


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | THURSDAY 10 | SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 33°C
Min: 27°C
Rainfall: 4.8 mm

Forecast: Mainly cloudy with a thunderstorm in spots in the afternoon



PM to launch flagship fisheries scheme, app for farmers today

New Delhi, Sept. 9: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will digitally launch the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) on Thursday and also inaugurate the e-Gopala App, a comprehensive breed improvement marketplace and information portal for direct use of farmers. In a statement on Wednesday, the Prime Minister's Office said that Modi will also launch several other initiatives in the fisheries and animal husbandry sectors in Bihar, a state which is heading for the assembly polls in October-November.

—PTI



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People have resolved to elect AIADMK: Minister



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Trump nominated for Peace Nobel

SPORT | 8

Ronaldo second player to score 100 international goals



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Border tense as India takes north Pangong Tso heights

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

In the latest move, the Indian Army reportedly occupied heights on the north bank of Pangong Tso which overlook Chinese positions on the ridge-lines in the Finger 4 area. This means that the Indian Army now has tactical advantage on both, north and south banks of the Pangong Tso.

Mountain warfare is all about dominating the heights, and since they have come under the Indian Army's control, there are reports that China has started building up its forces on the north bank of Pangong Tso and is trying to come closer to the Indian position at Finger 4.

The whole Pangong Tso

● In its Moldo garrison, China has now deployed 5,000-7,000 soldiers and India has also a similar number of soldiers in the area

area in the Ladakh sector is on edge with expectation of some kind of action from the Chinese Army to regain lost ground on the south of the lake where India had in a pre-emptive move occupied two dozen strategic heights. What has added to the tension is the fact that now all the action in the Pangong Tso area is being controlled directly by the commanders in Beijing and it's no longer in the hands of local PLA officers.

■ P4

Restore pre-April status, India to tell China today

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

At a bilateral meeting on Thursday on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) foreign ministers meeting in Moscow, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar is expected to clearly tell his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi that peace on the borders is closely linked to development of bilateral ties between the two Asian giants and that China must de-escalate by dis-engaging

its troops to restore the April status quo in the Ladakh sector.

This comes even as news agency reports from Beijing cited the Chinese foreign ministry as saying there would be a Russia-India-China (RIC) trilateral foreign ministers' luncheon meeting in the Russian capital on Thursday which is being seen by observers as an effort by a worried Russia to encourage and persuade both Asian neighbours to reach a compromise and avoid a devastating war in the Ladakh sector.

■ P4

DMK pledges to make Stalin CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Wednesday urged the party cadre to focus only on winning the 2021 Assembly elections even as the party's general council resolved to 'dislodge the anti-people AIADMK government, place the DMK in power and make Stalin the chief minister'.

Addressing the general council, attended by 3,500 members through video conference, Mr Stalin said the meeting should have been held on March 29 but had to be postponed due to outbreak of the pandemic.

Criticising the state government for its administrative failure in managing the Coronavirus crisis, the DMK, through a resolution, accused it of indulging in corruption in the issue of e-passes, procurement of medical equipment, testing kits, PPEs, masks, bleaching powder, disinfectants and so on.

Another resolution accused the BJP of being the 'protector' of the corrupt AIADMK government in the state and also



accused the Centre of failing in controlling the spread of Coronavirus and causing widespread joblessness. It said the BJP government went against the principles of federalism, secularism and democracy

It alleged that the BJP government was privatizing public sector institutions and airports and was working against social justice.

Taking potshots at the media, Stalin said that normally the media would be interested in writing about the ruling party but now the media had been criticising the DMK, trying to find fault here and there, as though the party was in power. It would happen in eight months, he said.

■ P3



Sena-run BMC razes Kangana home before high court stay

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
MUMBAI, SEPT. 9

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Wednesday razed a portion of the bungalow-cum-office of Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut calling it "illegal alterations" barely hours before the Bombay High Court halted the civic body's operation.

Justice S.J. Kathawalla who heard a petition filed by Ms Ranaut challenging the notice issued by BMC for illegal construction sought to know from BMC how it entered the premises when the owner was not present and directed it to file an affidavit in response to the plea. The court posted the matter for hearing on Thursday.

The actor who reached the city later in the day denied illegal act on her part in the construction at the Pali Hill area of Bandra (West).

TN govt declares 5-day break for online classes

Erode, Sept. 9: In a respite to school students attending online classes in the state, the state government on Wednesday announced there would be a five-day break for them starting September 21 to reduce their stress and help them refresh.

"On normal occasions, students are provided quarterly

and half-yearly holidays," School education minister K.A. Sengottaiyan said. "But due to the Covid-19 pandemic, schools had to switch to online mode of teaching. With Chief Minister K. Palaniswami's consent, online classes and telecast of video lessons on television channels will not be conducted from September 21 to 25," he said.

All the schools, including private institutions, would be monitored by block-level officers to check whether classes are conducted during these five days, he added.

On the Centre's standard operating procedures for partial re-opening of schools

for students of classes 9 to 12, Mr Sengottaiyan said consultation would be done after the Covid-19 situation improves in the state.

On Saturday, the government had directed the schools not to compel students to attend online classes. Commissioner of School Education Sigy Thomas

Vaidhyan wrote to all chief educational officers directing them not to compel students to attend online classes. Teachers have also been asked to ensure all students, who have been absent from online sessions, are suitably coached and brought on par with other students when the schools reopen.

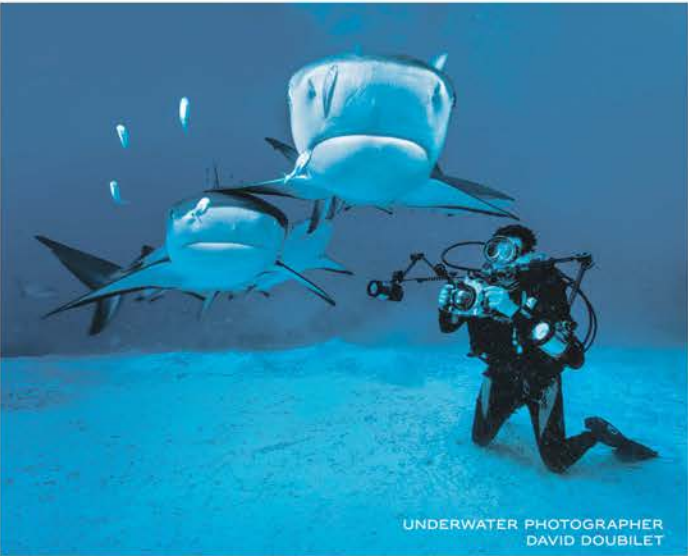
—PTI



UNDERWATER EXPLORATION PIONEER SYLVIA EARLE



SUBMARINER 1000ft 300m WATER RESISTANT



UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID DOUBILET



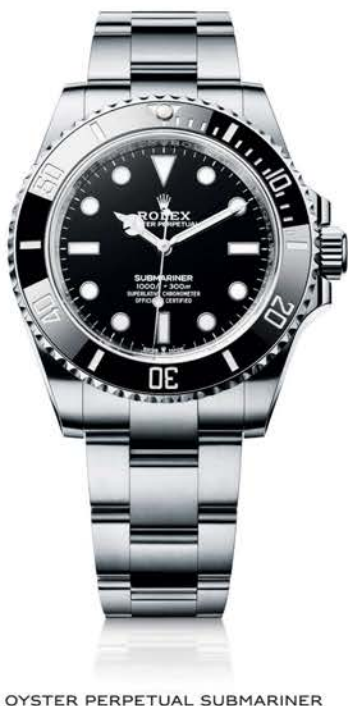
EXPLORER GHISLAIN BARDOUT



ROLEX GLIDELock EXTENSION SYSTEM



CALIBRE 3230



OYSTER PERPETUAL SUBMARINER

THE NEW GENERATION SUBMARINER

Built for divers in 1953, the Submariner soon set the standard, making it the ultimate watch for underwater exploration. A symbol of waterproofness and reliability, the iconic design transcended its original purpose. While remaining true to its diving heritage, the Submariner also became the watch of choice on land, and the perfect companion to mark the memorable moments in the lives of its wearers. Now, with a new 41 mm case and a next generation movement, the story of the Submariner continues.

#Perpetual

ROLEX

SHORT TAKES

CoE-AI launched at NIT-T

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, SEPT. 9

Dr Mini Shaji Thomas, Director, National Institute of Technology-Tiruchirappalli (NIT-T) inaugurated the Rs 1.18-crore Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (CoE-AI) at NIT-T on Monday, funded by the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA), with a focus on interdisciplinary research in AI.

A release said NIT-T T recently signed an MoU with NVIDIA Corporation. The centre has already sanctioned sponsored projects from DRDO, ISRO and Naval Research Board. The institute has also taken initiatives to extend the facilities available at the CoE to other organisations through consultancy mode. In addition to these, the CoE-AI is planning to submit proposals to different government and private organisations to expand the R&D activities, the release added.

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aavani 25
Tithi: Ashtami
Star: Rohini/ Mrigashirsham
Rahukalam:
1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam:
6 am to 7.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.47 am
Zohar: 12.12 pm
Asar: 3.21 pm
Maghrib: 6.16 pm
Isha: 7.28 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.14 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 11.55 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 1.07 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+65,956)	(+687)
44,33,392	74,610

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,584)
TN: 4,80,524 8,090

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,78,71,869

DEATHS

9,04,535

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info

COUNTER POINT



No breaking news?
Go and provoke
Kangana!



Tamil Nadu fire and rescue services director DGP C. Sylendra Babu addressing frontline fire rescue personnel as part of a stress management programme at Egmore office. — DC

DE-STRESS MEASURES



The CBMT metro rail station renamed as Puratchi Thalaivi Dr J. Jayalalithaa CBMT metro. — DC

Metro train stoppage time increased from 20 to 50 secs

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

Green Line Metro Rail services from St. Thomas Mount to Puratchi Thalaivar Dr M G Ramachandran Central Metro station, resumed on Wednesday.

A press statement issued by Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), said that the operation recommenced in the Green line as part of resurrection of its operations in a graded manner. CMRL, which had suspended all operations on March 22 due to the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, resumed the Blue Line operations on Monday between Washermenpet and Airport Metro Station. The Green Line operations between St Thomas Mount and Puratchi Thalaivar Dr M G Ramachandran Central Metro via Koyambedu restarted from 7 am to 8 pm with peak hour headway of 5 minutes and non-peak hour headway of 10 minutes.

The train stoppage time at stations has been increased from 20 seconds to 50 seconds to maintain social distancing and fresh air circulation.

Contact-less QR code ticketing methods and Travel Card Reader machines have been introduced in all 32 metro stations for safety of passen-



Chennai metro rail services resume in a graded manner between Washermenpet and airport. — DC

gers. These facilities can be utilized by downloading the CMRL Mobile app', it said

Engine failure of Chennai bound train delays 2 trains

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

Two Chennai-bound express trains were delayed for more than two hours after, a Tiruchy-Chennai Pallavan superfast express engine developed a fault near Karunguli railway station on Tuesday evening.

Railway officials said a faulty engine forced them to stop the train at Karunguli railway station at around 6: 30 pm. Following this, a Kanyakumari-Chennai, Kanyakumari super fast express was stationed at Ottivakkam railway station.

