

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | FRIDAY 18 | SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 26°C
Rainfall: 2 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Purattasi 2
Tithi: Prathamai
Star: Uthiram/ Hastham
Rahukalam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm
PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.47 am
Jumma: 12.10 pm
Asar: 3.21 pm
Maghrib: 6.11 pm
Isha: 7.22 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.08 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.39 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 7.08 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+96,729)	(+1,171)
51,12,623	84,400

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,560)
TN: 5,25,420 8,618

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

3,02,46,777

DEATHS

9,48,442

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES 213

worldometers.info

Amit Shah discharged from AIIMS

New Delhi: Union home minister Amit Shah, who recently recovered from Covid-19 and was admitted to AIIMS for a complete medical checkup, was discharged on Thursday evening, officials said. He was admitted to the premier hospital on September 12. The home minister has been discharged from AIIMS, an official said.

45,222 kids treated for Covid-19

Chennai: In government hospitals and government medical college hospitals all over the State, 45,222 children were successfully treated for Coronavirus even as treatment for other ailments continued uninterrupted, Health Minister C Vijaybaskar said. In a statement on Thursday, he said 944 children were treated at the Egmore Children's Hospital and of that but for 455 who came with Covid-19 symptoms.

COUNTER

POINT



What can I do?
It's an act of God!

Women, kids advised to move to safer places along LAC

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 17

As India and China continue to be locked in a stand-off along the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh and a “war-like” intent being displayed by China, massive deployment of forces and increased supplies of arms and ammunition are not the only preparations underway in India.

In a clear indication of the tense situation prevailing between the two countries, residents, particularly women and children, of at least five border villages

along the LAC in Uttarakhand have been advised to go to safer locations — a first since the 1962 war with China. For the villages in Dharchula of Pithoragarh district in the hill state, not one but two enemies are at their doorstep — China and Nepal. Sources in Dharchula disclosed to *Deccan Chronicle* that the local administration had recently issued an advisory to the gram pradhans, or village heads, of the border villages of Kuti, Nabhi, Raung Kong, Napalachchu and Gunji, advising them to move the women and children from the respective vil-

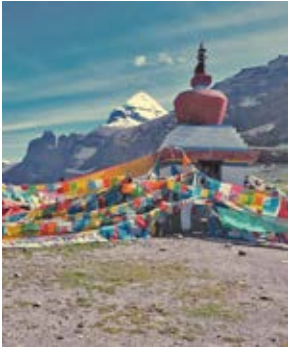
lages due to the grave situation along the border.

The move comes even as the Army and ITBP soldiers are being deployed ahead of these villages in large numbers. The villages, located at an altitude of over 10,000 feet, are not very far away from Mount Kailash, close to where the People's Liberation Army of China is said to have deployed surface-to-air missiles.

People belonging to these villages live there for about six months, between May and November. Once the winter gets harsh when temperatures fall below minus-20°

Celsius, they move to the lower reaches in Dharchula town by November or December. The five villages are located a few kilometres from the tri-junction between India, China and Nepal.

“The villagers have been informed about the advisory and some of them are packing up and will leave soon. We have requested that women and children be sent down as early as possible. In case the situation takes a turn for the worse, most men have decided to stay back and assist the Army and the ITBP,” one of the village heads told this newspaper. ■ P4



A view of Mount Kailash as seen from the India-Tibet border, a few kilometres ahead of Gunji village in Pithoragarh Uttarakhand.

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CM inaugurates Vandalur, Pallavaram flyovers



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Obama's memoir 'Promised land' to be released in Nov.



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Rohit says Malinga will be missed in MI

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DURING LOCKDOWN

66 lakh white collar jobs lost

SANGEETHA G | DC
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

Around 6.6 million white-collar professionals lost their jobs post lockdown, washing away all the gains made in their employment since 2016. Among the salaried class, industrial workers lost 5 million jobs, as per the data from private think tank CMIE. The government has not yet come out with any data on Covid-19 induced job losses across sectors.

As per the analysis of private think tank Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) based on the data from its 20th wave of Consumer Pyramids Household Survey, among the salaried class, white-collar professional employees witnessed the biggest loss in terms of jobs. These include engineers including software engineers, physicians, teachers, accountants and analysts, who are professionally qualified and are employed in some private or government organisation. However, this does not include the similarly professionally qualified people who run their own practice as these are classified as ‘Qualified self-employed professional entrepreneurs’.

Employment in the category of white collar professional employees and other employees has been rising steadily since 2016 when the survey began tracking them. An estimated 12.5 million white-collar professional employees were employed during the survey of January-April 2016. A year ago, during the survey of May-August 2019, their employment peaked at 18.8 million. It remained almost stable at 18.7 million

● **Among the salaried class, industrial workers lost 5 million jobs, as per the data from CMIE**

● **Employment of professionally qualified white collar workers fell steeply to 12.2 million during the survey of May-August 2020**

in the next survey of September-December 2019 and then fell to 18.1 million during the survey of January-April 2020. This survey contained a partial impact of the Covid-19 induced lockdown.

Employment of these professionally qualified white collar workers fell steeply to 12.2 million during the survey of May-August 2020. This is the lowest employment of these professionals since 2016. All the gains made in their employment over the past four years were washed away during the lockdown.

Another group to have suffered big job loss among salaried class is industrial workers. Around 5 million industrial workers lost their jobs post lockdown, translating into a 26 per cent fall in employment in the group over a year. The decline in employment of industrial workers is likely to be largely in the smaller industrial units. This job loss also reflects the distress in the micro, small and medium industrial units in recent times.

The government has been evasive to the queries by members of Parliament about the post-Covid job losses.

No force can stop Indian Army from patrolling: Defence minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 17

Union defence minister Rajnath Singh asserted in Rajya Sabha on Thursday that no power on earth can stop the Indian Army from patrolling.

“Patrolling patterns are traditional and well-defined. No force on earth can stop our soldiers from patrolling and our soldiers have sacrificed their lives for that. There will be no change in the patrolling pattern,” Mr Singh said in response to a question from former defence minister A.K. Antony about the dispute with China at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh. “Face-offs happened

● **“China “provocative military manoeuvre” on August 29/30 in an attempt to change the status quo on the south bank area of Pangong Lake in Ladakh region at a time when the two sides were engaged in military and diplomatic talks to de-escalate tensions,” the defence minister said**



because patrols were interrupted,” he said, adding that he cannot share more details due to operational sensitivities.

Noting that there is a mismatch between what China says and does, Mr Singh said, “Unki kathani aur karni alag

5 China citizens hacking Indian networks charged

Washington, Sept. 17: The US Justice Department has charged five Chinese citizens with hacking over a 100 companies and institutions in America and abroad, including the Indian government's networks, and stealing valuable software data and business intelligence.

Deputy US Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen on Wednesday announced three indictments have been unsealed in the matter that collectively charge five Chinese nationals with computer hacking and charge two Malaysian nationals for helping some of those hackers target victims and sell the fruits of

● **The victims ranged from software development, computer hardware, telecommunication, social media and video game companies**

their crime. The Malaysian nationals were arrested on Sunday and the Chinese nationals have been declared fugitive, according to a Justice Department statement. Rosen severely criticised the Chinese government. “The Department of Justice has used every tool available to disrupt the illegal computer intrusions and cyberattacks by these

Chinese citizens. Regrettably, the Chinese Communist Party has chosen a different path — of making China safe for cyber-criminals so long as they attack computers outside China and steal intellectual property helpful to China,” the deputy attorney general said.

“In about 2019, the conspirators compromised Government of India websites, as well as virtual private networks and database servers supporting the Government of India. The conspirators used VPS PROVIDER servers to connect to an Open VPN network owned by the Government of India,” the indictment said. —PTI

Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigns from Cabinet

DC CORRESPONDENTS
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 17

In a major embarrassment to the NDA government at Centre, Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigned from the Cabinet over two contentious farm Bills passed in the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

“I have resigned from Union Cabinet in protest against anti-farmer ordinances and legislation. Proud to stand with farmers as their daughter and sister,” Mrs Badal, who held the Food Processing Industries portfolio, tweeted.

In her four page letter to the PM, she wrote ‘My decision symbolizes my party's vision, its glorious legacy and its commitment to go to any extent to safeguard the interests of the farmers’ and asked the PM to accept her resignation.

● **“I have resigned from the Union Cabinet in protest against anti-farmer ordinances and legislation. Proud to stand with farmers as their daughter and sister,” Kaur tweeted**

She also wrote that she before, during and after the promulgation of the three Ordinances she had tried her best to persuade the Cabinet to take the actual stake holders of this decision, the farmers, on board and remove their apprehensions and concerns. “All this while, I was given the impression that since an Ordinance is only a temporary arrangement, my concerns and pleas would be addressed while legislating on the issue in the Parliament,” she said.

3 Hizb militants, woman killed, CRPF officer hurt in Srinagar gunfight

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 17

Three Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militants and a 45-year-old woman resident were killed and a CRPF officer was injured in a predawn gunfight in Srinagar's Batamallo quarter on Thursday.

