

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | MONDAY 14 | SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 31°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aavani 29
Tithi: Dwadashi
Star: Pusam
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

PRAYERS

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

SUNSET TODAY 6.11 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 2.40 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.43 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+90,934)	(+1,106)
48,42,722	79,720

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,693)
TN: 5,02,759 8,381

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,90,91,268

DEATHS

9,26,749

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
213

worldometers.info

Kangana meets Maha Guv

Mumbai: Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut, who is locked in a bitter battle with the ruling Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, on Sunday met state Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari here and told him about the “injustice” done to her. The meeting came days after the Shiv Sena-ruled BMC demolished alleged illegal alterations at Kangana’s bungalow at Pali Hill in suburban Bandra. Talking to reporters after the meeting that took place at the Raj Bhavan, the actor said, “I met the governor. He heard me as a daughter. I came to meet him as a citizen. I have nothing to do with politics.”

BJP worker found dead in Hooghly

Kolkata: A BJP worker was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Hooghly of West Bengal on Sunday morning. Ganesh Roy, the deceased, was a booth level worker of the party. The body, with legs bent and apparently touching the ground almost, was hanging from a tree, one and half km away from his home. A noose was tied around the neck of Roy, in his mid fifties.

58 % of recovered cases from 5 states

New Delhi: A total of 37,02,595 people have recuperated from COVID-19 in the country so far, with 58 per cent of the recovered cases being reported from Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, the Centre said on Sunday. The same five states account for 60 per cent of total 9,73,175 active cases in the country. The national recovery rate now stands at 77.88 per cent.

COUNTER POINT



Our young MP is asking if there will be any debate on Kangana and Rhea?

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Bedi thanks Centre, ICMR for help to contain virus



Afghan resolution is the key to regional peace: Imran

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Hamilton claims his 90th F1 win



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■ **Suicides, demonstrations mar medical admission exam**

Neet tests 1.17 L in TN amid political protests

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEP 13

Amidst an aura of fear and anxiety, 1.17 lakh medical college aspirants took the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test, popularly known as NEET, in 238 centres spread across 14 towns and cities in the State on Sunday.

Though the examination began at 2 pm, students and parents thronged the centres before 11 am and many of them went without lunch as they waited for the gates to open and the students were let in after the mandatory tests for Coronavirus and also the stringent physical checking to prevent malpractices.

Protests by various groups of youth and politicians also marked the day as the demand for the cancellation of NEET in Tamil Nadu reached a crescendo particularly in the wake of three suicides on Saturday and a suicide attempt hours before the start of the examination.

Among the organizations that organized protests with banners and flags, raising slogans against the government for not banning NEET were the Students Federation of India and the DMK Youth wing in various places across the State.

A newly married woman in one of the small towns was forced to remove her thali (wedding necklace) and metti (toe ring) despite protestations. Similarly, there were many cases of strict adherence to norms that left many parents and students uneasy.

However it was the fear of Coronavirus that hung in the air and the authorities in the various centres



Precautions like social distancing were in place for the all-India Neet medical admission test that was held across centres with students and supervisory staff alike needing to play it safe.

Corona +ve student sent back

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARUR, SEPT 13

A NEET aspirant hailing from Vellakovil in Tirupur district who tested positive for Covid-19, was not allowed to appear for the exam at a centre located at a private engineering college near here, on Sunday. The student was confirmed Covid-19 positive

strictly enforced the protocol. No one was allowed into the examination halls without a facemask and those who turned up without a facemask were provided one.

Body temperature of all aspirants was checked with thermal scanners and social distancing was

on Friday, and he had contacted the particular centre in-charge and enquired if he could attend the examination. In response, the authorities had told him that he would be permitted if he complies with necessary health precautions and wears a Covid-19 protective gear. Following this, the candidate had come to the centre and con-

tacted the centre-in-charge, but he was asked not to enter the exam hall. The official had asked him to return his hall ticket with email ID and leave. He had told the student that they would inform the government about his inability to appear for the exam, and the rest would be decided by the government.

NEET.

Anxiety was writ large on the faces of many aspirants as the news of the three suicides the previous day and an attempt by a Ranipet girl, Sowmya, in the same morning by overdosing on sleeping pills seemingly affected them emotionally. ■ P2

India, China commanders to meet

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 13

The next Corps Commanders meeting between Indian and China is crucial as it will show whether the PLA is ready to work on ground towards disengagement and de-escalation after foreign affairs ministers from the two countries agreed on a five-point agenda during their meeting last week in Moscow.

Sources said that all diplomatic talks will mean nothing unless the Chinese military is ready to disengage on the ground. India wants the status-quo ante of April 2020 restored and China should withdraw its 50,000 troops which it has pushed near the LAC in the Eastern Ladakh.

“The Corps Commanders may meet this week. The dates have not been confirmed yet,” said sources. “After drawing room 5-



The domination at key points by Indian army has put pressure on the Chinese army.

point understanding with all its diplomatic rhetoric has been made the ball is back in the military field. Wonder how ‘disengagement’ and ‘proper distancing’ possible without a common reference point or mutually known LAC alignment. India must insist on delineation of LAC,” former army chief Gen Ved Prakash Malik tweeted on Saturday. “Chinese use negotiations to gain time, strengthen positions on the ground and keep adversary guess-

ing about their real intentions. Troops need to remain fully alert, stand firm and not be lulled by diplomatic talks,” he added.

This will be the sixth round of Corps Commanders meeting between the two sides. A Major General level meeting was also held on August 8 at Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) to discuss disengagement at the strategic Depsang plains.

The last and fifth Corps Commanders meeting was

held on August 2 at Moldo where Chinese had refused to go back from the finger area in the Pangong Tso. The Chinese sides also did not meet its earlier commitment to disengage in other stand-off points including Gogra Post. There was a feeling that the Chinese sides were using the Corps Commanders meeting to buy time to strengthen their positions in the places of transgressions.

However, the situation changed after August 29-30 when India occupied some strategic peaks in the Chushul sector which are overlooking Chinese garrison in Moldo. Also in the finger area in the Pangong Tso India soldiers are now at points which are higher than Chinese positions on the ridgelines of finger 4. The domination at key points by Indian army has put pressure on the Chinese army.

● **She wore seven different masks with names of victims of US police excesses in her 7-match march to the US Open tennis title**



She showed up for Saturday’s match wearing a mask with the name of Tamir Rice, a Black 12-year-old boy killed by police in Ohio in 2014. That

was the seventh mask she’d used during the tournament, after honouring other Black victims of violence: Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, Trayvon Martin, Ahmaud Arbery,

PARLIAMENT AMID PANDEMIC

▶ **Only MPs with a Covid test negative report will be allowed to attend**

▶ **Big screens have been put up for members to see the proceedings all over Parliament**

▶ **Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha will share the days with half day sessions in the morning and afternoon**

▶ **LAC, Economy, GST, Ordinances and Covid-19 pandemic are issues that seem set to rock Parliament**



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla chairs a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) at Parliament House Annexe, in New Delhi, Sunday.



We hope the Opposition would get an opportunity to speak and serious national issues would be discussed. We expect the prime minister to be present in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and give a reply to the questions raised by us.

— Jairam Ramesh, Congress MP

Amit Shah admitted in hospital again

DC RRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEP.13

Ahead of the monsoon session of parliament, Union home Minister Amit Shah was admitted to Delhi’s AIIMS last night, nearly two weeks after he was discharged from the hospital. He was earlier admitted to the national capital’s top hospital for post Covid-care.

The monsoon session begins Monday with Covid safety measures, including compulsory face mask and social distancing in place. With 200 out of 785 members of parliament above 65 years of age, and at least seven Union Ministers and two dozen lawmakers recovering from COVID-19, the corona virus pandemic has cast a

shadow over the monsoon session. In an official statement, the AIIMS this morning said: “Shri Amit Shah, Honourable Home Minister, was discharged from AIIMS, New Delhi, after post Covid-care on August 30. As per advice given at discharge, he has now been admitted for complete medical checkup before parliament session for 1-2 days (sic).”

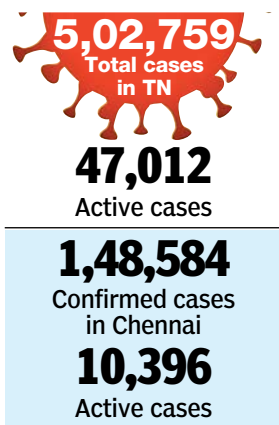
The 55-year-old BJP leader had tested positive for coronavirus, which has affected over 47 lakh people in India so far, on August 2 when he was taken to private hospital Medanta in Gurgaon. On August 14, he had tweeted that he would be in home isolation for a few more days on the advice of his doctors.

VIRUS MILESTONE

State Covid-19 tally breaches 5 lakh mark

Chennai, Sept. 13: The spread of Coronavirus continued unabated with some districts in the northern and western parts of the State showing high numbers on a day when there were 74 fatalities, which took the total death since the outbreak of the pandemic to 8,381.

With nearly 5,700 cases in the last 24 hours, the Tamil Nadu tally crossed the 5-lakh mark to and the count is now 5,02,759. Fresh infections in the State were 5,693 and in Chennai it was 994. The northern districts that continued to report high numbers were Chengalpattu 299, Cuddalore 251 and Thiruvallur 291, while those in the west were Coimbatore 490,



Salem 309 and Tiruppur 291. The total number of active cases, including those in isolation, was 47,012 on Sunday when 5,717 patients were discharged after treatment.

Mask of hero: Champ Osaka rallies for racial justice

New York, Sept. 13: Surprisingly off-kilter in the early going Saturday at the US Open, Osaka kept missing shots and digging herself a deficit. Until, suddenly, she lifted her game, and Victoria Azarenka couldn’t sustain her start.

By the end, Naomi Osaka pulled away to a 1-6, 6-3, 6-3 victory for her second U.S. Open championship and third Grand Slam title overall. A quarter-century had passed since a woman who lost the first set of a U.S. Open final wound up

winning: In 1994, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario did it against Steffi Graf.

Osaka is a 22-year-old who was born in Japan to a Japanese mother and Haitian father; the family moved to the U.S. when she was 3. Osaka, now based in California, arrived for the U.S. Open intent on claiming the championship, to be sure, but with another goal in mind, as well: continuing to be a voice for change by calling attention to racial injustice.



She showed up for Saturday’s match wearing a mask with the name of Tamir Rice, a Black 12-year-old boy killed by police in Ohio in 2014. That

George Floyd and Philando Castile. “The point,” Osaka explained, “is to make people start talking.”

Last month, Osaka refused to compete after the police shooting of a Black man, Jacob Blake, in Wisconsin — she said she would withdraw from her semifinal at the Western & Southern Open, although decided to play after the tournament took a full day off in solidarity.

Osaka and her coach, Wim Fissette — who used

to work with Azarenka — have said they think the off-court activism has helped her energy and mindset in matches. “I wanted,” Osaka said, “more people to (see) more names.”

So perhaps it was no coincidence that this win over Azarenka, a 31-year-old from Belarus also seeking a third Grand Slam title but first in 7½ years, made Osaka 11-0 since tennis resumed after its hiatus because of the COVID-19 outbreak. — AP

SHORT TAKES

Anti-viral fabric to fight Covid

Chennai: Dollar Industries Limited joined hands with Australia based HealthGuard to curate a new range of anti-viral products like anti-viral masks and innerwear for men. The safe cosmetic based chemistry of HG AMIC is 100% and skin-friendly and remains active on treated fabric achieving excellent wash performance.

In a panel discussion on the continuous battle against the Covid-19 pandemic, the best measures to protect oneself along with their loved one were addressed by eminent doctors. Dr.Shreevidya Venkatraman said that though masks are becoming a part of our regular attire, where people are experimenting with designs and patterns but the right kind of mask that can be most effective during this time.

Dr. Uttiya Deb pointed out the need to strike a socio-economic balance while stepping out of homes and resuming to regular day to day activities. Though the immunity boosters have become extremely popular, he felt that the right kind of safety measures is equally important.

‘Road to School’ program expands

Chennai: The ‘Road to School’ initiative of Ashok Leyland, leading commercial vehicle manufacturer, expanded its reach to 178 additional schools in Krishnagiri and Namakkal districts. The child development program will benefit additional 11,042 students. The program was started in 2015 with 36 Schools in Shoolagiri and Anchetty in Krishnagiri District. The success encouraged the company to spread further in Tiruvallur (Minjur, Puzhal), Namakkal (Mohanur, Paramathy, Erumapatti and Kolli Hills), Krishnagiri (Shoolagiri, Anchetty, Thally, Kelamangalam) covering about 714 schools impacting around 55,000 students in Government primary and upper primary schools. The program helps nurture both scholastic and co-scholastic development of children in Government schools in remote locations covering education, health, personal hygiene, wellness, nutrition supplement, emotional development including sports and music.

