

IN BRIEF

'Depressed' woman jumps to death

Noida: A 50-year-old woman, undergoing treatment for depression, died after she allegedly jumped off a high-rise building in Noida on Sunday. The woman lived in Jaypee Aman society in Noida's Sector-151, where the incident took place around 7.30 am. The floor she jumped from is yet to be confirmed, police said. "She lived in a ground floor apartment with her husband, a retired Air Force official, and two children, aged 27 and 21. According to her family, she was under medication for depression since 2007, and had previously also attempted suicide," an official from the local Knowledge Park police station told PTI. The official said police have not come across any eye-witnesses so far. Even footage from CCTV cameras has been of no help to ascertain the height of the fall, the official said. "The over 15-floor building has occupants up till the seventh floor. Apparently, she may have gone to any floor above the seventh floor and jumped. A probe is on in the case," the official said.

Couple commits suicide in Siraspur

New Delhi: A 50-year-old man and his wife died allegedly after consuming a poisonous substance at their rented house in Siraspur area on Sunday, police said. The couple had a son who had married around nine years ago. Their son had no child and they were allegedly under depression over it. Kamlesh and his wife Usha (45) were found lying unconscious at their house in Jeewan Park, Siraspur, where they had been living as tenants for a few days, they said. Police suspect that they took the extreme step due to depression. On Sunday, when their son-in-law came to meet them, he found both of them lying unconscious and an inquiry found that the couple had consumed some poisonous substance, a senior police officer said. Kamlesh was a security guard at a godown in Alipur and his wife was working in a private company, he said. The couple was under depression and police suspect it might have drove them to end their lives.

4 arrested for posing as cops

New Delhi: A gang of four men have been arrested in Rohini for allegedly posing as police officials and extorting money from people either in the name of any "violation" or "illegal activity", police said on Sunday. The four identified as — Sagar, Praveen, Lokes and Amar Singh, who earlier worked as security guards formed a gang during the lockdown period and decided to extort money from people by either threatening or blackmailing them, they said. The accused roamed in plain clothes and claimed to be CID officials but with their arrest, four forged ID cards including a fake appointment letter was recovered from them, police said. According to the police, two constables were patrolling on September 17 evening when they were alerted by a few people about four men who allegedly introduced themselves as CID officers and threatened them while they were inside the Japanese Park.

Driver hurt as his taxi catches fire

New Delhi: A taxi driver suffered burns after his vehicle caught fire on a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) track in south Delhi's Madangir area on Sunday, police said. The driver, Deepak, a resident of Sangam Vihar, was taken to a nearby hospital by the PCR van. He suffered minor burns and his condition is said to be stable, they said. A Delhi Fire Service official said a call about the fire was received around 8 pm after which two fire tenders were rushed to the spot to douse the flames. Police said the cause of the fire is being ascertained but initial probe suggests that it might have been triggered due to a short-circuit. The incident took place around 8 pm on BRT lane near Rajaram traffic signal. A police team which arrived at the spot found the vehicle in flames. The driver was rescued and taken to a nearby hospital, a senior police officer said.



YSR Congress Party MPs display placards during a protest demanding a CBI probe into the Amravati land scam case in front of Mahatma Gandhi's statue in the Parliament House complex in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

■ Scribe was held for passing info to Chinese Lawyer: Evidence against Rajeev Sharma 'planted'

New Delhi, Sept. 20: The espionage case lodged against arrested freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma under the Official Secrets Act is "false" and the "evidence was planted" by the Delhi police, his lawyer claimed on Sunday.

The Delhi Police on Saturday said Sharma, a resident of Pitampura, was allegedly passing sensitive information about India's border strategy, Army's deployment and procurement, and foreign policy to Chinese intelligence agencies.

He was arrested by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police in connection with a case under the Official Secrets Act as he was allegedly found in possession of defence-related classified documents.

Senior advocate Adish Aggarwala, who is representing the journalist, alleged that the police's claim of finding incriminating evidence from his possession was "not true".

"We are not denying that he was working for a Chinese news organisation. The only dispute is the police's claim that they have found incriminating evidence, which is not true. The evidence was planted later on. On September 14, when the police took him in custody, they searched his house that night and no incriminating evidence was found. He is being framed in a false case. He has not committed any of offence," Aggarwala told PTI.

The advocate said the police could have informed the media on the day of the arrest itself, but they did not "as nothing incriminating was found".

"Once they (police) analysed and could not find any anything incriminating, they planted the evidence," he further alleged.

"They are not interrogating any official from the Defence Ministry. He must have found the documents from someone. It isn't that he printed them at his home," he claimed.

Aggarwala also alleged that Sharma's family was not allowed access to him, nor was any information regarding the allegations furnished to them.

"No copy of the FIR is uploaded online. Despite multiple requests, the police have not furnished a



Rajeev Sharma

copy of the FIR. He was not given access to a lawyer when he was produced before a judge through video conferencing," he said and termed it "illegal". The lawyer said the only thing the police had was that Sharma was working with a Chinese media organisation.

"Our country has not stopped business with China. A lot of people from China are working here and a lot many Indians are working there. There's nothing wrong in that," he said. Sharma's counsel has filed a bail application which is scheduled to come up for hearing on September 22 before a Delhi court. In the application, the counsel has said that there is "no risk of him running away from the process of justice".

"The applicant has deep roots in society and is a respected senior journalist. His wife is also Associate Professor at Venkateswara College, DU. Therefore, there is no risk of him running away from the process of justice."

"There is no chance of influencing any witness or tampering with any evidence. The investigation would no longer require custodial interrogation of the applicant, and he can join the investigation as and when directed," the application stated. — PTI

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24 officials of Ghaziabad bank booked for ₹100 crores fraud

Ghaziabad, Sept. 20: Twenty-four directors of Ghaziabad's now defunct Mahamedha Cooperative Bank have been booked for allegedly misappropriating around ₹100 crore, according to an FIR lodged here.

The case was lodged following an audit by a company engaged by the Cooperative Department. The company in its report named the errant directors and officials.

In a complaint to police, Cooperative Department assistant commissioner and registrar Devendra Singh alleged the bank officials sanctioned loans to ineligible customers. He said ₹99.85 crore was embezzled.

Devender Singh said properties of seven people who took hefty loans from the bank have been attached. Properties of other borrowers will also be attached, he said.

The case will be investigated by the cooperative cell of the UP police, superintendent of police (City) Abhishek Verma told PTI.

One of the directors named in the FIR is already dead. The permission for running the bank was granted on February 27, 2001 by the Reserve Bank of India.

Its licence was cancelled in 2017 due to irregularities. — PTI

The national capital's Covid case count went past 2.46 lakh on Sunday with 3,812 more people contracting the viral disease, while 37 fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 4,982, according to the Delhi government's health bulletin.

Before this, the city recorded over 4,000 cases for five consecutive days.

The capital recorded 4,071 cases on Saturday, 4,127 on Friday, 4,432 on Thursday, 4,473 on Wednesday and 4,263 on Tuesday.

The number of deaths from Covid recorded daily in the national capital has hovered in the range of 30-40 from September 15-19, during which daily fresh cases were logged in excess of 4,000 on all five days. In this five-day period, however, the number of tests conducted every day

has seen record numbers, ranging between 60,000 and over 62,000.

Covid cases have shown a surge since the beginning of this month with September 16 recording 4,473 cases, the highest single-day spike here till date. On that day, 33 fatalities were recorded, taking the total number of deaths

to 4839, according to official figures shared by the Delhi health department.

Of the total 2,46,711 cases reported in Delhi so far, 2,09,632 have either recovered, been discharged or migrated out of the city, the bulletin said.

As many as 52,405 tests were conducted on Saturday to detect COVID-

19 infection, of which 11,322 were RTPCR/CBNAAT/TrueNa tests and 41,083 rapid antigen tests, it said.

Authorities conducted 61,973 tests on Friday, 61,037 on Thursday, 60,014 on Wednesday, 62,593 on Tuesday and a record 62,669 tests on Monday.

Health authorities have conducted around 5.92 lakh tests in the last 10 days — an average of more than 59,000 tests a day, according to government data.

The number of total tests conducted was 19,62,120 on September 10. It rose to 25,55,007 on Sunday.

Health minister Satyendar Jain also took a meeting of medical directors of the Delhi government-run hospitals to review the status of testing. The death rate for the last 10 days stood at 0.77 per cent. The case positivity rate during the last 24 hours was 7.27 per cent

while the cumulative positivity rate is 9.66 per cent, the bulletin said.

The number of active cases increased by over 190 per cent in the city since mid-August. There were 11,068 active Covid cases on August 18 which increased to 32,097 on Sunday.

Of the total 15,621 hospital beds for COVID-19 patients, 7,040 are occupied and around 19,000 patients are under home isolation, according to government data.

There has been an over 235 per cent increase in the number of containment zones in the city in a month — from 557 on August 18 to 1,872 on Sunday. Government officials and experts have been cautioning to people to wear masks, observe social distancing and venture out only when urgently required to help contain the spread of the infection.

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Delhi Assembly panel issues fresh summons to Facebook

FB India V-P was earlier asked to depose before committee on Sept. 15**SANJAY KAW**
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 20

A fresh notice has been issued by the Delhi Assembly's peace and harmony committee to Facebook India vice president and managing director Ajit Mohan to ensure his presence to depose before it on Wednesday over allegations of "deliberate inaction on the part of the social media platform to apply hate speech rules."

A statement issued by the panel, on Sunday, warned that any defiance to the subsequent notice for appearance will be deemed to be an act of "breach of the constitutionally guaranteed privileges" of the committee.

The final warning to the social media giant was issued by the committee chaired by Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Raghav Chadha as Mr Mohan did not appear for his deposition during the last meeting of the panel.

Mr Chadha had said the non-appearance of the top Facebook official to depose before the committee was a contempt of the Delhi Legislative Assembly as well as the people of the national capital. He had insisted that Facebook honour the proceedings taking place

under the state legislature in the same manner as they did for a parliamentary standing committee.

The fresh notice comes days after Facebook India executives, including Mr Mohan, snubbed a call to appear before the Assembly panel on September 15. In a written response, they said they had already appeared before a parliamentary panel on this issue and, therefore, the Assembly should withdraw its summons.

The social media giant met the parliamentary panel, headed by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, this month and is due to appear before that panel again.

The committee said that the indifference exhibited by the representative of Facebook India is also a contempt to the people of Delhi... was unanimously

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decided... that in the event of subsequent default, (the) committee shall be constrained to invoke its power to initiate breach of privilege proceedings against Facebook India and thus (invite) the penal jurisdiction of the house."

The "peace and harmony" committee was set up by the Delhi Assembly after riots in February over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in which over 50 people were killed and hundreds injured.

The committee had taken cognisance of the accusations against Facebook for its alleged "complicity" in the Delhi riots on the premise of the "incriminatory material" produced on record by the witnesses as well as their depositions in its previous meetings.

This was after reports by US publications that cited

interviews with unnamed insiders to allege that hate speech rules were not applied in the case of inflammatory posts by Bharatiya Janata Party leaders and right-wing activists. A report - by the Wall Street Journal - identified Ankhi Das, Facebook India's policy chief, as saying punishing violations by BJP workers "would damage the company's business prospects in the country".

One report by *Time magazine* referred to BJP leader Kapil Mishra's controversial video which was among several played by the Delhi High Court in its hearing on the matter. In response, the social media giant insisted that it applied hate speech rules uniformly and without any consideration to political parties that may be involved.

The foreign media reports triggered a political slugfest between the BJP and the Congress, which has written letters to Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. Amid allegations that it controls social media narratives, the BJP hit back by pointing out the Congress was approached by data firm Cambridge Analytica to "weapose" data before last year's Lok Sabha polls.

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"On Sunday, the accused hanged himself with a bed-sheet tied around the bars of the lock-up gate. He was immediately rushed to Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital but was declared brought dead by the doctors," said the DCP. The police said the accused was previously convicted in a case of sodomy registered at Alipur police station, wherein he entered the house of a 10 year-old boy and forcefully committed sodomy on him.

He had also been convicted in a case of murder-cum-robbery registered at the Khajuri Khas police station.

According to the police, on Saturday, a complaint was received against Dharmendra at Swaroop Nagar police station alleging him of entering a neighbour's house and raping a 14-year-old girl who was alone at her house while her mother, a labourer, was out for work.

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SHORT TAKES

Water cannon used to stop YC workers

Chandigarh: The Haryana Police on Sunday used a water cannon to stop Punjab Youth Congress activists from entering the state through Ambala during a tractor rally against the Centre's farm-related Bills. The Youth Congress activists were going to Delhi through the Chandigarh-Delhi highway when they were stopped at the heavily barricaded entrance to Haryana by police. The situation at the Haryana-Punjab border turned tense as the protesters remained adamant to continue their march towards the national capital. Some activists tried to set a tractor on fire after the march was stopped. The Haryana Police denied permission to the Youth Congress workers, saying they would not allow the traffic movement on the national highway to be disrupted and also cited the coronavirus restrictions.

— PTI

Police exam paper leaked in Assam

Guwahati: The question paper of the written exam for 597 posts of sub-inspector in the Assam Police was leaked and authorities cancelled the test on Sunday minutes after it had commenced across the state, officials said. Chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal was immediately informed about the question paper being leaked and he ordered cancellation of the examination. He also asked the director general of police (DGP) to inquire into the matter, they said. The question paper was under strict possession of district police forces, the officials said. "A proper investigation will detect the source and find the culprits. The case has been handed over to the CID already," State Level Police Recruitment Board (SLPRB) chairman Pradeep Kumar said. — PTI

Burglars decamp with ₹25L valuables

Kota, Rajasthan: Unidentified burglars broke into a house in Rajasthan's Kota district and made away with cash and jewellery worth ₹25 lakh, police said on Sunday. Ten suspects on four motorcycles targeted the house on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday. They had bolted the locks of the rooms while the occupants were asleep, police said. The house in Karwad village under the Itawa police station limits belongs to Girish Kumar Nama, a food and catering businessman, they said. Some suspects have been detained and efforts are on to nab those involved in the burglary. A case of loot has been registered against unidentified miscreants at Itawa police station.

