The problem of testing is not limited to the airlines. A report from Bloomberg this week said that questionable testing in India could be the reason why our Covid-19 numbers were down. Half of all testing in India was done through rapid antigen tests. These tests were quick but were likely to result in false negatives (meaning reporting a negative wrongly) half the time. This could mean that one out of every four people getting tested negative could actually be infected with Covid-19.

In mid-August only 25 per cent of the total tests were done in this way but now it is almost 50 per cent. In states like Bihar, about 90 per cent of all tests are of the rapid variety. This could explain the sharp fall in the number of cases in India, the report said. Other nations which

had large numbers of positive cases like the United States and Britain were using the RT-PCR tests, which took longer time for results but were more reliable.

There is also uneven testing across the country and no specific standard. The day the Bloomberg report was published, Bihar, which had just voted in an election with large rallies, reported only 600 cases while the city of Delhi, the nation's capital, added about 7,000 cases in 24 hours.

The report quoted several experts who were sceptical about the numbers in India, and again, this doesn't surprise me. We have no standard processes in place to address the more serious public health hazard of our lifetime. It is obvious to those of us who have travelled in this period. The rest of the world, as the repeated bans on us from Hong Kong show, knows it too now.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

IN BRIEF YEMENI REBELS STRIKE SAUDI OIL FACILITY

Dubai, Nov. 23: Yemen's Houthis rebels said they struck a Saudi oil facility in the port city of Jiddah on Monday with a new cruise missile, just hours after the kingdom finished hosting its virtual Group of 20 leaders summit.

The kingdom did not immediately acknowledge any attack as videos on social media suggested a fire at an Aramco oil facility.

Brig. Gen. Yehia Sarie, a Houthi military spokesman, tweeted that the rebels fired a new Quds 2 cruise missile at the facility.

He posted a satellite image online that matched Aramco's North Jiddah Bulk Plant, where oil products are stored in tanks.

3 PAK BURGLARS ATTACK INDIAN MAN IN THE UAE

Dubai, Nov. 23: A 33-year-old Indian man was attacked by three mask-wearing Pakistani burglars who also stole his laptop, mobile phone and some cash while he was asleep at his home in Dubai, according to a media report.

During a hearing in the Dubai Court of First Instance on Sunday, the man said the Pakistani burglars broke into a villa in the Bur Dubai area in August, assaulted the residents with a metal bar, and stole several items, the *Gulf News* reported on Sunday. He said the attackers put a plastic bag over his face and tape on his mouth. "They were wearing medical masks. One of them muzzled me and the other attacked me with a metal bar. I tried to resist but they overpowered me. I pulled the mask of one of the attackers and saw his face," the victim told the court. "I managed to remove the plastic bag and the tape and went outside the room. I went to my roommate and tried to chase the attackers," he said.

The burglars stole the man's laptop, mobile phone, cash, and credit cards, the report said. While one of the burglars was arrested by a police patrol as the victim identified him, the other two remain at large.

UK SC TO DECIDE IF I.S. BRIDE CAN RETURN

London, Nov. 23: Britain's Supreme Court is set to decide whether a woman who ran away from her London home as a teenager to join the Islamic State group in Syria can return to the UK.

The British government is fighting to keep Shamima Begum from coming back to the country where she was born. At a hearing beginning on Monday, it is challenging a lower court's ruling that Begum can return to Britain to mount a legal challenge aimed at restoring her UK citizenship, which was revoked on national security grounds.

The Court of Appeal said in July that "the only way in which she can have a fair and effective appeal is to be permitted to come into the UK."

But James Eadie, a lawyer for the UK government, told the Supreme Court that Begum "is considered to pose a real and current threat to national security." Begum was one of three east London schoolgirls who travelled to Syria in 2015.

US RENEWS VOW TO DEFEND PHILIPPINES

Manila, Nov. 23: President Donald Trump's administration provided precision-guided missiles and other weapons to help the Philippines battle Islamic State group-aligned militants and renewed a pledge to defend its treaty ally if it comes under attack in the disputed South China Sea.

National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien represented Trump in Monday's ceremony at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila, where he announced the delivery of the cache of missiles and bombs to the Philippine military. Trump pledged to provide the \$18 million worth of missiles in a phone conversation with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte in April.

O'Brien expressed condolences to the Philippines after back-to-back typhoons left a trail of death and devastation in the country and ousted US help to the country battle the coronavirus pandemic. The US assistance projects normalcy in Washington's foreign relations as Trump worked to challenge the results of the Nov. 3 presidential election.

Blinken to be US Secretary of State, Sullivan next NSA

Washington, Nov. 23: Joe Biden intends to pick his trusted foreign policy advisor Antony Blinken as the US Secretary of State and Jake Sullivan as National Security Advisor, media reports said on Monday, as the President-elect is poised to make his first round of Cabinet announcements on Tuesday.

Blinken, 58, has served as the Deputy Secretary of State in the second term of the Obama administration and National Security Advisor to Biden when he was the vice president.

A strong India-hand, Blinken was the top foreign policy advisor to the Biden campaign.

"President-elect Joe Biden intends to nominate Antony Blinken to serve as secretary of State, turning to a trusted diplomat and foreign-policy adviser to oversee his work to rebuild US relationships around the globe, according to people familiar with the decision," *The Wall Street Journal* reported.

"President-elect Joe Biden is planning to announce that he has selected Antony Blinken, one of his closest and longest-se-

rving foreign policy advisers, as secretary of state," *The Washington Post* said.

"Jake Sullivan, another top Biden adviser, is expected to be named as national security adviser, according to two people familiar with the announcement," the daily said.