Bodies of 2 boys wash ashore at Kovalam

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 13

The bodies of two boys who drowned in the Mallapuram Sea on Saturday were washed ashore near Kovalam on Sunday. The victims, Hariharan Vignesh (17) and Akash (15), from Kodambakkam, were pulled into the sea by a giant wave while they were taking dip. Despite a search by the local police and fishermen, the bodies could not be found then.

Meanwhile, the two bodies were washed ashore at the Kovalam beach on Sunday morning. The Mallapuram police recovered the bodies and sent them to the Chengalpatt GH for post-mortem.

Initiative seen as milestone in brackish water aquaculture

Pvt seabass hatchery to come up in Chennai

T SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, SEPT 13

Aimed at providing a fillip to the aquaculture sector in the state, ICAR - Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA), Chennai, has come up in support of setting up a start-up initiative in seed production of ‘Asian Seabass’, an idea conceived by three fisheries graduates — V S Karthik Gowda, Kaushik Alike and Sachin V Savan — from the Mangalore Fisheries College. Director, CIBA, Dr K K

No, not even Covid could change us



Apsara Reddy

And the point is..

This whole mush talk of how Coronavirus redefined us as a people or how it brought about bonds of togetherness and care are such a yawn. People had a lot of time to cook, to sell their wares and make those extra phone calls to those they care about. Oh and yes, it was the coolest thing to do to pose with doctors, nurses and Asha workers for carefully planned social media posts. But wait a minute, did you test? Did you always wear a mask and most importantly did you tell the ones who needed to know that you're positive and asymptomatic? And did

this pandemic better you as a person?

Many of whom I know feel sick, had every symptom of Covid 19 but didn't bother to test. It's that innate Indian attitude of 'I am an exception. I won't spread it'. Why? because you're simply lazy or couldn't care less. So, you self-medicate, stay indoors and pretend as if nothing ever happened and in the process risking the lives of people who live with you. What you the conqueror of all symptoms might have not realised is that you're two day meds may have sorted the symptoms but you could still be a carrier.

Then there are also the ‘invincible’ who test positive minus any symptoms and then refuse to inform those who they came in contact with. Better still they continue going about meeting people. No home quarantine or social distancing. A top film personality who tested positive made a few calls and had even the health department poster removed from his entry gate. And the very next day he was meeting friends and said his positive news was all fake. He had a house full of visitors, some of whom tested positive in a matter of days!

Covid isn't easy and certainly the consequences could lead to losing a job, household under lockdown, income issues, no medical insurance if you need to get admitted and yes the stigma of it all. But if you don't survive it there's nothing you can look forward to. If you have symptoms and aren't invited to some silly

social gathering with so-called social distancing, excellent. Celebrate the loss of flaky friends in your life. You needn't mask your Covid status to remain relevant.

The point is you have to allow yourself to feel a sense of responsibility towards those around. You have to muster up the gumption despite your fears and sheer indifference. Just because you feel fine doesn't mean you can pass on the virus to those who may never be able to recover because of your reckless act. Being unlocked is good for businesses, but as communities and cities we need to be far more careful than ever. It's not convenient nor is it comfortable. But this decision of yours matters more than you think it does.

So before we hail humanity and celebrate coronapreneurs and front liners, ask yourself am I doing the right thing.

9 held for damaging vehicles in city

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 13

Nine men from two gangs were arrested by the Palikaranai police for damaging vehicles parked at Perumbakkam on Saturday night in a drunken condition.

The leaders of the gangs, Vallarasu and Salman, were arrested along with their accomplices. According to the police, the two gangs, in a drunken brawl, allegedly pulled out wooden logs and attacked each other. A few men went berserk and damaged the vehicles parked in the bylanes. Four auto-rickshaws and two motorcycles were partially damaged.

When the local people intervened, the gangs roughed up a few of them. Alerted by the locals, Pallikaranai police reached the spot and apprehend nine men. A case was booked against them for causing public nuisance and damaging properties. They were produced in Alandur court and lodged at Puzhal prison.

PMIST ex-VC Ramachandran passes away

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, SEPT. 13

Dr N Ramachandran (60), former vice-chancellor of Periyar Maniammai Institute of Science and Technology-deemed to be university (PMIST), founder of ‘Clean Thanjavur Movement’, a social worker and educationist, died here on Sunday. He is survived by wife Parveen.

As founder of ‘Clean Thanjavur Movement’, he was instrumental in planting one lakh saplings in the district, and systematized management of solid wastes in town. As vice-chancellor, PMIST, he implemented the ‘Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas’ (PURA) scheme introduced by former President of India, Dr Abdul Kalam.



Bedi thanks Centre, ICMR for help to contain virus

Puducherry, Sept. 13: Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry Kiran Bedi on Sunday said the Centre and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) have come to the rescue of the territorial government in evolving and implementing measures to contain COVID-19.

In her address to the people on virtual mode, she thanked the Centre and ICMR on behalf of the people of Puducherry and its administration for helping in controlling the coronavirus.

She said that in addition to the Union Home and Health Ministry's steps taken to help the Union Territory, the local government has strengthened its machinery by assigning the Secretary-cum-Commissioner for Relief and Rehabilitation A Anbarasu and the Health Secretary T Arun the task to monitor and ensure various measures were in place to prevent the people from suffering.

Bedi said the territorial government had ramped up testing centres resulting in the increase in num-

ber of samples being tested. "Now, we are able to zero in on the actual number of people suffering because of the pandemic," she said.

She said that basically the cooperation of the people counted much. "If the people extend cooperation, the present percentage of fatality could be brought down early making use of the improved infrastructure in the hospitals," she said.

— PTI

He was among the RSS men imprisoned during the Emergency (1975-77).

For about 10 years, till the time of his death, he helmed Tamil RSS mouthpiece Vijayabharatham as its Editor.

As a whole time

‘pracharak’ for 50 years, he had worked across Tamil Nadu.

A native of Tirunelveli, he became an RSS worker when he was about 21-years old and had just stepped out of college.

— PTI

15 deaths take virus toll in Pondy to 385

Puducherry, Sept. 13: A total of 388 new COVID-19 cases and 15 deaths took the infection tally to 19,821 and the deaths to 385 in the union territory on Sunday, the government said. The UT also tested 4,024 samples, the highest in a single day.

The 15 deaths included six women and the deceased

were in the age group ranging from 48 to 85.

A total of 4,024 samples were tested, taking the total number of specimens examined so far to 99,480, Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said.

The overall COVID-19 cases stood at 19,821 (after transfer of six cases to

Tamil Nadu), he said.

The fatality and recovery rates were 1.94 per cent and 73.56 per cent respectively. Active cases stood at 4,856, while 14,580 patients have recovered so far.

Puducherry region accounted for 291 new cases, while Karaikal had 58, Yanam 38 and Mahe, one, Kumar said. — PTI



DYFI protests against Neet exams and the BJP government at Chinnamalai, Saidapet.

— DC



Students prepare for Neet exam at a private school in Adyar.

— DC

Over 9.500 students take Neet in Karur, Tiruchy

R VALAYAPATHY | DC
KARUR, TIRUCHY/THANJAVUR, SEPT. 13

In Karur district, a total of 1,764 aspirants appeared for NEET on Sunday in three centres. As many as 339 aspirants were absent.

As many as 7,797 aspirants appeared for the exam in 22 centres in and around Tiruchy, against the total applicants of 9,499. Official sources said 82 per cent of applicants appeared for the exam, while 1,702 candidates did not appear. Although students were allowed inside the centres after a thorough check, soon after the examination, the candidates threw away their hand gloves and face masks on the roadsides, triggering panic among nearby residents.

Most of the students expressed concern about the exam, since they were

DMK, Congress members plan to protest against Neet in Parliament

From P1

DMK Youth Wing secretary visited the girl, Sowmya, who was admitted to a hospital in Vellore. He also expressed his condolences to family members of Motilal (Thiruchengode), Aditya (Dharmapuri) and Jothishree Durga

allowed into the examination centre by 11:00 hrs, and they had to finish the exam without even lunch. Many were badly hungry and had to take a lot of water very often.

In Thanjavur, a total of 5,682 students wrote NEET exam on Sunday, across 10 centres in the district. Officials said, 7,134 students had applied for the

(Madurai), who ended their lives out of fear of NEET.

DMK and Congress members of Parliament have also planned to organise a protest at Parliament complex on Monday to put pressure on the Centre to exempt Tamil Nadu from Neet.

Students arrived at the centres by 11 am. They were permitted inside the hall after corona precautionary checks like thermal scanning, washing of hands with sanitizers and wearing face masks.

STPI: TN software exports at ₹25Kcr in last 6 months

Chennai, Sept. 13: Overcoming COVID-19 challenges, necessitating Work From Home, among others, over the last six months, the IT sector in Tamil Nadu had fulfilled commitments to customers and helped register Rs 25,000 crore in software exports in the last two quarters, a top official has said.

Over 90 per cent of employees in the Information Technology industry, working from home due to the outbreak, fulfilled the commitments made to the clients, Software Technology Parks of India Director, Sanjay Tyagi said.

"I am glad to inform you that in the last six months we have shown Rs 25,000 crore exports in the last two quarters of this financial year", he said at an event organised by CII, Tamil Nadu. This figure was actually more than last year's exports during these two quarters, he said.

"This (achieving ₹25,000 crore exports) is something which is phenomenal that has happened," he said. However, he did not mention the software exports made in the two quarters of the last financial year.

Tyagi said Tamil Nadu has to play a very important role in achieving

■ Over 90 per cent of employees in the Information Technology industry, working from home due to the outbreak, fulfilled the commitments made to the clients, Software Technology Parks of India Director, Sanjay Tyagi said

■ Verma said the Centre's announcement of a defence corridor connecting Chennai, Hosur, Salem, Coimbatore and Tiruchirappalli as nodes would make the five cities serve as potential clusters and would have ecosystems for defence manufacturing

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of making India a USD 5 trillion economy. "For achieving the target (USD 5 trillion) Tamil Nadu has to at least contribute USD 500 billion to the GDP," he said.

Information Technology additional chief secretary Hans Raj Verma urged industry captains to create jobs in rural areas. "We must create sustainable jobs at the village level. Then the next round of jobs will come from Tier II and III cities," he said.

"We will train our youth to become industry ready and they will be the USP of Tamil Nadu. With this new generation, the IT, ITeS and electronics and manufacturing sector will give Tamil Nadu the edge", he said.

Verma said the Centre's announcement of a defence corridor connecting

Chennai, Hosur, Salem, Coimbatore and Tiruchirappalli as nodes would make the five cities serve as potential clusters and would have ecosystems for defence manufacturing.

The virtual conference, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry, Tamil Nadu, was to announce the 19th edition of its flagship 'CON-NECT' 2020, scheduled to begin from September 15.

CII Connect 2020 Chairman Suresh Raman said the event would be held till September 19th and have speakers from both domestic and overseas companies.

The theme of the conference would be 'technology as an enabler for getting growth back' and it would deliberate on the economic issues arising out of the current pandemic, he said.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

It is Neet murder, not suicide: Udayanithi**ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC NAMAKKAL, SEPT. 13**

Death by NEET including Motilal's death is not suicide, but murder, said DMK youth secretary, Udayanithi Stalin. As many as 13 students have died in three years over NEET, he added.

Udayanithi Stalin met Motilal's parents in Tiruchengode, and offered them financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh on behalf of the DMK party. Later, speaking to reporters, Udayanithi said, "Death by NEET including Motilal, is not suicide but murder. The EPS and OPS ruled TN government is in hand-in-glove with the Centre on NEET, and 13 students have died in three years. Former CMs Kalaingar did not allow NEET and subsequent CM J Jayalalithaa also did not allow the exam. But the BJP-ruled Centre is insisting on NEET regardless of all opposition."

"If the DMK comes to power, we will face any kind of legal battle and prevent Neet, he added.

SL's proposed 20th Constitution Amendment faces resistance

Colombo, Sept. 13: The Sri Lankan government's proposed 20th Constitution Amendment has faced internal resistance from within a faction of the ruling SLPP parliamentary group itself, ahead of its inclusion in Parliament's order paper, the party members said on Sunday.

The government on September 2 gazetted the 20th Constitution Amendment draft, the new proposed legislation that would replace the 19th Amendment introduced in 2015 that curtailed the powers of the President and strengthened the role of Parliament. The 19A was seen as the most progressive pro-democracy reformist move since Sri Lanka came to be governed under the all-powerful executive presidency in 1978. It depoliticised the government administration by ensuring the independence of key pillars such as the judiciary, public service and elections. The 20th Amendment proposes to restore full legal immunity to the President, removing the provisions made in the 19A to take legal action against the President. The office of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in a statement on Saturday night said that a nine-member ministerial committee has been appointed to review the 20A in its present form and, if needed, a fresh gazette will be issued. Ever since the government gazetted the 20A, some of the ruling SLPP's own parliamentarians and the party's allies have been publicly expressing unhappiness over its certain provisions, the party members said. If the 20A is implemented in its present form, PM Mahinda Rajapaksa will be the hardest-hit as his current powers as the premier would be diminished with his younger brother and the President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, assuming full executive power, they said.

