

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

NELLORE | SATURDAY | 19 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WEATHER**  
Max: 34.8°C  
Min: 26.5°C  
RH: 63%  
Rainfall: Nil  
Forecast: clear.  
Max/Min  
temp. 31/25°C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+99,627)	(+1,275)
53,05,387	85,621

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,043)	(+11)
TS: 1,67,046	1,016
(+8,096)	(+67)
AP: 6,09,558	5,244

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

3,04,93,112

DEATHS

9,52,300

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/

coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvati; Dakshinayana

Tithi: Adhika-Ashwayuja Shuddha  
Dwitiya till 9.11 am and then  
Tadiya till 5.38 am (Sunday)  
Star: Chitta till 1.21 am (Sunday)  
Variyam: 11.11 am to 12.36 pm  
Durmuhurtam: 6.08 am to 7.44 am  
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 noon  
**HILIRI CALENDAR**  
Safar ul Muzaffar 1, 1442 AH  
**PRAYERS(SHAHI MASJID)**  
Fajar: 4.48 am  
Zohar: 12.05 pm  
Asar: 4.27 pm  
Maghrib: 6.12 pm  
Isha: 7.22 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.09 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM**  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW 6.40 AM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 7.54 PM**

COUNTER POINT

Thank God, there is no data!

IN BRIEF

Paytm restored on Play store

**New Delhi:** Google on Friday restored the Paytm app on its Play store after removing it for a few hours for violating its policy on sports betting activities. The app was back on the Google Play store on Friday evening after the Softbank-backed Paytm removed the 'cash-back' feature from a recently-launched game on the application.

Monsoon might be over soon: IMD

**New Delhi:** The Southwest Monsoon is likely to start withdrawing by the end of next week, the IMD said on Friday, while Odisha is bracing for heavy rainfall due to a fresh low pressure area which is likely to form over the Bay of Bengal around September 20. Rains eluded Delhi for the eleventh consecutive day on Friday, despite a rain forecast,

AP bars reopen after 6 months

**Amaravati:** After nearly six months of closure due to the Coronavirus-induced lockdown, bars would be reopened in Andhra Pradesh from Saturday. The state government, however, decided to levy a 20 per cent 'Covid-19 fee' on the basic licence of bars and also a 10 per cent additional retail excise tax on liquor.

■ **Report on Page 3**

NATION | 4

**Chinese intel mounts pressure on Muivah**

WORLD | 5

**China flies 18 warplanes during US, Taiwan talks**

SPORTS | 8

**Duplantis breaks Bubka's 26-yr-old pole vault record**

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## CORONAVIRUS AFFECTS ORGAN DONATION TOO

**KANIZA GARARI I DC**  
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 18

The waiting list for organs like kidneys, livers, corneas and heart valves has lengthened to more than six months after the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. Patients who had registered with Jeevandan, the government scheme, and with private hospitals face a long wait as it is difficult to carry out elective transplant procedures.

According to the guidelines issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research, only emergency cases where the patients are suffering from chronic failure of organs must be taken up.

Doctors are facing a challenge wherein brain dead patients are acquiring infections in the intensive care unit. These infections are leading to Covid-19 in most cases, making it difficult to harvest organs.

Those brain dead patients in facilities where infection control is upgraded can facilitate organ harvesting but their numbers are very low.

Dr Ch. Madhusudhan, head of the department of surgical gastroenterology and liver specialist at Osmania General Hospital, stated "The risk factors in brain dead donors are also high. Since they are in intensive care units, it has been noted that they are acquiring Covid-19 and that makes it difficult to harvest their organs. Those who are not infected by Covid, are very few. Infection control measures have been upgraded by all hospitals and we are only now, in the month of September, seeing a few cadaver donations."



Farmers raise slogans during a protest outside the residence of former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal against three agriculture related Bills, at Badal villagein Sri Muktsar Sahib in Punjab on Friday.

