

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | MONDAY 30 | NOVEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 31°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: 0.7 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Karthigai 15
Tithi: Pournami/ Prathamai
Star:Krithigai/ Rohini
Rahukalam:
7.30 am to 9 pm
Yamagandam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.00 am
Zohar: 12.02 pm
Asar: 3.14 pm
Maghrib: 5.40 pm
Isha: 6.55 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.41 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.16 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 5.44 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 7.44 AM

CORONA C O U N T

CASES	DEATHS
(+37,685)	(+418)
94,30,724	1,37,151

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 1,459)
TN: 7,80,505 1,459

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

6,28,59,511

DEATHS

14,62,784

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info

Naveen expels his ex-blue-eyed boy and 3-time MLA Panigrahi

Bhubaneswar: Ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president Naveen Patnaik on Sunday expelled Gopalpur MLA Pradeep Panigrahi from the regional party on charge of "anti- people" activities. An official release issued by the BJD said: "Pradeep Panigrahi, MLA Gopalpur is expelled from the primary membership of the party with immediate effect for his anti-people activities." The three-time MLA and a former minister, is the first leader in the regional party who has been expelled on charge of "anti-people" activities, though many members in the past were removed from the BJD on "anti-party" charges. Though the BJD's official order signed by its general secretary (Media Affair) Manas Ranjan Mangaraj mentioned Panigrahi's "anti-people" activities, it was not clarified the nature of the offence he allegedly indulged in. The party action against Panigrahi came after the anti-corruption vigilance wing established his alleged association with suspended Indian Forest Service Officer (IFS) Abhay Kant Pathak and his son Akash Kumar Pathak. — PTI

COUNTER POINT



You are so lucky to have a Cow Cabinet to take care of your problems!

Man booked under new conversion law

Lucknow, Nov. 29: Uttar Pradesh has registered its first case under the new anti-conversion law in Bareilly district on Saturday based on a complaint from the father of a young woman. A case was registered by Tikaram, a resident of Sharif Nagar village, who accused a man Uvaish

Ahmed of the same village of trying to convert his daughter through "allurement". According to the complaint, Mr Tikaram's daughter and Mr Ahmed studied together in Class 12. Three years ago, the accused started exerting pressure on her to undergo religious conversion and perform 'nikaah' (mar-

riage). But when the woman opposed, he threatened to kidnap her, Mr Tikaram alleged. The complainant's daughter married someone else in June this year. However, Mr Ahmed continued to harass her family members, he said. He went to Mr Tikaram's house on Saturday and asked him to

bring his daughter back from her in-laws' house. Threatening her family, the accused told Mr Tikaram that the woman will have to undergo religious conversion and marry him, according to the complaint. Mr Tikaram then approached the police, and a case was registered against the accused. — PTI



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Mike Tyson makes comeback in boxing ring



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Farmers reject Shah proposal

■ Will not move to Burari as it is like an open jail, says BKU leader

SANJAY KAW AND BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
JDC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

Thousands of farmers protesting at Delhi's borders against the Centre's new farm laws on Sunday rejected Union home minister Amit Shah's proposal for an early discussion on their grievances, conditional to their moving to a designated protest site in the national capital's Burari area.

A joint forum of about 30 farmers' unions said the government should have approached them with "an open heart" and not put pre-conditions for talks. "We have decided that we will stay put at Delhi's borders. We will not go to Burari as it is like an open jail," Bharatiya Kisan Union (Dakaunda) president Buta Singh Burjgill said.

The leaders spearheading the protests also urged the Centre to withdraw the new laws and authorise a Cabinet committee or a group of ministers to hold future discussions. They, however, made it clear that no political party would be allowed to share the stage with them.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Krantikari) leader Sarjeet Singh Phul threatened that the farmers were ready to block all the five entry points to Delhi. ■ P4



Farmers protest at Singhu border during their 'Delhi Chalo' march against the Centre's new farm laws, in New Delhi, Sunday. — PTI

Farmers being misled by forces from abroad: BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 24

Accusing the Congress and its former ally, the Shironami Akali Dal, of propping up the ongoing farmers' protests, the BJP on Sunday claimed that the protest had become a "lion's ride" for both these parties, and now "the lion doesn't listen to them, nor can they disembark". The BJP also claimed the farmers were being misled by "forces from abroad" and advised them they should understand such "designs, and become wiser".

Protests are not political, insists home minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

Union home minister Amit Shah said here on Sunday that farmer protests against the new farm bills were apolitical. He defended the bills saying they were for welfare of farmers. "After a long time, farmers are going to come out of a locked system," he told reporters here.

Welcoming political rivals taking up the farmer's cause, Mr Shah said "whoever wants to oppose it politically, let them do it."

IT raids unearth ₹450 cr undisclosed income in TN

New Delhi, Nov. 29: The Income-tax department has detected undisclosed income of ₹450 crore after it searched an IT SEZ developer, its former director and a stainless steel supplier based in Tamil Nadu, the CBDT said on Sunday.

The searches were carried out at 16 premises in Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Cuddalore on November 27, it said.

"The searches, so far, have resulted in the detection of undisclosed income of more than Rs 450 crore," the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said in a statement.

The Board is the administrative authority for the tax department.

In the case of the ex-director of the information technology special economic zone (IT SEZ), the taxman unearthed evidences of about Rs 100 crore "accumulated by the person and his family members in the past 3 years."

"The search further unearthed that the IT SEZ developer claimed bogus work-in-progress expenses of about Rs 160 crore in an under-construction project," the statement said.

"The entity had also claimed capital expenses of around Rs 30 crore on account of bogus consultancy fees in an operational project and inadmissible interest expenses to the extent of Rs 20 crore was also claimed by the

entity," it said.

In the case of the Chennai-based stainless steel supplier, it was found that the group has been conducting three sets of sales: accounted; unaccounted and partly-accounted.

"The unaccounted and partly-accounted sales amount to more than 25 per cent of the total sales each year. The group has provided sales accommodation bills to various customers and received commission of more than 10 per cent on these transactions," it said. "While the quantification of unaccounted income is being carried out currently, it is estimated to be around Rs 100 crore." — PTI

AFGHAN BLASTS KILL 31 TROOPS, 3 CIVILIANS

Kabul, Nov. 29: Afghan officials said Sunday at least 34 people were killed in two separate suicide bombings that targeted a military base and a provincial chief.

In eastern Ghazni province, officials said 31 soldiers were killed and 24 others wounded when the attacker drove a military humvee full of explosives onto an army commando base before detonating the car bomb.

A suicide car bomber targeted the convoy of a provincial council chief in Zubal, killing at least three people.

— PTI

Rajini to meet dist secys today, may clear the air

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV 29

Will he? Won't he? The million dollar question might find an answer today as Superstar Rajinikanth is slated to meet secretaries of his Rajini Makkal Mandram. The secretaries will gather at the Raghavendra kalyana mandapam and the star can also be expected to attend in-person as the start of his political career could be on the line.

Urged to rethink on his expressing his wish to stay away from electoral politics on October 29, perhaps due to health reasons, he will meet the district secretaries of RMM to announce his decision about contesting in next year's Assembly polls. Sources indicates that an announcement is certainly expected on Monday since Rajini himself had declared that he would make his stand known after consulting Mandram officials.

Rajini had hinted that his long awaited political entry would be delayed as concerns had been expressed about the potential risks to his



health during the pandemic. A letter available in the public domain hinted that the actor had been advised to restrict travel since he has a kidney condition and could be vulnerable to the Covid-19 virus. The star was to disown the letter and yet admitted that in the letter "the doctor's advice is true".

The actor who had shown an interest in entering politics was tipped to meet Amit Shah of BJP when the Union Home Minister came to Chennai this month. He did not come to meet Mr Shah but the auditor S.Gurumurthy is said to have conveyed Rajini's thinking on political entry to Mr Shah. Since then the buzz has only risen with the news of the meeting with district secretaries of Rajini fans' outfit. ■ P2

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SHORT TAKES

Creating awareness on organ donation

Chennai, Nov. 29: With its social initiative #NoMoreWaiting for a second year, Edelweiss Tokio Life Insurance unveiled an educational program on organ donation and a plan to build corpus for underprivileged organ recipients. The insurer will continue its partnership with MOHAN Foundation, an NGO actively working for the cause. The insurer has again roped in Rahul Bose, actor and social activist, as the face of the initiative and aims to harness his social influence in spreading awareness for this cause.

Commenting on the organ donation initiative, Sumit Rai, MD & CEO, Edelweiss Tokio Life Insurance said, "We deeply resonate with the cause of organ donation because it coincides with our organisation's vision of protecting people's dreams and aspirations."

AI plans direct flights on Chennai-London route from Jan.

New Delhi, Nov. 29: Air India is planning to operate non-stop flights on the Chennai-London route from January next year, making Tamil Nadu's capital the ninth city to be connected with the British capital. "We have plans to commence direct operations between Chennai and London from January, 2021," the spokesperson said.

Scheduled international passenger flights continue to remain suspended in India since March 23 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, airlines have been permitted to operate special international flights under the Vande Bharat Mission since May and under the bilateral air bubble pacts since July. Flights between India and the UK have been operating under an air bubble pact only post the lockdown.

Air India is currently operating non-stop flights to London from Delhi (seven flights a week), Mumbai (four flights a week), Kochi (three flights a week), Ahmedabad (two flights a week), Bengaluru (two flights a week), Goa (two flights a week), Kolkata (one flight a week) and Amritsar (one flight a week), an airline spokesperson told PTI. Asked how has been the occupancy rate in its London flights after the coronavirus-induced lockdown, the spokesperson said the "load factors have been generally good". "Some of the stations like Delhi, Kochi, Goa and Ahmedabad have seen quite a heavy demand (for London flights)," the spokesperson said. — PTI

Rains likely in TN, Kerala, coastal Andhra

Chennai, Nov. 29: A well-marked low pressure area lay over Bay of Bengal and it is very likely to concentrate into a depression and bring rains in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and south coastal Andhra Pradesh till December 3, the India Meteorological Department said on Sunday.

The low pressure area on Saturday over south Andaman Sea and adjoining areas of southeast Bay of Bengal has organised into a well marked low pressure area, the regional Met centre said in a bulletin. "It is very likely to concentrate into a depression during next 36 hours and likely to intensify further thereafter. It is likely to move west-northwestwards and reach near south Tamil Nadu coast around December 2."

Under the influence of the system, light to moderate rainfall or thundershower is likely over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal till December 3. The showers, in such regions, starting with isolated places, could extend to many areas and then spread to most places during the next four days, the bulletin said.

The IMD tweeted, "Scattered to widespread rainfall activity very likely over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry & Karaikal, Kerala & Mahe, Lakshadweep, south coastal Andhra Pradesh and south Rayalaseema during 1 to 3 December, 2020."

Cine-shooting permitted, call for resuming NMR

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, NOV. 29

As the Southern Railway has permitted cine-shooting using the hill train in the Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR), a plea has come up for resuming regular train services in NMR to charm the tourists besides catering to the needs of the local populace.

A Mumbai-based film-making unit was allowed to use the NMR train and track between Coonoor and Ketti on Saturday to film a few scenes.

S. Ananthkrishnan, a senior member of the Citizens' Forum of Coonoor, said that the NMR was off the track since March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Though there were media reports in late September that the Nilgiris district administration had given its nod for regular NMR train services from October, the Southern Railway denied it and announced that it is yet to take a final call on the resumption of NMR service.

"As normalcy is return-



Cine-shooting underway along NMR track.

— DC

ing fast in the country after Unlock 4.0., now it is time for the Southern Railway to think about resuming hill train services in NMR which is not only a World Heritage Site, but also a big tourist attraction. By strictly

adhering to SOPs, the train services in NMR shall be resumed now as it will help both tourism and the locals, especially the elderly who would prefer train journey to avoid travel sickness in the ghats roads in motor vehicles.

Since the mandatory e-pass norm to enter Nilgiris had also been scrapped, it is high time the railway ministry itself interfere in this issue to resume NMR services soon" Mr. Ananthkrishnan said.

Network or networth: Beware of social media scamsters



Sanjay Pinto

A jocular sequel to one of Dale Carnegie's best-sellers could well be 'How To Con Strangers & Scam People'. The biggest and noisiest megaphones that can use the current of gullibility to amplify messages are our social media accounts. During the pandemic, the time spent on these platforms has risen exponentially, making them a fertile ground for cyber criminals and common to breed with impunity.

A civic conscious citizen was recently bamboozled into debiting his bank account by a trickster on facebook. The modus operandi was devious. Find a target. Create a credible looking profile, replete with reputed names of employers, upload happy family pictures, invariably lifting them from other profiles, put out carefully drafted posts that reflect a measure of dignity, send out friend requests to mutual friends and then craft a sob story seeking a small loan. Repay that promptly to build trust. Then the shark attack – a more tragic sob story and a bigger ask.

The Good Samaritan, like many others, fell prey to one such fraudster. Polite requests for repayment were met with excuses and dilatory tactics. A stern threat of legal action brought out a chameleon! The choicest invectives were spewed with a 'do what you can' dare!