Security alert

As Tamil Nadu Assembly section is starting tomorrow, security beefed up at Kalaivanar Arangam. — DC

Coimbatore Marathon to go virtual, to be held in Dec.

Coimbatore, Sept. 13: The eighth edition of the Coimbatore Marathon will be a virtual month-long event owing to the prevailing pandemic situation and will be held in December, the organisers said on Sunday.

The theme for this year's event being organised from December 1 to 31 is 'Run Smart', they said. "We are very excited to present this virtual edition of the marathon and ensure continuity of the event for the benefit of all stakeholders," Coimbatore Marathon Race Director Ramesh Ponnuswami said.

"Since the event is a virtual one, we are not constrained to conduct it on a specific date and time," he added. Participants can choose their date, start time, route, distance and run/walk from wherever they are and complete their race any time during the month of December, he said.

Another advantage of the virtual run is that there are no constraints in terms of the route, timings and so on, so four new event categories have been introduced: a 3 km run/walk, a 10 Miler [16.1 km], a 20 Miler [32.2 km] and a Full Marathon [42.2 km] in addition to the usual 5 km run/walk, 10 km and Half Marathon (21.1 km) events, Ramesh said.

Stating that past editions of the event have always been held in the first week of October, he said taking into consideration experience with adverse weather conditions prevailing during that time of the year and the clash with festival and public holidays, the event will henceforth be permanently moved to December from this year.

The premier event, for the cause of cancer patients, is expected to attract more than 25,000 participants from all walks of life across the world and registration

for Coimbatore Marathon 2020 Virtual Event is now open. Participants can register through www.coimbatoremarchathon.com. For those wishing to participate, a donation of ₹99 to the Coimbatore Cancer Foundation will be applicable for participants based in India and USD 5 for participants based outside India, for all the categories. Participants in India can opt for a finisher medal for a donation of ₹399 (USD 24 for participants outside India) or a finisher medal and a finisher T-shirt for a donation of ₹699 (only for India-based participants).

Participants must submit their timing online for verification. Post verification, finisher medal & finisher T-shirt will be home delivered to participants who opted for them. All participants get to download an e-certificate and e-badge for participating and contributing to a noble cause, Ramesh said. — PTI

Veteran of labour battles dies of coronavirus

Coimbatore, Sept. 13: Marxist leader and former MLA K Thangavelu, who cut his teeth as a banian mill worker and went on to spearhead many successful agitations for labour rights in Tamil Nadu, died of COVID-19 here on Sunday.

The 68-year-old party veteran and trade unionist, who was treated for coronavirus at a hospital for the past 14 days passed away early today, the CPI(M) said. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

A Marxist ideologue, he was renowned for his lectures on Marxism and leadership qualities and had been a state executive committee (known as state sec-

retariat in the party) member for about 25 years. Thangavelu, born in an ordinary family, started his life as a banian mill worker and mobilising workmen, he led many successful agitations for their labour rights. During his stint in trade unions at various levels he was instrumental in getting these mill workers various rights.

"As a leader, he left an

indelible mark through his excellent work. He was simple, honest and calm," the party said in a statement paying rich tributes to him.

Elected as an MLA in 2011 from Tirupur South Constituency, he championed labour welfare in the Assembly and was close to the ordinary people in his constituency.

Expressing grief and extending condolences, the CPI(M) said Thangavelu's death is a huge loss for the party, the Left movement and the working class. DMK President M K Stalin, citing Thangavelu's humble origins, said he distinguished himself as a trade union leader through his hard

Another police torture case tumbles out**ANANTH MATHIVANAN | DC COIMBATORE, SEPT. 13**

A youth who has been allegedly tortured by the police and forced to admit to a crime is under treatment at the Coimbatore Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Sources identified the youth as Kannan (27), a construction labourer, native of Thenkasi, residing near Naickenpalayam for the past 13 years. A few months back, during the lockdown, Kannan had shifted to his brother's house near Kovundampalayam.

HM worker hacked to death in Kovai**DC CORRESPONDENT COIMBATORE, SEPT. 13**

A Hindu Munnani functionary was hacked to death over prolonged enmity here in the city, on Sunday.

Police said, Biju (36), resident of Ram Nagar, owned a soda shop near his house. The gory incident took place on Sunday noon as Biju was standing in front of a cinema theatre in the same area. A five-member gang reached the spot and went chasing Biju in cinematic style, and hacked him with sickles and knives. After Biju fainted and fell down on the road, they fled leaving Biju in a pool of blood.

Seeing the brutal assault, public and local residents informed the police. Meanwhile, motorists crossed the stretch and with the help of locals rushed him to the Coimbatore Medical College Hospital. Despite treatment, Biju died within a few hours of admission.

Kattoor police sent the body for post-mortem and lodged a complaint. Initial investigations revealed that Biju was killed over prolonged enmity with one Arumugam belonging to the Mukkulathor Padai.

Police have taken seven persons in custody and are investigating.

Sources identified the youth as Kannan (27), a construction labourer, native of Thenkasi, residing near Naickenpalayam for the past 13 years. A few months back, during the lockdown, Kannan had shifted to his brother's house near Kovundampalayam.

A couple of days back, Periyanaickenpalayam police picked Kannan from Kavundampalayam around 11 pm and took him to the police station in the name of a formal enquiry. There

they had verbally abused him and forced him to admit to a murder that had taken place six months back, near Kovanur.

As Kannan refused to yield, he was allegedly assaulted and brutally tortured with 'lathis', in which Kannan suffered a wrist fracture, and was seriously injured in other parts of the body.

Kannan was released the next day by 3 am. Then, within a span of seven hours, police again picked him up and tortured him for the next couple of hours. Police had also threatened him that they

would lodge a fake complaint against him, if he revealed anything of the torture, to higher officials in the department.

Kannan got admitted to the CMCH and is under treatment, and had taken the issue to the knowledge of the district police superintendent.

Acting on his input, SP Ara Arularasu, ordered ADSP to conduct an enquiry with personnel in Periyanaickenpalayam police station. Kannan had decided to take the issue to the Human Rights Commission also. Investigations are on.

Expedite Kalamavur rail overbridge works: BJP**DC CORRESPONDENT PUDUKKOTTAI, SEPT. 13**

The Pudukkottai unit of the BJP has urged the Centre and State governments to expedite the construction of a rail overbridge at Kalamavur on the Tiruchy — Rameswaran highway, which has been pending for the last 12 years and complete the same at the earliest.

Party's district president, Rama Sethupathy, said in a release here on Sunday that the party in its district executive meeting held on Saturday, had urged the Union

railway minister to construct new rail overbridges at Thiruvappur and Kariyepallanam level crossings, which caused severe traffic congestion very often.

They have also requested the state government to immediately upgrade Ponn-amaravathi town panchayat as municipality, he added.

Party's national secretary, H Raja, called upon party workers to work for the party building activities to strengthen the party base at all levels, and to prepare them for next year's TN assembly election.

Later, addressing a press conference, Raja took strong exception over the reported remarks of DMK president M K Stalin that both the Centre and state governments have washed off their hands at this crucial juncture of the pandemic, and abandoned the people. Such remarks are highly condemnable, he added.

To a question, Raja said the DMK will never come to power, and the judgment on the appeal in the 2G spectrum scandal would be out within three months, and the culprits definitely punished.

FIT India drive by NCC cadets**B RAVICHANDRAN | DC COONOR, SEPT 13**

The NCC girl cadets from Providence College of Women here organized a month-long 'FIT India' campaign to stress on physical fitness and well-being to rope in the support of villagers for a healthy life.

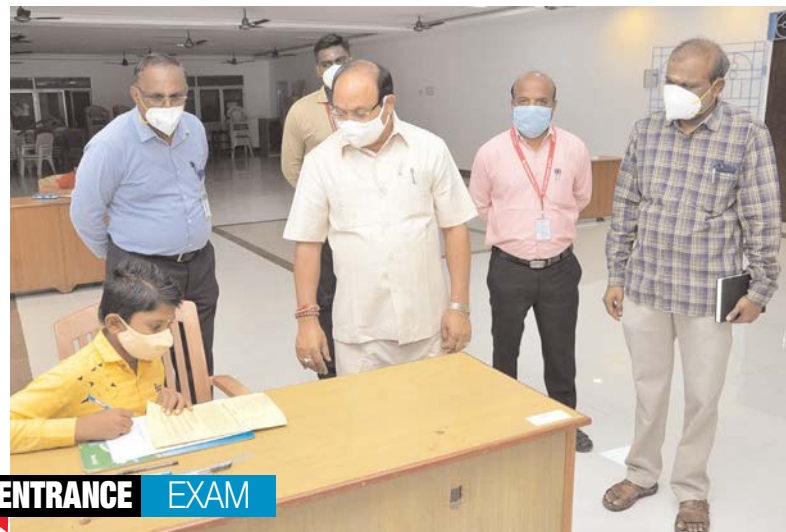
The cadets launched a month-long campaign that concluded on September 12. During the 'FIT India' campaign, cadets spread the message of fitness to their family members and immediate neighbourhood.

Cadets carried out physical demonstration of exercises, yoga, aerobics, basics of karate, traditional dances and fights, and also ensured participation and practice of the same by their villagers. These activities by the villagers

under the guidance of the cadets have been created into a video for circulation online.

The cadets also organised a 'FIT India freedom run' as an awareness run carrying placards, in which each cadet ran or walked a minimum of six-kms every day. NCC Officer Lt Cynthia George, said that even passersby wanted to know the idea behind this run, and the cadets spread the message to the local public, who in turn also started joining the run along with them.

The cadets also organized an online community development programme 'A fit body is a fit mind', comprising a fusion of yoga, talk on optimal health, karate demonstration and a street play on the benefits of physical activities.



Students take entrance exams for Rashtriya Indian Military College at Vellore collectorate.

— K. Senthil Nathan

Minister, kin, pay tributes to Motilal**ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC NAMAKKAL, SEPT. 13**

Relatives, friends and residents paid tearful tributes to the deceased student, Motilal, who committed suicide by hanging himself in Tiruchengode, due to fear of appearing for NEET exam, on Sunday. State Electricity Minister, P Thangamani, visited the victim's family and consoled the family members.

The minister met Motilal's parents and expressed his condolences, and later paid homage by laying a garland to Motilal's portrait.

After autopsy, Motilal's body was recovered by relatives and brought to his house for funeral rites.

Tearful relatives and mourning locals paid tributes to Motilal's body the whole day.

The body was then taken in a procession to the crematorium at Sengodampalayam, Tiruchengode.

At the funeral, relatives, classmates and several political personalities including DMK, Congress party figures and the general public paid their last respects. Motilal's father, Murugesan, set the pyre afire. It was heartbreaking to see so many parents, relatives and friends venting out their grief at the boy's death.

Minister Thangamani told reporters, "Students should not take hasty, wrong conclusions that

medical study is the only source of life. There are so many courses. Chief Minister Palaniswami had repeatedly advised students to study well, and move on with other careers. Former CM Amma's policy is also not in favour of NEET. We also follow the same principle. Our policy is not to choose NEET, and we are fighting for it. The decision regarding counseling for students studying in NEET training centers will be taken in consultation with Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami."

The Chief Minister would decide about financial assistance to Motilal's family in future, added Thangamani.

EAC reviews CPCL's 9.0 MMTPA TN project

Chennai, Sept. 13: The Expert Appraisal Committee has reviewed CPCL's proposed 9.0 MMTPA project in Nagapattinam in the State and has sent its recommendations for clearance from the Environment Ministry, a top company official said.

Chennai Petroleum Corporation Ltd (CPCL), an IndianOil Group company, has proposed to set up a 9.0 million metric tonne per annum complex at Cauvery Basin Refinery, Nagapattinam, company Chairman S M Vaidya said while addressing shareholders at the company's 54th annual general meeting.

Chennai Petroleum Corporation Ltd (CPCL), an IndianOil Group company, has proposed to set up a 9.0 million metric tonne per annum complex at Cauvery Basin Refinery, Nagapattinam, company Chairman S M Vaidya said while addressing shareholders at the company's 54th annual general meeting.

integrated state-of-the-art modern refinery cum petrochemical complex, including a propylene unit to start with, he said. The detailed feasibility report for the project has been completed while the board of directors have recommended the project to the board of IndianOil for "investment approval," he said.

Stating that the project was in line with the growth

three villages in Nagapattinam district to benefit 1,700 families to improve social, environmental and economic conditions, Vaidya said.