— PTI

'83,008 cases in Assam FTs pending'

New Delhi: A total of 83,008 cases of doubtful voters is pending in Foreigners Tribunals in Assam while 86,756 others were declared as foreigners in last five years, Lok Sabha was informed on Sunday. Union minister of state for home Nityanand Rai said at present Foreigners Tribunals (FTs) are functioning only in Assam. "Government of Assam has informed that pending cases of doubtful voters in Assam in FTs are 83,008. — PTI

NIA traces links of 9 Qaeda men via social media

■ Continued from Page 1 and explosives. It has also learnt that the 44-year-old tailor, who also used to work as a lathe machine operator for extra income, planned to escape after anticipating his arrest. He had called up some of his aides for help in the days leading to September 19, the sources said. The NIA, which is interrogating the six arrested from the state at its office in Salt Lake, is now trying to trace the calls from his cellphone which was seized. In a startling revelation, another accused, Najmus Sakib, spoke about his contacts with some people in Jammu and Kashmir to the investigators, sources claimed, adding that why and how he developed contacts in the Valley is still under probe. The 20-year-old is a second-year student of computer science at Basantapur Engineering College in Domkol. The NIA is planning to take the nine accused, in its custody on a transit remand till September 24, to New Delhi for their further interrogation.

Passage of farm bills watershed: PM

New laws will liberate farmers from numerous adversities, ensure them better life, says Modi

New Delhi, Sept. 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday described the passage of two farm sector Bills as a "watershed moment" in the history of Indian agriculture, asserting that they will ensure a complete transformation of the farm sector and empower crores of farmers.

In a series of tweets after Rajya Sabha passed the Bills by voice vote amid din created by protesting opposition members, Modi said these proposed laws will liberate farmers from numerous adversities as he noted that peasants were

for decades bound by various constraints and bullied by middlemen.

He again assured farmers that the existing government support system for them will continue. Farmers in states like Punjab and Haryana have been protesting against these Bills, with their leaders alleging that the legislations will dismantle the existing system and leave them to the mercy of corporate interests.

Reaching out to the peasantry in Punjab, the Prime Minister posted his tweets in Punjabi as well. Shiromani Akali Dal, the

Our agriculture sector is in desperate need of latest technology. With the passage of the Bills, our farmers will have easier access to futuristic technology

— Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

BJP's oldest ally, has quit the Modi government in protest against these bills. Modi asserted, "I said it

earlier and I say it once again: System of MSP will remain. Government procurement will continue.

"We are here to serve our farmers. We will do everything possible to support them and ensure a better life for their coming generations." These Bills will add impetus to the efforts to double income of farmers and ensure greater prosperity for them, he said. "Our agriculture sector is in desperate need of latest technology that assists the industrious farmers. Now, with the passage of the bills, our farmers will have easier access

to futuristic technology that will boost production and yield better results. This is a welcome step," the Prime Minister said.

The two bills were earlier passed by Lok Sabha. After they get the presidential assent, they will be notified as laws. "A watershed moment in the history of Indian agriculture! Congratulations to our hardworking farmers on the passage of key Bills in Parliament, which will ensure a complete transformation of the agriculture sector as well as empower crores of farmers," Modi added in another tweet.

■ Farmers in Punjab continue stir

Don't sign farm bills: SAD chief Sukhbir to Prez

Chandigarh, Sept. 20: Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal on Sunday urged the President not to give his assent to the farm Bills passed by Rajya Sabha, asking him to return them to Parliament for reconsideration. Badal said the passage of the Bills marked a sad day for democracy and millions in the country.

Democracy means consensus, not majority oppression, the SAD leader said in a statement shortly after Rajya Sabha passed two of the three Bills. In a rarely exercised provision, the Constitution gives the President the power to withhold assent to certain categories of Bills passed by Parliament.

"Please stand by the farmers, 'kisan mazdoors', 'arhtiyas', mandal labour and Dalits," Badal urged President Ram Nath Kovind. "Please intervene on their behalf with the government. Otherwise they will never forgive us," he said in the statement.

"Don't let the 'annadata' (farmers) starve or sleep on the roads," he added. Amid an uproar by the Opposition, Rajya Sabha on Sunday passed the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce



Sukhbir Singh Badal

(Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020. They were passed by Lok Sabha on Thursday. A third Bill is yet to be passed in Rajya Sabha.

Akali Dal MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal had resigned from the Union cabinet in protest against the three Bills, but the party remains with the ruling National Democratic Alliance.

Farmers in Punjab have been protesting against the three Bills. Their organisations have expressed apprehension that the Bills would lead to dismantling of the minimum support price (MSP) system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates.

— PTI

Bedlam erupts as 2 key farm Bills passed in Rajya Sabha

■ Continued from Page 1 Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill 2020 seeks to give freedom to farmers to sell their produce outside the notified APMC market yards (mandis). This, the government says, is aimed at facilitating remunerative prices through competitive alternative trading channels.

Farmers will not be charged any cess or levy for sale of their produce under this law, according to the government. It will open more choices for farmers, reduce marketing costs, and help them get better prices. It will also help farmers of regions with surplus produce to get better prices and consumers in areas with shortages at lower prices.

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill 2020 seeks to give farmers the right to enter into a contract with agribusiness firms, processors, wholesalers, exporters, or large retailers for the sale of future farming produce at a pre-agreed price.

It seeks to transfer the risk of market unpredictability from farmers to sponsors. The agriculture minister said these new laws will guarantee cultivators the price they negotiate at the time of sowing itself.

A third bill, the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 2020, that seeks to remove commodities like cereals, pulses from the list of essential commodities, is to be moved separately.

In a first, MP Assembly to hold virtual session

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, SEPT. 20

In a first of its kind move in the country, Madhya Pradesh assembly is going to hold a virtual session on Monday.

The one-day monsoon session of the house is scheduled to be held with a physical presence of a minimum number of members, required for quorum, while other members will take part in the proceedings online, state legislative assembly secretary A P Singh said on Sunday.

The decision was taken at the all party meeting here keeping in view the worsening pandemic situation in MP which has so far claimed lives of 1903 people.

It has also been decided to curtail the 3-day-session to a single day, speaker of the assembly Rameswar Sharma said. According to Mr Sharma, as many as 57 members, chosen by their respective parties,

are scheduled to be physically present in the house to take part in the proceedings.

The state government has made provisions for other members to take part in the business of the house online from National Informatics Centres (NIC) from their respective districts.

"Since it will be difficult to enforce social distancing during the proceedings of the house, the political parties have been asked to select a minimum number of legislators to be present in the house to take part in the business", Mr Sharma said.

While Congress MLA Gobardhan Singh Dangi died of Covid-19, 39 other legislators and ministers have so far contracted the virus.

Necessary financial and legislative businesses are scheduled to be completed after the mention and tribute to the departed souls when the house meets for its one-day-monsoon session on Monday.

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, SEPT. 20

Former BJP leader and Union finance minister Yashwant Sinha, who returned to active politics after a gap of six years, told the *Asian Age* in an interview that his political front United Democratic Alliance (UDA) will provide a credible alternative to people who have suffered 15 years of misrule by chief minister Nitish Kumar and the NDA government in Bihar.

Q: What is the idea behind launching a new political front - United Democratic Alliance

(UDA) ahead of assembly elections in Bihar?

A: Our agenda is clear - Badlo Bihar, Banao Behtar Bihar (Change Bihar, Make Better Bihar). With no industrialization, lack of infrastructure and large scale migration the state has failed to make any progress in the last fifteen years. Data shows that Bihari farmers and workers are the poorest in the country and there has been no employment generation despite tall claims by the state government being led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

The corruption and law and order scenario is also

21 states agree to borrow to meet GST revenue shortfall

New Delhi, Sept. 20: As many as 21 states have opted to borrow ₹97,000 crore to meet the GST revenue shortfall in the current fiscal, sources said on Sunday.

In the current fiscal, the states are starting at a ₹2.35 lakh crore Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue shortfall. Of this, as per Centre's calculation, shortfall of about ₹97,000 crore is on account of GST implementation and rest ₹1.38 lakh crore is due to the impact of Covid-19 on states' revenues.

The Centre late last month gave two options to the states to borrow either ₹97,000 crore from a special window facilitated by the RBI or ₹2.35 lakh crore from market, and has also proposed extending the compensation cess levied on luxury, demerit and sin goods beyond 2022 to repay the borrowing.

— PTI



Yashwant Sinha

bad in the state. Unless that is rectified you cannot think of development and industrialization in Bihar. The 15 years versus 15 years narrative is also being built to mislead people and hide the state government's failure ahead of assembly elections.

Q: Since that you have

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 20

Security forces have not just successfully managed to check Chinese movement along the LAC in the Ladakh sector but have had huge success in containing infiltration along the Indo-Pak border as a detailed analysis of the data reveals. Security forces managed to keep infiltration low even during the summer months which is the peak time for infiltration by subversive elements.

Starting March this year, only three infiltrations were made which went up in April where 23 infiltration attempts were made while 18 of them were successful. However, following this immediate corrective and stringent measures during May only eight infiltration attempts were made while only four went through but surprisingly during the month of June no attempt was made

PARLIAMENT BRIEFS

'There is Chinese aggression in Arunachal Pradesh like Ladakh'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 20

Demanding that the Central government should strengthen the road network in Arunachal Pradesh, especially those connecting the state capital Itanagar with Tawang to facilitate movement of Army convoys and also for the locals, Bodoland People's Front (BFP)'s Rajya Sabha



Biswajit Daimary

Chinese Army to assert that just like Ladakh there is Chinese "aggression" in the North-eastern state.

Parl nod to bill to cut salary and allowances of ministers by 30%

New Delhi, Sept. 20: Parliament on Sunday passed the Salaries and Allowances of Ministers (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which proposes to reduce the salaries and allowances of ministers by 30 per cent for a year to augment financial resources required to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

Opposing an ordinance issued earlier this

year to effect the salary and allowance cut, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said in Lok Sabha that the move was like being "penny wise and pound foolish."

He said more money was spent in preparing copies of the bill than the amount saved in cutting allowances of ministers.

— PTI

Opposition parties object to FCRA Amendment Bill introduced in LS

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 20

The Opposition led by Congress on Sunday objected to the provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha, which make Aadhar mandatory for members of an NGO seeking registration in

the country. Also the new legislation seeks to restrict usage of foreign funds by NGOs for administrative purposes, by up to only 20 per cent. Currently this limit is 50 per cent. It also prohibits any public servant from receiving foreign aid. The bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha by Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, faced objections.

After cosyng up with NDA on many bills, BJD differs on farm bills

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 20

Joining the bandwagon of the opposition parties in the state, Odisha's ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) which in the past extended its crucial support to the NDA on the floor of the Parliament to pass many "controversial" bills, on Sunday opposed the controversial farm bills moved in the Rajya Sabha by Union agriculture and

farmer welfare minister Narendra Singh Tomar.

The regional party said that the two legislations — the Farmers' and Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 — fail to provide adequate protection to small and marginal farmers and sharecroppers.

'Security forces checked China, Pak at LAC, LoC'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 20

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Starting March this year, only three infiltrations were made which went up in April where 23 infiltration attempts were made while 18 of them were successful. However, following this immediate corrective and stringent measures during May only eight infiltration attempts were made while only four went through but surprisingly during the month of June no attempt was made

■ OFFICIALS CLAIMED that this summer season a multi-pronged and more stringent strategy was adopted which started with increasing deployment of personnel and a much effective domination of the borders by border patrolling teams

in wake on increased security deployment along the Indo-Pak border. Even during the month though terrorists from across PoK made 10 infiltration attempts they were all thwarted successfully.

"It is largely due to the fact that security forces could successfully stop any major infiltration during the peak summer season that a direct impact is being witnessed on the security situation in the Kashmir Valley. Since we could stop the militant from coming in this summer due to which the num-

ber of terror incidents in the Valley have also witnessed a drop," a senior security official said.

Officials claimed that this summer season a multi-pronged and a more stringent strategy adopted which started with increasing deployment of personnel and a much effective domination of the borders by border patrolling teams. Further the number of observation posts along the Indo-Pak borders was also increased.

The security forces also deployed a number of high effective hi-tech surveillance equipment along the LoC backed by strengthening of local human intelligence network in the border areas. More areas near the border were also covered with border fencing and floodlighting and deployment of technological solutions in non-feasible areas like mountain and riverine gaps.

SHORT TAKES

BJP leader tests +ve for Covid-19 in Maha

Mumbai: After the two-day session of the State Legislature held early this month, there has been a marked rise in the number of ministers and legislators testing positive for coronavirus. The latest to fall prey to the virus is senior BJP MLA Sudhir Mungantiwar, whereas five ministers in the Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government have tested Covid-19 positive this month so far. Mr Mungantiwar on Sunday informed on Twitter that he had been detected with coronavirus infection. He said, "I have isolated myself after my reports come on Saturday evening." He further requested those who had come in contact with him over the past few days to get themselves tested. The 58-year old MLA from the Ballarpur constituency in Vidarbha was the finance and forest minister in the previous D. Fadnavis-led BJP government.

4 held for woman's murder in Mumbai

Mumbai: The Panvel police in Navi Mumbai arrested four men for murdering a woman, allegedly over an illicit relationship, and dumping her body in Morbe dam, where her remains were found floating by cement block, officials said. The accused persons were arrested from Satara district and it was learnt that the woman had lost her husband some years ago. The woman was duped of her money on some occasions by the man with whom she was in a relationship. The officials said that after several such fights, the accused hatched a plan to kill the woman. The accused was identified as a 32-year-old man, resident of Khoprol village, who was arrested with three of his accomplices who had murdered the 27-year-old woman at her residence in Akurli village near Panvel and then dumped the body in the dam.

