

# THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2020



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Pakistan, China creating border dispute under a mission: Rajnath Singh



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Kangana shoots for Thalaivi in Hyderabad under security blanket



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### WINDOWS



Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Virat Kohli plays a shot during an IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders in Sharjah on Monday. RCB beat KKR by 82 runs — PTI

Report on Page 8

### K'taka govt crisis: Sriramulu divested of health portfolio

**Bengaluru:** Amid rising Covid-19 cases, Karnataka CM B.S. Yeddyurappa divested B. Sriramulu of the health and family welfare portfolio, handing it over to K. Sudhakar. Soon after the order came, Mr Sriramulu rushed to Mr Yeddyurappa's residence and held a meeting with him. Later, he also sought an appointment with BJP leaders in Delhi to air his grievance. When he failed to get an appointment, Mr Sriramulu also spoke of resigning from the Cabinet. Full report on Page 4

### 66,732 fresh cases, 816 deaths in 1 day

**New Delhi:** With 66,732 new cases, the country's Covid tally has now crossed the 71.2-lakh mark while death toll climbed to 1,09,150 with 816 new fatalities in the last 24 hours. India is also reporting a high number of recoveries and the total recovered cases are close to 61.50 lakhs. Full report on Page 3

### SC allows 2nd round of Neet exam Oct. 14

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court allowed National Testing Agency to conduct second round of the Neet (UG) for the Covid-19 affected students and those in containment zones on October 14. The court said the result may be declared on October 16, 2020. Full report on Page 2

### COUNTERPOINT



His body doubles are wearing masks and out campaigning!

### WEATHER

Max: 35.4°C  
Min: 19.4°C  
RH: 81%  
Rain: NIL

Forecast: Mainly clear sky

### ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Adhika Ashwayuja  
Bahula Ekadasi till 2.29 pm  
**Star:** Magha till 10.49 pm  
**Varjyam:** 11.37 am to 1.06 pm; 6.04 am to 7.31 am (Wednesday)  
**Durmuhurtam:** 8.32 am to 9.19 am; 10.48 pm to 11.37 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 5.55 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.21 AM**  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW 2.11 AM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 3.09 PM**

■ ₹12Kcr 50-yr loans to states ■ LTC vouchers, festival advance for Central staff

## In fresh push for eco revival, Centre offers booster shot for states, babus

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

In a fresh economic revival push, the Centre on Monday announced a slew of booster shots for both government employees and states to prop up demand, in terms of consumer spending and capital expenditure. It said the demand boost is estimated to be a total of ₹73,000 crores and that it should be spent till March 31, 2021. The Centre, however, expects the demand may go up by ₹1 lakh crores if the states also join in this spending exercise.

As part of the increasing consumer spending for states, the Centre also announced two schemes — LTC Cash Voucher Scheme and Special Festival Advance Scheme — to primarily benefit Central government employees. “The proposals being presented are designed in a way that they can stimulate demand by frontloading/advancing some of the expenditure with some offsetting changes. Others are directly linked to an increase in GDP,”

### 2 Lashkar men, one from Pak, die in Srinagar area gunbattle

YUSUF JAMEEL  
SRINAGAR, OCT. 12

A Lashkar-e-Tayyaba commander from Pakistan and his local associate were gunned down by the security forces in a firefight that erupted early Monday in Srinagar's Barzulla area. A private house where the duo was holed up as the security forces launched a cordon-and-search operation in the area was destroyed as it caught fire in the final assault.

Kashmir DGP Dilbag Singh said at a hurriedly called press conference that the slain Pakistan militant commander, Saifullah, was involved in a series of attacks on the forces, including ambushes within and outside Srinagar in the past fortnight, leaving several securitymen dead and injured. The other militant killed was identified as Irshad Ahmed Dar, alias Abu Usama, a resident of southern Pulwama district, “who was active since May 2019 and involved in several civilian killings and attacks on the J&K police and Central security forces”. ■ More on Page 4

### LTC CASH VOUCHER

► Fare payment will be tax free  
► Full payment on leave encashment  
► In addition, leave encashment of 10 days is paid  
► An employee, opting for LTC plan, will be required to buy goods/services worth 3 times the fare and 1 time the leave encashment before March 31, 2021  
► The scheme also requires that money must be spent on goods attracting GST of 12% or more from a GST registered vendor through digital mode.



Nirmala Sitharaman  
The employee is required to produce GST invoice to avail the benefit  
► If Central govt employees opt for it, cost will be around ₹5,675 crores

### FESTIVAL ADVANCE SCHEME REVIVED

► Interest fee advance of ₹10,000 recoverable in a maximum of 10 instalments  
► If given by states, ₹4,000 crores expected to be disbursed  
► If given by all state governments, another ₹8,000 crores likely to be disbursed  
► Special interest free 50-year loans to states for capital expenditure for ₹12,000 crores  
► Additional budget of capex ₹ of 25,000 crore, in addition to ₹4.13 lakh crores given in the Budget 2020

finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said while briefing the media on Monday.

“Consumers' demand needs to be boosted. We estimate the measures announced today for consumer spending and capital expenditure will boost demand by ₹73,000 crores, to be spent by March 31, 2021. Given that private

sector spending through LTC tax benefit would be at least Rs 28,000 crores, we estimate that the total demand boost due to today's measures to be more than ₹1 lakh crores,” she said, adding that if the demand goes up based on the stimulus measures announced, it will have an impact on those people who have

been affected by Covid-19.

Besides, an additional budget of ₹25,000 crores (in addition to ₹4.13 lakh crores given in Budget 2020-21) is being provided for capital expenditure on roads, defence, water supply, urban development and domestically produced capital equipment. Giving a breakup of the demand boost of ₹73,000



Smoke and flames billow out of a house during an encounter between the security forces and militants at old Barzulla in Srinagar on Monday. Two militants, including a top commander of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba from Pakistan, were killed in the gunbattle. — PTI

## Massive grid failure, power outages cripple Mumbai

BHAGWAN PARAB  
MUMBAI, OCT. 12

Life in Mumbai, India's financial capital, was heavily crippled Monday morning due to a major grid failure, that led to massive power outages. Almost the entire city was without power for nearly four hours, which halted local trains, left a few people trapped in elevators and disrupted “work from home”. Taking serious note, chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has

ordered an inquiry.

The three-hour blackout, which started 10 am, left Mumbai city and its suburbs in the Mumbai metropolitan region without electricity, causing huge inconvenience. Power outages were reported from nearby areas like Thane and Navi Mumbai.

Local trains, Mumbai's lifeline, came to a halt due to the outage, leaving thousands of commuters stranded. The grid failure was caused by the multiple tripping of lines and

the transformer supplying power to the Mumbai system. While restoration work started on a war footing, it took nearly three hours to resume the supply phase wise.

Maharashtra power minister Nitin Raut said the failure was caused by “technical problems” during maintenance work.

However, Mumbai airport and the two main stock exchanges — BSE and NSE — could operate normally. ■ More on Page 3

### No consensus on compensation at GST Council meet

**New Delhi:** The stalemate over compensating states for the short-fall in GST collections continued on Monday with a meeting of the GST Council ending without reaching any consensus. The panel, which is the highest decision-making body on indirect taxes, for the second time in a week failed to reach a consensus on the Centre's proposal of states borrowing against future GST collections to make up for the shortfall. — PTI

More on Page 7

crores, she said: “The total estimate of demand boost is as follows: ₹36,000 crores additional consumer demand (₹28,000 crores through LTC, ₹8,000 crores through the festival advance), plus ₹37,000 crores Central, state capex (₹25,000 crores additional budget spend and ₹12,000 crores special

Turn to Page 4

### 7 kidnapped Indians freed in Libya, will return soon

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

Seven Indians hailing from Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh who were kidnapped last month in strife-torn Libya have been released from captivity and will return to India, the external affairs ministry said Monday, thanking the Libyan authorities and tribal elders for their help.

The seven Indians were working at a construction and oilfield supplies company and were kidnapped at a place called Asshwerif on September 14 while on their way to Tripoli airport to catch a flight to India.

The external affairs ministry said: “We are happy to inform that the seven Indian nationals who had been abducted at Asshwerif in Libya on 14 September were finally released yesterday (11 October). Our ambassador to Tunisia Puneet Roy Kundal spoke to them over phone... All of them are in good health and are currently staying in the company's premises in Brega.”

### Tom Cruise is back in action



Actor Tom Cruise climbs on to a police car during the shooting of the film *Mission Impossible 7*, by Christopher McQuarrie, in Rome on Monday. — PTI

## Top India, China generals confer 7th time on LAC

Statement expected today; Chinese diplomats attend for the first time

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

India and China on Monday held the seventh round of their corps commander-level talks to ease tensions in eastern Ladakh where both armies are involved in a tense five-month-long military standoff. The meeting started at around 12 noon at Chushul, on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control and went on till late in the night for more than 10 hours at least.

India has again insisted that China withdraw its troops from all friction points in eastern Ladakh and restore the status quo ante of April 2020 in Pangong Tso and Gogra Post-Hot Springs. The Chinese Army has also been preventing Indian patrols in the Depsang sector. India has made it clear that since it was China which had first transgressed, the People's Liberation Army has to make the first move towards disengagement.

There was no official word yet on the corps commanders' meeting. An official statement may be released on Tuesday or Wednesday. The Indian and Chinese armies had issued a joint press release after the sixth round of the corps commanders' meeting. This was the first corps commanders' meeting after China said that it has “not recognised” the Union territory of Ladakh. The meetings with the

### Nirbhay missile fails during trial

**New Delhi:** The Nirbhay subsonic cruise missile, having a range of around 1,000 km, developed a technical snag during a test firing on Monday at a facility in Odisha, forcing its developer DRDO to abort the trial. The DRDO has already carried out several successful trials of the ‘Nirbhay’ missile since October 2014. ■ More on Page 4

Chinese military tend to be lengthy as discussions usually need to be translated.

This was the last meeting under Lt. Gen. Harinder Singh as commander of 14 Corps. He is all set to take charge as the commandant of the Indian Military Academy, Dehra Dun, later this month after completing his one-year tenure.

Lt. Gen. P.G.K. Menon, who will be the new 14 Corps chief, also took part in Monday's meeting. The representative from the external affairs ministry, joint secretary (East Asia) Naveen Srivastava, too attended the corps commanders' meeting for the second time. There were reports that some Chinese foreign ministry officials also attended the meeting for the first time. In the ■ Turn to Page 4

### SC asks govt to respond to challenges to farm laws

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

The Supreme Court on Monday sought the Centre's response on two petitions challenging the constitutional validity of three contentious farm laws that sparked farmers protests, which came into force September 27. The case may be listed for further hearing on November 16.

A bench headed by CJI Sharad A. Bobde issued the notice as it was told these laws would unconstitutionally override state legislation on the marketing of farm produce. ■ More on Page 4

### TN leader Khushboo quits Cong, enters BJP

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

Hours after quitting the Congress Party over “few elements seated at a higher level... with no connectivity with ground reality dictating terms” and “suppressing” people like her, one of the most prominent names in Tamil cinema, Khushboo Sundar, on Monday joined the BJP and said she had realised over some time that if India has to move forward “then someone like Prime Minister Narendra Modi is needed to take the country in the right direction and to its glory”. The actor-politician, who joined the DMK in 2010 when it was in power in the state and then the Congress in 2014, said she is not expecting anything from the BJP, but her entry comes as Tamil Nadu heads for Assembly polls next year.

Speculation is rife that she could be fielded by the BJP or accommodated in the Rajya Sabha. There were rumours Ms Sundar was miffed with the Congress leadership for not considering her in the last Lok Sabha polls.

The Congress has accused its former national spokesperson of lacking “ideological commitment” and claimed her departure would have no impact on Tamil Nadu politics.





## IN BRIEF

## Man falls asleep in car with AC on, dies

**Noida:** A man was found dead in his car in which he appeared to have fallen asleep under the influence of liquor leaving the AC of his vehicle on, police said on Monday. The body of the man, in his thirties, was found by his brother on Sunday but the family did not lodge any complaint alleging any foul play in the death, they said. The man died of apparently inhaling poisonous gases like Carbon Monoxide emanating from the car's engine and sucked inside the vehicle's cabin by the AC, they said. "Deceased Sundar Pandit lived in Barola village. He had another home in Sector 107 where he had come on the weekend," a police spokesperson said. "His family members told police that he was a habitual alcoholic. He slept inside his car, which was parked in the basement on Saturday night in an inebriated condition," he added. "Next morning Pandit's brother found him unconscious in the car and immediately took him to a hospital, where he was declared dead," the spokesperson said. The family members have carried out the last rites and cremated the body, according to officials of the police station.

## Woman held with smack worth ₹10L

**New Delhi:** A 55-year-old woman was arrested from north Delhi's Majnu Ka Tilla for allegedly supplying drugs in the national capital, police said on Monday. A total of 110 grams of smack worth around ₹10 lakh in the international market was recovered from her possession, they said. The accused has been identified as Seema, a resident of Aruna Nagar in Majnu Ka Tilla. She was previously involved in a culpable homicide case registered at Civil Lines police station. DCP (north) Anto Alphonse said they received a tip-off and apprehended the woman.

## Centre offers booster shot for states, babus

■ **Continued from Page 1** interest free 50-year loans to the states). The proposals to stimulate demand are designed to stimulate demand in a fiscally prudent way — some of them involve advancing of expenditure, with offsetting changes later — others are directly linked to increasing GDP.

As far as the capex boost to states is concerned, the Centre has decided to offer special interest-free 50-year loans to states to the tune of ₹12,000 crores. The loans will consist of three components. "The first part is ₹2,500 crores for the Northeast (₹1,600 crores), and ₹9,00 crores for Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. The second part involves ₹7,500 crores for other states in proportion to their share in the Finance Commission's devolution," she said.

"At least 50 per cent of the loan will be granted initially and the balance will be allotted after use of the first instalment. It may be noted that the unutilised funds may be reallocated. The last part of capital expenditure boost is ₹2,000 crores for states which meet at least three out of four reforms mentioned under the Atma Nirbhar fiscal deficit package," she added.

Under the LTC Cash Voucher scheme, government employees can opt to receive cash amounts for leave encashment plus three times the ticket fare, to buy items which attract GST of 12 per cent or more on only digital transactions, and a GST invoice will have to be produced from the vendors.

"If Central government employees opt for it, this will cost around ₹5,675 crores. The employees of PSBs and PSUs are allowed to avail this facility, and for PSBs and PSUs the cost will be ₹1,900 crores. The demand infusion in the economy by Central government and PSUs will be about ₹19,000 crores," said Ms Sitharaman.

Under the Special Festival Advance scheme, the finance minister also said it would boost spending among Central employees. Sharing details, she said it will be available up to March 31, 2021. "The amount will be given to Central government employees as a prepaid RuPay card. The amount that will be granted is ₹10,000 crores. The festival advance earlier for non-gazetted employees was at ₹4,500.

