

SHORT TAKES

ANANTAPUR TO AMARAVATI ROAD NOW IN NHDP: MP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

YSR Congress MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu has said that Union transport minister Nitin Gadkari has positively responded to his request for development of Anantapur-Amaravati greenfield express highway under the National Highways Development Programme (NHDP). The MP said on Thursday that he had written a letter to the Union minister in this regard.

Mr Devarayalu said that Hyderabad-Visakhapatnam and Nagpur-Vijayawada Expressways were included in the mega expressway programme. Anantapur-Amaravati greenfield expressway was conceived in 2016 at an estimated cost of ₹27,600 crore with an objective to accelerate industrial development and generate employment in drought-hit Rayalaseema, the MP said.

YSRC CHALLENGES LOKESH TO PROVE GRAFT CHARGES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

Refuting the allegations of graft made by Telugu Desam leader Nara Lokesh, YSRC Congress has dared him to prove the charges levelled against 40 ruling party MLAs.

YSRC Legislator Jogi Ramesh termed the allegations as baseless and challenged Lokesh to prove them. He claimed that the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government works with utmost transparency and all 151 MLAs stood by the people even during the Covid-19 pandemic.

IUMLAP SEEKS PROTECTION OF WAKF PROPERTIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

The Indian Union Muslim League AP has sought protection of wakf properties and registration of Muslim religious places.

IUMLAP state president Sk Basheer Ahmed on Thursday said that majority of Muslim religious places were not registered with the government. The IUMLAP submitted a memorandum to deputy chief minister S.B. Amzath Basha in this regard.

Mr Basheer Ahmed said that there were numerous Muslim religious places like masjids, madarassas, idgahs, shadikhana, peerla chavidi, ashukhanas, etc in the state. He said the government should create a data base of these places with all details like place, door number, electricity service numbers, boundaries, details of structure with geo-tagging.

MAN ARRESTED FOR TRYING TO CHEAT YSRC MLA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

An imposter, posing as a top CMO official, tried to dupe YSRC Chilikaluripet MLA Vidadala Rajani. The MLA quickly realised that there was something fishy and lodged a complaint with the Pattabhipuram police, who tracked the cheat, identified as Thota Balaji Naidu, to Paravada of Visakhapatnam with the help of his phone calls. He was soon arrested by the Paravada police.

He introduced himself as Babu Jagajivan Rao working as a top official in the secretariat at Velagapudi.

Claiming that the government had released Rs 2 crore to each Assembly constituency to help the kin of Covid victims, the imposter asked the MLA to select eight families for ₹25 lakh loan with 75 per cent subsidy. He demanded ₹50,000 as bribe from each beneficiary for sanctioning the loan. The insisted on immediate payment of the entire amount of ₹4 lakh through Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS).

Ms Rajani suspected that there was something amiss as Balaji Naidu mentioned that the Chief Minister directed him to take the names of the beneficiaries through the MLA for payment of the amount. She immediately called police on another phone and alerted them about the cheat.

The police said that earlier Balaji Naidu tried to cheat YSRC MLC Zakia Khanum. Guntur urban SP R.N. Ammi Reddy said that the Pattabhipuram police registered a case and started investigation.



People from various sections of life join the members from the North Andhra Representatives Association during a protest against the government demanding three capitals for AP state near GVMC Gandhi Statue Junction in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

— K. MURALI KRISHNA

Govt to provide 13 types of services to farmers at RBKs

CM says doubling farmers' income is his government's priority

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy stated that doubling the income of farmers was his government's priority and would do whatever was needed to achieve the goal.

He announced setting up facilities for 13 types of services at Rythu Bharosa Kendras such as warehouses, drying platforms, collection centers, cold storage rooms, custom hiring centers, primary processing centers, assaying equipment, janata bazaars, bulk milk cooling units, cattle sheds, aqua infra, procurement centers and e-marketing.

Reviewing with officials the status of agriculture and RBKs with officials at Tadepalli on Thursday, he

affirmed that in an attempt to make agriculture sustainable, the government of Andhra Pradesh decided to set up multi-purpose facilities. Mr Jagan also discussed the steps to be taken to strengthen Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS).

The CM said, "A total of 13 types of facilities would be set up next to RBKs at an estimated cost of ₹6,000 crore. It was decided that all the necessary proposals for setting up of multi-purpose facilities should be sent to NABARD through state co-operative bank (APCOB) for further action."

He directed the officials to take steps to strengthen Primary Agricultural Credit Societies financially. He told the officials to study pros and cons of set-

ting up of Janata Bazaars at warehouses and prepare a report.

The Chief Minister emphasized the need for providing infrastructure facilities to strengthen RBKs and said there should be quality in material, seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides in RBKs. "Farmers can sell their produce across the country through e-marketing platforms and Janata Bazaars should be made available for the farmer to sell his produce, he said.

Mr Jagan said e-cropping would make it easier to pay insurance premium for crops and to provide farmers a minimum remunerative price and compensation in case of crop loss. He directed the officials to implement policies which will help

the farmers to double their income. He asked the officials to prepare a report on constructing warehouses, and Janata Bazaars and aqua works. He said the e-marketing platform should be ready by next Kariff. He directed the officials to prepare plans for Janatha Bazaars, scheduling and secondary processing and then focus on minimum support price to crops.

The government signed an MoU with Amul and other companies to provide employment opportunities to women. He claimed that installation of meters is necessary for supply of quality power to farmers and the money would be directly credited to farmers' bank accounts and there will be no burden on them.

MINISTER SEEKS CENTRE'S HELP FOR AP DEVELOPMENT

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, SEPT. 10

Industries and IT minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy has appealed to the Union government to extend support for key projects, infrastructure and overall development of AP.

As part of his mission to promote AP as a destination for industries, Mr Goutham Reddy met Union ministers Anurag Thakur, Manuskh Mandaveeya and Piyush Goyal in New Delhi on Thursday.

He urged Mr Anurag, minister of state for finance, to extend financial support to establish a bulk drug park and two Skill Universities in AP. He also invited him to meet industrialists in the state. In his interaction with Mansukh Mandaviya, he sought funds for infrastructure such as national highways to connect ports and harbours.

Mr Goutham Reddy told him about their plans to set up three ports and 10 fishing harbours under the Maritime Board.

He also pointed to the commitment of the Centre to develop a major port.

TD an obstacle to development, says chief whip

NAGESWARA RAO
BALLEDA | DC
KADAPA, SEPT. 10

Government chief whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy has accused Telugu Desam of creating obstacles in everything that the state government is doing for people, fearing it will bring a good name to Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Speaking to reporters at the party office in Rayachoti on Thursday, Srikanth Reddy pointed out that while the state government has made English as medium of instruction to develop government schools on par with

private ones, TD leaders have filed cases against it in courts. He asked whether TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu is sending his grandson to a Telugu medium school.

He demanded that all Telugu Desam leaders, who have filed cases in court against English being the medium of instruction, should pull out their children and grandchildren from English medium schools and admitted them into Telugu medium schools. He accused TDP leaders of enacting drama and asked them whether children of poor should not be educated in English medium schools.

YOGI VEMANA VARSITY SIGNS MoU WITH WORLD FORUM OF EDUCATION

Kadapa: Yogi Vemana University (YVU) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the World Forum of Education, Bengaluru, through virtual mode on Thursday.

Vice-chancellor of the university Prof Munagala Surya Kalavathi said

the MoU with WFE would help large section of students and faculty through the mutual exchange of expertise, resources and facilities at global level.

YVU is the first university in AP was first to sign an MoU with the World Forum of Education.

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

Several government officials who received calls demanding money from fraudsters claiming to be from ACB, have appealed to the state government to order a thorough probe to find out how they managed to get their private phone numbers and also details of their families.

Kurnool police have found a gang of eight persons, including the kingpin Jaya Krishna, hailing from different parts of Anantapur, who were threatening government officials to expose them for their corrupt deals if they failed to pay up.

The police arrested six of them on September 1 and sent them to judicial remand at Anantapur district jail in Reddipalli. Jaya Kri-

shna from Pedda Kottala village of Uravakonda mandal in Anantapur district, and another accused, who was a bank account holder, are absconding.

Based on confessions, police said that all the gang members were having criminal records and some having also served jail terms. The main accused, while in jail, teamed up with fellow-inmates and soon after release on bail, they began blackmailing government officials. The modus operandi was to identify government departments notorious for high-level corruption and search for the mobile numbers of officials on the internet. Armed with a list of numbers, they used to call up the officials claiming to be from ACB and tell them about their corrupt deals

● The police found out 18 targeted government officials by the gang; two of them succumbed to Covid-19.

● ACB officials ask people to call on toll free no. 14400 to lodge complaints about graft.

and demand money to avoid further inquiry on them.

They managed to get three SIM cards with fake credentials. They also got two persons having bank accounts in Canara Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank in Karnataka and offered them 10% commission to return money credited into their accounts. Contrary to their calculations, these bank accounts helped the police to zero in on the culprits.

The ACB had recently disclosed the names of government officials who paid how much money to the

No leads yet on gutting of chariot in Antarvedi

VADREVI SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, SEPT. 10

The police investigation on the gutting of the chariot in the Sri Lakshmi Narasimha swamy temple in Antarvedi has not come to a conclusion yet.

Additional police forces are on strict vigil in the village and also in the Konaseema region in general. Nobody is being allowed to go to Antarvedi and the police are preventing passersby along the route to Antarvedi.

The endowment department's additional commissioner, Ramachandra Mohan, has been appointed as special officer at the temple to coordinate and oversee issues pertaining to the reconstruction of the chariot. It is learnt that a computer operator and a security guard were suspended at Antarvedi temple on Thursday.

The Jana Sena Party has given a 'Chalo Antarvedi' call. However, the Eluru range DIG, K. V. Mohan Rao, made it clear that nobody would be allowed in Antarvedi as Section 144 and Section 30 are in force. He said that if the party leaders or workers try to come, the police will not allow them. He said a scientific research and investigation is going on in the gutting incident and no law and order problems would be entertained.

Expressing concern over the gutting incident, BJP and Jana Sena party leaders took up resentment fasts for one hour in their respective houses and party offices.

BJP state president, Somu Veeraj, along with leaders R. Sri devi, Bommala Dattu, A. Ramakrishna Rao and others took up resentment fasts at BJP office in Rajahmundry on Thursday. Veeraj alleged that the state government was not responding though the attacks are being done on Hindu temples. He said that the party would not keep silent if such attacks go on further. BJP leaders Pydah Krishna Mohan, Pydah Bhavan Prasad, Y. Ramkumar and M. Subba Rao, BJP former president, Y. Malakondaiah and others participated in the stir in their respective houses. The BJP Kakinada parliamentary district president, Ch. Ramkumar, said that BJP workers took up the stir in all mandals. Jana Sena leaders K. Durgesh, P. Venkateswara Rao and others took up their stir at their houses at Rajahmundry and Kakinada respectively.

Kapu corporation chairperson, Jakkampudi Raja, visited Antarvedi temple and inquired about the incident. He said that the government was taking the issue seriously and the police officials are on duty to nab the culprits. However, he said that the opposition parties were unnecessarily making the issue controversial. Former MLA and Telugu Desam leader, Vanamadi Venkateswara Rao (Kondababu), expressed concern over the Antarvedi incident and demanded that the government conduct an impartial probe without attributing it to beehive hunters and mentally-ill persons. He said that during the YSRC government, several attacks are taking place on Hindu temples and prayer houses.

CM TOOK SWIFT ACTION IN CHARIOT GUTTED ISSUE, SAYS BOTSA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

Municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana said that the Jagan government came out with a welfare calendar and was strictly following it by direct transfer of money to the beneficiaries. He alleged that the previous Telugu Desam government had gone back on its promise to

waive agriculture and DWACRA loans.

He said that it was objectionable that BJP and TD were resorting to provocative speeches in the Antarvedi temple chariot burning case. Accusing TD leader Nara Lokesh of misleading the people, the minister said one should not forget the fact that CM Jagan's swift response following the incident funds released for a new chariot.

YSRC: HOW COULD TD TRUST CBI NOW

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Officials informed that a GO to this effect will shortly be issued on the matter. Opposition parties and Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu had been demanding a CBI probe.

The CM has taken the matter of the fire seriously and while the state police have been trying their best, there was criticism from political and other groups casting aspersions on the government. No one would be spared and stringent action

would be taken against those involved, irrespective of their position, was the government stand.

Meanwhile, YSRC MLA and party spokesperson Ambati Rambabu stated that there is no negligence of the government in the Antarvedi incident as the government had initiated swift measures. He said earlier Naidu had no confidence in CBI and had banned the agency during his tenure but now he is distrusting the AP police and had started believing the CBI which shows his political opportunism.

Minister blamed for attacks on temples

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 10

President of AP Sadhu Federation Srinivasananda Saraswati on Thursday blamed endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas for 'attacks' on Hindu shrines in the state.

Speaking to reporters here, he said 27 attacks had taken place on temples during the last 15 months. Demanding resignation of the minister, Saraswati said most of the temples in the State were losing valuable lands to encroachers and strongly condemned the arrest of 37 BJP leaders who went to Antarvedi to stage a protest over the burning of 62-year-old chariot.

Convener of Save Simhachalam, Turaga Sriram said vast stretches of Si-

mhachalam temple lands were being grabbed by unscrupulous elements. He warned that if the government failed to free the lands from the crutches of the land grabbers, he would call all the Kar Sevaks from across the country to join him to save the temple lands.

Meanwhile, BJP leaders staged a silent protest at the Visakhapatnam city party office condemning the burning of the chariot. Former Visakhapatnam MP K. Haribabu carried a placard which said 15 temples were attacked during YSRC regime and 17 under TDP rule. The placard of MLC P.V.N Madhav said YSRC government enhanced Holy Land tour funds from Rs 40,000 to Rs 60,000, but no funds for travel to Ayodhya.