History-sheeter killed in Nashik

Nashik: A 28-year-old history-sheeter was allegedly shot dead by three persons in Maharashtra's Nashik, police said on Sunday. The incident occurred in DGP Nagar area of the city on Saturday night. The deceased, Nawaz alias Baba Sheikh, had suffered serious injuries in the incident and died at a private hospital on Sunday, police said. "Sheikh was going on a motorcycle when he was shot at around 10 pm by three persons. He was later shifted to the hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries," a police official said. His uncle lodged a complaint at Upnagar police station. "Based on the complaint, police registered a case of murder against three persons, identified as Taufiq alias Tipu Sheikh, Sameer Khan alias Murgi Raja and Arjun Piwal," he said. — PTI

'Stubble burning can worsen epidemic'

Chandigarh: The stubble burning which is likely to start later this month ahead of the Rabi crop sowing season can exacerbate the Coronavirus crisis, an agricultural-cum-environment expert has cautioned. If alternate arrangements to stubble burning are not made, pollutants like particulate matters and toxic gases like Carbon Monoxide and Methane could give rise to severe respiratory problems, which will further worsen the Covid-19 situation, as the Coronavirus also impacts the respiratory tract," Sanjeev Nagpal, also an advisor to the Union and the Punjab governments on the crop residue management, told PTI on Sunday. — PTI

Fire breaks out at Bhilwara hospital

Jaipur: A fire broke out at a private hospital in Rajasthan's Bhilwara on Sunday, forcing Evacuation of over 50 patients admitted there, according to police. Bhilwara's Subhas Nagar SHO Pushpa Kasotia said the fire broke out due to short-circuit on the third floor of the hospital. Fifty-two patients admitted there were safely rescued, police said. Panic gripped patients, their attendants and hospital staff. The rescue operation was immediately started and all of them were safely evacuated, the SHO said. — PTI

Covid total crosses 54L with 92,605 new cases in 24-hour

No significant mutations found in Covid strains: Health min

AGE CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS NEW DELHI, SEPT. 20

As overall cases of novel coronavirus crossed 54 lakh in India with 92,605 fresh cases in last 24 hours, minister of state for health Mr Ashwini Kumar Choubey told Rajya Sabha on Sunday that the overall number of cases and deaths per million population due to Covid-19 in the country is much lower compared to similarly affected countries. On Sunday, 1133 fresh deaths were recorded taking overall fatalities to 86,752.

Mr Choubey said trying to develop herd immunity against Covid-19 in the absence of established pharmaceutical interventions may have disastrous consequences in terms of morbidity and mortality. In a written reply in Rajya Sabha, he said in the initial phase of the Covid-19 pan-

▶ **WHILE TRYING** to allay concerns over the Oxford Astra Zeneca Vaccine candidate, Dr Harsh Vardhan said that vaccine development is a complex process and that trials have restarted only after an independent investigative expert committee gave the permission to proceed.

demic, countries that thought of developing herd immunity through a natural process of allowing the disease transmission had very high morbidity and mortality and therefore, "had to abandon the strategy". The minister was responding to a question on whether state governments are following herd immunity measures to fight the Covid-19 pandemic in the country. The Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said "no significant or drastic mutations"

have been found in strains of SARS-CoV-2 in India till now and added that ICMR has been conducting large-scale sequencing of nationally representative strains of SARS-CoV-2 virus collected over the past several months over different time-points and detailed results on mutations and evolution of the virus will be available in early October. He added that ICMR is actively exploring saliva-based test for Covid-19.

While trying to allay concerns over the Oxford Astra Zeneca Vaccine candidate, Dr Harsh Vardhan said that vaccine development is a complex process and that trials have restarted only after an independent investigative expert committee gave the permission to proceed. He also noted that it would take substantive time for herd immunity to develop so as to be able to cover about 70% of the population.

■ NSCN(I-M) leadership told about Sept. deadline for talks India refuses separate flag and constitution to Naga negotiators

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, SEPT. 20

The government of India in its ongoing informal talks with NSCN (I-M) has made it clear that Centre was not going to concede to their demand for a separate flag and constitution and now the ball is in their court to take call.

Asserting that the government of India was going to stick to its stand on which an agreement was made on October 31, 2019, security sources told this newspaper that talks with NSCN (I-M) have already been completed on all the issues.

Pointing out that the government of India has assured them to keep the option open for talks on demand of separate flag and constitution even after signing of the peace-

▶ **ASSERTING THAT** the government of India was going to stick to its stand on which an agreement was made on October 31, 2019, security sources told this newspaper that talks with NSCN (I-M) have already been completed on all the issues

▶ **SECURITY SOURCES** said that the issue (of separate flag and constitution) came up for discussion in the ongoing informal talks with NSCN (I-M) leadership through the officers of Intelligence Bureau but subsequently it was turned down

accord, security sources said that NSCN (I-M) leadership has also been told categorically about the deadline of September to conclude the peace-process.

Admitting that a joint council meeting of the NSCN (I-M) held at its Hebron camp in Dimapur recently reiterated their demand for a separate flag and constitution as to be the part of the final settlement in the ongoing Naga peace talks with the Centre, security sources

said that the issue came up for discussion in the ongoing informal talks with NSCN (I-M) leadership through the officers of Intelligence Bureau but subsequently it was turned down.

The talks with NSCN (I-M) had concluded on October 31, 2019 with an understanding that the issue of a separate flag and Constitution would remain a subject open for discussion and negotiation even after the signing of the peace accord, secu-

riety sources said adding that NSCN (I-M) started becoming uncomfortable with the Nagaland governor and interlocutor R.N. Ravi soon after his hard-hitting letter to the state government about "parallel governments" being run by underground groups and accusing them of extortion. It is significant that Mr Ravi's letter came after reports of massive corruption and extortion started creating unrest in the civil society of Nagaland.

Though, now NSCN-IM has also claimed that the talks were running smoothly, in Nagaland demands for an early resolution have been growing from civil society organisations and tribal heads. All these bodies have also made it clear that a final agreement without a separate flag and constitution is acceptable to the public.

106-year-old woman wins over Covid in Maharashtra

SHAHAB ANSARI MUMBAI, SEPT. 20

A 106-year-old woman from Dombivli has become the oldest survivor of Covid-19. The woman was discharged from the treatment facility set up by the Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC) on Sunday after 10 days of hospitalisation.

At the time of discharge the lady happily showed her discharge certificate to the media and her family was also happy to see her getting discharged from hospital after recovering from the disease.

According to the women's daughter-in-law no hospital was initially ready to admit her due to her age following which she was admitted to Covid-19 facility set up by the KDMC at Savlaram Krida Sankul (sports complex), 10 days ago. Later, she was admitted to the facility and doctors and medical teams there took proper care of her. She thanked the Centre's medical staff for giving her mother-in-law proper treatment and beat the Covid-19.

Aaditya Thackeray, the Maharashtra cabinet minister, took to Twitter and appreciated the efforts of KDMC staff and Shiv Sena's Kalyan MP Shrikant Shinde for providing proper medical treatment to the old lady. He said the blessings of the woman and many more like her "keep us all going strong".

Dr Rahul Ghule, managing director of 'One Rupee Clinic' which is managing this Covid-19 treatment facility, appreciated his team for taking care of the elderly woman.



Maratha Kranti Morcha workers stage a protest, demanding the reservation for Maratha community in education and employment in Thane on Sunday. During the protests, the people of Maratha community demanded reservation as well as the stay on recruitment for 12,538 posts in the police department till the reservation is implemented. — PTI

Trust plans Kaaba-shaped mosque on Ayodhya land

'It will not be named after any emperor or king'

Lucknow, Sept. 20: The mosque to come up in Ayodhya pursuant to the Supreme Court verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi case may have a shape that is different from the traditional shape of mosques and will not be named after any emperor or king.

Secretary and spokesperson of the Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF) Athar Hussain told PTI on Sunday, "A mosque measuring 15,000 square feet will be built in Dhannipur village. It will be of the same size as that of the Babri mosque. The shape of the mosque may be completely different from that of other mosques. It may be square-shaped like the Kaaba Sharif in Mecca, as hinted by architect S.M. Akhtar."

To a question on whether the mosque at Dhannipur will have no domes or minarets like the Kaaba Sharif, Mr Hussain said it could be a possibility. He said the architect has been given a free hand in this regard.

"The mosque will not be named Babri Masjid. It will not be named after any king or emperor. My personal opinion is that it should be called the Dhannipur Masjid," Hussain said.

He also informed that the trust is making its portal so that people can donate for the mosque and the museum, hospital and research centre which will

The shape of the mosque may be completely different from that of other mosques. It may be square-shaped like the Kaaba Sharif in Mecca, as hinted by architect S.M. Akhtar.

— Athar Hussain Mosque trust member

be built inside the complex. Write-ups by national and international Islamic scholars will also appear on the portal.

He said some work on the portal is yet to be completed and hence, donation is yet to begin.

The Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board has formed the IICF, a trust, for the construction of the mosque on a five-acre plot.

The state government has allotted the five-acre plot in Ayodhya's Dhannipur for the construction of the mosque on the directive of the top court.

After a protracted legal tussle, the Supreme Court, on November 9 last year, ruled in favour of the construction of a Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya and directed the Centre to allot an alternative five-acre plot to the Sunni Waqf Board for building a new mosque at a "prominent" place in the holy town in Uttar Pradesh. — PTI

Terrorists build underground bunkers in Shopian to escape

Bunkers dug up mostly in dense apple orchards: Army

Shopian (Kashmir), Sept. 20: Hideouts in higher reaches and seeking refuge in local houses are a thing of the past as terrorists in Kashmir Valley now dig underground bunkers in dense apple orchards and even in seasonal streams to escape the dragnet of Army and security forces.

"This trend has been witnessed off late in twin districts of Pulwama and Shopian with the latter having a majority of them in view of dense apple orchards and jungles," says Colonel A.K. Singh, heading the 44 Rashtriya Rifles, the Army's counter-insurgent unit which earned a distinction of having maximum kills of terrorists as well as surrenders or apprehensions.

Talking to PTI from the well-fortified 44-RR headquarters, Col. Singh and his team is always seen engaging with locals to sort out their problems which may even include career counselling or guidance in education but when it comes to counter-

ing terrorists, they are much ahead by neutralising 47 militants and ensuring detentions and surrender of seven of them.

For Col. Singh and his team, who man two areas of Shopian and three of Pulwama districts, both considered to be hotbeds of militancy, the task has not been easy after recovery of underground bunkers where terrorists could hide for several days without being noticed by the security forces.

The shocker was a hideout in the middle of Rambai Ara, known for fluctuating water levels and often affected by flash floods, that led Col Singh

and his team members back to the drawing board.

"The terrorists were hiding inside an iron bunker made in the middle of Rambai Ara. The alert troops saw an opening of an empty oil barrel which was subsequently used by terrorists to enter into the bunker."

"This was something worth suspicion and discreet surveillance was mounted on the opening. Much to our surprise, we saw terrorists emerging out from underground in the middle of the stream, which generally has water gushing only in the rainy season," he said.

Five terrorists belonging to banned Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and Hizbul Mujahideen were killed after the troops launched an attack earlier this year. However, for the army, it was not the statistics of the number of kills but a worrisome trend indicating that terrorists were now well-entrenched inside the underground bunkers. — PTI

AIADMK will 'split' ahead of Assembly polls: DMK leader

Theni (TN), Sept. 20: DMK propaganda secretary Thanga Tamil Selvan on Sunday claimed that the ruling AIADMK is likely to "split" ahead of the Assembly elections next year owing to a host of issues including differences within the party.

A clear picture would emerge in the coming weeks and "as the election approaches, we will see splits," he claimed.

The AIADMK was beset with several problems, he alleged and said the "verbal duels within their four walls" now gave ample indications of what was going on in the party.

Apparently, Selvan was referring to a meeting of the AIADMK days ago in Chennai where party coordinator O. Panneerselvam and co-coordinator K. Palaniswami did not reportedly see eye-to-eye on a number of party related issues.

Revenue minister R.B. Udhayakumar had, however, dismissed such claims saying the two leaders had an excellent understanding and they were like Lord Rama and his brother Lakshmana. "The altercations will soon spill over to the streets and the party will get split into several factions before the Assembly elections," he claimed. — PTI



T. Tamil Selvan

PIL in SC seeks uniform law for succession and inheritance

New Delhi, Sept. 20: A PIL seeking to remove anomalies in succession and inheritance laws and make them uniform for all citizens has been filed in the Supreme Court.

The petition filed by BJP leader Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay said gender and religion-neutral laws in succession and inheritance is necessary to secure justice, equality and dignity of women, and alleged that the central government has not taken any steps in this regard till date.

The plea, filed through advocate Ashwini Kumar Dubey, has also sought directions to the Law Commission to examine the laws relating to succession and inheritance of the developed countries and international conventions in this regard and prepare a report on 'uniform grounds of succession and inheritance' for all citizens within three months.

"The injury caused to the citizens is extremely large because gender-biased and religion-biased personal laws relating to succession and inheritance are not only against the constitutional ethos of gender justice & gender equality, guaranteed under articles 14-15, but also against the dignity of women, which is an important element of right life to life & liberty, guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution," the plea said. The PIL stated that existing personal laws being very "complex and cumbersome" are against the goals of preamble.

Filmmaker Kashyap calls sexual harassment allegations 'baseless'

Mumbai, Sept. 20: Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap, who has been accused by actor Payal Ghosh of sexual harassment, on Sunday said the claim is "baseless" and found support in his industry friends, with Hansal Mehta, Taapsee Pannu, Mohd Zeeshan Ayyub as well as former wife, film editor Aarti Bajaj crediting him for creating safe work space for women.