On the digital initiatives taken up by the company, he said CPCL was also adopting the new technologies to improve performance. "These technologies include usage of drones for inspection of pipelines and equipment at heights thus reducing the time taken to complete the jobs," he said. CPCL was also in the process of identifying opportunities for digitisation of processes and data analytics and artificial intelligence utilisation for

better decision making and improving reliability of operations, he added. The initiative was expected to improve the company's performance and employee productivity, he said.

On measures to reduce carbon footprint, Vaidya said the company already replaced usage of naphtha in some parts of the refinery with environment friendly 'Regasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG)' to reduce carbon intensity in operations. On financials, he said the company's profitability improved during the first quarter of the current financial year with a profit before tax of ₹430 crore. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

WB: BJP WORKER FOUND HANGING FROM TREE

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, SEPT. 13

A BJP worker was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Hooghly of West Bengal on Sunday morning. Ganesh Roy, the deceased, was a booth level worker of the party. The body, with legs bent and apparently touching the ground almost, was found hanging from a tree, one and half km away from his home. A noose was tied around the neck of Roy.

The police later recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem. Roy's family members said that he went out of home at Khanati village in Goghat on Saturday afternoon but he did not return. According to them, he was murdered by the Trinamul Congress which they claimed was threatening him with dire consequences before the Lok Sabha Elections last year.

Echoing them state BJP president Dilip Ghosh also accused the ruling Trinamul Congress of killing Roy in cold blood and then hanging the body to pass it as a case of suicide.

ARTISAN OFFERS TO MAKE DURGA IDOL AT ₹101

PRANMOY
BRAHMACHARI | DC
BERHAMPORE, SEPT. 13

At a time when many Durga Puja organisers in West Bengal are facing difficulty to collect donations to organise the biggest festival of the state, due to financial crunch amid Covid-19 pandemic, a Berhampore-based artisan has dropped his remuneration to ₹101, perhaps the lowest amount, for idol making. Kanchan Karmakar, the reputed idolmaker, said he would take the amount as his fee from the Berhampore Indraprastha Women Durga Puja Committee.

Asked about his decision, he said, "I have been working as a sculpture for the last 45 years. My creations were sent to the US, Europe and the Middle East earlier. But this time I am making an idol of Goddess Durga of clay for our local organisers all of whom are women. Since they have no funds due to this pandemic, they can not afford to pay for a Durga idol. So they decided to not organise the Durga Puja this year. I then reduced my fee as a token price to help them continue with their puja and bring happiness in our locality."

Chhanda Dutta, one of the puja committee organisers, said, "We are indebted to Kanchanda for his good effort. Now we can organise our Durga Puja despite many odds. Due to the pandemic situation we failed to collect big amount but he generously supported us. The price of his idol can be anything around ₹50,000! But, he dropped the price for us."

YECHURY NAMED IN DELHI RIOTS CHARGESHEET

New Delhi, Sept. 13: The CPI(M) on Sunday criticised the government over the reference to its leader Sitaram Yechury and some civil society members in a supplementary chargesheet filed by the Delhi Police which cites statements from some accused to say that they mobilised anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protestors.

"The CPI(M) condemns this obnoxious action by the Delhi Police to further the narrative of its political masters and urges the government to desist from such acts of criminalising peaceful political protests," the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Politburo said in a statement.

The reaction came a day after it was reported that the names of CPI(M) general secretary Yechury, Swaraj Abhiyan leader Yogendra Yadav, economist Jayati Ghosh and Delhi University professor Apoorvanand figure in the supplementary chargesheet in the February riots cases, allegedly for "provoking and mobilising" anti-CAA protesters.

The Sunday statement by the Politburo said it was "shocked by the brazenness with which the Delhi Police, acting under Home Minister Amit Shah, has tried to implicate prominent political leadership, academics, cultural personalities and activists in connection with the horrific communal violence in North East Delhi in February".

Nepal trying to stake claim on 3 villages in U'khand

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD SEPT. 13

With India locked in a stand-off with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Nepal has started to play its games with renewed vigour. The K.P. Sharma Oli government is increasingly sending feelers to people living in three villages adjoining the Kalapani region in the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand to shift their loyalties to Nepal so as to stake claim over the villages which are administered by India.

Coming at a time when the Nepal Army is believed to be assisting China expand its military bases close to Mount Kailash, China seems to be behind the latest move by Nepal, which is seen as a quid pro quo arrangement between the two neighbours.

In return, the Nepal government is promising tonnes of money, land and houses along with Nepalese citizenship — most of which is believed to be funded by China.

Sources in the know of the Nepalese "operation" told *Deccan Chronicle* that for the past few days, "agents" working for the Nepal government have got in touch with people residing in Kuti, Nabhi and Gunji villages — located a few kilometres from Kalapani territory in Pithoragarh district — asking them to consider shifting loyalties to Nepal.

The locals of these three Indian villages, located at an altitude of over 10,000 feet, who share a 'roti-beti' relationship with the people of Darchula in Nepal, are getting multiple calls from people on the other side asking them to con-



One of the bridges between India and Nepal in Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand. — DC

sider the "irresistible offer."

Information reaching Indian agencies is that the agents have been either been making calls directly to the villagers, claiming to be their "well-wishers", or taking the other easy way of making the locals of Darchula speak with their friends and relatives in the three villages.

Since decades, people on both sides have remained in constant touch with each other, hopping in and out of Indian territory everyday as they either have business links or relatives on the other side.

Many Indian girls have married into Nepali families in Darchula and elsewhere in Nepal.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, India-Nepal border has been sealed for the last few months. People on both sides communicate

with each other using Nepal Telecom SIM cards.

With the frequency of such calls increasing by the day — which has now become a point of discussion in the three villages — the villagers are contemplating writing to the Centre that there is no question of shifting loyalties and that they firmly remain with India.

Many of them even held a meeting among themselves on Friday. In all the three villages put together, there are more than 850 residents. Prior to the pandemic, people on both sides used to meet everyday. Many on the Nepal side are dependent on the Indian side for their livelihood.

Sources said that though there were some indications earlier that Nepal might resort to such moves, especially after it

claimed Kalapani to be its territory, the attempts at wooing with the villagers with land, money and Nepalese citizenship has increased manifold even as tensions between India and China along the LAC is at an all-time high.

For quite some time now, Nepal has left the people in its border villages along the tri-junction between India, China and Nepal at the mercy of the People's Liberation Army of China which supplies food and essentials to the villagers to win them over, even as the Chinese Army has been steadily taking control of certain areas inside Nepalese territory.

In May, Nepal triggered a diplomatic row with India after it claimed Kalapani and Lipulekh in its political maps. Later, it showed Limpiyadhura within its boundaries.

Modi praises Bihar, calls it powerhouse of talent

Patna, Sept. 13: In the run up to the Assembly polls in Bihar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated three petroleum sector projects, gave a big thumbs up to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, and reached out to voters, calling the state a "powerhouse of talent".

Modi's praise of alliance partner Kumar came weeks ahead of the elections that are likely to be held in October-November, as he dedicated three petroleum projects worth nearly ₹900 crore to people. These included a gas pipeline that extended from Durgapur in West Bengal to Banka in Bihar.

Banka was also the beneficiary of an LPG bottling plant while another such unit is located at Harsiddhi in East Champaran district.

"I had the opportunity of flagging off the work on extension of the gas pipeline a year-and-half ago. I am delighted to see its completion. The country and Bihar have come out of an era when a project was announced and a generation had to wait for its completion. *Nitish ji* has played an important role in ushering in this change in the state," Modi said.

In his trademark style, the Prime Minister began his speech with a few sentences in Angika, the dialect spoken in Banka and adjoining districts.

He marvelled at the gas pipeline project which was no mean feat as it

involved working across a stretch of nearly 200 km of difficult terrain dotted with many rivers, dense forests and hills.

"I would like to use the terms gas-based industry and petro-connectivity, which may sound very technical but actually impact the lives of the common people," he said, addressing the function virtually from the national capital.

Just imagine what would have been the situation if people were to keep venturing out in search of wood and other fuel for cooking their meals. The need is no longer there thanks to schemes like the Ujjwala Yojana which has ensured that LPG reaches households of the poorest of the poor, he said. *PTI*

K'taka has biggest spike of 9,894 cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU, SEPT. 13

In the biggest spurt in Covid-19 cases in the state till now, Karnataka on Sunday reported 9,894 new cases, taking the total number of infections to 4,59,445. The previous biggest single-day spike was recorded on September 2 with 9,860 cases. Of the new cases, Bengaluru Urban alone accounted for 3,479 cases. The state also reported 104 Covid-related fatalities to take the death toll 7,265.

A health department bulletin here said 8,402 patients were discharged after recovery in the past 24 hours. It said out of 99,203 active cases, 98,396 patients were in isolation at designated hospitals.

2,216 new cases, 11 deaths in Telangana

Hyderabad: Telangana registered 2,216 new Covid-19 cases and 11 deaths from the disease in 24 hours ending 8 pm on Saturday. The new cases and deaths have taken the total Coronavirus infections to 1,57,096 and fatalities to 961.

According to the bulletin, 1,24,528 persons have recovered and, as on

Friday evening, 31,607 Covid-19 patients were being treated in hospitals, or were in home or institutional isolation. The GHMC area, comprising mostly Hyderabad city, recorded 341 new cases.

AP reports 9,536 new cases, 66 deaths

Vijayawada: As many as 9,536 new Corona positive cases were registered in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday, taking the total positive cases to 5,67,123 in which 95,072 were active cases, 4,67,139 recovered and 4,912 were deaths. The East Godavari district is

NCB ESTABLISHES CHAIN OF NARCO SUPPLY TO SSR

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 13

Following NCB raids in Mumbai and Goa and arrests of drug peddlers while probing the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide, the breakthrough has helped identify chain of narcotics that reached Rajput. The NCB has arrested one Dwayne Fernandes, who is the associate of Showik Chakraborty and is stated to have supplied drugs to the latter, meant for Rajput. Officials said that Fernandes is a Mumbai-based drug dealer and deals in curated marijuana and hash. Other arrested peddlers have revealed the chain of supply of substances.

on top place in registration of Covid-19 cases among the rest of districts of the State.

Kerala reports 3,139 new cases, 15 deaths

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala on Sunday reported 3,139 new COVID-19 cases taking the overall tally to 1,08,278. At present, 30,072 people are undergoing treatment for the infection while 77,703 people have recovered from the infection so far. Of the new positive cases, 2,921 were infected through contact, the minister said in a release.

fold along the LAC in eastern Ladakh after the Galwan Valley clashes on June 15 in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed. The Chinese side also suffered casualties but it is yet to give out the details. "China is thought to have suffered at least 43 deaths in the Galwan clash," the magazine said. Citing Cleo Paskal of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, it said the number of Chinese killed could exceed 60. "Indian troops fought back ferociously. Beijing won't admit the extent of the debacle," it said. It said that late last month, for the first time in a half-century, India carried out an offensive against China, taking back high ground the Chinese recently grabbed. "China's forces were surprised when Indian troops mounted their attempt to retake strategic high points. Stunned Chinese soldiers retreated," it said. "China's subsequent efforts to counter the Indian moves proved ineffective. At least for the moment, India's troops, in the southern-most of the three areas of conflict, are in control of territory once in Chinese hands," it added.

It said the PLA Ground Force can move against undefended targets. However, it is not clear how effective it is in battle. "The Ground Force does not have a track record of success in contested situations. Its last major

engagement was in 1979 when, in the effort to 'teach Vietnam a lesson,' the Chinese troops were repelled and humiliated by their much smaller neighbour," the magazine noted. "India is not giving the invaders the opportunity to improve," it said, adding that India's troops are displaying "newfound boldness". "The game has changed," Paskal said. "You can say the Indians are more aggressive or more aggressively defensive, but they are in fact bolder and better." "The setback in the Himalayas poses problems for Xi, which means it poses a problem for everyone else," it added. It said that in China's highly politicised system, the setbacks in Ladakh cannot be perceived as Xi's fault, so he will almost surely purge elements of the military. "PLA leaders begin to see little choice but to undertake offensive military actions to avoid becoming a victim of Xi's internal terror," said Richard Fisher of the Virginia-based International Assessment and Strategy Center.

India and China reached an agreement to resolve their border row at a meeting between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Moscow on Thursday on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meet. *PTI*

Odisha minister admitted to hosp.

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 13

Odisha textiles, handlooms and handicrafts minister, Padmini Dian, and her husband, Sadashib Dian, and Nabarangpur Lok Sabha member, Ramesh Chandra Majhi, who tested positive for Coronavirus earlier last week, were on Sunday shifted to a Covid-19 hospital in the state capital after they complained of difficulty in breathing.

Dain, her husband, son and nephew tested positive for the virus on September 3, following which they were under home isolation.