The sudden disruption of train services for more than two hours had put rail passengers to hardship. Meanwhile, an

Railway officials said a faulty engine forced them to stop the train at Karunguli railway station at around 6: 30 pm. Following this, a Kanyakumari-Chennai, Kanyakumari super fast express was stationed at Ottivakkam railway station.

RPF constable who was on duty in the Kanyakumari super fast express fainted and fell on the rail tracks of the Ottivakkam railway station. After he was given first-aid by the medical team, he was taken to the Chengalpattu government hospital for treatment. The trains resumed its services after 8: 20 pm, sources said.

Woman PhD scholar from Kerala ends life at IGCAR

SINDHIYA SAMUEL &
P.A JEBARAJ | DC
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

A 26-year-old woman research scholar from Kannur district in Kerala was found hanging in her hostel room in Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR) at Kalpakkam on Tuesday, police said on Wednesday.

According to police sources, the student has been identified as N. Jeena, 26, who had joined the IGCAR, Kalpakkam township in 2018. Jeena was a junior research fellowship, doing her doctorate in Radio Chemical lab in IGCAR.

The Keralite had been staying at the Kalpakkam township hostel for the past three years.

According to police sources, Jeena's sister Daniya, 28 is employed at the Atomic energy central school as a contract teacher. Her husband, Suresh, drove vehicles at the IGCAR. The duo also



N. Jeena

lived in the Kalpakkam township.

At around 2: 30 pm on Tuesday, P.T Nirmalan, Jeena's father in Kerala received a call from the latter's office informing him that his daughter was found hanging in her hostel room. When he tried to contact her through mobile, it was kept in switch off mode. Therefore he informed his elder daughter Daniya

and son-in-law, Suresh to go to Jeena's hostel.

When Suresh reached the hostel, he found her dead, following which he immediately alerted the police.

The Kalpakkam police rushed to the spot and recovered the body of the deceased. The body has been sent to the Chengalpattu Government hospital for post-mortem.

The hostel authorities said to police that Jeena did not come of her hostel room since Monday night. On searching Jeena room, police found an alleged 'suicide note' written on her diary. She reportedly wrote "No one is responsible for my death. I'm sorry mom and dad, I don't like to live here, I'm sorry".

Police have also recovered her mobile phone and laptop. The gadgets she used will be searched for details in connection with the suicide, police said.

A case has been registered under section 174 Cr

Pc over this suicide and an investigation is on, a police officer said, declining to divulge further information. After post-mortem on Wednesday, Jeena's body was handed over to her family.

The suicide of a research scholar comes less than a year after a 19-year old student of IIT - Madras allegedly committed suicide in her hostel room in November last year.

Fathima Lateef, a student at the department of humanities and social sciences at IIT Madras, allegedly hanged herself in her hostel room in the campus. It was alleged that harassment by faculty members forced Fathima to take the extreme step.

In her suicide note, she had named two professors as a reason for his suicide. The case is currently being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

Financial situation in Pondy very critical: CM

Puducherry, Sept. 9: Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy on Wednesday said the fiscal situation of the territorial government was 'very critical' as the flow of revenue had fallen considerably during the ongoing Covid-19 period.

He played the Centre for being 'irresponsible' to the repeated pleas of his government to sanction funds.

Addressing a virtual press conference, he said, "We cannot raise the taxes although we are managing the expenditure from out of the state government's funds and also by utilising the Covid-19 Fund and Disaster Management Fund." CM pointed out that Rs 700 crores was due from the Centre for last five months under compensation for implementing the GST here. — PTI

Neet aspirant commits suicide
Stalin, Ramadoss condole student's deathR. VALAYAPATHY | DC
ARIYALUR, SEPT. 9

A 19-year-old Neet aspirant allegedly committed suicide by jumping into a well at Elanthankuzhi village near Senthurai in Ariyalur district on Wednesday.

Police said the deceased Vignesh completed plus-2 at a private school in Senthurai in 2017. He wrote the Neet twice after getting coaching from two coaching centres in Kerala and Tiruchy in which he failed once and subsequently completed his Neet successfully. But he could not fulfil his dream of getting MBBS admission.

Once again he prepared for appearing for Neet in the third attempt slated for September 13, but was frustrated and in mental agony.

Meanwhile, he was found missing since Tuesday, and his parents and relatives found his body floating in an irriga-

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

DMK president M.K. Stalin and PMK founder Dr S Ramadoss condoled the death of Vignesh, a medical college aspirant from Elanthankuzhi village in Ariyalur district who committed suicide due to mental agony reportedly caused by the pressures of preparing for the Neet.

Stalin, in a Facebook message, said "we have lost one more life on the altar of Neet" and appealed to the student community to face the challenges bravely.

Ramadoss said the boy

tion well of the village. Senthurai police and fire service personnel sent the body to government hospital, Jayankondam, for

belonging to a Most Backward Class (MBC) community had been preparing for Neet for the past two years. Last year, he scored 370 marks and was given admission in a private medical college, which he had to decline because his parents could not afford the fees.

Vignesh had scored 486 marks out of the total of 500 in his tenth class examination and 1006 out of 1200 in the plus-2 examination, Ramadoss said, demanding the cancellation of Neet permanently.

He said Neet was only helping private medical colleges to make money.

post-mortem. Meanwhile, villagers of Elanthankuzhi resorted to road roko demanding the withdrawal of Neet.

10 more die of coronavirus in Pondy; toll mounts to 347

Puducherry, Sept. 9: Five women and as many men succumbed to Covid-19 in Puducherry on Wednesday while 341 more people contracted the virus, pushing the tally of infections to 18,084.

A release from Health and Family Welfare department said 341 new cases were reported at the end of testing of 2,560.

Nine out of the total deaths on Wednesday occurred in Puducherry and remaining one was reported from Karaikal region. Of the total 18,084 cases, 4,770 were active while 12,967 patients recovered and discharged so far.

The total number of fatalities climbed to 347 with 10 related deaths.

Meanwhile, CM V. Narayanasamy called on the aged and those with ailments like blood pressure, diabetes, respiratory problem and cancer to be very careful and take precautionary steps so that they would not fall a prey to virus. PTI

Close shave for passengers as moving car catches fire

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

Panic gripped busy GST road on Wednesday morning after a moving car caught fire.

Four persons travelling in the car had a close shave after they jumped out just in time before the vehicle was gutted in minutes, following which the traffic flow on the road was affected for at least an hour.

Chandran, a resident of Perungulathur, along with his friends, Vigneshwaran, Mohan and Vaithyanathan were going in a car from Perungulathur to Tambaram Sanatorium.

As the car reached Gandhi Salai junction on GST road, Vigneshwaran who was driving the car noticed smoke emitting from the dashboard. They assumed that there must be a short-circuit and immediately slowed the



A car on fire on GST road. — DC

car when suddenly, the engine caught fire. The occupants jumped out of the car to save themselves.

They alerted the police and fire brigade. Two fire trucks from Tambaram fire station and Tamil Nadu fire service state training centre rushed to the spot and carried out

fire extinguishing operations but the whole car was completely engulfed in flames and gutted.

It was said that the fire broke out from the engine was due to a short circuit. However the exact reason for the fire is yet to be ascertained. The Tambaram police regis-

tered a case. Further investigations are underway.

A few days back in a similar incident, a techie had a narrow escape after a BMW he was driving caught fire on Vanumpettai- Velachery 200 feet road, near Adambakkam. He, however, managed to escape.

Aid for differently-abled yet to be given

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

In pandemic time, the ₹133-crore relief fund announced by the state government for 13.35 lakh certified differently-abled people remains undistributed even after three months. It was on June 16, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami announced that people in the state with disabilities who have identity cards would be given ₹1,000 as financial

assistance to survive pandemic blues.

The Chief Minister had also said that officials from the civil supplies department will disburse funds at their doorsteps in Chennai and parts of three neighbouring districts - Thiruvallur, Chengalpattu and Kanchipuram districts from June 22.

P. Simma Chandran, president, Tamil Nadu Differently-Abled Federation, said they got only 60 per cent of the relief so far.

But officials have no clue on when the rest of the amount will be distributed. The chief minister said that officials would distribute the fund at doorstep, but none of them have come to our house with the fund. "We were forced to travel to the Commissionerate of the Welfare of the Differently-Abled to get the amount. We were asking for the rest of the amount for more than a month now. But when we asked the Commissioner

of Differently-Abled, he told us that it would be disbursed after approval from the district collector. When we contacted the collector, he told us it would be under the purview of the corporation commissioner. The reality is we have still been left unpaid" said Chandran.

He also said most of the differently-abled people are stranded at the home for many months as they were unable to get their walking supports repaired

due to cash paucity.

Johny Tom Varghese, Commissioner for Differently-Abled, when contacted, admitted the pendency in the disbursement of und by saying that it was under process. "There are a few pending, in Chennai especially. Any differently-abled person with an NIDC (National Identity and Disability Certificate) card can stake claim. The eligible people can make a call to the helpline number 18004250111," he said.

SHORT TAKES

Corona spread continues

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

Spread of Coronavirus continued with 5584 cases reported on Wednesday when the death toll was at 78, indicating a trend in which the figures are refusing to come down despite the claims by the government.

Chennai had 993 fresh infections and 14 fatalities, while a few districts had high numbers. They are Chengalpattu 237, Coimbatore 445, Cuddalore 344, Salem 279 and Thiruvallur 281.

Grievance redressal number for Thanjavur dist

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, SEPT. 9

The people of Thanjavur district can send their grievances to WhatsApp number 9344030481, said Mr M. Govinda Rao, Thanjavur district collector, on Wednesday.

In a press release, he said that Monday grievances day meetings have been cancelled due to the pandemic. A grievances petition box has been installed at the collectorate.

Royal Enfield to set up assembly unit in Argentina

Chennai, Sept. 9: Bike-manufacturer Royal Enfield on Wednesday said it would commence assembly of motorcycles in Argentina thereby becoming the first such facility to be set up outside Chennai. Royal Enfield would commence local assembly of motorcycles in partnership with Grupo Simpa. The unit would be located at Campana in Buenos Aires, a company statement said here. Grupo Simpa has been Royal Enfield's local distributor since 2018 and Wednesday's announcement was significant as it would be the first time in the history of Royal Enfield that motorcycles would be assembled and produced outside the company's manufacturing facilities located in Chennai.

To begin with, the facility would locally assemble three motorcycles -- Himalayan, Interceptor 650 and Continental GT 650 beginning this month, the statement said.

"Royal Enfield has been working steadily to grow and expand the middleweight motorcycling segment (250cc-750cc) globally and also to increase our footprint in important global markets. We have been pursuing our plans to set up local assembly units across specific markets in Asia-Pacific region and across south America," company CEO Vinod K Dasari said.

"In the first of these (initiatives), we are happy to announce the first CKD assembly plant in Argentina," he said.

On the reason to set up the unit in Argentina, he said, "Argentina and other South American countries have been an important market for Royal Enfield. The local terrain and topography create a perfect canvas for riding our motorcycles. Ever since we commenced sales in 2018, we have received a resounding response."

—PTI



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami inspects science park at Tiruvannamalai. Collector Kandasamy also seen.

People have resolved to elect AIADMK: Minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

The people of Tamil Nadu have resolved to elect the AIADMK back to power, fisheries minister D. Jayakumar said on Wednesday.

Reacting to a question from the media, after attending a party event in Broadway, on the DMK general council passing a resolution to bring DMK

to power and make M. K. Stalin the Chief Minister, Jayakumar said that was a resolution passed by the DMK but the people had resolved otherwise.