Last week, Biden said he had decided on his name for the Treasury Secretary. "The announcement of Blinken's selection is expected by Tuesday at the latest, people familiar with the selection said," the *Journal* reported.

Blinken also spoke during the virtual celebration of India's Independence Day organised by the Biden Campaign and addressed by Biden himself and his running mate Kamala Harris, who is now the Vice President-elect.

"The Vice President (Biden) has long been a champion of stronger ties with India. I saw this firsthand, I started working for him in 2002 on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Then, of course, the Obama-Biden administration and his years as Vice President.

China to launch 1st unmanned mission for moon's samples

Beijing, Nov. 23: China said on Monday that it will launch its first unmanned space mission on Tuesday to collect samples from the moon's surface and return to earth, which its scientists say is one of the country's most complicated and challenging space missions.

China National Space Administration (CNSA) said that the fuelling of the Long March-5 rocket, currently China's largest launch vehicle, began on Monday ahead of the launch on early Tuesday.

The rocket, which will send the Chang'e-5 spacecraft to Earth-moon transfer orbit, is scheduled to be launched from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site in south China's Hainan Province in the early hours on Tuesday.

The mission is the country's first attempt to launch a spacecraft to collect and return samples from the moon, the CNSA said. The Chang'e-5 mission aims to conduct unmanned lunar sample collection and return to Earth, one of the country's most complicated and challenging space mis-

sions, state-run *Xinhua* news agency reported. It will contribute to the scientific studies in fields such as the formation and evolution of the moon, it said. China's lunar exploration program is named after the legendary Chang'e, the "Moon Lady," who took a potion and floated into the sky, eventually landing on the moon, where she became a goddess accompanied by a jade rabbit.

A major space power, China launched its first Mars mission 'Tianwen-1' on July 23 this year. The Mars spacecraft which included an orbiter, lander and rover is on its way to the red planet. China launched its first lunar probe, Chang'e-1, in 2007 which orbited 200 km above the moon and mapped 3D images of the lunar surface followed by Chang'e-2 in 2010 which had sent high resolution photos of the moon's surface. Chang'e-3 was launched in 2013 which softly touched down on the Sinus Iridium 12 days later. Chang'e-3 included a lander and a moon rover called Yutu (Jade Rabbit). — *PTI*

2 dead, several injured in stabbing at San Jose church

San Jose (California), Nov. 23: Two people died and multiple others were injured in a stabbing Sunday night at a church in California where homeless people had been brought to shelter from the cold weather, police said.

The stabbing happened at Grace Baptist Church in San Jose, where police said on Twitter that no services were taking place.

"Unhoused individuals were brought into the

church to get them out of the cold," the department tweeted.

It was unclear exactly how many people were wounded, but some of the injuries were life-threatening, police said.

San Jose mayor Sam Liccardo initially tweeted that a suspect had been arrested, but police later said no arrest could be confirmed. KTVU-TV reported that a 22-year-old man was apprehended in the stabbing. Video shown

Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine 70% effective on an average

Becomes third drugmaker to announce promising results to contain Covid

London, Nov. 23: Pharma major AstraZeneca said on Monday that an interim analysis of clinical trials of its Covid-19 vaccine in the UK and Brazil showed that it was 70 per cent effective on average, becoming the third drugmaker to announce promising results to contain the deadly virus. The vaccine, developed with the University of Oxford, showed 90 per cent efficacy in one dosing regimen when the vaccine was given as a half dose, followed by a full dose at least a month later, and another dosing regimen showed 62 per cent efficacy when given as two full doses at least one month apart, AstraZeneca said in a statement.

"The combined analysis from both dosing regimens resulted in an average efficacy of 70 per cent," it added. An independent Data Safety Monitoring Board determined that the analysis met its primary endpoint showing protection from Covid-19 occurring 14 days or more after receiving two doses of the vaccine, AstraZeneca said.

No serious safety events related to the vaccine have been confirmed. The ChAdOx1 nCoV-2019 or code-named AZD1222 was well tolerated across both dosing regimens, it said. The company "will now immediately prepare the regulatory submission of the data to authorities around the world that have a framework in place for conditional or early approval," the statement said.

AstraZeneca will seek an Emergency Use Listing from the World Health Organisation for an accelerated pathway to vaccine availability in low-income countries, it added.

"These findings show that we have an effective vaccine that will save many lives. Excitingly,



German health minister Jens Spahn wears a protective mask as he is shown around the vaccine production company IDT Biologika by its general manager Juergen Betzing in Dessau, Germany on Monday as the race to develop a Covid vaccine continues. — *AFP*

we've found that one of our dosing regimens may be around 90 per cent effective and if this dosing regimen is used, more people could be vaccinated with planned vaccine supply," explained Professor Andrew Pollard, Director of the Oxford Vaccine Group and Chief Investigator of the Oxford Vaccine Trial. The result of the Oxford vaccine compares with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, which were recently shown to be 95 per cent and 94.5 per cent effective, respectively.

The Oxford vaccine is comparatively cheaper and easier to store. "This vaccine's efficacy and safety confirm that it will be highly effective against Covid-19 and will have an immediate impact on this public health emergency," AstraZeneca Chief Executive Officer Pascal Soriot said.

— *PTI*

4 Indo-Americans Rhodes Scholars

New York, Nov. 23: Four Indian-Americans are among the cohort of 32 students chosen from the US as Rhodes Scholars virtually for the first time this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The diverse group, that won scholarships to the Oxford University in England, comprises immigrants and students of colour.