Chariots at TTD-run temples secure: CVSO

AVINASH P SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 10

Chief vigilance and security officer of TTD Gopinath Jatti has said that special surveillance steps have been made for the protection of chariots in the 49 temples across the country. The CVSO and Tirupati Urban SP Avula Ramesh Reddy reviewed the security arrangements for the protection of temples and the ensuing annual Brahmotsavams from September 19-27, at a meeting held in Annamaiah Bhavan on Thursday at Tirumala.

Speaking to reporters later, Mr Jatti said that the TTD vigilance wing in coordination with the police department made elaborate security arrangements including round-the-clock CCTV

surveillance at all the TTD-run temples across the country, he explained.

Since it has been decided that annual Tirumala Brahmotsavams would be held in 'ekantham' in view of the prevailing Covid-19 restrictions, only devotees with online Srivari darshan tickets would be allowed to visit Tirumala.

SP Ramesh Reddy said CC cameras were installed at all TTD temples, mutts etc., to ensure protection to the holy places. "Any activity by individuals or social media aimed at disturbing communal harmony and peace will be dealt strictly," he added while appealing to the public to call on WhatsApp No: 80999 99977 if they came across suspicious movements, if any, at temples and other vital places in the district.

the case with the municipal commissioner from Palamaneru in Chittoor district.

The government officials are a worried lot as they are getting calls from the police as their numbers were found in the call data of the mobile phones of the accused to enquire whether they paid money to the gang. They have made a fervent appeal to the state government to order an inquiry to find out how their personal details are being leaked out and even suspected moles in their departments.

A senior official from ACB said, "We wonder as to why not a single official called us when somebody claiming to be from ACB began demanding money. We also maintain a toll free number where complaints can be lodged."

IN BRIEF

APSP constable dies as gun misfires

Kurnool: An APSP police head constable died after his gun allegedly misfired at APSP second battalion ground here on Thursday. The deceased was identified as Solomon Raju, 49, a native of Vaddeman Village in Nandikotkur.

A 1992 batch constable, he was posted at second battalion under the control of the APSP DIG Venkateswarlu.

IV Town police station CI Srinivasa Reddy said that the incident occurred while he was cleaning his gun around 9 am while on duty. It misfired and bullets pierced into his body and he died on the spot.

He said that the body was sent to Kurnool government general hospital for post-mortem. A case has been registered and investigation is on, the CI added. The deceased survived by his wife and two children.

48-hr spl drive for issuing rice cards

Kadapa: District collector Chevuri Harikiran said that new rice cards should be obtained free of cost by volunteers within 48 hours at the village and ward secretariats. On Thursday, he conducted a surprise inspection of the village secretariat at Valluru Mandal headquarters along with Joint Collector (Development) Saikanth Varma. The Collector said that the concerned authorities had directed the village and ward secretariats to provide all kinds of services to the people within the stipulated time. As part of the Navasakam, all those who have old ration cards are requested to take the rice cards free of cost through the respective village and ward secretariat volunteers. For this, a special drive is being organized for 48 hours in the respective secretariats across the district. These new rice cards will also help to benefit from the YSR insurance scheme, he said.

Officials open one gate at Srisaillam

Kurnool: With the water level rising in the both Krishna and the Tungabhadra rivers, officials opened one gate at the Srisaillam dam to let out water on Thursday. The Priya-darshini Jurala project on the Krishna river is discharging 1,16,570 cusecs of water into the Srisaillam reservoir. The Srisaillam dam received a total of 1.48 lakh cusecs received till Thursday evening. The reservoir is brimming with water at its full reservoir level of 885 feet. It has 215.8070 tmc ft of water, which is its total capacity. With this, officials released 1,53,653 cusecs of water including 84,225 cusecs to the Nagarjunasagar.

Taskforce arrests 3 smugglers

Tirupati: The red sanders anti-smuggling taskforce on Thursday arrested three smugglers, including a minor boy and seized 20 red sanders logs from their possession near Pavuralagutta area the Bakarapeta forests in Chittoor district. According to the taskforce DSP Venkataiah, the task force team led by RI P. Bhaskar had started the combing operation in Bakarapeta forest area during late hours on Wednesday. When the team reached Pavuralagutta area in the early hours on Thursday, they encountered a group of smugglers carrying red sanders logs and other implements. On sighting the taskforce team, the smugglers abandoned the logs and fled deep into forests. However, the team has managed to arrest three Tamil Nadu based smugglers including a 16-year-old minor boy. They were identified as Srinivasulu (36), who served jail-terms twice in connection with red sanders smuggling cases and Jaya Velu (18).

Amjad Basha donates plasma

Kadapa: Deputy Chief Minister and Minority Welfare Minister S.B. Amjad Basha and Joint Collector (Development) Saikant Verma said that everyone who has fully recovered from Covid-19 should give plasma and save the lives of another. Deputy CM Amjad Basha inaugurated the plasma therapy centre at RIMS Hospital on Thursday after which he donated plasma.

He said that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the state officials to set up the plasma therapy centres in all Covid centres. As part of the initiative, he opened a plasma centre at RIMS Hospital to save more patients from infection. With Covid cases increasing by the day, people are getting panicked in all districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Kavi Samrat remembered

Telugu language-lovers pay tributes to statue of Kavisamrat Viswanatha Satyanarayana on the occasion of 125th birth anniversary celebrations at Lenin Centre in Vijayawada on Thursday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

No respite from rising number of Corona cases**EG continues to lead with highest no. of cases at 1,412**

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

Andhra Pradesh has 10,175 new Covid-19 cases scaling up the tally to 5,37,687 and 68 deaths, taking the death toll from Covid-19 to 4,702 in the last 24 hours.

Thursday's Covid-19 bulletin reported that out of 72,229 samples tested, 10,175 were found infected with coronavirus.

Out of a total of 43,80,991 samples tested so far in the state, 4,35,647 patients have been discharged from various hospitals after recovery while 97,338 patients are still active with the infection and taking treatment.

East Godavari continues to lead the state with the highest number of new infections at 1,412, followed by 1,386 in Prakasam, 1,139

in West Godavari, 968 in Chittoor, 838 in Guntur, 823 in Nellore, 664 in Srikakulam, 576 in Kadapa, 545 in Krishna, 516 in Vizianagaram, 482 in Kurnool, 422 in Anantapur and 404 in Visakhapatnam.

East Godavari registered the highest number of cumulative infections in the state with 72,497, followed by 50,182 in Kurnool, 47,548 in Anantapur, 47,248 in West Godavari, 46,469 in Chittoor, 43,147 in Guntur, 42,436 in Visakhapatnam, 41,041 in Nellore, 34,090 in Kadapa, 33,607 in Prakasam, 30,372 in Srikakulam, 26,196 in Vizianagaram, 19,959 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery of Covid-19 infection patients has been good in East

Godavari at 59,292, followed by 45,338 in Anantapur, 42,209 in West Godavari, 42,191 in Anantapur, 36,072 in Visakhapatnam, 34,898 in Guntur, 34,800 in Nellore, 25,866 in Kadapa, 23,436 in Srikakulam, 18,157 in Prakasam, 16,697 in Vizianagaram, 16,578 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Among deaths of Covid-19 infected patients, Chittoor, Kadapa and Nellore registered nine each, followed by seven each in Krishna and Prakasam, six in Anantapur, five each in East and West Godavari, four each in Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam, two in Guntur and one in Vizianagaram.

Chittoor registered the highest number of cumula-

tive deaths at 504, followed by 446 in Guntur, 442 in East Godavari, 405 in Kurnool, 391 in Anantapur, 376 in West Godavari, 369 in Nellore, 351 in Prakasam, 341 in Visakhapatnam, 330 in Krishna, 282 in Kadapa, 279 in Srikakulam and 185 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities have discharged 10,040 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery.

AP has carried out Covid-19 tests on 82,041 samples per million population and has registered a Covid-19 positive rate at 12.27. Maharashtra has tested 39,152 samples and has a positive rate at 19.78 and Telangana has tested 48,106 samples with positive rate at 7.81, showing that AP remains the most responsible and proactive state in the fight against Covid-19.

Collector wants health official suspended, arrested

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

In yet another case of high-handedness on frontline Covid-19 health-care professionals, Guntur collector I. Samuel Anand kicked up a row by directing a senior health official to suspend a doctor and ordered the police to arrest him.

Dr Somla Naik, working Nandendla in Narasaraopet division, complained about lack of adequate beds for Covid-19 patients in government hospitals to admit them and provide treatment, during a review meeting chaired by the collector at Narasaraopeta in Guntur district.

The collector had expressed his displeasure over the rise in number of Covid-19 cases especially in rural areas and had asked health officials highlight any problems.

When Dr Naik complained about lack of beds, the collector lost his cool and said that when 1,300 to 1,400 beds were lying vacant, how the doctor could say that no beds

were available.

Dr Naik was reportedly trying to explain that during the recent visit of a joint collector, they were instructed not to keep anyone with Covid-19 symptoms in home isolation and shift them to the government hospitals. They did so, which filled up the vacant beds.

When the collector instructed officials to shift all 60-plus Covid-19 infected people to hospitals for treatment, Dr Naik allegedly informed him that as higher officials were giving different directions, they were getting confused as to which instruction to follow. He said that they were finding it difficult to get beds to admit the patients in hospitals.

The repeat statement of lack of beds resulted in arguments between the two. At this juncture, collector Anand directed the district medical and health officer to place Dr Naik under suspension. When Dr Naik reportedly questioned the collector for issuing such a directive, collector Anand instructed the police to arrest the doctor on

charges of violation of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

As the collector was repeatedly asking the police to arrest Dr Naik, the medical officer left the meeting. Anand directed revenue authorities to lodge a complaint against Dr Naik.

The police later escorted Dr Naik to the Narasaraopeta DSP office and made him to wait there for some time. The doctor returned home after some time. Narasaraopeta DSP M. Veera Reddy said, "As we have not received any complaint on Dr Naik, we have not booked a case and not arrested anyone so far."

Reacting to the incident, AP Government Doctors' Association state convenor Dr D. Jayadheer said, "We condemn the high-handedness of the Collector on the medical officer. The collector has no right to issue directions to arrest Dr Naik. If there are any issues, a departmental inquiry can be ordered and action can be taken if he is found guilty of violation of norms."

Student's mistake unravels fraud

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However, by mistake, the student also pinned the hall ticket to the answer sheet. During the evaluation, the additional controller of examinations in JNTUK smelled a rat.

The university appointed an internal committee to inquire into the matter and the committee found the involvement of the three outsourcing personnel of the university and three other personnel, including the driver and cleaner of the vehicle and also an employee of an affiliated college. The university suspended the three outsourced personnel for negligence of the duty as

they were route officers securing confidential material.

The JNTUK registrar lodged a complaint with the Sarpavaram police, seeking an investigation of the matter and the involvement of other individuals mentioned in the internal committee.

Sarpavaram police station house officer, R. Govindarajulu, said that a case was registered based on the complaint given by the JNTUK and is being investigated.

However, many of the answer sheets have been tampered in such a way and the role of four engineering colleges in north Andhra districts are suspected.

58 get recruited under APCOS in V'nagaram

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 10

The Vizianagaram Education department appointed 58 outsourced employees through Andhra Pradesh Corporation for Outsourced Services (APCOS) and presented the orders to the job achievers on Thursday.

While handing over the appointment letters, Collector, Vizianagaram Dr M. Hari Jawaharlal said that 100 per cent transparency was being maintained while recruiting various posts.

According to the need of the education department in the district, 58 people have been recruited for various duties. The department recruited the persons through APCOS ensuring complete transparency, the Collector said.

The appointed APCOS

employees would work as nonteaching staff in KGBVs and at Mandal Resource Centres in the district, the Collector added.

The Collector also claimed that the administration has collectively worked in the recruitment of village secretariat employees and other category recruitments without any corruption allegations.

According to the government directions, the district administration would follow the directions with absolute transparency, he added.

District Educational Officer Nagamani said that the department had informed the APCOS about the need of outsourced persons for various jobs.

The APCOS has selected and appointed the personnel, she added.

PESO ASKED TO CHECK SAFETY AT STORAGE FACILITY

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 10

The AP Pollution Control Board has asked the Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organisation to inspect the safety parameters as mentioned in the Ammonium Nitrate Rules of 2012 at the Sravan Shipping and Services Pvt Ltd, the stevedores company that handles storage and evacuation of ammonium nitrate.

In his letter to the chief explosive officer of Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation, last week, the member secretary of the pollution control board, Vivek Yadav said that the ministry of environment and forests on October 30, 2008 gave consent to Sravan Shipping and Services to store 20,000 tons of ammonium nitrate in its three sheds located in Chukavanipalem, Visakhapatnam. The AP Pollution Control Board also gave consent on April 6, 2018 to handle the same quantity.

However, the Board found that the Sravan Shipping had failed to meet the safety standards and asked the management to stop handling ammonium nitrate until further orders. Invoking rule 18 of Manufacture, Store and Import of Hazardous Chemicals, 1989, the board sent a letter to Visakhapatnam Port Trust not to engage Sravan Shipping and Services in handling the ammonium nitrate till further notification.

The secretary said the Board also requested the Visakhapatnam-based deputy controller of explosives to ascertain the adequacy of safety measures at the shipping company warehouse to store 20,000 tons of ammonium nitrate.