When the minister and her husband faced difficulty in breathing late on Saturday evening, they were shifted to a Covid-19 hospital at Jeypore in Koraput district and later sent to SUM Covid-19 hospital in Bhubaneswar.

The Nabarangpur MP who was also under home isolation from September 4, was shifted to another Covid-19 hospital here after developing breathing difficulties.

Another minister, Ranendra Pratap Swain, has been admitted to SUM Covid-19 hospital after his swab reports returned positive.

Six ministers, including Sushanta Singh, Tukuni Sahu and Arun Sahoo, and 18 MLAs have contracted the virus. On Sunday, Odisha reported 3,913 new Covid-19 cases

UDHAV VOWS TO FIGHT POLITICAL STORMS, COVID

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, SEPT. 13

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday said that he would fight with Coronavirus infection as well as all political storms in the state. While addressing the people through social media, Thackeray announced to start a campaign 'My Family, My Responsibility' from September 15.

Meanwhile, calling Chief Minister's address a big disappointment, the BJP said people were expecting him to explain the government's roadmap to tackle rising number of cases and deaths due to Covid-19. Despite the worsening situation in the state, the Chief Minister was seen only praising himself, the opposition party said.

Thackeray has been facing flak from detractors on both political and Coronavirus fronts. "Whatever political storms come, I will face... I will fight Coronavirus too," said the Chief Minister. He was speaking a day after Covid-19 infection cases in Maharashtra crossed the 10-lakh mark.

RURAL | POWER

Raghuvansh Prasad as rural development min in UPA-I is credited with designing MGNREA

Singh, math professor who brought cheers to villages

Patna, Sept. 13: Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, the veteran socialist leader who announced his decision to quit the RJD from his hospital bed just four days before his death, was an inimitable blend of rustic aggression and learning, qualities that helped him carve a niche for himself in Bihar politics.

For years he lived under the shadow of his alter ego, RJD supremo Lalu Prasad, while they together negotiated the choppy waters of state and national politics, but was not quite overshadowed by his leader.

An astute lawmaker, Singh

would fish out *Practice and Procedure of Parliament* written by MN Kaul and SL Shakdher whenever a tricky situation arose, almost instinctively open the relevant page that would have the answer to end a logjam, and begin reading out in his quirky Hinglish that many found hilarious.

Behind the rough and ready visage lay the analytical mind of a mathematics professor who always had his leader's ears.

Singh, however, died a disillusioned man and put in his papers from his hospital bed at AIIMS, New Delhi, on Thursday.

"Since the death of Jannayak Karpoori Thakur, I stood behind you for 32 years, but not now," he said in his brief one-line resignation letter to Mr Prasad, who is serving sentences in four fodder scam cases in Ranchi.

In the footnote, the once staunch Prasad loyalist, added, "I got the affection of party leaders and workers, besides common people. Please forgive me." Thakur was a prominent socialist leader and former state chief minister.

Hours later, Prasad wrote back from jail in complete disbelief. "I don't believe... a letter purportedly written by you is

on social media. I, my family, and the RJD family that have nursed the party want you to get well soon and be amongst us," Mr Prasad wrote back.

"For four decades, we have together discussed political, social and even family matters. You get well soon and we will discuss again. You are not going anywhere, you understand," he wrote in a handwritten letter that had the stamp of the prison authority.

The same day he also wrote to Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar about the projects in his constituency Vaishali, the first republic in the world, which he represented five successive

times till 2014, when he was defeated by LJP's Rama Singh. He again lost in 2019.

In a moving tribute to the departed leader, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who received the news of his death when he was inaugurating a string of petroleum sector schemes for Bihar, called him a grassroots leader with deep understanding of poverty and problems of the poor.

Singh cut his teeth in politics in Samyukta Socialist Party, before he became a member of the Bihar assembly in 1977.

He represented Belsand assembly seat multiple times and was also the chairman of

the Bihar Legislative Council before making his Lok Sabha debut in 1996.

It was under his stewardship of the Union Rural Development Ministry that NREGA, the flagship rural livelihood scheme was implemented.

Notwithstanding his political successes, he kept himself away from the trappings of power. He would love to have a chat with his constituents reclining on a charpoy sipping tea, and pronouncing ticket as "tikas", like an obscure, unlettered villager from Bihar.

Not that he did not know. He just like it that way. *PTI*

IN BRIEF

Swiss cops break up party

Geneva: Police in the Swiss capital Bern said they used water cannon and rubber bullets to disperse a crowd of mostly young people holding an illegal “street carnival”. Several hundred people gathered late Saturday in the northeast of the city around cars blaring music and floats. A huge banner in French read “Street Carnival”, according to a photo on aurka.com, the website of a Swiss photographer who specialises in demonstrations and street art. Police said they intervened when those taking part began heading toward the city centre and throwing bottles and stones at officers. It was not immediately clear why the gathering was deemed illegal. Demonstrators “set up barricades and set off fireworks”, a police statement said.

Vatican: Return to in-person Mass

Vatican City: The Vatican has said it was “necessary and urgent” to return to in-person Masses as soon as anti-Coronavirus measures permit. The head of the Vatican’s liturgy office, Cardinal Robert Sarah, on Saturday said in a letter to bishops conferences that virtual liturgies, while useful, were no replacement for the real thing. He said physical presence by the faithful in churches was “vital, indispensable, irreplaceable”. While some Catholic priests claimed Coronavirus lockdowns that shuttered churches infringed on religious liberties, Pope Francis has adhered to Italy’s strict lockdown. He halted all public Masses at the Vatican, livestreamed his morning liturgies during the peak of Italy’s outbreak, and at one point even admonished priests who balked at the measures for their “adolescent resistance”. The Vatican said on Saturday that Francis had approved Sarah’s letter to bishops conferences.

Protest outside Netanyahu house

Jerusalem: Thousands of Israelis demonstrated outside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s official residence in central Jerusalem late Saturday, demanding he resign over his trial on corruption charges and what is widely seen as his mishandling of the Coronavirus pandemic. With Israel reporting record levels of new Coronavirus cases each day, the country appears to be headed toward a nationwide lockdown this week ahead of the Jewish New Year. Saturday’s demonstration came a day after Israel announced an agreement to establish diplomatic relations with Bahrain, the second Arab country to normalise ties with Israel in under a month and just the fourth overall. But the surprise announcement had little effect on the thousands of demonstrators gathering outside Netanyahu’s residence every Saturday throughout the summer to protest his corruption trial, handling of the health crisis and the resulting economic pain.

PHILIPPINES DEPORTS U.S. MARINE

Manila, Sept. 13: A US Marine convicted of killing a Filipino transgender woman was deported Sunday after a presidential pardon cut short his detention in a case that renewed outrage over a pact governing American military presence in the Philippines. Lance Cpl. Joseph Scott Pemberton left a message to President Rodrigo Duterte and to the family of Jennifer Laude, who he was convicted of killing in 2014 after finding out that she was a transgender in a motel northwest of Manila. The message’s content will be released after his departure, his lawyer, Rowena Garcia-Flores, said. Philippine immigration officers and American security personnel escorted the 25-year-old Marine from his cell in the main military camp in metropolitan Manila to the airport, where he boarded a military aircraft. Ahead of the flight, he was subjected to a Coronavirus test, which turned negative, immigration spokeswoman Dana Sandoval said. “He’s been successfully deported,” Sandoval said. On Monday, Duterte granted an “absolute and unconditional pardon” to Pemberton in a move that caught many by surprise. The Philippine leader has long been a vocal critic of US security policies while reaching out to China and Russia.

Marching on in Minsk



Opposition supporters parade through the streets during a rally to protest against the presidential election results in Minsk on Saturday. Belarusians have been demonstrating against the disputed re-election of President Alexander Lukashenko for a month, with more than 100,000 people flooding the streets of Minsk for the four straight weekends.

— AFP

Afghan peace talks: The hard work begins

Search on for lasting ceasefire after decades of fighting

Doha, Sept. 13: Peace talks between the Taliban and Afghan government negotiators get down to business Sunday, with the search for a lasting ceasefire one of many key issues up for discussion. A slick opening ceremony in the Qatari capital Doha on Saturday saw the Afghan government, and allies including the United States, call for a ceasefire. But the Taliban, who have fought a guerrilla campaign against both since they were forced from power in 2001, did not mention a truce as they came to the negotiating table. The head of the peace process for the Afghan government suggested to AFP that the Taliban could offer a ceasefire in

exchange for the release of more of their jailed fighters. “This could be one of their ideas or one of their demands,” said Abdullah Abdullah, the chairman of Afghanistan’s High Council for National Reconciliation. Negotiations will be arduous and messy, delegates warned during the opening ceremony, and are starting even as deadly violence continues to grip Afghanistan. “We will undoubtedly encounter many challenges in the talks over the coming days, weeks and months,” US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said as he called for the warring sides to “seize this opportunity” to secure peace.

— AFP

AFGHAN RESOLUTION IS THE KEY TO REGIONAL PEACE, SAYS IMRAN

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 13

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday said successful culmination of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process was indispensable for Afghanistan and regional peace. In a Facebook post, the Prime Minister reiterated the determination that Pakistan will continue to remain in full support and solidarity with the Afghan people as they march forward in this consequential journey for peace and development. Meanwhile, Defence Minister Perviz Khattak

said Pakistan was committed to bring peace in Afghanistan. He termed resumption of intra-Afghan dialogue a good omen for the region. He said peace in Afghanistan is vital for the prosperity of Pakistan. Speaking about the national issues, the Defence Minister said the country had come out of the financial crisis and now the government had focused provision of relief to the people. Perviz Khattak said the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan will honour all pledges made with the people.

2 L.A. DEPUTIES SHOT, HUNT ON FOR ATTACKER

Compton (US), Sept. 13: The shooting of two Los Angeles County sheriff’s deputies in an apparent ambush prompted a manhunt for the shooter, reaction from the President and protests outside the hospital where the wounded deputies were being treated Saturday night in California.

The 31-year-old female deputy and 24-year-old male deputy both underwent surgery Saturday evening, Sheriff Alex Villanueva said in a late-night news conference. Both graduated from the academy 14 months ago, he said. The deputies were shot while sitting in their patrol car at a Metro rail station and were able to radio for help, the sheriff said. Villanueva expressed frustration as he urged people to pray for the officers. It sparked thousands of reactions, including from President Donald Trump, who responded, “Animals that must be hit hard!” — AP

Lens on foreign journos if giving ‘slanted view’ of Oz

Melbourne, Sept. 13: Foreign journalists working in Australia will come under the scrutiny of federal agencies if they provide a “slanted view” of the country, interfere with its democracy or steal the intellectual property, a senior minister warned on Sunday, amidst a diplomatic standoff with China. Australian Home Affairs Ministers Peter Dutton said there had been a concerted effort with Australian

ian federal police working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies to make sure that the government can address foreign interference wherever it may occur in the country. “If people are here as journalists and they’re reporting fairly on the news, then that’s fine. And if people are masquerading as journalists or business leaders or whoever they might be, and there’s

evidence that they are acting in a contrary to Australian law, then ASIO and AFP and other agencies will act,” Dutton said. “If there’s an attempt with interfering or conducting espionage-type activities, then we have a problem with that. But for a journalist coming into our country, applying scrutiny as anybody on your panel would today — we don’t have an issue,” he said. — PTI

Lanka Constitution Amendment faces internal resistance

Colombo, Sept. 13: The Sri Lankan government’s proposed 20th Constitutional Amendment has faced internal resistance from within a faction of the ruling SLPP parliamentary group itself, ahead of its inclusion in Parliament’s order paper, the party members said on Sunday. The government on Sept. 2 gazetted the 20th Constitutional Amendment draft, the new proposed legisla-

tion that would replace the 19th Amendment introduced in 2015 that curtailed the powers of the President and strengthened the role of Parliament. The 19A was seen as the most progressive pro-democracy reformist move since Sri Lanka came to be governed under the all-powerful executive presidency in 1978. It depoliticised the government administration by ensuring the indepe-

ndence of key pillars such as the judiciary, public service and elections. The 20th Amendment proposes to restore full legal immunity to the President, removing the provisions made in the 19A to take legal action against the President. The office of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in a statement on Saturday night said that a nine-member ministerial committee has been appointed to review the 20A in its present form and, if needed, a fresh gazette will be issued. Ever since the government gazetted the 20A, some of the ruling SLPP’s own parliamentarians and the party’s allies have been publicly expressing unhappiness over its certain provisions, the party members said. If the 20A is implemented in its present form, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa

China calls HK people held at sea ‘separatists’

Beijing, Sept. 13: The 12 Hong Kong people arrested at sea by mainland authorities last month were separatists, a spokeswoman for China’s foreign ministry said on Sunday, in response to her US counterpart’s characterisation of the arrest as a deterioration of human rights.

The comment came a day after relatives of the detainees held a news conference in Hong Kong demanding the urgent return of the 12 who were intercepted by the Guangdong coast guard on Aug. 23 on a boat bound for Taiwan.