Not all such scams are with your knowledge. Cyber criminals even managed to create fake facebook profiles of senior police officials in a few States by using photographs from their genuine accounts. Armed with these accounts, they had the temerity to befriend their contacts and send out SOS requests for



money for some emergency! The spate of timely disclaimers put out by these top cops was a wake-up call.

Some of these gangs have reportedly been nabbed. Many may still be lurking out there. Friend requests from locked profiles are a definite red flag. Even invitations to participate in webinars hosted by strangers may be a ploy to strike up a conversation. A standard line to persuade you is "we are giving you a platform". As renowned musician Anil Srinivasan once quipped "You are not a train to need a platform!" Beware of tangential interface on community groups that you may have joined.

It is important for users to not entertain, or at least minimise interaction with strangers on the social media. Don't become a victim in the first place. Social media sites must insist on some form of authentication like an official email ID in order to display professional information. Why can't their algorithms disallow duplicate accounts with the same pictures? Why can't there be default categorisation like Family, Personal Friends, Acquaintances & Colleagues? If our search history and cookies can be used to pop up relevant advertisements, surely stricter due diligence and higher community standards are expected from these behemoths.

God forbid, if you do get cheated, promptly lodge a police complaint. In the cases cited above, offences of cheating by 'personation' and for dishonestly inducing delivery of property punishable under Sections 419 and 420 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

are clearly made out. They carry jail terms of upto 3 years and 7 years respectively.

Sections 66 C and D of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, can additionally be invoked for "fraudulently or dishonestly making use of any unique identification feature of any other person" and "cheating by personation by using a computer resource". They are both punishable with imprisonment upto 3 years and a fine that may extend to ₹1 lakh.

These twin provisions, along with other offences under the IT Act, came in for scrutiny by the Supreme Court in the landmark Shreya Singhal Vs Union of India (2015) decision. While striking down the loosely worded Section 66A of the IT Act, the Apex Court had observed that it was "clear that in all computer related offences that are spoken of by Section 66, 'mens rea' is an ingredient and the expression 'dishonestly' and 'fraudulently' are defined with some degree of specificity."

In fact, the definition of these two crucial terms is the same as what is contained in Sections 24 and 25 IPC, namely, "causing wrongful gain to one person and wrongful loss to another" and an act "with intent to defraud". In such offences, establishing criminal intent is not difficult.

Despite sufficient legal deterrence, many victims hesitate to take the legal route. Petitions can be filed online. Inaction emboldens criminals. Prompt complaints help in busting rackets and will save many unsuspecting folks from being ensnared.

Never forget that for all its networking prowess, the social media can also be home to anti social elements. Sometimes, if you have social media 'friends', you don't need enemies!

(The writer is an advocate at the Madras high court, columnist & author)

Hundreds of devotees throng Swamimalai shrine for darshan

DC CORRESPONDENT THANJAVUR, NOV. 29

Hundreds of devotees had darshan of Lord Swaminathaswamy at Swamimalai, one of the six abodes of Lord Muruga, near Kumbakonam, as part of Thirukarthikai festival on Sunday.

The sanctum sanctorum was opened at 3 am and abhishekams and alankarams followed. People were allowed to have dar-

shan from 6 am to 8 pm. Lord Muruga was in gold kavasaam and carried a diamond spear in rajaalankaram. In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the car festival was replaced with a rathotsavam within the inner prahara of the temple. In the evening, Lord Muruga gave darshan in golden peacock and "chokkapanai" (burning palmyrah leaves) was held during night.

Cong MP Karti flays 'hero worship' of Rajiv case convicts

Chennai, Nov. 29: Congress MP Karti Chidambaram on Sunday opposed "hero worship" of Rajiv Gandhi assassination case convicts and wondered why there was no talk about those who were killed alongside the former Prime Minister in 1991. The Lok Sabha MP from Sivaganga, referring to the seven convicts said, "do not make them heroes, they are not heroes," and asked whether the 15 other victims were not Tamils. Also, he sought to know, "what about justice

for them?" Tagging a clip of his interview to News18 Tamil Nadu channel on his Twitter handle, Karti regretted that the so-called pro-Tamil outfits that support the release of the seven convicts have never spoken about the victims.

Rajiv Gandhi and 15 others were killed in a blast triggered by a woman suicide bomber Dhanu at an election rally in Sriperumbudur on May 21, 1991.

The ruling AIADMK,

main opposition DMK and almost all other parties support the release of the convicts, V Sriharan alias Murugan, T Suthendararaja alias Santhan, A G Perarivalan alias Arivu, Jayakumar, Robert Payas, Ravichandran and Nalini.

The AIADMK government recommended their release in 2018 and the matter is pending with Governor Banwarilal Purohit. The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee had said political parties demanding their release was unacceptable. — PTI

BOOK REVIEW

Bridging the gap between perceptions and reality

R. MOHAN | DC CHENNAI, NOV. 29

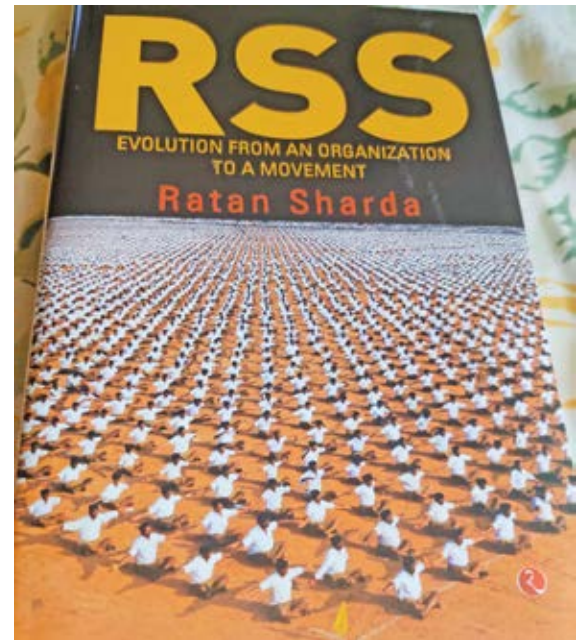
You can love it or hate it but you can hardly ignore it as the RSS approaches a century. Such is the polarisation of Indian politics that the RSS, as it evolved in nearly 100 years from an organisation into a movement, should be a figure of hate, with very few liberals capable of recognising it for what it is and, perhaps, even admiring it for the discipline it has instilled in its core followers. You could spend a lifetime propounding liberal and pluralist vales and still spend just a little time recognising the movement for what it is as an entity.

Ratan Sharda's book could be like a hagiographical account of a saint. It is an adulatory and idealised history of the RSS but it deserves its place on the bookshelf for trying to place in perspective an organisation that has outgrown its 'shaka' base in its sweep of an eight million membership now, making it the world's largest voluntary organisation.

Its history – founded on September 27, 1925 by Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar - is interesting. The mysterious or cruel deaths that a few of the pioneers with even a passing association with it like the Jan Sangh founder Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and RSS' own Deendayal Upadhyay, who was the President of the Jan Sangh when he was murdered in early 1968 - pushed out of a moving train near Mughalsarai junction, now named after him – have never been properly explained.

In the foreword, Makarand Paranjpe, Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, accepts - "In fact, far from being powerful and influential, the RSS was India's least understood and most reviled organisation. Banned once in British India and thrice after Independence, it was systematically slandered and ridiculed by the ruling dispensation. A systematic disinformation campaign was conducted against it over decades. Its members were branded as Hindutva fanatics and fascists."

In its eternal battle for recognition, its current



From Rupa Publications

president, Mohan Bhagwat, pulled off a coup in getting India's former President and Congressman Pranab Mukherjee, to share the dais with him on June 7, 2018. Not only did Pranab attend but also traversed the narrow lanes of Nagpur to pay homage to the RSS founder Hedgewar, whom he called a "great son of Mother India." Only history can pass judgments on the effects of such a 'breakthrough' but it is a fact that the acceptance factor of the existence of the RSS may have grown manifold after reaching out across the political divide in this manner.

The author's admission that not a lot of literature is available in English is, perhaps, a dead giveaway of why the organisation might still be viewed with certain dread, particularly in the south of India. A member of the RSS from his youth, Sharda had to dig out the history from Marathi and Hindi books as well and has done a fair job of it, spelling out the structure and workings of the organisation. Those familiar with RSS will know that the 'Sarsanghaalaks' is the head who is always nominated by the previous head. His workload must be high considering there are 60,000 daily shakha meetings and 25,000 weekly and monthly meetings among 85 million swayam-sevaks directly involved

in RSS work.

The story of the founder Hedgewar who threw away a packet of sweets given in his English school to celebrate the Queen's Birthday offers a hint of his early anti-colonial views. Arguments over the independence movement and the RSS role in it may rage on in view of how the Left and Liberals interpreted it but there is little doubt that Hedgewar had put himself in enough trouble as a student in defying the authorities when it came to singing vande mataram (banned by the Risleys Circular) in school and he was expelled for it. Hedgewar was, of course, a member of the Congress when he founded the RSS. History also records that not everyone agreed with Gandhiji's idea of pacific absolutism.

The book serves its essential purpose of bridging the gap between how the RSS perceives its public role and how the English media understands it, or refuses to acknowledge anything other than old and cliched beliefs. By covering the contribution of six Sarsanghaalaks, the author presents a studious history of the organisation. The perspective of the reader will probably be guided by how much he can set aside prejudices to read about the RSS for the sake of understanding it, even in an academic way.

Early intervention on children with disabilities reduces strain on parents: Studies

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, NOV. 29

The home-based and tech-enabled early intervention project of Amar Seva Sangam Ayikudy (ASSA), launched in eight rural locations in the districts of Tirunelveli and Tenkasi in 2017, has reduced the psychological, emotional, personal, physical, and financial burden in 75% of parents of children with disabilities, found a peer-reviewed study, published in the journal, Disability and Rehabilitation. Parent strain was reduced by 36% on average, which are levels of strain reduction never before seen in other research studies. The study also found 83% of families showed greater empowerment in caring for their child with disabilities.

Another peer reviewed study showed that age

Amar Seva Sangam, a premier organisation in Disability Management, is pioneering community participatory, technology-based rehabilitation solutions that are affordable in rural settings in southern TN districts

adjusted school enrolment for children with disabilities in the same program improved from 70% to 85% for those provided with early intervention. The study also showed that early intervention therapy visit attendance improved, from 60% to 95%, over the 2.5-year study period, indicating parents' recognition of the benefits of early intervention.

Amar Seva Sangam, a premier organisation in Disability Management, is pioneering community participatory, technology-based rehabilitation solutions that are affordable in

rural settings in southern TN districts. The studies involved 1,050 children and over 300 parents in ASSA's Early Intervention programme. The studies assume significance as they highlight the role of family-centered, home-based approach and technology adoption in early intervention in reducing the psychological burden of parents who have children with disabilities, and in empowering those parents and improving program attendance and school enrollment rates of their children.

Dr. Dinesh Krishna, Director of ASSA's Early Intervention Programme and professor at University of Toronto, co-author, said, "The home-based and family-centred care approach of ASSA had a positive impact on the lives of the children with disabilities, and their families. It is not just

about technology adoption. The programme involved families in the interventions through collaborative goal-setting, information-sharing and team coordination, the program also advocated for inclusion of children at the level of schools through advocacy and school and community awareness programs. We found that these approaches helped mitigate caregiver burden, empower families and improve child integration."

The Tamil Nadu Government's Department of Welfare of Differently Aabled Persons recently provided funding to expand the programme to 23 new blocks in Tenkasi, Tirunelveli and Tuticorin district. The entire programme is expected to cover over 3,000 children and their families in 2021 and expand further.



Karhigai Deepam festival at Tiruvannamalai on Sunday.

— DC

DEEPA FESTIVAL

SHORT TAKES

MATONDKAR TO JOIN SHIV SENA, SAYS PARTY

Mumbai, Nov. 29: Bollywood actor Urmila Matondkar, who had contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections on a Congress ticket and quit the party later, will join the Shiv Sena on Tuesday, a party functionary said.

Harshal Pradhan, a close aide of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, on Sunday said that Matondkar will join the party in the CM's presence.

Ms Matondkar's name has been forwarded to Governor B. S. Koshiyari by the Shiv Sena for nomination to the Legislative Council from the Governor's quota. The names of 11 others have also been forwarded by the three-party Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government for their nomination from the Governor's quota.

The Governor is yet to approve the list of 12 names.

Ms Matondkar had unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Lok Sabha election from Mumbai North constituency as a Congress candidate. However, she had later quit the party over the functioning of the Mumbai unit of the Congress.

Recently, she had criticised actor Kangana Ranaut for comparing Mumbai with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the nepotism issue. — *PTI*

STAN SWAMY'S ALLEGATIONS DENIED

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, NOV. 29

A senior prison official from Talaja jail on Sunday informed that Father Stan Swamy, an accused in the alleged Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, is being provided sipper and other facilities like wheelchair, walking stick, walker, and two attendants in the prison from the day second of his arrest.