NGT | INITIATIVE

The committee will submit report before Nov. 17, 2020 Panel to check ONGC, GAIL pollution

VADREVU SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, SEPT. 10

The national green tribunal (NGT) appointed a joint committee to ascertain air, sound, soil and water pollution caused on account of the oil and gas explorations of ONGC and GAIL along the Krishna-Godavari Basin.

The committee will comprise a senior officer from the ministry of environment and climate change, a senior officer from the central pollution control board, Chennai, a senior officer as deputed by the chairperson of the AP pollution control board, the East Godavari District collector or a senior officer not below the

rank of assistant collector or sub-divisional magistrate and an expert on petroleum engineering from Andhra university college of engineering, Visakhapatnam.

The committee will submit its report on or before 17, November, 2020. Venkatapathi Raja Yennumula filed a petition in NGT against the oil companies, alleging that there used to be the usual phenomena of oil leakage in the pipelines established by these units causing damage to agricultural land and also affecting water bodies.

The units are not following the pollution control mechanisms which prevent such leakages and there is no proper maintenance of pipelines carried out by them which causes frequent oil and gas leakages, causing deaths.

The applicant stated and said that though the district collector reviewed frequent gas leakages in the district and certain directions were given to ONGC as well as GAIL authorities to take proper precautionary measures to avoid them in the future, no action has been taken by the oil companies and similar incidents occurred on May 18 and August 21 in 2020.

The applicant also alleged that they are discharging untreated effluents into nearby water bodies and the seashore causing water pollution as well as marine pollution, affecting the marine ecology. Instead of discharging treated effluents into the deep sea, following the conditions of environmental clearance, they are discharging them onto the seashore and shallow sea causing pollution in the sea water which affects marine life and indirectly affects the

liveliness of the local fisherpeople.

The NGT stated that the committee is at liberty to co-opt any other expert in the field of petroleum engineering to assist in preparing the report, especially on offering advice on safety measures to be taken to avoid such things in future

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The NGT directed the committee to ascertain as to whether the pollution control mechanisms provided by the oil companies are adequate and, if not, what are the upgradations and improvements required to minimise or avoid such incidents in future and also to prevent pollution, damage and death of human and marine life.

Cases cross 50K in Kurnool district

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, SEPT. 10

Kurnool reported zero Covid deaths on Thursday, a trend reversal, on a day when the total number of positive cases crossed the 50,000 mark. The district has been witnessing a steady rise of positive cases since April.

The first Covid case was reported on March 28; the 100th on April 17, 10,000th on July 25 and 20,000 on August 4. However, in just a fortnight, it shot up from 40,000 to 50,000. Now the people have lost count, said State Covid special officer Dr C. Prabhakar Reddy. He added that more than the virus itself, it was the fear of Covid that has killed people. Meanwhile, the recoveries

have been increasing substantially in the past few days, while positive cases are going downward. This is a healthy development, said district collector G. Veera Pandian.

Testing and early isolation of suspects has helped the administration to reduce fatalities, said DMHO Dr Rama Giddaiah.

Presently there are 4,438 active cases while 45,338 have been discharged since recovery. Veera Pandian said that the administration is ready to tackle any kind of situation and 104 and 108 ambulances were available at every mandal. And there was no issue at all to arrange oxygen and ICU facilities to severely affected people, he added.

SHORT TAKES

2 SOG JAWANS
KILLED IN
ENCOUNTER

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 10

Two jawans of Special Operation Group (SOG) of Odisha police died in an exchange of fire between security forces and Maoists in a forest near Sirki village on Kalahandi-Kandhamal border, police said on Thursday.

The martyrs were identified as Sudhir Kumar Tudu (28) of Mayurbhanj district and Debasis Sethy (27) of Angul district. At least five Maoists had died in the gun-battle that took place on Wednesday. Initially, four bodies of Maoists were recovered from the spot. During the combing operation following the encounter, the security personnel recovered another body of a Maoist.

On a tip-off from Intelligence input, an operation was launched on Kalahandi-Kandhamal border on September 8. Two composite teams of SOG and District Voluntary Force (DVF) had participated in this operation. Following heavy firing from the Maoists, a team of SOG and DVF had retaliated, said an official statement issued by Odisha Police.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik paid tribute to the martyred jawans. "Salute to the martyrdom of Debasis Sethy of Angul and Sudhir Kumar Tudu of Mayurbhanj who laid down their lives fighting against left-wing extremists. My heartfelt condolences to the families of the martyred jawans," the Chief Minister tweeted.

LUKEWARM
OPENING DAY FOR
RLYS SPL TRAINS

New Delhi, Sept. 10: There was a lukewarm response from passengers towards railways' 80 special trains, bookings for which opened on Thursday, with the average occupancy rate being less than 50 per cent, except for two trains which showed more than 100 per cent occupancy.

While Indore Jn Bg Railway station to Howrah in West Bengal showed an occupancy of 108 per cent, the Shramik Express from Valsad station to Muzaffarpur in Bihar showed occupancy of 179 per cent, according to data provided by the national transporter. Though the Indore to Howrah train was over booked, the train in the reverse direction had only 15 per cent occupancy.

Another train running over western railway between Manmad and Mumbai in Maharashtra showed 52 per cent occupancy. Occupancy in trains originating from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal for journeys towards Karnataka and Telangana maintained an average occupancy of around 30 per cent. The most occupancy of 47 per cent was seen in the Muzaffarpur-Bangalore weekly special train, followed by the Gorakhpur-Yeshwantpur Jn Railway station at 32.4 per cent and the Darbhanga-Secunderabad special which has an occupancy of 31 per cent.

INFANT
TRAFFICKING GANG
BUSTED IN MP

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, SEPT. 10

Indore police on Thursday busted a newborn babies trafficking gang, took two people including a woman into custody, and rescued a 10-day-old infant from them.

Acting on a tip off by a non-government organisation (NGO), a team of women police sealed a particular area in Indore and foiled the bid by the two accused, identified as Bablu alias Tejkaran Thakkar and Shilpa Telang, to sell the infant to an unidentified person who managed to escape from the spot, police said.

"We have rescued the baby. Investigation is on to find out the biological parents of the child", Indore district additional superintendent of police Manisha Pathak said.

According to the police, the two accused were trying to sell the baby for ₹1.20 lakh to their 'client'. "Both the accused are health workers. We suspect that they steal newborns from hospitals", a senior police officer from Indore told this newspaper on the condition of anonymity. Interrogation of the two accused would unearth the entire network of child trafficking in the state, he added.

Tibet under electronic surveillance

China is miffed over India's recruitment of Tibetans in the Special Frontier Force

Army on alert along LoC after ISI uses drones

Srinagar, Sept. 10: A quadcopter used by Pakistani spy agency ISI in Jammu and Kashmir has necessitated alert along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Valley as the Army believes it could be used for dropping acute weapons for terrorists.

General-Officer-in-Command of strategically located XV Corps in Kashmir Lt Gen B.S. Raju said after an incident "across Peer Panjal", a reference to Jammu region in army parlance, "we have alerted all formations to keep a check on any flying object seen along the LoC". He said the terrorists holed up in the Kashmir valley have been facing acute shortage of arms and ammunition and they are desperately looking for some help from across the border for the same.

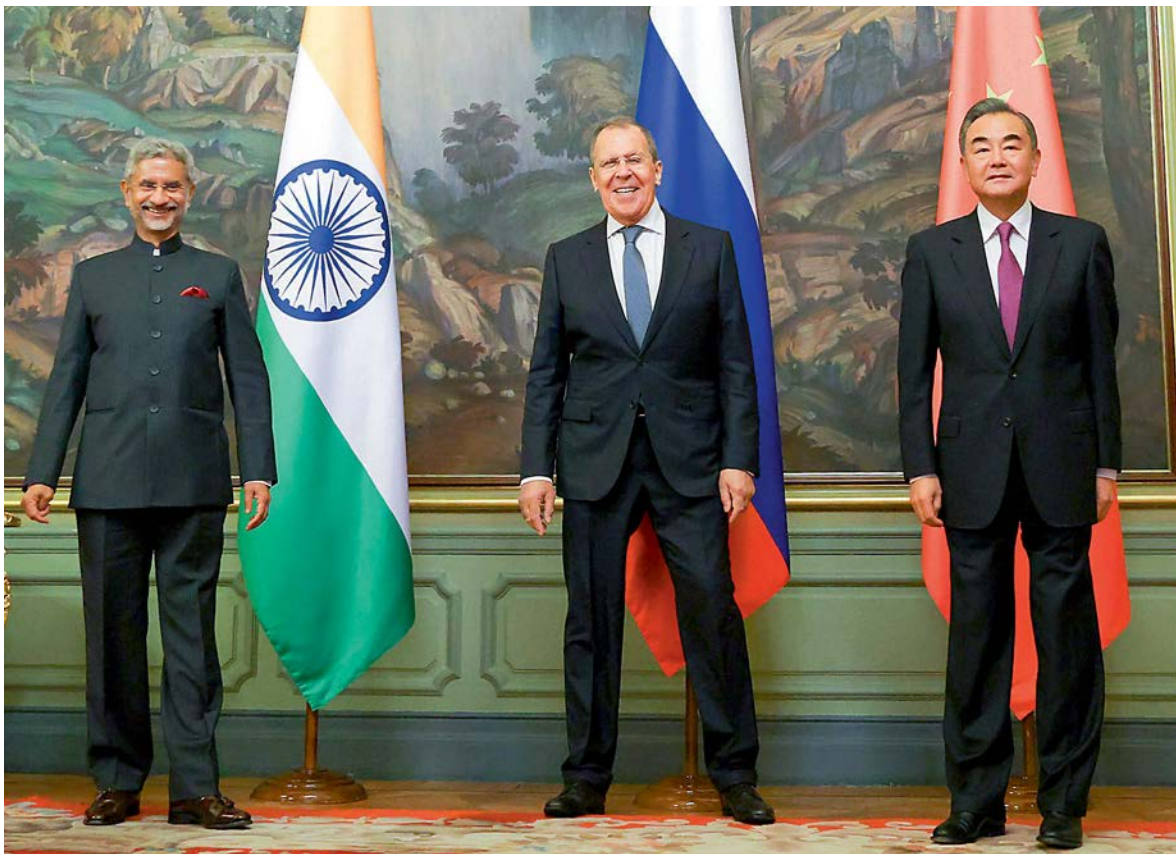
In June, BSF had shot down a Pakistani drone, loaded with a sophisticated rifle and seven grenades, along the International Border in Kathua district

of Jammu region.

The Chinese-made drone weighed about 17.5 kgs and had a payload of 5.5 kg including a sophisticated US-made M4 semi-automatic carbine and seven Chinese grenades. Four batteries, a radio signal receiver and two Global Positioning Systems were also recovered.

This, according to Gen Raju, is a "new dimension" in decades of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism.

"Instructions have been passed on to the forward formations to keep an eye on any flying object coming from across the border (LoC) and hit it hard to bring it down," he said. As small drones are tough to detect, an extra vigil using all high-tech gadgets along with human scrutiny is being maintained. A strict watch is also being maintained for movement of civilians along the LoC as terrorists may disguise themselves as nomads or shepherds to pick up the arms consignment. — PTI



Foreign minister S. Jaishankar, left, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, and China's foreign minister Wang Yi, pose for a photo on the sidelines of a meeting of Foreign Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Commonwealth of Independent States and Collective Security Treaty Organisation Member States in Moscow on Thursday.

THE FALLOUT

- Tibetans living close to the Indian borders and otherwise are under massive electronic surveillance following tensions between India and China
- Ever since the Galwan valley clashes, surveillance has been increased on Tibetans and many of them who remained in close touch with Indians are now incommunicado
- Indians residing close to the borders in Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh and other areas share a good rapport with Tibetans
- In Tibet, human rights abuses include disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests and detentions, forced abortions and infanticide
- According to one report, 87,000 deaths have been recorded in Lhasa alone between March 1959 and September 1960

between the two countries following the clashes in Galwan valley in June. This includes mobile-phone monitoring and keeping an eye on other forms of communication, be it emails or chats — the contents of which are being monitored round the clock. It is learnt that in some areas close to the Indian borders, mobile-phone networks have been jammed to ensure there is

no communication.

Threats from the PLA have ensured that people keep to themselves lest they invite the wrath of PLA, whose brutality against Tibetans is well known. For the PLA, places like Purang are significant as they are not only close to the borders with India and Nepal, the Mansarovar lake and Mount Kailash are located towards the north of this

town, the area where the PLA has deployed surface-to-air missiles and is expanding its military base by taking up construction work.

Indian SIM cards do not work here due to poor connectivity and many locals in Dharchula use Nepal Telecom SIM cards to talk business with Tibetans.

It is not only Purang that PLA is worried about. Sources say that the

Chinese Army is heavily surveilling villages in Demchok in Ladakh, Tago and Yamrang areas in Khimkulla Pass along the LAC in Himachal Pradesh, Linzhi, a city in the southeast of the Tibet Autonomous Region which borders Arunachal Pradesh where the Bokar tribes live on both sides and also the areas near Nathu La.

"Tibetans living close to

the borders with India share a great rapport from even before the 1962 war as most of these routes were used for trade between the two nations. Generations of tribes or traders have close cultural ties besides having business interests which makes the PLA uncomfortable. With tensions at its peak between the countries ever since the 1962 war, the PLA wants to have a tighter grip over Tibet and its people, especially due to the friendship with the Indians," sources said.

Besides strict electronic surveillance, Indian agencies have learnt that due to the heavy mobilisation of

forces on the Chinese side, many Tibetans have been asked to evacuate and relocate to areas far away from the borders. In Tibet, not following the dictat of the PLA has led to disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests and even killings. Denial of freedom of speech and the Internet is a constant.