Donning masks and hats to shield their identities, they made their first public appeal for help and information on their relatives’ plight, pleading for them to be allowed to consult lawyers appointed by their families and not the Chinese government and to be allowed to call relatives in Hong Kong.

US State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus tweeted on Saturday that their arrest was “another example of the deterioration of human rights in Hong Kong”, and called on mainland authorities to “ensure due process”.

The arrests came about two months after the mainland government imposed a security law on the special administrative region following months of pro-democracy demonstrations.

China’s Hua Chunying responded in another tweet. “Seriously? Fact check: The 12 people were arrested for illegally cross-

US threat to world peace: China min

Beijing, Sept. 13: China’s Defence Ministry on Sunday blasted a critical US report on the country’s military ambitions, saying it is the US instead that poses the biggest threat to the international order and world peace. The statement follows the September 2 release of the annual Defence Department report to Congress on Chinese military developments and goals that it said would have “serious implications for US national interests and the security of the international rules-based order”.

Defence Ministry spokesman Colonel Wu Qian called the report a “wanton distortion” of China’s aims and the relationship between the People’s Liberation Army and China’s 1.4 billion people.

“Many years of evidence shows that it is the US that is the fomentor of regional unrest, the viola-

tor of the international order and the destroyer of world peace,” he said. US actions in Iraq, Syria, Libya and other countries over the past two decades have resulted in the deaths of more than 800,000 people and displacement of millions, Qian said.

“Rather than reflecting on itself, the US issued a so-called report that made false comments about China’s normal defence and military construction,” he said in the statement. “We call on the US to view China’s national defence and military construction objectively and rationally, cease making false statements and related reports, and take concrete actions to safeguard the healthy development of bilateral military relations.”

The report examined the PLA’s technical capabilities, doctrines and the ultimate aims of China’s military buildup. — AP

ing the border in waters. They are not democratic activists, but elements attempting to separate #HongKong from China,” she wrote. The Shenzhen city police, in its first notice since the arrest, on Sunday said the 12 Hong Kong citizens were under criminal detention on suspicion of illegally crossing the

border. The investigation is ongoing, it said.

“Police will protect the legitimate rights and interests of criminal suspects in accordance with law,” the police said.

The relatives on Saturday said they had been given no information on the allegations. — Reuters

Blair, Major call for boycott of Johnson’s Brexit bill plan

London, Sept. 13: Britain’s former prime ministers from rival parties, Tony Blair and John Major, united on Sunday to call on members of Parliament to boycott Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s proposed law aimed at overriding parts of the Brexit divorce agreement.

Ahead of the Internal Market Bill coming up for debate in the House of Commons on Monday, Major as a member of Johnson’s own Conservative Party and Blair from the Opposition Labour Party warned that what is being proposed by the prime minister is “shocking” and has wide-ranging ramifications on all future trade negotiations, not only with the European Union (EU) but with other nations.

“The overt repudiation of the treaty — by seeking to override unilaterally the provisions agreeing to the application of certain EU rules to Northern Ireland — strikes at the very heart of the withdrawal agreement,” the duo wrote in a joint article for *The Sunday Times*.

IF THE government has concerns about specific parts of the withdrawal treaty, there are ready mechanisms within it to resolve them amicably; in the first instance by negotiation between the UK and the EU and, if that fails, through independent arbitration. It has chosen to ignore these options.

TONY BLAIR AND JOHN MAJOR, Britain’s former PMs

“If the government has concerns about specific parts of the withdrawal treaty, there are ready mechanisms within it to resolve them amicably; in the first instance by negotiation between the UK and the EU and, if that fails, through independent arbitration. It has chosen to ignore these options. Instead, it has thrown the withdrawal treaty into uncertainty and given the EU genuine reason to

question whether Britain can be relied upon in any future trade agreements with the EU,” they wrote.

Major was a Conservative prime minister from 1990 to 1997. His Labour successor Blair served as Britain’s prime minister from 1997 to 2007. Amid growing discord over the issue within his own party, Johnson has sought the backing of his MPs for the new Bill saying the EU is threatening to impose a customs border in the Irish Sea, separating Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK.

The Bill focuses on the Northern Ireland Protocol — the part of the Brexit divorce designed to prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland. If it became law, it would give UK ministers powers to modify or “disapply” rules relating to the movement of goods between Britain and Northern Ireland that will come into force from January 2021, unless the UK and EU are able to strike a trade deal ahead of that.

— PTI

FILM | FEST

Hungarian Kornel Mundruczo's 1st English foray *Pieces of A Woman* is set in Massachusetts

And the Oscar goes to... ‘Princess’ Venessa Kirby

SUPARNA SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 13

It doesn’t happen often, but when it does, it creates what we call “the magic of cinema”. Bringing to life characters and a world that simply didn’t exist before a writer conjured them up requires a unique mix of individual pursuit of brilliance, but also a *jugalbandi* of skill, daring and commitment with others. A director who can imagine and create it, an actor who can make us believe in it, a cinematographer who captures it and an editor who eventually decides

what we see, how, when, and for how long. No matter how well one of them does, creating that magic depends on what everyone does. Hungarian director Kornel Mundruczo’s first English language film, *Pieces of A Woman*, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) on Saturday, strives for that kind of brilliance and achieves it in a bravura sequence that comes barely six minutes into the film and goes on for almost 24 minutes. Based on a screenplay by Kata Webber, *Pieces of A Woman* is set in Massachu-

setts, US, where Martha (Venessa Kirby), a slim, chic executive, and her construction worker husband Shaun (Shia LaBeouf) have planned a home birth for their first child. They have bought a baby-friendly car, a room with a crib is ready, and the midwife has been booked. September 17. There is slight chill in the air. Winter is coming. And so is the baby. C i n e m a t o g r a p h e r Benjamin Loeb’s long, intimate sequence, shot by a hand-held camera, stays with Martha for the entirety of the birth of her baby. It starts with mild contrac-

tions, her water breaking, the contractions increasing and a replacement midwife turning up. In this sequence, where there are few, carefully-concealed cuts, the camera stays close to Martha as a helpless Shaun tries his best to be of some use. It zooms in when Martha needs a hand to squeeze and

steps back as she gets delirious with pain and says she smells something rotten. We feel as if we too are attached to her, bobbing around Martha gently in amniotic fluid along with her baby. Your hair will stand on its end when Martha screams in pain, her veins popping out as she tries to push the baby out. This visceral look at what child birth entails for a woman, eager and desperate to eject a piece of herself, is just the beginning of change — of Martha’s body and emotions. Venessa Kirby, most well-known for playing Princess

Margaret in Netflix’s *Crown*, is stripped of all veneer of glamour and even dialogue in *Pieces of A Woman* as she has to first let a child rip through her, and then cradle a tragedy that keeps taking her apart, bit by bit. Kirby carries this destruction, this loss in her body, in her silence, in her inability to tolerate even the most loving and benign of touches. They all feel as if they are taking a bite of her broken pieces. While Martha is pretending to live, a media and court room drama is playing out. But Martha is keeping everything and everybody at an arm’s

length. Her mother, Elizabeth (played with flinty self-assurance and infuriating interference by Ellen Burstyn), won’t have it. In the film’s second most powerful scene, Elizabeth tells her own story, and the film again takes Martha apart so that she can piece herself back together. Though it’s too early to tell, but for now my prediction is that the next Oscar for best performance female will go to Venessa Kirby. And I won’t be surprised if Ellen Burstyn stands smiling next to her, holding her own golden knight.

DECCAN Chronicle

14 SEPTEMBER 2020

It's status quo once again for Congress

The latest recast of the Congress leadership by its president Sonia Gandhi seems to be in line with the saying “the more you change, the more you remain the same”. The party has chosen to return to ad hocism, a strategy which has helped it float at many critical times but weakened it every time. Ms Gandhi, who returned to her post after being ‘interim president’ for a year, has picked the same people who have been at the helm of the party all these years, to assist her. The Congress Working Committee (CWC), once the most powerful political forum in the country, sees no change that reflects the changed political reality of the country.

The exercise comes in the background of 23 senior party leaders writing a letter to Ms Gandhi demanding that the party have a full-time president who can inspire the party cadre, more freedom to state units and election to the state units. It is to the credit of Ms Gandhi that she has included some of the letter writers, including veteran face Ghulam Nabi Azad and Jitendra Prasada, members of the CWC. She, however, dropped them from the new arrangement which will advise her on “organisational and operational” matters. That articulate faces of the party such as Dr Shashi Tharoor, who has been an effective voice of the party within Parliament where it is a famished lot, and outside has not been accommodated in any of the new committees, is a signal that the rebels will find it tough to go further up in the party hierarchy if they raise their voice for more democratisation. The party seems to have no plans to brook dissidence if it is aimed at its first family.

It is disappointing that the grand old party of Indian politics has chosen to ignore the signals that emanate from the ground asking it to reinvent itself and be the bulwark of resistance to the right wing politics that is bent on undoing every single block with which the republic is built. Instead of looking for fresh faces that can inject new enthusiasm into the minds of the party workers whom one would be able to find in every village, the choice of leadership has remained a game of musical chairs.

A series of challenges of unprecedented magnitude and reach, each one with a firepower that can seriously damage its future, faces India and the government and the party that leads it have conveniently chosen to ignore each one of it. It is estimated that India will have the most number of Covid infections by mid-October. The economy has been in tatters and the pandemic has pushed it further down. The border issue is far from over, though the determined efforts of the Armed Forces have been able to checkmate the enemy at the border. The country deserves an Opposition which can hold the government accountable to Parliament and the people, and the Congress has the leading roles in ensuring it. A vibrant and elected leadership alone can ensure it.

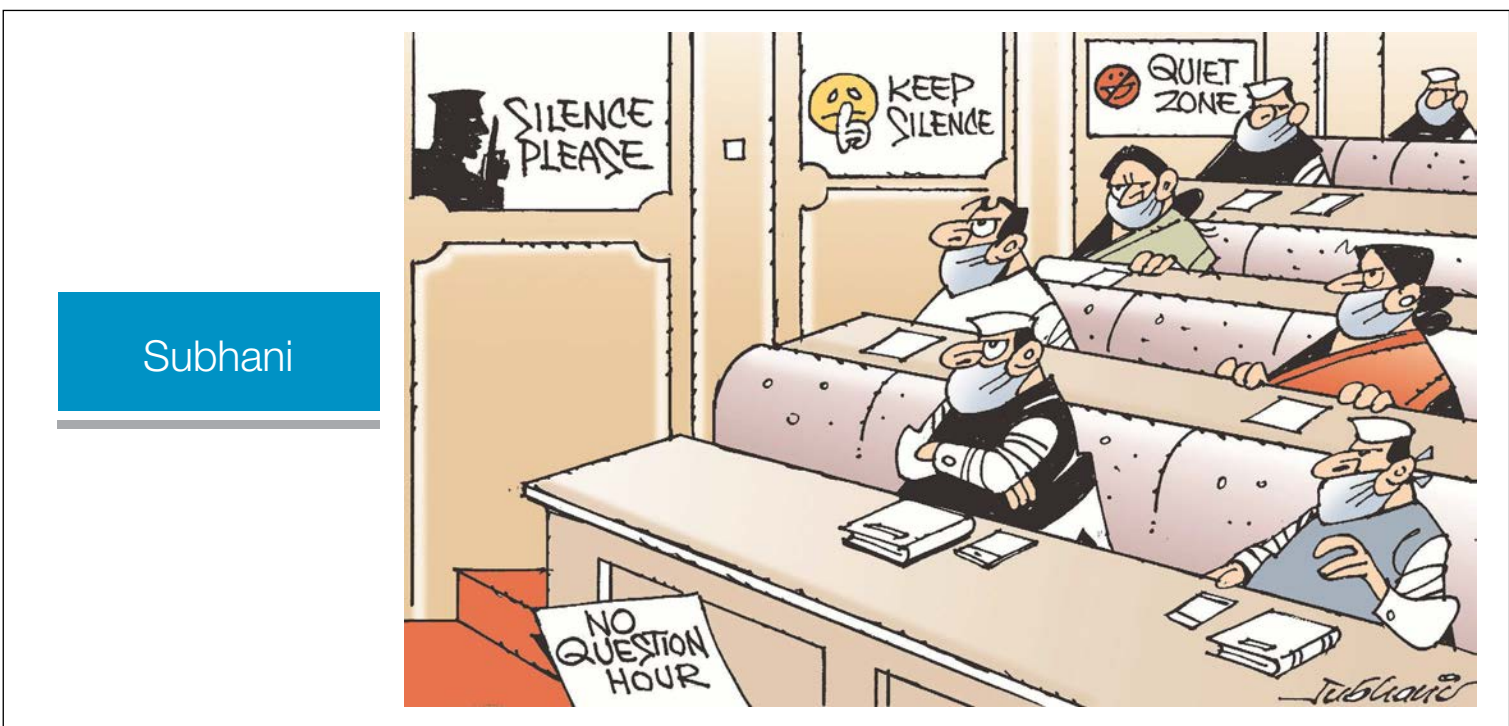
Vilification campaign

It turned out to be a false alarm. First, a tweet by the Swaraj Abhiyan leader and then a clarification issued by Delhi Police have confirmed that Yogendra Yadav, Sitaram Yechury, Jayati Ghosh and Apoorvanand have not been arraigned as accused in a supplementary chargesheet filed in connection with the death of a 17-year-old in the February riots in Delhi. It does raise a few uncomfortable queries, though, pertaining to both the source and the process resulting in the misleading news flash by the agency.