The house in which gunmen had been holed up was damaged in the final assault of the security forces during which small and medium weapons were used, the police sources and witness said.

The slain militants have been identified as Zakir Ahmad Paul, Ubair Mushtaq Bhat and Adil Hussain Bhat—all local Kashmiris from militancy-infested southern K ul g a m - S h o p i a n - Pulwama districts. The police claimed that they were involved in several attacks in Srinagar City and South Kashmir.

OTHER STORY

913 Indians reach Chennai in last two days

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

As many as 913 Indians stranded abroad due to the coronavirus lockdown reached Chennai in 10 repatriation flights under the Vande Bharat mission on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The Indian nationals arrived from the United States of America, Singapore, Kuwait, Sharjah, Riyadh, Oman, Qatar, Dubai, Abu Dhabi.

According to the sources at the Chennai Airport, of the 913 passengers, at least 700 passengers produced negative RT-PCR test report on arrival at the airport.

After the completion of customs and immigration procedures, they were allowed to undergo 14 days of home quarantine, unlike earlier where they were put into institutional quarantine either free or paid.

The remaining passengers underwent a medical checkup at the Chennai airport by the health teams deployed there. They were later sent to home quarantine.

Similarly, 629 left Chennai in six flights in the last two days. Indian passengers boarded flights to America, Paris, Dubai, Abu Dhabi from the Chennai international airport.



Devotees queuing before Kapaleeswarar temple tank in the city on Mahalaya Amavasya, considered auspicious for remembering ancestors, offering prayers and seeking their blessings, on Thursday. — DC

Mass protests against NEP across TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

Representatives of several organisations from across the state have come together as a single platform under the name Oppressed People's Collective and conducted protests across Tamil Nadu against the New Education Policy (NEP) on Thursday, the 142nd birth anniversary of

Thanthai Periyar.

The members from Dalits and Ambedkari movements, Periyarist movement and the CPI (M) held demonstrations in more than 1,000 places wearing black batches and holding black flags. The protestors demanded that the NEP draft emphasizing education as a commodity should be withdrawn immediately. The protestors alleged

that NEP is against the oppressed communities and minorities. The motive behind the policy is to cripple the oppressed classes by denying them education.

They said the new draft policy will convert education into a commodity and deprive the socially and economically backward students of education.

The protestors shouted

slogans against the Union Government for trying to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking states, terming it highly condemnable and against the federal structure of the nation.

They also insisted that the present 10, 12 patterns in the school system should continue and there should be no all-India exam for admission to any course.

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

The ongoing property survey by the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) in Alandur area has caused heartburn among residents over an imminent tax revision.

Municipal administration minister S.P. Velumani had announced withholding of property tax hike in November last year.

V. Rama Rao, secretary, People's Awareness Association, Nanganallur, said the zonal officials were conducting a property survey in at least 100 residences per day in the area for the last few days.

"We are still paying the tax rate revised in 2008 by the then Alandur municipal administration which was merged with GCC in 2011. When the authorities revised the tax in 2013, the civic officials did not include us in the new tax regime. Instead they continued 2008 tax for us. It led to a difference between tax rates in the old city residents and newly added areas. When we protested, the government appointed a three-member committee headed by the principal secretary (finance) to study the matter last year. The committee has not submitted its report so far. As long as the committee report is not

tabled, the property survey by the GCC officials is unnecessary and unilateral as the house owners are already reeling under exorbitant taxes and pandemic blues. We expect the committee will go into all issues and a new affordable tax regime will be recommended for newly-merged suburbs like Alandur," he said.

"Comparing us with posh localities of Chennai on taxes is unjustifiable. The Chennai corporation is adopting dual standards on taxes, one for Alandur and another for old corporation areas. Even after nine years of annexation, the GCC failed to end the discrimination," he alleged.

He added that property tax in several areas under the municipalities of Alandur, Ambattur and Valasaravakkam had been revised in 1998, 2003 and 2008.

"The civic body should have revised the property tax from 2013, as residents were already paying a higher property tax."

According to him, the Nanganallur residents pay Rs 2.46 per sq ft while households in Mylapore and Alwarpet give less than Rs 2 per sq ft. A zonal level official told DC that the survey was going on and details in this regard were available with the revenue department.

HC: File status report on Chitlapakkam lake encroachments

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

The Madras high court has directed the authorities to file the updated status report along with site photographs within 4 weeks showing some definite action taken against the encroachers of water bodies in Chitlapakkam village, Tambaram taluk, Kancheepuram district.

"If such a comprehensive report with the relevant evidence is not filed, the



district collector concerned shall remain present in this court on the next date of hearing. Such a report shall be filed in this court after serving a copy of the same to the counsel for the petitioner, two days in advance", said a division bench comprising Justices

Vineet Kothari and Krishnan Ramasamy.

The bench gave the directive while posting to October 8, 2020, further hearing of the PIL filed by advocate S.Vaidyanathan, which sought a direction to the authorities to repossess the government lands forming part of the Chitlapakkam lake from the illegal occupants, and restore the lake and its tail end areas to its original extent and size and maintain it properly.

Puducherry adds 323 fresh Covid-19 cases; 13 deaths take toll to 431

Puducherry, Sept. 17: Puducherry on Thursday logged 323 fresh coronavirus cases while 13 related fatalities pushed the death toll in the union territory to 431. The 323 new cases were identified after examination of 4,867 samples during the last 24 hours while 330 patients were discharged from hospitals, Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said in a release. He said the overall tally of Covid-19 cases in Puducherry stood at 21,428 (after transfer of six cases to TN) The active cases stood at 4,744 while the number of patients who had recovered and were discharged was 16,253. He said the fatality rate touched 2.01 per cent, adding this was the first time it had reached such a level in Puducherry and recovery rate was 75.85 per cent. — PTI

Online classes: Help soothe frayed nerves of children

B. Vijayalakshmi

Viewpoint

With schools remaining shut and lockdowns continuing in varying degrees, children are unable to put up

with the prolonged state of physical isolation from their friends, classmates, teachers, other family members and society. This week, a 15-year-old smart and bright girl from Sivagangai district ended her life owing to pressure of online classes. Her parents were devastated. It is reported that the teen became more withdrawn from her family as she struggled to understand

COPING WITH STRESS

her class 10 subjects online. Similarly, a class 9 student of Chennai committed suicide after failing to cope with the pressure of remote learning. Four students have taken their lives in the last two months over difficulties in learning through online classes.

Most of the parents have

lost jobs or taken a pay cut and shifted to WFH model. Besides, they have to manage children, household chores and deal with pandemic fears. Parents, grappling with the new normal, are turning helpless and letting their children do whatever they want. Children have begun spending more time alone or are glued to screens. And the transition from classroom mode to

online learning has made them withdrawn or get into a conflict with parents.

The educational institutions in the state are likely to reopen only when conditions are safe and Covid spread is reduced. Several factors like smart phone/computer availability, internet connectivity and understanding of classes and environment in houses cause depression,

anxiety and other mental health conditions in children. It is imperative that the state government directs all schools to get their counsellors help students to calm down, manage their anxiety and regain a sense of safety.

At the same time, parents should also be patient, understanding and help their wards adjust to this new learning mode.

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OTHER STORIES

Competition for college students in TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

The Public Relations Society of India (PRSI), Chennai Chapter, is organising a State Level virtual competition for college students in Tamil Nadu with a view to promoting their varied skills.

The competitions would be in writing, photography and posters. Three winners in each category will be awarded cash prize of ₹5,000, ₹3,000 and ₹1,000 each, apart from a citation.

The topics for the competition are as follows: Poster: Positives from Covid-19, Photography: Make the World a Better Place and Essay: Impact of Online School Education in India (300 words in English)

Students in the age group of 18 to 15 can upload their work on <https://forms.gle/omtqCXmeDmStpV4e9>

Relief for roadside vendors

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

The Chennai corporation has asked registered roadside vendors who had not yet received the ₹1000 relief announced by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to furnish the necessary details with the zonal offices and avail of the benefit.

In a press release, corporation commissioner G. Prakash said of the total 27,195 registered roadside vendors, 14,633 of them had been paid the relief of ₹1,000 twice. The amount had been credited to their bank accounts, he said. Those who had not yet availed of the benefit could provide a Xerox copy of the identity card issued to them by the Corporation, mobile phone number and bank account details to the zonal offices, he said.

Free power connections under Tatkal

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

Electricity minister P. Thangamani announced a Tatkal scheme for farmers seeking free electricity connection to their pump sets, under which farmers who are in the waiting list can pay the specified amount depending on the power of their motors and get the connections. An official press release said that the amount to be paid was ₹2.5 lakh for five horsepower (HP) motors, ₹2.75 lakh for 7.5 HP, ₹3 lakh for 10 HP and ₹4 lakh for 15 HP.