■ BJP at MCD accuses govt of 'paralysing' their functioning  
Hand over hospitals if unable to pay staff, govt tells MCDsAGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

The Delhi government, on Monday, asked the municipal corporations to consider handing over their hospitals to it if they are unable to pay salaries and dues of doctors, paramedics, and other staff members who have threatened to go on strike.

The urban development minister, Satyendar Jain, said that the situation due to threat of strike has forced Delhi government to shift Covid-19 patients from the North Delhi Municipal Corporation run Hindu Rao hospital to LNJP hospital.

Mr Jain directed the additional chief secretary (urban development) to take up the issue with commissioners of the BJP-ruled three municipal corporations.

In a letter to the commissioners of North, South, and East Delhi Municipal corporations, the additional director (local bodies) of urban development

## Delhi records 40 more Covid deaths, taking toll to 5,809

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

The national capital recorded 40 Covid fatalities on Monday, taking the death toll to 5,809 while 1,849 fresh cases took the infection tally to over 3.11 lakh, authorities said.

The relatively low number of fresh cases resulted from the 35,947 tests conducted the previous day. On October 10 as well as on September 29, 48 fatalities were reported in the

city, the highest number of deaths recorded in a day since July 16 when Delhi saw 58 fatalities.

Forty more fatalities have been recorded, taking the death toll to 5,809, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department.

The tally of active cases on Monday dropped to 20,535 from 21,701 the previous day. The total number of cases in the city has climbed to 3,11,188, the bulletin added.

department said, "If MCDs are unable to pay salaries and are facing difficulty in running their hospitals, they may consider handing over their hospitals to the Delhi government to avoid any further anguish to medical, paramedical, and other staff and inconveniences

to patients and their relatives as well as citizens of Delhi during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic."

He said the municipal corporations should expeditiously clear all payments of salaries, wages, and other dues to doctors, paramedical, and other staff of their hospitals

and submit a report to the urban development minister.

"Inability to pay the salaries and other dues in time has led to a situation where proper treatment to Covid-19 patients is not being provided and patients are forced to shift from Hindu Rao hospital to Lok Nayak hospital for continued medical care," said the letter.

The letter also reminded that under recommendations of the 5th Delhi Finance Commission, the first and second instalments of basic tax assignments by the urban development department and grant-in-aid by health and education departments have already been released to the corporations by the Delhi government for 2020-21.

BJP leaders at the three municipal corporations have been accusing Delhi government of "paralysing" their functioning by holding their financial dues under various heads.

## 'Will request Centre to issue directions for fund release'

North mayor: Govt must release aid of ₹2,022 crore

SHASHI BHUSHAN  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

Amid the ongoing financial crisis, North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash said that he will request the Union government to take cognisance of the situation and issue directions to the Delhi government to release due funds to the civic bodies. Mr Prakash told this newspaper that the Delhi government needs to help the corporation in this matter and it should release a grant-in-aid of Rs 2,022 crore, which it had announced in its interim budget.

He pointed out that the Delhi government needs to help the civic bodies.

"The Delhi government must release a grant-in-aid of ₹2,022 crore, which it had announced in its interim budget. Two quarterly instalments of ₹556 crore and ₹1,045 crore are still pending. We are exploring all legal possibilities to get our dues cleared by the Delhi government.

"If needed, we will approach the court. I will



Jai Prakash

also request the Centre to take cognisance of the situation and intervene. The Centre should issue directions to the Delhi government," said the North Delhi mayor. Mr Prakash explained that the financial crisis can end but the corporation needs to work in the right direction with determination.

"We will need to work at three levels and we are making efforts. During the lockdown, the entire city was shut down for four months, therefore our income had reduced as the collection of property tax and other earnings from car parking, advertisement, licensing department, and others had fallen

■ **ACCORDING TO** North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash, Delhi government must release a grant-in-aid of ₹2,022 crore, which it had announced in its interim budget. Two quarterly instalments of ₹556 crore and ₹1,045 crore are still pending

drastically.

"We are exploring opportunities to increase revenue sources. We have brought out an amnesty scheme to encourage people to pay up their property tax. Interest and penalties have been waived. The move has immensely helped us. We have managed to clear a part of the pending salaries as a good amount was collected," Mr Prakash added.

According to North Delhi mayor, there are several big projects under the Remunerative Project (RP) Cell which ultimately increase the corporation's income and a desired result will start coming from next month.

## SC dismisses plea seeking ban on halal slaughter

PARMOD KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

The Supreme Court on Monday rejected a plea seeking a ban on the halal form of slaughter of animals, dubbing the plea as "mischievous in character."

"Your petition is mischievous in character", said Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul heading a bench also comprising Justice Dinesh Maheshwari questioning the motives of the petitioner as court dismissed a petition by a Delhi-based outfit, Akhand Bharat Morcha, headed by one

Sandeep Ahuja,

"Court cannot determine who can be vegetarian or non-vegetarian. Those who want to eat halal meat can eat halal meat. Those who want to eat Jhatka meat can eat Jhatka," Justice Kaul remarked.

Justice Kaul further observed that these are the issues which cannot go into and the court can't interfere with the food habits of the people.

The petition had challenged Section 28 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, allowing the slaughter either through halal or jhatka.

The petition had also sought a stay on a circular issued on March 30 by the animal husbandry department of the Agriculture Ministry in a hurry, allowing the slaughter of animals by "halal" under the pressure of the meat sellers.

Slaughter of the animals with an Islamic prayer for eating is done in a halal method in which the jugular vein of the animal is severed leading to the draining out of blood leading to its death while Jhatka involved killing the animal instantaneously by a single strike to sever the head.

## Delhi records worst air quality since Feb.

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

The air quality in the national capital and adjacent areas was recorded in the "poor" category on Monday morning, with concentration of fine particulate matter — PM2.5 and PM10 — increasing to the highest recorded levels this season so far.

However, the Ministry of Earth Sciences' air quality monitor, SAFAR, said the air quality index (AQI) was likely to improve slightly in the coming days due to a change in the wind direction.

The city recorded an overall AQI of 240 at 10 am. The 24-hour average AQI was 216 on Sunday

■ **THE MINISTRY OF** earth sciences' air quality monitor, SAFAR, said the air quality index (AQI) was likely to improve slightly in the coming days due to a change in the wind direction

and 221 on Saturday.

The AQI in Jahangirpuri (301) and Vivek Vihar (316) hit the "very poor" category. An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

PM10 levels in Delhi-NCR stood at 242 microgram per cubic meter

(µg/m3) at 9 am — the highest this season so far, according to CPCB data. PM10 levels below 100 µg/m3 are considered safe in India.

PM10 is particulate matter with a diameter of 10 micrometers and is inhalable into the lungs. These particles include dust, pollen and mold spores.

The levels of PM2.5 — finer particles which can even enter the bloodstream — were 106 µg/m3. PM2.5 levels up to 60 µg/m3 are considered safe.

Delhi's air quality had turned poor on Wednesday, the first time in since June 29, with the Central Pollution Control Board recording a 24-hour average AQI of 215.

SAFAR said as many as 448 farm fires were observed in Punjab, adjoining Pakistan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh which impacted Delhi's air quality on Sunday.

However, the wind direction will change from northwesterly to southeasterly and the impact of farm fires will reduce, it said.

On Monday morning, Delhi's minimum temperature settled at 19.4 degrees Celsius. The maximum wind speed was 4 kilometers per hour.

Low temperatures and stagnant winds help in accumulation of pollutants near the ground, affecting air quality.



Farmers install effigies in a field to protest for their demand for renewable energy ahead of the Bihar Assembly election at Kajra Panchayat under Wazir Ganj block in Gaya district on Monday.

— PTI

## HATHRAS CASE

## Medical board to check rape victim's treatment records

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI OCT. 12

The CBI, which is probing Hathras alleged gang rape and murder case, is set to constitute a medical board to examine all medical records of the victim.

According to sources apart from scrutinizing all medical records of the victim, the board members will also meet doctors of two hospitals where the victim was treated. "The medical board will be constituted in a day or two", sources said.

The CBI on Sunday took over the investigation in the alleged gang rape and murder of 19-year-old woman in Hathras after registering a case against an accused. The case was registered by the CBI on the request of Uttar Pradesh Government and further notification from Government of India. Sources further said the

board members will also interact with the three-member

Special Investigation Team (SIT) chaired by UP's home secretary Bhagwan Swaroop Srivastava. The SIT had started its investigation on October 1. Besides, the CBI will soon examine state police officials of Chandrapur police station of Hathras, who had initially investigated the case.

Earlier on September 14, an FIR was lodged on the complaint of the victim's brother at Chandrapur police station.

The complainant had mentioned in the FIR that the accused tried to strangle his sister in a millet field. Later the charges of murder and gang rape by four upper caste men were added in the FIR after the woman had later succumbed to her injuries during treatment at a Delhi hospital on September 29.

## Didi: BJP evil force, biggest pandemic

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, OCT. 12

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, on Monday, described BJP as a "big pandemic," eyeing to grab power in the state "even if all die of Covid-19." Comparing the saffron party to an "evil power," she also reminded them to follow the cultural norms of the state in politics in an oblique reference to their grave allegation against the West Bengal police of removal of a Sikh bodyguard's turban during the October 8 rally.

"On one hand there is



Mamata Banerjee

Covid-19, dengue, and malaria. On the other, there is dangerous BJP. I have never seen such a big pandemic! Since it is an event of our mouthpiece, we do not make nonsense or loose comments. But we can certainly say that there is a certain kind of culture,

decency, democracy, and tradition which needs to be followed to do politics in Bengal. This is Bengal's culture," Ms Banerjee said at the inauguration of 'Sharodiy Edition' of the TMC mouthpiece, Jago Bangla.

She added, "You (BJP) have done a lot and have been trying to do a lot more. Remember, Maa (read Goddess Durga), who killed Asura, comes to earth to eliminate such an evil power like you."

Pointing out restrictions on Durga Puja in other states, the Trinamul supremo noted, "No permission

has been given in New Delhi except the one at Chittaranjan Park. Not a single puja has been permitted in UP also. Same happened in Assam. Only in Bengal we are going to celebrate it because it is our national festival. How can we forget it?" On the havoc spike in the number of Covid-19 cases a week before Durga Puja, she however argued, "The numbers are on the rise because flight operations have started. Special trains have been running. Thousands of trucks and other vehicles are also coming from other states."

## CBSE class 10 compartment exam results declared, over 56% passes

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) declared the result for class 10 compartment examination on Monday with over 56 per cent of the registered candidates passing the exam. According to officials, a total of 1.57 candidates had registered for

■ **A TOTAL OF** 82,903 candidates have cleared the exam taking the pass percentage to 56.55 per cent

the exam and of them, 1.49 candidates appeared for the exam.

"A total of 82,903 candidates have cleared the exam taking the pass percentage to 56.55 per cent,"

a senior board official said. The board had last week announced results for class 12 compartment exam with 59.43 per cent of the candidates clearing the examination.

The compartment examination for classes 10 and 12 began on September 22 at 1,268 centres across the country amid strict precautions in view of the Covid.

## No fibre internet installation in court complexes, says HC

**New Delhi, Oct. 12:** The Delhi High Court on Monday declined to entertain a plea seeking installation of fibre lines of all telecom operators in every court complex in the city to ensure faster internet for effective hearing of cases via video conferencing. A bench of chief justice D.N. Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan said that while the issue raised was a good one, no relief can be granted right away as huge expenditure is involved and the government has its own priorities. "This is not the right time for it (laying fibre cables in district courts). We will do it in time, slowly," the bench said.

The court however allowed the petitioner, a

lawyer, to make a representation before the authorities who, on receiving it, were directed to decide it in accordance with the law, rules, regulations and government policy applicable to the facts of the case and by also keeping in mind its financial priorities.

With the direction, the bench disposed of the plea. The petition, seeking laying of fibre cables for faster internet connectivity, had been filed by advocate Satnarain Sharma who has claimed that "due to lack of infrastructure and poor connectivity of internet, hardship is being faced by the judges and lawyers in most of the court complexes" in Delhi.

— PTI

## SC allows NTA to conduct second round of NEET exams on Oct. 14

**New Delhi, Oct. 12:** The Supreme Court Monday allowed National Testing Agency to conduct second round of the NEET (UG) for the Covid affected students and those in containment zones on October 14.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde passed the order after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta sought the top court's nod in the issue citing special circumstances due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"In view of the circumstances which have necessitated postponement of the examination in the past and in view of the prevailing circumstances, we consider it appropriate to grant permission to the National Testing Agency to conduct a second part of the NEET (UG) 2019 for the COVID affected students and for those in containment zones on October 14, 2020," the bench said.

The bench, also comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian, said the result may be declared on October 16, 2020. The crucial National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), which is a pen and paper based test unlike engineering entrance exam JEE, was held on September 13 after being deferred twice in view of the Covid.

— PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
E-TENDER NOTICE	
The Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Northern Railway, Delhi division, New Delhi invites e-tender for the following work:	
1	Name of work with its location
2	Name of tender on IREPS
3	Approximate cost of work
4	Date of Opening of Tender
5	Cost of Tender document & 18 % GST
6	Earnest Money Deposit
7	Website particulars where complete details of tender document can be seen
No: 3PUB/Tender/ATM/DLI-DV/2018 Dated : 09.10.2020	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	



SHORT TAKES

BJD NAMES CANDIDATES FOR BYPOLLS

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO  
BHUBANESWAR, OCT. 12

Odisha's ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Monday declared its candidates for the forthcoming by-elections to Balasore Sadar and Tirtol Assembly seats. Bijay Sankar Das, son of former BJD MLA Bishnu Das, will contest from Tirtol, while Swarup Kumar Das was declared as the party's nominee for Balasore Sadar. On Sunday, the BJP had declared its candidates for the two constituencies. Manas Dutta, son of deceased BJP MLA Madan Mohan Dutta will contest from Balasore Sadar while Rajkishore Behera was declared as party candidate for Tirtol. Congress is yet to announce their candidates. However, party MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati dropped hints that the party would announce its candidates within a day or two. The by-polls to both the seats have been necessitated by the demise of sitting BJP MLA Madan Mohan Dutta (Balasore) and sitting BJD legislator Bishnu Das (Tirtol). Polls will take place on November 3 and results will be announced November 10.

BUXAR WOMAN GANGRAPED, MINOR SON KILLED

**Buxar:** Seven persons allegedly raped a 30-year-old woman after killing her five-year-old son in a village in Bihar's Buxar district, police said on Monday. One person has been arrested in connection with the incident, while search is on to nab the others, they said. On Saturday, the accused took the woman to a jungle when she had come to Chaigain village to deposit money at a bank along with her son, raped her and killed the child, her father said in the FIR lodged with Murar Police Station. The men then threw the woman and her son in a canal after tying them with a rope, according to the police complaint. The two were taken to Chaigain Primary Health Centre, where doctors declared the child brought-dead and referred the woman to Sadar Hospital, police said, adding, the body of the minor has been sent for post-mortem examination. The woman's medical examination report is awaited and her statement will be recorded in the court of the judicial magistrate on Monday, a police officer said. Dumraon Sub-Divisional Police Officer K.K. Singh said a person named Munni Ram has been arrested and the other accused will be apprehended soon.