American Secretary of the Rhodes Trust Elliot Gerson announced the

names of the 32 Americans chosen as Rhodes Scholars representing the US on Sunday. The four Indian-American students include Swathi R Srinivasan, Vijayasundaram Ramasamy, Garima P Desai and Savarni Sanka.

"Never before has a class of Rhodes Scholars been elected entirely virtually, with both candidates and selectors participating safely, independently and digitally," Gerson said. — *PTI*

Saudi Arabia denies Bibi met crown prince

Jerusalem, Nov. 23: Israeli media reported Monday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu flew to Saudi Arabia for a clandestine meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, which would mark the first known encounter between senior Israeli and Saudi officials.

But, Saudi Arabia on Monday denied Israeli media reports of landmark talks Netanyahu and bin Salman during a visit by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

"I have seen press reports about a purported meeting between HRH the

Crown Prince and Israeli officials during the recent visit by @SecPompeo," Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said in a tweet.

"No such meeting occurred. The only officials present were American and Saudi," Israeli public broadcaster *Kan* and other outlets had reported that the meeting took place Sunday, weeks after the Jewish state reached historic deals to normalise ties with two Saudi allies, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Those deals, known as the Abraham Accords,

were brokered by the administration of US President Donald Trump, who leaves office in less than two months.

Hebrew-language media cited an unnamed Israeli official as saying that Netanyahu and Yossi Cohen, head of Israel's Mossad spy agency, flew to the Saudi city of Neom on Sunday, where they met with the crown prince. The prince was there for talks with visiting US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Flightradar24, which provides live worldwide flight tracking, showed a plane taking off

from Tel Aviv on Monday at around 7:30 p.m. local time and vanishing from radar near Neom around an hour later.

It shows the same flight appearing on radar near Neom and landing at Tel Aviv at around 1 a.m. (local time) Monday. It did not provide any details on the flight. The Israeli PM's office did not respond to requests for comment. Israel recently signed normalisation agreements with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates and has long maintained clandestine security ties with Saudi Arabia. — *Agencies*

NEW | STUDY

Research hints at possibility that life may have existed on the Red Planet 4 billion years ago

Nasa rover data hints at ancient megaflood in Mars

New York, Nov. 23: Giant flash floods once washed through Gale Crater on Mars' equator around four billion years ago, according to a study which hints at the possibility that life may have existed on the Red Planet.

The research, published recently in the journal *Scientific Reports*, assessed data collected by Nasa's Curiosity rover — launched in November 2011 — and found that "gigantic flash floods," likely touched off by the

heat of a meteoritic impact, unleashed the ice stored on the Martian surface. Based on the analysis, scientists including those from Cornell University in the US, said these floods of "unimaginable magnitude" set up gigantic ripples that are tell-tale geologic structures familiar to scientists on the Earth.

"We identified megafloods for the first time using detailed sedimentological data observed by the rover Curiosity," said study co-

author Alberto G. Fairén from Cornell University. According to the scientists, geological features including the work of water and wind have been frozen in time on Mars for about four billion years.

They said these features convey processes that shaped the surface of both the Earth and the Mars in the past. This case includes the occurrence of giant wave-shaped features in sedimentary layers of Gale crater, often called "megaripples" or "antidu-

● **THE RESEARCHERS** said these features convey processes that shaped the surface of both the Earth and the Mars in the past.

nes" that are about 30-feet high and spaced about 450 feet apart, lead author Ezat Heydari, a professor of physics at Jackson State University in the US, noted. The antides are indicative of flowing megafloods at the bottom of

Mars' Gale Crater about four billion years ago, which are identical to the features formed by melting ice on Earth about two million years ago, Heydari added. According to the study, the most likely cause of the Mars flooding was the melting of ice from heat generated by a large impact, which released carbon dioxide and methane from the planet's frozen reservoirs.

The water vapour and release of gases combined to produce a short period

of warm and wet conditions on Mars, the researchers said. They believe the condensation may have formed water vapour clouds, which in turn likely created torrential rain, possibly planetwide. This water may have entered Gale Crater, and combined with water coming down from Mount Sharp in Gale Crater to produce gigantic flash floods, they added.

The Curiosity rover science team had already established that Gale Crater once had persistent la-

kes and streams in the ancient past.

The researchers believe these long-lived bodies of water are good indicators that the crater, as well as Mount Sharp within it, were capable of supporting microbial life.

"Early Mars was an extremely active planet from a geological point of view. The planet had the conditions needed to support the presence of liquid water on the surface — and on the Earth, where there's water, there's life,"



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	44,077.15	0.44
Nifty 50	12,926.45	0.52
S&P 500*	3,581.04	0.66
Dollar (₹)	74.10	0.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.07	-0.63
Euro (₹)	88.04	0.14
Gold (₹)	49,767	0.11
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.63	1.49
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.900	0.391
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.855	3.136

* As of 9:30 PM IST

‘Asset quality of Indiabulls Hsg, IIFL vulnerable’

Asset quality at non-bank lenders IIFL Finance and Indiabulls Housing Finance is "vulnerable" due to the economic contraction, Moody's Investors Service said. It said Muthoot Finance, the third NBFC it rates, is better positioned because of its focus on the gold loans. Loan collections have shown an improvement for all the three NBFCs despite the six-month loan repayments moratorium ending in August.

Gland Pharma shares rise 40% in two sessions



After decent listing gains last week, Gland Pharma shares gained another 15 per cent on positive management commentary. The shares gained 19.99 per cent intra-day to hit a high of Rs 2,184.50 on the BSE and later closed at Rs 2,091.85, up 14.91 per cent. Gland Pharma has gained 39.43 per cent in just two trading sessions from its public issue price of Rs 1,500 per share of Re 1 face value.