The leaders and activists, however, have been named in unauthenticated disclosure statements obtained by police from the accused and which form part of the chargesheet. It is not admissible in court but can form the basis of legal action against these individuals should there be found, or concocted, corroborative evidence. Prima facie, the allegation against them is about “provoking and mobilising” the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) protests in Jaffrabad on February 22. But since they were perfectly within their rights to criticise and rally public opinion against CAA, it is no more than the government’s political position on the matter. “Maliciously the image of the government”, to quote from the second chargesheet, is no offence under the law.

The Delhi Police investigation into the riots has been loudly condemned by this newspaper for being shoddy in the extreme and ideologically charged. The original chargesheet was against Pinjra Tod members Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal, and Jamia Millia Islamia’s Gulfisha Fathima. Incredible though it may appear to be, they are now being accused of instigating an unknown person to shoot Amaan, the 17-year-old riot victim. Curiously or not, Kalita and Narwal have written, “I refuse to sign”, in some pages of the statements in the new chargesheet.

Recently, hearing a bail plea by her, the Delhi high court held that there is no evidence against Kalita of participating in any conspiracy. Clearly, these new “revelations” strategically hyped by the police is part of its partisan agenda to discredit the anti-CAA movement, discourage new participants and intimidate, harass and harm the protesters.



Subhani

Staring at Dragon's eyes: India must stay on guard



Ruchi Ghanashyam

The fire that was lit by the Chinese in the Galwan Valley on June 15 continues to smoulder in eastern Ladakh. The worst incident of violence on the India-China border since 1967 claimed the lives of 20 Indian soldiers. Several weeks later, many efforts to resolve the situation are yet to yield the desired results. India has demanded China restore the status quo, while China blames India, claiming sovereignty over the area.

This is the second India-China standoff in recent memory. The tussle between the two militaries in Doklam in 2017 is still fresh in our memory. The Chinese attitude towards India has been evident for years, if not decades. Covert Chinese backing for anti-India groups in the Northeast has been known for long. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, its tight embrace of Pakistan, including support at the UN for Pakistan-based terrorist Masood Azhar, are mirrored in its anti-India activities elsewhere in our neighbourhood. Each of India's neighbours is vulnerable to Chinese stratagems: Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives or Bhutan.

China's aggressiveness isn't restricted to India's neighbourhood. Its activities in the South China Sea have alienated much of Southeast Asia, and raised alarm bells in several Western capitals. Its bellicose approach to Taiwan hasn't gone unnoticed in Washington or elsewhere. Even worse is its approach towards Hong Kong, where it is systematically undermining the “One country, two systems” principle, which was the basis for the governance of Hong Kong and Macau since they became China's

Special Administrative Regions in the late-1990s. Britain has taken the lead to speak out against the draconian security law that China imposed on Hong Kong in July.

Human rights violations across China are another issue that bothers the West. The heavy-handed tackling of unarmed protesters in Hong Kong was brought into the world's living rooms by international TV channels. The treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang province has alarmed not only the West but also Central Asia.

China has demonstrated a voracious economic appetite. Of late, it has increasingly given direct loans and trade credits to developing nations, much beyond their capacity to pay back. One report claims it has given \$1.5 trillion in such loans and credits to over 150 countries, and more than 50 developing nations owe more than 15 per cent of their GDP to China. It eyes the assets of nations unable to service their debts, though the Chinese media denies this.

China's approach to trade is no less aggressive. The United States and China are engaged in what is described as a trade war, while European and other countries are concerned over China's single-minded approach. Chinese companies like Huawei and many Chinese apps are increasingly attracting greater scrutiny. India, too, has taken action to ban several of these apps.

While disliking China's political and economic approach, most countries have looked the other way due to their growing dependence on Chinese finance and investments. The tipping point may have been reached as the world struggles to cope with the human and economic impact of the coronavirus that has brought most developed countries

virtually to their knees.

India faces a challenge from China on its borders. It also has an opportunity to engage with a world that is increasingly uncomfortable with China's actions. The engagement among the “Quadrilateral” (India, Australia, Japan and the US) has been revitalised. It is time that the “Quad” is expanded to include Britain, that has a direct interest in Hong Kong and is a long-time maritime power. In addition, Britain has a good understanding of this region. France can similarly bring greater depth to this initiative. Closer coordination between the Quad and Southeast Asia must also be on our agenda. Our engagements shouldn't be limited to the Indo-Pacific; strengthening ties with Central Asian nations should also be an important objective.

These efforts shouldn't be seen or projected as “anti-China”, and such coordination is vital to maintain secure and peaceful maritime movement in the Indo-Pacific. It could benefit development of the “blue economy”, studying the impact of climate change and disaster relief and management. Our engagements with the Quad also shouldn't be seen as a panacea for our border problems with China. We must resolve the current situation with China through dialogue, but our engagement with China must firmly convey our resolve to defend our sovereignty. India's preference for peace should not be mistaken for military inability or unwillingness. This “red line” must be understood by the Chinese. Within the bounds of this position, the creativity of our diplomats and policymakers can try and find a solution that is acceptable to both sides and which the Chinese leadership can take back to their people

The Chinese seem to have opened too many fronts. Despite its strength and power, China today seems to have few friends in the world.

without appearing to have surrendered or backtracked.

In war and diplomacy, it is always advisable not to open too many fronts simultaneously. The Chinese seem to have opened too many fronts. Despite its strength and power, China today seems to have few friends in the world. It's efforts to encircle India may have had dubious success, but its own overambition, bordering on arrogance, has led to the near encirclement of China itself.

Is it an arrogant misjudgement on China's part, which made it supremely confident of handling such widespread unhappiness of its actions across the globe? Somehow, it's difficult to accept that Chinese policymakers could have been so naive. Some blame internal struggle and dissonance within the Chinese leadership for the current overstretch. Others point to the centenary of the Communist Party of China next year and the desire of the leadership in Beijing to deliver the Chinese vision of itself as a great superpower at this important landmark. Covid-19's appearance as China is preparing to deliver this vision; its actions in Ladakh and other places while the rest of the world is preoccupied with the Wuhan virus could be a coincidence, unless the macho Chinese behaviour in Ladakh and south of its borders is aimed at diverting the attention of its own people.

China is busy spreading its wings. From Hambantota to Gwadar, from Djibouti to Greece's Piraeus Port, and now its efforts to establish its footprint in the islands of southern Italy, combined with its increasing assertiveness in Hong Kong, the South China Sea and Ladakh, paint a picture of a China that has decided its time has come. India must remain on guard, both militarily and diplomatically. When it comes to the crunch, our battles are our own!

The writer is a retired IFS officer who recently served as India's high commissioner to Britain

LETTERS

NEET DEATHS

This refers to the death of students fearing failure in the Neet exam. The students who wish to appear for such competitive exams need to approach with a positive mindset. If one is not sure of scoring marks, why then should he/she appear for the exam in the first place? Failures, it is said, are stepping stones for success. A kind of fear appears to have set in the minds of students, probably due to the whipping up of such a sentiment by the political leaders, who are bent upon cancelling the exam itself. While it is normal for a student to develop a kind of fear during examination time, one should overcome the same by dint of hard work and should not succumb to the same. The students should prepare for the Neet like any other examinations. Grit and determination is the key to success. The students should face the exam with equanimity. Nothing is impossible.

V.S. Jayaraman
Chennai

NOVAK DISQUALIFIED

One can only pity the world No.1 Novak Djokovic for his unceremonious disqualification from the US Open in bizarre circumstances after he inadvertently struck a line-woman in her throat with a ball. Though unfortunate, the incident should serve as a reminder to all tennis professionals that they must always keep their cool on court. Joker's US Open ouster shows rules are paramount. A professional sports career is accompanied by a number of highs and lows, as well as moments of frustration that get the better of even the best of athletes. Perhaps, the Serbian great may take a leaf out of Federer's playbook for the exemplary manner and grace with which he conducts himself, both on and off the court. Djokovic can win Grand Slams, but not hearts.

R. Sivakumar
Chennai

Kishwar Desai

London Diary

Apocalypse just around corner, Rule of Six can't ward it off

A big shock this week was the pause of the human trials for the “Oxford vaccine” as it is now known, when one volunteer fell ill. The vaccine is our eagerly awaited “Christmas present” ever since Prime Minister Boris Johnson had said there would be a vaccine by the end of the year, and we were dreaming of an unmasked Christmas. And now more sobering information comes to us that even vaccines which reach the human trial stage have only a 20 per cent chance of success and no one knows out of the five vaccine candidates that Britain has lined up — which one will eventually triumph. In any case no country plans to vaccinate the whole population — so new rules will have to be drawn up. Rule Britannia, as they say! But in these disrupted times, when everyone is stuck at home (and I have always maintained that I don't mind at all as I am now doing the final edit of my new book in which I will be slobberingly grateful to “self isolation”) — the

two sections of society who will always appreciate WFH are women and authors. For once I am in the winning team — being a woman and an author!

But meanwhile, we are now seeing The Return of Carona in the UK. This is a horrifying sequel to the first act. Covid cases are doubling every week and the dreaded R number is 1.7. As it happens, schools are starting again and within a fortnight universities will reopen. The government already looks indecisive as it did last April. Now it keeps on changing its mind as frequently as the weather changes. Can we blame them? There is no ready-made solution — and even those subjects which may have a solution such as Brexit are being tossed around. I always think of Boris as a “jolly” leader who somehow thinks that if you remain optimistic the problem will disappear. But Brexit plus Carona equals Chaos. Right now, the country looks unprepared for

the apocalypse round the corner.

But when in doubt invent a new rule! Rule Britannia! A new rule says that only six persons can gather together indoors or outdoors. So all those restaurants and pubs which did a roaring trade in the summer will be back under wraps. Offices were about to reopen and London transport would have carried more passengers on the underground. But now this has been put under a cloud. Of course before it comes into effect on Monday the weekend will be full of crowded beaches, pubs and restaurant. The stiff upper lip of the quietly obedient Briton is nowhere to be found, and instead we see lips firmly wrapped around beer glasses.

Indeed one argument is that it was the haste with which the government relaxed the lockdown to help the economy that may have caused the resurgence of the infection. For the first time since he became Chancellor, Rishi Sunak is

being questioned about the wisdom of his Eat Out to Help Out Policy which gave customers price cuts in restaurants for each meal they had on selected days of the week. And the opening of the pubs would have added to the return of Covid. But as has often happened since the epidemic started, scientists, civil servants, politicians have not agreed on anything. “The Rule of Six” sounds suspiciously like a Sherlock Holmes mystery — and possibly will remain one.

Of course football resumed this weekend but without spectators just as it was during the last season. People will still watch it online and at least there will something to talk about on Monday morning when they meet their mates or crowd out the phone lines of radio talk shows. The English male talks more about football than any other topic over the weekend — before the match on Saturday and then after final whistle and over the entire weekend

ending at Monday lunchtime.

But what about theatre? How many of us are prepared walk into a theatre to watch a play about Covid-19? At least it will be a live performance with properly socially distanced seating. Well, some people have done exactly that because Ralph Fiennes is enacting the role of a Covid patient at a time the government dithers over the next step, at the Bridge theatre. The playwright of *Beat the Devil* is David Hare — who apparently did get the infection — and then was inspired to write the play. Perhaps it is a great idea to stage this monologue — but honestly, even though the combination of Fiennes and Hare are dynamite, right now a monologue on Covid is the last thing I need.

Kishwar Desai is an award-winning author. Her latest book, The Longest Kiss: The Life and Times of Devika Rani, will be out by November.