Lankan gangster died of heart attack: CBCID

Coimbatore, Sept. 17: The death of Sri Lankan gangster, Angoda Lokka, was due to heart attack and no foul play was involved, findings of the post-mortem, chemical examination and histopathology reports have revealed, according to CBCID sources. Lokka died here on July 3 in a private hospital, following chest pain and the body after autopsy was shifted to Madurai and cremated the next day. Suspecting foul play, three people were arrested on charges of getting Lokka an Aadhaar card in the name of Pradeep Singh. After taking over the case, CBCID concentrated on two aspects whether the deceased was really the gangster and how documents were forged to get the Aadhaar card for him by the trio. The examination reports, including histopathology, received from Chennai, revealed that there was no finding of poisoning or anything indicating unnatural death and the death was natural one and due to heart attack, CBCID sources said. With suspected foul play ruled out, the investigating agency will now focus on the next case of forging documents to get the Aadhaar card and harbouring the fugitive-gangster, the sources added.

Gov leads the state in greeting Modi

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

Governor Banwarilal Purohit, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam and leader of the Opposition M K Stalin were among the leaders in the state who extended their greetings to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his 70th birthday on Thursday.

While wishing long life to the Prime Minister, the Governor stated that "India is making rapid strides under your visionary leadership and taking

On the joyous occasion of your birthday, I would like to convey my warm wishes to you for a wonderful year ahead. I pray that the Almighty may grant you many more years of good health and strength to serve our nation: Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali, Prince of Arcot

its rightful place in the comity of nations. Your leadership along with dedication and pragmatic approach in serving the nation and innovations in administration have laid a strong foundation for

India to emerge as a global leader. May God the Almighty bless you with happiness, good health and many more years of dedicated service to the nation."

"On the joyous occasion of your birthday, I would like to convey my warm wishes to you for a wonderful year ahead. I pray that the Almighty may grant you many more years of good health and strength to serve our nation," said the Chief Minister.

Panneerselvam wished the Prime Minister good health and success in his goal of taking the nation

to unprecedented heights. "May you have a long life with good health and continue your service to the nation," Stalin said.

"I wish him, many more years of good health, happiness and strength to do wonders in his public life and also to successfully serve our people & nation in the years to come," said PMK founder, Dr S Ramdoss in his tweet. Makkal Needhi Maiam founder Kamal Haasan wished the Prime Minister the best of health, happiness and strength to pull the nation through these tough times.

Patient saved from post-Covid respiratory failure

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

A 58-year-old patient from Chennai who was detected with post-Covid respiratory failure was successfully treated at the Gleneagles Global Health City through ECMO (Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation).

A press release from the hospital said the patient developed fever and breathing difficulty in the month of July and underwent treatment for severe Covid in a neighbourhood hospital for 14 days.

He was discharged with RTPCR negative and after a couple of weeks his blood oxygen levels continued to drop below a critical level and he was referred to Gleneagles Global Health City for progressive respiratory failure and severe lung injury.

Due to persistent low oxygen levels despite conventional methods, the clinical team put the patient on ECMO support for 16 days. On the 18th day the patient was weaned from ECMO and the 20th day was weaned off ventilator support.

The team of medical experts spearheaded by Dr Govini Balasubramanian, Dr Subramanian Swaminathan, Dr Rajavel, Dr Sivasailam & Dr Suresh aided in the incredible recovery of this patient.



Elephant statues put up to greet the CM near Vandalur.

—DC

CM inaugurates Vandalur, Pallavaram flyovers

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Thursday inaugurated the new flyovers at Vandalur and Pallavaram.

The flyovers, one at the Vandalur-Kelambakkam-Mambakkam junction and the other at Pallavaram GST Market road-Kundrathur junction were completed recently.

To avoid traffic congestion at the Vandalur-Kelambakkam junction, then Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa gave orders for construction of a flyover.

The work for the Vandalur flyover and the one at Pallavaram began in 2016.

The 700-meter-long Vandalur flyover (₹ 55 crore) has six-way paths on either side. The Pallavaram flyover (₹82.66 crore) has three-way paths.

The 1.53-kilometre-long flyover on GST Road at the Pallavaram junction intends to ease traffic and enable safe travelling for motorists.

The Pallavaram flyover was scheduled to open in May 2018, while the one at Vandalur was to be over by June 2019. But various factors delayed construction before the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic led to the exodus of guest workers.

On Thursday, the Chief Minister also inaugurated groundwork for two U-

shaped flyovers to come up at Tidel Park junction and Indra Nagar junctions on the OMR road. A sum of ₹108.13 crores have been set aside for this.

Talking about the progress of other projects, the Chief Minister said the Koyambedu junction flyover, being constructed on a budget of Rs 93.50 crore, is in progress with plans to open it for public use by December 2020.

He also informed that the Medavakkam flyover (₹146.41 crore), Keelkattalai flyover (Rs 64 crore), Thiruvottiur-Ponneri-Panjatti flyover (₹58.64 crore) and Tambaram Arial walkway (₹19.75 crore) are in different stages of completion.

Farmer's G-day meet

Thanjavur: The farmers' grievances day meet will be held via video-conferencing here on Friday. Collector M Govinda Rao will interact with the farmers who would attend it from the offices of the respective assistant directors, agriculture, from various places in the district. "All arrangements have been made for the meeting, and farmers can participate in compliance to corona prevention measures like wearing face masks, maintaining social distancing and washing hands with sanitisers," the collector said.

Salai.

Asked if any alliance partner of the AIADMK would leave when the time came for the next elections, Jayakumar said no party would leave the alliance and there were only chances of more parties joining in.

Describing the DMK as a party of contradictions, he said when the earlier session of the Assembly was in progress, they wanted it to be adjourned and now when the short session was convened they wanted it to be extended to more number of days.

Periyar remembered on his birth anniversary

R VALAYAPATHY/
G. SRINIVASAN | DC
TIRUCHY/THANJAVUR, SEPT. 17

Leaders of various political parties garlanded the statue of Periyar EVR statue at Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai, Tiruvallur and Nagapattinam districts on Thursday to commemorate the leader's 142nd birth anniversary. In some places in the central dis-

tricts, floral tributes were paid to the late leader's portrait.

In Tiruchy, DMK principal secretary KN Nehru and a group of partymen garlanded the EVR Periyar statue near the Central bus stand. Later, talking to newsmen, Nehru accused the Centre of threatening the people like actor Suriya with income tax department raids, merely because they had made

anti-NEET remarks.

As far as Neet is concerned, Nehru said, "The Tamil peoples' ideology way (Kolkai Vazhi) will win and added that it was incorrect to state that the then DMK government had permitted holding of NEET. Those who blame the DMK in this regard, never speak about the permission granted for Sterlite at Tuticorin by the Jayalalithaa-led AIADMK

government."

Referring to the PM's Kisan Samman scheme scam, Nehru said the DMK wants the entire scandal amount to be recovered and distributed to genuine farmers.

Meanwhile, students, teachers and staff of Periyar Maniammai Institute of Science and Technology (PMIST), in Thanjavur, garlanded the statues of EVR

Periyar at the old bus stand, the new bus stand and Vallam, to observe the 142nd birth anniversary of the leader.

PMIST dean P V Srividya and Research head Dr Kumaran led the students and teachers in garlanding the EVR statue near the old bus stand. DMK members led by Thiruvaiyaru MLA Durai Chandrasekaran, garlanded the Periyar and Anna statues at the old bus stand.

Happy birthday PM



State BJP unit celebrates Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 70th birthday on Thursday. State BJP president L. Murugan cut a 70kg cake at T Nagar.

— DC

Diverse views on Stalin's Neet claims

ARULOLI M | DC
TIRUNELVELI, SEPT. 17

DMK president M K Stalin's promise to do away with the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Neet) if the DMK captures power, is likely to help him politically in the Tamil Nadu 2021 assembly elections, but is alleged to be an impossible task.

Though the DMK argues that the state has the power to make laws on matters enumerated in the concurrent list of the seventh schedule of the Indian Constitution, according to Article 246, a d v o c a t e Girinivasaprasad, says that the state-enacted legislation if fully inconsistent to the Central Act enacted by the parliament on the same subject, would become null and void in view of the repugnancy according to Article 254(1) of the Constitution.

It is under this point that the Tamil Nadu admission to MBBS and BDS courses bill, unanimously passed by the Tamil Nadu legislative assembly in 2017, exempting medical aspirants from Tamil Nadu from taking Neet was not given president's assent, said Girinivasaprasad. He also pointed out a similar ruling by the Supreme Court in the M Karunanidhi versus Union of India case in 1979.

Another advocate T. Kamaraj, also deputy president of OBC wing, Tamil Nadu Congress

Stalin rebuts CM's charge in Assembly

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

Two days after the Chief Minister and the health minister openly accused the DMK of being the root cause for the introduction of Neet in the Assembly, the DMK president came out with a statement on Thursday to prove that the DMK had been opposing Neet right from the beginning.

Listing seven allegations leveled by the Chief Minister and others on the floor of the House, Stalin debunked each one of them point by point, giving the details of the incidents with dates.

One of the answers is for the question, which was also raised on the floor directly to Stalin, as to how he would get exemption for Tamil Nadu from Neet. Though

committee, however, opined that DMK president M K Stalin's claim need not be brushed aside as an impossible task, as the Constitution of India also has provided exemption to retain State legislation even if it is inconsistent to a Central Act.