TRANSGENDERS IN SEXUAL OFFENCES: SC SEEKS REPLY

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Monday sought reply from the Centre on a public interest plea today issued notice to the Centre seeking protection for transgender community against sexual offences as is available to others. Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a three judge bench also comprising Justice A.S.Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian sought response from the Centre on a PIL by advocate Reepak Kansal. "It is a very good issue. Issue notice," said CJ Bobde. The matter is likely to be listed for further hearing on November 27, 2020. The court asked senior counsel Vikas Singh appearing in the matter to place before it a list of issues on which the top court had laid down guidelines in pursuance to the Vishakh guidelines. The PIL by lawyer, Kansal, has sought direction to the Centre to make appropriate modification/interpretation of sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) dealing with sexual assaults against transgender/transsexuals and or eunuchs. It has sought that the laws dealing with sexual harassment should be gender neutral. The Union of India, the PIL by lawyer Kansal says should adopt and implement the universal declaration of human rights to protect the fundamental rights of third gender by giving them equal protection before law. The petition has challenged constitutional validity of various clauses and Sub-sections of Section 354-A (Sexual harassment and punishment for sexual harassment) of the IPC.

# Power outage brings Mumbai to halt

Mumbai varsity defers UG, PG exams to Sunday, CM Uddhav orders probe

BHAGWAN PARAB  
MUMBAI, OCT. 12

Life in Mumbai, the financial capital of the country, was heavily crippled on Monday morning due to a major grid failure, which resulted in a massive power outage. Almost the entire city was without power for nearly four hours which stopped local train services, left few people trapped in elevators and disrupted "work from home". Taking a serious cognisance of it, chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has ordered an inquiry into the incident. The three-hour-long blackout, which started at 10 am, left Mumbai city and the suburbs in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) without electricity, causing huge inconvenience to people. Power outages were reported from nearby cities like Thane, Palghar, Navi Mumbai, Panvel, Dombivli and Kalyan as well. Local train services, the lifeline of Mumbai, came to a halt due to the outage for nearly two-and-a-half hours, leaving thousands



A doctor treats a child with the help of a torch in Sion Hospital in Mumbai on Monday. — RAJESH JADHAV

of commuters stranded. Left with no option, several passengers decided to jump out and walk on tracks to reach the nearest station. The grid failure happened due to multiple tripping of lines and transformer supplying power to Mumbai system. Though the restoration work started on a war-footing, it took nearly

three hours to resume the supply phase wise. Maharashtra's Power Minister Nitin Raut said that the failure was caused by 'technical problems' during maintenance works. He said, the trouble started from Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Company (MSETCL) facilities during a planned maintenance

work. Tata Power, which is into both generation and distribution, attributed the outage to a simultaneous substation tripping at MSETCL's two substations at Kalwa and Kharghar. "Power cut across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region due to grid failure," the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and

Transport (BEST) undertaking said on Twitter. Adani Power Ltd and Tata Power Co Ltd, the other two power suppliers to the city, said they had also been affected by the outage. With majority of Mumbaiers still working from home due to coronavirus-induced lockdown, the outage left them hapless with no electricity and Internet services. People reported difficulties from both the Internet service providers and telcos with issues like issues in call connections and internet or data connectivity being expressed. However, the exact reasons for the same were not known. Vodafone Idea's media briefing, which was scheduled to be held in Mumbai on Monday afternoon, was postponed after the power outage. The Mumbai University deferred the UG and PG examinations to Sunday. However, Mumbai's international airport and the country's two main stock exchanges located in the city, the National Stock Exchange and BSE, said they were operating normally.

## Diesel gensets keep hospitals unaffected

BHAGWAN PARAB  
MUMBAI, OCT. 12

With the number of Covid-19 infections still very high and many patients recovering in hospitals including specially-created facilities rendering services like oxygen supply, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) directed staff to bolster diesel supply to last up to eight hours and also scout for mobile diesel generator vans which are used at film shoots as a standby. BMC chief Iqbal Singh Chahal asked all hospitals to contact their transport garage officers to get enough diesel to operate generators for at least eight hours so that there are no power failures, especially in ICUs. He also asked hospitals to update their respective control room heads about the situation every 30 minutes and directed the disaster management control

► BMC chief Iqbal Singh Chahal asked all hospitals to get enough diesel to operate generators for at least 8 hours so that there are no power failures, especially in ICUs

room and concerned officers to coordinate the operation. In a statement, Mr Chahal said, "All the hospitals to contact their respective SWM transport garage officers to get enough supply of diesel for at least eight hours so that there are no power failures in hospitals, especially ICUs. In case of any issues please contact the disaster control room for help. CE SWM to coordinate this." He further asked disaster control to keep standby private mobile DG set vehicles handy within the next one hour in case power failure continues beyond two hours.

■ BJP seeks to maintain sway over upper castes while wooing OBCs, dalits

## Half of BJP picks for Bihar's 2nd phase are upper caste

**Patna, Oct. 12:** A strategy of keeping its upper caste support base intact while making inroads in the sizeable OBC and Dalit vote bank meets the eye upon perusal of the BJP's list of 46 candidates for the second phase of assembly elections in Bihar.

Altogether 94 seats go to polls in the phase, for which voting will take place on November 3. The BJP had got more than half of these under the seat-sharing arrangement with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U). The saffron party's list of candidates for the second round of voting was released on Sunday. Nearly half of the BJP's 46 candidates for the second phase of voting belong to the upper castes Rajputs, Bhumihars, Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaishyas which constitute the core base of the saffron party in the state. The party has also given tickets to eight Yadavs, seeking to make a dent into the opposition RJD's unquestionable sway over the most sizeable OBC group in the state.

The JD(U), which has announced its candidates for all the 115 seats it will be contesting, has also fielded a substantial number of Yadavs. Yadavs form nearly 15 per cent of the electorate in the state and the NDA parties are trying to cash in absence of Prasad from the poll scene to wean away the core support base of the RJD. The RJD supremo is in jail after conviction in four cases of multi-crore fodder scam. Candidates from other OBC groups also figure in the BJP's list while seven

### 52,000 VOTERS OPT FOR POSTAL BALLOT IN PH 1

**New Delhi, Oct. 12:** More than 52,000 voters, who are either senior citizens above 80 years of age or are people with disabilities, have opted for postal ballot in the first phase of Bihar elections to be held on October 28. Booth Level Officers (BLO) in 71 constituencies spread across 16 districts of the state had approached over four lakh voters of the two categories.

Dalits will be seeking votes for the party in as many reserved constituencies.

Out of the 46 seats in the second phase, the BJP has set aside five from its quota for the Vikassheel Insaan Party, headed by former Bollywood set designer Mukesh Sahni who left the Opposition camp and joined the NDA nearly a week ago.

The VIP has been allocated total 11 seats for all three phases of the polls for the saffron party from its share of 121 seats in the NDA.

Bihar has a 243-member assembly.

Rest 122 seats in the NDA camp have gone to the JD(U) out of which it has provided seven to Hindustani Awam Morcha of the former chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi.

The BJP had won 20 out of the seats going to polls in the second phase.

Its sitting members in four of these Sugauli, Chanpatiya, Siwan and Amnour have been

deprived of tickets this time.

While Sugauli has gone to JD(U), the BJP has placed its trust in new faces in the remaining three.

Union minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey's reported lobbying for his son Arijit Shashwat seems to have paid no dividend in Bhagalpur where the party has placed its trust in district unit chief Rahul Pandey.

Another candidate, who has risen from the ranks and made it to the list is Nikhil Anand, one of the most prominent spokesmen in the state unit who will be challenging RJD strongman Bhai Virendra in Maner.

Former MP Om Prakash Yadav who had won Siwan for the party in 2014 but was denied tickets last year as the seat went to the JD(U), has been fielded from the assembly segment of the same name.

In neighboring Daraunda, the party has pacified rebel Karanjeet Singh, who quit and won the seat as an Independent in by-poll necessitated by Kavita Singhs election to the Lok Sabha from Siwan. Karanjeet Singh will now seek to retain the seat as the BJP's official nominee.

Two state ministers in the list Nand Kishore Yadav and Rana Randhir will be seeking re-election from Patna City and Madhubani respectively.

The party has come out with names of its candidates for a total of 75 seats which go to polls in the first two phases. Unsurprisingly, not a single Muslim has been given the party ticket though ally JD(U) has fielded nearly a dozen. — PTI

## New low: MP Cong leader tries to belittle Shivraj's background

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY  
BHOPAL, OCT. 12

The campaigning for the November 3 by-elections in 28 Assembly constituencies in Madhya Pradesh has reached a new low with a senior Congress leader trying to belittle chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan citing his humble family background.

State unit president of farmers' wing of Congress Dinesh Gurjar said Mr Chouhan was no match to former chief minister Kamal Nath while drawing a comparison of their financial backgrounds.

"Mr Chouhan hails from a family of 'nange, bhooke', loosely translated in English as extremely poor, while Mr Nath was the second biggest industrialist in India", the Congress leader said while addressing an election meeting in Ashok Nagar late on Sunday.

The ruling BJP has seized the opportunity to portray it as a battle between 'rich vs poor' in the assembly by-polls to target Mr Nath, who is leading Congress in the crucial by-elections. "Yes, I come from a poor family. That's why I understand the pangs of hunger. That's why my focus has always been to uplift the poor and the farmers.



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

I have transferred ₹1000 to the bank accounts of each farmer as soon as I assumed office. I have undertaken many welfare measures for the poor and the farmer after I assumed power in March", he said while addressing a poll meeting in Guna in the state on Monday.

He also attacked Mr Nath saying that the latter never visited villages and was hardly aware of conditions of the poor in villages.

"Congress is projecting Mr Nath as an industrialist. But, I challenge Mr Nath if he has ever visited villages to know how agriculture operations are being undertaken by the farmers, or what kind of problems the poor and the farmers are facing", he said.

"A man from a poor family like me can only understand the people's plight and work for their development. An industrialist like Mr Nath is hardly aware of their problems", he observed.

## Kerala opens up tourism in a phased manner

GILVESTER ASSARY  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT. 12

The Kerala government has opened up tourism sector partially by allowing tourists in hill destinations, adventure tourism spots and backwaters from Monday.

The tourist centres will be opened up in two phases complying with the safety protocols, said tourism minister Mr Kadkampally Surendran. While houseboats and tourist boats have been allowed in backwaters and lakes, the beaches will be opened for tourists only after November 1 in the second phase.

The decision to open tourism sector has been taken in view of the huge crisis being faced by the sector and the people who are dependent on it, due to the lockdown.

While many other states had opened up tourism sector earlier, the Kerala government was cautious as it did not want to trigger a spike in the Covid cases, especially in the densely populated areas.

Therefore, the government decided to open up the sector in a phased manner.

Since the Union home ministry in its Unlock 4 order has not mentioned tourism in the prohibited category, the sector can be opened with adequate measures. The government's decision has brought some relief to the people engaged in tourism sector.

The government had earlier announced that those coming to Kerala from outside the state for business purposes, would be exempted from 7 days mandatory quarantine. The same norm is going

## INDIA RECORDS CASES BELOW 70,000, DEATHS LESS THAN 900

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

With 66,732 fresh cases, India on Monday registered a total of 71.21 lakh cases of coronavirus while its death toll climbed to 1,09,150 with 816 new fatalities in the last 24 hours.

However, despite significantly high number of fresh cases being detected, the virus spread seems to have slowed down a bit in India though the coming festive season will make it clear if India has crossed the "peak".

The gap between India and the United States of America in terms of overall cases is narrowing down and on Monday it has further come down to 8.70 lakh.

Union health ministry officials said that the trend of steady decline in active cases is continuing and the active caseload is now only 12.10% of the total positive cases, which is 8.62 lakh.

"For the fourth day after the active cases dropped below the 9 lakh mark after a month, the decline continues unabated," officials said.

to be applied to the tourists as well. They can come to the state on a short visit for a week.

All tourists coming from outside should register with the state government's Jagratha portal.

## SOUMITRA CHATTERJEE STILL CRITICAL

**Kolkata, Oct. 12:** Legendary Bengali actor Soumitra Chatterjee is still in a "high risk zone" though his parameters are stable, doctors attending to the thespian said on Monday. The 85-year-old Dadasaheb Phalke awardee has fever and continues to be in a "drowsy, confusional state", which is a matter of concern, they said. Chatterjee might have to undergo an MRI later on Monday, doctors at the private hospital, where he is being treated for Covid-19, said. "He is stable, had good sleep last night, but is still in a high risk zone. His oxygen saturation level has improved," a doctor said. — PTI

FRESH ISSUE

## Will fight 'love jihad' in next term: Assam mantri

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, OCT. 12

After announcing to shut down all the government madrasas, senior BJP leader and Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stirred a fresh controversy by announcing to launch a fight against 'love jihad' if they return to power in 2021 assembly polls. Addressing a meeting of BJP Mahila Morcha at Dibrugarh, the minister said that they have been fighting against various problems that that state has been facing but five years were not enough to bring an end to it. Coining a new term 'Ajmal's culture and civilisation' for illegal immigrants from Bangladesh

and equating it with AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal as its saviour, the minister said that a large number of girls have become the victim of 'love jihad' on social media platforms like Facebook.

Referring that many Assamese mothers came to him crying that her daughter was victimised by youths displaying fake Hindu names on social media, the minister said that this is being done by a section of youths who are from 'Ajmal's culture and civilisation'

Stressing the need of launching a campaign against love jihad, the minister said, "If BJP comes to power again, we will take a decision that if any boy hides his religious identity

● **AIUDF CHIEF** Badruddin Ajmal, who has been instrumental in stitching alliance with Congress for the assembly election next year, has become the regular target of the BJP leader as political observers are of view that AIUDF-Congress alliance may turn out to be a formidable challenge for the saffron party in Assam.

and comments anything negative on Assamese daughters and women, he will face rigorous punishment."

Referring to instances as to how Hindu girls are becoming victims of 'Ajmal's culture and civilisation'

on Facebook where boys hiding their religion on social media befriend and marry them, the minister said, "We have taken an oath that if Ajmal's army touches our women, the only punishment for them will be a death sentence, nothing less. We are working with such a resolve."

AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal, who has been instrumental in stitching alliance with Congress for the assembly election next year, has become the regular target of the BJP leader as political observers are of view that AIUDF-Congress alliance may turn out to be a formidable challenge for the saffron party in Assam.

The minister added,

"Love jihad has created a mountain-like problem for Assamese daughters. Many girls have faced talaq after getting duped by fake names of the boys. The BJP has resolved that whenever anyone from 'Ajmal's culture-civilisation' attacks Assamese girls, 'ruthless' replies will be given."

Describing the assembly elections of 2021 as a fight to save culture and civilisation of the state, he said, "If people do not unite then the society will not be saved. That is why the 2021 assembly election is for saving our culture-civilisation. If the 65 percent people don't fight together against Ajmal's culture-civilisation, then our future Assam will not be

saved. If we lose this fight of culture-civilisation, then we will not be able to live in Assam after 15 years."