On the DMK's allegation that the AIADMK had given up on the rights of the state, he said the State lost most of its rights when the DMK was part of the coalition government at the Centre. Even on issues like the Cauvery

dispute the DMK did not take any firm stand, he said.

The AIADMK had been fighting for the rights of the State fervently with the Centre, he said, adding that the state government had been fighting for the Rs 12,000 crore GST dues that the Centre had to pay, he said.

When asked about BJP leaders talking about forming a government in

Tamil Nadu, the Minister said that it could be their wish and they might have expressed their views about it.

On Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami urging the Reserve Bank of India to roll back its credit policy, Jayakumar said that the government could not tolerate the reduction of funds to the districts that had shown growth.



DMK president Stalin with general secretary Durai Murugan and treasurer T. R. Baalu at the general council meet on Wednesday.

—DC

Give up EIA draft: DMK

FROM P1

Demanding that education be brought under the state list once again from the present concurrent list, a resolution told the Centre not to implement the National Education Policy 2020. It wanted the AIADMK government to oppose the policy that went against the two language formula followed in the state.

It asked the Centre to give up the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) 2020 draft as it would have a devastating effect on various ways, including the lives of the farmers as it would clear many projects that the farmers had been opposing. The general council, through a resolution, said that social justice was given a go by in the civil services exami-

nations held by the UPSC.

Finding fault with the both the Centre and state governments on their alleged anti-farmers policies, a resolution said various projects that would ruin the lives of farmers were being initiated by the governments. Also the governments were not writing off farmers' loans and not providing them crop insurance. Farmers were even made to wait for 19 years for a free electricity connection, it said.

The general council, through separate resolutions, welcomed a few court decisions. They were the one approving the exclusive reservation for Arundathiyar community from the 18 per cent earmarked for Scheduled Castes, providing for OBC reservation in the all-India quota for medical college admissions by the

Centre and the 50 per cent reservation for government doctors in post graduate medical seats, which was introduced by the late M. Karunanidhi in 1989 during his tenure as chief minister.

Another resolution thanked all those who contributed to the 'Ondrinaivom Vaa' (Come let's unite) scheme of the DMK launched to provide succour to those affected by the Coronavirus outbreak and the lockdown and another welcomed the new office bearers to the party.

Stalin also, in his address, introduced Durai Murugan, the new general secretary, T.R. Baalu, treasurer, K. Ponmudi and A. Raja, both deputy general secretaries. Mr Stalin recalled their services to the party and the governments.

Raja rules out any tie-up with BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT
PERAMBALUR, SEPT. 9

The new deputy general secretary of the DMK, Mr A. Raja, MP, has ruled out the possibility of the DMK forging any alliance with the BJP under any circumstances.

He told mediapersons here on Wednesday that the present alliance under the leadership of the DMK is functioning well and there is no chance for changing the present political alliance.

Mr Raja, who represents Nilgiris in the Lok Sabha, said he will continue party work under the guidelines of the DMK president and other office bearers and will work for the victory of the DMK in the next assembly elections.

He said the DMK will continue to oppose the three-language formula and DMK parliamentary party vice-president Kanimozhi will speak in the Lok Sabha on this subject.



Some of the posters put up by members of Rajini Makal Mandram in Madurai on Wednesday.

—K. Manikandan

Virtual print fee row in film industry will be solved: Min

DC CORRESPONDENT
THOOTHUKUDI, SEPT. 9

Information and publicity minister Kadambur C. Raju on Wednesday said the renewed conflict between the Tamil cinema producers and theatre owners over paying the virtual print fee (VPF) for digital distribution of films will be amicably solved through tripartite talks.

Expecting the Centre to issue standard operating

procedures (SOPs) to reopen cinema theatres, following an online meeting of the theatre owners with the central government on September 8, Raju said the state machinery is ready to act as per the Centre's guidelines to resume functioning of theatres in the state.

However, responding to the conflict between the theatre owners and the producers over paying VPF, raised by Bharathiraaja,

president of the Tamil Film Active Producers' Association (TFAPA), Mr Raju said the issue was taken up by the producers in the tripartite meeting facilitated by his ministry among the producers, theatre owners and digital cinema distributing companies (Qube cinema technologies and UFO movies).

"By the intervention of my ministry, earlier the VPF has been reduced by around

50 percent," said the minister, who added that the present issue of the producers' demand for the theatre owners to share the VPF towards projector and digital distribution expenses, normally paid by the producers, too would be amicably solved by the state government through tripartite talks to ensure the reopening of theatres once the central government issues the SOPs.

Kerala gold smuggling case: NIA raids goldsmith's house in TN

Coimbatore, Sept 9: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday carried out searches at the residence of a gold smith in the city in connection with the Kerala gold smuggling case, police said. A four-member NIA team raided the house of Nandakumar on Cross Cut road early this morning, they said. He has been

detained for interrogation. The matter pertains to smuggling of gold in the neighbouring state through diplomatic channels, which came to light after 30 kg yellow metal worth Rs 14.82 crores, smuggled in a consignment camouflaged as diplomatic baggage, was busted by Customs in Thiruvananthapuram on July 5.

Jumbo which bit crude bomb dies

DC CORRESPONDENT,
COIMBATORE, SEPT. 9

The Makhna elephant which suffered a serious injury in its mouth after allegedly biting a crude bomb a few weeks ago finally died at the TN-Kerala border without responding to treatment.

Greens demanded the TN forest department to probe into the death of the elephant suspecting the incident happened inside the Coimbatore forest division.

On August 15 night, the forest department staff noticed the injury and started treatment. But the wound turned extremely serious. Tongue, molars and cheek muscles that coordinate and facilitate chewing and swallowing stopped functioning after suffering the serious crude bomb blast.

The efforts of the forest department turned vain as the elephant died on Wednesday at a roadside in Solaiyoor-Marappalam after being allegedly driven into the Kerala forest limit.

The efforts of the forest department turned vain as the elephant died on Wednesday at a roadside in Solaiyoor-Marappalam after being allegedly driven into the Kerala forest limit

Despite knowing the poor health condition of the elephant, it was allegedly tortured by the department staff by making it walk several kilometres in the tough terrain without food.

A team followed and chased the animal by hurling crackers and rockets, finally forcefully driving it into the Kerala forest limit a day before its death to avoid the death inside the Coimbatore division as well as departmental complications.

The serial elephant deaths in the Coimbatore forest division had triggered anger among the greens against the department and resulted in raiding few houses in three ranges recently and arrested 4 offenders in connection with poaching and making of crude bombs.

Five arrested for hunting deer, squirrel

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, SEPT. 9

In a joint operation, the forest officials and police officers nabbed four tourists and a local cottage owner for hunting a barking deer and a Malabar squirrel in Adigaratti and Ketti village limits near here.


A. Saravanakumar, the Assistant Conservator of Forests in the Nilgiris forest division, said the Kundah forest range received a confidential information about a person shooting a barking deer in Muttinad-Kollimalai road near Adigaratti on Monday evening and was carrying the animal in a car. The forest officials sought the help of Ketti police in arresting the culprits.

The cops intercepted the vehicle in Ketti limits.

The cops intercepted the vehicle in Ketti limits. Upon investigation it was known that one V.Manikandan, who is running a tourist cottage in Santhoor village near Ketti, and four tourists were involved in hunting down a barking deer

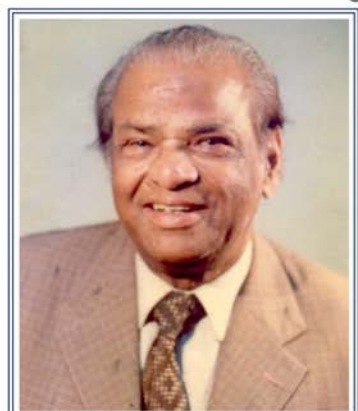
Upon investigation it was known that one V.Manikandan, who is running a tourist cottage in Santhoor village near Ketti, and four tourists were involved in hunting down a barking deer. The four tourists namely N. Sulaiman from Madurai, John Armstrong Babu, D. Jebakumar and D. Ramaiya, all hailing from Thoothukudi, entered Nilgiris in the guise of visiting Ketti for purchasing farm lands and were illegally staying in the cottage run

by Manikandan. On Monday morning they killed a Malabar giant squirrel near Ketti, cooked its meat in a nearby tea garden and ate it. For the evening meal, they hunted a barking deer and peeled off its outer skin and extracted the meat. The gang of five were arrested on Tuesday evening. The leftover meat of the wild animals shot by them, the gun and the vehicle used by them were also seized by the forest officials, Saravanakumar added.



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SHORT TAKES

LEH POLICE ARRESTS EDITOR FOR FB POST

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, SEPT. 9

The arrest of a local editor by Leh police over a third party Facebook comment against a BJP leader has caused outrage among journalists and civil society activists in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Tsewang Rigzin, the editor of *State Times* newspaper was arrested by the police on a complaint lodged with it by local BJP MP Tsering Namgyal last week. The police complaint was lodged following an unidentified member of a Facebook page called Ladakh in Media run by Rigzin posted a comment against BJP leader Vikram Singh Randhawa on September 3. The police arrested Rigzin on September 5, as he was the administrator of the group, but he was immediately granted bail, a report from Leh said.

However, many journalists in J&K and beyond took to social media platforms soon to condemn Rigzin's arrest.

RHEA MOVES COURT TO SEEK BAIL FOR 2ND TIME

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, SEPT. 9

Actress Rhea Chakraborty, arrested by the NCB in a drugs case linked to her boyfriend and actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death, on Wednesday moved a bail plea before a special NDPS court in Mumbai. This is her second attempt to seek release after a magistrate court on Tuesday refused to grant her bail.

The actress has filed this plea through her lawyer Satish Maneshinde in which she claimed to be "innocent".

It is also claimed that during her custody, she was coerced into making a self-incriminating confession, which she retracted later on September 8.

According to her bail plea, she is entitled for bail because "no drugs or psychotropic substance has been seized from the present applicant and the allegations, if any, would pertain to small quantities" and hence section 27A is not applicable. Therefore, there would be no bar on granting her bail. As a result, the offence, if any, is bailable in nature and "the applicant ought to be enlarged on bail forthwith," read her bail plea.

2 STUDENTS CHARGED WITH UAPA GET BAIL

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPT. 9

Two students who were arrested for their alleged links with Maoists and charged with Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), were granted conditional bail by a NIA special court in Kochi after 10 months in custody.

Alan Shuhaib and Thaha Fasal are students of journalism and law respectively and former members of CPM's local branch committee. They were arrested from Kozhikode on November 2, for alleged links with Maoists.

The bail has been granted on the personal surety bond of ₹1 lakh each filed by Alan and Thaha's parents. In their bail plea, the duo had contended that no evidence has been produced by investigating agencies yet to prove their connection with Maoists and they have been lodged in the jail for more than 10 months now.

Alan and Thaha were arrested for allegedly possessing and distributing brochures favouring Maoists. The two students were expelled from the CPI(M) earlier this year.

The LDF government in Kerala had drawn flak for slapping UAPA against the students. The UAPA sections were charged at a time when the CPM at the Centre had opposed the draconian law within and outside Parliament.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's statement describing the students as Maoists had sparked off a controversy in the state. The use of UAPA had surprised many in the Left circles.

After the LDF came to power in 2016, there was a big debate on UAPA cases registered during the previous Congress led UDF government's tenure. The CPI(M) had made its opinion clear that UAPA should be used only to curb terror activities.