Quoting Article 254(2) in his support, which allows State law to prevail under certain special circumstances despite the doc-

trine of repugnancy if the President of India gives his assent to the law, Kamaraj said that being the president of the biggest and traditional Dravidian movement, M. K. Stalin must have plans for a mass upsurge against Neet, and thereby, create a political compulsion for the Centre to obtain President's assent for an anti-Neet legislation.

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Listing seven

SHORT TAKES

2 BOYS BEAT MOTHER TO DEATH IN ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 17

Two minor boys, apparently fed up with continuous torture, beat their mother to death in an apartment at Sundarpada under Airfield police station here on Wednesday night. The deceased was identified as Binodini Mishra.

An altercation reportedly broke out between the mother and her sons late Wednesday night over some family issue.

In a fit of rage, the two minor boys aged 12 and 15 years started beating Binodini, 40, with an iron rod killing her on the spot.

Later, they kept the body in the bathroom and went outside after locking the flat. On Thursday morning, the security guard of the apartment called up Airfield police, who reached the spot and found the body lying in the bathroom.

The police seized the body and sent it for post-mortem.

The cops also detained the two accused for interrogation.

Police sources, quoting the boys, said the deceased had been torturing her children under the influence of liquor. Fed up with this, the two children beat their mother to death. The deceased's husband, an employee posted in Rourkela, was informed about the incident.

BSY IN DELHI TO DISCUSS CABINET EXPANSION

New Delhi, Sept. 17: Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa arrived in the national capital on Thursday to discuss cabinet expansion in the state with the BJP top brass.

During his two-day visit, the chief minister is scheduled to call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP national president J.P. Nadda as well as Union Ministers to discuss the state's issues.

"I have come to Delhi to discuss with several Union Ministers about developmental works of the state. At the same time, I will also discuss the cabinet expansion with the party leaders to ascertain their views," Yediyurappa told reporters here.

He is likely to meet Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday, and Modi, Nadda and other Union Ministers on Friday.

The chief minister's son and BJP state vice-president BY Vijayendra is accompanying him.

Yediyurappa is under pressure to expand Karnataka's cabinet at the earliest to appease disgruntled legislators although he is not keen to make any such changes right now.

MP MANTRI THRASHES CONGRESSMAN

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, SEPT. 17

A video showing a senior minister in Shivraj cabinet thrashing a Congress worker in Gwalior on Thursday went viral causing huge embarrassment to the ruling BJP.

State energy minister Pradyumna Singh Tomar was caught on camera advancing menacingly towards a group of Congress workers who were shouting slogans against BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia at Phulbag square in Gwalior.

He was then seen in the video clip delivering punches on a Congress worker. The incident took place on Wednesday.

According to official sources, the Congress workers were staging a demonstration in Gwalior to protest against the move by Gwalior Municipal Corporation to remove hoardings featuring Congress veteran and former chief minister Kamal Nath erected at some places in the city.

The demonstrators stopped the minister's cavalcade and then started shouting slogans against Mr Scindia provoking Mr Tomar to disembark from his vehicle and confront the Congress workers. He first had heated exchanges with them and later gave blows to Mr Khan while snatching the Congress flag from him. Mr Tomar was known to be a staunch loyalist of Mr Scindia. He was among 22 former Congress MLAs who resigned from assemblies as well as Congress in March to pull down the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government.



Members of various organizations prepare food for farmers, protesting against the central government over agriculture related ordinances, at Puda ground in Patiala, Thursday.

— PTI

Old trick: PLA borrows leaf from 2,200 years old battle

Chinese troops play Punjabi songs on loudspeakers at the LAC

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 17:

While Indians are amused over Chinese troops playing Punjabi songs on loudspeakers at Line of Actual Control (LAC) at Eastern Ladakh where for the first time in 45 years shots have been fired, its seems PLA is using the tactics employed by Chinese Han generals some 2,200 years ago during so called "Battle of Gaixia".

In this battle, Han King Liu Bang beat his Chu rival Xiang Yu and established the Han Dynasty in China.

Chinese state run *Global Times* on Thursday talking about Chinese army playing Punjabi songs at LAC said that the Indian army is in a situation of "hearing the Chu songs on four sides."

The *Global Times* said that the move of playing Punjabi songs sends a message to India that the Indian army is isolated and besieged on all sides. "Hearing the Chu songs on four sides" is a Chinese idiom, which is said to have originated from the supposed "Battle of Gaixia". After the fall of the Qin Dynasty, the state of Chu and the State of Han fought for control of China around 206 BC to 202 BC.

As per the legends around 202 BC, Chu king

● **IT SEEMS** foolish if PLA assumes that Punjabi songs played at the LAC will have the same impact on a professional and battle hardened Indian Army as what happened with Chu soldiers some thousands of years back.

Xiang Yu was trapped and surrounded by the rival Han forces in hills at Gai Xia. The legends say to weaken the morale of the Chu forces and King Xiang who was a ferocious fighter, Han soldiers started singing Chu songs from all sides.

After listening to these songs, Chu soldiers thought that Han people had captured their homeland and brought Chu people to the battlefield.

As per these stories, Chu soldiers became worried about their family members, homesick and lost the will to fight.

Many Chu soldiers deserted. Even Chu King is said to have become desperate after listening to the Chu songs and is said to have cried. Xiang Yu committed suicide after his forces tried to break the trap.

However, it seems foolish if the PLA assumes that Punjabi songs played at the LAC will have the same impact on a professional and battle hardened Indian Army as what hap-

Men have decided to stay back and assist the Army

FROM PG 1

These villages used to be pit stops for trekkers, tourists and those travelling to Adi Kailash; they would be offered homestays by the locals. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the people have been hit hard. Most of them sell various products including herbs which they painstakingly collect from mountains at the annual trade between India and China but even that did not take place this year. "Our main earnings are through the trade every year. When we return from China, we buy some products which we sell when we go down to the town. This time around, we do not know how to survive," said a local.

The villagers are worried that if tensions continue to rise between India and China, they will permanently lose their source of income and in the worst scenario, even their

opened with Chu soldiers some thousands of years back. Only last week Indian army's Sikh

● **OF THE FIVE** villages in Dharchula of Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand, Kuti has a population of about 365 people living in 115 houses.

● **NABHI HAS** 78 people and 32 houses, Raung Kong about 120 living in 35 houses, Napalachchu 74 in 25 houses and

● **LOCATED AT** an elevation of about 10,000 feet, locals stay there for six months every year and then migrate to the plains

● **ALL THE** villages are few kilometres away from the tri-junction between India, China and Nepal

● **CHINA HAS** deployed surface-to-air missile near Mount Kailash — not very far away from the villages

● **ABOUT 975** people including 395 females reside across the five border villages, leading tough lives.

houses. About 975 people including 395 females reside across the five border villages, leading tough lives. "During the 1962 war, our ancestors assisted the Indian Army and stood by them in the most difficult times. We even

gave our rations to them and transported their equipment, arms and ammunition on our backs. We will do the same even now if there is a repeat of 1962," Virendra Singh Nabiyal, a local of Nabi village, said.

Regiment observed the 123rd Saragarhi Day where 22 soldiers of 4 Sikh in a famous 'last-stand'

fought thousands of Pathans in North West Frontier Province on September 12, 1897.

gling case accused or their operations, the investigation agencies are examining whether any shady activities took place without Jaleel's knowledge.

Meanwhile, when asked about the Jaleel issue at the daily press conference, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the NIA might have sought some clarification from the minister. "It is already clear that there is no case against him. Let me get more details," he said.

On Opposition's demand

for Jaleel's resignation, the Chief Minister said, "There is no need for him to resign on moral grounds. He didn't demand copies of Quran or Zakat from the UAE consulate. It was the other way round. Copies of the Quran were not brought into the state clandestinely. It came through the normal route in the airport and were cleared. The consulate sought Jaleel's help in the distribution of the Quran because he is the minister for welfare of minorities.

3 Hizbul militants, woman killed in Srinagar encounter

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, SEPT. 17

Three Hizbul-Mujahideen militants and a 45-year-old woman resident were killed and a CRPF officer was injured in a predawn gunfight in Srinagar's Batamalloo quarter on Thursday.

The house in which gunmen had been holed up was damaged in the final assault of the security forces during which small and medium weapons were used, the police sources and witness said.

The slain militants have been identified as Zakir Ahmad Paul, Ubair Mushtaq Bhat and Adil Hussain Bhat — all local Kashmiris from militancy-infested southern Kulgam-Shopian-Pulwama districts.

The police claimed that they were involved in several attacks in Srinagar and South Kashmir.

Director General of Police, Dilbag Singh, said the local woman Kaunsar Jan was killed after she was hit in a barrage of militant gunfire. He termed the killing of a civilian during the operation as "unfortunate".

He said, "The operation was launched at 3 am and in the initial firing of terrorists a deputy commandant of the CRPF was injured and, unfortunately, a local woman was killed."

However, the slain woman's son Aquib Riyaz Sofi said she was hit in her head and died on the spot when the security forces fired upon their car in which the mother-son due was trying to move out of the area to escape fighting.