The minister's reference to 65 per cent population was obviously to non-Muslims as according to the 2011 census report, 34.22 per cent people in Assam are Muslims while 61.47 per cent are Hindus.

Mr Sarma said, "We had spoken about the Saraighat battle in 2016. This battle doesn't end in five years. We will have to fight till we finish off Ajmal's army politically."

The Battle of Saraighat was a naval battle fought in 1671 between the Mughal Empire, and the Ahom Kingdom on the Brahmaputra at Saraighat.



SHORT TAKES

BSY DROPS SRIRAMULU AS HEALTH MINISTER

VINAY MADHAV  
BENGALURU, OCT. 12

Failure to handle Covid-19 spike in Karnataka cost health and family welfare minister B. Sriramulu, who has turned rebellious against chief minister B.S. Yeddyurappa. Sriramulu, who has been deputy chief minister aspirant since the BJP government came to power, has been relieved of his two portfolios — health and family welfare, backward class development. The portfolios have been given social welfare department. Soon after the order came, Sriramulu rushed to CM's residence and held an one hour meeting with him. Later, Sriramulu went to his residence and held another meeting with his close associates. He has sought appointment with BJP leaders in Delhi to air his grievance. When he failed to get an appointment, Sriramulu also spoke of resigning from the cabinet and staying as just MLA. The daily average spike in Covid-19 positive cases in the state has crossed 10,500 and the daily average of Bengaluru city alone has crossed the 5,000-mark. Even the total number of deaths in the state is touching the 9,000-mark, which forced Yeddyurappa to shift Sriramulu away from health and family welfare department.

SC NOTICE TO CENTRE ON NEW FARM LAWS

PARMOD KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

The Supreme Court on Monday sought response from the Centre on two petitions challenging the constitutional validity of recently enacted contentious three farms laws that has sparked farmers' protests across the country. The three laws whose validity has been assailed include Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020. These laws came into force from September 27 after President Ram Nath Kovind gave his assent to the Bills passed in the monsoon session of Parliament. A bench headed by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde and Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian issued notice as the court was told that without taking recourse to the Constitution, the three farms laws override the state legislation relating to the marketing of the farm produce. While the court junked the PIL by advocate Manohar Lal Sharma saying that it was bereft of any cause of action arising from the implementation of three laws, it issued notice on petitions by Chhattisgarh Kisan Congress leader Rakesh Vaishnav, Rashtriya Janata Dal's Rajya Sabha member Manoj Jha, DMK's Rajya Sabha member Tiruchi Siva, and the Congress MP T.N. Prathapan. The case is likely to be listed for further hearing on November 16, 2020.

India, China generals...

Continued from Page 1  
Last corps commanders' meeting, both sides had agreed to stop sending more troops to the front line, refrain from unilaterally changing the situation on the ground, and avoid taking any action that may further complicate the situation. Since the sixth corps commanders' meeting, some type of uneasy peace has been maintained at the LAC in Ladakh, which had seen a number of firing incidents for the first time in over four decades. However, tension remains high in the area, with both sides having deployed troops, tanks, artillery, missiles and fighter aircraft at advanced bases. The Army and the Indian Air Force are still on high alert. Both sides are prepared to keep their armies at these high altitude bases in the mountains during winter, when temperatures dip way below zero degrees and bone-chilling winds make survival extremely difficult.

3 teachers booked under PSA as 13 students join militant ranks

One of the students is Sajjad, an accused in attack on CRPF convoy in Pulwama

YUSUF JAMEEL  
SRINAGAR, OCT. 12

Three teachers of a private school in J&K's southern Shopian district have been booked under stringent Public Safety Act (PSA) after the discovery that 13 of its students joined militants' ranks over a period of time. One of them is Sajjad Bhat, an accused in the February 2019 bombing of a CRPF convoy in Pulwama in which 40 jawans were killed and eight others wounded. Inspector-general of police (Kashmir range), Vijay Kumar, told reporters here that during the investigation by it and other security and law enforcing agencies it was found that 13 of the alumni of Siraj-ul-Uloom schools situated in Shopian's Imam Sahib area and affiliated with Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), had joined various militant outfits. The three teachers who have been detained under the PSA are Abdul Ahad Bhat, Rouf Bhat and Mohammad Yusuf Wani, he said. However, sources said that the school is run by a local trust called Siraj-ul-Uloom Educational Trust which incidentally is, at present, being headed by a JI member Muhammad Yusuf Mantu. A JI official claimed that the school has nothing to do with the organisation or its subsidiary Falah-e-Aam Trust which runs a chain of schools across J&K. Under the PSA, introduced in J&K in 1978 initially to deal with timber smuggling but later used by successive governments often against their political opponents, a person can be detained for a period of six months to two years without the authorities seeking a formal trial. The Centre had in February 2019 declared JI, J&K as "unlawful association" for five years under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. Also, the rightwing party's almost entire leadership and hundreds of members were arrested and many of them booked under the PSA. Sources said the students were mainly from Kulgam, Pulwama and Anantnag districts which with Shopian have been the hotbed of insurgency over a period of time and witnessed spurt in recruitment of local youths by various militant outfits after the killing of Burhan Muzaffar Wani in July 2016.



Security personnel take guard near the site of an encounter with militants at old Barzulla in Srinagar on Monday. — PTI

LeT's Pak commander, PDP firm on its aide killed in encounter Art. 370 demand

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR, OCT. 12

A Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) commander from Pakistan and his local associate were gunned down by the security forces in a fire fight that broke out early Monday in Srinagar's Barzulla area. A private house where the duo had been holed up following the security forces launched a cordon-and-search operation in the area was destroyed as it caught fire in the latter's final assault. J&K's Director General of Police Dilbag Singh claimed at a hurriedly called press conference that the slain Pakistan militant commander Saifullah was involved in a series of attacks on security forces including the ambushes that took place in and outside Srinagar past fortnight, leaving several security forces personnel dead and injured. The other militant killed in the encounter has been identified as Irshad Ahmed Dar alias Abu Usama, a resident of southern Pulwama district, "who was active since May 2019 and involved in several civilian killings and attacks on the J&K police and central security forces." The police chief said that, so far, this year the security forces have conducted 75 counter-insurgency operations across J&K during which as many as 180 militants including several top commanders of various outfits were killed. Inspector General of Police (Kashmir range), Vijay Kumar, said that after evacuating the civilians living in the neighbourhood the LeT militants trapped inside a residential house in Mir Mohalla (locality) of old Barzulla were offered to lay down their arms and surrender before the security forces as part of the Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) followed during the actions. But they refused and opened fire on the joint party of J&K police's Special Operations Group (SOG) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), triggering the encounter, he said and added the operation was launched shortly after midnight on receiving input about the presence of militants in the area. Singh said that Saifullah had infiltrated into J&K earlier this year and had during the past two months shifted his base from north to south Kashmir. He said that all the operations against militants carried out by the security forces, so far, this year were "clean and conducted in a professional manner." He asserted, "Barring one operation at Batmaloo, Srinagar, in which one woman got killed in a crossfire, all operations were cleanly conducted by the security forces". He said that eight encounters took place in the Srinagar alone in which 18 militants including a top Hizbul Mujahideen commander Junaid Ashraf Khan were killed. "Whenever any terrorist outfit tries to establish its base in Srinagar, we successfully corner the militants with the help of our intelligence and other sources," the DGP said. Asked how many militants were active in Srinagar at present, the police chief said, "Only one who is involved in a couple of attacks. We will bring him to justice very soon."

People's Democratic Party (PDP) on Monday said that it will not accept the bargain of (restoration of) statehood for Jammu and Kashmir against the special status it enjoyed under Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution prior to August 5, 2019. "The mere restoration of statehood to J&K is not going to undo the plunder of the rights of its people. The PDP would always strive to restore the position of August 4, 2019 as the first step towards working out the resolution of the J&K issue in a dignified manner," said the party's general secretary and former minister Ghulam Nabi Lone 'Hanjura'. Lone who was speaking at a meeting of party workers at its headquarters here asserted, "The people of J&K cannot be tricked into the bargain of statehood against our special status, rights and identity". He alleged, "They (Centre) want to force us into acceptance and create a sense of failure among us but let me make it clear, we will not relent in the pursuit and struggle for our agenda of resolution of Kashmir issue through dialogue and reconciliation of which the restoration of our special status has to be the cornerstone." Accusing the BJP government of continuously making attempts aimed at disempowering the Kashmiris while creating a facade of development, he said "a fakery like 'Back to Village' is done for mere public relations and, at the same time, autocratic farmans (decrees) like property tax proposals are imposed". The meeting unanimously demanded immediate release of PDP president Mehbooba Mufti from detention. Under J&K's stringent PSA.

● THE PDP accuses the BJP govt of continuously making attempts aimed at disempowering the Kashmiris while creating a facade of development.  
● THEY UNANIMOUSLY demanded immediate release of PDP president, Mehbooba Mufti, from detention under J&K's stringent PSA.

The suit filed through DSK Legal firm said, this comes in the wake of these channels using highly derogatory words and expressions for Bollywood such as 'dirt', 'filth', 'scum', 'druggies' and expressions such as it is 'Bollywood where the dirt needs to be cleaned', 'all the perfumes of Arabia cannot take away the stench and the stink of this filth and scum of the underbelly of Bollywood', 'This is the dirtiest industry in the country', and 'cocaine and LSD drenched Bollywood'. — PTI

PRODUCERS MOVE HC TO RESTRAIN REPUBLIC TV

New Delhi, Oct. 12: Leading Bollywood producers on Monday approached the Delhi High Court seeking to restrain Republic TV and Times Now from making or publishing allegedly irresponsible, derogatory and defamatory remarks against film industry and conducting media trials against its members on various issues.

The lawsuit by four Bollywood industry associations and 34 leading producers have also sought to restrain them from interfering with the right to privacy of persons associated with the industry.

It has sought direction to Republic TV, its editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami and reporter Pradeep Bhandari, Times Now, its editor-in-chief Rahul Shivshankar and group editor Navika Kumar, and unknown defendants as well as social media platforms to refrain from making or publishing allegedly irresponsible, derogatory and defamatory remarks against Bollywood.

The suit filed through DSK Legal firm said, this comes in the wake of these channels using highly derogatory words and expressions for Bollywood such as 'dirt', 'filth', 'scum', 'druggies' and expressions such as it is 'Bollywood where the dirt needs to be cleaned', 'all the perfumes of Arabia cannot take away the stench and the stink of this filth and scum of the underbelly of Bollywood', 'This is the dirtiest industry in the country', and 'cocaine and LSD drenched Bollywood'. — PTI

SC ASKS ARNAB GOSWAMI TO FILE AFFIDAVIT

PARMOD KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Republic TV's Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami to file an affidavit stating that he had served the notice to the Maharashtra legislature and the secretary to the legislature but the same was refused.

Heading a bench also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde asked Goswami to file an affidavit on the service of the notice issued by the court on September 30. The top court had on September 30 issued notice to Maharashtra assembly secretary on a plea by Goswami challenging a show cause notice issued to him for the alleged breach of privilege for his remarks against Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray during a TV debate relating to the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput. The court sought an affidavit as Harish Salve appearing for Goswami told the court that the service of the notice was done but it was refused.

Govt mulls upgrading ATC system at 4 key airports on lease

ANIMESH SINGH  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

Saddled with obsolete air traffic control systems (ATC) at key airports of Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru, the Centre is learnt to be looking at the option of procuring advanced surface movement control systems, on lease. The cost of the upgrading the system in all these airports is estimated at around ₹700 crore, and procuring them on the lease will substantially cut the project cost, top sources aware of the development, informed this newspaper.

With the economy hit hard by the Coronavirus pandemic, and the cash-strapped Centre struggling to implement its ambitious programme of monetising running assets like railway stations, telecom towers, airports and real estate, owing to depleting funds, the proposal of upgrading the ATC systems on lease basis seems to have been floated, looking at the prevailing fiscal situation. The new system will also be installed at the upcoming Greenfield airport at Navi Mumbai. All these four airports are managed by private operators. The Prime Minister's Office's (PMO), it is reliably learnt, has been apprised of the practicality of the proposal and resultantly the Civil Aviation Ministry has been asked by it to seriously look at the possibility of acquiring new ATC systems at the aforementioned airports on lease. The need for updating the critical ATC systems at Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru airports, which handle a bulk of the nation's total air traffic, has arisen mainly because the existing systems installed at these airports have become obsolete and face frequent breakdowns. While the proposal has been mooted by the Civil Aviation Ministry, the PMO is learnt to have pressed the case for obtaining the new systems on lease. In fact, it has suggested that all capital intensive equipments should be procured on lease. However, sources informed that the proposal does not cover the 125 airports which are administered by Airports Authority of India (AAI). The PMO has backed the suggestion on the basis that by acquiring the ATC systems on the lease will not only prevent the equipments from getting obsolete but also help in reducing the cost of the overall project in terms of cutting down maintenance expenses. Sources in fact pointed out that there is an urgent need to replace the existing automation systems at

Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru due to frequent breakdown of existing hardware, obsolescence of current hardware, difficulty in procuring spares, technological improvements and limitations of the hardware. The need for software upgrade is being felt as it would be cheaper than maintaining the existing system at the aforementioned installations, which face regular breakdowns and are struggling to keep pace with the growing air traffic, sources pointed out.

These are part of Modi government's effort to speed up infrastructure development in border areas for rapid movement of forces and faster supply of ammunition to forward areas. A majority of these bridges are expected to significantly improve movement of troops in areas along the border with China in Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh sectors, officials said. Both India and China held a series of diplomatic and military talks to resolve the border stand-off. However, no breakthrough has been achieved to defuse the situation.

Balasore in Odisha at around 10.30 am. Sources said the missile developed engine issues, in its second stage, following which the trial process was aborted. The DRDO is analysing all the details. The DRDO has already carried out several successful trials of the "Nirbhay" missile since October 2014. Last, test of the missile was conducted by DRDO on April 15, 2019. Nirbhay can fly at a low level to escape detection by radars and air defence systems and is highly manoeuvrable. It is capable of carrying nuclear warheads and can be deployed from multiple platforms. It has a speed less than that of sound (Mach 0.8). India developed a supersonic cruise missile Brahmos in association with Russia whose range of under 500 kilometres. In the last few weeks, India has test-fired a number of missiles, including a new version of the surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missile BrahMos and anti-radiation missile Rudram-1.

LAC | STANDOFF

Defence minister virtually inaugurates 44 major permanent bridges in the border areas

Pak, China creating border dispute under mission: Rajnath

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

After Pakistan, China is also creating a dispute at the border with India as if it was part of a "mission", defence minister Rajnath Singh said on Monday, as Indian and Chinese troops remain locked in a stand-off in eastern Ladakh for over five months. The defence minister, speaking at an online event after inaugurating 44 bridges, said India is not only facing the situations along the frontiers resolutely, but it is also bringing in major development including in border areas.