UK biopharma platform buys into Celon Labs

A newly incorporated London-based biopharmaceutical platform has acquired a majority stake in Celon Laboratories Private Limited, a Hyderabad-based specialty generics company having presence in India and emerging markets. The Platform is backed by CDC Group, the UK's publicly owned impact investor, Development Partners International via its ADP III fund and the European Bank for Reconstruction & Development.

Fake Xiaomi products worth ₹33 lakh seized

Xiaomi said counterfeit products with the company's branding were seized from four suppliers in Chennai and three suppliers in Bengaluru. The fake products were worth Rs 33 lakh. As a part of its proactive anti-counterfeit programme, Xiaomi filed complaints with the local police stations, and raids were conducted in the market in October and November. Over 3,000 products were seized.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

■ On-tap banking licence already available NBFCs may prefer to skip bank status

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, NOV. 23

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) internal working group's recommendation to allow large Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs) to convert into front line banks may see few takers, going by the past experience. The on-tap Universal Banking Licence is any-how available to most NBFCs and other players since 2016; however, none have opted for going down the banking route so far. According to experts, fulfilling the statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) and cash reserve ratio (CRR) requirement for NBFCs will play an important role in decision making for most of these lenders. The impact of SLR/CRR will have a severe negative impact on NBFC's margin profile as well as on their current cashflow patterns. After the IL&FS crisis, most NBFCs have improved their risk practices and currently are sitting on cash piles to avoid any undue defaults or liquidity freeze, pointed out experts. The internal working group (IWG) headed by executive director P. K. Mohanty has recommended that well-run large NBFCs with an asset size of Rs 50,000 crore and above, including those owned by a corporate house, may be considered for conversion into banks subject to the completion of



10 years of operations, and tougher promoter stake dilution guidelines (49 per cent stake before applying, with a 10-year timeline to reach 26 per cent cap). Umesh Revankar, MD & CEO at Shiram Transport Finance, said, "The regulator had opened doors for on-tap universal banking licence in 2016 and for small finance bank licence in 2018, so what we are seeing in terms of opening up the sector is not a first from RBI, but opening up candidature for large corporate/industrial houses and well-run large NBFCs for converting to a private sector bank is a progressive step indeed." "Shriram Transport Finance, being a large NBFC predominantly in the vehicle finance space, we have built pan-India reach with strong last-mile connectivity, all the while delivering a focused product portfolio, backed by speed & quality, to mostly the underbanked and unbanked customers. In contrast, a bank has to provide a very wide range of

Reforms momentum to continue: Sitharaman

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, NOV. 23

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday assured industry that the momentum of economic reforms will continue to make India a hotspot of global investment. Noting that the government has used the pandemic to push ahead with long pending reforms, Sitharaman said, "...The momentum for reform shall continue. Several more active reform-related steps are being taken up." The financial sector is being professionalised and the government will continue with disinvestment agenda, she added, addressing a CII event. The minister also said the government will speed up the new privatisation policy for public sector units. In order to bring in further ease for global players to set up shops here, she said an effective unified single window where access to regulators, policymakers and facilitators would be available at one point. Referring to the Prime Minister's meeting with representatives from 20 of the world's largest pension and sovereign wealth funds earlier this month, she said the emphasis of the upcoming budget is going to be what the global investor community exactly looking from India in this changing environment.

Investment proposals from HK going into deep freezer

SHRUTI SRIVASTAVA NOV. 23



India is subjecting foreign investment proposals from Hong Kong at par with China as part of a new policy that makes approval mandatory for plans from countries that share a land border, a person with the knowledge of the matter said. Nearly 140 investment proposals valued at over \$1.75 billion, mostly from China and Hong Kong—China's special administrative region—have been put on hold pending scrutiny, the person said asking not to be identified. Amidst a border stand off with China, the Indian government tight-

ened rules for foreign direct investment from all nations sharing a land border, making scrutiny mandatory for such investments—a restriction that was earlier applicable only to Pakistan and Bangladesh. The delays may complicate deal-making and impact the flow of capital

from private equity firms and hedge funds, which often include investors domiciled in China or Hong Kong. This may starve Indian companies of investment in the midst of the pandemic-induced economic contraction. The curbs also apply when the beneficial owner of the proposed investment is situated in any of India's neighbours. A government panel constituted to approve these proposals is yet to decide on the rules, including on beneficial ownership. Tensions between the two giant Asian economies have been escalating since May. —Bloomberg

Diwali sales bounce for organised retailers

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 23

Organised retail saw Diwali sales clocking about 88 per cent of last year. Some of the categories have even seen growth over last year. The Covid-hit Diwali this year managed to garner 87 to 88 per cent sales of last year for the organised retailers. From 69 per cent sales in October, Diwali season saw a substantial recovery, finds the Retailers Association of India. "While footfalls were still down, customers have been walking with a clear purpose of what to buy. This saw conversions going up and the bill sizes

were almost double that of last Diwali. While some categories did well, some lagged behind," said Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO, RAI. Shopping malls too witnessed some activity during the festive days. "While the dwell time has decreased, the ticket size has increased drastically. During the Navratri and Diwali season, shopping malls across the country reported an increase in footfalls on a week-on-week basis and witnessed a continued growth during the weekends. We are hoping to reach 80 per cent of sales on an average," said Amitabh Taneja, chairman, Shopping Centres

Association of India. Festive-induced shopping has added some impetus to the garments category. However, growth was seen only in the occasion wear and leisure-wear segments. Athletic-wear, including shoes, saw good growth of about 20 per cent as compared to last year's Diwali shopping period. Similarly, luxury brands and occasion-wear brands have also indicated double-digit growth. Work-from-home category products continued to show faster recovery, especially electronics and consumer durables, with some segments registering double digit growth of about 15 to 18 per cent.