Recently, Chinese President Xi Jinping in his address to the seventh Central symposium on Tibet had called for building a "new modern socialist" Tibet and constructing an "impregnable wall" against separatism and "sinicisation" of the Tibetan Buddhism.

Kangana Ranaut episode over for Sena, says Raut

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, SEPT. 10

A day after the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) demolished illegal constructions at Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut's office, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Thursday said that the issue was over for his party.

However, the actress has continued her vitriolic against Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray calling him an example of nepotism and accused him of turning Shiv Sena into "Sonia Sena."

"The Kangana Ranaut episode is over. We have even forgotten it. We are now busy with our government and social work," Raut said after meeting the Chief Minister at his residence Matoshree.

Raut also denied his party has a role in the demolition carried out by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation in Kangana's office at Pali Hill in Bandra.

"The action at Kangana Ranaut's office is done by the BMC. It has no con-

● THE ACTRESS has continued her vitriolic against Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray calling him an example of nepotism and accused him of turning Shiv Sena into 'Sonia Sena.'

nection with Shiv Sena. You can talk to the Mayor or the BMC Commissioner on it," he said.

The Shiv Sena-ruled BMC had razed illegal alterations at Kangana's office on Wednesday. However, the Bombay High Court later ordered a stay on it.

Meanwhile, Kangana has continued with her outburst against the Chief Minister calling him prime example of nepotism and accusing him of misusing the power. Just like Wednesday, she posted a series of tweets too on Thursday targeting Thackeray.

Terming the MVA government in Maharashtra as a 'milavast Sarkar,' she accused Uddhav of compromising on its identity. "The ideology on which Shri Balasaheb

Thackeray built Shiv Sena, today they have sold the ideology for power, becoming Sonia Sena from Shiv Sena. The goons who broke my house behind my back, do not call them a civic body. Don't insult the constitution."

"Your father's good deeds can give you wealth, but you have to earn respect, you will shut my mouth, but my voice will echo in a hundred millions after me, how many mouths will you shut? How many voices will you suppress? Till when you will run away from the truth, you are nothing but, an example of dynasty," she said in another tweet.

Referring to Shiv Sena's alliance with the Congress, Kangana said Uddhav has turned it into a "Sonia Sena".

The actress had found herself in controversy after criticising the Mumbai police and comparing Mumbai with Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK). It had evoked a sharp response from Raut who asked her not to visit Mumbai.

KALPESH
MHAMUNKAR | DC
MUMBAI, SEPT. 10

The Bombay High Court on Thursday expressed surprise that the government had no control over the electronic media and asked why television news should not be regulated by the state.

A bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni was hearing a bunch of petitions that sought various reliefs related to the case of the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, including a direction to restrain the press in its coverage of the case.

The bench impleaded the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting as a party in the matters. It also directed the ministry to file a reply in court indicating the extent of state control that is exercised in respect of telecasting news, particularly such news that may have serious ramifications.

The bench also made the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and the Enforcement Directorate

● THE BENCH made the NCB and ED, the central agencies that are currently probing cases related to actor's Sushant Singh Rajput's death, as parties after one of the petitioners alleged that the agencies were 'leaking' probe related information to the press and the public.



(ED), the central agencies that are currently probing cases related to the actor's death, as parties after one of the petitioners alleged that the agencies were "leaking" probe related information to the press and the public.

The bench, however, refused to implead actor Rhea Chakraborty as respondent in the case. "We do not see any reason to implead Chakraborty, an accused who is presently in judicial custody," it said.

The petitions, filed by activists, and eight retired senior police officers, allege, among other things that several TV channels were running a parallel probe into the

case and that they were running a malicious campaign against the Mumbai police through their current reportage in the case.

On September 3, another bench had heard the same pleas and had passed an order urging the press to show restraint while covering the developments of Sushant Singh Rajput's death case.

On Thursday, senior advocate Milind Sathe, who appeared for the former police officials, told the bench that despite the order, TV channels were continuing with their slander against the Mumbai police. Sathe submitted transcripts

from news broadcasts whereby, channels had insinuated that the Mumbai police had been assisting or shielding the accused, and the "drug mafia".

CJ Datta told advocate Sathe that he shouldn't be bothered by what a news anchor was saying. He, however, added that the court hoped and trusted that the spirit of the order dated September 3 would be kept in mind by TV news channels.

The Union government, meanwhile, pointed out that the petitioners should have approached the Press Council of India, a statutory body which regulates the print media, and the News Broadcasting standards Authority (NBSA) with its grievances against the TV news channels. At this, the bench noted that the NBSA wasn't a statutory body.

"We are surprised that the state has no control over the electronic media. Why should it (TV news) not be regulated in case they may have serious ramifications," the bench said.

Kerala is witnessing a huge spike in Covid-19 cases and also experiencing heavy rainfall

Pinarayi convenes all-party meeting on byelections

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPT.10

Close on the heels of Kerala government writing to Election Commission of India to cancel the forthcoming byelections to Chavara and Kuttanad Assembly constituencies, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has convened an all-party meeting on Friday to arrive at a consensus on the issue.

The EC has announced

that the polls to the two seats would be held along with Bihar elections in November. In a letter written to EC, Kerala chief secretary Vishwas Mehta has listed out the reasons for reconsidering the decision to hold by the polls in the two constituencies.

The chief secretary has pointed out that going by the voting percentage in Kuttanad assembly segment in the last Lok Sabha polls, at least 1.17 lakh voters are likely to turn up for casting their votes in 172

● THE OPPOSITION Congress-led UDF is not averse to cancelling the Assembly bypolls. The Opposition says that even if the two MLAs are elected, they would get just four months term as the next Assembly elections are due in April 2021.

polling stations. Similarly, 1.32 lakh voters are expected to exercise their franchise in 163 polling stations in Chavara.

With the state witnessing a huge spike in Covid-19 cases over the last couple of weeks, social distancing will be at risk in these polling stations. The state has also been experiencing heavy to very heavy rainfall during the south west monsoon.

This is a cause of concern especially in Kuttanad constituency where many areas are below sea level and prone to floods and water logging. Hence arranging logistics for polling would

be a major problem.

The state government has also apprised the EC of the huge pressure under which the officials of police, revenue, local bodies and various government departments are working as Covid-19 warriors. It is because of their relentless work that the state could contain the virus in the first two phases.

On the political front, the opposition Congress-led UDF is not averse to cancelling the Assembly

bypolls. The Opposition says that even if the two MLAs are elected, they would get just four months term as the next Assembly elections are due in April 2021.

Apart from Covid-19 threat, the elections will also put a huge financial burden on the government especially at a time when the state's economy is in dire straits.

The UDF, however, wants the local bodies poll also postponed by a few weeks or at least a month. The

elections to the 1,000-plus local bodies including corporations, municipalities, panchayats are scheduled to be held in October.

The BJP on the other hand is for cancelling Assembly bypolls. However, the party wants the local bodies poll as scheduled. All these issues will be discussed in detail at the all party meeting on Friday.

The government will try to arrive at a consensus before going to the EC again.

IN BRIEF

Quake strikes New Jersey

New York: A magnitude 3.1 earthquake struck in East Freehold, New Jersey, early Wednesday morning, the US Geological Survey reported. Residents took to social media to express their shock at the rare occurrence. Hundreds of people as far away as Philadelphia and Long Island, New York, contributed to the USGS' "Did You Feel It?" map, reporting only weak or light shaking and no damage. "It would be very surprising for us to see anything more than you know, damaged shelves or picture frames falling off of windows," said Robert Sanders, a geophysicist with the survey. The USGS said the earthquake happened about 2 a.m. and was centered 1.25 miles south, southeast of the centre of East Freehold.

Greece rescues 151 migrants

Athens: Greece's coast guard says a rescue operation was launched overnight after a yacht carrying more than 150 migrants was found in distress in bad weather northeast of the Aegean island of Amorgos. The coast guard said Wednesday a nearby cargo ship picked up 151 people from the yacht during the search and rescue operation Tuesday, in which coast guard and Greek navy vessels also participated.

A witness on board the Antigua and Barbuda-flagged cargo ship said they saw one person swimming away from the yacht, but gale force winds in the area were hampering any further search and rescue operations Wednesday morning, the coast guard said. It said the cargo ship was transporting the migrants to Turkey. Thousands of people fleeing war or poverty in the Middle East, Africa and Asia arrive on Greek islands each year in an attempt to make their way into Europe.

Probe on if netted shark killed surfer

Canberra: Authorities will investigate whether a dead tiger shark caught in a net off an Australian beach killed a surfer, an official said Wednesday.

Nick Slater, 46, was fatally mauled on Tuesday off popular Greenmount Beach on the Gold Coast tourist strip in a rare attack off a beach protected by shark netting. His death is only the second fatal shark attack at one of Queensland's 85 beaches that have been protected by nets and drum lines since as early as 1962, the state government said. The first was a 21-year-old swimmer who was mauled by more than one bull shark off a netted beach on North Stradbroke Island, north of the Gold Coast, in 2006. Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said a large tiger shark had been found since Slater's death tangled in a net off Greenmount Beach. "Further investigations will be conducted to discover if there is any link between it and the fatal attack," Palaszczuk said. Before nets were put in place, the last fatal shark attack was in 1958.

2K HOMES WRECKED IN N. KOREA

Seoul, Sept. 9: A typhoon that struck North Korea wrecked nearly 60 bridges and destroyed or inundated more than 2,000 houses, state media reported Wednesday, with leader Kim Jong Un saying the damage had disrupted central planning for the rest of the year.

Typhoon Maysak brought days of heavy downpours to the country's east coast last week even as the North was still reeling from earlier flooding and typhoon damage, and this week it was followed by Typhoon Haishen.

Maysak "destroyed or inundated" more than 2,000 houses and tens of public buildings in the affected regions, the official KCNA news agency said, while 60 kilometres of roads and 59 bridges collapsed, with over 3,500 metres of railway roadbeds "swept away".

Natural disasters tend to have a greater impact in the North due to its creaking infrastructure, and the country is vulnerable to flooding as many mountains and hills have long been deforested.

The damage obliged the authorities to "change the direction of our struggle after comprehensively considering the year-end tasks that were underway", Kim told a top committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, according to KCNA. It did not give specific details.

Trump downplayed Covid to avoid panic: Woodward

Washington, Sept. 10: US President Donald Trump has acknowledged downplaying the dangers posed by the deadly Coronavirus, saying he did not want to create panic in the country, according to a new book by a renowned American investigative journalist.

The book, 'Rage', by Bob Woodward is being described by the publisher as an "unprecedented" and "intimate tour de force" of new reporting on the Trump presidency that is facing a pandemic, economic disaster and racial unrest. The book is scheduled to hit the stores on September 15, less than two months before the November 3 presidential election. Excerpts of the book and clippings of the interviews with Trump were released by Woodward to some media outlets on Wednesday.

"I wanted to, I wanted to always play it down," Trump told Woodward in March, a recording of which was released by the 77-year-old veteran journalist to *The Washington Post*. "I still like playing it down, because I don't want to create a panic."

In another interview on February 7, the audio clip of which was posted by *The Washington Post*, Trump told the journalist, who broke the Watergate scandal in 1972, that the Coronavirus was deadlier than the flu and could be transmitted through the

Justice Dept. push into Don case could prompt dismissal

Washington, Sept. 10: Attorney General William Barr on Wednesday defended the Justice Department's move to intervene in a defamation lawsuit against President Donald Trump, even as experts were skeptical of the federal government's effort to protect the president in a seemingly private dispute. The Justice Department's action is "a normal application of the law. The law is clear. It is done frequently," Barr said at an unrelated news conference in Chicago.

He added, "The little tempest that is going on is largely because of the bizarre political environment in which we live." But experts said it's far from clear that the conduct at issue — whether Trump defamed E. Jean Carroll, a writer who

accused him of raping her at a New York luxury department store in the 1990s — has anything to do with the scope of his White House duties. The department's move is likely to have an ancillary benefit for Trump in delaying the case, but administration lawyers have a tough task at hand trying to argue that the president was acting in

his official capacity when he denied Carroll's allegations last year, experts say. "I wouldn't make such an argument, and if a president approached me to do it, I would say, 'Don't,'" said Stuart Gerson, who led the Justice Department's Civil Division in President George H.W. Bush's administration when Barr was attorney general for the first time.

"The president gets sued all the time and is defended by the government," Gerson added, "but those are for lawsuits that have to do with actions in his official capacity as the president. This isn't anything like that."

The Justice Department's action is consistent with the expansive view of executive authority it has taken under Barr. — AP

WH: PREZ NOBEL NOMINATION HARD-EARNED

Washington, Sept. 10: The nomination of Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize for brokering the landmark Israel-UAE deal is a "hard-earned and well-deserved honour," the White House has said, underlining that the US President has made peace a cornerstone of his foreign policy efforts. Far-right Norwegian lawmaker Christian Tybring-Gjedde on Wednesday nominated Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in mediating the deal between Israel and the UAE which is seen as a historic step towards peace in the Middle East.

Israel and the UAE announced on August 13 that they were establishing full diplomatic relations. The first commercial direct flight between Israel and the UAE landed in Abu Dhabi on August 31 after both countries announced normalisation of relations. The deal would be signed on September 15 at the White House. The UAE is only the third Arab country to establish diplomatic ties with the Jewish state. Israel's neighbours, Egypt and Jordan, being the other two Arab states to recognise Israel. — PTI



This photo released by the semi-official Fars News Agency shows Iranian troops participating in a military drill near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, on Thursday. Units from the navy, air force and ground forces are participating in a nearly 2 million-square-kilometre area of the Gulf of Oman.

Iran war games amid US tension

Tehran, Sept. 10: Iran's military Thursday began an expansive annual three-day exercise near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, state TV reported, with the manoeuvres taking place amid heightened tensions between the Islamic Republic and the United States.