"You are well aware of the conditions created along our northern and eastern borders. First it was Pakistan, and now also by China, as if a border dispute is being created under a mission. We have a border of about 7,000 km with these countries where the tension continues," Singh said. The defence minister on Monday virtually inaugurated 44 major permanent bridges in the border areas including 10 strategic bridges in Jammu and Kashmir and eight in Ladakh. These bridges constructed by Border Roads Organisation (BRO) are spread in seven states and



Rajnath Singh

Union Territories including Himachal Pradesh (2), Punjab (4), Uttarakhand (8), Arunachal Pradesh (8) and Sikkim (4). These bridges are of strategic importance and provide connectivity to remote areas. The BRO is also working to complete 45 more bridges in Ladakh in next two years.

These are part of Modi government's effort to speed up infrastructure development in border areas for rapid movement of forces and faster supply of ammunition to forward areas. A majority of these bridges are expected to significantly improve movement of troops in areas along the border with China in Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh sectors, officials said. Both India and China held a series of diplomatic and military talks to resolve the border stand-off. However, no breakthrough has been achieved to defuse the situation.

Pawan Bali  
NEW DELHI, OCT. 12  
The flight test of Nirbhay subsonic cruise missile having a strike range of around 1,000 km failed on Monday as it developed a technical snag minutes after its launch at a facility in Odisha. This will further delay induction of Nirbhay — India's own version of America's famous Tomahawk missile — in the armed forces. The missile was test-fired by the DRDO from an integrated test range in

Balasore in Odisha at around 10.30 am. Sources said the missile developed engine issues, in its second stage, following which the trial process was aborted. The DRDO is analysing all the details. The DRDO has already carried out several successful trials of the "Nirbhay" missile since October 2014. Last, test of the missile was conducted by DRDO on April 15, 2019. Nirbhay can fly at a low level to escape detection by radars and air defence systems and is highly manoeuvrable. It is capable of carrying nuclear warheads and can be deployed from multiple platforms. It has a speed less than that of sound (Mach 0.8). India developed a supersonic cruise missile Brahmos in association with Russia whose range of under 500 kilometres. In the last few weeks, India has test-fired a number of missiles, including a new version of the surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missile BrahMos and anti-radiation missile Rudram-1.





THE ASIAN AGE

13 OCTOBER 2020

Judiciary must keep itself above suspicion

The move by Andhra Pradesh chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to write a letter to Chief Justice of India Sharad Arvind Bobde, with a “sense of pain and anguish” at the “politicisation of institutions”, monitored by N. Chandrababu Naidu, “through honourable sitting judges of Supreme Court”, is unprecedented in India’s history. True, there have been confrontations between politics and the judiciary, between Parliament and other legislative bodies over the division of powers. There were times that the judiciary was accused of “judicial overreach” and “legislating in disguise” in the course of interpreting legislation and executive orders. The relationship between judiciary and political pillars of the legislature and executive is complex, but there is little doubt, even factoring in the impeachment powers of Parliament, that the judiciary is independent and supreme in interpretation of the Constitution and legal matters.

The court must not weaken its resolve to rid India of political corruption but also stand above any shred of doubt that no one in the judiciary is possibly guilty of judicial intervention at the behest of any political leader

Caesar’s wife, it stands even above suspicion or a shade of doubt, and must continue to do so.

The political rivalry between YSRC chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and his arch-rival Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu is irrelevant here; it is best decided every five years in the people’s court. But when a chief minister, or even an ordinary citizen, raises issues, casts aspersions or makes allegations against a sitting Supreme Court judge, the onus shifts to the nation’s highest court and the CJI to ensure that every citizen of this country is assured that there is no need to worry about the serious allegations by ensuring transparency, fearless introspection and ensuring fairness.

One cannot completely dismiss the views of Mr Reddy’s rivals that this could be an arm-twisting tactic at a time when serious cases of financial wrongdoing are pending in the courts, including a matter on fast-tracking such hearings, in which, if found guilty and sentenced, the young CM could face disqualification from holding office and contesting elections for a considerable time.

The court will have to undertake this testing ordeal of not getting arm-twisted into weakening its resolve to rid India of political corruption but also simultaneously stand above any shred of doubt that no one in the judiciary, much less so, someone in the highest court, is possibly guilty of allegations of extra-constitutional judicial intervention at the behest of any political leader. Given its track record and the Indian people’s overriding trust and unshakable faith in the courts, one expects this is exactly what the CJI would ensure happens. Hail the judiciary!

Indefatigable Nadal

The Spaniard Rafael Nadal’s 13th triumph in the French Open is an incredible achievement. The unforgiving clay courts of Roland Garros present a challenge that can also drain the fit and tuned-to-the-minute athletes. Roger Federer acknowledged this as “one of the greatest achievements in sport” after his great rival equalled his record of 20 Grand Slam titles on Sunday. A naturally gifted champion like Federer has only one French Open in his 20 Grand Slams. A persevering Nadal adapting his baseline game to Wimbledon grass and the hard courts of the Australian and US Open championships and conquering each of them consistently enough is a saga in itself.

Not fortunate to be gifted with the dulcet touch and graceful athleticism, Nada makes up for it by his willingness to chase down each point like a man possessed. There is a terrier-like determination to him on a tennis court that makes him a role model for fellow sportsmen who struggle to withstand the vicissitudes of form and, more importantly, fitness. Nadal has had his share of injuries, surgeries and endless queries in random drug tests, besides his self-doubts, in a remarkable journey of endurance in which the ability to stay motivated for years after raking in millions of dollars also counts.

In crushing Novak Djokovic, the third gladiator of modern tennis, Nadal not only emphasises that he is the king of the rectangle of clay. In this virtual monopoly of Grand Slams, broken only by Thiem’s victory at the US Open, the three greats are signalling they are in no hurry to make way for a generational change in men’s tennis. On the other hand, with Serena Williams not winning a Grand Slam since becoming a mother, the field is wide open on the distaff side. Young Iga Swiatek, the first ever Pole to win a Grand Slam, brings with her a powerful forehand and angled groundstrokes that makes her appear to be the one poised to emulate the likes of Nadal in exhibiting a metronomic thoroughness in tennis conquests.

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Subhani



Tackle Xi in Myanmar; don’t forget Rohingyas



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray  
Reflections

India’s foreign secretary and Chief of Army Staff may not have recently paid a joint visit to Naypyidaw, the capital of the country formerly known as Burma, if so much did not hang on the outcome of the November 8 elections. What probably influenced both Mr Harsh Vardhan Shringla and Gen. M.M. Naravane most was the spectre of “Paukphaw”, the China-Myanmar friendship that President Xi Jinping had underscored during his state visit in January.

Although India and Myanmar are distant neighbours at present, they comprised one administrative unit from 1885 to 1937. They might have been politically one now if Jawaharlal Nehru had accepted U Nu’s 1947 proposal for a “United Nations of South Asia”. The fears, hatreds and resentments that make these elections so different from the 2015 polls when Myanmar soared on the cusp of hope may signify major changes in the road ahead.

The electoral outcome is bound to leave a heavy imprint not only on Myanmar’s place on the chequerboard of Asia’s power politics but on the social and demographic character of a country that seems incapable of accepting that it must rise above tribal and religious loyalties to claim the status of a nation. It’s not just a question of more than 37 million voters choosing their parliamentary and sub-national assembly representatives or of the all-powerful military appointing its tame legislators. Empowering the people is what matters. Under Myanmar’s 2008 constitution, the Tatmadaw — Myanmar’s all-powerful military — chooses the vice-president and the home, defence and border affairs ministers, and controls 25 per cent of all parliamen-

tary seats.

The future of 1.3 million Rohingyas whom the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, calls “the world’s fastest-developing refugee emergency ... a humanitarian nightmare”, will have to be decided. So will the future of Aung San Suu Kyi, still elegantly winsome at 75, whose National League for Democracy infused the future with optimism in 2015. Today, she seems rather like a faded rose, having lost much of her shine as the global pin-up girl of Asian democracy and must justify her glory as Nobel Peace Prize laureate. For all that she is styled State Counsellor, Ms Suu Kyi seems to dance to the Tatmadaw’s tune on the Rohingyas.

Like the rest of the world, the Naypyidaw regime must also come to grips with a fast-spiralling Covid-19 crisis that may keep voters away from the polls. With nearly 24,000 infections, a meteoric rise from the 887 that were recorded on September 1, Myanmar has suddenly surged from only marginally infected to being Southeast Asia’s fourth-worst hit country.

The speculation is that pressed on so many fronts, Myanmar might feel that the future would be better protected if China’s rising influence were to be checked. That might explain reports of New Delhi’s offer of a \$6-billion petroleum refinery project and the talks

The electoral outcome is bound to leave a heavy imprint not only on Myanmar’s place on the chequerboard of Asia’s power politics but on the social and demographic character of the country.

India’s national interest can never be divorced from the humanitarian cause of the Rohingya, especially not by a government that claims to go beyond ‘Look East’ to ‘Act East’

to boost connectivity, power and energy projects, as well as joint efforts to tackle the pandemic. Worthy as these initiatives may be, one cannot but wonder why they are not components of a permanent programme binding two such physically close neighbours.

When India did take an interest in Myanmar after years of neglect, it was to deny the Naga or Mizo rebels sanctuary or prevent China and Pakistan from gaining strategic advantages. These legitimate objectives were small in themselves and appeared to reduce foreign affairs to immediate petty gains, with little inkling of the broad sweep of history. Myanmar’s expulsion of Indian labourers, clerks, doctors, teachers and lawyers prompted little reaction because the victims seemed to be culturally, socially and financially remote from the mandarins of South Block.

Rightly or wrongly, it was whispered at one time that a pragmatic approach was discouraged by India’s ethnic Myanmar first lady. That was nearly two decades ago. A subsequently more sympathetic attitude was attributed to Ms Suu Kyi’s personal contacts in New Delhi during the years her mother was Myanmar’s ambassador and she a student at the city’s Lady Shri Ram College. Inevitably, the suffering Rohingyas are now seen as Muslim jihadists rather than victims of racism.

Myanmar’s 2014 census listed Rohingyas as illegal Bengali immigrants. Most were stripped of citizenship in 1982. They are denied education,

employment and the right to move about freely. This legal subjugation is nothing compared to the terrible atrocities of repeated military crackdowns, particularly in 2017-2018, when entire villages were burned down, men were murdered and women subject to gangrape.

Predictably, perhaps, some Rohingya groups responded with militancy. But the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation demands the right to “self-determination within Myanmar”, while the Rohingya-led National Democratic Party for Human Rights supported the 1988 democracy movement. It returned four members to Parliament in 1990 when the Tatmadaw cheated the victorious NLD of its right to form the government.

The former Army strongman, Shwe Mann, is now projecting his Union Betterment Party as the middle ground between the NLD and the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party, while the tycoon and legislator Thet Thet Khine, who left the NLD to launch the People’s Pioneer Party, focuses mainly on the economy. Meanwhile, the NLD’s promise of imported cars has invited ridicule. Unhappily, none of the 16 major parties in the fray is campaigning to enfranchise the marginalised ethnic groups like the persecuted Rohingya.

They needn’t be India’s priority either. The political challenge of “Paukphaw” — including China-backed projects like the \$4 billion Myitsone Dam, the Belt and Road Initiative, the economic corridor stretching from China’s Yunnan province to Rakhine state, and the \$15 billion Yatai New City Project at Shwe Kokko on the Myanmar-Thai border — matters far more. However, India’s national interest can never be divorced from the humanitarian cause of the Rohingya, especially not by a government that claims to go beyond “Look East” to “Act East”.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

PARTY HOPPING

This refers to your report on Congress spokesperson and actor Khushbu Sundar being likely to cross over to BJP. This is nothing surprising, as in Indian politics, anything is possible at any time, especially on the eve of elections in the state. It is a known fact that she was inducted into DMK with pomp but was later ignored. She coolly joined Congress in 2014. However, now it seems that she is unhappy that her work has not been recognised, as here too she was denied a ticket in 2016 and 2019. How long will Khushbu remain with the BJP?

N. Mahadevan  
Chennai

TRP GAME

TELEVISION RATING Points (or is it Terrible Reporting for Publicity) is an indicator of judging the viewership of a channel and also a tool used across advertising agencies for advertisement selection. Higher the TRP, higher the probability of generating revenues (that too at exorbitant rates). The rat race for “breaking” news has probably increased manifold without even checking and doubly verifying them. The number of 24x7 channels has worsened the situation further as everyone wants to outsmart the other. “Buying” TRP is probably the worst a television channel can do to show they are the most viewed ones. The media is the fourth pillar of democracy but if false and sensational news is the norm, then one doesn’t know how low it will fall just for the sake of generating revenues.

Syed Abdul Monim  
Navi Mumbai

COVID SAFETY

IT’S EASIER to stop something happening in the first place than to deal with the damage later. Till now there is no sign of a wonder drug to cure Covid-19 so it’s better to take preventions. It takes time to get cured of a disease. We can prevent ourselves from deadly virus by taking preventive measures like washing hands, staying at home if you have any signs and symptoms of infection and wearing masks while going out.

Yash Bairagi  
Ujjain

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

Aakar Patel



If you do not admit there’s a crisis, you can’t solve it

If I do not acknowledge that I have a problem, then I cannot solve it. If the problem is a minor one, this is less consequential and does not affect me beyond a point. It is only an irritant that I can continue to ignore.

But if the problem is a major one, and if the problem affects not just me but many people around me, then ignoring it must have a sound reason. Ignoring it must in some way be more important than addressing it.

The sale of cars in India has not grown for the past five years. The number of cars bought by Indians in 2015-16 was 27 lakh units. The number of cars bought in 2019-20 was 27 lakh units. India’s middle class is either not growing or not spending.

The government says that stagnating car sales is not a problem because young people prefer to use Uber and Ola cabs. The United States sold two crore cars last year. Uber and Ola (and its various

equivalents) do not seem to affect any other nation.

The sale of two-wheelers in India has not grown for the past four years. Altogether 1.7 crore units were sold in 2016-17, and 1.7 crore units were sold in 2019-20. This is the vehicle of the lower middle class, the size and consumption of which has not grown for four years. What theory the government has for this we do not know as it has not been acknowledged that there is no growth.

Commercial vehicles have not shown any growth for the past four years. Sales were seven lakh units in 2016-17 and seven lakh units in 2019-20. This includes vehicles like trucks, heavy lorries, tankers and small tempos that carry products either to the manufacturers or to the market. The real meaning of four years of zero growth in this market can simply be imagined.

Real estate has shown no growth over the last four years. Indians

bought ₹2 lakh crores worth of real estate in 2016. They bought ₹2 lakh crores worth of real estate in 2019. India’s exports have not grown for six years. The country exports the same quantity that it did when Dr Manmohan Singh was Prime Minister. India was exporting about \$300 billion a year when the UPA-2 left office. It exported about \$300 billion in 2019-20. Why is this the case? We do not know because the government does not speak about it. When imports into India fell more than exports out of India, the government celebrated the moment as a singular achievement.

Employment has not only not grown in the past six years, it has actually gone down. A report produced by the government showed it to be at over six per cent in 2018, more than at any other time in history. Why are Indians losing employment? We do not know. The government has dismissed the issue and said that pakora sellers

and Uber drivers were replacing traditional employees.