On Saturday, Ghosh took to Twitter and wrote that the *Gangs of Wasseypur* director was sexually inappropriate towards her, a claim he has dismissed.

The 30-year-old actor tagged Prime Minister Narendra Modi in her tweet, requesting him to take action against



Anurag Kashyap

Kashyap. "@anuragkashyap72 has forced himself on me and extremely badly. @PMOIndia @narendramodi ji, kindly take action and let the country see the demon behind this creative guy. I am aware that it can harm me and my security is at risk. Please help!" Ghosh wrote.

In a video released to ABN Telugu, Ghosh claimed that the incident

happened in 2014-2015. The actor, who made her Hindi debut with Rishi Kapoor-Pareesh Raval starrer *Patel Ki Punjabi Shadi*, also claimed that Kashyap boasted about his connection with megastar Amitabh Bachchan and claimed that there were other female artistes who he got intimate with.

Dismissing the allegations, Kashyap called Ghosh's claim an attempt to "silence" him.

An outspoken critic of administration and a member of the Indian film industry who is vocal about the vilification of Bollywood by celebrities and trolls online, the director said it had taken some people "such a long time" to "shut me up". — PTI

Open air gym opens in Kolkata



Fitness enthusiasts perform exercises during the inauguration of open air gym at Chetla Park in Kolkata on Sunday. West Bengal minister of urban development and municipal affairs Firhad Hakim earlier performed exercises with people during the launch of the gym. — PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

21 SEPTEMBER 2020

Vigil against terror is cost of freedom

The arrest of nine people with alleged links to terrorist organisation Al Qaeda from West Bengal and Kerala by the National investigation Agency (NIA) points to the fact that India cannot let its guard down against terrorism sponsored from across the border. As per the agency, the arrested people, six from the border district of Murshidabad in West Bengal and three from Ernakulam in Kerala, were part of an inter-state module. The revelation that it has presence in many states calls for heightened vigil by the state governments. It is incumbent on the state governments to ensure that terrorist organisations do not get to access people, especially the youth, and take them on the path of destruction. Well-planned and coordinated campaigns to make them aware of the perils of terrorism and the disastrous consequences it will have on them and their societies must be rolled out. The Kerala government, which has implemented many a plan for the welfare of the guest

That the suspected terrorists were armed with crude weapons, and reports that they were planning to use potassium chlorate gleaned from firecrackers for bombs, indicate their handlers have not been able to supply them with sophisticated weapons

workers, must also ensure that terrorist elements do not intrude into the state in various routes. The international community has been successfully fighting terrorism in the last two decades by denying it access to funds and weapons. The NIA's claim that the module was actively indulging in fund-raising locally is perhaps pointing to the fact that India has also successfully blocked the channels of terror funding. That the suspected terrorists were armed with crude weapons and the reports that they were planning to use potassium chlorate gleaned from firecrackers for bombs indicate that their handlers have not been able to supply them with sophisticated weapons. The government must tighten the processes by taking cues from international agencies and ensure that the potential terrorists are stopped in their tracks for want of money and weapons.

There, however, is no reason to be complacent. The haul of digital devices, sharp weapons, country-made firearms, locally-fabricated body armour and articles and literature used for home-made explosive devices signals the fact that the agents of terror have been successful in radicalising youth over social media to such an extent that they are willing to stake their lives and strike terror with locally available weapons. The NIA says that the alleged terrorists, who have been doing odd jobs as cooks and masons, have been targeting vital installations and innocent people in Indian cities; if that's true, then it shows the desperation of their handlers, who will be pressured into doing desperate acts.

The arrests have kicked up a political storm in both the states, which will have elections to their assemblies in less than a year. The Opposition parties have blamed the state governments for intelligence failure. The Trinamul Congress has, on its part, said the failure of the Centre in guarding the borders with Bangladesh has resulted in the intrusion of undesirable elements into the country. The NIA can put paid to such political games by driving the terrorists out of their holes in other states, too. The job is far from over for the agency.

Diminutive pioneer

US Supreme Court justice, liberal, hard-knuckled lawyer, women's rights champion. Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who passed away from cancer at 87, has left a legacy to be cherished by all. She was at the forefront of the movement of second wave (classical) feminism, and did her bit to further its cause.

Ginsburg had many avatars — a valetictorian who lost her mother a day before her graduation, a cheerleader, a typist — because back then, in the 1960s and 1970s, women were restricted by law — hundreds of them — from participation in the professions and public life. For more than a decade until her first judicial appointment in 1980, she led the fight in the court for the equality of the sexes in terms of opportunity and freedom. As expected of a person fighting under terribly challenges, Ginsburg's strategy was cautious, precise and singlemindedly devoted to one goal — winning. In close contests, she was the definitive winner.

Ginsburg drew first blood in Supreme Court in 1971 when she got it to strike down a state law preferring men over women as estate executors. Giving the lie to the misogynists masquerading as men's righters, masculinists and today's "meninists", Ginsburg often chose male appellants to illustrate systemic injustices. For instance, she chose to represent a man who had lost his wife, the principal breadwinner, at childbirth. He applied for social security, but was not entitled as a widower. This absolute exclusion based on gender per se operates to the disadvantage of female workers, their surviving spouses and their children, argued Ginsburg. The bar was overturned.

In 1996, as a relatively new Supreme Court justice, Ginsberg wrote a 7-1 opinion declaring that the prestigious Virginia Military Institute could no longer exclude women: "Reliance on overbroad generalisations, typically male or typically female tendencies, estimates about the way most women or most men are will not suffice to deny opportunity to women whose talents and capacity place them outside the average description." The intrepid Ginsburg went on to spend 27 years in the court, courting celebrity along the way. It will be an insult to her transcendental legacy and philosophy if President Donald Trump goes to nominate, as promised, a woman to fill her seat, for tokenism sake.

THE ASIAN AGE

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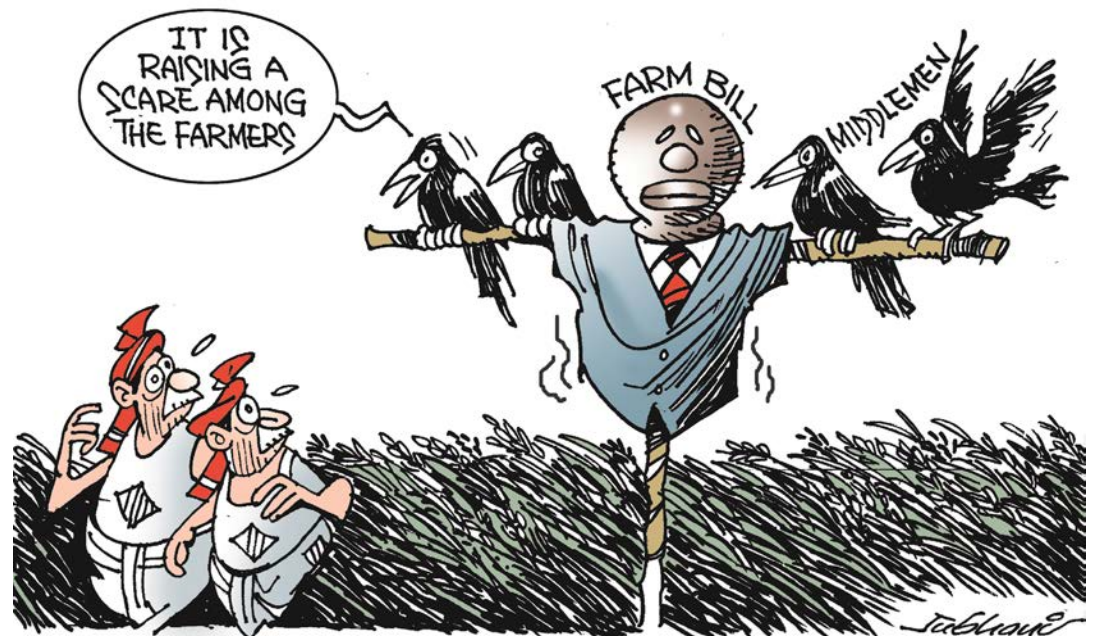
Printer & Publisher: K. SUDHAKAR

THE ASIAN AGE offices are located at:
New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124. Mumbai: Sigma House, #43, Ground Floor, R. A. Kidwai Marg, Near Wadala Rly Station, Wadala (West), Mumbai - 400 031 Phone (022) 24195301 Fax (022) 24195347 Kolkata: 4th Floor, Chowdhury Building, 8/1A Little Russell Street, Kolkata 700 071. Phone: (033) 2289 0676/77 Fax (033) 2289 0686

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office in the United Kingdom Air surcharge for Kathmandu and J&K ₹1
Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Decan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BEL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301. ■ Mumbai: Dangal Media Pvt Ltd, Plot No 22, Digha MIDC, TTC Industrial Estate Area, Vishnu Nagar, Digha, Navi Mumbai-400708. ■ Kolkata: Saryajing Employees Cooperative Industrial Society Ltd, 13/A, Prafulla Sarkar Street, Kolkata 700 072. ■ London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.
RNI Registration number: 57290/94 Postal registration numbers: DL(S)-05/4189/15-17

Subhani



Why 'no data' is not an acceptable argument



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

Information is power. We rely on numbers to allocate resources and make crucial decisions. But what do we do when the numbers go missing? What do gaps in data reveal? The questions go to the heart of social and political battles raging in India today. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, no data means no justice for the uncounted dead, nor to their families.

India has over 5.3 million confirmed coronavirus cases — the world's second worst case load after the United States. Official estimates show it has already killed over 86,000 Indians.

Who among the dead remain invisible as we are simply not counting them? As the pandemic rages, that question exposes our faultlines and remains the story to watch because it pivots around inclusion-exclusion in official data.

In May, 16 migrant labourers who were trying to get back home to Madhya Pradesh on foot were killed when a freight train ran over them between Jaina and Aurangabad districts of Maharashtra. The same month, a video clip which went viral showed a toddler trying to wake up his dead mother at a railway platform in Muzaffarpur, Bihar. In what must be one of the most poignant visuals of the pandemic, the child is seen tugging at a sheet covering his mother's body. The woman, 35-year-old Avreena Khatoun, died while travelling in the Ahmedabad-Katihar (Bihar) Shramik Special train.

News reports, quoting family members, said the woman had died of hunger, thirst and severe heat while travelling for four days. The Muzaffarpur district administration, as well as the Railways, say that she died because of a pre-existing ailment.

The heartbreak of these

unforgettable images and that of many other reported instances of migrant deaths can't be captured in a phrase or in a statistic.

But numbers matter in gauging the magnitude of the tragedy and in determining compensation for the families of the dead. Even if we concede that all migrants did not die of hunger, the fact is that they died. We don't have an official number of how many of them died in all. This invisibility in official statistics, whether alive or dead, lies at the core of the vulnerability of these informal workers.

It's not that the government doesn't furnish any data. It has told us, for example, that the Indian Railways operated over 4,611 Shramik Special trains for the convenience of the workers, that over 63.07 lakh guest workers have been shifted to various destinations in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and other states, that it had arranged to provide food and water to the workers during their journey.

But the Union labour ministry also recently told Parliament there is no data on migrant deaths so the "question doesn't arise" of compensation. This was in response to a question relating to compensation for families of those who had lost their lives while trying to reach home in the wake of the nationwide lockdown imposed by the government to contain the pandemic's spread.

The government's written response in the Lok Sabha on the first day of the Monsoon Session on the numbers it has, and the numbers it chooses to be silent about, has triggered a charged debate.

The railway ministry subsequently told the Lok Sabha that 97 people had died on board the Shramik Specials, conceding perhaps for the first

time that guest workers had died on the trains taking them to their villages and hometowns during the lockdown.

Meanwhile, a public database maintained voluntarily by an independent technologist and scholars, including from Jindal Global Law School, Emory University and Syracuse University, point to at least 972 deaths among guest workers till July 4 during the various lockdowns across the country.

Rajendran Narayanan, who teaches at Bengaluru's Azim Premji University, and is associated with Stranded Workers Action Network (Swan), which has been following these issues, says the argument of "no data" touches on the critical issue of accountability. He argues that even if the government didn't have its own figures for the deaths during the lockdown, it had access to estimates by volunteer networks and researchers who were closely following the issue. Mr Narayanan says Swan's data was shared with the home ministry, the National Disaster Management Authority and other government agencies.

Why did the government not follow these leads?

Equally puzzling is the government's response to a question in Parliament on Covid-19 related fatalities among the country's health workers. Asked about the number of healthcare staff, including doctors, nurses, support staff and Asha workers who have been affected by and died from Covid-19, the health ministry said: "Health is a state subject. Such data is not maintained at the Central level by the ministry of health and family welfare."

The Indian Medical Association is furious and has released a list of 382 doctors who have already died due to the coronavirus. The doctors' body has demanded that the dead medics be treated as 'martyrs'.

A government that has repeatedly lauded doctors and other health workers as "Covid warriors" says it has no data of the front-line health workers who have fallen prey to the virus.

The Indian Medical Association is furious and has released a list of 382 doctors who have already died due to the coronavirus. The doctors' body has demanded that the dead medics be treated as "martyrs". The IMA said: "If the government doesn't maintain the statistics of the total number of doctors and healthcare workers infected by Covid-19 and the statistics of how many of them sacrificed their life due to the pandemic, it loses the moral authority to administer the Epidemic Act 1897 and the Disaster Management Act."

Asked in Parliament whether the Union government maintains data on the number of safai karmacharis who have died due to safety hazards related to their work of cleaning hospitals and handling medical waste during the coronavirus pandemic, the ministry of social justice and empowerment said: "Hospitals and dispensaries being a state subject, no data is maintained by the Union government" on the issue.

These are just three of the lists that the government says it does not have and where its position pivots around "no data". This is by no means comprehensive. The "no data" argument extends to many other areas where there has been no action or scant action.