Swamy, 83, who has various health ailments including Parkinson disease has been in Talaja jail from October 8.

The court on Thursday rejected Swamy's application seeking a direction to the National Investigation Agency to return the straw and sipper allegedly seized from him during the arrest after the NIA denied that it ever seized those things. His lawyer Sharif Shaikh had then filed fresh application to provide such necessary things to Swamy.

While talking to the media, a senior prison official denied allegations made by Swamy. He said, "We are aware that Swamy is a patient. Why would we not provide him things which he needs for survival?" "We are providing him a wheelchair, walking stick, walker and two attendants. We have also provided straw and sipper so he can eat easily," the official said. As per the NIA, Swamy was involved in the activities of the banned CPI (Maoist), and had received funds through an associate for furthering Maoist agenda. The NIA has also alleged that he was in contact with "conspirators" - Sudhir Dhawale, Rona Wilson, Surendra Gadling, Arun Ferreira, Vernon Gonsalves, Hany Babu, Shoma Sen, Mahesh Raut, Varavara Rao, Sudha Bharadwaj, Gautam Navlakha and Anand Teltumbde to further the group's activities.

SENIOR COBRA COP KILLED, 7 INJURED

From page 1

All the injured were immediately evacuated from the attack site to Chintalnar field hospital. Later in the night, all the eight injured were airlifted to Raipur for better medical treatment", Mr Sunderraj said.

However, Mr Bhalerao succumbed to his injuries during treatment. The slain CoBRA officer is a native of Nashik in Maharashtra. The conditions of the other seven injured were stated to be stable and out of danger.

The incident comes just four days after the visit of MHA senior security adviser K. Vijay Kumar to Bastar, where he reviewed the security forces' counter-insurgency strategy.

The attack site is considered a stronghold of the outlawed CPI (Maoist).

Tadmeela had seen the deadliest attack on security personnel by Maoists in 2010, when 76 CRPF jawans were killed in an ambush by Maoists on April 6, 2010.

FARM BILLS OPEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS, SAYS PM

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

Amid unprecedented protests by farmers from several states in the national capital against the three farm laws that were passed recently by Parliament, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his Mann ki Baat monthly radio broadcast on Sunday that the laws were advantageous for farmers, and that they addressed all the demands made by them.

Modi's assurance comes when farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and several other states have laid siege near various entry points of New Delhi, seeking scrapping of these laws, terming them "pro-corporate" and "anti-farmer".

In fact, soon after the Prime Minister's broadcast ended, the agitating farmers were quick to reject Union home minister Amit Shah's proposal for early discussion on their grievances, conditional to their moving to a designated protest site.

Modi, listing the benefits of the three farm laws, said: "Agricultural reforms in the past few days have also now opened new doors of possibilities for our farmers. The demands that were made by farmers for years, that every political party, at some point or the other, made the promise to fulfil... those demands have been met."

Describing these laws as agricultural reforms, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said they have "unshackled" farmers and given them "new rights and opportunities".

● **MODI'S ASSURANCE comes when farmers from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and several other states have laid siege near various entry points of New Delhi, seeking scrapping of these laws, terming them 'pro-corporate'.**

Farmers reject early talks, threaten to 'gherao' Delhi

Farmers say government should have approached them with 'an open heart'

SANJAY KAW & BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC
NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

Thousands of farmers protesting at Delhi's borders against the Centre's new farm laws on Sunday rejected Union home minister Amit Shah's proposal for an early discussion on their grievances, conditional to their moving to a designated protest site in the national capital's Burari area.

A joint forum of about 30 farmers' unions said the government should have approached them with "an open heart" and not put preconditions for talks. "We have decided that we will stay put at Delhi's borders. We will not go to Burari as it is like an open jail," Bharatiya Kisan Union (Dakaunda) president Buta Singh Burjigal said.

The leaders spearheading the protests also urged the Centre to withdraw the new laws and authorise a Cabinet committee or a Group of ministers to hold future discussions. They, however, made it clear that no political party would be allowed to share the stage with them.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Krantikari) leader Sarjet Singh Phul threatened that the farmers were ready to block all the five entry points to Delhi. He said, "Instead of going to an open jail in Burari, we've decided that we will gherao Delhi by blocking its five main entry points. We've got four months' rations with us, so nothing to worry. Our operations committee will decide everything." All through Sunday, the situation remained tense around Delhi's edges and beyond as a large number of farmers from Punjab, UP and Rajasthan continued to join the protests in the border areas. Apart from a few incidents of tyre-burning, the protestors broke through the police barricades at the Delhi-Haryana border near Narela to enter the national capital.



A farmer helps a woman to cross a temporary barricade at Singhu border in New Delhi on Sunday during their Delhi Chalo march against the new farm laws. — *PTI*

BJP alleges Cong, SAD instigating stir

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

Accusing the Congress and former ally Shiromani Akali Dal of propping up the farmers protest, the BJP on Sunday claimed that the protest has become a "lion's ride" for both the political outfits.

"The lion doesn't listen to them nor can they disembark," Tweeted BJP general secretary (organ-

sation), B.L. Santhosh. "They will rue their misdeed for a very long time to come."

With hundreds of farmers, mainly from Punjab, sitting on the Delhi-Haryana border, the BJP claimed that farmers are being misled by "forces from abroad" and advised them that they should understand such "design and become wiser."

The BJP has claimed that supporters of

Khalistan movement, supported by some of the India's neighbours, want to create unrest in Punjab and India by infiltrating the farmers' association and misusing farmers to settle their interests.

Citing an interview of one such activists and the banners that were carried at some of the protest sites, Santhosh said that it is anybody's guess who is misleading farmers.

The nation should stand up as one to expose these forces.

"Farmers protests co opt @medhanarmada @.YogendraYadav , AAP party leaders, forces from abroad who are supporters of Khalistan movement. It will be good to farmers to understand the design & become wiser . Don't allow farmers to become guinea pigs for anarchist designs," said Santhosh.

Covid cases inch closer to 94-L mark

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

India's Covid-19 caseload inched closer to the 94-lakh mark, while the number of people who have recuperated from the disease crossed 88 lakh pushing the national recovery rate to 93.71 per cent. The total Coronavirus cases mounted to 93,92,919 with 41,810 new infections being reported in a day, while the death toll climbed to 1,36,696 with 496 new fatalities.

The Union health ministry posted a graph on Sunday morning, which showed that 22 states and Union Territories have Covid-19 fatality rate lower than the national average of 1.46 per cent.

The active Coronavirus caseload remained below 5 lakh for the 19th consecutive day. There are 4,53,956 active Coronavirus infections in the country which comprises 4.83 per cent of the total caseload. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 88,02,267 pushing the national recovery rate to 93.71 per

● **THE COUNTRY'S daily new Coronavirus cases are being largely reported from just eight states and Union Territories (UTs).**

cent, while the Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.46 per cent.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, and surpassed 90 lakh on November 20.

According to the ICMR, over 13.95 crore samples have been tested up to November 28 with 12,83,449 samples being tested on Saturday. The country's daily new Covid-19 cases are being largely reported from just eight states and Union Territories (UTs). The states that contribute maximum number of daily new cases are Maharashtra, Delhi, Kerala, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Chhattisgarh.

MP announces closure of schools till December 31

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, NOV. 29

Even as Madhya Pradesh is under the grip of rising Coronavirus cases, the government has announced closure of primary and middle English schools till December 31.

"The state has witnessed a sudden surge in Coronavirus positive cases in the third week of November. It appears the second wave of pandemic has already hit the state. We apprehend that positive cases may rise in December too and hence the people need to be very cautious", Health minister Prabhuram Choudhury told reporters here. The state has been reporting more than 1,500

fresh cases daily since the third week of November. The notification announcing the closure of schools was issued here late on Saturday night. A decision on reopening the schools on January 1 would be taken considering the pandemic situation then.

The government said the partial functioning of classes from 9 to 12 in high schools would continue and consent of parents of the students was mandatory for allowing them in classrooms. Students are being allowed to attend schools to clear their doubts. Meanwhile, the state has recorded the death of 13 infected people in the last 24 hours. MP has reported 1,514 new cases of Covid-19 on Sunday.

Gurung to address rally next month

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, NOV. 29

Three-and-half-years after his escape from Darjeeling, fugitive Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) top gun Bimal Gurung, facing more than 150 cases including the UAFA, is all set return to North Bengal next month with a political rally which he will address at Siliguri.

According to reports, his visit to the Hills still remains uncertain due to a fierce opposition by his rival camp in the GJM led by Binoy Tamang and Anit Thapa, also at the helm of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration.

Landing at Bagdogra Airport in Siliguri on Saturday afternoon after three-and-half-years, Gurung's long-time lieutenant Roshan Giri said, "Bimalji is coming here very soon. Possibly on December 6 he will reach Siliguri. We have got permission for a rally at Baghajatin area here. If



Bimal Gurung

the venue turns out to be small, we will hold our rally at another place."

On the separate statehood demand of Gorkhaland Giri observed, in 2024, we will support the party which will support Gorkhaland. Bimalji already announced it on October 21."

Tearing into the rival GJM faction he claimed, "Anit Thapa and Binoy Tamang have destroyed hills. From corruption to nepotism to murder of democracy, everything happened there. Democracy will be restored there when Bimalji would return. People have faith in his leadership. We all thank them for supporting us."

SHAH BLASTS OWASI FOR REMARKS ON ROHINGYAS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, NOV. 29

Union home minister Amit Shah said here on Sunday criticised AIMIM chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi over his reported remarks on what action had the Modi government taken over charges that Pakistanis, Rohingyas and Bangladeshis were illegally staying in Hyderabad.

Mr Shah demanded that Owaisi give in writing, seeking removal of those staying illegally to initiate Central government's action against them.

"When I take action they (Owaisi and others) create ruckus in Parliament. Have you not seen it?" he asked. "Let them just once give me in writing to expel Rohingyas and Bangladeshis... then I will initiate action. It should not just be a speech for elections."

"When there is discussion over the matter in the Parliament, who takes their side? The people of the country know it," Shah added.

Mr Shah dismissed the challenge of Chief Minister KCR to create a federal front, saying, "he tried last time and lost half the Lok Sabha seats in his state. Let him try again... we will see how much more he loses."

Buoyed by the hysterical crowds that gathered to greet and cheer him, Mr Shah said, the BJP will have its mayor in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and the party will form the next state government in Telangana.

"The way people of Telangana have supported Modi ji during Lok Sabha polls, the beginning for change has begun," he said.

MAMATA GOVT WILL FALL IN TWO MONTHS, CLAIM BJP MPS

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, NOV. 29

Eyeing a large number of defections from the ruling Trinamul Congress ahead of the Assembly elections in West Bengal, two key BJP MPs on Sunday indicated that the Mamata Banerjee government might fall in the state within a month. One of them also predicted that governor Jagdeep Dhankhar would then ask the chief minister to prove her party's "majority" any day.

The TMC, however, discounted their claims in wake of Nandigram MLA Shubendu Adhikari's resignation as a minister from Ms Banerjee's Cabinet and party MLA Mihir Goswami's defection to the saffron camp.

Bishnupur BJP MP Saumitra Khan said in Jalpaiguri: "It will not take much time for the TMC to crumble. The TMC will cease to exist as a party within a month. You will see then the governor will suddenly call and ask the CM any day to show him of having (magic number of) 149. Everything is heading to that possibility."

Referring to the probable TMC ministers' switch to the saffron party, the state BJYM chief added: "How long can it take for ministers like Subrata Mukherjee, Rabindranath Ghosh and Goutam Deb or MLA Sourav Chakraborty to join to us? Everything will be decided after a discussion within our party." Echoing him, state BJP chief and Midnapore MP Dilip Ghosh observed: "Disaster management has been underway in the TMC. They are now busy (trying) to stop defections. The month of December is very crucial for them. The yearend is not going well for them."

— *PTI*

GREEN INITIATIVE

'Kulhad' saves environment and lakhs of people get employment from it: Goyal

Kulhad to replace plastic tea cups at railway stations

Jaipur, Nov. 29: Tea will be sold in environment-friendly 'Kulhads' (earthen cups) in place of plastic cups at all railway stations in the country, railway minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday.

Speaking at an event organised at the Digawara railway station in Rajasthan's Alwar district, the minister said the initiative will be the contribution of the Railways towards a plastic-free India.

"Tea is given in 'Kulhads' at nearly 400

railway stations in the country today, and in future, it is our planning that tea will be sold only in 'Kulhads' at all the railway stations in the country. This will be the contribution of the Railways towards a plastic-free India," he said.

The minister said before addressing this gathering, he was having tea in a 'Kulhad' and the taste was really different.

'Kulhad' saves the environment and lakhs of people get employment from it, he said. The minister

was speaking at an event to mark the inauguration of the newly electrified Dhigawara-Bandikui section under north-western Railways.

The minister said before the Narendra Modi government came to power in 2014, the railway sector was ignored in Rajasthan as electrification had not been taken up in the last 30 years after the electrification of Delhi-Mumbai route.