It is true that Covid-19 has affected India’s economy deeply and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. We are unlikely to get back to the GDP figure that we achieved in January this year for another three years. This means that by the time Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s second term ends in May 2024, we will still only be economically where we were in January this year. The problem is that where we were in January this year was not a good space. All the numbers that have been referred to above are before the Covid-19 pandemic’s outbreak.

The stagnation in our economy had happened before the lockdown and has nothing to do with our current crisis. If and when we are able to overcome the Covid-19 related problem with our economy, we will go back only to the earlier problem.

India’s GDP growth declined every quarter for 10 quarters before

Covid. Why? We do not know. It could be one reason, and it could be many reasons. But if we do not acknowledge the issue at all, we will never solve it. You can only think about, discuss and then implement corrective measures if you acknowledge that corrective measures are needed. If you carry on like nothing has happened, then deep problems cannot be fixed by themselves and they won’t go away. The government went from saying that India was the one bright spot in the world’s economy and the fastest growing economy in the world, to not saying anything about the economy at all.

The problem is a major one, and it affects not just the Prime Minister but hundreds of millions of people across the country. Ignoring it must have a sound reason. Ignoring it must in some way be more important than addressing it.

Aakar Patel is a senior journalist and columnist



## IN BRIEF

## Lanka suspends expatriates rescue

**Colombo:** Sri Lankan officials say they have suspended bringing back expatriates stranded overseas due to the Coronavirus because the country's quarantine facilities are full. Army Commander Shavendra Silva, who heads the task force to control the pandemic, says Sri Lanka's quarantine facilities have filled up amid a steep rise in Covid-19 patients in the past week. Sri Lanka had earlier announced that it successfully contained the spread of the virus, and no local clusters were reported for two months.

## Death penalty for rape in B'desh

**Dhaka:** Bangladesh's Cabinet on Monday approved an increase in the maximum punishment in rape cases to death from life imprisonment after a series of recent sexual assaults triggered protests on streets and in social media.

Cabinet spokesman Khandaker Anwarul Islam said President Abdul Hamid is likely to issue an ordinance amending the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act because Parliament is not in session. Details of the amendment were not immediately available, but Islam said the Cabinet agreed to a proposal that trials in rape cases be completed in a speedy manner. Under the current law, the maximum punishment in rape cases is life imprisonment, except for cases in which the victim dies, when capital punishment is allowed.

## Protesters raze statues in Portland

**Portland:** Protesters overturned statues of former Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln in Portland, Oregon, in a declaration of "rage" toward Columbus Day. Protest organisers on Sunday night dubbed the event "Indigenous Peoples Day of Rage," in response to Monday's federal holiday named after 15th-century Italian explorer Christopher Columbus, a polarising figure who Native American advocates have said spurred centuries of genocide against indigenous populations in the Americas. The group threw chains around Roosevelt's statue, officially titled "Theodore Roosevelt, Rough Rider."

## Poland defuses WW bomb, shifts 750

**Warsaw:** Hundreds of people in northwest Poland have been evacuated for a few days to allow Navy sappers to neutralise a British World War II giant Tallboy bomb resting under a waterway leading to the port of Szczecin. The 5.4 tonne bomb was found in Sept. 2019 during work to deepen the waterway. It's located on the southern edge of a popular Baltic Sea resort of Swinoujscie, that, like Szczecin, was a busy Nazi Germany military port during the war. In a defusing project that began on Monday and is expected to last for five days, experts will be seeking to neutralise the Tallboy underwater by causing its explosives to burn out in a controlled way.

## CLOTH MASKS NEED DAILY WASH TO CUT VIRUS RISK

**Melbourne, Oct. 12:** Cloth masks may reduce the transmission of viruses such as SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19, only if they are washed daily at high temperatures, according to a study.

"Both cloth masks and surgical masks should be considered 'contaminated' after use," said Professor Raina MacIntyre, from the University of New South Wales in Australia. "Unlike surgical masks, which are disposed of after use, cloth masks are re-used. While it can be tempting to use the same mask for multiple days in a row, or to give it a quick hand-wash or wipe-over, our research suggests that this increases the risk of contamination," MacIntyre said. The researchers analysed data from a randomised controlled trial (RCT) they published in 2015. The latest study, published in the journal BMJ Open, is still the only RCT ever conducted on the efficacy of cloth masks in preventing viral infections, they said. The researchers did a deep dive into the 2011 data on whether the health workers in their study washed their masks daily, and if so, how they washed their masks. The team found that if cloth masks were washed in the hospital laundry, they were as effective as a surgical mask.

## US Supreme Court confirmation hearing



White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows (left) looks on as Judge Amy Coney Barrett arrives to testify at the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on her nomination to serve as an associate justice on the US Supreme Court on Capitol Hill in Washington on Monday. — AFP

## Don's task: Resetting campaign that GOP fears is slipping away

**Washington, Oct. 12:** President Donald Trump is running out of time to recover from a series of self-inflicted setbacks that have rattled his base of support and triggered alarm among Republicans who fear the White House is on the verge of being lost to Democrat Joe Biden.

The one-two punch of Trump's Coronavirus diagnosis and his widely panned debate performance also has Republicans worried they could lose control of the Senate. With just over three weeks until Election Day, Senate races in some reliably red states, including South Carolina and Kansas, are competitive, aided by a surge in Democratic fundraising that has put both the Republican Party and Trump's own campaign at an unexpected financial disadvantage.

The president will aim for a reset this week, hoping an aggressive travel schedule and Judge Amy Coney Barrett's Supreme Court confirmation hearings will energise his most loyal supporters and shift attention away from a virus that has killed more than 214,000 Americans on his watch. Optimists in the president's inner circle point to his unique ability to command attention and to his 2016 campaign, which also seemed destined for defeat before a late shift. But that comeback was aided by outside forces

## Trump begins the election trail again

**Washington, Oct. 12:** US President Donald Trump will launch a campaign marathon on Monday, holding rallies in three key swing states over the next few days as his White House race against surging rival Joe Biden enters its critical final weeks.

The Republican leader will hold a rally in Florida, followed by Pennsylvania and Iowa — states all crucial to clinching a victory on November 3. Trump will likely try to galvanise his electoral base by touting his nominee for Supreme Court justice, Amy Coney Barrett.

The Republican-controlled Senate will begin hearings for the 48-year-old judge, whose confirmation — of which there is little doubt — will shift the nation's highest court firmly to the right for generations.

Trump's doctors gave

him the all-clear Saturday to return to the campaign trail after he was ruled no longer a Coronavirus transmission risk, and on Sunday he said while calling in to a campaign event that he tested "totally negative." But he has yet to be declared virus-free, and his immunity claim is unproven.

"It looks like I'm immune for, I don't know, maybe a long time and maybe a short time, it could be a lifetime, nobody really knows, but I'm immune," Trump said. The word 'immunity' means something, having really a protective glow.

"So now you have a president who doesn't have to hide in a basement like his opponent," Trump added — in a jab at Democratic challenger Biden, who has taken a far more cautious approach to campaigning during the pandemic. —AFP

against an unpopular opponent.

This year's campaign, other Republicans worry, may instead resemble 1980 or 2008: a close race until, at the end, it decidedly wasn't. "It's not good for my side," said veteran

GOP pollster Whit Ayres. "Pretty obviously, in many ways down-ballot Republicans are in the boat with Donald Trump. That's good for Republicans in deep-red states, but more problematic for those in swing states." — AP

## EU weighs in on action against Russia for poisoning Navalny

**Brussels, Oct. 12:** European Union foreign ministers were weighing on Monday whether to impose sanctions on Russian officials and organisations blamed for the poisoning of opposition leader Alexei Navalny with a Soviet-era nerve agent.

The ministers, meeting in Luxembourg, are considering a proposal from France and Germany to freeze the assets of those suspected of involvement and ban them from travelling in Europe under sanctions to combat the use and spread of chemical weapons.

Navalny, an anti-corruption investigator and major political opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin, fell ill on August 20 during a domestic flight in Russia. He was flown to Germany for treatment two days later and is still recovering there.

Last week, tests conducted at labs designated by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons confirmed that Navalny was the victim of a Novichok nerve agent. German Foreign Minister

Heiko Maas said on Monday that given the OPCW's findings, it is now "objectively clear that this is a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention, one that cannot remain without consequences."

In a statement on Friday, France and Germany said that despite repeated calls Russia has provided "no credible explanation" for what happened and that "there is no other plausible explanation for Navalny's poisoning than a Russian involvement and responsibility." — AP

## LIVING | HELL

With no home remaining, Kurds have little to return to, say human rights groups

## Displaced Syrian Kurds continue to long for home

**Hasakeh, Syria, Oct. 12:** The five-month-old baby girl of Wadha Sharmoukh has only lived in a tent because Turkish troops and their Syrian proxies captured her family's hometown in northern Syria from Kurdish forces a year ago.

She was born in a dusty camp crowded with Kurdish civilians who fled their towns and villages when Ankara's October 2019 offensive seized a 120-kilometre (70-mile) long strip of land on the Syrian side of its southern border. "My

daughter Berivan was born in the camps. She has never seen a home. She has just been squeezed into a tent," the 29-year-old mother said in the settlement in the northeastern province of Hasakeh.

"What kind of life is that, of a child born and raised in a tent?" asked the woman from the town of Ras al-Ain.

Sharmoukh and her family are among tens of thousands who have been forced out of their homes and into tented settlements in areas still controlled by the Kurds.

● **SHARMOUKH** and her family are among tens of thousands who have been forced out of their homes and into tented settlements in areas still controlled by the Kurds.

Their homes and belongings have been seized or looted in the year since Turkey's operation ended, human rights groups say, leaving them with little to return to — if they are able to return at all. "The future is bleak and we feel hopeless," Sharmoukh said.

## Chinese to test 9m for Covid in 5 days

## Qingdao city begins nucleic acid test campaign

**Beijing, Oct. 12:** China's Qingdao city has launched a citywide nucleic acid test campaign that will cover its nine million residents over the next five days, amid apprehensions of a second wave after the coastal city reported 12 Covid-19 cases. The cases were connected to Qingdao Chest Hospital which is a designated medical institution for the Covid-19 patients from overseas.

In May, China tested 11 million people in Wuhan — the epicentre of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Qingdao health authority has said that a citywide testing program has been launched. The five districts — home to about six million people — will be fully covered in the next three days. The whole city will be tested within five days, covering roughly nine million people, state-run *Global Times* reported.

So far, all medical staff, new hospitalised patients and nurses in hospitals at Qingdao have been given nucleic acid tests, with all 114,862 results coming back negative. As of Saturday, the total number of confirmed Covid-19 cases on the Chinese mainland had reached 85,557, including the 218

● **ONE OF** the ways they sped up the process was to use batch- or pool-testing.

● **IN THIS** process, a batch of between five and 10 samples was tested. Only if a sample tested positive would the team go back to carry out individual tests to see who was

patients still being treated.

Altogether 80,705 patients have recovered, according to China's National Health Commission's report released on Monday. It said 4,634 people have died to Coronavirus on the mainland.

They also mobilised teams to test disabled people, the elderly and those vulnerable in their own homes.

One of the ways they sped up the process was to use batch- or pool-testing. In this process, a batch of between five and 10 samples was tested. Only if a sample tested positive would the team go back to carry out individual tests to see who was positive within the batch.

Videos circulating online showed residents

lining up late on Sunday to get tested, said the *Global Times*, adding that some of these test points were open from 07:00 to 23:00.

The new cases come a week after China's Golden Week holiday — which saw millions travel across the country.

A *Global Times* report quoting the Qingdao Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism said the coastal city had received 4.47 million passenger trips over this period.

The nearby city of Jinan, in the same province as Qingdao, called for anyone who had visited the city since 23 September to get tested, according to a report by *The Paper*.

Earlier last month, Qingdao announced that two port workers who handled imported seafood had tested positive. They were not known to have infected anyone else.

Daily Coronavirus infections have fallen drastically in China, and for the most part the country appears to have recovered from the worst.

China currently has 91,305 virus cases and the death toll stands at 4,746, according to WHO data.

— Agencies



Asif Ali Zardari

## EX-PAK PRESIDENT ASIF ALI ZARDARI HOSPITALISED

**Islamabad, Oct. 12:** Pakistan's former president and PPP co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari was admitted to a private hospital in Karachi after he felt "unwell", his party has said.

"Doctors are conducting his medical check-up and necessary medical tests," the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) tweeted on Sunday without providing much details.

Zardari was "shifted to hospital after feeling unwell late on Sunday evening," it said. The former president's long-time associate Dr Asim Hussain told a private news channel that Zardari was brought to the hospital due to low sugar level. It was reported that the PPP leader was admitted in the emergency ward of the private hospital in Karachi. It, however, did not mention the hospital's name.

Zardari, who is facing multiple corruption cases, was released from jail in December last year after the Islamabad High Court approved his bail on medical grounds. He had been suffering from ischemic heart disease, which means his heart may have an inadequate supply of blood and oxygen. — PTI

## Imran's top aide resigns, facing graft charges

**Islamabad, Oct. 12:** Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's Special Assistant on Information and Broadcasting Lt. Gen. (retd.) Asim Saleem Bajwa resigned on Monday, amid allegations that he used his offices to help family set up several off-shore businesses.

"I requested the honourable prime minister to relinquish me from the additional portfolio of SAPM on Info & broadcasting. He very kindly approved my request," Bajwa, the former Pakistan Army spokesman who also served as Commander of the Southern Command, tweeted.

However, he would continue working as chairman of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Authority. The development comes more than a month after Bajwa submitted his resignation to Prime Minister Khan following a report on a website that alleged that he had used his offices in setting up off-shore businesses of his wife, sons and brothers. However, Khan rejected his resignation at the time and asked him to continue working as his special assistant.

The report alleged that Bajwa's younger brothers opened their first Papa John's pizza restaurant in 2002, the year he started working as a Lieutenant Colonel on the General Pervez Musharraf's staff. It claimed that his brother Nadeem Bajwa, 53, who started as a delivery driver for the pizza restaurant franchise, another three brothers, his wife Farrukh Zeba and

## FATF'S REGIONAL GROUP KEEPS PAKISTAN ON FOLLOW-UP LIST

**Islamabad, Oct. 12:** Noting that Pakistan's measures against money laundering and terror financing "is not yet sufficient to justify a re-rating", a regional affiliate of the Financial Action Task Force on Monday retained the country on its 'Enhanced follow-up' list, according to a media report.

The development came only a few weeks ahead of the meeting of the FATF — the Paris-based global money laundering and terror financing watchdog — to decide on Pakistan's grey list status.