Should this be an acceptable answer? Data is a public good. What we are not tracking is easily forgotten and turned invisible. In this pandemic, it has become a matter of life and death.

It is critical that we now talk about data justice, which means data that needs to be in the public domain in public interest, for better accountability and inclusion.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

LETTERS

HE'S COOLEST

Despite scaremongering over the absences of Suresh Raina, Dwayne Bravo and Harbhajan Singh from the CSK squad, M.S. Dhoni proved his bench strength. Star-studded champions Mumbai Indians started the game on a lightning note. But Dhoni, with his rookie bowlers, restricted it to 164. It still loomed big. CSK's aging openers failed, but then A. Rayadu and Faf du Plessis put on a century partnership. Hats off to Captain Cool, who promoted Jadeja and Sam Curran up the order. They decimated the MI bowlers. Kohli will miss Dhoni's services at the T-20 World Cup next year.

N. Mahadevan
Chennai

FIERY SOUL

THE VEDIC SCHOLAR Agnivesh is no more. Curiously, it has now emerged that his last words to former Stephens principal Valson Thampu were: "I saw 140 million people standing together, united. They were saying they would not take it any more. They will resist." Agnivesh was a leading light, a social reformer who was vilified by the government, ironically for his very spirituality. He also believed in the power of the common man, and was an egalitarian at his core. To the end of his days, he contributed to the welfare of India's humanity.

Hasan Nishat Ansari
Kolkata

FATTENING FARMS

CHILD OBESITY has assumed an epidemic form in rural Mauritania. Some Mauritanian communities believe that the fatter girls look the wealthier and more attractive they appear to men. So families put five- and six-year-olds on a 9,000 calorie a day diet and force feed them in order to marry them off at 12. They spend all day eating and lying in bed from poisoning and stomachaches. Should one condone this in the name of multiculturalism? This isn't tradition, it is a bundle of customs pushing child abuse.

Priyanka Mathur
Kolkata

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to M.C. Joshi (Sep. 16). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Anita Katyal
Political Gup-Shup



Now, RSS seeks to co-opt Cong; Opp. weakness worries TMC

Ever since the Bharatiya Janata Party swept to power in 2004, the party's ideological mentor, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, has intensified its public outreach programmes in an effort to correct the public perception about the organisation. Only recently, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat was in Delhi when he held a series of meetings with media-persons precisely for this purpose. He was at pains to explain that the RSS is not attached solely to the BJP and that it reaches out to all sections of society. He said people from different walks of life and political parties are also in touch with them and they were not averse to their ideology. In this connection, he specifically mentioned that senior Congress leader Janardhan Dwivedi had attended the three-day conclave convened by the RSS in the capital two years ago as part of its exercise to give the organisation an image makeover. Mr Bhagwat's reference to Mr Dwivedi seemed to suggest that the Congress is supportive of the RSS when the fact is that Rahul Gandhi is

the Sangh's most trenchant critic.

It is no secret that the letter written by 23 Congress leaders to Sonia Gandhi calling for a visible and active president has led to considerable consternation in the party. But surprisingly many Opposition parties are also worried about the repercussions of the internal developments in the Congress. Several Opposition leaders, particularly from the Trinamul Congress, privately express their concern over the convulsions in the Congress. Though the two parties are battling each other in West Bengal, the Trinamul Congress has a vested interest in the revival of the state unit of the Congress. A senior Trinamul Congress leader recently bemoaned that the Bharatiya Janata Party had succeeded in expanding its footprint in West Bengal because of the diminution of the Congress and the Left parties. With the state headed for crucial Assembly elections next year, it is Trinamul's fervent wish that the Congress and the Left parties improve their position in the coming

months as a division in the Opposition vote works to its advantage. At present, the BJP occupies the entire Opposition space in West Bengal.

Samajwadi Party president Mulayum Singh Yadav and his son and successor Akhilesh Yadav were embroiled in a bitter family feud a few years ago but the two have since kissed and made up. The bond between the two is more than evident during the ongoing Parliament session. Mulayum Singh Yadav is not too steady on his feet as he does not keep well and has to be escorted to his seat in the Lok Sabha. Akhilesh makes it a point to accompany his father and further stands guard beside him to ensure that no one comes too close to him. Akhilesh takes his seat only when the Speaker announces the commencement of the day's proceedings. Akhilesh also tweeted a photo of father and son enjoying snacks in the Samajwadi Party office in Parliament House. Clearly, bygones are bygones.

Former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda turned 73 last week and expectedly a large number of Congress workers turned up in Delhi to wish him. It has become important for Mr Hooda to rally his supporters and showcase his strength after Randeep Singh Surjewala, the younger Jat leader from Haryana, got a huge promotion in the recent organisational reshuffle undertaken by interim Congress president Sonia Gandhi. Mr Surjewala has been heading the party's media department for several years now. But he is obviously the flavour of the season as he has also been elevated as party general secretary and given charge of the important state of Karnataka. This also means that he is now a regular member of the Congress Working Committee, the party's highest decision-making body. In addition, Mr Surjewala has been included in the six-member committee set up to assist Sonia Gandhi in organisational matters. This is a clear message to Mr Hooda that the party is promoting Mr Surjewala as Haryana's next Jat

leader. Though he has a substantial fan following in the Haryana Congress, Mr Hooda is a worried man these days.

Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh has been at the receiving end of his party colleagues' ire for some time now. While Navjot Sidhu and Pratap Singh Bajwa are identified dissidents, there are several others in the Congress who are also upset with Mr Singh over his style of functioning. Their latest grouse is the manner in which the Captain, as the chief minister is called, is promoting his son Raninder Singh who has lost two Assembly elections. Congress insiders said that most of the appointments in the state's Malwa region have been made at the behest of the chief minister's son. It is to be seen whether senior Congress leader Harish Rawat, recently given charge of Punjab, will succeed in restoring peace in the party's Punjab unit. His predecessor Asha Kumari had failed on this score.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

IN BRIEF

**Canadian ex-PM
Turner dies at 91**

Toronto: John Turner, a Liberal party politician who served stints as Canada's justice and finance ministers before a very brief turn as the country's 17th prime minister, has died at age 91, his family reported Saturday. Marc Kealey, a former aide speaking on behalf of Turner's relatives as a family friend, said Turner died peacefully in his sleep at home in Toronto on Friday night. Turner failed to live up to the great expectations of his early career, serving as prime minister for just 79 days in 1988.

**4 terrorists
killed in Pak**

Islamabad: At least four terrorists were killed by security forces in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, the Army said. The security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in the central Makran range of Awaran district on Saturday, the Army said in a statement. "Terrorist hideouts including logistic base destroyed while (a) large cache of arms, ammunition and communication equipment recovered," it said. Multiple hideouts and administrative camps of terrorists have also been destroyed, it said.

**Five injured in
Houthi attack**

Cairo: Five civilians were injured when a military projectile launched by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi hit a village in Saudi Arabia's southern Jazan region, state media reported on Saturday. State news agency SPA quoted a civil defence spokesman as saying three cars were damaged in the border village and that the five civilians suffered minor injuries from shrapnel. There was no confirmation of the attack by the Houthi group, which has been battling a Saudi-led coalition in Yemen for more than five years.

**Afghan airstrikes
kill 24 civilians**

Kabul: Government airstrikes in the north of Afghanistan killed 24 civilians, including children, and wounded six others, witnesses said on Sunday. The two witnesses said that most of those killed in Saturday's airstrikes, which struck the village of Sayed Ramazan in northern Kunduz province, were civilians. The Khanabad district in the province where the village is located is Taliban controlled. The Afghan Defence Ministry, however, said the airstrikes killed 30 Taliban fighters, but added an investigation was being held into claims that civilians were among those killed.

**POMPEO ENDS
LATAM TOUR
IN COLOMBIA**

Bogota, Sept. 20: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Saturday wrapped up a tour of four South American countries — three of them neighbours of Venezuela, whose socialist government is under intense US pressure.

After a meeting with Colombian President Iván Duque on Saturday, the two vowed to deepen ties — including US investment in the country's struggling economy — and Pompeo praised Colombia's tough stance against Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro. Pompeo said Colombia's backing of opposition leader Juan Guaidó "and the democratic transition for a sovereign Venezuela free of malign influence from Cuba, from Russia, from Iran, is incredibly valued." "You are a true leader for the region and the dignity of all of its people," he said at a news conference.

In a separate statement, Pompeo announced an additional \$348 million in aid for Venezuelans, including the some 5 million who have left the crisis-ravaged nation.

His office said that new funding now brings the total amount of US humanitarian and development assistance toward the Venezuela crisis to more than \$1.2 billion since 2017.

Pompeo's three-day trip to the region comes as the US presidential election nears, with Florida — which has hosted an expanding Venezuelan diaspora — a key battleground. Duque highlighted a report by the UN's top human rights body accusing Maduro's government of crimes against humanity, including torture and killings carried by security forces.

Thai protesters call for royal reform with 'People's Plaque'

The mass student-led rally that began Saturday is the largest this year

Bangkok, Sept. 20: Anti-government demonstrators occupying a historic field in the Thai capital on Sunday installed a plaque symbolising the country's transition to democracy to replace the original one that was mysteriously ripped and stolen three years ago, as they vowed to press on with calls for new elections and reform of the monarchy. The mass student-led rally that began on Saturday is the largest in a series of protests this year, with thousands camping overnight at Sanam Luang field near the royal palace. On Sunday, they began marching to an undisclosed location, saying they want to hand over a petition to the king's adviser.

A group of activists drilled a hole in front of a makeshift stage in Sanam Luang and laid down a round brass plaque, commemorating a 1932 revolution that changed Thailand from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. "At the dawn of September 20, here is where the people proclaimed that this country belongs to the people," read part of the inscription on the plaque. In April 2017, the original plaque vanished from Bangkok's Royal Plaza and was replaced by one praising the monarchy.

"The nation does not belong to only one person, but belongs to us all. Therefore, I would like to ask holy spirits to stay with us and bless the people's victory," student leader Parit "Penguin" Chirawak said.

Another activist, Panusaya Sithijirawattanukul, said their demands do not propose getting rid of the monarchy. "They are proposals with good intentions to make the institution of the monarchy remain graciously above the people under democratic



Student Union of Thailand spokesperson Panusaya "Rung" Sithijirawattanukul (C) makes the three-fingered Hunger Games salute as she and other anti-government protesters take part in a pro-democracy rally in Bangkok on Sunday. Thousands of protesters cheered as activists installed a new plaque declaring that Thailand "belongs to the people" — the boldest show of defiance in a youth-led movement which has questioned the unassailable monarchy's role in the kingdom.

rule." Still, such calls took the nation by surprise.

Protesters' demands seek to limit the king's powers, establish tighter controls on palace finances and allow open discussion of the monarchy. Their boldness was unprecedented, as the monarchy is considered sacrosanct in Thailand with a harsh law that mandates a three- to 15-year prison term for defaming it. Organisers had predicted that as many as 50,000 people would take part in the weekend's protest, but AP reporters estimated 20,000 people were present. "By holding their protest on Sanam Luang, the protesters have won a significant victory," said Tyrell Haberborn, a Thai studies scholar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

— AP

More than 300 detained at Minsk women's march

Kyiv (Ukraine), Sept. 20: Police in the capital of Belarus cracked down sharply Saturday on a women's protest march demanding the authoritarian president's resignation, arresting more than 300 including an elderly woman who has become a symbol of the six weeks of protest that have roiled the country.

More than 2,000 women took part in the march in Minsk. Such anti-government marches have become a regular feature of the unprecedented wave of

large, persistent protests that began after the Aug. 9 presidential election. Officials said President Alexander Lukashenko won a sixth term in office with 80 per cent support in that vote but opponents and some poll workers say the results were rigged.

During Lukashenko's 26 years in office, he has consistently repressed opposition and independent news media. Large demonstrations have been held in cities throughout the country and some Sunday protests in Minsk have

attracted crowds estimated at up to 200,000 people.

The human rights group Viasna said more than 320 people were arrested in Saturday's march. "There were so many people detained that lines formed at the prisoner transports," Viasna member Valentin Stepanovich said.

Among those detained was Nina Bahinskaya, a 73-year-old former geologist whose defiance and tart tongue have made her a popular figure in the protests.

— AP

IRAN DISMISSES US EFFORTS AT UN SANCTIONS

Tehran, Sept. 20: Iran dismissed US efforts to restore all UN sanctions on the country as mounting economic pressure from Washington pushed the local currency down to its lowest level ever on Sunday.

Iran's currency dropped to 272,500 to the US dollar at money exchange shops across Tehran. The rial has lost more than 30 per cent of its value to the dollar since June as sweeping US sanctions on Iran continue to crush its ability to sell oil globally.

Iran's currency was at 32,000 rials to the dollar at the time of Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, which was signed by the Obama administration but which the Trump administration pulled the US out of.

As the currency plummeted, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh slammed the Trump administration's declaration Saturday that all UN sanctions against Iran have been reimposed because Tehran is not complying with the nuclear deal. The US move has been rejected as illegal by most of the rest of the world.

— AP

Scientists identify new drug with potential to mitigate severe Covid

Los Angeles, Sept. 20: Scientists have found that a new drug has the potential to prevent or mitigate severe consequences of Covid-19, an advance that may lead to the development of novel therapeutics for the Coronavirus infection.

The researchers, including those from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in the United States, assessed how the drug 4-Phenylbutiric acid (4-PBA) modulates the inflammatory response produced in severe cases of Covid-19 in animal models. According to the study, published in the journal *Cytokine and Growth Factors Review*, the inflammatory process identified in severe cases of Covid-19 causes an uncontrolled and excessive release of cytokines — molecules in charge of organising the body's defence.

The scientists said this excessive release could even trigger blood vessels to become hyper permeable and also lead to multi-organ failure. They added that controlling such a cytokine "storm" is essential to treating the severe forms of the disease.