He said, "Our house is situated in Lane No. 9 (of Firdous Colony Batamalloo). My mother and I left home so that we could relocate to a safer location. When I reached near Lane No. 5, my mother, seeing huge deployment of security forces ahead, got so scared that she forced me to drive back to our home. It was when the security forces fired from behind and one after another bullet pierced the head of my mother sitting next to the driving seat resulting in her on spot death".

The killing of three suspected militants and woman sparked off protests in Batamalloo neighbourhood during which irate crowds of

youth clashed with the security forces. The latter fired dozens of teargas canisters to quell the stone-pelting mobs in the area, the witnesses said.

The DGP told reporters that the security forces combating a 31-year-old insurgency in J&K have killed 177 militants including 22 foreigners in 72 operations, so far, this year.

"All the 22 foreign terrorists were Pakistani nationals and it shows how deeply it (Pakistan) is involved in terrorism and violence being unleashed in J&K," he said.

A statement issued by the police here said that during the search operation in Batamalloo, the militants holed up in a residential house were given the opportunity to surrender.

"They, however, indiscriminately fired upon the joint search party, which was retaliated leading to an encounter. Unfortunately in the initial indiscriminate firing by the terrorists, CRPF Deputy Commandant Rahul Mathur and a lady identified as Kaunsar Jan were seriously injured. She succumbed to her injuries on spot while the injured CRPF Officer was shifted to 92-Base Army Hospital for treatment," it said.

Mr. Singh said that militants from other districts of the Valley keep visiting Srinagar to carry out attacks on security forces.

"The J&K police and CRPF teams are alert and whenever they get a lead about presence of terrorists in Srinagar, efforts are immediately put in place to ensure zero collateral damage before neutralizing them," he said. He added, "Thursday's operation was seventh in Srinagar in the recent past, but biggest success was the killing of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen commander Junaid Sehrai in the May 19 encounter."

Charu Sinha who took over as IG CRPF (Srinagar sector) recently at the press conference said that there was "a huge difference" between the situation in Naxal areas of the country and Kashmir especially Srinagar.

"We will work professionally in collaboration with police and other agencies," she said.

AFTER 407 DAYS OF DETENTION, PDP LEADER AKHTAR FREED

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, SEPT. 17

The authorities in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday released People's Democratic Party (PDP) leader Naeem Akhtar and some other politicians from house detention.

This comes days after Minister of State (Home) G. Kishan Reddy, said in Lok Sabha that no leader in J&K is currently under house arrest.

On Thursday morning, Mr. Akhtar who served as a minister and chief spokesman of the PDP-

BJP government tweeted, "After 407 days of detention (I) am informed that I am free to move about. Thank you rulers for small mercies while you inflict larger tragedies on our land." The PDP sources said that two former party legislators Muhammad Yusuf Bhat and Aijaz Ahmed Mir were also allowed to leave their respective homes where they had remained "under detention" for past couple of months.

Mr. Akhtar said he would now go around and "check the limits of my freedom."

Chart your own course: What one can learn from Modi's life

SYED ZAFAR ISLAM



their lives. The common thing that I see is the stark confusion people have about what they wish to do going forward. There is always this dilemma that today's youth has in their minds. Should they follow what they feel like doing or should they follow popular trends? To those young citizens of our country, I always say that one should study the life of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi and derive an important lesson — must follow the path that

you truly believe in, and do not get distracted by the fashionable trends of the day.

At a time and age in his life when most people around him would have been thinking of securing prized government jobs or even looking to become lawyers, doctors or teachers, Narendra Modi decided to be his own man and work for society. While the methods may vary in today's day and age, what Narendra Modi did is today fashionably called a sabbatical. He paused to think of what he wanted to do in his life and the path that he wanted to traverse. One must therefore learn the important lesson to take away from this incident - clean the cobwebs of your mind so that you can think rationally and clearly. Pause, even take a break

if necessary, to figure out exactly what you want to do with your lives.

Choose after detailed deliberation the path that you can put your heart into. I repeatedly tell the youth of today. Mr. Modi's life teaches us a lot about this important aspect of life.

One sees the sharpness of mind and the intellect of the man and wonders — what if the man had charted a different, perhaps more conventional trajectory in his life? Would we have witnessed him as India's Prime Minister today? It is clear by now that Mr. Modi is among the sharpest minds around, and that he could have been a successful person in any other field. And yet, he chose something that was very different from prevalent trends. He dared

to be different because he pursued something with passion and vigour, and today's youth can draw inspiration from this just as much. The path should be one that gives your heart joy and utmost satisfaction, just as Narendra Modi chose to serve the people of India for it satiates his soul to no end.

Life, like in politics, often sees people dragging you down. You will see people mocking your initiatives when it starts, only to realize their own follies later. However, that should not deter you from sticking to the path.

Had Mr. Modi hesitated to pursue his goal of making India open defecation free or to roll out the world's largest financial inclusion program of the Jan Dhan Yojana, the successes we see today on the

two fronts would not have manifested themselves. Do not be swayed by the gimmickry of these naysayers in life; instead, view their gimmickry for what it is - a gimmick. Because they do not truly believe in anything that they say necessarily; they are instead seeking perceived momentary benefits without seeing the larger picture. Their myopic vision should not be allowed to overpower your ambition and desires ever. Let your work speak for itself, even as you may face opposition similar to what Mr. Modi has seen coming at him for believing and holding onto his way of doing things.

Just like Mr. Modi, you may be called names, you may be misrepresented deliberately and attacked as well. However, do not fear

attacks and face them bravely, and see how the malevolent force crumbles by itself just as the opposition has scattered into the wind when faced resolutely by Mr. Modi.

Doing your own thing can make you stand out of the crowd in life just as in politics, and people will try to imitate you. These days, some people have rediscovered their roots even in politics, and think they can benefit by being imitators. Some of them suddenly started visiting temples like Mr. Modi, while some others suddenly start chanting shlokas to show that they are perhaps bigger Hindus than Mr. Modi. Never forget though that imitation is the best form of flattery.

Take this copycat behaviour in your own stride as a compliment and brush

off the emotional baggage that such imitators bring along with them. Notice how Mr. Modi does not imitate anyone, and is his self always — be your true self just like that.

We can go on and on about Mr. Modi's life as an example for the youth of New India. Being his own man comes naturally to Mr. Modi much like it is a feature of New India and its youth, a key reason why the two gravitate towards each other so naturally. To sum up though, Mr. Modi has only done what Frank Sinatra meant when he sang — I did it my way.

(The writer is a BJP's Rajya Sabha MP, its national spokesperson and former Managing Director, Deutsche Bank, India)

DECCAN Chronicle

18 SEPTEMBER 2020

Covid shot: Cautious hope, but policy key

For a month now, India has been consistently recording the highest daily infection rate in the world for the coronavirus pandemic. Thursday's tally of 97,894 topped all such records and by an unfortunately thin margin, adding to the prevailing atmosphere of fear and anxiety. The death toll is 83,198. The virus has reached the heartlands and ICMR's recently released sero-survey results suggest that for every infection spotted India missed 81 cases.

Independent trackers are reporting a slightly higher death tally than the health ministry. According to Worldometer, India has 5,118,253 confirmed cases and 83,230 people have died due to Covid-19. This is in addition to an independent estimate of 906 people who lost their lives amid a poorly enforced lockdown. The government has denied data on this last count, even as families of these individuals in greatest distress pinned their hopes on relief arriving in the form of a financial compensation.

There will be no financial compensation. The economy has shrunk massively and the government is struggling to pay states GST compensation. West Bengal finance minister Amit Mitra alarmingly opined that the shrinkage is 32-33 per cent rather than 23.9 per cent as stated.

The only hope for citizens lies in the quick discovery and distribution of a coronavirus vaccine. On this account, Hyderabad-based drug maker Dr Reddy's Laboratories is ready for clinical trials of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine while AstraZeneca has resumed trials for the "Oxford vaccine" in India and the UK. In the US, it is Pfizer that has assumed the lead in the vaccine race, which is now nearing its finish line, even as numbers at home stack up overwhelmingly. Though experts believe a vaccine will at best have 40-50 per cent efficacy, it will lead to the building up of herd immunity, which has now emerged as the best bet for our hapless populations.

India needs a comprehensive coronavirus vaccine strategy that will mobilise its fairly successful pharmaceutical industry to mass produce shots so that their price — initially astronomical — comes down and they can be administered to the last man quickly and efficiently, after first covering the elderly and most vulnerable. With a crashing economy and a collapsing healthcare, this strategy will be tricky not only to formulate but also to implement. Advance planning can perhaps save the day, advises the Opposition, and the government must pay heed. It cannot afford to while away its time and needs must take its bitter lessons from its failure to build capacity during its very costly lockdown.

Science and politics are being conflated in a sickeningly familiar manner in India as also elsewhere. It is hype and wordplay against fact and smart decision-making. A day after Union health minister Harsh Vardhan said a vaccine against the coronavirus disease would be ready by early next year, Adar Poonawalla of the Serum Institute which is participating in the AstraZeneca vaccine trials rightly warned that there won't be enough doses till 2024. Over in the US, an election-bound Donald Trump contradicted his own expert by declaring that a vaccine will reach his country's population by about the same time. But even if a vaccine for Covid-19 were released now, it would take six to nine months for enough people to receive it to create immunity, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director, Robert Redfield, has held.