Units from the navy and air force and ground forces are participating in a nearly two million-square-kilometre (772,200-square-mile) area of the Gulf of Oman.

State TV said Iranian submarines and drones were being deployed. Adm. Habibollah Sayyari,

commander of the annual exercise dubbed Zolfaghar-99, said Wednesday the operation is aimed at "improving readiness in confronting foreign threats and any possible invasion."

Sayyari's comments hinted at the threat of military conflict amid tensions between Iran and the US, which has sought to extend a years-long United Nations weapons embargo on Tehran that is due to expire in October.

There is a hint at the threat of military conflict amid tensions between Iran and the US, which has sought to extend a years-long United Nations weapons embargo on Tehran that is due to expire in October. Brief seizure, referring to the operation as a routine inspection without elaborating. In July, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard fired a missile from a helicopter targeting a replica of a US aircraft carrier in the Strait of Hormuz in an exercise aimed at threatening the US. In January, a US drone strike killed a top Iranian general at the Baghdad airport and Tehran responded by firing ballistic missiles at American forces in Iraq.

Iran's navy operates in the Gulf of Oman on the eastern side of the strait. — AP

During the hearing, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor said that the ex-premier has been declared proclaimed offender by the court. Justice Mohsin Kiyani remarked that Nawaz Sharif's bail had been rejected after which he has become absconder in the case. The former premier is residing in London but his doctors are present in United States, he added.

Subsequently, the court directed to present arguments over admissibility of the plea and adjourned the hearing till September 15. Meanwhile, NAB has challenged Nawaz Sharif's bail in

Pompeo: Moscow 'poisoned' Navalny

Washington, Sept. 10: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Wednesday there was a strong chance Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's poisoning was ordered by senior officials in Moscow. "I think people all around the world see this kind of activity for what it is," Pompeo said in a radio interview.

"And when they see the effort to poison a dissident, and they recognise that there is a substantial chance that this actually came from senior Russian officials, I think this is not good for the Russian people," he told conservative host Ben Shapiro.

Navalny, the most visible critic of President Vladimir Putin within Russia, fell violently ill last month as he took a flight in Siberia. He was flown for treatment to Germany, where doctors said he was poisoned. Pompeo reiterated that the United States and its European allies all wanted Russia to "hold those responsible for this accountable" and said Washington would also try to identify the perpetrators.

"It's something that we'll take a look at, we'll evaluate, and we'll make sure we do our part to do whatever we can to reduce the risk that things like

CAMPAIGNER FOR NAVALNY BEATEN UP

Moscow, Sept. 10: Unidentified attackers beat up an activist campaigning for hospitalised Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny in the Urals city of Chelyabinsk, his colleagues said Thursday. Alexei Baraboshkin, the local coordinator for Navalny, was "assaulted by unknown attackers" late Wednesday after receiving threats for several weeks, his campaign office wrote on Telegram. It posted a picture of him with a bruised and bleeding eye. Navalny is being treated in Germany for poisoning with Novichok in an incident that has sparked international condemnation and the threat of sanctions against Russia. — AFP

this happen again." Pompeo's remarks come despite President Donald Trump's comment last week that he had seen no proof that Navalny was poisoned. Trump has sought warmer relations with Putin. — AP

Covid risk pauses Assange hearing

London, Sept. 10: The London hearing on WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's extradition from Britain to the United States was suspended Thursday because one of the lawyers may have been exposed to the Coronavirus. District Judge Vanessa Baraitser ordered the proceedings adjourned until Monday while a lawyer representing the US government is tested for the virus.

Assange is fighting American prosecutors' attempt to get the British government to send him to the US to stand trial on spying charges. US prosecutors have indicted the 49-year-old Australian on 18 espionage and computer misuse charges over WikiLeaks' publication of secret US military documents a decade ago. The charges carry a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison.

Assange's lawyers say the prosecution is a politically motivated abuse of power that will stifle press freedom and put journalists around the world at risk. The hearing started Monday at London's Old Bailey criminal court and is scheduled to last about a month. — AP

Court hears Nawaz surrender review

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 10:

Pakistan's Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday conducted hearing on former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's review petition against order to surrender in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills corruption reference.

During the hearing, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor said that the ex-premier has been declared proclaimed offender by the court.

Justice Mohsin Kiyani remarked that Nawaz Sharif's bail had been rejected after which he has become absconder in the case. The former premier is residing in London but his doctors are present in United States, he added.

Subsequently, the court directed to present arguments over admissibility of the plea and adjourned the hearing till September 15. Meanwhile, NAB has challenged Nawaz Sharif's bail in

3 PIA OFFICIALS SACKED OVER FAKE LICENCES

Islamabad, Sept. 10: Three officials of Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority have been sacked for their alleged involvement in the fake flying licence scandal in the country's national carrier, Pakistan International Airlines, according to a media report on Thursday. A fourth CAA employee obtained a stay order from a court against the possible decision to sack him, the Dawn newspaper reported. — PTI

Avenfield reference in IHC, saying that the ex-PM is a convict and absconder. Interior secretary and foreign ministry should take action as per law for Nawaz Sharif's return.

FILM | FEST

Journalists are watching digital screenings, virtual red carpets in their pyjamas due to Covid

Tiff opens, beams on thousands of laptops globally



SUPARNA SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 10

The annual Toronto International Film Festival (Tiff), which serves as the diving board for big Hollywood and European films eying the Oscars, opened on Wednesday on a thousand laptop-screens across

the world.

The 45th edition of Tiff is the first of its kind — a hybrid in the times of Coronavirus.

Every September, Tiff, which rolls out the red carpet on Toronto's buzzy King Street to welcome 400-odd films and their creators, actors, has this year split between screenings in cinema halls, and "outdoor screenings" in Toronto's two drive-in venues.

Film journalists from across the world, who are usually in attendance, are taking part in the festival virtually, watching digital

screenings, virtual red carpet events in their pyjamas.

"We began this year planning for a 45th festival much like our previous editions," said the festival's artistic director Cameron Bailey, "but along the way we had to rethink just about everything. This year's lineup reflects that tumult." It's true.

The 11-day festival opened on Thursday with Spike Lee's *American Utopia*, and the closing film, or well series, will be a taste of Mira Nair's *A Suitable Boy* (an adapta-



Alma Poysti as Tove Jansson in Finnish film *Tove*.

tion of Vikram Seth's 1993 novel). Tiff, considered the most

middle brow of the Big 4 international film festivals (amongst the high-brow

Cannes, Venice and Berlin), is the most inclusive, democratic film festivals. Of all the films it's showing this year, 43 per cent are directed, co-directed or created by women, and 49 per cent are directed, co-directed, or created by Black, Indigenous or POC (people of colour).

There is *One Night in Miami*, Regina King's film about a young Muhammad Ali, actress Halle Berry's directorial debut, *Bruised*, Ricky Staub's *Concrete Cowboy* starring the Covid-recovered Idris Elba, and Francis Lee's *Ammonite*

starring Kate Winslet.

And there is, of course, Chaitanya Tamhane's Marathi film, *The Disciple*.

If there is a god of film festivals, it is *Serendipity*. Because that's all that can explain why my very first film at Tiff on Thursday was the delightful, peppy, *Tove*. A Finnish film written and directed by two women — Eeva Putro and Zaida Bergroth, respectively — Tove tells the story of the Helsinki-based author and illustrator, Tove Jansson (played with both verve and affecting vulnerability by Alma Poysti).

DECCAN Chronicle

11 SEPTEMBER 2020

Heed advice, announce rapid relief and stimulus

Democracy feeds on argument, on discussion as to the right way forward. This is the reason why respecting the opinion of others belongs to democracy,” said Richard von Weizsäcker, the German president, under whose term his country got reunited. This philosophy is not new to India as it was ingrained in its culture with the Rig Veda declaring thousands of years ago: “Let noble thoughts come to me from all directions”. However, the import of this philosophy seems to have been lost on the current government, which appears to believe that no consultation is required on the issues of national importance — especially on reviving the economy which is badly mauled by coronavirus.

A survey conducted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) serves as a reality check on all-is-well claims being made by officials and ministers. The survey claimed demand continues to be weak. In fact, 41 per cent of the companies, which participated in the survey, reported that their sales in August 2020 were less than 50 per cent of their sales in August 2019. Another 21 per cent said sales in August 2020 were between 50 and 75 per cent of the sales recorded in August 2019. Fifty-six per cent companies have reported that unlocking of the economy did not improve their order books, while 49 per cent companies reported cash-flow issues. Automobile sales figures show that people don’t have confidence in the economy. While car sales were relatively less impacted with people preferring safe personal transport in the pandemic, two-wheeler sales — that show the aspirational middle class is performing — have plunged by 28.7 per cent and commercial vehicle sales have more than halved reflecting the poor outlook of the economy. India is a consumption-driven and domestic-focused economy. So a weaker demand could have a highly adverse impact on people’s jobs, companies and also exchequer. The Narendra Modi government, however, ignored the advice of several well-known economists to announce financial stimulus to kickstart the Indian economy. Dithering of the government to announce steps to ring-fence the economy from Covid-19 lockdown impact led to a 24 per cent contraction in the GDP in the quarter ended on June 30. Though government-paid economists believe in a V-shaped recovery, most banks and rating agencies have forecast an economic contraction of 10 to 15 per cent. State Bank of India believes that annual production of the country would be 10 per cent less this fiscal year, which means at least 10 per cent of jobs will vanish.

Commenting on the government’s complacency, former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan said, “If you think of the economy as a patient, relief is the sustenance the patient needs while on the sickbed and fighting the disease. Without relief, households skip meals, pull their children out of school and send them to work or beg, pledge their gold to borrow, let EMIs and rent arrears pile up. So by the time the disease is contained, the patient has become a shell of herself.”

In spite of hard facts arguing for a strong stimulus, if the Modi government does not act, history will not be kind to it.

Do animals have rights?

Is your dog equal to you? Chief Justice of India Sharad Arvind Bobde on Wednesday posed this existential question before a petitioner. Allahabad-based People’s Charitoteer Organisation has sought juridical personhood for all members of the animal kingdom. Its plea cites legal entity status accorded to animals in two recent verdicts rendered by the Punjab and Haryana and Uttarakhand High Courts. Besides the Centre and some of its ministries, it has arrayed all states, UTs, the National Crime Records Bureau and the Animal Welfare Board of India as party.

George Orwell famously wrote in *Animal Farm* “all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others”. This literally holds true in nature, where might is right for the sustenance of food chains and ecosystems, and in economies to which agriculture, fisheries, food processing, leather and dairy are intrinsic.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Markets) Rules, 2017, notified by the NDA 2.0 government, for instance, became unsustainable in law for this very reason, and the ban on the sale of cattle for slaughter that breached the people’s fundamental right to livelihood was since revoked.

While the Supreme Court considers this prayer of animal righters, if sceptically, as Justice Bobde himself clarified, it is important, therefore, to bear in mind that progressive, and innocuous, though this reform appears, it may end up wasting the judiciary’s time. For sure there are international precedents — leftist Ecuador was the first to amend its constitution in 2008 to apply this definition to nature, while New Zealand accorded it to the Te Urewera national park in 2014 and the river Whanganui, “ancestor of the Maoris”, in 2017. But to officially hold animals as not “property” but equals yet have them governed by manmade laws is openly fallacious.

The petition urges all citizens of India be declared persons *in loco parentis* for animals. However, treating wildlife as a person requires the establishment of guardians to represent its legal interests. This “doctrine of trust” is already in place; so, perhaps, the rights approach to this case is redundant, after all.

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ADITYA SINHA
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patnamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234

Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285

Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208

Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904

Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433

Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burunpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemmudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580

Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Feet Road, Koramangala, Bengaluru-560 095 Ph: 080-43460500; Fax: 080-22960552

Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255

Kochi: No.3-B, 3rd Floor of DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloorkkadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408

Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph’s Press, TC 15/1040, Cotton Hill, Thycud (PO), Thiruvananthapuram 695 014

Kozhikode: Door No 6/1002 E, First Floor of City Mall, Opp. YMCA, Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001, Fax : 0495 4019 018

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Subhani

Vulnerable India faces crucial House session



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

Parliament will convene on the 14th of September, five days before the constitutional stipulation of 180 days expires. Article 85 of the Constitution stipulates that there should not be a gap of more than six months i.e. 180 days between two sessions of Parliament.

That the House convenes at an extraordinary moment in the contemporary history of India is a sequitur. The Covid-19 pandemic, the first in over a century of such global magnitude, is testing both the resilience of the Indian people and the Union and state governments to the extreme. With over 44 lakh cases and 75,000 deaths India now ranks second in the world, ahead of Brazil and behind the United States. However, the curve is not flattening. It is spiking like a fighter aircraft on a 90-degree upward ascent. With only five crore of 135.26 crore people tested so far India is looking at a very long haul with no vaccine in sight. The fact that the death rate is low is definitely a matter of relief. However, even this may unfortunately prove to be evanescent.

The most draconian lockdown in the world and that too at a four-hour notice completely failed. Nothing exemplifies it more than the fact that on March 22 the day the Janata Curfew was enforced India had 381 cases and seven deaths. Six months later the figures are traumatic. Prime Minister Modi’s unfortunate boast that “today, the entire country is fighting a war against coronavirus... Mahabharata was won in 18 days but the war against coronavirus will take 21 days” sounds like a nasty joke.

The question that the country is asking is why

the government has not been able to control the pandemic especially when China where this evil ogre originated has been successful in stamping it out. Worldwide infections today stand at more than 27 million and over 8,90,000 people dead from the disease.