Rajan, Acharya blast proposal for big corporate entry into banking

New Delhi, Nov. 23: The RBI working group's proposal to allow corporate houses to set up banks is a "bombshell" and at this juncture, it is more important to stick to the tried and tested limits on involvement of business houses in the banking sector, according to an article jointly written by former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan and ex-deputy governor Viral Acharya. They also said that the proposal is "best left on the shelf". "The history of... connected lending is invariably disastrous how can the bank make good loans when it is owned by the borrower? Even an independent committed regulator, with all the information in the world, finds it difficult to be in every nook and corner of the financial system to stop poor lending," the article said. Last week, an Internal Working Group (IWG) set up by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) made various recommendations, including that a large corporate may be permitted to promote banks. Referring to the report, the article said, "its most important recommendation, couched amidst a

S&P sceptical NUPUR ANAND MUMBAI, NOV. 23 S&P Global Ratings said on Monday a recommendation from the RBI committee to allow industrial conglomerates to set up banks is fraught with risk. "The working group's concerns regarding conflict of interest, concentration of economic power, and financial stability in allowing corporates to own banks are potential risks," S&P Global Ratings said in a note. Corporate ownership of banks raises the risk of inter-group lending, diversion of funds and reputational exposure, it said. —Reuters

The IWG has suggested significant amendments to the Banking Regulation Act of 1949, aimed at increasing the RBI's powers, before allowing corporate houses into banking. "Yet if sound regulation and supervision were only a matter of legislation, India would not have an NPA problem. It is hard not to see these proposed amendments as a subtle way for the IWG to undercut a recommendation it may have had little power over. "In sum, many of the technical rationalisations proposed by the IWG are worth adopting, while its main recommendation -- to allow Indian corporate houses into banking -- is best left on the shelf," they opined. Rajan and Acharya noted that the rationales for not allowing industrial houses into banking are then primarily two. First, industrial houses need financing, and they can get it easily, with no questions asked, if they have an in-house bank. The second reason to prohibit corporate entry into banking is that it will further exacerbate the concentration of economic (and political) power in certain business houses. —PTI

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, NOV. 23

India is a net exporter of agricultural machinery, with tractors contributing to a lion's share of the exports. Despite lock-down disruptions and container issues, tractor-makers could make significant exports in the first half of this year. In 2019-20, agricultural machinery earned export revenues of \$1,024.58 million. By witnessing a positive trade balance of \$708.3 million, India is a net exporter of agricultural equipment. India exports these equipment to some of the advanced countries like the US, UK, Germany, and Italy apart from Africa, ASEAN and SAARC countries. Tractors accounted for \$766 million, or 75 per cent, of the agricultural equipment exports. Even during the April-September period of this year, despite the

lock-down and container availability issues, tractor manufacturers clocked exports of \$905 million. Mahindra and Mahindra is the market leader in the tractor segment, followed by TAFE. Together these companies account for more than 60 per cent of the tractor market share in India. The key customers of Indian tractors are in the US, Turkey, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Algeria, sub-Saharan Africa, Vietnam, Thailand and Ukraine. Indian manufacturers are capable of producing a wide range of advanced tractors with capacities ranging from 20 HP to 120 HP. India also exports harvesting and threshing machinery, cleaning equipment as well as grading and sorting machinery. "India is a world leader in exporting solar irrigation

pumps. India being largely an agrarian economy, mechanization has a significant potential," said Engineering Export Promotion Council India chairman Mahesh Desai. India has a large global market to explore in agricultural machinery. The global agriculture equipment market is projected to reach \$279.5 billion by 2025, growing at a CAGR of 6.5 per cent from 2018 to 2025. Currently, the global trade is valued \$90 billion and India has a meagre share of 1.4 per cent. According to industry experts, some of the manufacturers have realised the importance of complying with international quality standards, especially when exporting to Europe and North America. Better compliance of these standards will help Indian products grab a larger share in the global trade.

New Suzuki V-Strom 650XT ABS launched at ₹8.84 L

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, NOV 23

Suzuki Motorcycle on Monday launched a new BS6 variant of the V-Strom 650XT ABS, the ultimate adventure tourer bike

priced at Rs 8.84 lakh. With the new V-Strom 650XT, the Japanese automaker has introduced its first premium segment bike with a BS6 engine. The bike falls in the middleweight adventure category.



Is India letting cronyism get deeper into banking?