SHORT TAKES

Sree's spot-fixing ban comes to end

New Delhi: India pacer S. Sreesanth's ban for alleged spot-fixing came to an end on Sunday, concluding a seven-year punishment that was originally meant to be for life and was aggressively contested by the flamboyant bowler. The 37-year-old has already made it clear that he intends to resume at least his domestic career at the end of the ban and his home state Kerala has promised to consider him if he manages to prove his fitness. "I'm completely free of any charges nd anything nd now gonna represent the sport I love the most.will give my very best to every ball I ball even (if) it's just practice," he tweeted on Friday, a couple of days before the end of his suspension. "Just have another 5 to 7 years max to give it all I've got nd I will give the very best to any team I play," he added. However, with the Indian domestic season postponed at present due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it remains to be seen when exactly Sreesanth is able to make a comeback if Kerala decides to give him a chance. — PTI

Ruturaj to undergo 2 more Covid tests

Dubai: Young Chennai Super Kings batsman Ruturaj Gaekwad, who tested positive for Covid-19 last month, will undergo two fresh tests starting Sunday and could miss the first few games of the IPL. Thirteen members of the CSK contingent tested positive for the virus and two of them were players — Gaekwad and Deepak Chahar. Chahar, along with 11 others, has recovered and resumed training after clearing his mandatory two tests. "Ruturaj will undergo two tests as per protocol, today and tomorrow. If he tests negative, he will be back in team hotel bubble. The other staff members have tested negative and are now back to normal. They are back in team bubble," CSK CEO K.S. Viswanathan said on Sunday. For Gaekwad, CSK will follow the established protocol and he will also have to undergo cardiovascular and lung function tests to ascertain his fitness if he clears the virus tests. — PTI

Coach Simeone is Corona positive

Madrid: Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone has the Coronavirus. The Argentine wasn't showing any symptoms and was in isolation, the club said on Saturday. Simeone and the rest of the team were tested on Friday. The club did not say if anyone else was infected. The Spanish league stopped play from March until June because of the pandemic. The top flight managed to finish the season in July without any major infections. But as the virus has started to spread again in Spain, teams have reported infections in recent weeks. Atletico are scheduled to play a friendly at C d'iz on Tuesday. Like Real Madrid, Barcelona, and Sevilla, Atletico have their first two rounds of the Spanish league postponed to give the teams more rest after the completed in Europe in August. — AP

LeBron leads Lakers to finals

Miami: LeBron James had 29 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists as the Los Angeles Lakers advanced to their first NBA Western Conference final in a decade with a 119-96 blowout win over the Houston Rockets on Saturday. Anthony Davis tallied 13 points and 11 rebounds, Kyle Kuzma had 17 and Markieff Morris finished with 16 for the Lakers.

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Brighton vs Chelsea from 12.30 am (Tuesday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

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NAOMI AGAIN!

Osaka beats Victoria to win second US Open crown

New York, Sept. 13: Japan's Naomi Osaka came from a set down to beat Victoria Azarenka of Belarus to win the US Open on Saturday and clinch her third Grand Slam title.

Osaka, the fourth seed, overcame her unseeded opponent 1-6, 6-3, 6-3 inside a near-empty Arthur Ashe Stadium at Flushing Meadows.

It brought 22-year-old Osaka's haul of tennis major trophies to three after her victories at the 2018 US Open and 2019 Australian Open.

"I didn't really enjoy that. It was a really tough match for me," Osaka said following her 1hr 53min victory.

Azarenka, 31, sprinted to the first set in just 26 minutes, dominating Osaka with an 88 percent success rate on her first serve.

The Japanese was uncharacteristically sloppy, hitting a whopping 13 unforced errors.

Azarenka then went 2-0 ahead in the second set before Osaka fought back to break her opponent's serve twice and take a 4-3 lead.

The momentum had quickly swung in Osaka's favor and she broke a third time to take the match to a deciding set.

"I just thought it would be very embarrassing to lose this in under an hour so I just have to try as hard as I can and stop having a really bad attitude," said Osaka, explaining the turnaround.

Osaka enjoyed the first breakthrough of set three in game four when she broke Azarenka's serve to take a 3-1 lead. Azarenka then blew a golden opportunity to get back into the match, wasting three break points as Osaka recovered from 0-40 to hold for a 4-1 lead.

Azarenka saved four break points to make it 4-2 as she battled to keep the contest alive.

When she broke Osaka in game seven, the set was back on serve. But Osaka immediately



Naomi Osaka of Japan holds up the championship trophy after defeating Victoria Azarenka of Belarus in their US Open women's singles final in New York on Saturday. Osaka won 1-6, 6-3, 6-3.

broke back after Azarenka pushed a forehand wide to leave herself the opportunity of serving for the match and title. On Osaka's second championship point, Azarenka found the net.

'THIS WAS FUN'

Azarenka, a two-time

Grand Slam champion, was playing in her first tennis major final since losing the 2013 US Open to Serena Williams.

The last few years of the former world number one's career have been disrupted, firstly by injury then by a custody battle over her son, born

in December 2016.

But she enjoyed a fairy-tale run in New York, clinching the Western & Southern title before reaching Saturday's US Open final, where she lost for the third time.

"It's been a long road of getting here, but this was fun," she added. — AFP

— AP

Mayhem at Mugello as Hami clinches 90th win

Mugello (Italy), Sept. 13: Lewis Hamilton won a chaotic, crash-littered Tuscan Grand Prix on Sunday, extending his lead at the top of the Formula One drivers' championship.

Reigning champion Hamilton finished ahead of his Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas to claim his 90th F1 victory in a race which only 12 drivers finished, moving the Briton to within one win of equalling Michael Schumacher's all-time record.

"It was all a bit of a daze," said Hamilton to Sky Sports.

"It was incredibly tough today... All the those restarts, the con-

● **Two spectacular multi-car collisions brought Tuscan Grand Prix to a chaotic standstill and reduced the field to just 13 of the original starters.**

centration that's needed during that time, it was really, really hard."

Hamilton, 35, is now on 190 points, some 55 ahead of Bottas and is also on course this season to equal Schumacher's record of seven world titles after claiming his sixth win in nine races this year.

Alex Albon finished third, claiming his first podium finish for Red Bull, after a thrilling drive to compensate his team for the early exit of Max Verstappen in the first of two multi-car collisions in a race of three Safety Car interventions. The race took two hours and 25 minutes to complete, with the spells behind the Safety Car adding up to 76 minutes.

Two spectacular multi-car collisions brought Sunday's Tuscan Grand Prix to a chaotic standstill and reduced the field to just 13 of the original starters, but despite all the carnage no driver was injured. — AFP



Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton celebrates after winning the Tuscany Grand Prix at the Mugello circuit in Scarperia, Italy, on Sunday.

— AP

ENGLISH PREMIER | LEAGUE



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah scores his side's fourth goal against Leeds United in their Premier League match at the Anfield Stadium in Liverpool on Saturday.

— AP

Super Salah seals it for Liverpool

London, Sept. 13: Mohamed Salah hit a hat-trick as Liverpool kicked off their Premier League title defence with a thrilling 4-3 win against Leeds on Saturday.

Just 48 days after last season's delayed conclusion, the Premier League returned with a bang as Liverpool and Leeds served up a feast of goals to open the 2020-21 campaign.

Jürgen Klopp's side are English champions for the first time since 1990 and their bid for a record-equalling 20th title got off to a memorable start.

Liverpool didn't have it all their own way as Leeds came from behind three times before Egypt forward Salah finished them off with two minutes left.

Leeds are back in the top-flight for the first time in 16 years and Marcelo Bielsa's team deserve credit for putting Liverpool under enough pressure to expose flaws in a team that won the title by 18 points.

Salah won a fourth-minute penalty when his shot hit Leeds debutant Robin Koch on his outstretched arm and he dispatched the spot-kick himself.

Leeds fashioned a stunning equaliser in the 12th minute when on-loan Manchester City midfielder Jack Harrison cut past Trent Alexander-Arnold and Joe Gomez before drilling a superb low finish

THE RESULTS

Liverpool (Salah 4-pen, 33, 88-pen, Van Dijk 20)	4
Leeds (Harrison 12, Bamford 30, Klich 66)	3
Crystal Palace (Zaha 13)	1
Southampton	0
West Ham	0
Newcastle (Wilson 56, Hendrick 87)	2

into the bottom corner.

Virgil van Dijk restored Liverpool's lead eight minutes later with a thumping header from Andrew Robertson's corner.

Leeds equalised again in the 30th minute when Van Dijk made a hash of a flicked attempt to clear and Patrick Bamford pounced to guide his shot past Alison Becker.

A remarkable game produced more drama as Salah struck again three minutes later with a thunderous drive into the roof of the net.

Leeds equalised for a third time in the 66th minute. But Liverpool won it in the 88th minute when Leeds debutant Rodrigo tripped Fabinho and Salah slotted in the penalty, leaving Klopp to sum up the feelings of both teams when he mouthed "wow" at the final whistle. — AFP

MESSI PLAYS 45 MINUTES IN BARCA FRIENDLY WIN

Madrid, Sept. 13: Lionel Messi started and played 45 minutes in Barcelona's first pre-season friendly on Saturday as Ronald Koeman showed no hesitation in reintegrating the Argentinian.

Barca beat third tier side Gimnastic Tarragona 3-1, with Ousmane Dembele opening the scoring on his first appearance since November.

Antoine Griezmann and Philippe Coutinho then each scored penalties, either side of Javier Bonilla pulling one back for the visitors.

But Messi's return at the Johan Cruyff Stadium was perhaps the biggest plus for Koeman,

who was taking charge of his first game since being appointed coach last month. Barca will not play their first La Liga game against Villarreal until round three at the end of the month, having been granted extra time off due to their involvement in last season's Champions League.

Still without fans due to the coronavirus pandemic, Spain's top flight got off to a slow start at Ipurua, where Eibar finished with 10 men after Pape Diop was sent off in the 87th minute.

Granada then picked up where they left off last season by defeating Athletic Bilbao 2-0.

— AFP

Has SASCOC decision put SA cricket in jeopardy?



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

There are a few days to go before the grand entertainment of cricket hits Indian television screens. As teams are preparing for the Indian Premier League (IPL) that kicks off on September 19, an important bit of news did not find much space among the reams being written about the blue riband tournament run by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

A few days ago, South Africa's Olympics body South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SAS-

COC) asked key members of Cricket South Africa (CSA) to step down from their posts and took over the administration of cricket in the country. To CSA, which has been in the deep end with allegations of corruption, racism and many other evils, SASCOC's directive has dug the hole deeper, casting a pall of gloom for cricketers and fans in the country.

Even as the 10-odd South African (SA) cricketers are busy shaking the rust, caused by a long absence of competitive cricket, in the Arabian desert for the IPL,

the question on the minds of their colleagues who are not as lucky is a terrible one directly concerning their future. South African cricket in the recent past has undergone turmoil, losing much talent, thanks to the Kolpak ruling which hit their country the hardest.

SASCOC's decision now puts a cloud over the future of SA cricket on the whole depending on which way the International Cricket Council (ICC) will interpret it. According to an article in the ICC constitution, cricketing matters of each member country must be handled autonomously only by the board without interference from the government or other public or quasi-public body. The debate whether SASCOC's ruling constitutes government

interference or not is something which ICC's legal team must be pondering over at this point in time.

SASCOC has strongly denied that their directive constitutes meddling by the government and stresses that it has not acted under any kind of directive from the country's rulers and is a completely independent act. While the legal eagles will be busy trying to decide SASCOC's stand, it will be pertinent to note that there is a precedent of familiar cases that have happened in the past.

SA's neighbours, Zimbabwe, were suspended by the ICC in July last year for alleged intrusion by their government in Zimbabwe Cricket's (ZC) affairs. Thus the country became first full member

of the ICC to be banned from playing any form of cricket. A similar fate was suffered by Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN), an associate member and a rising force in the Subcontinent. Both countries were brought back into the ICC fold in October 2019.

According to their website, SASCOC is the Sports Confederation for all Sports Federations in the Republic of South Africa, and of course, is recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and International Paralympic Committee (IPC), amongst others. The latest media release by them confirms that CA is its member and is required to comply fully with their constitution. SASCOC claims that it has acted in good faith, and in the best

interests of the sport.

What then constitutes 'government interference' in the constitution of the ICC? If an association has members of that country's ruling party on their board, will their opinion or acts be defined as those suggested by the government? In the case of Pakistan Cricket Board, their country's head of state automatically becomes their patron-in-chief. When Imran Khan, the current head takes a call on cricketing matters will it be termed as one taken by an eminent cricketer (their most successful cricket captain) or the head of their government?

Closer to home, though the committee formed under Retd. Chief Justice R. M. Lodha did not stop politicians from holding posts in the BCCI, the

Supreme Court (SC) suggested a ban on government servants and ministers donning the role of cricket administrators. Laws are meant to be laid and enforced for the betterment of the populace, in this case for the game to prosper.

From an ICC perspective, for now, SASCOC's action will cause furrows among their legal team and the country will be under close scrutiny.

It will be prudent for ICC to take a relook at their constitution and come out with clear guidelines which leave little room for doubt for their members, going forward. They could well consider the statement of Chief Justice T. S. Thakur who had said: "Politicians as a category cannot be barred. There is a politician in everyone."