He said the investment by Railways and infrastructure development

projects in Rajasthan have increased multiple times between 2014-2020 as compared to that between 2009-2014.

Goyal said 65 underpasses were constructed from 2009-14 while 378 underpasses have been constructed from 2014-September 2020.

He said only four over-bridges were constructed in five years till 2014 whereas 30 such bridges have been constructed from 2014 to September 2020. The minister said electrification of railway

lines across the country will save the environment as engines will run on electricity produced in the country, saving fuel, money and time. Also, the speed of trains will also be increased, he said.

"This will also help farmers who will be able to take their crops to any part of the country (through rail freight transport) in less time," he added.

Goyal said the Prime Minister is very concerned about the environment and therefore

emphasis is being given on electrification.

The minister flagged off the first train on the newly electrified 34 km-long Dhigawara-Bandikui rail section.

He said after the entire line from Rewari to Ajmer has now been electrified with the electrification of this stretch.

Dausa MP Jaskaur Meena, GM-NWR Anand Prakash and other public representatives and railway officials were present in the function.

SHORT TAKES CHINA SET TO BOLSTER NEPAL DEFENCE TIES

Kathmandu, Nov. 29: China's Defence Minister Gen Wei Fenghe on Sunday met Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and held talks with Nepal Army chief Gen Purna Chandra Thapa on various issues of bilateral interest, aimed at bolstering bilateral military cooperation and taking the existing friendly ties to a new height.

Gen Wei, who is also a State Councillor, held bilateral talks with Army chief Gen Thapa at the army headquarters here during his day-long "working visit" to Nepal, said a statement issued by the Nepal Army. "The two held a cordial discussion on various issues of bilateral interest," it said. "Bilateral discussions were then held at the delegation-level mainly on issues pertaining to resumption of training and student exchange programme and follow up on defence assistance that have been impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic," the statement said. The Chinese defence minister, who was leading a 21-member delegation, viewed both the proposals "positively and affirmed that the bilateral cooperation should resume as soon as possible, including exchange of high level visits," it said.

He also pledged to provide additional assistance to the Nepali Army in fighting Covid-19. The Nepali Army expressed confidence that "the visit will help in strengthening and expanding the cordial military-to-military relations between the two countries."

DAVID PROWSE, ORIGINAL DARTH VADER, DIES

London, Nov. 29: Actor David Prowse, best known for physically portraying the role of the antagonist Darth Vader in the original "Star Wars" trilogy, has died at the age of 85 following a brief illness, according to his agent. His agent Thomas Bowington confirmed the news of the actor's death on early Saturday morning. "It's with great regret and heart-wrenching sadness for us and million of fans around the world, to announce that our client Dave Prowse MBE has passed away at the age of 85," Bowington said.

Jason Joiner, events producer who worked with Prowse, also announced the death on a Facebook page dedicated to the actor. "Dave was dedicated to meeting the fans for decades and lots of fans' first ever guest they met was Dave in the early days of Comic Cons and collators' events. Dave was larger than life and he will be so very much missed. Our love and thoughts go out to his family," Joiner said.

Mark Hamill, who played Prowse's on-screen son Luke Skywalker in the "Star Wars" films, paid tributes to the late actor on Twitter. "So sad to hear David Prowse has passed. He was a kind man & much more than Darth Vader. Actor-Husband-Father-Member of the Order of the British Empire-3 time British Weightlifting Champion & Safety Icon the Green Cross Code Man. He loved his fans as much as they loved him. #RIP (sic)" Hamill wrote.

EVACUATION AS VOLCANO ERUPTS IN INDONESIA

Jakarta, Nov. 29: A volcano in eastern Indonesia erupted Sunday, sending a column of ash as high as 4,000 metres (13,120 feet) into the sky and prompting the evacuation of thousands of people.

Nearly 2,800 people from at least 28 villages were evacuated from the slopes of Mount Ili Lewotolok, which is located on Lembata island of East Nusa Tenggara province, as the volcano began erupting, said Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Raditya Jati.

There were no deaths or injuries from the eruption. The Transportation Ministry said a flight warning had been issued after the eruption and a local airport had been closed as ash rained down on many areas of the island. Mount Ili Lewotolok has been erupting off and on since October 2017. Indonesia's Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation Center raised the volcano's alert level to the second-highest level on Sunday after sensors picked up increasing activity.

The 5,423-metre (17,790-foot) mountain is one of three currently erupting in Indonesia after Merapi on Java island and Sinabung on Sumatra island.

They are among more than 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, which is prone to seismic upheaval due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines around the Pacific Ocean.

Anti-lockdown protests in London: Over 150 arrested

Arrests for breaching virus curbs, assaulting cop and possessing drugs

London, Nov. 29: Scotland Yard has said its officers policing anti-lockdown protests in central London have made 155 arrests as part of early interventions to prevent people from gathering amid the Coronavirus pandemic. The Metropolitan Police made arrests for offences, including breaching Coronavirus regulations, assaulting a police officer and possession of drugs.

Save Our Rights UK, a group holding demonstrations against the stay-at-home rules, said it held protests on Saturday against the government's Covid-19 lockdown. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had on October 31 announced a second lockdown in England as the country crossed the grim milestone of 1 million Coronavirus cases.

The lockdown took effect on November 5 and will last until December 2. Large gatherings are banned under the Coronavirus lockdown restrictions. The Metropolitan Police on Saturday said its officers made a number of early interventions to prevent people from gathering and urge them to go home.

As part of this, coaches transporting protesters into the UK capital were intercepted and those who did not turn back were either arrested or issued fines or fixed penalty notices under the Coronavirus legislation, it said. "This was a challenging day for Met, City of London and British Transport Police officers," Chief Superintendent Stuart Bell, policing commander on the protests, said on Saturday.

"On Friday, we made it very clear how we would police this event, warning those looking to attend that they risked facing enforcement action if they attended a gathering in London," he said. "The enforcement action is a direct result of those individuals deliberately breaking the law and at times, targeting our officers with aggression and causing disruption to the road network," he added.

HK TO CLOSE SCHOOLS AMID VIRUS SURGE

Hong Kong, Nov. 29: Hong Kong has reported 115 new Coronavirus infections, the first time it has seen cases in the triple digits since August 2. The government on Sunday also announced that classes at kindergarten, primary and secondary schools will be shut for the rest of the year in light of the worsening Coronavirus situation in the city.

Of the 115 infections reported Sunday, 24 were untraceable. Another 62 were linked to recent outbreaks in dance studios across the city, taking the total number of infections in that cluster to 479, health officials said. Employees and recent guests at three restaurants in the city have also been ordered to undergo compulsory testing after multiple positive cases had been linked to the venues. Hong Kong has reported 6,239 Coronavirus infections since the pandemic began.

— AP

SMART | DEVICE

Scientists find the physics that unlocks dense memory storage capabilities

World's smallest atom-memory unit created

Houston, Nov. 29: Researchers have created the smallest memory device yet, an advance that may lead to faster, smaller, and more energy-efficient electronic chips for consumer electronics and brain-inspired computing.

The scientists from the University of Texas at Austin in the US also found the physics that unlocks dense memory storage capabilities for these tiny devices. In the research, published recently in the journal *Nature Nanotechnology*, the scientists reduced

the size of what was then the thinnest memory storage device, shrinking the cross section area down to just a single square nanometre. According to the researchers, getting a handle on the physics that pack dense memory storage capability into these devices enabled them to make the device much smaller. They said ultrasmall holes in the material provide the key to unlocking the high-density memory storage capability.

"When a single additional metal atom goes into

that nanoscale hole and fills it, it confers some of its conductivity into the material, and this leads to a change or memory effect," explained Deji Akinwande, a co-author of the study. Though they used the compound molybdenum disulfide — also known as MoS₂ — as the primary nanomaterial in their study, the researchers believe the discovery could apply to hundreds of related atomically thin materials. Smaller processors enable manufacturers to make more compact com-

puters and phones, they said, adding that shrinking down chips also decreases their energy demands and increases capacity.

● **THE NEW device falls under the category of memristors -- an area of memory research, centred around electrical components with the ability to modify resistance between its two terminals without a need for a third terminal in the middle.**

puters and phones, they said, adding that shrinking down chips also decreases their energy demands and increases capacity.

This means faster and smarter devices that take less power to operate, the scientists explained. The original device — dubbed "atomristor" by the researchers — was at the time the thinnest memory storage device ever recorded, with a single atomic layer of thickness.

However, shrinking the memory device is not just about making it thinner but also building it with a smaller cross-sectional area, they added. "The scientific holy grail for scaling is going down to a level

Afghan suicide car bomb kills 30 security men

Kabul, Nov. 29: A suicide car bomber struck an army base in Afghanistan on Sunday killing at least 30 security personnel, officials said, in one of the deadliest attacks targeting government forces in months.

The attack occurred on the outskirts of Ghazni city, capital of the eastern province of Ghazni, which has seen regular fighting between the Taliban and government forces.

It came as the Afghan government and Taliban are engaged in peace talks, but a top official warned that such attacks have the potential to "harm the peace process" as violence continues to surge across the country. "Thirty bodies and 24 wounded people have been brought to hospital. All of them are security personnel," Baz Mohammad Hemat, director of Ghazni hospital, said.

Interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian said a suicide bomber had detonated a vehicle full of explosives. "The bomber drove a Humvee vehicle right inside the base and detonated it," Ghazni governor spokesman Wahidullah Jumazada said. The base is located on a vast swath of arid land surrounded by mountains.

Video footage showed military ambulances taking the dead and wounded to hospitals and cranes deployed to remove the debris from the site of the attack in the base. The ministry of defence gave a toll of 10 security personnel killed and seven wounded. The ministry is known to downplay tolls

● **IN ANOTHER suicide car bomb attack on Sunday, one civilian was killed and 20 others wounded in the southern province of Zabul.**

in attacks against its forces.

No group has so far claimed the attack, and the Taliban who are fighting government forces have often not commented on deadly strikes since the peace talks commenced on September 12.

The Taliban have primarily targeted government forces in rural areas since signing a separate deal with Washington in February that paved the way for the withdrawal of foreign forces by May 2021.

The Pentagon said earlier this month that it would soon pull out about 2,000 troops from Afghanistan, speeding up the timeline of a full withdrawal. "Such terrorist attacks will create an atmosphere of fear, terror and pessimism among the Afghan people and will harm the peace process," said Abdullah Abdullah, who is leading the overall peace process in Afghanistan.

"The increase in violence is not acceptable to people... and runs against the peace process, negotiations and reconciliation." The Ghazni attack comes just days after two bombs killed 14 people in the historic city of Bamiyan, ending years of calm in the isolated town famous for its ancient Buddhist heritage.

— AFP



Aerialist Svitlana Rohozhyna performs during the "EXTRAVAGANZA - The Vegas Spectacular" show at the Jubilee Theater at Bally's Las Vegas Hotel & Casino on Saturday in Las Vegas, Nevada. The production opened on March 14, 2020, for only one show before all entertainment on the Las Vegas Strip was shut down to fight the Coronavirus pandemic. The show reopened this week just as a three-week statewide pause went into effect due to surging Covid-19 numbers, forcing producers to adjust to new capacity restrictions limiting audience to 50 people. — AFP

Boris defends lockdown in attempt to curb rebellion

London, Nov. 29: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has urged his Conservative Party lawmakers to back the government's tier-based Covid-19 lockdown in a Parliament vote in a letter stressing that there "a sunset" clause — or expiry date — of February 3 on the latest restrictions. In an attempt to curb a growing rebellion within his own ranks against the new measures which face a House of Commons vote next Tuesday, Johnson wrote on Saturday evening that the tiers will be reviewed every two weeks, and areas can move down the tiers from mid-December.

"Regulations have a sunset of 3 February. After the fourth fortnightly review (January 27), Parliament will have another vote on the tiered approach, determining whether the measures stay in place until the end of March," he wrote.

In his attempt to placate angry MPs opposed to further lockdowns, he also committed to publish more data and outline what circumstances need to change for an area to move down a tier, as well analysis of the health, economic and social impacts of the measures taken to suppress Coronavirus.

Most of England's population is to fall under the two toughest tiers when the second national lockdown ends on December 2. Around 32 million people — 57.3 per cent of England — will fall into Tier 2 or high alert level which means the rule of six applies with up to six members of different households allowed to meet outdoors.



Boris Johnson

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— PTI



Yannis Plakiotakis

GREEK MINISTER IN HOSPITAL WITH COVID-19

Athens, Nov. 29: Greek Merchant Navy Minister Yannis Plakiotakis was admitted to hospital on Saturday suffering from coronavirus, he said on social media.

The 52-year-old politician had announced on Tuesday that he had tested positive the day before. In a statement he had said he planned to remain at home for the time being.

Greece is battling a second wave of the pandemic with a general lockdown and its health system on its knees due to the number of patients on ventilators.

On Saturday, authorities announced a record death toll with 121 new deaths in 24 hours, raising the total death toll to 2,223.

The number of people in the intensive care units rose to 606.