ANDY MUKHERJEE NOV. 23

Is India opening the door for big businesses to take over its banking industry? A working group set up by the Reserve Bank has suggestions for what to do with ownership of private-sector banks. Large industrial houses may be permitted to own controlling stakes, it says, but only after strengthening regulation and supervision to deal with the problem of "connected lending" - basically diverting depositors' funds to their other businesses. From the conditional nature of the recommen-

dation, it doesn't appear that the regulator will soon reverse its policy of keeping conglomerates away from banking. But the report could pave the way for backdoor entry. Large groups could acquire non-bank finance firms, which may be allowed to convert into banks. In India's post-Covid desperation for capital, the financial system might go from being state-dominated to tycoon-led. The 1997-98 Asian financial crisis ought to be a cautionary tale. In Indonesia, unchecked commingling of financial and non-financial activities within a corporate

group pushed up the cost of bank rescue to 40 per cent of 1998 GDP. From telecommunications to transportation, India's business landscape is already starting to resemble a Monopoly board. An Indian reprise of J.P. Morgan, the US banker-businessman who used finance to control railroad pricing and stitch together a steel behemoth, would bring the country even closer to the American Gilded Age of the late 19th century. Crony capitalism has built up slowly in India, emerging as a Frankenstein's monster a decade and a half after



politicians began to unchain the private sector in the early 1990s. That's when-in the name of public-private partnership and rapid economic growth-serious misallocation of credit got under way. In 2018, financier IL&FS Group, which wrote the playbook on

how to cynically exploit a poor country's desire for better infrastructure, went bankrupt. The ensuing funding crunch brought down several titans who were controlling hefty assets with slivers of equity. The great churning since then has reduced competition and raised concentration. Today, the names of domestic balance sheets available to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for any serious heavy lifting can fit on the back of a postage stamp. But his need to find fresh risk-taking private capital is high, especially after the carnage from the pandem-

ic. Per capita gross domestic product in 2025 may be 12 per cent below pre-virus estimates, "implying the largest amount of scarring among major economies globally," says Oxford Economics' Priyanka Kishore. That's the backdrop to the RBI internal group's review of bank ownership. The report came just as the regulator solemnised the sale to Singapore's DBS Group Holdings Ltd of one such lender, the third failure of a major deposit-taking institution in 15 months. Before that shotgun marriage, the country had 22 universal

banks (and 10 so-called small finance banks) in the private sector, with a 30 per cent share of deposits, up from 13 per cent two decades ago. Foreign banks' low 5 per cent share has remained unchanged. Dominant public-sector banks' market share is down to 65 per cent, from 82 per cent in 2000. This process will only accelerate as state-run institutions consolidate to four from 12. More private banking capital will no doubt be needed. Still, should the country really look to big business to provide it? —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Prajnesh goes down in final

Orlando: Indian tennis player Prajnesh Gunneswaran ended runner-up at the Orlando Open, losing the summit clash of the ATP Challenger event to American Brandon Nakashima, here.

Prajnesh did not have the required power in his strokes to hurt the American, losing 3-6 4-6 in the \$52,080 hard court tournament on Sunday. He could convert none of the eight break chances that came his way in an hour and 28 minute contest. It is Prajnesh's second straight runner-up finish. He had reached the final at the Cary Challenger last week. The result helped Prajnesh to move to 128 from 137. He has already locked the India number one rank with his Orlando show. Serving at 2-3, 30-all, Prajnesh buried a forehand to the net to be down a break point but saved it with an ace. Another forehand error by Prajnesh gave Nakashima another chance but the Indian saved that too with a well set-up winner. — PTI

BCCI condoles Bhaskaran's death

New Delhi: The BCCI on Monday condoled the death of former Kerala first-class cricketer CK Bhaskaran Nair, who had also played an unofficial first-class game against then Ceylon.

Bhaskaran breathed his last in Houston, USA, where he practised medicine. He was 79. "The BCCI mourns the death of Dr. CK Bhaskaran Nair. The 79-year-old passed away on 21st November 2020 at Houston in the United States of America (USA)," the Board stated in a condolence message.

Nair, a former Ranji Trophy cricketer, was born in 1941 in Thalassery in Kerala. He picked 106 wickets in 42 first-class matches in a 12-year career spanning from 1957 to 1969. He had five five-wicket hauls and scored 580 runs, with the highest being 76 not out. — PTI

Afridi misses SL flight ahead of LPL

Lahore: Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi on Monday missed his flight to Sri Lanka and will be unavailable for at least the first two matches of his franchise Galle Gladiators in the inaugural Lanka Premier League.

The former Pakistan captain tweeted about the same, adding to the agony of the tournament organisers after a spate of heavyweight pullouts. "Missed my flight to Colombo today morning. Nothing to worry, I'll be reaching soon to take part in the LPL for Galle Gladiators. Look forward to joining my teammates," Afridi wrote on his Twitter handle. Galle Gladiators will play their first match on November 27 against Jaffna Stallions, a day after the inaugural season opener between Kandy Tuskers and Colombo Kings. — PTI

VFI told to pay ₹4 cr to Baseline

New Delhi: The Volleyball Federation of India (VFI) has been ordered to pay ₹4 crore as compensation to Baseline Ventures for terminating its contract with the sports event management company for conducting the Pro Volleyball League.

In an award delivered by sole arbitrator Justice (ret'd) K Kannan, the VFI has also been ordered to pay ₹5 lakh legal fee and 12 per cent interest from the date of commencement of arbitral proceedings, Baseline Ventures said in a release on Monday. — PTI

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Jamshedpur vs Chennaiyin from 7:20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Champions League: Rennes vs Chelsea from 11:25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Krasnodar vs Sevilla from 11:25 pm on Sony Six; Manchester United vs Istanbul Basaksehir from 1:30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Six; Dynamo Kyiv vs Barcelona from 1:30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1; Paris St Germain vs Leipzig from 1:30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 3; Juventus vs Ferencvaros from 1:30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2

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.

High-flying Reds

Jota, Firmino score as Liverpool bulldoze Leicester

London, Nov. 23: Liverpool shrugged off an injury crisis to move level on points with Tottenham at the top of the Premier League with a 3-0 win over Leicester, while 10-man Arsenal were left to cling on for a 0-0 draw at Leeds by Nicolas Pepe's red card on Sunday.