— PTI

## BJP lets Akalis quit govt with eye on Punjab polls

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 18

With less than two years to go for the Punjab Assembly elections, BJP leaders consider Prime Minister Narendra Modi's acceptance of Harsimrat Kaur Badal's resignation from the Union Cabinet over the farm Bills as a move to free the party from the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD).

For many years, the BJP's Punjab unit has been urging the central leadership to go it alone in the state as it felt that the party was not growing organisationally because it had to limit itself to urban areas as the villages are considered the SAD's stronghold.

While the central BJP is yet to react to Badal's resignation and to speculation about the continuation of the SAD in the NDA, the BJP's Punjab unit chief Ashwini

Sharma said Badal's resignation was the SAD's "political decision" and that the party was still part of the NDA.

Harsimrat Badal, who was holding the food processing industries portfolio in the Union Cabinet, resigned on Thursday and her portfolio has been allocated to agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Friday.

Speculation is rife that the BJP has started the groundwork for the 2022 Assembly polls and is in touch with former SAD leader Sukhdev Singh

Dhindsa and some state leaders are in touch with Navjot Singh Sidhu, the Congress leader.

According to the BJP's feedback, many urban voters, including youths, were unwilling to support the BJP in Punjab because of its alliance with the SAD. After the 2015 sacrilege controversy and the recent controversy over

the missing "swaroop" of Guru Granth Sahib, many Panthaks have been disappointed with the SAD. However, no prominent Sikh leader has joined the BJP because of its alliance with the SAD, stunting its growth in the state.

Showing up fault lines between the oldest allies in the NDA, the BJP enrolled a significant number of members in the Malwa region, considered to be the Badal family's stronghold, in spite of the SAD's objection.

On its part, the SAD was angry with the Modi government not heeding to its request to reconsider the introduction of agriculture Bills as its core supporters, primarily the Panthaks and farmers, have been opposing them. The ruling Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party have made the agriculture Bills a major political issue against the SAD, forcing the latter to act.

## AP yet to clear medical oxygen supply dues

**SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN I DC**  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

Dealers supplying the life-saving medical oxygen to government hospitals for treating Coronavirus-infected patients are complaining that their financial dues running into crores of rupees are to be cleared by the state government. Some dealers allege they have not been paid for oxygen supplies right from the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic.

There are just a few medical oxygen suppliers located mainly in Visakhapatnam and Sriakulam. There are 10-15 dealers who collect oxygen cylinders from them and supply to various government hospitals in all the 13 districts where Covid-19 patients are being treated. Dealers are now saying that unless they pay manufacturers, they will be unable to get oxygen for making supplies to hospitals. A medical oxygen

## 14 docs die in Covid care, no relief given

**D. SIVA RAMI REDDI I DC**  
KURNOOL, SEPT. 18

At least 14 government doctors died of Covid-19 while rendering their services in Andhra Pradesh so far. Yet none of them received any compensation so far.

The Central government announced ₹50 lakh while it also said it will give another ₹50 lakh, said a doctor.

Doctors are risking their

lives for nothing.

In Kurnool district alone, three doctors died of Covid-19 while providing medical services, said a doctor.

One doctor worked continuously for seven days without taking a break during the height of the virus spread, when the case load was between 800-1000 per day in Kurnool district.

■ **Page 3: Doctor lost his eye due to infection**

supplier based in Visakhapatnam said, "We used to get medical oxygen from manufacturers at about ₹12.50 per cubic metre before Covid-19. At present, it costs ₹19-21. Though the Drugs Control Administration has fixed

its cost at ₹16.50, it is available to the end user at ₹17.49 including handling, transport and other costs. We supply medical oxygen to dealers on one-month credit basis. Some dealers complained of not receiving their payments from

government hospitals." Sources privy to this development say the state government owes ₹2 crore on an average to each dealer since the outbreak of Covid-19 in March.

A dealer from Guntur said, "We are borrowing money to pay suppliers of medical oxygen, so that we can continue the supply it to government hospitals, as it is essential for saving the lives of Covid-19 patients. As we were not paid for months, we are even planning to serve a notice that no medical oxygen supplies will be made unless dues are cleared."