Amid the gloom and doom, a tiny glimmer, that governments need to rally.

As Neros fiddle

So in another 21 months India will have a new Parliament? Well, not a new set of members but a modern building that will replace the over 90-year-old monumental circular edifice. Coming up at the cost of a whopping ₹861.9 crores, quite close to the existing 144-column structure, the new Parliament is indeed a grandiose plan of the present day government. When the country is going through a dark patch, economically and otherwise, if a government is keen on moving parliamentarians to a new House with modern amenities, it only reveals a mix up in priorities.

The ostentatious project, which will be given concrete shape by Tata Projects Ltd, also brings to memory stories of ancient monarchs who revelled in building fanciful structures even when their subjects suffered in penury and hunger. In recent times, too, democratically elected leaders had displayed such grandiosity, costing only the exchequer needlessly. The swanky state capital, envisaged at Amaravati, for Andhra Pradesh is one example of one chief minister's grand plan not getting the grants from the next, thus leaving the capital idea remaining an unrealized dream for six years.

It had been worse in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, where a resplendent high-rise, designed with care by a chief minister to house the Secretariat and Assembly, was turned into a multi-specialty hospital, where Coronavirus patients are now being treated with care. That, however, was not the first new secretariat project in the state that went bust since successive Chief Ministers had been unsuccessfully trying to shift out of the historic Fort St George for long.

Hope such a fate doesn't befall the new Parliament that the Tata's would build in 21 months, perhaps before another government takes charge. We also hope that Parliamentary Democracy regains its lost vigour and verve in the new premises, ushering in better times for the country with parliamentarians protecting people's rights.

Subhani



Kashmiris respond to Centre with 'Gupkar II'

Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near



On August 5, 2019, the Narendra Modi government embarked on a dangerous and destabilising course by tearing up the delicate arrangement Free India entered into with Maharaja Hari Singh on the morrow of Independence. The compact, in the shape of Article 370 of the Constitution, gave Kashmir considerable autonomy (as is now being negotiated with the Nagas). On August 22 this year, just 12 months after constitutional havoc was wreaked, accompanied by unremitting repression, Kashmir announced its riposte.

The riposte was resoundingly peaceful. It was contained in a document that its authors called "Gupkar Declaration II". The manifesto, which holds the promise of a fightback by ordinary people in Kashmir, relying only on constitutional means, if the parties that are signatory to it can hold their nerve in the face of both repression and allure, the twin instruments that go with the orchestration of tyranny.

Not to put too fine a point on it, the basis of the promise of Gupkar II is, as of now, no more than a piece of sophisticated political imagination. Its defining feature can be summed by a phrase in it: "nothing about us without us", which seems to constitute a direct challenge to the militaristic, semi-fascistic, style of governance in Kashmir.

On the practical side, Gupkar II underscores that all political activities to be undertaken by the six signatory parties will be "subservient" to the restoration of Kashmir's autonomy as captured in Article 370. At this stage, there is nothing specific about public participation in taking the Gupkar II message forward.

The fundamental rea-

son for this is the disdain for mainstream parties that has developed among ordinary people since the August 5, 2019 crackdown. These parties are now held guilty of having sided all these years with New Delhi which trifled with Kashmir's dignity — indeed, even putting mainline politicians themselves in jail in the same manner as the separatists and the extremists, as if to the BJP rulers they were all the same.

It is the irony of the situation that is sought to be underlined, and it is an irony which, subtly conveyed by interested actors, transmutes into disgust for New Delhi, which gets easily transferred to those who are seen as having represented it in the Valley.

For all that, however, a very negative mood against the BJP sweeps the Valley, and it is this that is likely to sway people's behavior when Assembly elections are held — whenever they are held, and especially if the authorities perversely go on delaying it.

The BJP was once a welcome name in Kashmir due to former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's solicitude toward it. The goodwill was transferred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi until his party's true colours were revealed, ending in the stripping of J&K's autonomy and Kashmir's downright derogation and false depiction — for communal motives — as a land of Pakistan-inspired terrorists.

In the past three decades, Kashmir has seen extremist and terrorist violence, principally an aspect of Pakistan's covert and overt war against India, but also lately developing an indigenous component. But now, if Gupkar II can take off, New Delhi could face two very separate battlefields in Kashmir — one constituting the extrem-

ist-terrorist-separatist variety and, in addition, the newly created second front comprising mainstream political parties.

The latter campaigning for the restoration of Article 370, and not only J&K's statehood, are likely to get to be quite a handful unless, in the coming weeks and months, they are forcibly prevented from campaigning. So there could be greater repression, helping the extremist cause psychologically and politically, and, indirectly, Pakistan, in the process infusing greater strategic uncertainty into a region already beset with hostile Chinese military activity.

Should this materialise, few will miss locating its origins in the ideology-laden hubris which has been the hallmark of Modi, Shah & Associates, a partnership that has been so blind as not to see that the mainstream parties of Kashmir have been made victims of terrorist violence because they were seen as accomplices of Indian democracy, which has shown up in Kashmir in badly faded colours.

Gupkar II was preceded by the original Gupkar Declaration of August 4, 2019, enunciated just a day before the constitutional stripping of J&K. Leaders of the mainline Valley parties, who intuitively knew that the omens were all bad, had assembled at the Gupkar Road residence of National Conference chairman Farooq Abdullah, although they were regional rivals of the NC. They resolved, just before being imprisoned, that they would remain "united" to preserve Kashmir's constitutional status.

Gupkar II is a reaffirmation and a resolve for further action. But its distin-

A few days later, the CPI in Kashmir extended unqualified support. This makes Gupkar II not only a document of Kashmir but a document for the nation. This makes it unique in Kashmir's annals.

guishing feature is that in addition to the regional parties that had met in 2019, two national parties — Congress and CPI(M) — also joined them at Dr Abdullah's residence on August 22 this year. A few days later, the CPI in Kashmir extended unqualified support. This makes Gupkar II not only a document of Kashmir but a document for the nation. This makes it unique in Kashmir's annals.

It is instructive that its arch opponents are the BJP and the Narendra Modi government, the suave professionals who spread the Jamaat-e-Islami narrative in the Kashmir Valley, and Pakistan's military establishment if the signals are read right. This is an impressive array of foes for a group that espouses peaceful and constitutional means to return to the old normal.

Can history be re-injected? It is hard to say. But it is worth remembering that the official move to break Kashmir's spirit constitutionally was stoutly opposed in Parliament in August 2019 by the Congress leadership, the Left parties, the DMK, RJD, and Trinamul Congress. The BJP's important Bihar ally, the JD(U), also opposed it. Another BJP ally, Akali Dal, spoke against the bill but was obliged to vote with the government.

This is an impressive number of parties standing up with Kashmir in Parliament. In addition, the principal sections of the mainline media too disapproved of the government's action. The Forum for Human Rights in Kashmir, comprising a retired Supreme Court judge, several retired high court judges, a retired home secretary, a retired foreign secretary, and retired military officers published a sharply critical report on the ending of Kashmir's autonomy and the government's subsequent actions in Kashmir. And yet, regrettably, there seems a concerted effort in some quarters in the Valley to spread the disinformation that India slept soundly through the process of Kashmir's belittling by the Modi government.

LETTERS

LAUDABLE ENHANCEMENT

The decision of the Tamil Nadu government to enhance the punishment for crimes against women and children under several sections of Indian Penal Code is laudable. But what is more important is speedy disposal of cases by courts. It has been reported that more than 10 per cent of the total crimes in Tamil Nadu is against women and out of this more than 49 per cent of the crime against women and children relate to Pocso cases. More all-women police stations should be opened and stringent action initiated against offenders.

M.C. Vijay Shankar, Chennai

A WELCOME RULING

THIS REFERS to the editorial *A welcome ruling*. The Supreme Court of India has done the right thing by restraining Sudarshan television channel from airing a programme that allegedly sought to vilify Muslim communities by accusing them of a campaign to infiltrate bureaucracy. The perception that barring a few, television channels have revelled and continued to revel in an inglorious orgy of rumour-mongering, vilification and partisan deception cannot be faulted. But the question arises now whether the prior restraint as underlined by the Supreme Court in the Sudarshan television case sets a dangerous precedent at a time when blatant attempts are being by those in power to criminalise dissent needs a convincing answer. It is time the News Broadcasters Association, whose remit includes legal, ethical and regulatory concerns, pulls up its socks and ensures television news channels play by the rules book.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

TIME-BOUND TRIAL

APROPOS REPORT *Centre in SC favours time-bound trial* (Sept. 17). The Supreme Court had asked umpteen times to constitute special courts to deal with corrupt law makers but successive governments have done nothing so far. If the NDA government does the same it should be welcomed. But when special courts are established, the accused corrupt politicians should not be allowed to dilly-dally seeking adjournments nor to appeal in lower courts or even in high courts. There should be a provision to appeal only to the Apex court. In fact, many CMs, MPs and MLAs are facing numerous corruption cases which are in limbo for decades due to lacunas in the laws or deliberate procrastination by the accused. And also their partners, the babus, are embezzling public money in hundreds of crores and so holding benami properties too should be brought under the ambit of special courts.