Greek Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Saturday warned that "Christmas holidays this year will be very different".

— AFP

India to boost bilateral ties with Seychelles

Victoria, Nov. 29: India has vowed to further enhance its strategic partnership with Seychelles in the post-Covid era as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held high-level talks with the country's top leadership here during his two-day visit to the key Indian Ocean nation.

Jaishankar, who arrived here from the United Arab Emirates, also visited Bahrain as part of this three-nation tour which began on Tuesday. During his visit, he called on Seychelles' newly-elected Indian-origin President Wavel Ramkalawan on Friday and congratulated him on his recent electoral victory.

Jaishankar and Ramkalawan discussed the historical neighbourly relationship strengthened by shared belief in values of democracy and rule of law. He "iterated India's resolve to further enhance the India-Seychelles strategic partnership in the post-Covid era," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement on Saturday.

The minister also "spoke of the centrality of Seychelles to India's vision of SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region) that characterised India's policy towards



S Jaishankar

the Indian Ocean Region. As a neighbour across waters, Seychelles was very much a part of the Neighbourhood First policy as well," it said.

Jaishankar also carried a personal message from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and conveyed an invitation from the Indian leadership to the Seychelles President to visit India in 2021.

— PTI

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY		
E-TENDER NOTICE No. 13 UBL 2020-21		
Dated: 26-11-2020		
The undersigned, on behalf of The President of India, invites E-Tenders for the following works.		
Sl.	Name of Work	Approx. Value
1	Hubballi Division: Ballari: Proposed construction of Sewage Treatment Plant (STP/ETP) at Ballari of capacity 100 kLD.	Rs. 1,07,85,938/-
2	Hubballi Division: SW-H: Ranjipura: Provision of standard height gauges and approach road in Senior Section Engineer / Vijayapura sub-division / Hospete for 09 Nos. of Bridges.	Rs. 1,25,51,711/-
3	Hubballi Division: SW-H: Ranjipura: Provision of goods platform facilities and approach roads of goods shed at Ranjipura station.	Rs. 64,83,028/-
4	Hubballi Division: SW-H: Ranjipura: Provision of goods platform facilities and approach roads of goods shed at Ballari station.	Rs. 65,72,747/-
5	Hubballi Division: Ballari - Rayadurg Section: Proposed rebuilding of existing stone slab Bridge No. 02 of span 1x0.91m at km 1.832 on Ballari - Rayadurg section, as RCC box bridge.	Rs. 46,75,268/-
6	Hubballi Division: Ballari: Renovation of existing water pond at Ballari.	Rs. 42,69,948/-
7	Hubballi Division: Supplying and transportation of drinking water through road tankers by private agency including pumping into Railway over head tanks in Assistant Divisional Engineer / Vijayapura sub-division.	Rs. 37,90,500/-
Last date for submission of bids: Upto 11.00 Hrs. of 21-12-2020		
For details log on: www.reps.gov.in		
Divisional Railway Manager / Works Hubballi		

DECCAN Chronicle

30 NOVEMBER 2020

Farmers have its ear, onus is on govt to find solution

The three laws the Union government has brought in with a claim to revolutionise Indian farming and emancipate the farmer seem to have failed to convince a large section of its potential beneficiaries. They have been on a warpath ever since the bills were introduced in parliament in September this year. And after having waited for months for an amicable solution, they have now reached the national capital, and made their voices heard in the corridors of power.

The Union government has been less than honest when it says it is ready to hold talks with the agitationists. Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar first offered to talk to them in October, but absented himself when they turned up. Defence minister Rajnath Singh, a former agriculture minister with a fair understanding of the sector, had also offered to mediate but nothing concrete emerged. At present, Union home minister Amit Shah has said the government was willing to talk but given the way Prime Minister Narendra Modi justified the pieces of legislation in his latest radio talk on Sunday, there is not much the government has done to concede.

Agriculture in India, like it is the world over, is a highly protected enterprise. Governments support it in terms of subsidies for inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, finance and power, and for the purchase of the produce. The agriculture markets (*mandis*) and the minimum support price (MSP) mechanism that are in vogue in India offer the farmer some basic assurances: there will be a buyer and there will be a minimum price, so that he needs to fight a limited number of other uncertainties. In spite of them all, instances of farmer suicide are on the rise.

It is in this context that the three laws, which, in effect, undermine both agriculture markets and the MSP, should be seen. The laws allow the farmer to sell to any one, and allow anyone to purchase, with no upper limits. It also legalises contract farming. Instead of revelling at the new freedom, the farmers are petrified by the possibility of the entry of the big corporates, at present legally stopped, into the scene and hence the protests. They fear that the corporates will chase out the mandis and once they vanish, the government could also withdraw from the scene. Since the laws provide for no MSP, they will be at the mercy of the big players. And that's how the farmers' primary demand for legal protection to the MSP system gains credence.

The NDA dispensation has its own ways of dealing with protesters, and it has demonstrated it while addressing issues created by note ban, introduction of the Goods and Services Tax, passing of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and following out of Article 370 of the Constitution. One way was to portray the protesters as troublemakers and anti-nationals. It's unlikely to work this time around, for it's the farmer who feeds the nation who is there on the other side. So, the government better address their legitimate demands and come out with a solution.

Iran killing: Trouble for Biden

The Iranians have pointed fingers at Israel for the targeted killing of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, thought of as the father of their nuclear programme. There is also speculation that it could be the United States playing tricks in the dying stages of the Trump presidency or using Israel as the hitman. Either way, it was a foolish and a dangerous move that can lead to unsettling consequences in an already volatile region, whose purport is to queer the pitch for the incoming president, Joe Biden.

The assassination and its fallout can bring satisfaction to only three entities: President Trump, Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu and the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Salman, who have been conspiring to strike blows at Iran under the overall umbrella of the flawed and failed Trump administration policy of bringing "maximum pressure" against Iran, possibly with a view to achieving regime change or Iran's military destruction. There is also a fourth entity, the Xi Jinping regime in China which last month signed a massive investment deal with Tehran. Whether this fructifies or not is conjecture, but it does offer the Chinese considerable leeway in unsettled West Asia at the expense of the US.

A justly angry Iran has threatened that it would retaliate. It would be well advised to be extremely measured in response, instead of causing a military opening up. The incoming Joe Biden team would also do well to calm nerves in Tehran, using balancing words. The killing by the Americans of Major General Qasem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds force, this January did not bring Iran to heel or cause it irretrievable loss. The recent killing of a famous nuclear scientist is not likely to reverse Iran's nuclear weapons programme, should Tehran head in that direction. The Iranian nuclear project is too well-grounded for that.

To curb this programme in return for ending crippling US and Western sanctions, the previous Obama administration had signed a comprehensive agreement with the regime of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in 2015, which President Trump scuttled in 2018. That has led Iran to raise its enrichment capacity eight times. For the incoming Biden administration, the key to stabilising West Asia lies in diplomacy, not militarisation.

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Subhani

New Delhi tries to reset its ties with neighbours



K.C. Singh

The six months of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic followed by a gradual reopening of international travel has seen diplomacy transition from virtual meetings on e-platforms to calibrated in-person contacts. Multiple events with geopolitical impact are compelling diplomats to scurry for meetings. One, the new US President assumes office on January 20, 2021, despite the misleading fulminations of incumbent Donald Trump. Pending this, all major nations are reassessing their policy options. Two, China is trying, after signing a confidence-boosting 15-nation trade agreement (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership), to wean away or pressure America's allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific and Europe before the Joe Biden administration fills the strategic vacuum.

For India, the first is a lesser hurdle than the second. While continuity is expected in the positive trajectory of India-US relations under President Biden, a renewed emphasis on human rights and democracy may present the Indian government with a challenge as it maintains or even sharpens its majoritarian agenda in coming state elections. But Chinese actions require close monitoring as the military standoff at the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh persists into winter. Senior Chinese diplomat and state councillor Yang Jiechi was in South Korea in August and then in Myanmar, Spain and Greece in September. He arrived in Sri Lanka on October 9, promising Chinese assistance for infrastructure, including building of the Colombo Port City and upgrading of Hambantota port. Meanwhile, the Imran Khan government in Pakistan in September

decided to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan to a full province, signalling to China that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) running through it had a more assured legal status. Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi swung through Japan and South Korea on November 24-25 to apparently woo them before President Biden unveils his Indo-Pacific strategy.

South Block naturally also stepped up its diplomatic engagements to respond to these two and other developments. While external affairs minister S. Jaishankar was on a six-day tour of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Seychelles on November 24-29, foreign secretary Harsh V. Shringla was in Nepal on November 26-27. Separately, national security adviser Ajit Doval was in Sri Lanka on November 27-28 for the fourth Trilateral Maritime Security Cooperation meeting of India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Relations with Nepal have been testy since India inaugurated in May a new road in the Kalapani sector, providing easier access to Mansarovar in China. Nepalese Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, while beleaguered in an internal political battle with rival Communist Party group, picked the territorial issue to rally his party and nation. China was no doubt delighted by the friction as it ratcheted up its military posture in Ladakh. Indian Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane visited Nepal to maintain the old tradition of close relations between the two militaries. In a peculiar followup, the head of the Research and Analysis Wing, India's external intelligence agency, made a high-profile visit, including a call on the Nepalese PM and the Opposition leader. The foreign secretary's visit was thus well prepared and expected to further soften the Nepalese. A border

working group meeting, which the Nepalese sought as a condition precedent to resumed bonhomie, was conceded. Mr Shringla also proposed an infrastructure and connectivity plan to counter the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative from the north. Nepal is a vital buffer between India and China and geographically and culturally more integrated to the Indian south than the Chinese north.

In Colombo the NSA, Mr Doval, had the more complex task of balancing Chinese gains in Sri Lanka after the recent electoral triumph of the wily and nationalistic Rajapaksa clan, with the brothers occupying the top two posts. Ironically, since the initiative's creation, domestic politics in Sri Lanka and the Maldives has brought to power governments closer now to China and India respectively, the reverse of the earlier situation. Thus, while in the Maldives the Solih government is more than thrilled to welcome Indian investment even in lieu of Chinese offers, in Sri Lanka the Rajapaksa clan is leaning towards the Chinese, opportunistically balancing Indian and American overtures as that allows it freedom to pursue its nationalistic and majoritarian agenda domestically. It may find Mr Biden and his team is less tolerant of its domestic politics than the Trump administration. The BJP's desire to make a dent in Tamil electoral politics would also have to be balanced against majoritarianism at home and reticence over how minority Tamils are treated in Sri Lanka.

Before Mr Jaishankar arrived in the Gulf, US secretary of state Mike Pompeo was making his farewell visits to Israel, the United Arab Emirates and finally Saudi Arabia, where he arranged a meet-

ing between Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the Red Sea town of Neom on November 22. I had tweeted at the start of his visit that hopefully no adventurous move was being planned against Iran, to create a diversion, as a desperate President Donald Trump ran out of legal and populist tricks to overturn the US presidential election results. On November 27, in an apparent Israeli operation, endorsed perhaps by the US and even the Saudi-UAE alliance, Dr Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a top Iranian nuclear scientist and high-level officer of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, was killed. This was an attempt to limit the Biden administration's options in dealing with Iran. Hopefully, the Iranians are smart enough not to be immediately provoked. But their pent-up anger over the earlier killing of Gen. Qasem Soleimani in a US drone attack and now this provocation can explode at some stage.

Mr Jaishankar's visit to Seychelles was important as the new LDS government of President Waud Ramkalawan, the priest-grandson of an immigrant from Bihar, has been opposed to Indian naval concessions. However, it was surprising the external affairs minister chose to visit only nations aligned to the US in the Gulf and those with recently established relations with Israel. In the case of Bahrain, there was some justification as the death of long-serving Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa needed condoling. But overall, the optics seemed insensitive to the fissures in the Islamic world caused by Trumpian diplomacy. It would limit India's options with Iran and other Islamic nations opposed to US-Saudi-Emirati actions. It would perhaps have been better to wait till the Biden administration had begun fixing the Trumpian mess.

It was surprising the minister chose to visit only nations aligned to the US in the Gulf and those with recently established relations with Israel

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.

LETTERS

FRIVOLOUS DISPLAY SIGNS

The decision to display signs at petrol bunks by the police that petrol will not be filled if the two wheeler rider does not wear a helmet is ridiculous. Rules in Tamil Nadu are followed more in breach than in practice. Even after making an announcement that those who do not wear masks will be fined has had no effect thanks to poor supervision and enforcement by the government authorities. Wearing a helmet is a personal matter concerning the safety of an individual and does not affect the public but not wearing masks amid pandemic results in transmission of the deadly coronavirus to several people at a time due to the callous attitude of the public. Let the authorities first enforce the mask wearing rule strictly supervised by the police.