"When cells are stressed by infection, they call the

French min among 13K new infections

Paris, Sept. 20: Coronavirus infections tipped the scales again in France on Saturday with nearly 13,500 new infections in 24 hours. Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire is among them. He announced on Friday in a tweet that he had tested positive with no symptoms and was working during self-isolation. The high-profile Le Maire is the fourth French minister to test positive since March.

It was the second day in a row that new Covid-19 cases in France were above 13,000. The French health agency said Friday's big jump was the result of one hospital in the Essonne region south of Paris belatedly reporting numerous cases. It wasn't clear whether that kind of add-on effect was at play on Saturday.

For health authorities, it is clear that France needs to worry about the spread of the Coronavirus, with over 1,000 clusters detected. There have been 31,274 deaths since the start of the pandemic — among the highest death tolls in Europe — and 26 deaths in the last 24 hours. In Paris, the Prefecture de Police warned that there will be no more tolerance for bars and restaurants where rules to counter the virus aren't respected.

— AP

cytokines, and the more stressed they are, the more persistent they become, provoking this uncontrolled inflammation. Hence, one possible treatment for Covid-19 is to reduce cellular stress," said study co-author Ivan Duran from the University of Malaga in Spain.

Duran said repurposing the 4-PBA anti-stress drug, approved for clinical use against other diseases could modulate such cellular stress, which is also present in pathologies like diabetes or aging, which are classified as Covid-19 risk factors.

— PTI

UP TO £10,000 FINE FOR VIRUS BREACH IN UK

London, Sept. 20: The UK government on Sunday announced new rules, which make it a legal requirement for people with Coronavirus to quarantine, with fines of up to £10,000 imposed on repeat breaches of the stipulated 14-day self-isolation period to control the spread of the virus.

Downing Street said the new requirements, which will be enforced from September 28, also come with support payments of £500 for those on lower incomes who cannot work from home, such as construction workers, and stand to lose income as a result of the mandatory self-isolation due to Covid.

The rules come in as Prime Minister Boris Johnson considers further tougher measures after he warned that the UK may now be seeing a "second wave coming in" of the deadly virus, with the number of cases continuing to rise.

— PTI

Don to nominate woman judge to Supreme Court

Washington, Sept. 20: President Donald Trump has said he will next week nominate a woman to replace the late US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, escalating a political row with the Democrats over her successor weeks before the presidential election.

"I will be putting forth a nominee next week. I could say most likely it would be a woman. I think I can say that. If somebody were to ask me now I would say that a woman would be in first place," Trump told supporters at an election rally in North Carolina on Saturday.

Ginsburg, a history-making jurist, feminist icon and a champion of women's rights and social justice, died of cancer on Friday. She was 87. She was the second woman ever to serve as a justice on the nation's highest court. Trump said he is within his rights to fill the vacancy in the US Supreme Court, a move that has infuriated Democrats, who fear Republicans will vote to lock in a decades-long conservative majority on the country's top court.

"We have great respect for the process. This has happened numerous times and every time there was a nominee as you know. There's been many occasions where frankly it turned out to be during a presidential year," he told reporters. "I think we're going to start the process extremely soon."

● **TRUMP SAID** he is within his rights to fill the vacancy in the US Supreme Court, a move that has infuriated Democrats, who fear Republicans will vote to lock in a decades-long conservative majority on the country's top court.

We will have a nominee very soon," he said, adding that there about 45 people on his list, but he does have a "short list" for potential nominees.

During the rally, Trump asked his Republican supporters whether the nominee should be a man or a woman. The crowd cheered loudly for a female candidate. "That's a very accurate poll (crowd reaction) because that's the way I feel. I actually like women much more than I like men. I have to say. It would be a woman. A very talented, very intelligent woman," the president said, adding that a final name had not been zeroed in on. He also discussed how he has the power to fill the vacant seat in the Supreme Court where justices serve for life or until they choose to retire. "So, Article 2 of the Constitution says that the President shall nominate justices of the Supreme Court. I don't think it can be any more clear, can it?" he underlined.

— PTI

Nawaz, Zardari vow to send govt packing

**SHAFQAT ALI
ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 20**

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and former President Asif Ali Zardari Sunday vowed to send the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI)-led government packing.

Speaking at an opposition's All Parties Conference (APC) Nawaz Sharif, who is in London and has been declared absconder by the Pakistani courts, said the primary reason for the current problems were those people who 'hijacked the people's mandate by putting inexperienced people in power' in 2018.

He said Pakistan had become a laboratory of "such experiments" and every child knows that no prime minister has been allowed to complete five years in power.

"It's not even taken into account that the democratic structure of the country is demolished due to such tactics and the public loses faith in the system," he said marking his political comeback after more than a year.

The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) supremo said that democracy was in danger and he agrees with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazal) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman that "we need to make this conference purposeful or people will be disappointed. If we don't do it (take a step) today, when will we?"

He also repeated opposition's allegation that the

SHEHBAZ SON SUMMONED FOR INTERROGATION

Islamabad, Sept. 20: Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Sunday summoned Salman Shehbaz, son of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) President Shehbaz Sharif, for questioning about a massive deposit he made to an employee's account.

Salman has been summoned on September 25 at the FIA office in Lahore. One of the topics he will be questioned about will be a Rs9.2 billion deposit he made into an employee's account. Salman already has warrants out for his arrest in a money laundering case.

National Accountability Bureau (NAB), with the connivance of PTI, was carrying out only "selective accountability".

Former President Asif Ali Zardari, in his address said that they will send the government packing to restore democracy and save the country. Foundation of a country is laid on democracy, after which prosperity follows, he added. Zardari thanked Nawaz for accepting PPP's invitation and said that Benazir Bhutto signed charter of democracy with Nawaz and both parties cooperated to remove Musharraf from office.

— AFP

COVID | CURBS

The UK govt warns that a 2nd nationwide lockdown could be imminent as virus cases surge

Shut UK nightclubs worry about not seeing light of day

London, Sept. 20: Inside a former London newspaper printing factory turned nightclub, a roaming urban fox has replaced throngs of dancers shut out by the coronavirus pandemic.

Six months after Covid-19 turned off the music and lights at London's Printworks and similar dance venues across Britain, there is no knowing when they will reopen.

The UK government on Friday warned that a second nationwide lockdown could be imminent as virus cases surge once more.

Britain has been the worst-hit country in Europe

by the pandemic, with nearly 42,000 deaths from the virus. Numbers of new cases are meanwhile reaching levels not seen since April, with some attributed to illegal raves.

"We're fighting for our survival," Printworks' co-founder Simeon Aldred said from the nightclub that just a few months ago welcomed up to 5,000 clubbers an evening.

Aldred is unsure whether he and business partner Bradley Thompson will have to let go 400 staff working across all their venues or plan for reopenings, possibly early next year.

"We've been burning our own (cash) resources," he said, while deploring what he sees as a lack of government visibility.

"It won't go back exactly the way it was but I think people will still want to come together, eat together, pray together (and) dance together," Peter Marks, the chief executive of Deltic, one of Britain's largest nightclub groups with 53 venues, fears bankruptcy.

"We've come from a very successful healthy company to one brought to its knees," he said, noting the closures are still costing it millions of pounds in rent and other

● **THE BRITISH** government has been paying the bulk of wages for millions of workers during the pandemic. However its furlough scheme is set to end in October, with analysts forecasting a surge in unemployment as a result.

fixed costs. This is despite government support with paying staff wages and thanks to tax cuts during the pandemic.

According to the Night Time Industries Associati-

on, UK nightclubs together with bars, pubs, restaurants and theatres generate 66 billion (71 billion euros, \$84 billion) annually and employ about 1.3 million people.

While the British government has been paying the bulk of wages for millions of workers during the pandemic, its furlough scheme is set to end in October, with analysts forecasting a surge in unemployment as a result. "We know this is an incredibly difficult time for nightclubs, but they will need to remain closed for now in line with current scientific advice to control the virus," said a government

statement.

"We continue to engage with industry representatives and listen to their concerns." While acknowledging the risks, Marks believes the clubs can reopen safely. "We don't want to cause a spike (in virus cases) but we think we can have a way to come back with protocols to reduce the risks," he said.

Britain is meanwhile not alone in shutting nightclubs, with Berlin's famous Berghain venue transforming into a sound exhibition.

In the UK, for artists like DJ and music producer Nabihah Iqbal, the pandemic has had a "catastrophic

effect". "Normally I'm really busy touring and playing all around and now everything has stopped," Iqbal said from her home as she mixed tunes for radio inspired by music from around the world.

Last week, she performed in a bar for the first time since March but fears the return could be short-lived given the current virus spike in Britain.

DJ Shosh and her group 24H Garage Girls meanwhile lament at missing out on the chance to perform at the famous Glastonbury music festival.

— AFP

quick BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|------------|--------|
| Sensex | 38,845.82 | -0.34 |
| Nifty 50 | 11,504.95 | -0.10 |
| S&P 500* | 3,319.47 | -1.12 |
| Dollar (₹) | 73.45 | 0.27 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 95.39 | -0.007 |
| Euro (₹) | 87.07 | -0.12 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 52,672.224 | 0.42 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 43.15 | 00 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 0.697 | -0.019 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 0.697 | 0.00 |

* As of Friday/Saturday

PSBs report over ₹19,964 crore frauds in Q1

Public sector banks reported frauds worth over Rs 19,964 crore in 2,867 cases during the April-June quarter, RBI's reply to an RTI query said. Of the 12 PSBs, SBI reported 2,050 fraud cases involving Rs 2,325.88 crore in Q1. BoI took the biggest hit with Rs 5,124.87 crore in 47 cases, followed by Canara Bank Rs 3,885.26 crore (33 cases), BoB Rs 2,842.94 crore (60), Indian Bank Rs 1,469.79 crore (45) and IOB Rs 1,207.65 crore (37).

5% import duty on open cell used in TV from Oct. 1



A 5 per cent customs duty will be reimposed on the import of open cell for TVs from October 1 following the end of one year exemption period, a finance ministry source said. The Centre had last year exempted customs duty on open cell, a key component of TV, for a year till September 30 as the domestic industry had sought time to build capacity. With the exemption coming to an end, 5 per cent duty would be reimposed.

Internet user base rises to 743 mn in March quarter

The number of internet subscribers in India increased to over 743 million in the March 2020 quarter, clocking a growth rate of 3.4 per cent on a sequential quarter basis, showed Trai data. Reliance Jio led the chart, grabbing 52.3 per cent of the overall market share, followed by Bharti Airtel (23.6 per cent share). Vodafone Idea held the third position with 18.7 per cent market share.

Vistara CEO says no layoffs; salary cut review in Jan.

Vistara, which has implemented various cost-saving measures amidst the pandemic, will review salary cuts in January but has not laid off any of its nearly 4,000 employees. Vistara's CEO Leslie Thng said, "There have been no job cuts at Vistara, and therefore, the staff strength remains the same as earlier nearly 4,000 employees." Many airlines globally have resorted to salary cuts, layoffs and furloughs in recent months.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

■ Less than 2% gets assistance in hand Street vendor loans off to crawling start

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 20

The micro credit scheme for street vendors under the stimulus package has till now reached only 7 per cent of the 50 lakh targeted beneficiaries. As on September 10, loans have been approved for 3.68 lakh street vendors. Of this, 99,000 persons, or less than 2 per cent, have been disbursed the loans, as per data provided by the Ministry of Finance in Parliament.

The government had announced the PM Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi scheme as part of the stimulus package and had launched it on July 1. The scheme intends to support 50 lakh street vendors whose business have been affected by the pandemic with working capital loans.

The Rs 5,000-crore scheme would provide a loan of Rs 10,000 to street vendors, repayable in 12 monthly installments. "After the government subsidy of 7 per cent, the effective rate of interest charged by micro finance institutions comes to 12 to 13 per cent. Further, the customer gets a cash-back of Rs 100 for digital repayment of the installments. At 12 per cent interest rate, a cash-back of Rs 100 every month for 12 months makes the scheme almost free of cost," said Manoj Nambiar, chairperson of the MicroFinance Institutions Network (MFIN).

However, till now only 3.68 lakh vendors, or 7.3



VIVAD SE VISHWAS GARNERS ₹9,538 CR

New Delhi, Sept. 20: The government has collected Rs 9,538 crore revenue from the Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas scheme, Parliament was informed on Sunday.

Minister of state for finance Anurag Singh Thakur said as many as 35,074 declarations have been filed under the scheme till September 8. "The revenue generated till date through the

(Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas) Act is Rs 9,538 crore. This figure does not include the payments made by the taxpayers who are yet to file their declarations under the scheme," Thakur said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

In March, Parliament passed the Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas Act. The scheme is valid till December 31, 2020. —PTI

per cent of targetted beneficiaries, have received loan approvals, whereas those who have received the loan amount in hand is less than 2 per cent at 99,000.

"Only those vendors who are registered with urban local administration are eligible for the scheme. Most of the vendors are not registered with the civic bodies and hence stay out of the purview of the scheme. Though registra-

tion is an ongoing process, many vendors have apprehensions about it," said Nambiar. Many also find that once they get a licence for street vending, they will not be able to operate any other business.

Further, the banks and micro finance institutions prefer street vendors who are largely stationary at a certain place. A borrower moving from one place to another is considered as a risk factor.

GST shortfall: 21 states accept ₹97,000 cr borrowing plan

New Delhi, Sept. 20: As many as 21 states, mostly ruled by BJP or parties which have supported it on various issues, have opted to borrow Rs 97,000 crore to meet the GST revenue shortfall in the current fiscal, sources said on Sunday.

The states and union territories (UTs) which have intimated their decision to the Centre are Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Karnataka, MP, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Puducherry, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand and UP.

Finance ministry sources said Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal are yet to respond to the GST Council proposal to decide their options.

The states which do not submit their borrowing options before the due GST Council meet on October 5, will have to wait till June 2022 to get their compensation dues, subject to the condition that the GST Council extends the cess collection period beyond 2022, the sources said.