Medical education director Dr. K. Venkatesh said, "We have no issues of payment with our long-term suppliers of medical oxygen, as they supply us on credit basis. We will pay them once we get a budget grant. However, there may be issues with short-term suppliers, whom collectors have roped in. Those dues will also be cleared after grants are released."

## BUSES TO RESUME SERVICE IN VIZAG, VIJAYAWADA

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

Given the examinations being conducted for the posts in the Village and Ward secretariats, the city buses would resume services from Saturday in Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam cities.

M.T. Krishna Babu, the principal secretary of transport and R&B addressing the media on Friday said that the city buses would run as per the Covid-19 guidelines issued by the health department making people sit on alternate seats in the buses.

He stated that no standing passengers would be allowed in buses.

■ **Page 3: Temperature of passengers at every stop**

## Sea surge leads to panic in EG mandal

**VADREVVU SRINIVAS I DC**  
KAKINADA, SEPT. 18

There was a surge of sea waters near S. Yanam shore in Uppalaguptam mandal of East Godavari district on Friday. It breached the nearby sand dunes and flooded drains and aqua ponds besides paddy fields in the vicinity.

People fear that water may flood even villages. But, water went to the Kunavaram drain near Gachakalapora village, covering a distance of 20 km through S. Yanam, Challapalli and Pallipalem villages.

Fishing gear was damaged by sea waters even as some fishermen went

filed against him by the Yogi Adityanath government as he had exposed corruption and scams taking place in the state. Singh said he will visit UP on Sunday and get himself arrested. "I know I will be sent to jail soon. Why? Just because I raised the issue of killings and scams in UP," said the AAP leader.

# Anurag's remark sets off LS furore

## Minister accuses Gandhis of corruption when Oppn criticised Centre for PM-Cares Fund

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 18

There was high drama in the Lok Sabha as minister of state for finance Anurag Thakur made disparaging remarks about the Nehru-Gandhi family, which led to several adjournments, as Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Ranjan Choudhury called him "a chhokra from Himachal Pradesh".

Later, the proceedings resumed only at 6 pm after four adjournments, when Mr Thakur "apologised" to the House, saying he was "pained" if his words had hurt anyone, on the insistence of Speaker Om Birla.

Earlier, the trouble began when during the introduction of the Taxation and Other Laws (Relaxation and Amendment of Certain Provision) Bill by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Opposition members criticised the

● Countering opposition parties criticism of PM-Cares Fund, MoS finance Anurag Thakur accused the Gandhi family of cheating people through creation of various funds.

● After criticism by opposition parties, Thakur apologised to the House on the insistence of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

PM-Cares fund's validity. Mr Thakur counter-attacked immediately and accused the Gandhi family of "cheating" people by pooling public money through creation of various funds under different names.

While Opposition leaders — Shashi Tharoor, Manish Tewari and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury — were critical of the PM-Cares fund during the dis-

cussion on the legislation, Mr Thakur said: "From the High Court to the Supreme Court, all courts have validated the PM-Cares fund. Even children have contributed to it from their piggy banks. Nehru had set up a fund that has not been registered to date. You (Congress) only made a trust for the benefit of the Gandhi family. You made Sonia Gandhi its chairman. It should be probed." "Nehruji ordered the creation of Prime Minister's National Relief Fund in 1948 like a royal order, but its registration has not been done even till today. How did it get FCRA clearance?" Mr Thakur sought to know.

This irked the Opposition and Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury lashed out at Mr Thakur, calling him a *chhokra*, demanding an apology for maligning the Nehru-Gandhi family.

## Rules cited, RS doesn't hear AAP MP's plea on UP cases

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
*with agency inputs*  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 18

AAP leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh on Friday tried to raise the issue of FIRs filed against him, including for alleged sedition, by the UP government in the Rajya Sabha on Friday but was not allowed to do so as

the House was taking up listed business.

"In the Rajya Sabha, 37 MPs from 12 parties, including the Congress and the NCP, supported me and I was also assured by the Rajya Sabha Chairman that the matter will be looked into," Singh told reporters later outside Parliament.