Indian troops leave limited options for PLA looking for Galwan-type clashes

The PLA is said to have sent in their martial arts specialists to carry out a mass attack

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC HYDERABAD SEPT. 9

Positioned at a vantage point, armed and well-equipped soldiers of the Indian Army are operating from trenches with overhead protection at heights they took control of more than 10 days ago, with ample time for the soldiers to consolidate their positions.

The options before the People's Liberation Army to regain control of those heights are limited — either an air strike or send their infantry up which could come with huge costs.

To take on one platoon of the Indian Army sitting pretty on those heights which gives them a natural advantage over the enemy, they would need 10 of their platoons.

Limited options before a frustrated PLA to regain control of the strategic heights on the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso is what led them to line up their soldiers to attempt and carry out another Galwan valley-type clash at Mukhpari, one of the highest peaks in Chushul on Tuesday.

The PLA is said to have sent in their martial arts specialists carrying Guandao (a nearly six-foot long wooden or metal pole atop which a sharp blade is mounted) and other blunt weapons to carry out a mass attack. But with the Indian Army threatening to open fire, the Chinese troops were forced to retreat.

"The group of about 50 PLA soldiers had come with an intention to scare the Indian army and inflict casualties by using blunt weapons, similar to Galwan valley clashes. We captured the heights more than 10 days ago and we used this time to consolidate our positions at the heights. We do not intend to be drawn into close quarter combat with PLA anymore. We are positioned to open fire straightaway, firing warning shots first. A clear message was sent to them yesterday though they were looking for trouble," highly placed sources told *Deccan Chronicle*.

The PLA has limited options before them. One option is pounding the Indian positions, flattening the defence and regaining control of the heights. With a prepared



An IAF fighter jet flies in the Ladakh region amid the prolonged India-China stand off, in Leh on Wednesday.

— PTI

INDIA, RUSSIA DISCUSS BORDER STAND-OFF

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had a bilateral meeting and "excellent talks" with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday evening in which the "international situation" was discussed including possibly the current Sino-Indian military tensions in the

Ladakh sector.

The meeting was held ahead of the eight-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) foreign ministers' meeting and also significantly ahead of EAM Jaishankar's bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Thursday.

The Russian, Indian and Chinese foreign ministers are also expected to have a luncheon meeting together on Thursday.

Russia is India's time-tested friend and also has close ties with China due to which it has emerged as a key player to nudge both Asian giants towards a solution.

Indian army, that seems unlikely. The other option is to send their infantry who will have to climb up the mountains and launch an attack. But given the huge force required to take

on Indian troops positioned on mountain tops, that seems equally unlikely. Sources said that the Indian troops do not need to engage in close quarter combat.

- **ANOTHER ATTACK** and counter-attack between Indian and Chinese troops appears imminent.
- **LIMITED OPTIONS** before PLA to regain heights as it is exposed and unstable.

Border tense as India takes more heights

From Page 1

To put pressure on India, China had also brought forward its 15-20 tanks near Spanggur Gap, a mountain pass on the LAC, between China and India. India too has deployed its battle tanks.

In its Moldo garrison, China has now deployed 5,000-7,000 soldiers and India also has a similar number of soldiers in the area.

Chinese troops are on a daily basis trying to threaten Indians positions.

India has built defences and put barbed wire around its positions and has warned Chinese that crossing these wires will attract strong reaction from the Indian Army.

On Monday night the Chinese Army tried to remove these barbed wire and they were warned to go back. Chinese troops

then fired in the air to intimidate Indian soldiers. PLA troops were carrying what looked like their traditional Guandao weapon (a single-edge sword-like blade on the end of a pole) and had automatic rifles.

In May, the Chinese Army had crossed the LAC on the north bank of Pangong Tso and occupied 8 kilometres between Finger 4 and Finger 8 areas. In all diplomatic and military talks between the two countries since, China has bluntly refused to vacate the occupied area.

The Finger Area refers to a set of eight cliffs jutting out of the Sirijap range overlooking Pangong lake (tso). Before the PLA grabbed positions on Finger 4 overlooking Indian deployments, the Army would patrol right up to Finger 8 that New Delhi considers within Indian territory.

India to demand pre-April status

From Page 1

The RIC is an already-existing trilateral format and the luncheon meeting will obviously be hosted by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov which will give the Indian and Chinese foreign ministers another opportunity to interact apart from their own bilateral meeting.

EAM Jaishankar had made it clear last week that "what happens at the border will impact the (Sino-Indian) relationship". Blaming China for the situation of the last four months in the Ladakh sector that was a "direct result" of the Chinese side trying to unilaterally change the status quo at the Line of Actual Control

(LAC), India had also last week clearly said the "way ahead" was "negotiations" through both military and diplomatic channels. New Delhi added it is "firmly committed" to "peaceful dialogue" and called on China to "sincerely engage" India in order to restore peace and tranquillity at the LAC. New Delhi also made it clear that Beijing "should not take any provocative action or escalate matters", which comes after the latest round of Chinese military provocations at Pangong Tso lake in Ladakh both on the night of August 29 and on August 31.

The EAM meanwhile began his bilateral meetings on Wednesday in the Russian Capital.

- **INDIAN TROOPS** have a natural advantage.
- **PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY** wanted Galwan valley like clashes at Mukhpari, had sent martial art experts.

SC stays Maratha quota in jobs, seats

PARMOD KUMKAR | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed the implementation of Maratha reservation in jobs and education in Maharashtra and referred the matter to a larger bench to examine the constitutional validity of the Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act that provides for 16 per cent reservation for Marathas in jobs and educational institutions.

While referring the matter to a five-member Constitution bench, a bench comprising Justices L. Nageswara Rao, Hemant Gupta and S. Ravindra Bhat said the status of those who have

already taken benefits of the 2018 law shall not be disturbed.

Chief Justice S.A. Bobde will take a call on the constitution of the larger bench, the court said in response to petitions that challenged the law, arguing that the total quota in the state now exceeds the 50 per cent cap set by the top court.

On June 27, 2019, Bombay high court had upheld Maratha reservation, while trimming the 16 per cent reservation to 12 per cent in education and 13 per cent in jobs.

During the hearing, the Maharashtra government urged the three-judge bench to refer the 50 per cent cap on reservation ruled by the top court in the Indira Sawhney case in 1992 to a larger bench.

India Covid tally crosses 43 lakh; Kerala records yet another high

New Delhi, Sept. 9: With 89,706 infections being reported in a day, India's Covid-19 tally went past 43 lakh, while 33,98,844 people have recuperated from the disease so far pushing the national recovery rate to 77.77 per cent on Wednesday, according to data shared by the Union Health Ministry.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 43,70,128, while the death toll rose to 73,890 with 1,115 people succumbing to the disease in a span of 24 hours in the country, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The Covid-19 case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.69 per cent.

There are 8,97,394 active cases of COVID-19, which is 20.53 per cent of the total caseload in the

country, the data stated. India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, reached 30 lakh on August 23 and went past 40 lakh on September 5.

3,402 new cases reported in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala on Wednesday recorded 3,402 new cases of Covid - 19 even as 2,058 persons recovered from the infection. Of the new cases, 3,120 contracted the disease through contact, the source of infection among 235 is yet to be known, 46 came from abroad and 133 came from other states.

Telangana has 2,479 new cases, 10 deaths

Hyderabad: Telangana

recorded another 2,479 new Covid-19 cases even as 10 more people lost their lives from the disease in the state, according to the State Health Department. It said with these latest numbers, the total Covid-19 cases so far reached 1,47,642 while the number of deaths from the disease rose to 916, as on Tuesday evening.

10,418 cases, 74 deaths in Andhra Pradesh

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday registered 10,418 new Covid-19 cases increasing its overall tally to 5,27,512 and with 74 deaths the toll has touched 4,634 in the last 24 hours.

Among new infections, East Godavari continues to lead the state with 1,399 followed by 1,271 in

Prakasam, 1,134 in West Godavari, 949 in Nellore, 887 in Chittoor, 801 in Anantapur, 785 in Kadapa, 707 in Guntur, 660 in Srikakulam, 577 in Vizianagaram, 484 in Kurnool, 414 in Visakhapatnam and 350 in Krishna.

Karnataka sees spike with 9,540 cases

Bengaluru: Karnataka on Wednesday reported a spike of 9,540 Covid-19 cases and 128 fatalities, taking the total infection count to 4,21,730 and the toll to 6,808. The day also saw 6,860 patients getting discharged after recovery. Out of new cases reported on Wednesday, 3,419 were from Bengaluru urban alone. The state has cumulatively 4,21,730 cases as on Wednesday.

DON'T HARASS CO-FOUNDER OF ALT NEWS, HC TELLS GOVT

New Delhi, Sept.9: The Delhi High Court Wednesday directed the police not to take any coercive steps against fact-check website Alt News co-founder Mohd Zubair in a case of allegedly threatening, torturing a minor on social media.

Justice Yogesh Khanna sought a response of the police and National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), on whose complaint a case was lodged, on the journalist's plea seeking quashing of the FIR against him.

The Delhi police have registered an FIR against Zubair on 9 August for the offenses under the Information Technology Act for allegedly threatening and torturing a girl child on Twitter on a complaint received from the NCPCR.

The NCPCR complaint referred to the photo of a girl and her father shared by Zubair on Twitter during an online spat with the minor's father. — *PTI*

INDIA, FRANCE, AUS HOLD FIRST TRILATERAL TALKS

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

In a major strategic move, India on Wednesday held its first trilateral dialogue with France and Australia at a top officials' level in which "the focus of the dialogue was on enhancing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific Region" and tackling "economic and geostrategic challenges" as well.

The three countries decided to "synergise their respective strengths to ensure a peaceful, secure, prosperous and rules-based Indo-Pacific Region" and also "agreed to hold the dialogue on an annual basis".

The move is significant, given the Chinese military assertiveness in the maritime region.

India already partners with Australia in the four-nation Quadri-lateral arrangement along with the US and Japan which focuses on maintenance of a rules-based order in the region. France, which has island territories as its part in the maritime region, is also a close strategic partner of India.

In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said, "The first India-France-Australia Trilateral Dialogue was held virtually on September 9. The meeting was co-chaired by Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Foreign Secretary of India, Mr. François Delattre, Secretary-General, French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and Ms. Frances Adamson, Secretary, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The focus of the dialogue was on enhancing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific Region."

New Delhi said, "During the dialogue, the three sides discussed economic and geostrategic challenges and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 and domestic responses to it."

Four new Bills to make land registration easy in Telangana

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, SEPT. 9

The Telangana government on Wednesday introduced four bills in the assembly, paving way for digitisation of revenue records and land transactions to simplify the registration process.

While introducing the Telangana rights in land and pattadar passbooks bill, 2020, and the Telangana abolition of the

posts of village revenue officers bill, 2020, Chief Minister, K. Chandrashekar Rao, said citizens in the state can soon transfer both agricultural and non-agricultural properties at click of a button through the upcoming Dharani portal, rather than running from one government office to another.

Municipal administration minister, K. T. Ramarao introduced the Telangana municipal laws

amendment bill, 2020 and panchayat raj minister, Errabelli Dayakar Rao, introduced the Telangana panchayat raj amendment bill, 2020, in the assembly.