However, in China, the virus has been all but banished through a combination of lockdowns and travel restrictions earlier in the year. President Xi Jinping recently swaggered during an awards ceremony for medical professionals that China had passed “an extraordinary and historic test”. “We quickly achieved initial success in the people’s war against the coronavirus,” Xi said. “We are leading the world in economic recovery and in the fight against Covid-19,” he added. Where the NDA-/BJP government seriously erred is in underestimating the portentousness of the peril and doing precious little for 52 days between when the first case was reported in Kerala on January 30 and the announcement of the Janata Curfew on March 22.

The most severe casualty of the ill-conceived and poorly executed lockdown has been the Indian economy. In the early days of the lockdown itself it became fairly evident that epidemiologists had become economists and economists had morphed into epidemiologists. While the former flattened the economy the latter miserably failed to flatten the disease curve. The economic data for the fourth quarter of the 2019-20 fiscal estimated a GDP growth rate of 3.1 per cent capping a seven-quarter economic freefall. The fact that the fourth quarter of the previous fiscal accounted for only eight days of the lockdown was a harbinger of

things to come. The first quarter economic data of the current fiscal revealed as was expected, that the lockdown had knocked the bottom out of the Indian economy. “GDP has shrunk from ₹35.35 lakh crore in Q1 of 2019-20 to ₹26.90 lakh crore in the first quarter of Q1 of 2020-21, showing a contraction of 23.9 per cent as compared to 5.2 per cent growth in Q1 2019-20,” the official statement by the National Statistical Office proclaimed. Attempts by the government to talk up the economy are, at best, pathetic and, at worst, laughable. What Parliament must examine very closely is whether the assumptions that underpin the 30.42 lakh crores Union Budget passed on the last day of the budget session i.e. the 23rd of March, 2020, are still valid.

Another issue that has assumed menacing proportions is the question of GST compensation to the states. When the GST framework was being negotiated from 2015 to 2017 the NDA/BJP government had promised the states that in return for giving up their sub-sovereign taxing powers states would be compensated to the extent of 14 per cent compounded growth in revenue using 2015-16 as the base year for revenue estimation. This was to be done calculating the difference between that figure and the actual GST collections in a particular year till 2022. This arrangement was put in place to smoothen the implementation of the GST regime and compensate states for shortfalls in revenue collection as a consequence of such execution. The central government is now reneging on this sov-

ereign commitment to the states. This constitutes a sledgehammer assault on the federal structure of the nation. Parliament would naturally be very agitated for Article 1 of the Constitution states that India that is Bharat shall be a Union of states.

However, the most crucial issue that will dominate Parliament is the continuing Chinese aggression and occupation of Indian territory. While initially denying and obfuscating both the fact and extent of Chinese transgression into Indian territory even at the level of the Prime Minister in terms of the statement he made at the all Party meeting, the NDA/BJP government has now been compelled albeit reluctantly to accept that the situation is as if not more serious than 1962. While Parliament will unanimously express solidarity with our brave soldiers who were martyred in the Galwan Valley and other places there would be very hard and searching questions as to whether India is prepared for combating a four-front national security nightmare. The China-Pakistan axis, Covid-19 and a collapsed economy and a possible upsurge of left wing extremism in the red corridor from Tirupati to Pashupati, given the current antagonistic relationship with Nepal. Most of all even four months down the line government has not answered a fundamental question — why have the Chinese intruded into our land? Is it anger over some unfulfilled commitments given in Wuhan and Mamallapuram?

India is vulnerable like never before. No amount of cynical headline management using the unfortunate death of a cine actor will deflect from an almost existential crisis that stares us in the face.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

What Parliament must examine very closely is whether the assumptions that underpin the 30.42 lakh crores Union Budget passed on the last day of the budget session are still valid

LETTERS

CHINA MACHINATIONS

China taking up cudgels against India can be construed as action on behalf of our perennial enemy Pakistan. It is the presence of US forces in South China Sea that deters China from venturing out for an all-out war with India. The phased withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan can pose a threat to our country.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

GRAFT CHARGES

Mutual bashing has become the order of the day in AP. We have a Tamil Nadu-like situation where two regional political parties are ruling the roost while the national parties are put on the back burner. As such it is common to hear the Opposition party level allegations against the ruling regional party. While in power they cannot take action against the opposition but start barking the moment they are out of it.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

VIZAG COVID CARE

It is heartening to read that Visakhapatnam district stood first in the state in operation and maintenance of Covid-19 hospitals (*DC, Sept.10*). Upkeep of ICUs, oxygen beds and hygiene made the grade. Credit goes to doctors and para-medical personnel. Other hospitals must comply with the test parameters to achieve the target in future.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Hijackers extend deadline

BERNE, SWITZERLAND, Sept. 10

The International Red Cross Committee announced early today that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine has delayed its ultimatum for the proposed exchange deal for the liberation of more than 400 passengers of three hijacked airlines. The Geneva-based committee told the Swiss National News Agency it had word from its special negotiator in Amman, that the ultimatum originally set for 0830 hrs IST today was delayed indefinitely. The message was relayed to the Swiss Foreign Ministry and to the three other countries involved — the US, Britain and West Germany.

Abhijit Bhattacharyya



Throw Chinese out of India’s economy; war is not an option

As the tense standoff with China in Ladakh worsens, with shots fired at the Line of Actual Control for the first time in 45 years, the battle drums are beating in some quarters and there is loose talk of a “short war” in the next few months. That is ill-advised, and a reality check is in order.

The September 5 *New York Times* had a disturbing front page headline: “Pandemic quiets India’s streets and punctures its high hopes”. The story read: “Not long ago, India’s future looked entirely different... A sense of malaise is creeping... (as) China is increasingly muscling into Indian territory”. September 4’s *Wall Street Journal* was dismal too: “Economies reel in developing world”.

Those talking of war have no idea of the economic disaster it will inflict. India’s ruling class has never fully understood, or effectively dealt with, the Communist Party of China, and wishful thinkers actually hoped the CPC would offer a magic wand for India’s economic uplift. That was never to be: ever since 1971 at least, when Henry Kissinger and his boss Richard Nixon reached out to Beijing, China’s focus was firmly set on America. No

matter that the CPC constitution’s original 1954 preamble clearly named the US as “enemy number one”.

Where did India figure? Nowhere! The Han Chinese saw it as an “inferior” neighbour that could be used (and discarded) as a crutch in some sectors, as a “market of consumers, crazy for foreign goods; industry devoid of technology upgrades; capital and investment-starved; and banks riddled with mega fraudsters and bad loans”.

Amid all this, an invisible Han-produced chemical/biological warfare-type salvo was enough to extinguish all enterprise, set India on the road to ruin, and knocked the aspiring power off its growth trajectory. “The economy of India shrank by 23.9 per cent a quarter, its worst performance since the 1996 figures,” *WSJ* reported. And things will worsen the longer the Chinese-virus pandemic lasts. As India’s resources to protect its workers and companies is limited, the prospect gets gloomier. “While rich countries can print more currency or take on debt at low cost, such a move by less fortunate nations” like India (will) enhance financial instability.

See the larger picture again. Latin America lost 26.5 million jobs, but one

country, India, sources suggest, lost 40 million-plus jobs. Brazil began one of the largest aid programmes... giving \$100 monthly to individuals, \$200 to families; and the US gave \$600 to jobless workers, in addition to other benefits. Has India done anything comparable? No, because it doesn’t have the resources. India’s economics has collapsed like a house of cards, in less than six months of the Chinese virus.

The Chinese have put India squarely on the mat, internally and externally. Their so-called “investment” resorted to long, deep penetration of India’s private HDFC and ICICI Banks. They are everywhere, from telecoms to automobiles, with the likes of Great Wall Auto waiting to enter, expand and finish off established Indian carmakers.

The PLA’s territory-penetration targets India’s defences, and compels New Delhi to spend billions more in dollars to buy military hardware for high-altitude terrain. War, understandably, implies huge expenditure. For India, however, the dilemma is rapidly depleting revenue and rising expenditure. Given this background, India must not even think about a “physical war”. Instead, tackle the enemy through a “finance war”. It must not fall into the

Chinese trap. No one can predict the fallout of a war. If it lasts 15 days, for example, it may cause the death of upto 15,000 soldiers and three times more casualties.

Further, where will India fight? On its own territory — some of which has been occupied by force by the PLA? According to some calculations, 1,000 sq km has gone to the Chinese in this century itself: Depsang 900 sq km; Pangong 65 sq km; Chushul 20 sq km; Galwan 20 sq km. India fought to regain its own territory at Haji Pir in 1965. In Kargil 1999 too, India fought for its own land. There were mind-boggling casualties in both clashes with Pakistan.

With China, things will be far, far worse, further damaging the economy. That is not prudent, and a change in strategy is called for.

First, hit the Chinese companies lock, stock and barrel, target investments and whatever else in India. Use economics and finance as a tool to tackle the Hans’ malevolence-cum-perfidy. War will destroy whatever wealth India does possess now.

Politically, too, it will create huge turbulence. The month-long 1962 war destroyed Jawaharlal Nehru. One hopes 2020 will not see a repeat. The

1962 war triggered an emergency over the external threat, followed by a draconian Gold Control Act. The 22-day conflict paved the way for demonetisation on June 6, 1966, followed by all-round economic dislocation. The 17-day 1971 war led to another economic recession, and then the 1975 Emergency which almost derailed Indian democracy.

India must therefore take the economics route to curb, deport, expel and de-couple from China. Not through bloodshed. The latter will inflict a massive body blow to India’s defences, economics and democracy. Draconian laws are bound to follow due to the all-round external threat and internal dissent, and a destruction of India’s polity, society and economy.

India needs to act fast. In October 1962 Nehru wrongly asked an ill-prepared military to throw China out of its territory. Don’t do it today. Instead, first throw all non-military Chinese out of India’s trade, telecoms, transport and tourism... and every other sector immediately.

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College. The views expressed are personal.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,840.32	1.69
Nifty 50	11,449.25	1.52
S&P 500*	3,406.29	0.22
Dollar (₹)	73.45	0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	95.56	-0.29
Euro (₹)	86.91	-0.34
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,391.287	0.54
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	40.59	-0.20
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.053	0.064
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.710	0.007

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Peak power demand crosses last year's level

Peak power demand is back to normal as it has touched 174.33 GW on Wednesday, surpassing the highest level of 173.15 GW in September last year, showing spurt in commercial and industrial activities. The peak power demand met had reached its previous highest level of 173.15 GW on Sept. 9 last year, as per the power ministry data. Peak power demand met is the highest energy supply during the day.

Citi to have first woman CEO of a Wall Street bank



Citigroup said Jane Fraser would succeed Michael Corbat as the bank's next chief executive, making Fraser the first woman to lead a Wall Street bank. Fraser is currently head of Citi's global consumer banking division, a major part of the bank that includes checking and savings accounts but also Citi's huge credit card business. She's been with Citi for 16 years. Fraser will be the first woman head of Wall Street's big six banks.

Ravi Raju to head Nomura's wealth management biz



Nomura, Asia's global investment bank, said it has appointed Indian-origin Ravi Raju as head of international wealth management. In this newly created role, Raju will be responsible for expanding Nomura's wealth management business in Asia ex-Japan. Raju will be based in Singapore.

Australia allows import of Indian pomegranates

India will now be able to export pomegranates to Australia for the first time if certain biosecurity conditions are met, a senior diplomat said. The development comes after the completion of an import protocol for fresh pomegranates from India, which followed an import risk assessment involving significant collaboration and discussion between Indian and Australian authorities.



—Reuters

Govt awaits opportune time to enter market 26 PSUs chosen for divestment

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, SEPT. 10

It is official now. The government has revealed that 26 public sector undertakings (PSUs) have been chosen for privatisation as of now. Out of the shortlisted PSUs, 23 have received the Cabinet approval recently. The move is part of the government's efforts to meet its ambitious Rs 2.1-lakh crore divestment target for the current fiscal.

Responding a right to information (RTI) query sought by Chandigarh-based activist Aman Sethi, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam), under the Ministry of Finance, on August 24 said, "There are 26 public sector undertakings in the list as on the date so far in which the Government of India is pursuing strategic divestment."

The activist raised two more specific queries; about the percentage of shares the government plans to divest; and if Uco Bank is also included in the sell-off list. The Dipam responded that the percentage of shares would be decided according to the market conditions and that no information was available with the department about the Uco Bank issue.

Sensing heightened risk to revenue from the economic slowdown and the evolving pandemic conditions, the government has set a disinvestment target



LINED UP FOR SELLOFF

- Project & Development India
- Engineering Projects India
- Pawan Hans
- B&R Company
- Air India
- Central Electronics
- Cement Corp India (Nayagaon unit)
- Indian Medicine & Pharmaceuticals Corporation
- Salem Steel Plant, Bhadravati Steel Plant, Durgapur Steel Plant
- Ferro Scrap Nigam
- NDMC, Nagarnar Steel Plant
- Bharat Earth Movers
- HLL Lifecare
- Bharat Petroleum Corporation
- Shipping Corporation of India
- Container Corporation of India
- Nilachal Ispat Nigam
- Hindustan Prefab
- Bharat Pumps and Compressors
- Scooters India
- Hindustan Newsprint
- Karnataka Antibiotics & Pharmaceuticals
- Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals
- Hindustan Antibiotics
- Indian Tourism Development Corporation
- Hindustan Fluorocarbon

Source: Dipam

of Rs 2.10 lakh crore for the 2020-21 fiscal. Of this, Rs 1.20 lakh crore is to come from disinvestment of public sector undertakings and another Rs 90,000 crore from stake sale in other financial institutions.

In July, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced privatisation of about 23 public sector companies, which had already received cabinet approval. Elaborating about disinvestment

plans, the minister had said the government wanted to sell stake in public sector companies when it would fetch the right price.