M.C. Vijay Shankar
Chennai

VACCINE AID

This has reference to your editorial report, Covid-19: Strict to Protocol. It could take at least two years for the vaccine to reach all. Strict adherence of the protocols is the only option for the time being. This also refers to your report, Modi says the vaccine is for our neighbours too. It is heartening to read a report that shows how India is following sound principles of science in the entire journey of vaccine development. In order to boost the morale and help accelerate their efforts, scientists expressed their joy in the Prime Minister's meeting on the vaccine journey. The vaccines will help India to assist other countries too for global good and for our country's good health.

Suresh VV,
Vellore

SELECTION BIAS

Despite the pasting in the first ODI, the coach and captain kept their faith in their bowlers who were carted all around the SCG. The net result is another pasting. At this rate it could be a total whitewash, not only in ODI and T20 series, but even in the Tests. When will they stop selecting their blue eyed boys? Our captain seemed clueless and was wandering like an expecting father in a hospital corridor.

N. Mahadevan,
Chennai

Skand Tayal



Are 'virtual' summits of any real use?

November has seen India's participation in five virtual summits, starting with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on November 10 and ending with G-20 on November 22, with the Asean-India on November 13, East Asia Summit on November 14 and Brics on November 17. The raison d'être of summits is to enable the principals to interact in person, enabling them to cogitate over matters of vital importance collectively, bilaterally and sometimes off the record informally. But a virtual meet over electronic waves addressing images of fellow leaders is an entirely impersonal platform. The question arises: does such virtual summits serve any useful purpose.

Virtual summits do serve two objectives. One, to clear the annual calendar of meetings so the chain of summits remains unbroken; and the second, it enables countries to articulate their priorities and float fresh ideas to collectively address regional and global challenges.

In the summits, the primary focus was on the Covid-19 pandemic and ways to contain the virus and revive economic growth. India highlighted its efforts to support many nations by supplying medicines and medical equip-

ment. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to help make the Covid vaccine "accessible and affordable to all nations" was well received. With India's recognised capacity to produce vast quantities of vaccines, this commitment is serious and will make a palpable difference to the mission of vaccinating billions of people at an affordable cost.

At the SCO meet chaired by Russia's Vladimir Putin, Mr Modi stressed the importance of "reformed multilateralism" to meet the expectations of the world battling the social and financial impact of the Chinese virus. It was a wise call as nation states have no alternative but to work together. But the structures, processes and philosophy of both the concept of multilateralism and its practice across different institutions have a crying need for reform.

At the SCO summit Mr Modi expressed India's firm commitment to regional peace, security and prosperity and against terrorism, illegal weapons, drugs and money laundering. India has high expectations from the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent under the auspices of the SCO and recently sent an officer to work with RATS.

On November 12, Mr Modi addressed

the Asean-India summit hosted by the Vietnamese Prime Minister. In his brief remarks, Mr Modi focused on the centrality of Asean in India's "Act East Policy" and noted the importance of "a cohesive, responsive and prosperous Asean" for India's Indo-Pacific vision. The choice of words is notable. Under Chinese pressure on economically vulnerable countries like Laos and Cambodia, the 10 Asean members no longer speak with one voice on critical issues like Chinese expansionism in the South China Sea. Asean, as a group, has also not been sufficiently proactive and responsive in meeting the multiple challenges posed by the pandemic.

Progress on physical connectivity between Northeast India and Thailand through Myanmar has been tardy, that prompted the PM to stress the importance of digital connectivity with Asean. The unpalatable reality is that huge investments on development of roads or multi-modal network between East India and Asean have little economic justification or even local demand from businesses or communities. It is an endeavour solely driven by strategic and diplomatic logic and must be financed by India without any expectations of significant returns.

In East Asia, issues of common con-

cern include Chinese intrusion in SCS and terrorism. Both India and Asean leaders noted "the importance of promoting a rules-based order in the region, including via UNCLOS". However, China's shadow looms large on the region and the Code of Conduct for SCS being negotiated with China is likely to be a toothless document of pious intentions.

As Mr Modi spent Diwali with Indian soldiers at Longewala, Rajasthan, the East Asia Summit on November 14 was attended by external affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. On SCS, Mr Jaishankar did not mince words and expressed concern about "actions and incidents that erode trust in the region". In keeping with India's restraint in multilateral fora, he refrained from naming China for its transgressions.

The Brics summit on November 17 was chaired by President Putin. This group of emerging large economies has lost much of its sheen and cohesion with tensions between India and China and economic stress in Brazil and South Africa. The leaders did make their statements which are unlikely to have much impact or outcome. Brics summits are rarely noticed by any international observer outside those

from the member countries. If the India-China confrontation continues, Brics may also go into slow oblivion as the already-forgotten IBSA.

The G-20 summit hosted by Saudi Arabia was devoted to an "inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery" from the pandemic. Mr Modi emphatically proposed a shift of emphasis from mere growth to the welfare of human beings. His call for talent, technology, transparency and trusteeship will resonate widely in distant capitals. On terrorism, the G-20 declaration supported the FATF to combat money laundering and terror financing. Ironically, China's Xi Jinping urged all to bridge their differences through dialogue and resolve disputes through negotiations!

It is fair to conclude that virtual summits are ritualistic with forgettable outcomes. Even in normal times, most summit declarations are long and verbose, lacking focus and urgency. In the post-Covid world, it might be useful to revisit the ever-growing culture of summitry, clinically examine their usefulness and inject fresh energy into the process.

The writer is a retired diplomat and has served as India's ambassador to Uzbekistan and South Korea

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	44,149.72	-0.25
Nifty 50	12,968.95	-0.14
S&P 500*	3,638.35	0.24
Dollar (₹)	74.03	-0.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.84	-0.12
Euro (₹)	88.14	-0.23
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,142.43	0.008
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	48.04	0.24
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.911	0.039
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.852	-0.026

* As of Friday/Saturday

US, UK & Oz top mkts for Indian sellers on eBay

The US, the UK, mainland Europe and Australia are the top markets for Indian sellers that are exporting products through cross-border e-commerce on eBay's platform. Indian sellers have been witnessing strong demand across categories like apparel, fine jewellery, toys, auto parts and accessories and home decor, especially during the holiday season (Thanksgiving to New Year's), eBay India country manager Vidmay Naini said.

HSBC considers exit from US retail banking



HSBC Holdings Plc is considering an exit from US retail banking, according to a news report by the Financial Times. In the coming weeks, senior managers will outline the plan to the bank's board. They are also likely to suggest reducing investment banking activities to concentrate on international clients with a focus on Asia and the Middle East. A full exit from the US is no longer being considered.

Infibeam gets NCLT nod for demerger of biz

Fintech firm Infibeam Avenues Ltd (IAL) said it has received NCLT, Ahmedabad's approval for the demerger of its various entities, including SME e-commerce service and e-commerce business units. Under the 'composite scheme of arrangement', IAL had sought to demerge its SME E-commerce and the E-commerce marketplace businesses to Suvidhaa, while theme park and event business will be vested to DRC Systems.

China needs 4.7% growth to reach 2035 GDP target

A Chinese official said the country's average annual growth needs to reach 4.73 per cent to achieve a 2035 target of doubling the size of its economy. China has the conditions to meet the goal, said Yang Weimin, deputy director of an economic committee under the top political advisory body. President Xi Jinping said recently that it is "completely possible" for China's economy to be twice the size by 2035.

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■ Steep fall in gems & jewellery exports mar H1 figures

Trade balance with UAE turns deficit from surplus

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, NOV. 29

A drastic drop in exports has reversed India's trade balance with the UAE from surplus to deficit.

While India saw the trade balance improving with most of the major trading partners, including China, the US and the UK due to import reduction, the balance deteriorated with the UAE. From a trade surplus of \$510 million during April-September 2019, the trade slipped into a deficit of \$1.6 billion in the first half of the current fiscal.

The main reason behind the deterioration was the decline in exports. Exports to the UAE took a severe beating of 55 per cent, dropping from \$14,942 million in April-September 2019-20 to \$6,738 million in the first half of the current fiscal, as per the data from the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.



ations. Since the imports from the UAE stood at \$8,376 million, India registered a trade deficit of \$1,637 million.

While the decline was evident across most of the product categories, export of gems and jewellery was the highest contributor to this. Gems and jewellery exports to the UAE contracted 86.7 per cent from

\$5,063 million between April and September 2019 to \$673 million in the first half of the current fiscal, finds the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council.

Jewellery traditionally accounts for nearly a third of India's exports to the UAE, which dropped to a meagre 4 per cent during April-September 2020. A

large chunk of exports to the UAE happens through the Cochin Special Economic Zone. Cochin SEZ, which had exported \$3,268.90 million worth gems and jewellery in the first half of last year, saw a drop of 99.28 per cent to a meagre \$23.65 million in the first half of this year.

Exports of ready-made garments too declined 42 per cent during January-June this year to \$606 million against \$1,045 million during the year-ago period.

"Dubai is the largest trading hub in the UAE and almost 70 per cent of the shipments reaching Dubai are meant for re-exports to other markets. The re-exports were almost closed from Dubai due to the pandemic and hence the exports have fallen drastically," said K. Unnikrishnan, deputy director general, Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

PSU general insurers asked to cut flab, rationalise branches

New Delhi, Nov. 29: The finance ministry has asked public sector general insurance firms, especially National Insurance, Oriental Insurance and United India Insurance, to rationalise branches and cut down avoidable expenses to improve their financial health, sources said.

Earlier this year, the Union Cabinet decided to halt the merger process of the three state-owned general insurance companies due to their weak financial positions and the government, instead, approved



fund infusion of Rs 12,450 crore to help them meet required regulatory parameters.

The finance ministry has asked

these companies to cut the flab by rationalising branches and rein in other avoidable expenses like guest houses, etc, the sources said.

Besides, the companies have been asked to expand their business through the digital medium.

As part of the capital infusion exercise, the government approved raising the authorised share capital of National Insurance Company Ltd to Rs 7,500 crore and that of United India Insurance Company Ltd and Oriental Insurance Company Ltd to Rs 5,000 crore each. —PTI

Deemed GST registrants face physical verification

New Delhi, Nov. 29: The CBIC has asked field offices to carry out physical verification of premises of businesses which have been granted deemed GST registration between August 21 and November 16 to ascertain that they have genuine business or intend to carry out so.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has also asked taxmen not to grant GST registration on deemed basis in cases where the applicant has not opted for Aadhaar authentication or the authentication has failed.

Current provision under goods and services tax (GST) law allows for deemed registration upon completion of 21 days of application if the proper officer has not issued any notice within the 21 days.

The CBIC, in its instruction to field offices, said that data suggests that during the period from August 21 to November 16 deemed registrations have been granted in many

cases where Aadhaar authentication has not been opted for or has failed.

"These registrations granted on deemed basis require verifications to ascertain that they have genuine business or intends to carry out so," the CBIC said while issuing standard operating procedure (SOP) for carrying out physical verification of persons who have been granted deemed registration.

During the physical verification, the officer, among other things, would verify that in case the applicant intends to carry out manufacturing activity, the capital goods, if required for the said manufacturing activity, have been installed.

The officer would also verify electricity connection, bills paid in the relevant period, size of the premises whether it is commensurate with the activity to be carried out by the applicant. —PTI

From small biz to farmers, middle India is driving demand

ADITI SHAH &
RAJENDRA JADHAV
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI,
NOV. 29

Manish Mehra, owner of Washex Hospitality, an industrial laundry service, recently flew from Delhi to Jodhpur to win a contract to service a large, government-run hospital. "For a new relationship it is essential to know each other before you can establish the trust and confidence to work online and that need is higher in case of government departments," said Mehra, who had to stay for a week in a Jodhpur hotel.

Increased demand for air travel and hotel stays by small business owners like Mehra, accompanied by a rise in rural incomes and spending after two good monsoons, is helping the pandemic-hit Indian economy slowly recover.

Government data released on Friday showed the economy shrank 7.5 per cent in the July-September quarter, performing better than analysts' expectation of an 8.8 per cent contraction.

Annual growth of 3.4 per cent in farm sector and 0.6 per cent in manufacturing during the September quarter has raised hopes of an early recovery and some service sectors such as trade, hotels and transport contracted at a much slower pace compared with the April-June period.

Farmers, benefiting from a bumper crop, are lapping up tractors while demand for personal vehicles, due to a lack of public transport and the need for safer travel options, has boosted sales of cars and motorcycles.

There has also been an uptick in goods and services, tax collections and higher energy consumption.

A recovery is taking shape and it has been led by the manufacturing sector, which has moved from near annihilation in the July quarter to rebound mode, said Yuvika Singhal, an economist at QuantEco Research.

"Until there is a stronger recovery in high contact service sectors, which make up 60 per cent of the GDP, agriculture and manufacturing are expected to

AirAsia India says not exiting but expanding

Mumbai, Nov. 29: Budget carrier AirAsia India plans to add three more Airbus A320 neo planes by June next year as part of its fleet and network expansion.

The airline—a joint venture between Tata and Malaysia's AirAsia Investment Ltd—currently has 32 aircraft, including two A320 neos inducted recently.

In a statement to PTI, an AirAsia India spokesperson said the airline had signed an agreement for inducting five A320 neo planes last year.