The GST Council with full presence of states and UTs needs, as per the GST Act, only 20 states to pass any resolution, in case a voting is required.

—PTI

FPIs turn cautious, inflows thin this month

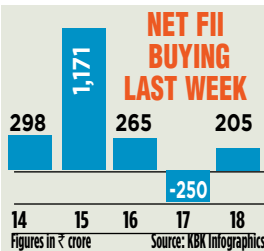
RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 20

Foreign portfolio investments in equities have seen a major drop in September so far, with net buying of just Rs 1,766 crore compared with the previous month in which FPIs had invested over Rs 47,000 crore.

August had seen record FPI investments at Rs 47,080 crore, but in September FPI inflows have been subdued and consistency is missing, with large amounts of net selling observed on some days, shows NSDL monthly data.

The sharp fall in India's first quarter GDP by -23.9 per cent, announced on August 31, did trigger selling by foreign portfolio investors by Rs 2,356 crore in a day.

"Sharper than expected



fall in growth calls for supportive measures from both the RBI and the Ministry of Finance," said Aastha Gudwani and Indranil Sen Gupta, analyst, Bank of America Global Research.

Last week, major FPI participation was witnessed in the weekend anchor investors allotment of shares in Computer Age Management Services (Cams) IPO, worth Rs 666.56 crore, proving FPIs appetite for Indian equi-

ties to be alive.

Whether the remaining days in September will make up for the subdued flows is anybody's guess. The caution in the market ahead of another earnings season and the big US event, of presidential election on November 3, seems in line with the global market trends.

The change in trend particularly pronounced in the US market. All-time-high US stock market indices are turning volatile of late and market experts are predicting a reversal in trend either near to or post the US elections.

Last week, the Dow Jones Industrial Average and technology stock index Nasdaq registered third straight weekly losses for the first time this year.

GST cut will help 2-wheeler market: Honda

New Delhi, Sept. 20: Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI) has supported calls from various industry quarters for reduction in GST on two-wheelers, saying the move would act as a 'tailwind' for reviving the sector which has been facing challenging business environment.

In an interview with PTI, a senior official of the Japanese two-wheeler major said the sector has been currently facing various headwinds due to economic slowdown that has hampered the growth of the sector.

"We are also confident

that any such move that will increase affordability for the buyer and which adds to their savings, why not (bring it)," HMSI director sales and marketing Yadvynder Singh Guleria said.

He was replying to a query whether the reduction in GST on two-wheeler segment would be helpful in reviving the sector.

"It will definitely help and act as a tailwind for the industry against what we are seeing today, the headwinds from multiple sides," Guleria noted.

Elaborating on the situation, he said that people want to preserve cash

these days due to economic slowdown related uncertainties. Despite that they are still willing to take personal mobility options due to the Covid-19 situation and it will help if affordability of owning a two-wheeler improves, he said.

For long, the two-wheeler industry has been demanding a reduction in GST on two-wheelers from 28 per cent to 18 cent. They argue that a two-wheeler is basic necessity for transportation of medium income group households.

Last month, even the finance minister said the segment merits a GST revision. —PTI

TikTok owner seeking \$60 billion valuation in US deal

ZHEPING HUANG SEPT. 20

China's ByteDance Ltd is seeking a valuation of \$60 billion for TikTok as Oracle Corp and Walmart Inc take stakes in the short-video app's business to address US security concerns, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Oracle and Walmart have rights to buy 12.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent, respectively, of a newly established TikTok Global under an agreement that won the approval of President Donald Trump, the person said, asking not to be named about discussing private negotiations. The two companies would pay a combined \$12 billion for their stakes if they agree to that asking price.

The final valuation price

TRUMP WANTS \$5 BN FROM DEAL FOR HISTORY PROJECT

Sept. 20: President Donald Trump said on Saturday he wants \$5 billion from companies creating a new US-based TikTok venture directed toward teaching American children "the real history."

Trump said he had approved a transaction between Oracle Corp, Walmart Inc and ByteDance Ltd to create a new company called TikTok Global to run the US video-sharing app. As part of the arrangement, Trump told reporters at the White House the companies agreed to contribute

\$5 billion to an education foundation.

Later, during a campaign rally in Fayetteville, North Carolina, Trump said "we're going to be setting up a very large fund for the education of American youth."

He told his rally audience that in conversation with leaders of the companies, he said "do me a favour, could you put up \$5 billion into a fund for education, so we can educate people as to real history of our country—the real history, not the fake history."

On Thursday, Trump

delivered a speech at the National Archives in Washington, in which he attacked the 1619 Project, a school curriculum created by the *New York Times* that orients American history from the date the first slaves arrived in the country. Trump said that in response, he would create "a national commission to promote patriotic education" that he calls the "1776 commission."

The next day, Trump phoned Oracle chairman Larry Ellison and WalMart CEO Doug McMillon. —Bloomberg

had not been set as the parties worked out the equity structure and measures for data security, the person said.

ByteDance was pressured into a deal for TikTok when Trump threatened to ban the app in the US over national

security concerns. After Microsoft Corp made a proposal for a full buyout of the service, ByteDance instead turned to Oracle's

offering in which the Chinese parent will maintain a solid majority stake.

"I approved the deal in concept," Trump told reporters on Saturday as he left the White House for a campaign rally in Fayetteville, North Carolina. "If they get it done, that's great. If they don't, that's OK too."

ByteDance and Oracle representatives didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

ByteDance may end up owning as much as 80 per cent of TikTok Global, which would include the app's operations in the US and the rest of the world excluding China.

Under the current proposal, there will be five seats on the board of TikTok Global. Walmart's CEO Doug McMillon will become a director, the retailer said. —Bloomberg

New tailwind for EM stocks

NETTY ISMAIL, SIMON FLINT, SYDNEY MAKI & ROBERT BRAND SEPT. 20

Emerging markets are poised to enjoy a fresh tailwind at an auspicious moment.

President Donald Trump's weekend approval of Oracle Corp's bid for the operations of TikTok—a move that may take some of the heat out of Washington's standoff with Beijing—looks poised to give markets a lift as the new week gets underway, extending last week's gains in developing-nation assets.

Record low interest rates, rising commodity prices and improved mobility data are buoying expectations of a recovery in the world's developing economies even as investors cast a wary eye toward the US presidential election in November. Yet for all those plus points—and any small boost provided by a gentler geopolitical backdrop—it's rate differentials



that are sustaining much of the investor demand. Bond funds extended their longest streak of inflows since a 12-week run in the fourth quarter of 2017, according to EPFR Global.

"Even though policy rates in emerging markets have come down a lot, many of them show meaningful relative interest-rate advantages versus the dollar now," said Morgan Harting, a New York-based money manager at AllianceBernstein who oversees about \$2.8 billion. "This could support ongoing capital flows to emerging markets, which would be good for stocks and bonds." —Bloomberg

Parents shouldn't wait to pass down their wealth

ERIN LOWRY SEPT. 20

In the coming decades, a Great Wealth Transfer will be upon us. Gen Xers and Millennials are expected to inherit a huge fortune. In the US, for example, some estimates say as much as \$68 trillion will be passed down from Baby Boomers.

For parents (or other family members) who indeed plan on leaving behind a financial legacy, it can be far more effective to gift early instead of waiting for the triggering event of your death to transfer wealth. This idea tends to elicit a negative reaction. After all, the risk of passing on money too early, or at all, is it will lead to spoiled kids and little motivation for them to be successful. It's a valid concern, but gifting early could also help someone flourish and build their own legacy, as access to capital creates more opportunities.

A common refrain when discussing generational wealth is, "The first generation makes it, the second generation builds it and the third generation blows it." Such idioms

come into existence because they have a kernel of truth. Family fortunes have been built and lost in just a few generations, which may be why some parents are reluctant to pass down their wealth too early.

There's a strain of the "bootstrap" narrative that pervades in this thinking: The concept is that if you withhold an inheritance, your child will be forced to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and make something of themselves on their own merit. They'll be less likely to overindulge and loaf around.

Or perhaps parents think, "No one handed me seed money or bought my first home, and look what I did." Is that true, though? Can everyone replicate your level of success? Is it not perhaps a confluence of timing, talent and a dash of luck (or a strong labour market, affordable housing, etc.) that propelled you forward?

Tough love can be a motivating tactic for some, but it doesn't guarantee successful children. Instead of withholding an inheritance from a child



Money musings

until your death, when the child may be in their 40s, 50s or even 60s, why not gift early to encourage your children to start building their own financial freedom?

See the impact of your legacy. One benefit to beginning the gifting process early is being alive to see how your children benefit. You can watch and advise them on taking risks, making key purchases (like owning a home or an investment property) and enriching their lives.

Access to resources and

capital has long made a huge difference in the ability to build and innovate. Many of the currently notable wealthy men and women in this country had seed money from a family member or a free place to live while building a business or access to a network and resources. And yet we still often herald these people as "self-made." They're not. Yes, there are outliers and expectations to the rule, but they're rare.

We often fixate on the ultra-wealthy, but there are many ways to pass on legacy. Not all legacies have to be about passing on a fortune. Some are simply about reducing economic struggle. Providing support like paying off part of debts or setting aside money for grandchildren's educational expenses are ways to pass on your legacy that often aren't framed as gifting early.

Not ready to gift early (or at all)? Be open about it. It's a parent's prerogative on how they plan to spend and gift their wealth. It can all be donated to an important or beloved cause, given to a

specific family member spent entirely before death. Someone simply being your child doesn't buy them the entitlement to your money in their adulthood.

However, if you plan to leave your child with nothing, it's wise to tell them - particularly if your child is aware of your wealth and assumes they'll inherit at least some of that money. Listen, I get that your child should not be counting coins that aren't theirs too early, but it's important to ensure that their financial planning isn't built upon an assumption of inheritance.

Should you plan to pass on wealth in a trust or in your will after your death, then you may want to have a discussion about that with your children so they can actually incorporate that into their financial futures. It could make a difference in the level of career or investing risk they're willing to take today, how they save and invest for their own lives or even if or when they'd start a family of their own.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Carlsen, So share top spot; Hari 7th

Chennai: A below-par performance in Blitz-2, in which he managed only three points from nine rounds, saw Indian Grandmaster P. Harikrishna finish joint seventh in the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz online chess tournament.

World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen and American Wesley So finished joint winners. Harikrishna's solitary win on the final day of the tournament came against American Jeffrey Xiong, the lowest rated player in the field, as he suffered four losses to go with three draws. He was tied for seventh place with Xiong.

The India No. 2, who had pulled off an upset win over Carlsen in Blitz-1, could not reproduce the good form and went down to the Norwegian world champion in the sixth round of Blitz-2 in a 47-move encounter. — *PTI*

Red Devils off to dreadful start

London: Manchester United's Premier League season got off to a dreadful start as Wilfried Zaha scored twice against his former club to hand Crystal Palace a 3-1 win at Old Trafford. The Eagles have now won their first two games of a Premier League season for the first time and on their last two visits to United.

After Andros Townsend opened the scoring early on, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men felt aggrieved with the nature of Palace's second from the penalty spot as Victor Lindelof was harshly punished for handball and David De Gea's save from Jordan Ayew's spot-kick was ruled out by VAR before Zaha converted the retaken penalty. But they could have no complaints about the result as they looked way off the pace in their first match of the new campaign. — *AFP*

Nadal bows out, Djokovic in semis

Rome: Clay court king Rafael Nadal crashed out of the Italian Open on Saturday, falling to a straight sets defeat to Argentine Diego Schwartzman in a tournament the Spaniard had won nine times.

Eight-seeded Schwartzman meted out a punishing 6-2, 7-5 loss in Nadal's final warm-up before his bid for a 13th French Open, and record-equalling 20th Grand Slam in just over a week. Top men's seed Novak Djokovic also stumbled on the Roman clay but recovered to win through 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 against German qualifier Dominik Koepfer.

"It was not my night at all," said Nadal, who had won all nine previous meetings against 28-year-old Schwartzman. — *AFP*

Celtics strike back with win over Heat

Miami: The Boston Celtics hit back on Saturday, leading wire-to-wire in a 117-106 victory over the Miami Heat that cut the gap in the NBA Eastern Conference finals to two games to one. Jaylen Brown scored 26 points and Jayson Tatum added 25 points and 14 rebounds for the Celtics, who avoided falling into an 0-3 hole from which no NBA team has rallied to win a best-of-seven playoff series. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Sunrisers Hyderabad vs Royal Challengers Bangalore from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

England Women vs West Indies Women: First T20 from 10.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Aston Villa vs Sheffield from 10.30 pm; Wolverhampton Wanderers vs Manchester City from 12.45 am (Tuesday) on Star Sports Select 2

Italian League: AC Milan vs Bologna from 12.15 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

TENNIS

ATP Hamburg European Open: First day's action from 2 pm on Sony Six, HD

Rome Masters: Men's final from 8.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

WWE RAW

Bouts from 5.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. and Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C - 9, Sector - III, Noida - 201301. Editor - T. Venkataram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.

Stoinishing show

Marcus' all-round feat ensures Super Over win for Delhi

Dubai, Aug. 20: Marcus Stoinis' last over star turns with both bat and ball was beautifully complemented by Kagiso Rabada's brilliant Super Over that ensured a thrilling opening round IPL victory for Delhi Capitals over Kings XI Punjab on Sunday.

Stoinis first blasted his way to a 21-ball-53 as his late assault ensured a decent 157/8 for Capitals with 57 coming off last three overs. Stoinis hit seven fours and three sixes.

In reply, Capitals were in control for 15 overs before Mayank Agarwal 89 off 60 balls nearly won it for KXIP before Stoinis came into the picture again with opposition needing one off three balls.

The first one was a dot followed by wickets of Agarwal and Chris Jordan as match ended in a tie and went into Super Over.