All four bills are aimed at ushering revolutionary reforms in the land administration in the state. Announcing a comprehensive land survey across the state to categorise agricultural and non-agricultural lands, Chief Minister Rao said each inch of the land

will be surveyed and the survey numbers will be tagged with geographical coordinates so that there will not be any scope for disputes and clashes over land in the state.

The Bills were introduced to bring transparency in land administration and simplify the registration process, minimising human interference, Rao said, declaring that the much-awaited Dharani website will soon be acti-

vated for the public to access data pertaining to the land records of the entire state.

Under the new law, the lands will be categorised as agricultural and non-agricultural lands and non-agricultural land transactions will be entered by the sub-registrars and agricultural ones by tahsildars.

Stating that section seven of the registration act, 1908 gives discre-

tionary powers to the state government to authorise any person to carry out registrations, Rao declared that using that discretion, the state government is empowering 590 tahsildars across the state as joint registrars.

The entire registration process will be carried out digitally by visiting the offices of the sub-registrar or the mandal revenue officer only once. The entire registration process

will be completed after submitting necessary documents and land records will be updated accordingly in real time.

"Over 89.47 lakh properties in local bodies have been already digitised to carry out these transactions digitally. The entire land or property data will be available online and thus, preventing unauthorised or illegal transactions," said the Chief Minister.

IN BRIEF

Another Belarus activist detained

Kyiv: Belarusian authorities on Wednesday detained one of the last leading members of an opposition council who remained free, moving methodically to end a month of protests against authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko. Lawyer Maxim Znakh, a member of the Coordination Council created by the opposition to facilitate talks with the country's leader of 26 years on a transition of power, was taken out of the council's office by unidentified people in ski masks, his associate Gleb German said. He said Znakh only had time to text message "masks" before they took the phone away from him.

Israel, UAE to ink deal next week

Washington: Israel and the United Arab Emirates will sign their historic deal normalising relations at a White House ceremony on Sept. 15, officials said. Senior delegations from the two countries will be led by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the brother of Abu Dhabi's powerful crown prince. US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the ceremony would either be on the South Lawn, the Rose Garden or inside depending on weather. Late Tuesday, Netanyahu tweeted he "was proud to leave for Washington next week at the invitation of President Trump and to participate in the historic ceremony at the to sign the deal with the UAE."

Pak mine collapse toll rises to 22

Peshawar: At least 22 people have been killed and dozens were battling for their lives after six units of the famed marble mines in Pakistan's Ziarat Ghar mountain collapsed, causing large boulders to fall on them. The mines collapsed on Monday night, instantly killing 12 miners, the *Geo News* reported. The death toll rose after 10 more succumbed to injuries at the District Mohmand Hospital. Majority of the deceased include labourers and few others who had gathered at the foothill in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Safi town near the Afghanistan border, about 85 km from provincial capital Peshawar. Mohmand District Police Officer Mohmand Tariq Habib told *Geo News* that people are still buried under the rubble.

NAWAZ IS PO, ZARDARI INDICTED

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 9

Former Pakistan president Asif Ali Zardari was indicted in the Toshakhana reference on Wednesday, while former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was declared a proclaimed offender. An Islamabad accountability court heard the Toshakhana reference on Wednesday. Former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani was also indicted.

Mr Zardari and Mr Gilani have denied the charges. The judge, Asghar Ali of court number three, ordered a copy of the indictment to be given to the suspects. Taking to the rostrum, Mr Gilani said these kinds of matters should go to the Public Accounts Committee, not the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The cabinet division had sent the summary to give the cars from the Toshakhana, he argued. "The summary landed on my desk after a whole process but the bureaucrats who sent it to me haven't been declared suspects."

Kabul bomb targets VP, kills 10 civilians

10 shops were smoldering after the explosion, windows of dozens of homes shattered

Kabul, Sept. 9: A bombing in the Afghan capital on Wednesday targeted the convoy of the country's first vice president, killing 10 people and wounding at least 31, including several of the vice president's bodyguards, injured 31 wounded were taken to different hospitals for treatment. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack and the Taliban quickly denied they were behind the bombing. First Vice President Amrullah Saleh suffered minor burns in the blast.

The bomb was hidden in a cart by the roadside and detonated as his convoy passed by. Saleh, who is also Afghanistan's former intelligence chief, said in his first television appearance immediately after the attack that he was fine and had sustained only slight burns. He appeared in the TV footage with bandages on one hand.

"Me and my younger son who was also with me are fine," Saleh said. "I have slight burns on my face and hand from the wave of the blast. I don't have exact details right now, but I apologise to those who suffered casualties and those who lost their property in the attack."

His spokesman, Razwan Murad, called the attack a "vicious terrorist attempt" on Saleh's life. The roads in the vicinity of the bombing were closed off. The blast ignited a fire that set ablaze a number of the shops. The explosion left behind a scene of destruction — at least 10 shops were smoldering in the aftermath of the explosion that had also shattered windows of dozens of nearby homes, some with doors hanging off their hinges. —AP

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The bomb was hidden in a cart by the roadside and detonated as convoy of First Vice President Amrullah Saleh passed by



Afghan security personnel and municipality workers clean the site of an explosion in Kabul, on Wednesday. Spokesman for Afghanistan's Interior Ministry said the bombing that targeted the convoy of the country's first vice president on Wednesday morning killed several people and wounded more than a dozen others, including several of the vice president's bodyguards. — AP

10 dead in Chicago weekend gunfire

Chicago (US), Sept. 9: An eight-year-old girl shot in the back was among 10 people killed in gunfire over the Labour Day weekend in Chicago, police said on Tuesday, marking the latest deadly holiday weekend in the nation's third-largest city.

More than 50 people were shot from Friday until just before Tuesday midnight during a year where vio-

lence crime has soared in Chicago and other big US cities. But the holiday weekend's shooting death and injury counts weren't as high as recent holiday weekends and police noted a preceding two-month decline. "We're going to continue, obviously, looking at addressing violence crime," Police Superintendent David Brown told reporters. "We are seeing... ten-

uous progress. It's fragile, obviously. But we're seeing tenuous progress."

From July to August, murders dropped 45 per cent while shooting incidents dropped 15 per cent in the same time frame, police said. The department attributed the drop to tactics started in July, namely adding more officers to higher crime areas. The department has previ-

ously made similar deployments to crime hotspots, which experts say can temporarily lower crime but can be too aggressive.

Brown has said this time officers are also involved more in community-relations events such as food drives, an effort he hopes can work long term. The July Fourth weekend was particularly bloody with 17 people killed and at last

70 wounded in gun violence. A seven-year-old girl and 14-year-old boy were among those fatally shot.

Killed over the Labour Day weekend was an eight-year-old girl identified by the Cook County medical examiner's office as Dajore Wilson. The child was in the car with two adults on the city's South Side when they stopped at a red light. — AP

UK PM plans law banning large gatherings

London, Sept. 9: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is planning tougher new restrictions on social gatherings of more than six people in England starting next Monday, following a significant rise in the coronavirus cases.

A law change to be introduced will ban larger groups of friends and family meeting anywhere socially indoors or outdoors, to be enforced through a £100 fine if people fail to comply and doubling on each offence up to a maximum of £3,200.

The rule will not apply to schools, workplaces or Covid-secure weddings, funerals and organised team sports, Downing Street said on Wednesday. "We need to act now to stop the virus spreading. So we are simplifying and strengthening the rules on

Las Vegas Covid +ve children contract inflammatory disease

Las Vegas (US), Sept. 9: Health officials said Tuesday that eight Las Vegas-area children under age 14 who tested positive for Covid-19 since March were also diagnosed with a rare inflammatory condition linked with the coronavirus.

The Southern Nevada Health District said all the children were hospitalised and released, and the district has begun adding

daily tallies of confirmed cases of the illness to its daily online Coronavirus response report.

Not all children exhibit the same symptoms, and the district said that while there isn't a known cause, many children with the illness had Covid-19 or had close contact with someone who did. Researchers say the illness can cause inflammation of the multiple internal organs.

The Health District reported 61,543 cases of Covid-19 in and around Las Vegas, an increase of 67 cases since Monday, and a total of 1,206 deaths since March.

Officials say new case rates have decreased in the past two weeks. State health officials reported no new deaths and 137 new confirmed cases of Covid-19 statewide on Tuesday. — AP

social contact — making them easier to understand and for the police to enforce," said Johnson. "It is absolutely critical that

people now abide by these rules and remember the basics — washing your hands, covering your face, keeping space from others,

and getting a test if you have symptoms," he said. Previously, guidance in England allowed gatherings of up to six people

from different households outdoors — or two households of any size, indoors or outdoors. But until now the police have had no powers to stop them unless gatherings exceeded 30 people.

Under the new law, any group of seven or more people gathering anywhere risks being dispersed by police or fined for non-compliance.

The change applies to people in England of all ages, and to gatherings indoors and outdoors, in private homes, public outdoor spaces, and venues such as pubs and restaurants. The devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland set their own Coronavirus restrictions but largely follow similar patterns as set out for England. — PTI

US to withdraw troops from Iraq, Afghanistan

Baghdad, Sept. 9: US President Donald Trump was expected to announce further troop withdrawals Wednesday from Afghanistan and from Iraq, where several thousand US troops hunting down jihadist sleeper cells have faced increasing attacks blamed on pro-Iran factions.

The deadly bomb and rocket attacks have put additional pressure on Iraqi Prime Minister

Mustafa al-Kadhemi, who has pledged to rein in rogue groups pledged to fight the US military presence. Kadhemi travelled to Washington last month for strategic talks, including on the future of the US-led coalition deployed in Iraq since 2014 to fight the Islamic State group.

At the time, Trump told Kadhemi US forces would leave Iraq but gave no timetable or cap for troop levels. A senior US official

told reporters the president would make an announcement Wednesday but offered no details. There was no immediate response from the US-led coalition to a request for comment from AFP.

The US has already been steadily downsizing its troop levels in Iraq in recent months as Iraqis take over combat and training roles. "These withdrawals are part of the agreed transition of the US-led coali-

tion's role in Iraq," an Iraqi official said.

US and other coalition troops stayed on after IS's defeat in 2017 to support Iraqi forces with air strikes, drone surveillance and training to prevent a jihadist resurgence.

By late 2018, there were an estimated 5,200 American troops still stationed in Iraq, making up the bulk of the 7,500 coalition forces there, according to US officials. Over the past

year, dozens of rocket attacks have targeted those forces, the US embassy and logistics convoys heading to Iraqi bases, killing at least six military personnel — three Americans, one Briton and two Iraqis. US officials have blamed the violence on headline factions close to Tehran, which as Washington's longtime foe has repeatedly demanded US troops leave the Middle East. — AFP

Trump nominated for Peace Nobel

Copenhagen, Sept. 9: A far-right Norwegian lawmaker said Wednesday that he has nominated US President Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize for the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in the Middle East. Christian Tybring-Gjedde, a member of the Norwegian Parliament for the far-right Progress Party, said Trump should be considered because of his work "for a peace agreement between the United Arab Emirates and Israel which opens up for possible peace in the Middle East."

"No matter how Trump acts at home and what he says at press conferences, he has absolutely a chance at getting the Nobel Peace Prize," Tybring-Gjedde, told *The Associated Press*. He said he nominated Trump on Wednesday, adding that "Donald Trump meets the criteria" for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Tybring-Gjedde was also one of two Norwegian lawmakers who nominated Trump for the peace prize in 2018 for his efforts to bring reconciliation between North and South Korea. Any national lawmaker can nominate someone. — AP

US reporter not detained: China

Beijing, Sept. 9: Local authorities in China's Inner Mongolia region have denied they used force or detained an American reporter when she was questioned at a police station last week.