He said cases had been

**SATURDAY NIGHT | FEVER**

**Champions Mumbai Indians to take on Chennai Super Kings**

## Derby in Dhabi: IPL kicks off today

**MOSES KONDETY I DC**  
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 18

Coronavirus may have left the world on a sticky wicket but cricketers have queered the pitch, moved up a gear and decided to bat on regardless. India's favour-it bash starts with a Derby in Abu Dhabi as defending champions Mumbai Indians square up against last year's runner-up Chennai Super Kings in a grudge match on

Saturday night. The IPL is here. Finally.

Postponed from April-May and forced out to the UAE, the annual extravaganza will involve 60 matches in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah's empty stadia over 53 days before the 2020 champion is decided.

Live television will provide succour to fans though, making it a case of so far yet so near, and dear. Broadcasters are plan-

ning to insert artificial spectator sounds like in football matches but the decibel levels in drawing rooms will be real high during the slam-bang slugfests.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly predicts high viewership. "Crowds will watch it on television... they (the broadcasters) are actually expecting the highest rating of IPL this season. There is a positive in everything," he has said

recently.

This would only be the third occasion when IPL has been played abroad — after general elections in India prompted the 2009 edition to be held in South Africa and 2014 event to be partly conducted in UAE.

Back to ground, three of the eight teams in fray are yet to win the coveted championship. The Delhi Capitals, Kings XI Punjab and Royal Challengers Bangalore will throw all

their might at rivals this time around to lay hands on that twinkling trophy.

Led by top gun Virat Kohli, RCB has fired big as well as blanks. The team has the highest as well as lowest totals in IPL history and has been beaten in the finals twice, in 2009 and 2015. Their captain is the highest run-getter but is yet to take his team to the presentation podium, providing enough fodder to critics.



## SHORT TAKES

**Brahmotsavams to conclude Sept. 27**

**From Page 1:** Brahmotsavams will conclude on September 27 with Chakrasnanam, which will be observed at Swamy Pushkarini in Tirumala in ekantham. Important events include Garuda Vahanam on September 23, Golden Chariot on 24, Rathotsavam on 26th and Chakra Snamam on September 27. All vahana sevas will be held inside the temple. TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy, along with senior officials like Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal, Additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy, JEO P. Basant Kumar and CV&SO Gopinath Jatti oversaw the preparations to ensure fool-proof celebrations amid the wonderfully illuminated landscape.

**₹1 CESS ON PETROL, DIESEL PER LITRE**

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18**

The Andhra Pradesh government has issued an ordinance amending the AP Value Added Tax Act, 2005 to levy and collect a road development cess of ₹1 per litre of petrol and diesel in the state.

The Governor promulgated the ordinance here on Friday and, accordingly, all the proceeds of road development cess, estimated at around ₹500 crore per annum, are to be transferred to AP road development corporation for exclusive use in the development of road infrastructure in the state.

Revenue special chief secretary, Dr Rajat Bhargava, justified the levy of the one rupee cess on petrol and diesel by saying that the revenues of the state plummeted to ₹1,323 crore in April, 2020 against ₹4,480 crore in April, 2019 following the cessation of all economic activity due to the lockdown. He said that similar trends were observed in state revenues for the months of May, June, July, August, 2020 and added that the centre also had not released AP's share of GST compensation for 2020-21 so far.

**EX-OFFICIAL ALLEGES ₹800-CR SCAM IN APSFL**

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18**

A former official of APSFL alleged that an ₹800 crore scam was conducted during the previous Telugu Desam government.

K. Gouri Sankar, former ED, business operations, APSFL, alleged that about ₹800 crore were siphoned off in Andhra Pradesh State Fibernet Limited (APSFL) during the previous TD government. Addressing the media here on Friday he alleged that Vemuri Hari Krishna Prasad, former adviser APSFL, was involved in the scam and awarded contracts related to APSFL to companies related to his kith and kin.