The champions were without the injured Virgil van Dijk, Joe Gomez, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Jordan Henderson, Thiago Alcantara, Xherdan Shaqiri and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, while top scorer Mohamed Salah was absent due to a positive Coronavirus test.

Yet, Jurgen Klopp's men were still imperious in easing past a Leicester side that had started the weekend on top of the table.

The Foxes did not do themselves any favours when Jonny Evans turned James Milner's corner into his own net to reward Liverpool's bright start.

Diogo Jota then became the first ever Liverpool player to score in his first four home league games with a downward header from Andy Robertson's cross. Only a combination of goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel and the woodwork kept Liverpool from a repeat of the 4-0 thrashing they dished out to Leicester when the sides last met in December.

But Robert Firmino then rounded off a fine night for the champions with a towering header from another Milner corner six minutes from time.

Liverpool have now set a new club record of 64 unbeaten league games at Anfield.

PEPE LETS ARSENAL DOWN

Leicester's defeat means Arsenal are just five points off the top four, but Mikel Arteta was furious at Pepe's lack of discipline as the Gunners were lucky to escape with a point at Elland Road where they played 0-0 stalemate with Leeds.

Leeds are 14th after their third consecutive match without a win, but Marcelo Bielsa's men were left cursing their luck as Rodrigo, Patrick Bamford and Raphinha all hit the woodwork in the closing stages.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang had been given a rare chance in the central striker's role, but he was starved of service even before Pepe's dismissal.

Aubameyang's penalty in a 1-0 win at Manchester United last month is the only league goal Arsenal have now scored for nearly 500 minutes.

Meanwhile, Everton recovered from three straight defeats to beat Fulham 3-2 thanks to a double from Dominic Calvert-Lewin. — AFP

RAINA PLEDGES TO LOOK AFTER 34 SCHOOLS

New Delhi, Nov. 23: Former India cricketer Suresh Raina has pledged to build sanitation and drinking water facilities at 34 government schools across Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and NCR.

Raina has decided to ring in his 34th birthday on November 27 with a series of philanthropic activities in association with his NGO, the Gracia Raina Foundation (GRF), named after his daughter. The initiative will ensure health and hygiene to over 10,000 children studying in these schools.

Raina, along with his wife Priyanka, a co-founder of the foundation kicked off his birthday week by inaugurating the upgraded drinking water facility, separate toilets for boys and girls, hand washing, dish washing area and smart classrooms at Govt Composite Middle School, Noor Nagar Sihani, Ghaziabad as part of the joint project of Gracia Raina Foundation and Yuva Unstoppable. — PTI



Kasper Schmeichel (left) of Leicester City fights for the ball with Liverpool's Roberto Firmino during their English Premier League football match at Anfield in Liverpool, North West England, on Sunday. Liverpool won 3-0. — AFP



Zlatan's brace blanks Napoli

Milan, Nov. 23: Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored twice to bring his tally to 10 league goals this season before limping off with a muscle strain as AC Milan stayed top in Serie 'A' on Sunday with a 3-1 win at 10-man Napoli.

Milan move back two points ahead of Sassuolo — 2-0 winners earlier at Hellas Verona — with Roma third after Henrikh Mkhitaryan netted a brace in a dominant 3-0 win over Parma.

Ibrahimovic continued his fine form, heading in a Theo Hernandez cross after 20 minutes, sending in the second with his knee nine minutes after the break.

But the 39-year-old pulled up clutching his left hamstring and was substituted after 79 minutes.

The Swede has scored in all six games he has played this season, having missed two after contracting Coronavirus.

Napoli played the final half an hour a man down after Tiemoue Bakayoko was sent off for two yellow cards, just after Dries Mertens had pulled a goal back for the hosts.

Norwegian Jens Petter Hauge completed the scoring five minutes into injury time, the 21-year-old getting his first Serie A goal. — AFP



Zlatan Ibrahimovic of AC Milan in action against Napoli during their Italian League match at the San Paolo stadium in Naples on Sunday. — AFP

YUSUF STRIKES TWICE IN LILLE'S 4-0 VICTORY

Paris, Nov. 23: Turkey international Yusuf Yazici struck twice as Lille ended a three-game winless run in French League with a 4-0 victory over Lorient that cut Paris Saint-Germain's lead at the top to two points.

Yazici slotted home from a Jonathan Bamba pass to put Lille ahead on 28 minutes before flicking in a Jonathan David cross to double the advantage early in the second half.

The midfielder then turned provider for Luiz Araujo to add a third for Lille on the hour, with Jonathan David notching his long-awaited first goal for the club in the closing stages.

Meanwhile, Christophe Galtier's side reclaimed second place from Lyon, who beat Angers 1-0 earlier in the day courtesy of a late winner from Zimbabwe striker Tino Kadewere. — AFP

ISAK SHINES AS SOCIEDAD EDGE PAST CADIZ 1-0

Madrid, Nov. 23: Real Sociedad moved three points clear at the top of La Liga on Sunday after Alexander Isak's goal proved the difference in a 1-0 win over Cadiz.

Isak headed in Adnan Januzaj's cross shortly after the hour mark at the Ramon Carranza to secure a sixth consecutive league victory for La Real.

An excellent start to the season shows no sign of abating, with Imanol Alguacil's side now three points clear of second-placed Atletico Madrid, albeit having played two games more.

They have scored an impressive 21 goals from their opening 10 matches, the highest tally in the league, and conceded only four. After travelling to AZ Alkmaar in the Europa League on Thursday, Real Sociedad play at home to Villarreal, who sit third and are the league's other surprise high-fliers.