The first Follow-Up Report on Mutual Evaluation of Pakistan released by the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) underlined that the country's progress on the 40 FATF recommendations on the effectiveness of anti-money laundering and combating financing terror (AML/CFT) system largely remained unchanged — non-compliant on four counts, partially compliant on 25 counts and largely compliant on nine recommendations. — PTI

three sons now own a business empire which set up 99 companies in four countries, including a pizza franchise with 133 restaurants worth an estimated \$39.9 million. — PTI



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	40,593.80	0.21
Nifty 50	11,930.95	0.14
S&P 500*	3,538.30	1.76
Dollar (₹)	73.27	0.16
Pound Sterling (₹)	95.47	0.91
Euro (₹)	86.53	0.29
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,073.240	0.46
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	41.53	-1.32
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.899	-0.041
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.779	0.00

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Govt extends tenure of 3 EDs of Canara, IOB

The government has extended the tenure of three executive directors of Canara Bank and Indian Overseas Bank by two years. Canara Bank said the tenure of EDs Debashish Mukherjee and Matam Venkata Rao has been extended for two years, or until further orders, whichever is earlier. IOB said the government has extended the term of Ajay Kumar Srivastava as executive director for a period of two years.

Razorpay joins the league of unicorns in India



Payments solution provider Razorpay Razorpay said it has gained the 'unicorn' status after having raised \$100 million funding from GIC, Sequoia Capital and existing investors. Witnessing a 300 per cent growth in its business during the past six months, Razorpay said it has raised a Series-D fundraising of \$100 million, giving the company more than \$1 billion in valuation. This round was co-led by GIC and Sequoia.

Credai seeks fiscal sops for realty sector

Realtors' apex body Credai said the industry is going through much pain due to the pandemic and urged the government to take fiscal measures for improving the liquidity position of cash-starved developers. The industry body, which represents more than 20,000 builders from across India, has sought financial support in the form of interest waiver and extension of the moratorium period till March 2021 for the sector.

Hiring activities up 24% in Sept: Naukri JobSpeak

With life returning to normalcy gradually, hiring activities grew 24 per cent in September as compared to the previous month, mostly driven by pharmaceuticals and education sectors. At 1,755 job postings, there was an improvement of 24 per cent in hiring activities last month compared to August with 1,413 listings, according to the Naukri JobSpeak Index for September 2020.

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Meeting ends without a decision Consensus eludes GST Council again

New Delhi, Oct. 12: The stalemate over compensating states for the shortfall in GST collections continued on Monday with a meeting of the GST Council ending without reaching any consensus. The panel, which is the highest decision-making body on indirect taxes, for the second time in a week failed to reach a consensus on the Centre's proposal of states borrowing against future GST collections to make up for the shortfall.

This was the third meeting in a row that discussed compensation shortfall without a decision.

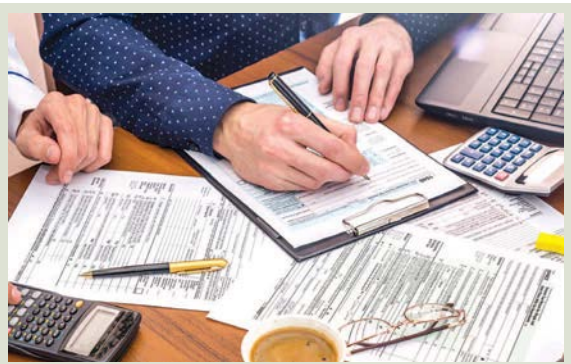
Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who heads the Council, said the Centre cannot borrow and pay states for the shortfall as it would lead to rise in bond yields, resulting in rise in borrowing costs for the government and the private sector.

However, this would not be the case if states borrowed against future GST receipts, she said, adding 21 states had agreed to borrow as suggested by the Centre.

However, other states insisted on a decision to be taken by consensus, she said.

"We were not able to arrive at a consensus," Sitharaman said.

In its previous meeting last week, the council had decided to extend the surcharge on taxes on luxury goods such as cars and tobacco products beyond June 2022 but failed to reach a consensus on



STALEMATE CONTINUES

- FM said the Centre cannot borrow and pay states for the shortfall as it would lead to rise in bond yields
- However, this would not be the case if states borrowed against future GST receipts, she said
- Dissenting states insisted on consensus decision

ways to compensate states for loss of tax revenue.

The projected total compensation shortfall in the current fiscal stands at Rs 2.35 lakh crore.

The Centre had in August given two options to the states—to borrow either Rs 97,000 crore from a special window facilitated by the RBI or Rs 2.35 lakh crore from the market. It had also proposed extending the compensation cess levied on luxury, demerit and sin goods beyond 2022 to repay the borrowing.

Following a demand by some states, the amount of Rs 97,000 crore was increased to Rs 1.10 lakh crore.

As many as 21 states -- which are BJP-ruled or

have supported it on various issues— have opted to borrow Rs 1.10 lakh crore to meet the compensation shortfall.

The Centre has released Rs 20,000 crore to the states towards compensation shortfall so far in the current fiscal.

Under the GST structure, taxes are levied under 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent slabs.

On top of the highest tax slab, a cess is levied on luxury, sin and demerit goods, and the proceeds from the same are used to compensate states for any revenue loss. But due to a slowdown in the economy, collections have fallen short of the money needed for compensating states.

Travel industry unhappy with redirection of LTC money

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, OCT. 12

Naturally, the travel industry is unhappy with the Centre's decision to redirect the leave travel concession (LTC) allowance of government employees to purchase of consumer goods.

After the prolonged lockdown, the travel and tourism industry was expecting the festive season to boost travel demand, as people usually use the opportunity to travel to their home state.

After almost eight months of nil to very limited tourism activity, festive season was one of the few demand drivers that the travel and hospitality industry was looking forward to and the industry was hoping for more tax-based stimulus in the hands of all citizens to travel when spent against GST-rated travel agents, hotels tour operators, tourist transporters and restaurants, said the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (Faith).

"Redirecting the LTC money of government employees to buy consumer goods would dry up those funds for the travel sector. Additionally, it would also send a vote of no-confidence to the tourism travel and hospitality industry, which was looking to get back on its feet after 'Unlock'," said Faith.

Additionally, since tax-free LTC is a four-year block scheme, it will also cut away funds for future travel demand sources for the next year when the LTC block ends in 2021. The tourism ministry was



But consumer durables are in a sweet spot

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, OCT. 12

The government's leave travel concession (LTC) scheme meant to induce demand has put consumer durables and electronics in a sweet spot.

The government has put forward a few riders for those availing the LTC scheme. The employee, who wants tax-free LTC, will have to buy goods or services worth three times the fare and one-time the leave encashment.

Further, the goods and services bought under the scheme should be carrying a GST of 12 per cent and above. This will weed out all the basic amenities that have a GST of less than 12 per cent and the focus will be on dis-

cretionary items like computers, consumer durables, smartphones, home appliances, furniture and home furnishings.

"Both in terms of price point and GST, consumer durables are in a sweet spot. People who have been deferring purchase of consumer durables, electronics, mobile phones and household electronics will have a reason to buy," said Naval Seth of Emkay Global Financial Services. Even those who had not made any festive season purchase plans will find a reason to upgrade consumer appliances with the scheme.

According to Kamal Nandi, president, Consumer Electronics and Appliances

Manufacturers Association (Ceama) and business head and EVP, Godrej Appliances, the measure will augur well for the consumer durables segment in the upcoming festive season.

"Traditionally, the Indian customer makes many of his/her big-ticket purchases, such as appliances, during the festive season. Due to the current pandemic, consumers have appreciated the value appliances add to their lives as they are looking for comfort and convenience at home with the adoption of 'work from home' format and for the overall health, hygiene & safety of their family from the coronavirus," he said.

Consumer durables have been seeing a good month-on-month recovery in sales in the past couple of months. "The category has not yet made growth over the same month last year. But we expect a positive growth during the festive season," said Seth.

planning to make 2021 the year for domestic tourism.

The industry wants LTC funds to be restored and

income tax benefits be offered to citizens travelling within the country, paying up to Rs 1.5 lakh to

GST-registered travel agents, hotels tour operators, tourist transporters and restaurants.

IIP contracts 8% in Aug; inflation spurts

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, OCT. 12

Despite the gradual relaxation of lockdown restrictions, the industrial output contracted by 8 per cent in August, mostly due to minimal output from the manufacturing, mining and power generation sectors. While at the same time, consumer inflation in the September month increased to 7.34 per cent from 6.69 per cent in the previous month on account of rising food prices, according to government data released on Monday.

The Index of Industrial Production, or IIP, had contracted by 1.4 per cent in August 2019. The index had contracted 10.4 per cent in July 2020, which was better than 15.7 per cent contraction in June this year.

"It may not be appropriate to compare the IIP in the post-pandemic months with the IIP for months preceding the Covid-19 pandemic," the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation said.

"The manufacturing sector production registered a decline of 8.6 per cent, while the output of mining and power segments fell 9.8 per cent and 1.8 per cent, respectively," it said, adding that with the gradual relaxation of restrictions, there has been a relative improvement in the economic activities by varying degrees as well as in data reporting.

The consumer price also went up to an unsatisfactory level, marking the highest level recorded in eight months, and it is also above the Reserve Bank's target range of 2-6 per cent. "The consumer inflation in September increased to 7.34 per cent from 6.69 per cent in the previous month on account of rising food prices. Food inflation in September rose to 10.68 per cent compared to 9.05 per cent in August," the release said.

Despite the central bank's effort to contain inflation by keeping rates low, unabated high prices have hurt the economy.

Sahara says over ₹3,200 cr paid to co-operative society members

New Delhi, Oct. 12: The Sahara Group on Monday said it has paid Rs 3,226 crore to more than 10 lakh members of its four associated co-operative credit societies in the last 75 days, including some payments against requests from people who had complained about delayed payouts.

The group said there has been some delay in payments, primarily due to an embargo imposed for last eight years by the Supreme Court, while about Rs 22,000 crore of its funds, including interest amount, are deposited in the Sahara-Sebi account, which was created to refund bondholders of two group firms.

In a statement, Sahara said Sebi has been able to repay only Rs 106.1 crore to the investors in these eight years despite repeated attempts, which the group said only affirms its view that there are no claimants left as most bondholders were already repaid before it was asked by the regulator to deposit the money. —PTI

Rao to man regulation department at RBI

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, OCT. 12

The Reserve Bank of India on Monday rejigged the portfolios of deputy governors following the appointment of M. Rajeshwar Rao as the new deputy governor. Rao was appointed following the retirement of his predecessor N.S. Vishwanathan and has been given the charge of department of regulation, enforcement, inspection, legal department and risk monitoring. Vishwanathan's vacancy was filled after a delay of six months. Rajeshwar Rao is a seasoned central banker.

Last week, the appointments committee of the Cabinet cleared the name of Rao for the post of RBI deputy governor. With this, the RBI now has four deputy governors. The other three are B.P. Kanungo, M.K. Jain and M.D. Patra.

According to the central bank's website, Kanungo will handle ten portfolios. These include coordination, currency management, external investments and operations,

department of government and bank accounts, information technology, payments and settlements, foreign exchange, internal debt management and right to information and secretary's department.

Jain will be in charge of eight portfolios, including central security, corporate strategy and budget department, consumer education and protection department, supervision, financial inclusion and human resources.

Patra will handle the monetary policy department, department of economic and policy research, deposit insurance and credit guarantee, department of statistics, financial markets and international department and financial stability unit.

The RBI needs four deputy governors: two from within the ranks, a commercial banker and an economist to head the monetary policy department.

Prior to taking over as the ED, Rao was chief general manager, financial markets operations

Singapore Air's A380 restaurant tickets sell out in 30 minutes

KYUNGHEE PARK SINGAPORE, OCT. 12

Singapore Airlines Ltd said all seats on its Airbus A380 pop-up restaurants were reserved within 30 minutes of bookings opening on Monday.

With flights largely grounded by the coronavirus pandemic, Singapore Airlines is trying novel ways to raise money, including using two A380 superjumbos parked at Changi Airport as temporary restaurants on Oct. 24 and 25.

A meal in a suite costs \$8642 (\$474, or roughly Rs 35,000), while seats in

business class are going for \$8321 and then dropping to \$896.30 for premium economy and \$853.50 for economy. Customers can also pay with frequent-flyer miles.

About half the seats in each aircraft will be available for dining, in line with restaurant guidelines on group limits and distancing, Singapore Airlines said in a statement. It plans to open a wait list later on Monday due to strong demand. In normal flying service, the carrier's A380s can seat as many as 471 people, according to its website.

The company will study

the wait list and see how it can "potentially accommodate some of those who are still interested in this unique dining experience," vice president of commercial operations Lee Lik Hsin said.

Singapore Airlines, which suffered a record \$81.12 billion (\$827 million) net loss in the quarter through June and is laying off about 20 per cent of its workforce, is also selling a range of first- and business-class meals and offering a service whereby a private chef reheats, plates and serves customers in their homes.

—Bloomberg

China bans Oz coal imports as political relations sour

Oct. 12: China has suspended purchases of Australian coal, according to people familiar with the order, as Beijing continues to tightly control imports of the fuel amid soured political relations with Canberra.

Chinese power stations and steel mills have been verbally told to immediately stop using Australian coal, the people said, asking not to be identified as the matter is private. Ports have also been told not to offload Australian coal, one of the people said. China's customs administration wasn't immediately available for comment.

The ban marks an escalation in tensions that have already jolted agricultural



exports from China's biggest supplier of commodities. It isn't clear when the halt might end or how it might affect long-term contracts that are already in place.

The fossil fuel has been a previous target for China's ire with what it regards as an increasingly hostile government in Canberra, most recently in 2019 when shipments became subject

to port delays. It's one of the few resources in which China is largely self-sufficient.

China is, overwhelmingly, the key buyer of Australia's most lucrative export, iron ore, although curbs on that product would be a heavy blow to a steel industry that relies on vast and cheap supplies from mining heavyweights like Rio Tinto Group and BHP Group.

More broadly, China keeps a tight grip on coal imports, as it seeks to balance the needs of its miners and industrial users. The fuel still accounts for over half of its energy needs.

—Bloomberg

HERO LAUNCHES GLAMOUR BLAZE AT ₹72,000



MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, OCT. 12

Hero MotoCorp, India's biggest motorcycle maker, on Monday introduced a new special edition of the popular Glamour bike called the Glamour Blaze priced at Rs 72,200 at Delhi showroom to boost sales ahead of the festive season.

Powered by a BS 6-compliant 125cc engine, the bike is looking at making a mark in an extremely popular segment which also sees stiff competition between competing products.

The 125 cc engine comes with XSENS Programmed Fuel Injection and offers 10.7 bhp and torque of 10.6 Nm. It also gets an idle start-stop system - called i3S by Hero.

Mahindra Alfa 3-wheeler now BS6-compliant

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, OCT. 12

Mahindra & Mahindra on Monday launched the BS6 compliant variants of Alfa, its flagship 3-wheeler brand in Asia's third biggest economy. Mahindra Alfa comes with a few cosmetic changes and enhanced performance.

The Alfa three-wheeler is available in both passenger starting at Rs 2.67 lakh and cargo variants at Rs 2.59 lakh at Mumbai showroom.





## SHORT TAKES



Para shuttler Manasi Joshi poses with the Barbie model.