The Bengaluru-based airline took delivery of the first A320 neo in October and another one earlier this month.

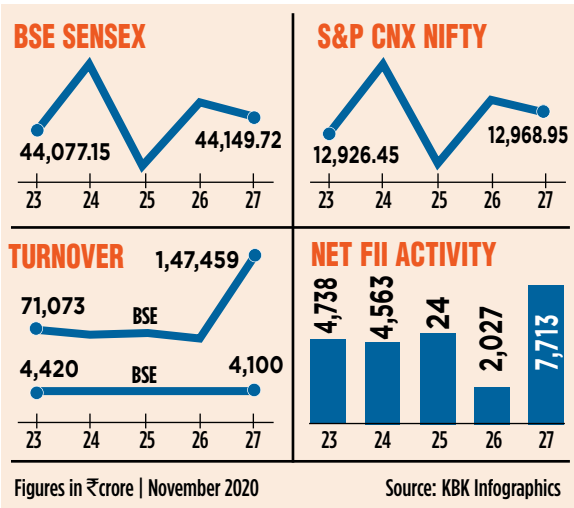
"We will be inducting our third Airbus A320 neo in December and we look forward to inducting our fourth and fifth A320 neo by June 2021," the spokesperson said in the statement.

The statement was issued in response to the queries sent to the airline's managing director and chief executive officer Sunil Bhaskaran.

On Nov. 17, Malaysia's AirAsia Berhad had said it was reviewing its investment in AirAsia India. Against this backdrop, there have also been concerns about the domestic airline.

Indicating that AirAsia India is on an expansion path, the airline's spokesperson said it is planning to scale up the capacity to 70 per cent from 55 per cent at present. —PTI

GDP data, auto sales seen as key triggers for market



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, NOV. 29

The second quarter GDP data that exceeded the market expectations may accelerate the broader market rally seen last week when the market opens on Tuesday after the long weekend, said analysts.

A record Rs 60,358-crore buying by the foreign portfolio investors in November has seen the market closing at record highs. The futures & options rollover for the Nifty-50 index at 77 per cent and the Nifty Bank Index at 79 per cent remains positive, though profit taking by domestic institutions has also been quite large in November.

The market is closed on Monday on the occasion of Gurunanak Jayanti. S. Ranganathan, head of research, LKP Securities, said, the contraction in GDP at 7.5 per cent was ahead of the market expectation, which was assuming a contraction of

9 per cent. Two-wheeler demand, he said, was robust and so was cement demand. Smart Investors were anticipating this, which was evident in the sharp up-move of over 5 per cent in the Nifty Midcap 50 and over 6 per cent up-move in the Nifty Smallcap 100 for the week. "The data is in line with Q2 earnings and commentary put out by several corporates," he added.

Nomura India said, "India's GDP growth rose to a better-than-expected -7.5 per cent year on year in the second quarter, a sharp rebound from the lockdown-induced decline of 23.9 per cent in the first quarter... On a seasonally adjusted basis, we estimate that GDP rose by an impressive 21 per cent quarter on quarter, almost reversing the 24.3 per cent fall in the April-June quarter."

November auto sales numbers and RBI policy announcement scheduled for later in the week would also impact the market.



carry the growth," said Singhal, adding that India is still growing on a lower GDP base and it will take more than a year to recover lost output.

A string of Marriot hotels in industrial towns like Srirerumbudur, Visakhapatnam and Nasik are operating at 50 to 60 per cent occupancy, with the bulk of guests working with domestic manufacturing companies, said Ashish Jakhanwala, CEO of hospitality firm Samhi, which owns the properties.

But Samhi's hotel in Bengaluru that mainly depends on large corporates is filling only 20 to 30 per cent of rooms.

"Demand from large corporates and international travel will take longer to recover. Hotels catering to public sector and infrastructure companies are

doing better," said Jakhanwala.

Since the end of May, when the government lifted a ban on flights, monthly domestic passenger traffic has more than doubled from 2 million in June to over 5 million in October. But that is still down from about 12 million a year ago.

India's biggest carrier IndiGo and rival Vistara are seeing an uptick in business travel but to a much smaller extent than before.

"Much of it is from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) or small business owners who cannot afford to sit at home," said Vinod Kannan, chief commercial officer at Vistara.

SMEs have contributed to a 35 to 40 per cent recovery in hotel bookings compared with pre-Covid times and between 27 and 32 per

cent recovery in flights, according to online travel agency MakeMyTrip.

In the hinterlands, the impact of Covid-19 has not been as severe as in the big cities and farmers have benefited from good rainfall for two consecutive years, leading to a bumper harvest and adequate conditions for winter-sown crops. This is driving up sales for tractor makers like Mahindra & Mahindra.

Lack of adequate and safe public transport in small towns and villages has also pushed up demand for cars and motorcycles.

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, had a 10 per cent growth in rural sales between July and September versus a 4 per cent rise overall, led by small, entry-level models, said Shashank Srivastava, executive director, marketing and sales.

"While Bharat is leading India in terms of a recovery, it cannot carry India," he said, adding that steady, long-term demand will depend on improving economic factors, growing incomes and a rebound in urban markets. —Reuters

CAUGHT | IN COVID Output from shale wells typically declines in a matter of months, so new ones need to be drilled

Pandemic has broken shale and left oil markets in Opec hands

KEVIN CROWLEY,
DAVID WETHE &
SHEELA TOBBEN
NOV. 29

Opec's oil ministers have a few challenges to consider at a crucial summit on Monday, but for the first time in years the shale boom won't be at the top of the list.

A devastating global pandemic and a reckoning with Wall Street appear to have broken the resolve of the shale wildcatters who turned the US into the world's biggest oil producer. Years of breakneck growth, at the expense of crude kingpins in the Middle East and Russia, have come to an end. If there was ever any doubt, it's now abundantly clear who has the upper hand in the global oil market.

"In the future, certainly we believe Opec will be the swing producer - really,

totally in control of oil prices," Bill Thomas, chief executive officer of EOG Resources Inc, the biggest independent shale producer by market value, said earlier this month. "We don't want to put Opec in a situation where they feel threatened, like we're taking market share while they're propping up oil prices."

The shale industry's prudence, also echoed by the CEOs of Pioneer Natural Resources Co and Occidental Petroleum Corp, means that production will probably flatten after a steep plunge this year. US oil output will end 2021 close to 11 million barrels a day, about the same as it is now, according to forecasters IHS Markit, Rystad Energy, Enverus and the US Energy Information Administration.

"I see no more growth until 2022, 2023, and it will



be very, very light in regard to the US shale industry ever growing again," Pioneer CEO Scott Sheffield, who'll run the fourth-largest shale operation in the country after his company completes the takeover of Parsley Energy Inc, said in an interview.

That will surely come as a relief to Opec and its allies.

At the start of 2020, the group's efforts to control prices were facing increasing difficulties. The breakthroughs in horizontal drilling and

fracking that ushered in the shale revolution made it look as though US production growth might never end. Output surpassed 13 million barrels a day for the first time in February.

Then Covid-19 hit, people around the world stopped driving and flying, and the oil market crashed. President Donald Trump brokered a historic deal with Opec in April to remove almost a 10th of global production from the market. He said the US contribution would come in the form of market-driv-

en cuts.

That pledge was delivered faster than most predicted, and it made a huge difference. Investors who were already tiring of the shale industry's cash-burning spree retreated from the sector, and several producers went bankrupt. Before the summer was over, US output had collapsed by 3.4 million barrels a day, almost the same as removing the United Arab Emirates at peak production. Output from shale wells typically declines in a matter of months, so new ones need to be drilled and fracked just to maintain production at current levels. A recent uptick in drilling and fracking doesn't seem to be enough to ensure production growth.

Since hitting bottom in the summer, the number of rigs searching for crude in shale fields has increased

by 69 to 241 last week, according to data from Baker Hughes Co. That's still down from 683 in March. Similarly, the number of fracking crews in the once vibrant Permian Basin straddling Texas and New Mexico has increased to 63, an improvement from a meagre 20 in June, data from Primary Vision Inc. show. But that's less than half the 146 teams that were pumping mixtures of water, chemicals and sand into wells in January to release oil from shale rock in the area.

It's as though the US suddenly went from being a thorn in Opec's side to being an unofficial member of the cartel's alliance with Russia and other producing nations. Since June, benchmark US oil prices have been remarkably stable, hovering around \$40 a barrel, and

that's how Opec likes it.

While shale's retreat has made Opec's life easier, for the US oil industry it's been brutal. There have been 43 bankruptcies of exploration and production companies this year through October, according to a report from law firm Haynes & Boone.

Shale may be down but it's certainly not out, though. The US is still an oil superpower, and will remain so for years to come. And there's always the possibility that higher prices will get explorers drilling and fracking relentlessly like before. A sustained price rise to \$50 a barrel will "trigger growth again," according to Bernadette Johnson, vice president for strategy and analytics at Enverus. At \$60 a barrel, US shale will come back strongly, she said.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Azam accused of physical abuse

Karachi: In an explosive press conference, a woman has accused Pakistan skipper Babar Azam of abuse. The woman, claiming to be Babar's school-mate, said that the player had been exploiting him for almost ten years. In her press conference, she also claimed that Babar had promised marriage to her in 2010, but he later did not live up to his word as he became a famous cricketer. In a video shared by Pakistan journalist Saj Sadiq, the woman can be seen calling for justice. The lady also claimed that she went on to support Babar financially when Babar had not made it big as a cricketer. She also claimed that Babar physically abused her. "He promised to marry me, he got me pregnant, he beat me up, he threatened me and he used me," the woman can be heard saying in the video shared by Sadiq. — *ANI*

Grosjean escapes crash in Bahrain

Manama: Romain Grosjean escaped from a horrific first-lap crash at the Bahrain Grand Prix on Sunday when his car split in two and burst into flames. The French driver's Haas collided with Daniil Kyvat's Alpha Tauri on turn three, skewing into a barrier.

Grosjean, 34, was lodged in the front half of his monocoque as it appeared to fly under the barrier, leaving the rear half behind on the edge of the circuit after spinning on impact. His car's fuel tank was clearly ruptured in the accident, releasing the fuel that ignited in a huge blaze.

The crash came at a service road access point where the driver and medical crew from the circuit Safety Car were on the scene immediately. The race was immediately red-flagged and the rest of the cars filed back to the pit lane. — *AFP*

Five-star Man City hammer Burnley

London: Man City shrugged off their problems in front of goal by hitting five past Burnley for the fourth consecutive clash between the two at the Etihad.

Pep Guardiola's men had scored just seven goals in their previous seven league games, but Riyad Mahrez's early double opened the floodgates. Benjamin Mendy made it 3-0 before half-time and Ferran Torres got his first Premier League goal before Mahrez completed the scoring and his hat-trick. Victory propelled City to within six points of Liverpool at the top of the table with a game in hand. Later, Everton boss Carlo Ancelotti was reduced to tears before his side's 1-0 loss to Leeds as respects were paid to Diego Maradona before all Premier League games this weekend with a minute's applause. — *AFP*

Messi pays tribute to Maradona

Barcelona: Lionel Messi paid tribute to Diego Maradona by stripping off his Barcelona top to reveal the Argentina great's shirt after he scored the final goal of a 4-0 rout of Osasuna on Sunday. Messi celebrated his powerful contribution from outside the box to cap the comfortable victory by taking off Barcelona's blue-and-burgundy to bare the red-and-black of Maradona's shirt from his stint at Newell's Old Boys.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Lanka Premier League: Dambulla vs Jaffna from 3 pm on Sony Six

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Leicester City vs Fulham from 11 pm West Ham vs Aston Villa from 1.30 am (Tuesday) on Star Sports Select 1

Indian Super League: Goa vs NorthEast United from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Italian League: Genoa vs Parma from 1.15 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

WWE

Raw: Bouts from 6.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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INDIA FALL FLAT

Oz crush Kohli's men in 2nd ODI for unassailable series lead

Sydney, Nov. 29: Australia buried India under an avalanche of runs for a 51-run drubbing in the second one-day international and an unassailable 2-0 series lead after the majestic Steve Smith produced another master-class in the form of a 64-ball 104 here on Sunday.

Batting first, Australia rode on five fifty-plus scores including Smith's blazing knock, to post an imposing 389 for four against a sluggish India.

This was the Australian run-machine's fifth century against India in the 50-over format and second on the trot after his ton in the series-opener, which came off 66 deliveries.

A target of 390 proved to be too much for India as they were stopped at 338 for nine, with captain Virat Kohli (89) and K.L. Rahul (76) finishing as their main contributors in what turned out to be another forgettable outing for the beleaguered visitors.

India started the big chase in earnest with the in-form Shikhar Dhawan (30) and Mayank Agarwal (28) dealing in boundaries from the onset.

If Agarwal found the fence twice in the first over, Dhawan struck Mitchell Starc for three successive fours to get the Indian innings going.

A magnificent cover drive by Agarwal took the visitors past 50 in 6.1 overs. However, in trying to go for one too many, Dhawan perished.