"There are already nearly 22-23 such PSUs which have been cleared by the Cabinet for disinvestment. The intent is clear that at least for those which had already been cleared by the Cabinet, we will have to disinvest," the finance minister had said.

Flawless 102-carat stone could fetch \$30 mn



JILL SERJEANT SEPT. 10

One of the world's rarest diamonds, about the size of an egg or a large lollipop, is going up for auction next month and is expected to fetch \$12 million to \$30 million.

Sotheby's said on Thursday that the 102.39-carat diamond, a flawless white sparkler, was the second-largest oval diamond of its kind to be offered at auction. The largest, a 118.28-carat diamond, set a record \$30.8 million price when it was sold in 2013.

Only seven such diamonds, known in the trade as D colour flawless or internally flawless white diamonds, over 100 carats have previously been sold at auction.

"More and more people have come to understand that something billions of years old and of the size of a lollipop can store as much value as a Rembrandt self-portrait or a Basquiat," Gary Schuler, worldwide chairman of jewellery at Sotheby's, said in a statement.

"Diamonds of this calibre and size have sold anywhere between \$11.9 million and \$33.7 million," said Quig Bruning, head of Sotheby's New York jewellery department.

Sotheby's said the gem was cut from a 271-carat rough discovered at the Victor Mine in the Canadian province of Ontario in 2018 and cut and polished for more than a year.

Two of the most famous large diamonds—the Koh-i-Noor and The Cullinan 1—belong to the British monarchy and form part of the British Crown Jewels.

India's fuel demand dips most since April

New Delhi, Sept 10: India's fuel demand in August posted its biggest decline since April as local lockdowns put brakes on economic activity and transportation, official data showed on Thursday. Petroleum product sales fell to 14.39 million tonnes in August, down 7.5 per cent over the previous month and about 16 per cent from a year earlier, data from the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) showed.

The decline in August was the sixth consecutive year-on-year slide. Fuel demand had slumped by a record 48.6 per cent in April to 9.4 million tonnes as the government imposed a nationwide lockdown in an attempt to curb the spread of coronavirus.

It recovered in the subsequent two months but has been falling again since July, on a monthly basis. Sale of diesel, the most consumed fuel in the country, fell 12 per cent to 4.84 million tonnes in August from 5.51 million tonnes in the previous month.

On an annual basis, the demand for diesel declined by 20.7 per cent. Petrol sales fell 7.4 per cent year-on-year to 2.38 million tonnes although it rose 5.3 per cent from 2.26 million tonnes in July as commuters preferred driving to using public transportation. LPG sales were down five per cent year-on-year to 2.2 million tonnes, while kerosene demand, fell 43 per cent to 1.32,000 tonnes. Month-on-month, the sale was almost flat. Industry sources said reaching pre-COVID-19 sales may take at least 3-4 months. There is likely to be a pick-up in demand with the onset of the festive season in October-November but reaching pre-COVID-19 levels would not be before new year, they said.

Oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan had previously stated that sales would return to normal by festival season but the local lockdowns being imposed in several states has prolonged the return to normalcy. Naphtha sales at 1.07 million tonnes was down 16 per cent over July demand. —PTI

India to take ₹30 L cr hit from Covid in medium-term

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 10

The pandemic would have caused a permanent loss of Rs 30 lakh crore to the economy in the medium-term. This is much higher than the loss suffered by several other countries in the Asia-Pacific, finds Crisil.

The rating agency expects the pandemic to have caused a permanent loss of 13 per cent of real GDP over the medium-term. In nominal terms, this amounts to Rs 30 lakh crore. The loss is far higher than a 3 per cent permanent hit to GDP in Asia-Pacific economies, other than China and India, estimated by S&P Global in June.

Catching-up with the pre-pandemic trend value of real GDP would require average real GDP growth to surge to 13 per cent annually for the next three fiscals—a feat never before accomplished by India.

Crisil has also revised India's real GDP growth forecast for fiscal 2021 to -9 per cent from -5 per cent projected in May. "With the pandemic's peak not yet in sight and the government not providing adequate direct fiscal support, the downside risks to our earlier forecast have materialised," it said, adding, that if Covid-19 were to peak out in Sept.-Oct., GDP growth could turn mildly positive towards the fiscal end.

Over 85% MSMEs still face liquidity crunch

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 10

Despite Rs 1.61 lakh crore getting sanctioned under Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS), more than 85 per cent of the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are still facing liquidity crunch.

As per the finance ministry data, till September 3, a total of Rs 1,61,017 crore or 53 per cent of the Rs 3 lakh crore ECLGS scheme has been sanctioned by different banks for the MSME sector reeling under the slowdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Of this, disbursements stood at Rs 1,13,713 lakh crore or 37 per cent.

However, these loans have been sanctioned for only those MSMEs which already had a loan outstanding with the banks.

"Of the total 6 crore MSMEs, 85 per cent do not have access to the formal banking system. The large majority has been facing issues even before the pandemic. The pandemic further enhanced their liquidity crunch. Among the MSMEs having access to formal credit, those who had a loan outstanding at the time of lockdown only were eligible for additional credit," said Meghna Suryakumar, founder and CEO of Credivatch.

The finance ministry data says that 41 lakh accounts have been sanctioned loans and 24 lakh have received it. The data does not specify the number of MSMEs which have been sanctioned or received credit. Even if



each account is counted as an MSME, only 6.8 per cent of the MSMEs have received the additional credit.

"In the first half of this fiscal, hardly any new loan has been disbursed to new MSMEs. New entrepreneurs with fresh loan requirements too are looking at fast sanction and disbursement of loans with 2 per cent interest subvention. I hope and pray the banks announce some special loan schemes for the second half of this fiscal. Liberal loan programmes for existing MSMEs outside the institutional credit domain as on February 29, 2020 should be immediately planned and announced," said Rajive Chawla, chairman, lamSMEofIndia.

Suryakumar finds a ray of hope coming from the fintech space. According to her, a few fintech players like Lendingkart and Capital Float have started financing the MSMEs outside the purview of formal banking. "Currently, their presence is quite small. But in the next five years, they would be financing a larger share of the unbanked MSMEs. The ongoing digitisation process will provide these MSMEs access to digital credit," she said.

In order to get there, MSMEs will have to first survive the pandemic.

PM launches ₹20,000 cr fisheries scheme



Narendra Modi

New Delhi, Sept. 10: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched Rs 20,050-crore Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) to boost production and exports in the fisheries sector as part of the government's aim to double farmers' income.

Through video conference, the Prime Minister also launched several other initiatives in the fisheries and animal husbandry sectors in Bihar, a state which is heading for the assembly polls in October-November.

Modi launched a mobile app e-Gopala that will provide solutions to farmers on livestock related issues and inaugurated Semen Station with state-of-the-art facilities in Pune with an investment of Rs 84.27 crore on 75 acres of land made available by the Bihar government.

After the launch, the Prime Minister interacted with farmers focusing on the livestock and fisheries sector. The PMMSY is a flagship scheme for focused and sustainable development of fisheries sector in the country with an estimated investment of Rs 20,050 crore for its implementation during

AVANTI FEEDS SEES CENTRE'S BLUE REVOLUTION BOOSTING BIZ

ASHUTOSH JOSHI SEPT. 10

Avanti Feeds Ltd, one of India's biggest exporters of seafood, says the government's ambitious plan to promote fisheries will boost its business.

The Hyderabad-based company, in which Thai Union Group Pcl holds a 24 per cent stake, recommends farmers should group together to benefit from the scale of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promised investment. The so-called blue revolution has an outlay of about Rs 20,000 crore (\$2.7 billion) on infrastructure, including cold storage and processing facilities, and Modi on Thursday rolled out an app for farmers to get market information.

"Ultimately, the backbone of this industry is the farmer, if you support him, everything will grow," Avanti Feeds's joint managing director C. Ramachandra Rao said on a call with ana-

lysts late Wednesday.

The programme is part of Modi's stimulus to revive the economy from a coronavirus-induced slump. It aims to more than double per capita consumption of fish in India to 12 kg by March 2025, and targets to generate about 5.5 million jobs.

Avanti Feeds, which exports more than two-thirds of its shrimps to the US, is looking for supply contracts with other countries, including China. For the three months through June, about 26 per cent of its exports were to Asian countries, with China being the major destination.

"We are working with Chinese importers to develop value-added products," Alluri Nikhilesh, executive director at the company's frozen foods units, said on the call. "China can become a dominant importer in the next few years."

—Bloomberg

China's mobile shipments down 15.6% in August

Shanghai, Sept. 10: Smartphone shipments in China fell 15.6 per cent in August compared with a year earlier, government data released on Thursday showed.

The numbers show consumer demand for handsets in China remains low, and that companies such as Huawei Technologies Co Ltd, Xiaomi Corp and Apple Inc will have a tougher time than before convincing customers to buy their latest products.

Phone makers shipped 24.4 million handsets in July, down from 33 million a year earlier, according to the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, a state-backed think tank.

—Bloomberg

Maserati unveils supercar after 15-yr gap

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, SEPT. 10

Italian super sports car-maker Maserati, owned by Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, on Thursday unveiled the new MC20, its first supercar in 15 years, in Modena.

Maserati's last supercar, the MC12, which cost almost \$800,000 was stopped being produced in 2005 after making only 50 units and bought by that few globally. In 2018, one MC12 sold at an RM Sotheby's auction for \$2.5 million.

Prices for the new MC20 car, which will be available globally next year, will start at about \$210,000. The supercar's production launch is scheduled for the end of this year, and Maserati is already accepting orders.



"The MC20 is more than a supercar. It's set the cornerstone to build Maserati for the future," Maserati CEO Davide Grasso said.

The new halo model will also offer electric, convertible and motorsport variants in beginning in 2022.

With a body made largely from lightweight carbon fiber and aluminum, the new Nettuno engine, a 630-horsepower V6 with torque of 730 Nm, delivers

0-100 km/h acceleration in under 2.9 seconds and a top speed over 325 km an hour. This engine signals Maserati's return to producing its own power units after a hiatus of more than 20 years.

The Maserati MC20 is part of a long-term plan by Fiat Chrysler to rebuild Maserati's once strong reputation for performance.

"It was critical of our strategy to start this new era with the launch of a

TRIUMPH ROCKET 3 GT BIKE LAUNCHED AT ₹18.4 LAKH

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, SEPT. 10

British superbike manufacturer Triumph Motorcycles, on Thursday launched its ultimate tourer, the all-new Rocket 3 GT in India priced at Rs 18.40 lakh at pan India showroom.

Well, that price is almost equivalent to a brand new Honda Civic. The company

ny already offers the roadster version R in India that was launched at Rs 18 lakh. Similar to the R, the GT too is being brought to the country through the CBU route. Deliveries of the new bike will start by the end of this month.

The new Rocket 3 GT is powered by the same 2,500cc, three-cylinder, liquid-cooled engine from the R that produces 167hp and a massive 221Nm of torque.



sports car," Grasso said, adding that "a sports car

that will bring us back to where we started."

SHORT TAKES

Natl badminton camp called off

New Delhi: The national badminton camp in Hyderabad for next month's Thomas and Uber Cup Final was on Thursday scrapped after it became clear that players would not get any relaxation on the mandatory seven-day quarantine period. The camp was originally scheduled to start on September 7 and conclude on September 27 for the event set for October 3 to 11 in Aarhus, Denmark. It was proposed by the Sports Authority of India (SAI) at the SAI Pulla Gopichand Academy. Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, SAI wanted all the 26 players to be in quarantine for at least a week before training, an idea which was rejected by the players and Badminton Association of India (BAI). SAI had said that players will have to stay and train at the Gopichand academy to ensure greater health safety amid the raging pandemic. However, top players, who are mostly from Hyderabad, were against the idea and voiced their reluctance to stay at the academy to SAI in a video conference. — PTI

Vaccine will not guarantee Games

Laussane: Amid uncertainty about planning the Tokyo Olympics, IOC president Thomas Bach said that progress with vaccines and rapid testing for Covid-19 would not be the complete answer for staging the rescheduled Games. "They will not be the silver bullet but they can greatly facilitate the organisation of the Games," Bach said after an International Olympic Committee board meeting. Bach declined to speculate on the Tokyo Olympics being held without fans. "We don't know how the world looks like tomorrow. So how can you expect from us to know how the world looks in 320 days from today?" Bach further added. — AP

Jonty to coach Sweden post IPL

Stockholm: Former South Africa international Jonty Rhodes will be moving to Sweden with his family after the IPL to take charge as head coach of the country's national team, the Swedish Cricket Federation (SCF) has announced. The 51-year-old Rhodes is currently in Dubai for the IPL as the fielding coach of Kings XI Punjab. "Swedish Cricket Federation to invest in junior cricket, high performance & growth through the appointment of South African cricket great, Jonty Rhodes as head coach," SCF said in a statement. Rhodes said he is excited about the fresh challenge he will face in a country not known for its cricket. "I am really excited to relocate to Sweden with my family and work together with the Swedish Cricket community," Rhodes said. — PTI

Panghal bats for formative coach

New Delhi: Asian Games champion boxer Amit Panghal has requested the Sports Authority of India (SAI) to allow the inclusion of his formative coach Anil Dhankar in the ongoing national camp in Patiala. Panghal said he has sent across his proposal formally to both SAI and the Sports Ministry but hasn't got any response so far. "I can only request and I have done that. I am waiting for some response, haven't got any as yet. The last mail that was sent by me to the ministry was on Monday," Panghal said. Panghal has regularly credited Dhankar for shaping his career in the early years, and had even pleaded for a Dronacharya award for the coach. — PTI

Live on TV

CRICKET

England vs Australia 1st ODI from 5.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FORMULA ONE

Italian Grand Prix Practice-1 from 2.25 pm; Practice-2 from 6.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

US OPEN TENNIS

Women's Doubles Final from 9.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 2, HD

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VICTOR AZARENKA

Serena, the other Mum, too into US semis

New York, Sept. 10: Serena Williams battled into a US Open semifinal showdown with Victoria Azarenka on Wednesday as top men's seeds Dominic Thiem and Daniil Medvedev booked their spots in the last four.