## Barbie model after role model Manasi

**New Delhi:** Indian para athletes have been making the headlines lately. Weeks after an unprecedented nine Para athletes were honoured with the National Sports Awards 2020, para shuttler Manasi Joshi has now made every Indian proud becoming the first ever Para athlete to have featured in TIME magazine as Next Generation Leader. She is also the first Indian para-athlete to have a Barbie doll modelled to her likeness announced on the occasion of the International Day of Girl Child. Joshi joined the likes of Australian Paralympic medalist wheelchair para athlete Madison De Rozario and Para Swimming champion Sumeyye Boyaci among many others, in celebration of extraordinary women who inspire girls around the world to be anything they dream to be. The only other Indian to have received this laurel is gymnast Dipa Karmakar in 2019. Extremely delighted with Manasi's latest recognitions, Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) President Deepa Malik said these honours will give a great boost to the Indian Paralympic Movement.

## Football captain Carlton no more

**New Delhi:** Former India football captain and mid-fielder Carlton Chapman, who formed a deadly trio at the club level with Bhaichung Bhutia and IM Vijayan in the 1990s, died on Monday following a heart attack in Bengaluru. He was 49. Chapman was hospitalised on Sunday night at a hospital in Bengaluru and passed away early this morning. A creative midfielder, Chapman played for India between 1995 and 2001 and the country won the 1997 SAFF Cup under his captaincy. At the club level, he had two successful spells with East Bengal and one with now defunct JCT Mills. A product of the Tata Football Academy in early 1990s, Chapman joined East Bengal in 1993 and scored a hat-trick in his team's 6-2 win against Iraq club Al Zawra in a first round match at the Asian Cup Winners Cup that year. — PTI

## Akbar elected FMSCI president

**New Delhi:** Former racer Akbar Ebrahim was on Monday unanimously elected for a second term as the president of India's motorsports governing body, FMSCI. The elections were held via video-conference amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Ebrahim had his first stint as FMSCI chief from 2016-2018 following which he was replaced by P. Prithviraj. "It is without doubt, going to be a very challenging and tough year given the unprecedented pandemic situation the whole world is facing. I am sure that the FMSCI will collectively rise to the occasion and manage the situation to the best of its ability," Ebrahim said. Farooq Ahmed was unanimously elected as the vice-president. The FMSCI boasts of more than 50 affiliates across all corners of the country and there are more than 1200 registered athletes. — PTI

## Live on TV

CRICKET
IPL: Sunrisers Hyderabad vs Chennai Super Kings from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD
BADMINTON
Denmark Open: Matches from 12.30 pm on Star Sports 2 HD, 3
TENNIS
St Petersburg Open: Matches from 3.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

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# BANG ON TARGET

## AB de Villiers goes great guns as RCB crush KKR

**Sharjah, Oct. 12:** AB de Villiers hit a power-packed 73 to help Royal Challengers Bangalore outplay Kolkata Knight Riders by 82 runs in the Indian Premier League on Monday.

The South African great smashed six sixes in his 33-ball blitz and put on an unbeaten century partnership with skipper Virat Kohli, who scored 33, as Bangalore posted 194 for 2 in 20 overs.

Proteas quick Chris Morris and spinner Washington Sundar claimed two wickets each to keep down Kolkata to 112 for 9 in 20 overs.

But the evening belonged to the 36-year-old De Villiers who scored his third IPL half-century of the season to go past 3,000 runs in the Twenty20 tournament.

"Genius. Find me another word for @ABdeVilliers17. This one will do for now! Genius.," veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle wrote on Twitter.

Opener Aaron Finch (47 from 37 balls) looked sluggish in the middle and struggled to find boundaries before being castled by Prasidh Krishna.

With boundaries drying up, De Villiers unleashed his array of shots against a disciplined Nagarkoti, smashing him for consecutive sixes, over midwicket, one of which hit a running car. — PTI



AB de Villiers of Royal Challengers Bangalore plays a shot on way to his half-century during an IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium on Monday.

— BCCI

## SCORECARD

**Royal Challengers Bangalore:** Aaron Finch b Prasidh 47, D. Padikkal b Russell 32, Virat Kohli not out 33, AB de Villiers not out 73. **Extras:** (LB-2, W-6, NB-1) 9. **Total: (for two wickets in 20 overs) 194.** **FOW:** 1-67, 2-94.

**Bowling:** Pat Cummins 4-0-38-0, Prasidh Krishna 4-0-42-1, Andre Russell 4-0-51-1, Varun Chakravarthy 4-0-25-0, Kamlesh Nagarkoti 4-0-36-0.

**Kolkata Knight Riders:** Tom Banton b Saini 8, Shubman Gill run out 34, Nitish Rana b Washington Sundar 9, Eoin Morgan c Udana

b Washington Sundar 8, D. Karthik b Chahal 1, A. Russell c M. Siraj b Udana 16, R. Tripathi c Morris b M. Siraj 16, Pat Cummins c Padikkal b Chris Morris 1, K. Nagarkoti b Chris Morris 4, Chakravarthy not out 7, Prasidh Krishna not out 2. **Extras:** (LB-3, W-3) 6. **Total: (for 9 wickets in 20 Overs) 112.** **FOW:** 1-23, 2-51, 3-55, 4-62, 5-64, 6-85, 7-89, 8-99, 9-108.

**Bowling:** Chris Morris 4-0-17-2, Navdeep Saini 3-0-17-1, Mohammad Siraj 3-0-24-1, Washington Sundar 4-0-20-2, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-12-1, Isuru Udana 2-0-19-1.

## IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Mumbai Indians	7	5	2	0	10	+1.327
Delhi Capitals	7	5	2	0	10	+1.038
Royal Challengers Bangalore	7	5	2	0	10	-0.116
Kolkata Knight Riders	7	4	3	0	8	-0.577
Sunrisers Hyderabad	7	3	4	0	6	+0.153
Rajasthan Royals	7	3	4	0	6	-0.872
Chennai Super Kings	7	2	5	0	4	-0.588
Kings XI Punjab	7	1	6	0	2	-0.381

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

## Teen nabbed for threatening Ziva

**Ahmedabad, Oct. 12:** A 16-year-old boy was nabbed on Sunday from Mundra in Gujarat for allegedly issuing threats against cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni's minor daughter, police said. "The class 12 student from Nanna Kapaya village was detained for questioning in connection with a disgusting threat message that was posted on the Instagram account of Dhoni's wife Sakshi Dhoni a few days back," Kutch (West) superintendent of police Saurabh Singh told reporters.

The teenager "confessed" to have posted the threatening message on the Instagram account after the IPL 2020 match between KKR and CSK cricket teams, police said.

Ranchi police had shared information regarding the boy with Kutch (West) police and asked them to con-

firm if he was the one who had posted the threat message, Singh said.

"We detained him for questioning after Ranchi police informed us that the accused hails from Mundra in Kutch district.

"We have confirmed that the boy is the same who had posted the message. He will be handed over to Ranchi police as the FIR was lodged in that city," the SP said, adding that a team of Ranchi Police is likely to reach Kutch tomorrow to take custody of the teenager.

Dhoni is captaining the CSK cricket team in the ongoing Indian Premier League. The nature of the threat had caused a huge outrage on social media, with several cricketers, politicians and celebrities expressing disgust and demanding action. — PTI

## ISHANT OUT OF IPL WITH RIB CAGE INJURY

**Dubai, Oct. 12:** Veteran pacer Ishant Sharma has been ruled out of the Indian Premier League with a rib-cage injury, his team Delhi Capitals said on Monday.

The 32-year-old Test specialist had played only one of the seven games that the Capitals have played so far, finishing his four overs wicketless for 26 runs against Sunrisers Hyderabad in Abu Dhabi. "Fast bowler Ishant Sharma experienced an acute episode of left rib cage pain while bowling at a team training session on October 7, 2020 in Dubai.

"Subsequent investigations revealed that he sustained a left internal oblique muscle tear. This injury will unfortunately rule him out of the remainder of the IPL," Capitals said. Ishant has played 97 Tests, 80 ODIs and 14 T20Is for India and is set to spearhead the ace attack during Test matches in Australia. — PTI

## Depleted Dhoni side face SRH

**Dubai, Oct. 12:** Time is fast running out for the Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led Chennai Super Kings, a team which desperately needs its batting to click when it takes on Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Tuesday in a battle to keep its IPL hopes alive.

CSK with five defeats in seven games are currently at the penultimate position in the eight-team standings halfway into the tournament. While Shane Watson and Faf du Plessis have had decent outings so far, CSK need a stronger show from its faltering middle order to.

SRH, on the other hand, are a only a tad better-placed than CSK at the fifth spot with three wins from seven games.

But the five-wicket defeat to RR on Sunday would be hurting the Hyderabad outfit badly.

Batting has not been SRH's concern at all as the likes of Jonny Bairstow, skipper David Warner, Manish Pandey and Kane

## NUMBERS GAME

### HEAD TO HEAD

- Matches: 13
- Chennai: 9
- Hyderabad: 4

### MEETING IN 2019

- Sunrisers Hyderabad beat Chennai Super Kings by 6 wickets at Hyderabad
- Chennai Super Kings beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by 6 wickets at Chennai

### MEETING IN CURRENT EDITION

- Sunrisers Hyderabad beat Chennai Super Kings by 7 runs at Dubai

### FOR THE RECORD

- Faf du Plessis is the highest run-getter for Chennai Super Kings in the current edition. The South African batsman scored 307 runs at a strike rate of 147.59 in seven innings of as many matches.

— S. PERVEZ QAISAR

Williamson are all among runs and have the ability to shoulder the responsibility on their own. But it is the bowling unit which let Hyderabad down on Sunday. — PTI

## ICC SETS DEADLINE FOR NOMINATION OF ITS CHAIRMAN

**Dubai, Oct. 12:** The ICC on Monday set October 18 as the deadline for its Board of Directors to propose candidates for the chairman's post to succeed Shashank Manohar, ending a nearly three-month-long impasse on the nomination process.

"The process, which is being overseen by the Independent Chairman of the ICC Audit Committee, has commenced and the first stage is for the nominations of potential candidates to be made by current Board Directors by 18 October 2020," ICC stated in a release.

The candidate would require two thirds of the 17 ICC Board member votes, which roughly comes to 11 or 12. — PTI

## NBA | CHAMPIONSHIP

## Lakers crack the whip to win title

**Orlando, Oct. 12:** Kobe Bryant's spirit could be felt by the Los Angeles Lakers as they finished a run to the NBA title on Sunday, nine months after Bryant's death in a helicopter crash.

The Lakers completed a championship run dedicated to the late LA legend by defeating Miami 106-93 to capture the NBA Finals four games to two in a quarantine bubble at Orlando, Florida.

"Kobe, I know he's looking down on us super proud. We miss him, and this is definitely for him," Lakers star forward Anthony Davis said.

"I think Kobe and Gianna have guided this team the entire year," Lakers general manager Rob Pelinka said.

"Kobe's voice is always in my head, always, every day, every minute... for us to be able to win this championship doesn't take away the sting of the loss, but what it does is it helps us add to their legacy.

Bryant's widow, Vanessa Bryant, posted a congratulations message on *Instagram*, saying: "Wish Kobe and Gigi were here to see this."

The Lakers captured their first NBA title since 2010, when Bryant led them to the last of his five career crowns.

"There would be times in my hotel room here — when you're in a bubble for 100 days, it's tough — there would be times in the middle of the night, I would hear his voice: 'Stay the course. Finish the task,'" said Pelinka.

**Kobe, I know he's looking down on us super proud. We miss him, and this is definitely for him.**

— ANTHONY DAVIS after winning the NBA title

"He said, 'I'll give you two, three years, you'll fix this. You'll get the Lakers back on top.'"

Pelinka looked to the heavens and said, "I guess you were right, man. You gave me the energy to do it."

Outside the Lakers' home arena, the Staples Center in Los Angeles, fans took to the streets chanting, "Kobe, Kobe," despite being urged to celebrate at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### JAMES SAVOURS MVP TITLE

The sight of LeBron James hoisting an NBA championship trophy as Most Valuable Player of the title series was no surprise — but the path he took to a fourth career crown was anything but usual.

"I can't sit here and say one is more challenging than the other or one is more difficult than the other," James said after capturing his fourth NBA title with a third team, and his fourth Finals MVP award.

He posted a triple-double of 28 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists in the title-clinching 106-93 victory over the Miami Heat in Game Six. — AFP



LeBron James (centre) of the Los Angeles Lakers is jubilant as he holds his MVP and the NBA Championship trophy after winning the NBA title at AdventHealth Arena at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, on Sunday. — AFP

## No direct entry for badminton Finals

**New Delhi, Oct. 12:** India ace P. V. Sindhu will not get a direct entry in the rescheduled World Tour Final as the Badminton World Federation (BWF) has decided against handing automatic invitations to current world champions in the season-ending tournament.

According to the BWF rules, world champions have always enjoyed a direct qualification to the prestigious World Tour Finals but with the Covid-19 pandemic disrupting the international calendar, the world body has decided to do away with the criteria this year.

"Players will qualify for the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals 2020 in Bangkok (Thailand) according to current regulations. The exception to that is current world champions will not get an automatic invitation (World Tour Regulations, Clause 8.2.3) and only points earned from World Tour tournaments will be taken into account," BWF said.

"The remaining Grade 2 tournaments counting

towards qualification are: DANISA Denmark Open 2020 (HSBC BWF World Tour Super 750), Asia Open I 2020 (HSBC BWF World Tour Super 1000), Asia Open II 2020 (HSBC BWF World Tour Super 1000)," the statement added.

Sindhu, who won the World Championship gold medal last year, had pulled out of the Denmark Open and will now have to perform at the Asia leg to make it to the World Tour Finals.

"We don't regret the decision to pull out of Denmark Open. Now that the BWF has laid down the criteria, Sindhu will try to do well in the Asia leg if there are no more post-nominations and qualify," Sindhu's father P. V. Ramana said.

The Denmark Open Super 750 event, beginning on Tuesday is the only World Tour tournament to be held this year.

The BWF also said "players do not have to participate in both the European and Asian legs to qualify for the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals 2020." — PTI

## Portugal, Italy held as Eng win

**Paris, Oct. 12:** Portugal and Italy kept hold of first place in their UEFA Nations League groups on Sunday with goalless draws against France and Poland on a night of little drama, while England saw off Belgium to take the initiative in their pool.

There was not much to talk about at the Stade de France as a star-studded line up of players including Cristiano Ronaldo, Kylian Mbappe and Antoine Griezmann failed to muster much of a spectacle in the League 'A', Group 3 match.

Pepe headed home what he thought was a 74th-minute opener when he got on the end of Bruno Fernandes' free-kick but was flagged offside.

Ronaldo, chasing his 102nd international goal,



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo (centre) in action during their UEFA Nations League match against France at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis on Sunday. — AP

was denied by a flying save from Hugo Lloris in added time. Both sides are on seven points, four ahead of Croatia. Meanwhile, Italy

stretched their unbeaten streak to 18 matches and held onto top spot in League 'A', Group 1 with their stalemate in Gdansk. — AFP