The *Los Angeles Times* said Thursday that one of its reporters was grabbed by the throat and pushed into a cell and held for more than four hours before being forced to leave the area in northern China. "There's no instance of the police using both hands to pinch the neck or being detained in a police cell, nor was there any instance of being detained or expelled," the press office for Hohhot, the provincial capital, said in a written response to questions from *The Associated Press*. The statement, dated Tuesday, said the reporter was interviewing a pedestrian and accused her of filming or photographing the person without the interviewee's permission.

It said the reporter chose to go back to Beijing voluntarily. The newspaper's Beijing bureau chief, Alice Su, who is the journalist in question, declined to comment.

She was covering protests and class boycotts that had broken out in Inner Mongolia over a move to increase the use of Chinese in schools where Mongolian has been the main language of instruction. Authorities, who have detained more than 20 people, are trying to clamp down on information about the protests.

North Eastern Railway
E-Procurement Tender Notice
No. 05TRACK2020
 On behalf of the President of India, Chief Administrative Officer/Con., North Eastern Railway, Gorakhpur invites the following E-Procurement Tenders:
Sr. No. : 1. Open Tender No./Due on : NECON0520 Due on 05.10.2020.
Description of Materials : Manufacture and supply of Combination Switch Expansion Joints (complete set) 60 Kg/ 52 kg as per RDSO drawing no. T-6782 with alteration 2, conforming to IRS specification no. T10-2000 corrigendum no. 1 of December 2016 with all fittings as per drawing. Qty. : 230 Set. **Consignee wise quantity, SSE/P, way/Con/NER : 230 Set L/N at Gonda, Delivery Period : 10 Months, Estimated Tender Value : Rs. 1,56,05,500.00, Earnest Money : Rs. 3,12,110.00. • Submission of Tender upto 14.59 hrs. on 05.10.2020 .** Date of opening 15.00 hrs. on 05.10.2020. Detailed tender notice, eligibility criteria, terms & conditions are available on website <https://ireps.gov.in>. In case any disparity arises between Hindi and English version of tender notice, English version of tender notice will hold good and will be followed.
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CPRO-W-90 N.E. Railway/Gorakhpur
About any Passenger-Agency complaint SMS on Mob. No. 09794845953
Do not smoke Bidi/Cigarette in train

In 3 big states, Biden looks to rebuild Dems' Blue Wall

Lansing (US), Sept. 9: In 2016, Donald Trump tore down Democrats' "blue wall," winning the White House with surprise victories in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. This year, Joe Biden is trying to rebuild. The Democratic presidential nominee's first pandemic-era campaign trips beyond his home in Delaware are taking him to all three states, an indication of how closely Biden's electoral prospects are tied to his ability to flip those political battlegrounds. Last week, Biden trav-

eled to Wisconsin and was followed quickly by running mate Kamala Harris, who held her own events there on Labour Day. On Wednesday, Biden heads to Michigan to tout a plan for boosting US manufacturing. He also has two stops scheduled this week in Pennsylvania. Though the Biden campaign often emphasizes that it sees multiple ways to secure the 270 Electoral College votes they need to win in November, the quickest path runs through Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

JUNE PRIMARY ELECTION: GEORGIA INVESTIGATING 1,000 CASES OF 'POTENTIAL DOUBLE VOTING'

Atlanta (US), Sept. 9: Georgia's top elections official said Tuesday that his office has identified about 1,000 cases of "potential double voting" in the June primary election — a felony he's determined to see prosecuted.

These voters submitted absentee ballots but also voted in person, a

problem that happened across 100 Georgia counties, and election officials didn't catch them in time to keep the second votes from being tallied, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger said.

"No one gets to vote twice. Everyone gets one vote," Raffensperger said. It wasn't imme-

diately clear whether the outcome of any races may have been affected. It follows a suggestion last week by President Donald Trump that people who vote early by mail should show up at their local polling places on Election Day and vote again if their ballots haven't been counted. — AP

to win the Electoral College," said veteran Democratic strategist Joe Trippi.

"It makes tremendous sense to make those three states the base foundation of any strategy to win. If Biden wins all three, it's over." Biden's aides believe his focus on the economy and Trump's handling of the coronavirus pandemic will resonate among key voters nationwide but particularly in states like Michigan, which took one of the sharpest hits nationally from the pandemic. The unemployment

rate in the state spiked at 24 per cent in April, according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics. The statewide rate has since recovered to 8.7 per cent, but Michigan has nearly 414,500 fewer jobs than it did when Trump was inaugurated. Trump supporters say that he has fulfilled his promise of creating jobs and was temporarily sidetracked by the pandemic. But the jobs numbers show that hiring at factories across the Midwest began to stall and then decline in the summer of 2019. — AP

in play — it's pretty impossible for Trump

"If Biden wins any of them — but particular-

ly any two, with some of the other states that are

DECCAN Chronicle

10 SEPTEMBER 2020

India, China leaders must defuse Ladakh row swiftly

The escalation of the already tense standoff at the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh by Chinese troops earlier this week, with the People's Liberation Army trying hard, unsuccessfully, to dislodge Indian soldiers from the commanding heights at Mukhpari (at over 18,000 ft), on the ridgeline north of Rezang La, led to the first shots fired at the LAC in 45 years. While there are claims and counter-claims on who fired the first shot, it seems clear that Chinese forces – armed with machetes, spears, clubs and automatic weapons – tried to intimidate the Indians into retreating with a show of force and firing in the air, but backed off when the Indian Army didn't budge, using loudspeakers and floodlights and firing in the air to stop the Chinese advancing. No clash took place, and there were no casualties, but if more such encounters occur, the two sides may end up shooting at each other, and from that it's just one step to a full-fledged war. While senior officers of the two armies are talking to each other, the two governments must actively step in now. External affairs minister Subrahmanyan Jaishankar is in Moscow to attend a foreign ministers' meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and he will meet China's foreign minister Wang Yi in a face-to-face encounter, the first between since the standoff began in early May. Mr Wang Yi is not only foreign minister, but also a state councillor (which ranks higher in Beijing's hierarchy) and special representative on the boundary issue and is well versed in its nuts and bolts. He is also due to talk to India's special representative, NSA Ajit Doval, in the coming days.

There is a long history, over decades, of the Chinese side intruding across the LAC, but after a brief period the PLA troops usually withdraw. The current standoff is unusual, even in contrast to Doklam in 2017, in its duration (now in its fifth month) and because the Chinese are showing no sign of withdrawing from the areas they occupied, such as from Finger 4 to Finger 8 and in Chusul (where Monday night's firing took place) and go back to their pre-April 2020 positions. This is what India has been consistently demanding. The Indian Army's pre-emptive move to occupy two dozen strategic heights on Pangong Tso's southern banks late last month – giving Indian soldiers the tactical advantage as they can keep a close watch on PLA movements – is said to have rattled the Chinese, and some of their renewed aggressiveness is attributed to this. With winter just two months away, India could use its control of these heights to negotiate with China from a position of strength and push for a swift return to the status quo.

While the Ladakh situation is critical, it's not the only place China is intruding into Indian territory. Transgressions by the PLA are reported across the 4,056-km LAC, in Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, which the Chinese call "Southern Tibet". China's aim is clearly to keep the Indian Army on edge across the long frontier.

Unless there is a swift breakthrough at Mr Jaishankar's Moscow talks, it may be time to involve the top leadership. China has consistently held, as has India, that bilateral negotiations are the only way forward. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping should start talking before it is too late.

A bizarre potboiler

The bizarre events that followed the tragic death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput have reached a curious point with the arrest of his friend Rhea Chakraborty by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on charges of "procuring drugs for him and for managing finance for drug procurement with him". The charge is based on the discovery of 59 grams of curated marijuana from the possession of two drug peddlers whom the agency alleges have links to Sushant Singh. It has admitted it found no "drug" on Rhea.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), as ordered by the Supreme Court, has started investigation into the death, which the victim's father himself had said was a suicide. The agency has in the past proved deaths, marked as suicides, to be murders after investigation, but this would perhaps be the first case in which it would be investigating a suicide.

One cannot lose sight of the incredible amount of energy being spent on and the hard politicking being involved in the case. Three central government agencies — the CBI, the Enforcement Directorate and the NCB — have their attention focused on the case. Remember, the Bihar government had lost no time demanding a CBI investigation saying the actor hailed from Bihar. Now the state, which goes to polls in a couple of months, reverberates with the slogan "Justice for Sushant" as if it has no other issues to grapple with.

All this happens at a time when the world has started taking a liberal view of drugs such as marijuana; some countries have either legalised or been contemplating legalising its use and instead chase more harmful synthetic drugs that permanently damage lives. One may only hope that the central agencies have set professional targets in this case and are not playing a role in a drama to divert public attention from real problems the country is faced with and to which the government seems to have no solution.

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Subhani



NEP: Ambitious targets set for education sector



Amitabha Bhattacharya

The National Education Policy 2020 in 65 pages, distilled from its 500-page draft version and modified via extensive feedback and comments from all stakeholders, including schools, colleges, universities, state governments and the public, has aroused a great deal of interest. While a few commentators criticised it for inadequacies and some politicians went vocal over the language issues, the document has broadly been accepted as timely and progressive. It is a continuation of earlier policies, especially NEP (1986/1992), but also marks some significant departures from the past.

To appreciate NEP 2020's defining characteristics, one must remember it primarily reflects the nation's intent to shape the contours of this sector in the medium-to-long term, the implementation of which, based on carefully designed action plans, will depend upon mobilisation of the needed resources and the political will at all levels. Besides, this extremely condensed document that combines modern thinking with the views of visionaries like John Henry Newman, John Dewey, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi in some form or another will be better understood if the more elaborate 2019 draft NEP is referred to. The draft, put together by sharp minds like K. Kasturirangan, Manjul Bhargava and others, provided the detailed logical underpinnings behind most of the crystallised ideas found in the final document.

A document like this should be valued for the way continuation of validated ideas is seamlessly integrated with bold new ones. While earlier policies and recommendations of various commissions had indeed stressed upon inclusion and equitable access to education, need for flexibility in devising the cur-

riculum, reduction of academic load for schoolchildren, moving away from rote learning, putting teachers at the heart of the education system, universalisation of basic education, integration of vocational education, enhancement of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at every level, increasing public expenditure on education to six per cent of our GDP and the like, NEP 2020 should be characterised by the following factors. First, it stresses on numeracy as much on literacy, urging the attainment of universal foundational literacy and numeracy of all children on a mission mode. In today's world, mathematical skills are as important as linguistic and other skills. Despite many attempts made so far, why a substantial number of our children have still been performing poorly, as measured by their learning outcome, remains a moot question. This and the remedial measures needed are addressed squarely in this document.

Second, based on the evidence of neuroscience that 85 per cent of a child's cumulative brain development occurs before the age of six years, pre-school education or school-preparedness for three years under Early Childhood Care and Education, facilitated by "play and discovery-based learning", has been proposed. In addition to the current coverage of 6-14 years under the existing law, three years of pre-school and four years of secondary education, making integrated schooling from 3-18 years, will be the new norm. Achieving a GER of 100 per cent for this entire spectrum by 2030, and a GER of 50 per cent for higher (including vocational) education by 2035, has been targeted. Ambitious, but not unachievable.