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

M. Mohibul Haque



The curious case of Urdu in NEP 2020

The Union Cabinet approved the new National Education Policy 2020 (hereafter NEP 2020) on 29 July, which proposes drastic changes in the Indian education system. While there are several changes, reforms and policies that are being widely appreciated there are many ambiguities, gaps and contradictions that are creating apprehensions in the minds of many in general and linguistic and religious minorities in particular.

NEP 2020 has given birth to apprehensions in the minds of Urdu lovers due to its unique status. It should be borne in mind that Urdu is a pan-Indian language but it lacks the patronage of any state as official language. Strangely, Urdu has not been mentioned anywhere in the 66 pages NEP 2020 released by the Union government. This conspicuous absence of Urdu drew widespread criticism across the country.

The government tried to alley the apprehensions of Urdu-lovers and Secretary of Higher Education is reported to have said: "Para 4.12, 22.6

and 22.18 of NEP 2020 talk of all languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which includes Urdu. Incidentally, what is being deliberately and mischievously suppressed is that the paras do not talk of Hindi also, rather all languages of the Eighth Schedule are mentioned". Despite clarifications by the government the controversy is not dying. It calls for analysis of the NEP 2020 from the perspective of the status of Urdu.

NEP 2020 declares that "wherever possible, the medium of instructions until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language" (para 4.11, p.13) This emphasis on the mother tongue arouses hopes that many languages of India facing the challenge of survival due to deliberate design of the colonial masters and later on the apathy of the successive governments may be saved from extinction.

Under the sub-heading, Multilingualism and the Power of Language, the government recognises the fact

that "young children learn and grasp nontrivial concepts more quickly in their home language/mother tongue". While emphasis on primary education in mother tongue is praiseworthy the determination of home-/local language will be problematic because the NEP 2020 does not mention what will be the unit of determination of local or home language. For example, what is the home language of the people living in cities like Lucknow, Delhi, Moradabad, Meerut or states like UP, Bihar, Telangana, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and so on is indeed very difficult to determine. Under these circumstances, the role of the central and state governments will become crucial in implementation of the three-language formula and Urdu in the absence of patronage and lacking job opportunities will certainly be marginalised.

Another important dimension of the language policy under NEP 2020 is the promise that "there will be a greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any state. The three

languages learned by children will be the choices of states, regions, and of course the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India." (para 4.13, p.14) However, determination of a 'region' for the purpose of the implementation of the three-language formula needs clarification. Besides, three entities — states, regions and students — are created for exercising the freedom of choice in selection of three languages to be taught. The question is what will happen if there is a clash in choice between states and students. For instance, a group of Urdu speaking students want to study Urdu while state emphasizes on Hindi, Sanskrit, Bangla, Odia, etc.

The apprehensions of Urdu-lovers are not unfounded because NEP 2020 besides especially promoting Sanskrit makes reference to other classical languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Pali, Persian and Prakrit but Urdu is not mentioned as a classical language as it seems that only ancient and not the medieval language/languages

are recognised as classical under NEP 2020.

While the allegation of deliberate exclusion of Urdu is doing the rounds the government decided to introduce the Jammu and Kashmir Official Languages Bill 2020 in Parliament under which Urdu is set to lose its status of the sole official language of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The anxiety can also be understood from the fact that according to Census of India 2011 Urdu is showing a steady decline as mother tongue since 1981(5.25), 1991(5.18), 2001 (5.01), and 2011(4.19). Unlike other languages of the Schedule 8 of Indian Constitution whose speakers enjoy strong regional or state backing, people who speak Urdu are spread all over the country and therefore, it needs special consideration by the government for its survival and promotion.

The writer is a professor of political science at Aligarh Muslim University

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,979.85	-0.82
Nifty 50	11,516.10	-0.76
S&P 500*	3,341.83	-1.29
Dollar (₹)	73.65	-0.16
Pound Sterling (₹)	95.38	-0.56
Euro (₹)	86.96	0.34
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,463*608	1.15
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	43.35	1.13
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.033	0.041
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.663	-0.024

ALL bags large order from fuel distributor

Ashok Leyland said it has bagged orders for 1,400 intermediate commercial vehicles (ICVs) from a logistics start-up company, Procure Box. The ICVs will be utilised by Procure Box for its fuel distribution business across 750 districts in the country. The order encompasses Ashok Leyland's most successful product, the Ecomet, and will be executed in the next five-six months, the company said in a regulatory filing.

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■ Irdai panel wants to cover MSMEs first ₹75K-cr pandemic pool suggested

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, SEPT. 17

A working group formed by the insurance regulator to study the feasibility of setting up a 'pandemic risk pool' to cover business losses arising due to pandemics and epidemics has recommended setting up a Rs 75,000 crore pool with public-private partnership to cover the business losses of MSME workers in the first phase.

The reinsurer, GIC Re, which has experience of managing the Indian Terrorism Pool and Indian Nuclear Pool, would be an apt administrator for the proposed pandemic pool, the group has said.

Pointing to the need for a pandemic pool, the group said some estimates suggest that the current business interruption premiums in some markets would need to be collected for over 100 years to cover two months of Covid-19-related business interruption costs.

"The working group believes that for the pandemic pool to have an adequate purpose, it needs to cover at least 4-5 crores MSME workers in the first phase and to accomplish that, the assurance from the government to provide a backstop is necessary... the backstop triggers only at the event of pandemic striking and the total loss payouts are higher than the capacity garnered by the local insurance/reinsurance and international market. Globally all pan-



demographic pool (including USA, France, Germany) proposals are heavily hinged on their national government's support in the form of similar backstop and are at different stages of approval. The working group has proposed a government backstop of appx. Rs 75,000 crores, at the initial stages," said the report.

"The quantum of loss due to an epidemic/pandemic risk event is huge and hence is beyond the capacity of public and/or private companies and/or government alone. Hence a risk pooling mechanism with public-private-government participation would be an appropriate resolution to address this similar concern in future," said the report.

The report said the participation shall be mandatory for the sectors which have been covered under the pool. "This can be with as a standalone product providing coverage for the event or as an add-on with the existing products."

The pool shall provide coverage in a phased manner.

As MSME and the unorganised sector are the worst affected segments of society during the current Covid-19 pandemic in India, the first phase of the pool shall cover income losses due to non-damage business interruption resulting from a future pandemic event and subsequent lockdown.

Pandemic losses are covered under currently available health insurance products, hence the coverage for losses in the health segment caused due to a pandemic event, beyond a threshold, may be covered under the pool in the second phase. The coverage under the pool may be expanded to the life insurance segment also in the later phases, said the report.

The pool premium collection is proposed to be invested in government securities or specifically designed bonds by the government. The premiums accumulated over the years and the investment surplus would help in gradually reducing the government backstop.

Advance tax mop-up falls 25.5% in Q2

Mumbai, Sept. 17: Advance tax collections fell 25.5 per cent to Rs 1,59,067 crore in the second quarter of the fiscal, an income tax official said on Thursday.

However, there was improvement over the first quarter ended June, when advance tax revenue had plunged 76 per cent to a tepid Rs 11,714 crore as the whole economy was under a stringent lockdown.

During the year-ago period to September 15, 2019, total advance tax collection had stood at Rs 2,12,889 crore, down from Rs 3,70,652 crore a year ago.

"Total advance tax collection in the second quarter fell by 25.5 per cent to Rs 1,59,067 crore from Rs 2,12,889 crore YoY. While corporates paid only Rs 1,29,619.6 crore in advance tax, down by 27.3 per cent in the reporting quarter, personal income tax collection stood at Rs 29,437.5 crore, down 15 per cent from Rs 34,632.9 crore.

"However, TDS (tax deducted at source) fared better at Rs 1,38,605.2 crore, down by 5.6 per cent from Rs 1,46,792.4 crore," the tax official from the Mumbai zone told PTI.

Advance corporate tax mop-up had plummeted by 79 per cent to Rs 8,286 crore in the June quarter, from Rs 39,405 crore in the June 2019 quarter. Advance personal income tax collection in Q1 had declined 64 per cent to Rs 3,428 crore from Rs 9,512 crore. —PTI

Civil aviation revenues dip 85%; over 18,000 jobs lost

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, SEPT. 17

Revenues of the civil aviation sector dropped by 85 per cent since the lockdown even as the sector lost more than 18,000 jobs.

The Covid-19-induced lockdown had reduced the air traffic to a fraction of what it was before. The regulatory restrictions on flight operations had led to severe curtailment in operations and sub-optimal aircraft utilisation.

As per the ministry of civil aviation data, domestic traffic fell close to 80 per cent from 5.85 crore during March-July 2019 to a mere 1.20 crore in March-July 2020. International traffic too reduced by 87 per cent from 93.45 lakh to 11.55 lakh during the period.