In came Kohli and as he has mostly done through his illustrious career, the Indian captain played some delightful shots on the way to his 87-ball innings to keep the visitors in with a chance.

During his stay in the middle, Kohli pulled,



Australia's Steve Smith celebrates his century against India during the second one-day international at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday. — *AFP*

drove, flicked and cut with plenty of success as India tried to keep the required rate within 9-10 runs per over.

But pacer Josh Hazlewood provided Australia their biggest breakthrough when he had Kohli caught brilliantly by a diving Moises Henriques at midwicket.

That brought Hardik Pandya in the middle and the all-rounder, in the company of Rahul, played some big shots. But they were never going to be enough. — *PTI*

SMITH LOOKING PRETTY SCARY: SAYS MAXWELL

Sydney, Nov. 29: In red-hot form, Steve Smith is looking "pretty scary" for the opposition teams, gushed Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell after his teammate hammered his second successive century against India on Sunday.

"As he said the other day, he has found his hands, he is looking pretty scary at the moment for opposition teams. He is placing the ball as well as anyone around the world. When he puts the foot down, he goes and goes hard," Maxwell said.

"He is picking his spots. A lot of time, you judge him by the way he starts his innings and he just started by hitting the middle of the bat consistently."

Maxwell, who himself contributed in Australia's huge total with his unbeaten 63, said it was great to get a bit of momentum in ODI cricket after struggling in T20s but also credited performing top-order for his success. — *PTI*

254 RUNNERS FROM CHENNAI COMPETE IN DELHI HALF MARATHON

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 29

As many as 254 runners from Chennai competed in the Delhi Half Marathon on Sunday. The participants got an opportunity to embrace and experience the magic virtually.

A runner from Chennai expressed that he had a great experience running the marathon through the ADHM app.

"I had a great time. The experience was smooth and excellent. I really enjoyed the special features in the app. It was amazing to receive a detailed analysis of my run post completion of the marathon," said VP Senthil.



Chennai runners who competed in the Delhi half marathon.

Kohli blames bowlers for blooper

Sydney, Nov. 29: India skipper Virat Kohli had no qualms conceding that the visitors were outplayed by a confident and ruthless Australia in the series-deciding second ODI here on Sunday, pinning the blame on the ineffective and inconsistent bowling by his side.

"We were completely outplayed. I think with the ball, we were not that effective, we didn't hit the areas that we wanted to consistently and they have a strong batting line-up, they know the conditions and the angles well," Kohli said at the post-match presentation.

Chasing Australia's 389, India finished at 338 for 9 with Kohli (89) and K.L. Rahul (76) being the top-scorer.

"Look at the scoreboard, we got 340 and still fell short by 50 odd, so the chase always felt steep and we knew one or two wickets would take the required rate to up to 13, 16 and so we had to keep hitting," the India skipper said.

"They took the chances that they created in the field, which was the difference, otherwise it



Captain Virat Kohli en route to his 89 against Australia during their second ODI in Sydney on Sunday. — *AFP*

would have been a much closer game."

"...Credit to them, they bowled much more consistently and used the dimensions well."

Kohli said the two catches which led to his and Shreyas Iyer's (38) dismissal were the "defining moments" of the game.

"Me and KL (Rahul) were talking if we stick around till 40-41 (overs), even 100 in last 10 overs with Hardik to come, it was game on, that was the

game plan but the two catches that they hung on to were the defying moments," he said.

A pleased Australia captain Aaron Finch said his bowlers took some lessons from the way Pandya bowled.

"Moises bowled really well defensively including his cutters, and as Virat said, we got a bit of a blueprint from Hardik, by taking the pace off the ball," Finch said after the match. — *PTI*

FACTFILE

■ Australia recorded their highest total against India by making 389/4 in 50 overs in the second ODI on Sunday.
■ The hosts previous best was 366/8 in 50 overs in the first match of the series at the same ground. Overall, it is the third-highest total by any team against India in the ODIs.
■ Steven Smith recorded third fastest hundred for Australia by completing 100 runs off 62 balls during his 104-run knock.
— *S.PERVEZ QAISER*

SCORECARD

Australia: D. Warner run out (Shreyas Iyer) 83, A. Finch c Kohli b Shami 60, S. Smith c Shami b Hardik Pandya 104, Marnus Labuschagne c Mayank Agarwal b Bumrah 70, Glenn Maxwell (not out) 63, Moises Henriques not out 2. Extras (lb-2, nb-1, wd-4) 7. **Total (For 4 wkts, in 50 overs) 389.**
FoW: 1-142-1, 2-156, 3-292, 4-372.

Bowling: M. Shami 9-0-73-1, J. Bumrah 10-1-79-1, N. Saini 7-0-70-0, Y. Chahal 9-0-71-0, H. Pandya 4-0-24-1, R. Jadeja 10-0-60-0, M. Agarwal 1-0-10-0.

India: Mayank Agarwal c Carey b Cummins 28, Shikhar Dhawan c Starc b Hazlewood 30, Virat Kohli c Henriques b Hazlewood

89, Shreyas Iyer c Smith b Henriques 38, K. L. Rahul c Hazlewood b Zampa 76, Hardik Pandya c Smith b Cummins 28, Ravindra Jadeja c Maxwell b Cummins 24, Navdeep Saini (not out) 10, Mohammed Shami c and b Maxwell 1, Jasprit Bumrah lbw b Zampa 0, Yuzvendra Chahal (not out) 4. Extras (nb-2, wd-8) 10. **Total (for 9 wkts, in 50 overs) 338.**

FoW: 1-58, 2-60, 3-153, 4-225, 5-288, 6-321, 7-321, 8-326, 9-328.

Bowling: M. Starc 9-0-82-0, J. Hazlewood 9-0-59-2, P. Cummins 10-0-67-3, A. Zampa 10-0-62-2, M. Henriques 7-0-34-1, G. Maxwell 5-0-34-1.

PANDYA BOWLS FOR FIRST TIME IN OVER A YEAR

Sydney, Nov. 29: All-rounder Hardik Pandya bowled in top-flight cricket for the first time since returning from a back surgery more than a year ago, with his team under pressure against Australia during the second ODI here on Sunday.

Two days ago, after the first ODI, Pandya, who has remodelled his action to reduce the stress on his body, said he would bowl in the "important" games and only when the time is right.

Pandya bowled a good first over too, conceding just five runs against a rampaging Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne.

In his second over, Pandya gave away just four runs with the Australians finding it difficult to put away his slower balls. — *PTI*

Tyson draws in comeback fight

Los Angeles, Nov. 29: Mike Tyson's return to boxing at age 54 ended in a draw with 51-year-old Roy Jones Jr. on Saturday in an eight-round exhibition battle of former heavyweight champions.

Fifteen years after retiring with a 2005 loss to journeyman Kevin McBride, Tyson made his comeback at Staples Center in Los Angeles without spectators in a pay-per-view matchup that mixed curiosity and nostalgia.

California State Athletic Commission officials required two-minute rounds instead of the usual three-minute rounds, mandated larger than normal 12-ounce gloves, said neither fighter could seek a knockout and declared there could be no official winner in safety moves for the over-50 fighters.

"Sometimes that two minutes felt like three minutes," Tyson said.

"I'm glad I got this under my belt and I'm looking forward to doing it again."

An "unofficial" panel of former World Boxing Council champions at ring-side scored the bout a draw, an outcome that Tyson applauded despite appearing to dominate.

"I'm good with that," Tyson said, admitting he thought he had won the fight.

"Yeah, but I'm good with a draw. The crowd was happy with that."

Jones, who looked tired

● **Fifteen years after retiring with a 2005 loss to journeyman Kevin McBride, Tyson made his comeback at Staples Center in Los Angeles without spectators in a pay-per-view matchup that mixed curiosity and nostalgia.**

and grabbed Tyson much of the fight, was unhappy at a draw.

"I ain't never happy with a draw. I don't do draw," Jones said, admitting that Tyson hurt him throughout the bout, particularly with body blows.

"If he hits you with his head, punches, body shots, it don't matter, everything hurts. Body shots definitely took a toll. Body shots are what makes you exhausted."

Tyson, who entered 50-6 with 44 knockouts, lost 100 pounds and began training again, his desire to get back in shape becoming a hunger to strap on the gloves once more.

Jones, who entered 66-9 with 47 knockouts, had not fought since a February 2018 cruiserweight victory. He hoped a solid effort against Tyson might set up a fight with 45-year-old Brazilian mixed martial arts star Anderson Silva. — *AFP*

ISL | SEASON 7

Albino comes to Kerala's rescue

Goa, Nov. 29: Kerala Blasters held Chennaiyin FC to a goalless draw courtesy a superb penalty save from Albino Gomes in their Hero Indian Super League encounter at the GMC Stadium, here on Sunday.

Chennaiyin named an unchanged side from their opening win against Jamshedpur FC.

Meanwhile, Kerala made three changes with Denechandra Meitei being handed his Hero ISL debut.

The first half remained goalless with either side failing to fashion clear-cut opportunities.

Chennaiyin were the dominant side but weren't clinical in the final third. Kerala goalkeeper Albino Gomes was called into action early on, in the third minute, saving a free-kick from Rafael Crivellaro.

However, a blunder from Gomes almost handed Csaba Laszlo's side the lead. The Kerala keeper fumbled while trying to clear the ball inside the 18-yard box. Bakary Kone made a vital clearance to save Kerala the blushes.

At the other end, Vishal Kaith also produced a fantastic save to keep his side in the game. Rohit Kumar found space outside the box and fired a long ranger only to be denied by the Chennaiyin custodian. This was their only shot on goal during the first half.

Chennaiyin suffered a huge blow just before the drinks break as



CFC's Jakub Sylvestr in disbelief after missing a penalty kick against KBFC at Bambolim.

Lalchhuanmawia Fanai went down after a tackle. He was replaced by Jerry Lalrinzuala.

The script wasn't different in the second half as Chennaiyin remained the better side. However, Gomes pulled off a couple of fine saves to keep Laszlo's team at bay.

The first came when substitute Fatkhullo Fatkhuloev delivered a pinpoint free-kick into the box during the 67th minute. Gomes stayed alert to avert the danger.

The Kerala custodian then had his biggest influence on the match by producing a fine penalty save, eight minutes later. The referee pointed to the spot when Rafael Crivellaro was brought down in the box by Sergio Cidoncha. Jakub Sylvestr stepped up to take the spot-kick but was denied by Gomes, who pulled off a fantastic save. — *Agencies*

Arjun annexes crown in third attempt

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 29

Coimbatore veteran Arjun Balu (Race Concepts) finally got the monkey off his back by taking the title in the premier Indian Touring Class in his third attempt in the MRF MMSC fmsci Indian National Car Racing Championship which concluded at the MMRT, here on Sunday.

Also clinching the drivers' titles in their respective categories were Mamallapuram's Raghu Ranganasamy of Performance Racing (Super Stock), 17-year old Bengaluru collegian Tijil Rao of Momentum Motorsport (Formula LGB 1300) and Thrissur's Diljith TS (MRF Saloon Car series).

Balu, who was runner-up in the previous two seasons, endured a difficult, rain-



The 2020 National champions (from left): Raghu Ranganasamy (Super Stock), Arjun Balu (Indian Touring Cars) and Tijil Rao (Formula LGB 1300).

affected weekend and did just enough to pick up crucial points by winning Race-1 and finishing second in Race-2 before retiring in Race-3 after a shunt. Dhruv Mohite of FB Motorsport won a double to help his team take the team championship.

A hugely relieved Balu,

after sealing the championship with a race to spare, said: "After winning Race-1, I knew I needed just seven points from Race-2 to clinch the championship. So, I held position through the 10 laps for P2. This championship win is most special and most satisfying for me. The previous two seasons, I

missed the title by a whisker (to Ashish Ramaswamy and Dhruv Mohite) despite enjoying big leads early on. This title is also a tribute to Joel Joseph and his Race Concepts team which worked so hard, sparing no effort to make sure I get a competitive car."

"This is our first championship win in six years. It has been a long and difficult journey with many ups and downs, but eventually, we clinched the title. I owe it to all the members of the Race Concepts team that worked long and hard to get us here," said Joel Joseph.

Meanwhile, Ranganasamy made up for a non-finish in Race-1 by surging to win in the next two outings for the title. In contrast, young Tijil Rao went without a win this weekend, but three podium finishes in the four races ensured him the

crown. The 2020 season was drastically impacted by the pandemic and was reduced to three rounds instead of the scheduled five. The first round was held in February and the remaining two this month behind closed doors while following the Covid-19 protocols.

National champions
Indian Touring Cars: Driver: Arjun Balu (Coimbatore, Race Concepts, 151 points). **Team:** FB Motorsport (262)

Super Stock: Driver: Raghu Ranganasamy (Mamallapuram, Performance Racing, 154). **Team:** Race Concepts (289).

MRF Saloon Car Series: Diljith TS (Thrissur, 113). **Formula LGB 1300:** Driver: Tijil Rao (Bengaluru, 122). **Team:** Momentum Motorsport (215).