Thirdly, NEP seeks to restore the importance of the arts, humanities and social sciences in our edu-

cation system. In our engagement with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as these areas offer higher employment opportunities, we have accorded lesser value and importance to non-STEM disciplines. Institutions focusing only on engineering, medicine or legal studies have inherent limitations, and this model often militates against the idea of a university. Introducing flexibility in course design, allowing much greater choice to students for selecting subjects as per their aptitude and preferences, offering different entry and exit options, and stressing on the crucial need for multi-disciplinary in education are among the measures suggested.

Fourth, the quality of research in most of our universities, especially in science, has been declining. NEP addresses this question and suggests how conditions conducive to high quality research in universities and colleges can be created. The idea to set up a National Research Foundation with adequate resources is a major step in this direction.

Fifth, recognising the power of the languages, a major emphasis has been laid on language learning. Children between 2-8 years are known to pick up languages swiftly, and the advantage of multi-lingualism in their cognitive development cannot be exaggerated. Equally important is the need to ensure that children are encouraged, in the initial years, to learn subjects through their mother tongue. To see this move as anti-English or pro-Hindi shows a clear bias and shows an inadequate understanding of the purport of the new policy.

Finally, a slew of structural changes has been suggested without which the envisaged reforms can-

not be carried out. Establishing four verticals for standard setting, accreditation, funding, and framing "graduate attributes", under the umbrella Higher Education Commission of India, would form the basic architecture. Education being a concurrent subject, evidently a great deal of coordination between various departments and also between states and the Centre will be imperative. If members are chosen carefully and transparently, HECI and the four bodies under it will facilitate this participative process.

Many important issues like expanding the role of the private sector in this area, granting of autonomy to unwilling or unprepared public institutions, recognising the role of parents in the education of children, imposing conditions for inviting reputed foreign universities "on our own terms", and substantially raising public expenditure on education must be grappled with. However, though the NEP promotes the idea of "credit transfer" in higher education institutions, it does not specifically address the problems of school students migrating from one state to another. NEP 2020 has broadly articulated all the problems that were plaguing the educational sphere as a whole, and based on the collective experience so far, sought to suggest ways for a bright new future. As we know, policies rarely fail, it's the more complex process of implementation that often does.

The first priority now will be to set up the bodies and set in motion the missions proposed in the next three months. The key to success lies in taking along the states, which must bear most of the extra expenditure involved. As such, this NEP will make a difference if only the Prime Minister leads the process. How seriously the Union government wants this transformative policy to revolutionise India's education sector will be evident in the next few years.

The writer is a retired IAS officer from the Andhra Pradesh cadre, who has also worked with UNDP and with the private sector

Though the NEP promotes the idea of 'credit transfer' in higher education institutions, it does not specifically address school students migrating from one state to another

LETTERS

INDIA'S ECONOMY

With the world's most powerful economies floundering due to Covid-19, India can't be a lone exception (*Come clean on economy*, Sept. 9). However, in a dire economic situation like this the government should find a peaceful solution with China on the LAC issue. India can't afford a long standoff with an incomparably more powerful economy like China. Can India ever think of a surgical strike on some China territory near the LAC as it did with Pakistan across the LoC? I think India must make its economy strong before taking on a powerful adversary like China. As of now, businesses are in dire straits and ballooning numbers of job losses are a cause for tremendous concern.

Kangayam R. Narasimhan
Chennai

DRUG MAFIA

APPROPOS THE report *Rhea arrested in drug case, sent to jail for 14-days* (Sept. 9). The arrest of Rhea Chakraborty in connection with Sushant Singh Rajput's case, by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has sent jitters to the chain of drug peddlers and consumers at large. While her arrest has obviously busted an entire drug mafia which includes some political figures and Bollywood stars, it is a shame on the entire nation where the use of drugs/narcotics is banned and proclaimed illegal. She is charged with various sections under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, and subsequently her bail plea was rejected by the Mumbai court and remanded under judicial custody for 14 days. Unravelling the drug cartel seems to be the eye-opener of the case as further investigations are on to reveal the facts about SSR's death.

Jacqueline Netto, Chennai

REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

THE ADVISORY issued by the Union Health Ministry in the name of SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for the partial reopening of schools for classes from 9 onwards seems blatantly implausible, even as many schools, especially govt-run schools do not have even the minimum facilities such as washrooms, grounds etc and many classrooms remain dungeons resembling medieval castles (*Schools allowed to reopen for classes 9 to 12*, Sept. 9). That said, how the students could be controlled on the school premises round the clock for social distancing, despite instructions, is a million-dollar query that would haunt us. Come what may, unless a lasting solution such as a vaccine for the control of the virus is available, running the schools even on trial and error basis would be perilous while treating the students like guinea pigs in a laboratory.

E.S.Chandrasekaran, Chennai

Sanju Verma



Worst over, healthy auto sales signal bounceback

India's GDP decline of 23.9 per cent for the June 2020 quarter has generated heated debate. A stringent lockdown necessitated by the worst global pandemic in 102 years was enforced with the idea of saving lives. Thanks to the lockdown, India's track record turned out superior to other nations' with a fatality rate below two per cent. In fact, every major global economy contracted sharply in the June quarter.

While the United States reported a staggering 32.9 per cent annualised crash in GDP growth, the comparable fall was 42.9 per cent for Singapore, a decline of 38.7 per cent for Canada, a 12.1 per cent fall for Eurozone, a 10.1 per cent drop for Germany, a steep contraction of 20.4 per cent for the United Kingdom and a massive plunge of 27.8 per cent in the case of Japan. In India's case, we had a bright spot, with the agriculture sector growing by a healthy 3.4 per cent in that quarter.

Another fact that deserves attention is the GDP data pertaining to the March 2020 quarter. Much before the global pandemic struck, while India's GDP grew at only 3.1 per cent, we were the only large economy to report posi-

tive growth in the March quarter, with agriculture growing by a solid 5.9 per cent. Other economies like the US contracted by 4.8 per cent, Germany by 2.2 per cent, Eurozone by 3.8 per cent and China actually saw a steep GDP fall of 6.8 per cent in March quarter. Global rating giant S&P says India will have a V-shaped recovery, with a projected GDP growth of 8.5 per cent for 2021-22, far higher than its international peers.

Thanks to stellar reforms in the last six years by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India became the fifth largest economy in the world, after surpassing the United Kingdom in February 2020, after becoming the sixth largest overtaking France in 2019. The media has been screaming itself hoarse about India's biggest GDP drop in 40 years but it failed to inform its audience that, on the positive side, India's policy repo rate at four per cent is the lowest in 58 years. The coal sector was denationalised and coal mining was privatised for the first time in 2019-2020 after 47 years. Banking consolidation by merging 10 public sector banks into four, starting April 2020, has happened for the first time in 51 years.

The country's foreign exchange

reserves swelled to a record high of \$538.191 billion. The best part is short-term trade credit at just 18.2 per cent of overall external debt. Again, over 66 per cent of the aforesaid accretion in forex reserves in the past one year is accounted for by stable and high quality FDI and not fickle FII flows.

Is the worst over? The answer is a decisive "yes". Take the GST revenues for August, for instance, which stood at ₹86,449 crore. Despite the lockdown, this was 88 per cent of the GST collected in the same month last year. Overall, 48.3 million e-way bills were generated in July, almost back to pre-Covid levels of 55.3 million bills, in January 2020.

Again, Indian Railways' Freight loading for August 2020, at 94.33 million tonnes, was 3.31 million tonnes higher compared to August 2019. CBDT has, so far, issued refunds of over ₹88,652 crore to more than 24.64 lakh taxpayers from April 1, 2020, onwards. The Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 52 in August, up from 46 in July. Amounts sanctioned under the emergency credit line guarantee scheme (ECLGS) by public sector banks increased to ₹76,044.44 crores, as of August 18, 2020. Similarly, private

banks sanctioned loans to the tune of ₹74,715.02 crores, under ECLGS, pointing at a swift uptick in the economy.

More importantly, let Modi naysayers not forget that 20 billion dollars is what India attracted in investments and pledges from 15 companies in just three months from April to July 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. This US \$20bn is a massive vote of confidence for Modinomics, by some of the world's largest and richest corporations like Google, Facebook, Walmart, Samsung, Apple, Saudi Arabia's PIF, SGS, Axtria, and so on. Taiwanese company, Pegatron, is the fourth Apple supplier to decide to set up a base in India, after Foxconn, Wistron and Compal Electronics, have pledged billions.

Suffice to say that India is not alone in this misfortune. Every global behemoth has been adversely impacted by Covid. But unlike others, India has a vibrant rural economy, accounting for over 50 per cent of our workforce. News has it that Australia is facing its worst recession in 30 years. China's food shops are running out of supplies and the US might end the year with a 4.2 per cent drop in consumption. In sharp contrast, India is doing a far better job

in dealing with the Wuhan virus.

At his US-India Strategic Partnership Forum address, Mr Modi said, "We are future-proofing India in every way, enabling New India to take off." Well, Mr Modi's words have found resonance, India's Hero Motocorp, the world's largest two-wheeler company that derives over 65 per cent sales from rural areas, for example, reported a healthy 7.6 per cent year on year growth in overall sales, selling 5.8 lakh units in August 2020. Ditto for M&M that derives over 50 per cent sales from rural India. It saw a robust 28 per cent YoY rise in overall tractor sales in July 2020. Maruti Suzuki saw a 21.3 per cent growth in car sales in August, while Tata Motors saw a splendid 154 per cent growth in auto sales. Indeed, since auto sales are a lead indicator, India's September quarter GDP should see a sharp bounceback, aided by government spending, which is moving ahead in full throttle, undeterred by the pandemic.

The writer is an economist, chief spokesperson for BJP Mumbai and bestselling author of Truth & Dare — The Modi Dynamic

SHORT TAKES

Tokyo governor firm on Games

Tokyo: The postponed Olympics must be held next year “by all means”, Tokyo’s governor said on Wednesday, becoming the latest official to insist the event is feasible despite the coronavirus pandemic.

Yuriko Koike’s remarks, at an event hosted by Kyodo news agency, come after International Olympic Committee vice-president John Coates told AFP that the Games would go ahead in 2021 “with or without Covid”.

“Athletes are going through much hardship due to the one-year delay given that their physical condition and motivation were targeted at this summer,” Koike said, according to an English translation of her remarks published by Kyodo. “We have to go forward with the Games next summer by all means,” she added, at the corporate event for the news agency’s subscribers.

The city will “implement every possible measure” to ensure the safety of the event, Koike said.

— AFP

Roy makes it to One-Day squad

Manchester: Jason Roy was added to England’s squad on Wednesday for the upcoming One-Day International series against Australia after recovering from a side strain.

The explosive opener missed the recent T20 series against Pakistan and Australia with the injury he sustained in training. Dawid Malan was promoted to the reserve list on the day he rose to No.1 on the Twenty20 player international rankings after scoring 66, 44 and 21 against Australia in the series.

England won 2-1. That took his career average to 48.71 and his overall strike-rate to 146.66. The ODI series against Australia starts Friday in Manchester. They are the first ODI matches between the countries since England won the Cricket World Cup on home soil last year. — AP

De Bruyne is Eng footballer of year

London: Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne was voted English football’s player of the year, denying Liverpool a third straight winner of the prestigious award. De Bruyne became the first City player to capture the Professional Footballers’ Association award after scoring 13 goals and making a record-tying 20 assists last season.