Rabada, a Super Over specialist then removed K.L. Rahul and Nicholas Pooran off successive balls to keep an easy three run target off one over. Rishabh Pant got a couple and Mohammed Shami bowled a wide as Capitals got their hard earned two points.

Earlier, Shikhar Dhawan (0) was run out to a horrible mix-up and the scoreboard was not a pleasant sight for the Delhi side at 13 for 3.

However, skipper Shreyas Iyer (39) and Rishabh Pant (31) respected the conditions to raise 73-run stand for the fourth wicket while Stoinis' knock towards the end put Capitals in a psychologically advantageous position.

Iyer launched into Gowtham for a massive six, first of the innings, in the ninth over, taking the run-rate to a modest five-an-over. — *PTI*



Marcus Stoinis of Delhi Capitals en route to his 53 against Kings XI Punjab in their IPL match at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Sunday. — *BCCI/IPL*

Delhi Capitals: P. Shaw c Jordan b Shami 5, S Dhawan run out (Rahul/K Gowtham) 0, S. Hetmyer c Agarwal b Shami 7, S. Iyer c Jordan b Shami 39, R. Pant b Bishnoi 31, M. Stoinis (run out) 53, A. Patel c Rahul b Cottrell 6, R. Ashwin c Shami b Cottrell 4, K Rabada (not out) 0, A. Nortje (not out) 3. **Extras:** (b-1, lb-0, w-6, nb-2) 9. **Total: (for 8 wks, in 20 Overs) 157.**
FoW: 1-6, 2-9, 3-13, 4-86, 5-87, 6-96, 7-127, 8-154
Bowling: S. Cottrell 4-0-24-2, Md Shami 4-0-15-3, Chris

Scorecard

Jordan 4-0-56-0, Gowtham 4-0-39-0, Ravi Bishnoi 4-0-22-1.

Kings XI Punjab: K.L. Rahul b Mohit Sharma 21, Mayank Agarwal c Shimron Hetmyer b Marcus Stoinis 89, Karun Nair c Prithvi Shaw b R. Ashwin 1, Nicholas Pooran b R. Ashwin 0, Glenn Maxwell c Shreyas Iyer b Kagiso Rabada 1, Sarfaraz Khan c Prithvi Shaw b Axar Patel 12, Krishnappa Gowtham c Rishabh Pant b

Kagiso Rabada 21, Chris Jordan c Kagiso Rabada b Marcus Stoinis 5, Mohammad Shami (not out) 0. **Extras:** (nb 1, w 1, b 0, lb 5) 7. **Total: (for 8 wks, in 20 overs) 157.**
FoW: 1-30, 2-33, 3-34, 4-35, 5-55, 6-101, 7-157, 8-157.
Bowling: A. Nortje 4-0-33-0, M. Sharma 4-0-45-1, K. Rabada 4-0-28-2, R. Ashwin 1-0-2-2, A. Patel 4-0-14-1, M. Stoinis 3-0-29-2.

Super Over: Kings XI Punjab (2/2 in .3 over) lost to Delhi Capitals (3/0 in .2)

BRAVO TO MISS COUPLE OF MATCHES

Abu Dhabi, Sept. 20: Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming has confirmed that their star all-rounder Dwayne Bravo will miss another couple of matches of the 13th IPL.

Despite missing the seasoned West Indian who is recovering from an injury, three-times winners CSK began their campaign on a positive note, beating arch-rivals Mumbai Indians by five wickets here on Saturday.

"Dwayne Bravo is out for a couple of games," Fleming said in the post-match press conference.

Bravo picked a niggles during the recently-concluded Caribbean Premier League and didn't bowl in the final due to a knee injury.

Playing in place of Bravo, English all-rounder Sam Curran smashed 18 off six balls to help CSK cross the finish line after Ambati Rayudu and Faf du Plessis scored brisk half-centuries.

In his quota of four overs, Curran returned impressive figures of 1/28 while picking up the wicket of the dangerous looking Quinton de Kock, and then played a cameo with the bat.

"Curran's performance was terrific," Fleming said.

The head coach also heaped praise on Rayudu, who played a match-winning knock, making a 48-ball 71.

"Rayudu has been nothing short of fantastic. He has been pretty emotional and played a great knock," Fleming said. — *PTI*

Kohli's hunt for IPL title begins

Dubai, Sept. 20: Virat Kohli will begin his quest for an elusive IPL title when perennial under-achievers Royal Challengers Bangalore take on David Warner's low profile but consistent Sunrisers Hyderabad in their opening IPL encounter here on Monday.

Both teams possess dangerous batsmen who can single-handedly take the game away from the opposition.

Kohli has always led from the front but he knows his search for a maiden title will remain incomplete if the team doesn't perform in all departments.

The addition of Australian limited overs captain Aaron Finch to the squad gives the star-studded batting line up more firepower. Expectations are also high from highly rated young opener Devdutt Padikal.

On the other hand, Warner, whose exploits in the IPL include winning the 'Orange Cap' thrice and leading his side to a maiden title triumph in 2016, will once again pair up with the dangerous Jonny Bairstow.

The formidable opening duo, that shattered multiple records including the highest opening partnership in IPL history against RCB last season, will hope to emulate the previous

● **Kohli has always led from the front but he knows his search for a maiden title will remain incomplete if the team doesn't perform in all departments.**

edition's exploits. Sunrisers also have the batting prowess of Kane Williamson, Manish Pandey, Mitchell Marsh and Fabian Allen.

Following a nightmarish 2019 season when they finished last, RCB seem to have much better balance but there ability to hit late in the innings is yet to be tested.

Sunrisers' blind spot also lies in the lack of depth in their batting order. The franchise has invested in youngsters like Virat Singh, Abhishek Sharma, Priyam Garg, and Abdul Samad and the management in the hopes that one of them could become the vital cog in the middle order.

A team that is known for its depth and variation in bowling, Sunrisers' core unit remains unchanged. Bhuvneshwar Kumar will spearhead the pace department with Sandeep Sharma, Siddarth Kaul and Basil Thampi playing secondary roles. — *PTI*

NUMBERS GAME — SRH vs RCB

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:

- Matches: 14
- Hyderabad won: 7
- Bangalore won: 6
- Tied: 1 (SH won in super over after match ended in a tie.)

MEETING IN 2019

- Sunrisers Hyderabad defeated Royal Challengers Bangalore by 118 runs at Hyderabad.
- Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by 4 wickets at Bangalore.

FOR THE RECORD

- Virat Kohli, who scored

5,412 runs at an average of 37.84 in 169 innings of 177 matches for Royal Challenger Bangalore is the highest run-getter in IPL.

● David Warner with 4,706 runs in 126 innings of as many matches for Delhi Capitals and Sunrisers Hyderabad is the fourth highest scorer in IPL behind Virat Kohli (5,412 runs in 177 matches) and Suresh Raina (5,368 runs in 193 matches) and Rohit Sharma (4,910 runs in 189 matches).

— *S. PERVEZ QAISER*

Warner puts onus on young blood

Dubai, Sept. 20: Sunrisers Hyderabad captain David Warner is hoping the team's young recruits "translate their talent into performance" in the 13th IPL and said gaining early momentum would do themselves a world of good.

The Sunrisers open their campaign in the 13th IPL with a game against the Virat Kohli-led Royal Challengers Bangalore on Monday, and Warner's message to his team is to go out and play freely without worrying too much about the result.

"We will try our best for that and if it doesn't happen, we will re-work our strategies and hope to go the distance in the IPL," Warner said during a virtual media interaction.

"Every team has a perfect mix of world-class overseas players and quality Indian players. Ours is a pretty good balanced side in all departments.

"The boys have to just go out there and have fun, not take it too seriously. Like if you get angry you will tend to repeat the mistakes."

Warner also spoke about the team's youngsters.

"Yes, it is good to have a lot of youngsters in the middle-order. They bring a lot of enthusiasm and show the right kind of attitude, too. I hope they translate their talent into performances."

The Australian is happy to have the presence of experienced campaigners such as Kane Williamson in the Sunrisers ranks.

"We have plenty of experience with the likes of Kane, (Jonny) Bairstow, Vijay Shankar to name a few. We got a job on our hand for sure," he said.

Speaking about his opening partner Bairstow, Warner said, "We know when to take those calculated risks and it is time to go this year again." — *PTI*

'INDIAN PAUNCH LEAGUE' BEGINS AS STARS MOCKED

New Delhi, Sept. 20: Leading cricketers from Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings have been slammed for their "healthy waistlines" during the opening match of the Indian Premier League in Abu Dhabi.

Some players were returning to professional cricket for the first time in six months after global sport was put on hold amid the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

Many expressed surprise at seeing top players including Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma, batsman Saurabh Tiwary and Chennai spinner Piyush Chawla sporting a post-lockdown paunch.

"I have never played more than gully cricket but I am pretty shocked to see some players in the #IPL2020 looking so unfit," former India field hockey captain Viren Rasquinha wrote on Twitter.

"I can't think of another physical sport where play-

ers at the highest level could cope with these fitness levels."

Veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle tweeted that there were a "couple of healthy waistlines today".

Social media users joked that the cash-rich IPL was now the "India Paunch League".

"Indian Paunch League (IPL) looking at all the bulging waistlines... looks like a veterans series match..." one user tweeted. Meanwhile Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni stood out with his bulging biceps on his return to the cricket field after more than a year on the sidelines.

The veteran wicketkeeper-batsman, who retired from international cricket last month, last played for India in their semi-final loss to New Zealand in the 2019 World Cup.

Fans swooned at their idol's body, with one user tweeting: "Dhoni looks WWE ready". — *AFP*



Chennai Super Kings' Lungisani Ngidi (left) celebrates the wicket of Kieron Pollard of Mumbai Indians with M.S. Dhoni in Abu Dhabi on Saturday.

DHONI PRAISES CHENNAI 'DADS ARMY'

New Delhi, Sept. 20: Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni has heaped praise on the experienced players in his side after they topped defending champions Mumbai Indians in the opening match of the IPL.

South African veteran Faf du Plessis smashed an unbeaten 58 to guide Chennai to a five-wicket win, chasing Mumbai's 162.

Once labelled "The

Dads Army" by the media, Chennai have a number of players over the age of 35, including Dhoni, Australia's Shane Watson, du Plessis and South African Imran Tahir.

But Dhoni said that kind of experience would always be an asset to any team, with the perfect side needing the "right mix of youngsters and the experienced players".

"What really helps youngsters in (the) IPL

is the fact senior cricketers (come) from... different countries and they have their own experience," said Dhoni.

"So that way we are blessed to have the senior cricketers who are part of the team."

Dhoni added that players with more than 300 one-day internationals under their belt have built up the kind of experience that is difficult to accumulate. — *AFP*

Shaking off rust is going to be key feature of IPL



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

Brijesh Patel never got an opportunity to play at Sharjah. Cricket in the emirate, the third largest in United Arab Emirates (UAE) started a few years after the dapper middle order batsman and brilliant fielder had finished his career as an Indian international. Patel who is now Chairman, Governing Council, of the Indian Premier League (IPL) was seen sitting quietly in the VIP section as India's most loved tournament kicked-off bringing a glow of light

into gloomy Indian homes.

Having taken the position during the last elections of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Patel knew the challenges, once the pandemic went viral across the globe. When Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Rohit Sharma went out for the toss at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Saturday, a small part of him must have relaxed, the feeling similar to that when a batsman faces the first ball of his innings with confi-

dence. Even as the cameras focused on other important VIP's from time to time, the man sitting in the hottest seat in the BCCI must be a bundle of nerves as Chennai Super Kings (CSK) beat their nemesis Mumbai Indians (MI) in the last over of the match.

There were many take-aways post the first fixture of the IPL. The biggest being that most players (barring a few) looked bulky and far removed from what they would have in happier times. To stay away from actual cricket for five plus months and then get corralled in a (forced) enclosed environment for almost a month is bound to show on the players. And it did. A slight bulge in the belly, sloppiness abounding while

fielding and the line and length going a bit awry were proofs of the absence of the 'real' thing — match practice.

Shaking off the rust is going to be the key feature of the IPL at this stage and the earlier teams do it the better for their chances as the tournament progresses. Fans would do themselves a favour if they manage to hold on to their (high) expectations as it will take nothing less than three to four matches for the players to come back to their own in the new normal. For now, not only are they trying to get back to their peak, in term of fitness and play, they are faced with the prospect of doing so on unfamiliar pitches they cannot predict.

Fitness and lack of

match practice may be the bugbear of the players but the CSK vs MI game showed that the IPL fans are fit and raring to go. CSK's victory meant that 'Thala' Dhoni is back in business and fans were watching every move made by the most experienced skipper of the tournament.

Man of the match, Ambati Rayudu's match winning essay of 71 of 48 balls not only made him an unlikely hero but gave fans the ammo to shoot at the Indian selectors of the immediate past and the team management of their 'folly' in not picking him for the International Cricket Council (ICC) World Cup last year.

With fans getting back their mojo and the die being cast with the start of

this important tournament, BCCI is reported to have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Emirates Cricket Board.

The MoU could make the Arab country a back-up option in case the pandemic situation in India does not subside and may well see India play its home series against England, next year as well conducting IPL 2021 once again in the desert. The vision of those who started the Cricketers' Benefit Fund Series (CBFS) in Sharjah (in the early 80s) has achieved fruition today with two more top class venues in the Emirates available.

The IPL bio-bubble is 'full' even as the tournament tries to pick up its speed taking the attention

of a million fans away from the harsh realities of living in the new normal. The BCCI has taken all the necessary steps to ensure its smooth flow from appointing health partners, negotiating with the local authorities to give comfort to the franchisees and monitoring betting irregularities through a recently appointed agency.

The IPL juggernaut has started to roll in the heat and dust of the UAE. And, going ahead (till November 3) there will be many more challenges that Patel and his efficient team will face. Watching them during the first game, it does look like they have put aside the initial hiccups and are hell bent on executing one of the toughest tournaments in these difficult times.