Williams, seeded third, came from a set down to overcome unseeded Bulgarian Tsvetana Pironkova and keep alive her bid for a 24th singles Grand Slam title at Flushing Meadows. Later, Azarenka blew away Belgium's Elise Mertens as she continues her hunt for a first Grand Slam title in seven years.

Serena's comeback included two astonishing shots with her left hand that contributed to winning points.

"At that point I was fighting so hard. I was just trying to do everything I can whether righty or lefty," she said.

A sluggish start saw the American lose the first 6-4, but she fought back to take the next two 6-3, 6-2, in 2hr 12min inside Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"I never give up and you know I just gotta keep going," Serena further added.

Serena smashed 20 aces, the most she has had in eight years, taking her tally for the tournament to 64 so far. The record for the most number of aces in a US Open in the women's singles is 70, set by Serena in 1999 when she won for the first time.

"Sometimes when I'm serving, I just tell myself, I don't care if my arm falls off, I'm going to keep serving," she said.

Serena is looking to match Margaret Court's record for the most number of singles Grand Slam wins.

It has been more than three years since she won her 23rd at the 2017 Australian Open — when she was already pregnant with daughter Olympia.

Serena has come close since, reaching four major finals only to come away empty handed.

In the last four she will renew her rivalry with Azarenka who demolished Mertens 6-1, 6-0 in just 1hr 13 min.

Serena defeated Azarenka in the final of the US Open in 2012 and 2013.

The last few years of Azarenka's career have



Victoria Azarenka celebrates after winning her women's singles quarterfinal match against Elise Mertens at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York on Wednesday. Azarenka won 6-1, 6-0.

been interrupted by a custody battle over her son who was born in 2016.

Azarenka said she found it "hard to accept losses" when she was young and at the top of her game, but was now benefiting from a more philosophical attitude.

"I enjoy the moment no matter what it is. I take life as it comes," Azarenka told reporters.

"It took me a long road to come here with a lot of struggles, a lot of understanding, forcing me to find this route, this path, if you can say that. But I'm here and I'm happy,"

THE RESULTS

Men's singles quarterfinals: Daniil Medvedev (RUS x3) bt Andrey Rublev (RUS x10) 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, 7-6 (7/5); Dominic Thiem (AUT x2) bt Alex De Minaur (AUS x21) 6-1, 6-2, 6-4.

Women's singles quarterfinals: Serena Williams (USA x3) bt Tsvetana Pironkova (BUL) 4-6, 6-3, 6-2; Victoria Azarenka (BLR) bt Elise Mertens (BEL x16) 6-1, 6-0.

she further added.

In the men's draw, Russia's third seed Medvedev downed compa-

triot and childhood friend Andrey Rublev 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, 7-6 (7/5).

Twenty-two-year-old Rublev raced to a 5-1 lead in the first-set tie-break before Medvedev, last year's US Open runner-up, hauled back to win it 8-6 with an ace.

Medvedev, 24, smashed 16 aces and won 89 per cent of first-serve points. He made 75 per cent of returns to Rublev's 54 per cent.

"One point decided two sets so it was a really tough match and Andrey was playing unbelievable actually," Medvedev said.

SINNER DOWNS PHILLIPP IN GENERALI OPEN

Kitzbuehel (Austria), Sept. 10: Jannik Sinner defeated former two-time champion Philipp Kohlschreiber 6-3, 6-2 at the Generali Open Tuesday, a week after both players lost in the opening round of the U.S. Open.

Sinner, the 2019 ATP Next Generation finals champion, won 85 per cent of the points on his first serve to keep his perfect record against Kohlschreiber, after also beating the German player in straight sets in Vienna last year.

Kohlschreiber, who resides in Kitzbuehel and won the title here in 2015 and again two years later, appeared at the tournament for the 10th straight year.

The 44th-ranked Sinner set up a second-round match against Laslo Djere. The Serb rallied from 4-0 down in the final set to defeat the eighth-seeded Albert Ramos Vinolas 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 (2).

Also, Feliciano Lopez downed Pierre-Hugues Herbert 6-4, 6-3; Federico Delbonis won an all-Argentine duel with Juan Ignacio Londero 6-4, 6-0; and Jordan Thompson outlasted fellow Australian John Millman 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (2) in just under three hours.

Swiss qualifier Marc-Andrea Huesler got the better of Emil Ruusuvuori 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (2) and set up a match against Fabio Fognini. — AP

Medvedev will play second seed Thiem who demolished Australia's Alex de Minaur, seeded 21st, 6-1, 6-2, 6-4.

"I had a great feeling from the first moment on," said the Austrian.

Fifth seed Alexander Zverev of Germany faces Spain's 20th seed Pablo Carreno Busta in the competition's other semi-final.

The disqualification of Novak Djokovic for accidentally hitting a line official with a ball during the last 16 means the US Open will crown a first-time Grand Slam winner on Sunday. — AFP

Lowry scores high as Raptors bully Celtics

Miami, Sept. 10: With their season on the brink and title repeat hopes in jeopardy, the Toronto Raptors outgouted Boston for a dramatic series-tying 125-122 double-overtime triumph Wednesday in the NBA playoffs.

Kyle Lowry led Toronto with 33 points and Norman Powell added 23 off the bench in an emotional thriller that resembled the intensity of a heavy-weight boxing matchup.

The defending champion Raptors equalised the best-of-seven Eastern Conference semifinal with a winner-take-all

game seven set for Friday, a conference final against Miami awaiting the winner.

Meanwhile, Kawhi Leonard finished an assist shy of his first playoff triple-double and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Denver Nuggets 96-85 in Game 4 to move a step closer to their first Western Conference finals.

Leonard garnered 30 points, 11 rebounds, four steals and two blocked shots. Reserve Montrezl Harrell added 15 points to help the Clippers take a 3-1 lead. They can close out the Nuggets on Friday night. — Agencies

Smith sings Virat praises, says best

Manchester, Sept. 10: Australian run-machine Steve Smith has rated his great Indian rival Virat Kohli as the best ODI batsman in world cricket currently.

The two batsmen, who will face off in the upcoming IPL and also during India's tour of Australia later this year, have been fierce rivals on the field but share cordial relations off it.

Smith, who is currently in England for the three-match ODI series against the hosts starting from Friday, said this during an Instagram session with fans.

When a fan asked the 31-year-old Australian to name the best ODI batsman, Smith had no hesitation in taking Kohli's name.

The Indian captain is currently the leading scorer in ODIs among active cricketers with 11867 runs at an average of 59.34. He has 43 hundreds to his name and is only seven away from surpassing Sachin Tendulkar's world record for most hundreds in ODIs.

During the session, Smith described Kohli's RCB teammate and South African great AB de Villiers as a "freak".

Smith, who is set to represent Rajasthan Royals in IPL 2020, said India's KL Rahul and Sanju Samson are the two players to watch out for. — PTI

ACU ARRIVES IN DUBAI TO KEEP IPL IN CHECK

New Delhi, Sept. 10: Preventing corrupt approaches through social media will be the focus of BCCI's anti-corruption unit (ACU) in the upcoming closed-door IPL, ahead of which the watchdog will educate players through video-counselling rather than physical sessions.

An eight-member BCCI team, led by Ajit Singh, landed in Dubai on Tuesday and is in the middle of their six-day quarantine. Singh has already said the IPL, beginning September 19, will be more secure than earlier as it is being conducted in a strict bio-bubble.

There will be no crowds at the stadium and fans won't be allowed to throng the team hotel. There have been instances when corruptors masqueraded as fans to approach players.

The ACU will be speaking to all the eight teams separately and the sessions will be more useful for the younger players who are not exposed to international cricket and the glamour of IPL. The established players are already aware of the ACU protocols. — PTI

Morgan and team set to take on Oz

London, Sept. 10: Eoin Morgan is hoping for spinning pitches during England's one-day series against Australia as the world champions plan for the 2023 World Cup in India.

The England captain is anticipating a gentle turner in Manchester, where the fierce rivals will play three one-day internationals over the next week, with weather conditions conducive to slow bowlers.

England's rise to top spot in the 50-over rankings was built around posting big totals on good batting tracks and their tournament triumph last summer

was driven by their pace attack.

But with the next World Cup due to be held in India in three years' time, as well as a T20 World Cup there next year, Morgan is embracing the need for change.

"It's a huge benefit to us playing at Old Trafford, particularly if we play on the wicket I think we're going to play on which will hopefully be slow and take a lot of turn," he said.

The three-match ODI series starts on Friday, following a Twenty20 series in Southampton, which England won 2-1. — AFP

NUMBERS GAME

AUSTRALIA-ENGLAND IN ONE DAYERS SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Venue Played	Aus won	Eng won	Tied	N/R
Australia	71	45	25	1
England	70	31	35	22
India	3	2	1	-
South Africa	2	2	-	-
Emirates	2	1	1	-
West Indies	1	1	-	-
Total	149	82	62	23
Day/Night matches	70	43	25	2
Last five matches	5	1	4	-

HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS:

- Australia: 342-9 in 50 overs at Melbourne 14-02-2015
- England: 481-6 in 50 overs at Nottingham 19-06-2018

LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS:

- Australia: 70 in 25.2 overs at Birmingham 04-06-1977
- England: 86 in 32.4 overs at Manchester 14-06-2001

HIGHEST INDIVIDUAL SCORES:

- Australia: 161* Shane Watson at Melbourne 16-01-2011
- England: 180 Jason Roy at Melbourne 14-01-2018

BEST BOWLING PERFORMANCES:

- Australia: 7-20 Andy Bichel at Port Elizabeth 02-03-2003
- England: 6-45 Chris Woakes at Brisbane 30-01-2011

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

Dhoni braces for another IPL hit in adversity



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

If a question were to be put forth to Indian cricket fans as to who they would choose as the best captain of all eight teams participating in the 13th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2020, the answer will be a no brainer.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the recently retired former Indian skipper and, considered a sagacious and most experienced captain, will walk away with majority of the votes.

Dhoni's record as a captain in the short formats of the game speak for themselves. With three

International Cricket Council (ICC) championships and an equal number of wins leading Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in the IPL, his reputation to lead teams to success is unparalleled. He is known to be tough when it matters, humane when his compatriots need a shoulder, and cool despite any degree of heat created in a pressure cooker situation. His resume would make him the ideal candidate for leader of the decade; the many pros notched therein outweighing the cons.

Thala (the Head) as he is called can do no wrong

according to CSK fans. To them, he is like the animated, mythical character, Obelix who was born with a magic potion as part of his blood stream and could run through mammoth armies on his own. Blessed with a keen intuition and well honed instincts, Dhoni's super powers as a hero will be tested when he steps out for the toss in one of the fabulous stadiums dotting the stark desert of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Even as CSK step out onto the practice facilities, Dhoni's mind will be in overwork mode to figure out the best combination needed at the start of the tournament.

If the loss of Suresh Raina has weighed heavily on the probable combination of the team, the withdrawal of Harbhajan

Singh (due to personal reasons) must have put the yellow fellows a few more steps back. CSK fans have yet to assimilate what it would mean for their favourite team to take the field without Chinna Thala (little head) as Raina is fondly referred to.

Both Raina and Harbhajan get a lot to the undisturbed table of CSK, in different ways. With 5368 runs scored in twelve editions of the IPL, the left hander stands second on the list of top scorers, 44 runs behind Virat Kohli and above Rohit Sharma who follows at number three.

More than the runs, Raina's effervescence on the field (with brilliant catching and more) plays a big role in constantly inspiring the team.

Harbhajan, who came

into the CSK fold after a long stint with Mumbai Indians (MI), is the man Dhoni would trust most when squeezing the flow of runs matter. With an economy rate of less than 7.5, the crafty off-spinner is the best option in the death overs.

More importantly, Bhajji, as he is known, is the only full-time exponent of off-spin in CSK's ranks which will make planning difficult for Dhoni when it comes to bowling to a team packed with left handed batsmen.

With medium pacer Deepak Chahar and middle order batsman Ruturaj Gaikwad lodged in the sick bay, having tested positive for Covid, Dhoni's problems will be compounded when he sits to pick the best combination for the opening games. Getting a

good start is imperative, especially when it comes to high pressure tournaments like the IPL where there is a lot at stake. To get a disturbed combination into the groove and keep them mentally fit will be the super skippers biggest task on hand.

While on captaincy, Dhoni will be aware that he needs to be supremely fit to last the entire tournament as his able (former) deputy, Raina, is out of the mix.

With Harbhajan, former MI skipper, also out, the CSK management will probably look at Dwayne Bravo or Shane Watson (both having captaincy experience) as likely deputies.

With Bravo (about to hit 37 years of age) and Watson, at 39 years (the same age as Dhoni), team

CSK will continue to be top heavy with seniors playing a youthful game.

In 2018, Dhoni led CSK to their third IPL victory, the team coming back after a two-year hiatus.

The team, whose average age was a shade above 30 years, surprised everyone by winning the final thanks to a magnificent effort by Watson, the oldest member of the team. Those who called the team 'Dad's Army' were made to eat their words thanks to a motivational effort by the skipper.

Today, Dhoni is faced with a similar challenge of making his team rise from adversity.

For someone who has been there and done that, there could be no better motivation for the Thala who thrives on such situations.