The Belgian credited manager Pep Guardiola for giving him the freedom to be creative. “Most of the time he just lets me be me,” De Bruyne said of Guardiola.

“We speak often about the team but in a lot of senses he knows when he gives the orders of what the team has to do that I will listen. But then on the other side, he gives me a lot of freedom; I don’t know why, that’s just the way it goes between us. He knows in one way I will always put the team first and then obviously if I can help myself I’m going to do that,” he said. — AP

Vikas gets the nod to train in US

New Delhi: Olympic-bound boxer Vikas Krishan has got the Sports Authority of India’s (SAI) approval to train in the USA, where he also plans to resume his career in the professional circuit.

SAI has approved his training in the US till November 30 and also sanctioned ₹17.5 lakh for the stint. Vikas, who competes in 69kg category currently, is an Asian and Commonwealth Games gold-medallist. — PTI

Live on TV

CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Final: Trinbago Knight Riders vs St Lucia Zouks from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

US OPEN TENNIS

Matches from 9.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 2, HD

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Cristiano’s century

Ronaldo second player to score 100 international goals

Stockholm, Sept. 9: Add 100 international goals to the extraordinary list of milestones achieved by soccer superstar Cristiano Ronaldo.

Ronaldo became just the second male player to reach a century of goals for a national team when he curled a free kick into the top corner from 25 metres for the first of his two strikes in Portugal’s 2-0 away win against Sweden in the Nations League on Tuesday.

Scoring one of the best goals of his international career was a fitting way to enter the “100 Club,” where he joins former Iran striker Ali Daei, and he wheeled away in delight in an empty Friends Arena in Stockholm before performing his trademark celebration the mid-air pirouette.

Ronaldo, who was playing in his 165th game for Portugal, then added a second goal another curler into the top corner and needs nine more to surpass the international record of 109 scored by Daei from 1993-2006.

Ronaldo already holds the record for goals in the Champions League with 131, 16 more than nearest rival Lionel Messi.

Portugal has won its two opening group games after beating Croatia 4-1 on Saturday, when Ronaldo was absent because of a toe infection. Belgium and France also have maximum points. The top-ranked Belgians beat Iceland 5-1 and France defeated Croatia 4-2 the same scoreline as the 2018 World Cup final.

England drew 0-0 at Denmark in Copenhagen.

GIROUD NEARS RECORD

Oliver Giroud moved to within one goal of Michel Platini’s national record for France by converting a penalty to complete the victory over Croatia at the Stade de France.

The striker was handed the opportunity to move onto 40 international goals by Antoine Griezmann, who gave away penalty duties having missed his last three for France. Giroud made no mistake in the 77th minute.

A well-taken individual goal by center back Dejan Lovren put Croatia ahead, but Anthony Martial set up Griezmann for the equalizer before sliding in for a shot that hit the post, struck goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic on the back of the head, and rebounded into the net.

— AP

GANGULY IN DUBAI TO TAKE STOCK OF IPL

New Delhi, Sept. 9: BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Wednesday left for Dubai to oversee preparations for a bio-secure IPL beginning on September 19.

Defending champions Mumbai Indians will face Chennai Super Kings in the opening match of the T20 event, which has been moved to the UAE due to the rising Covid-19 cases in India.

“My first flight in 6 months to Dubai for IPL... crazy life changes,” Ganguly posted on his Instagram handle with a picture in which he is wearing a mask and face shield, part of the Standard Operating Procedure while flying amid the pandemic.

The BCCI was able to create a window for the IPL following the postponement of the T20 World Cup in Australia, scheduled for October-November.

The Board would have faced a revenue loss of ₹4000 crore if the tournament, which usually takes place in April-May, had not got the go ahead.

IPL chairman Brijesh Patel is among the other key officials who are already in Dubai.

The tournament, despite its strict health safety measures, has already endured instances of contingent members testing positive for Covid-19. — PTI



Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates scoring the opening goal, his 100th goal for Portugal, during the UEFA Nations League football match against Sweden in Solna, Sweden, on Tuesday. Portugal won 2-0.

— AFP

Covid +ve Mbappe ruled out

Paris, Sept. 9: Kylian Mbappe has been ruled out of France’s Nations League game against World Cup runners-up Croatia on Tuesday after testing positive for Covid-19, national team management said Monday.

Mbappe, who took part in Monday evening’s training session before learning the result of his test, is the seventh Paris Saint-Germain player to contract the virus. Neymar was among the first to test positive last week.

“He was set aside from the group after receiving the results at the end of training before returning to his home in the evening,” French team management said.

“Like the rest of the squad, Mbappe had undergone a test prior to meeting up. The result was negative like the one on Wednesday” requested by UEFA ahead of the Sweden fixture on Saturday in Solna, management said.

Mbappe scored the winner for the world champions in a 1-0 victory over Sweden in their opening Nations League match on Thursday away to Lens.

MESSI BACK TO TRAINING WITH BARCELONA SQUAD

Barcelona, Sept. 9: Lionel Messi rejoined the rest of his Barcelona teammates at practice on Wednesday. Messi had been practicing separately from the group since returning to the club on Monday. He had not been with the squad since announcing he wanted to leave and then deciding to stay to avoid a legal dispute with Barcelona.

He needed to pass two Coronavirus tests before he could practice with the rest of the squad under incoming coach Ronald Koeman.

Also back with the group was Philippe Coutinho, who also had been practicing separately. Players who had been with their national teams for Nations League matches also returned, including Frenkie de Jong, Ansu Fati and Sergio Busquets.

Barcelona said that defender Samuel Umtiti has been cleared by doctors after recovering from Covid-19. Luis Suarez and Arturo Vidal, who like Umtiti are not in Koeman’s plans for the season, also have been practicing normally.

The club has scheduled a friendly against third-division club Nastic for Saturday.

— AP

Mbappe is the fourth player to be withdrawn from the France squad following a positive Covid-19 test.

— AFP

CANADA QUINN COMES OUT AS TRANSGENDER

Los Angeles, Sept. 9: Canada and OL Reign midfielder Rebecca Quinn came out publicly as transgender in an Instagram post on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old player, who won Olympic bronze with the Canadian women’s team in 2016 and played for Canada at the 2019 Women’s World Cup, said the post was aimed at helping “queer folk” feel safe on social media.

“As I’ve lived as an openly trans person with the people I love most for many years, I did always wonder when I’d come out publicly,” Quinn wrote in an Instagram post.

Quinn is one of the most prominent North American team sports athletes to come out as transgender.

— AFP

Awesome Osaka cruises into semis

New York, Sept. 9: Japan’s Naomi Osaka sailed into the semifinals of the US Open on Tuesday as Alexander Zverev of Germany booked his spot in the last four of the men’s draw.

Osaka, the tournament’s fourth seed, swept aside unseeded Shelby Rogers in straight sets to set up a match with Jennifer Brady for a place in Saturday’s final.

The 22-year-old Osaka required just 1hr 20 min inside an empty Arthur Ashe Stadium to defeat the 27-year-old Rogers 6-3, 6-4.

Osaka, the world number 9, said her victory was pay-back for three previous defeats to the 93rd-ranked Rogers.

They included a 2017 loss on clay in Charleston that Osaka said had left “a really bad aftertaste in my mouth.”

“Honestly, I just felt like she had the upper hand because I’ve never beaten her,” Osaka said.

Osaka’s dominant service game contributed to a comfortable runout for the 2018 US Open champion.

She won 83 per cent of points on her first serve and 70 per cent on her second.

In contrast, Rogers managed only 66 per cent and 33 per cent respectively. Rogers hit 29 unforced errors compared to just eight committed by Osaka. Brady conquered some

serious nerves to defeat Kazakhstan’s Yulia Putintseva and reach the semifinals of a Grand Slam for the first time.

The American 28th seed needed just 1hr 9 min to blow away her 23rd-seeded opponent 6-3, 6-2.

Brady is yet to drop a set and has lost only 24 games during her march to the semis, the fewest of anyone left in the draw.

Osaka said Brady would be a formidable opponent.

ZVEREV EASES PAST CORIC, IN SEMIS

Zverev bounced back from a shocking start to oust 27th-seeded Croatian Borna Coric in four sets.

The 23-year-old German prevailed 1-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/1), 6-3 in 3hr 25min.

He began playing more aggressively after finding himself a set down, and 4-2 behind in the second set.

The German will play Spain’s 20th seed Pablo Carreno Busta for a place in Sunday’s final.

The Spaniard defeated 12th-seeded Canadian Denis Shapovalov 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4), 0-6, 6-3 in an epic five-setter that ended in the early hours of Wednesday.

On Wednesday, second seed Dominic Thiem faces Australian Alex de Minaur and third seed Daniil Medvedev plays compatriot Andrey Rublev for the other semifinal spot.

— AFP



Jennifer Brady of the United States reacts after defeating Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan during the quarterfinals of the US Open tennis championships in New York on Tuesday. Brady won 6-3, 6-2.

— AP

CHAHAR RETURNS BUT MORE TESTS TO BE DONE

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

Chennai Super Kings heaved a sigh of relief on Wednesday when Deepak Chahar returned to the team hotel in Dubai after completing his 14-day quarantine period. However, batsman Rituraj Gaikwad and one more CSK member are still in isolation and expected to join the squad only on September 12.

“Deepak has returned from quarantine after testing negative twice. He will now undergo BCCI’s medical tests before starting training. Rituraj went into quarantine late and has to finish 14 days,” said K.S. Viswanathan, CEO of Chennai Super Kings.

Chahar’s return is good news for CSK, but the pacer still has to clear a cardiovascular test to be conducted by BCCI’s medical team in order to join the training camp.

His availability for the opening game against Mumbai Indians to be held on September 19 is still in doubt.



Australia’s Marcus Stoinis (second from right) celebrates the wicket of England’s Dawid Malan during their Twenty20 cricket match in Southampton.

— AFP

YUVI UP FOR COMEBACK

New Delhi, Sept. 9: World Cup-winning former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh has decided to come out of retirement, giving in to a request from the Punjab Cricket Association more than a year after he called it quits. The Player of the Tournament at the 2011 World Cup, Yuvraj had announced his retirement from all forms of cricket last June. PCA secretary Puneet Bali was the first person to approach the Yuvraj with an offer to come out of retirement for the benefit of Punjab cricket. He has agreed to resume for the state at least in the T20 format.

“Initially, I wasn’t sure that I wanted to take up the offer. I was done with domestic cricket, though I did want to continue to play in other domestic franchise-based leagues worldwide if I got permission from the BCCI,” Yuvi was quoted as saying by Cricbuzz.

— PTI

IT’S IMPORTANT TO HELP EACH OTHER: HUSSEY

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

Chennai Super Kings batting coach Mike Hussey feels mental toughness will be key this IPL season and three-time champions will be at an advantage given the number of experienced players they have in their ranks.

“It’s going to be huge and challenging for all the players and support staff, it’s something we have never experienced before so we have to adapt. But I think CSK has a bit of an advantage with all the experienced players we have which is maybe better than other young guys. It’s important to help each other and mentally deal with it,” said Hussey on CSK social media handle.

When asked if the mental game will have precedence over physical talent, Hussey said: “I think a bit of both will be needed. It’s always a mental game but you need physical talent as well. We have to play well; every team is strong in this competition so it’s going to be tough. But the mental side is going to be important; not only in the game but also dealing with the isolation and stuck in the room alone. So it’s going to be mentally challenging for everyone.”