This led to a steep decline in revenues in the June quarter. The aggregate revenue of Indian carriers came down by 85 per cent from Rs 25,517 crore in the June quarter of 2019 to just Rs 3,651 crore during April-June 2020. Air India's revenue fell to Rs 1,531 crore from



Rs 7,066 crore in the same quarter last year.

Aggregate revenues of airport operators too shrunk from Rs 5,745 crore in the June quarter of 2019 to Rs 894 crore in the June quarter of 2020, a drop of 84 per cent.

Reduced revenues saw more than 18,000 employees losing jobs across airlines, airports, ground handling agencies and cargo operators. As many as 5,298 employees of airlines lost jobs by the end of July while 3,246 people at airports, 8,466 people with ground handling agencies and 1,017 employees with cargo operators lost their jobs between March-end and July-end.

"The fall in domestic air travel demand has been much sharper than the

capacity cuts imposed for the industry. The pick-up in domestic passenger volume since end-May 2020 has been slow, with traffic increasing by only 6 per cent in July from the previous month. We think volume growth will remain in the single digits over the next few months, as the pandemic continues to spread in India and people forego non-essential travel," says Fitch Ratings.

Covid-19 has also adversely impacted the financials of the Airports Authority of India and it is likely to see losses this fiscal. In order to meet the working capital requirements, the AAI has taken 'fund-based working capital' facility of Rs 1,500 crore. Delhi and Mumbai airports were given a three-months deferral, up to July 15, on monthly fee payment against their annual fee obligation. Bangalore and Hyderabad airports have also been granted deferment of four months from July 1 for payment of concession fee to the central government.

SC refuses to resume Ambani insolvency case

UPMANYU TRIVEDI SEPT. 17

The Supreme Court rejected a petition by State Bank of India to allow a personal bankruptcy case against tycoon Anil Ambani to resume.

A three-judge panel headed by Justice L. Nageswara Rao ruled that the bankruptcy case against

A m b a n i

will remain suspended and directed the Delhi High Court to decide on Ambani's challenge to provisions of insolvency law.

The case is among the first high-profile ones after



Anil Ambani

rules were set for personal bankruptcy last year. Bankers and investors in stressed assets are keenly watching the case as its final outcome may decide the power of lenders in taking action against founders who guaranteed repayments of loans by companies that later went bankrupt.

—Bloomberg

WORLD

Defying China, top US official visits Taiwan

Taiwan Prez to host dinner for American delegation today

Taipei, Sept. 17: A top US diplomat landed in Taiwan on Thursday, the highest-ranking State Department official to visit in 40 years, in a further sign of Washington's willingness to defy China and its campaign to isolate the self-ruled island.

Keith Krach, undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy and the environment, is visiting to attend a memorial service for late president Lee Teng-hui on Saturday, the US State Department said.

The trip, the second high-ranking US visit in as many months, sparked an immediate rebuke from China, which baulks at any recognition of Taiwan and has mounted a decades-long policy of marginalising the democratic island.

Beijing considers Taiwan part of its territory, to be absorbed into the mainland — by force if necessary.

"China strongly opposes this," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters on Thursday, saying the trip "encourages the arrogant attitude of Taiwan independence separatist forces".

Relations between the United States and China are at their lowest point in decades, with the two sides clashing over a range of trade, military and security issues, as well as the Coronavirus pandemic.

Washington's increased outreach to Taiwan under US President Donald Trump has become yet another flashpoint between the

two powers.

"The United States honours President Lee's legacy by continuing our strong bonds with Taiwan and its vibrant democracy through shared political and economic values," spokeswoman Morgan Ortugas said in a statement announcing Krach's trip.

Taiwan's foreign ministry said Krach, accompanied by assistant secretary Robert Destro, would also discuss "how to strengthen bilateral economic cooperation" during his three-day visit.

It described him as the highest-ranking State Department official to visit Taiwan since 1979, when Washington switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing

from Taipei.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen will host a dinner for the US delegation on Friday.

"We look forward to more exchanges and discussions between Taiwan and the US to solidify the foundation for further collaborations, including economic cooperation, through undersecretary Krach's visit," her office said in a statement.

Beijing discourages any official exchanges with Taiwan but in recent months Washington has dramatically increased its outreach.

Last month, US cabinet member and health chief Alex Azar visited to highlight Taiwan's widely praised efforts to stop Covid-19. —AFP

TRUMP NAMES INDIA AMONG MAJOR DRUG TRANSIT HUBS

Washington, Sept. 17 : US President Donald Trump has identified India along with 20 other nations as major drug transit or illicit drug-producing countries and asserted that his administration is taking the fight to criminal organisations engaged in narcotics substances and their enablers on an unprecedented scale.

In his presidential determination, Trump also designated Bolivia and the regime of Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela as having failed demonstrably during the previous 12 months to adhere to their obligations under international counter-narcotics agreements.

"A country's presence



on the foregoing list is not necessarily a reflection of its government's counter-narcotics

efforts or level of cooperation with the United States," Trump said. He said countries such as Afghanistan, India, The Bahamas, Belize, Burma, Colombia, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic among others are a major drug transit or illicit drug producing nations.

Trump alleged that the most complicit kingpin in this Hemisphere is the Venezuelan dictator, Nicolas Maduro.

—PTI

Obama's memoir 'promised land' to be released in Nov.

Washington, Sept. 17 : Former US president Barack Obama on Thursday announced the publication in November of the first half of his memoirs, "A Promised Land" — two weeks after the election pitting Donald Trump against Joe Biden.

Publisher Penguin Random House said the book will be released in 25 languages simultaneously on November 17. "There's no feeling like finishing a book, and I'm proud of this one," Obama tweeted.

"In A Promised Land, I try to provide an honest accounting of my presidency, the forces we grapple with as a nation, and how we can heal our divisions and make democracy work for everybody," Obama, America's



44th president, served two terms in the White House from January 2009 through January 2017, when he was succeeded by Trump.

The book will reveal Obama's thoughts during the global financial crisis and his take on Russian President Vladimir Putin, the statement from Penguin Random House says.

It will also revisit the 59-year-old Democratic leader's approval of a May 2011 raid in which Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was killed in Pakistan.

A release date for the second volume has not yet been set, Penguin Random House said.

Gilgit-Baltistan to be full-fledged province in Pak

Islamabad, Sept. 17: Pakistan has decided to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan's status to that of a full-fledged province, a Pakistani media report on Thursday quoted a senior minister as saying. India has clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of the country by virtue of its fully legal and irrevocable accession.

According to a report in the Express Tribune, Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs, Ali Amin Gandapur, on Wednesday said that Prime Minister Imran Khan would soon visit the region and make the formal announcement to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan to the status of a full-fledged province with all constitutional rights.

Gandapur said Gilgit-Baltistan would be given adequate representation on all constitutional bodies, including the National Assembly and the Senate. "After consultation with all stakeholders, the federal government has decided in principle to give constitutional rights to Gilgit-Baltistan," the minister told reporters. India has said the Government of Pakistan or its judiciary has no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it.

India completely rejects such actions and continued attempts to bring material changes in Pakistan occupied areas of the Indian territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Instead, Pakistan should immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation, the Ministry of External Affairs said in May while protesting Islamabad's efforts to bring material change in Pakistan occupied territories. —PTI

Giant planet found orbiting dead star

Washington, Sept. 17: Scientists have, for the first time, discovered a Jupiter-sized planet orbiting a white dwarf or a dead star located about 80 light years away.

The finding, published in the journal Nature, shows the likely presence of the planet, named WD 1856 b, orbiting the smaller star remnant every 34 hours. "This planet is roughly the size of Jupiter, but it also has a very short orbital period — a year on this planet is only 1.4 days, so it's quickly whipping



around its white dwarf star," said Ian Crossfield, assistant professor at the University of Kansas in the US.

A white dwarf is the vestige of a star that has ballooned into a red giant then collapsed back into a dense, dim

core that is often about the size of Earth, so this planet is much larger than what is left of its star, the researchers said. The process usually devours orbiting planets — but not in the case of WD 1856 b, which appears somehow to have avoided destruction, they said. "This tells us white dwarfs can have planets, which is something we didn't know before," Crossfield said. "There are people who now are looking for transiting planets around white

dwarfs that could be potentially habitable.

It'd be a pretty weird system, and you'd have to think about how the planets actually survived all that time," he said. The researchers noted that this finding proves that some kinds of planets can survive and be found around white dwarfs. At first, WD 1856 b captured astronomers' interest when they noticed a possible transiting object with NASA's TESS Space Telescope survey. —PTI

North
 ♠ J 7 6 3
 ♥ K 8
 ♦ A 9
 ♣ Q 10 8 6 5 4

West East
 ♠ 4 2 ♠ A 5
 ♥ 10 3 ♥ A 4 7 6 5
 ♦ 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♦ K J 10
 ♣ 7 2 ♣ 5 4

South
 ♠ K Q 2 8
 ♥ 1 5
 ♦ 8
 ♣ A K J

Dealer: North
 Vulnerable, Neither

South	West	North	East
2♣	Pass	Pass	1♥
10♣	Pass	Pass	Pass