Defeat means Cadiz sit sixth, just above Sevilla. Getafe were earlier held to a goalless draw by Eibar. — AFP

VIRAT'S WORDS HELPED ME STAY STRONG: SIRAJ

Sydney, Nov. 23: Away from family while grieving the recent loss of his father, Indian pacer Mohammed Siraj says skipper Virat Kohli's advice to "be strong" has helped him stay afloat as he gears up for a gruelling series against Australia.

Siraj's father Mohammed Ghouse, 53, died due to a lung ailment in Hyderabad last week and despite BCCI offering him the option to return home, the fast bowler decided to stay put on national duty.

"Virat bhai said 'Miyaan tension maat le (don't be tense) and be strong. Your dad wanted you to play for India. So, do that and don't stress,' the Siraj told *bcci.tv* on the sidelines of India's training session.

"The skipper told me, 'If you can be strong in this situation, it will only help you'. So those were positive words from the Indian captain and it felt nice," the Hyderabad based pacer further added. — PTI

Aridane stars as Hyderabad win

Goa, Nov. 23: Hyderabad FC began their Indian Super League Season 7 campaign with a solitary goal win over Odisha FC, at the GMC Stadium in Goa on Monday. Debutant Aridane Santana (35') netted a penalty that proved to be the difference between the two sides, as Hyderabad kept their first-ever clean sheet in the league.

Hyderabad were all over Odisha's territory in the opening minutes of the game, forcing their opponents to play deep. They won a series of corners in the first 10 minutes.

The Nizams' first real chance arrived in the 6th minute when Luis Sastre whipped a perfect delivery into the box but Santana failed to direct his header towards goal. That the visitors had worked on their set-pieces was evident. A smartly-executed corner in the 10th minute saw Akash Mishra force Odisha goalkeeper Arshdeep Singh into a save.

After constant probing, Hyderabad got their reward in the form of a penalty. Aridane Santana played Halicharan Narzary clear on goal, and his effort was handled by Odisha skipper Steven Taylor.

Santana kept his composure and slotted home in the 35th minute.

Hyderabad keeper Subrata Paul had to wait until the 40th minute to make his first save, thwarting Odisha striker Manuel Onwu. The Nizams had chances to extend their lead but the outstanding Singh made a couple of good saves just before the breather.

Minutes after the restart, Odisha had their best opportunity to restore parity. But Nandhakumar Sekar's poor first touch allowed Mishra to make a crucial goal-saving tackle. At the hour mark, Odisha had yet another chance. Diego Mauricio ghosted past his marker and squared a pass into the area to Onwu, whose low shot was kept out by Paul.

Hyderabad almost doubled the lead from a set-piece but Joao Victor's goal was rightly ruled offside. Liston Colaco almost produced a moment of magic in the 67th minute, when he dribbled from the half-way mark into the box but was unable to find the finish. In the end, though, the misses did not matter, as Hyderabad held on for the win. — Agencies

CHENNAIYIN LOCK HORNS WITH JAMSHEDPUR FC

Vasco, Nov. 23: Chennaiyin FC will have their task cut out as they go up against two individuals who charted their stunning comeback last season but will turn out for Jamshedpur FC in their Indian Super League game here on Tuesday.

Chennaiyin fans will find not one, but three of their former heroes in the opposing dug-out when their team takes on Jamshedpur FC at the Tilak Maidan Stadium.

Coach Owen Coyle was the mastermind behind last season's stunning recovery that saw Chennaiyin go from rock bottom to within a game of the ISL title.

Jamshedpur conceded 35 goals last season with only Hyderabad FC having a more porous defence. It remains to be seen whether the presence of former Sunderland defender Peter Hartley and Nigerian centre-back Stephen Eze will improve things in this regard.

For Chennaiyin, the biggest task will be to fill the gaps left behind by departing players. Of the foreign contingent from last season, only new captain Rafael Crivellaro and defender Eli Sabia remain. — PTI



Daniil Medvedev of Russia holds up the winner's trophy after defeating Dominic Thiem of Austria 4-6, 7-6 (2), 6-4 in the final of the ATP World Finals at the O2 arena in London on Sunday. — Agencies

Medvedev stuns Thiem to win title

London, Nov. 23: Daniil Medvedev came from behind to beat US Open champion Dominic Thiem in a gripping encounter and win the biggest title of his career at the ATP Finals in London on Sunday.

The Russian fourth seed was second best for large periods at the empty O2 Arena but found a way back into the contest and prevailed 4-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-4.

Medvedev, who beat five-time champion Novak Djokovic and world number two Rafael Nadal earlier in the week, is the first man to beat all three of the world's top-ranked players at the season finale.

The giant Russian, 24, has now won 10 consecutive matches following his title earlier this month at the Paris Masters and his victory will taste sweet a year after a winless debut in London.

But it is a painful defeat

for Thiem, who also lost in the final of the elite eight-man event last year, to Stefanos Tsitsipas.

"What a match. One of my best victories, two hours and 42 minutes, three sets against an amazing player," said Medvedev. Thiem weathered early pressure from Medvedev and secured the first break of the match in the fifth game, when the Russian served a double fault.

He sealed the set in fortunate fashion when his forehand clipped the net and looped over Medvedev's racket.

Meanwhile, Wesley Koolhof and Nikola Pietrangeli beat Jurgen Melzer and Edouard Roger-Vasselin 6-2, 3-6, 10-5 to claim the ATP Finals doubles trophy. It was a case of third time lucky for the fifth seeds, who lost their first two finals, in Marseille and at the US Open, earlier in the year. — AFP