Alleging that Prasad operated various illegal activities, giving contracts to his sister concerns like Terra Soft and Netops fiber solutions LLP, Carpus solutions and other companies, Mr Sankar stated that Mr Prasad gave a ₹320 crore phase 1 fiber laying tender to Terra Soft and got kick-backs. He further alleged that the eligibility clause for participating in the Phase I fiber laying tender was fabricated to clinch the order. He called for an open debate on the various scams in APSFL committed by Prasad.

**YSRC DEMANDS CBI PROBE IN AMARAVATI SCAM**

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18**

YSR Congress MPs continued their protest at the Mahatma Gandhi statue in Parliament for the second day on Friday, demanding a CBI probe into Amaravati land and AP Fibernet scams.

Speaking on the occasion, YSR Congress general secretary and MP V. Vijaya Sai Reddy said the High Court stay on SIT probe and gag order on the media were not in the true spirit of Constitution and democracy.

Citing Sections of Prevention of Corruption Act, Mr Reddy said the stay was not justified unless there were special and extraordinary circumstances. He was of the view that judiciary could order a CBI probe instead of staying the investigation by SIT.

**Monsoon musings**

Above: Irrigation officials open all crest gates of Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada on Friday

Left: Sudden rainfall in Vijayawada on Friday.

Right: Uppalaguptam tahsildar I. Padmavathi visits S Yanam seashore to inspect breaches on Friday.

— DC

**Arrest of BJP men creates tension in Amalapuram****Chamber of Commerce gave a call to traders to voluntarily close shutters**

**VADREVU SRINIVAS I DC KAKINADA, SEPT. 18**

Tension gripped Amalapuram in East Godavari district on Friday as BJP leaders and activists tried to lay siege of the RDO office in protest against chariot burning incident at Antarvedi in Sakshinipati mandal in Konaseema.

According to police, as many as 291 activists were arrested in the last two days. Of them, 70 were detained on Friday and released on bail by evening. The police seized all roads towards Amalapuram and Antarvedi and it looked like a curfew situation with people of the town preferring to stay indoors. Amalapuram Chamber of Commerce earlier gave a call to traders to voluntarily close their shutters.

According to sources, some leaders who eluded arrest came on to the streets and raised slogans. Meanwhile, party workers made an attempt to storm the office of the Revenue Divisional Office to register their protest against the chariot burning incident at Antarvedi temple.

Those who tried to storm the RDO office included MLC P.V.N. Madhav, state General Secretary Vetukuri Suryanarayana Raju, Amalapuram district president M. Ayyaji Vema, S. Yamini. The



Police drags the BJP activists at Amalapuram on Friday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

**BJP'S PROTEST POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, SAYS VEDIKA**

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18**

Brahmana Adhyana Vedika has termed BJP's protests politically motivated. YSR Congress leader and BAV member Konuri Satish Sarma on

Friday took exception to BJP's call for 'chalo Amalapuram' to protest burning of the chariot at Antarvedi temple. Even though the government ordered a CBI probe, the BJP was trying to stoke trouble. Addressing a

press conference at Guntur, he said that the chariot burning incident was unfortunate and the government swiftly responded by ordering a CBI probe and sanctioning funds for a new chariot.

stand, while Ms Yamini said that some unknown persons stoned a prayer house at Antarvedi and they were arrested.

Eluru Range DIG clarified that prohibitory orders under Section 144 and Section 30 were in force and therefore, the police did not allow groups of people and crowds of people to stage protests.

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**BJP's 'chalo Amalapuram' plan foiled**

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18**

Police on Friday foiled BJP's 'chalo Amalapuram' plan by keeping party leaders under house arrest at various place. State BJP president Somu Veerraju expressed his anger over the house-arrest of the leaders and alleged that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was neglecting protection of Hindu temples. He warned that the YSRC government would facing dire consequences of public anger and demanded resignation of the endowment minister.

State BJP general secretary Vishnuvardhan Reddy alleged that the police forcibly put him in their custody for 20 hours and released him on Friday night at Gudivada police station. He alleged that YSRC government was trying to create fear by using police. But BJP would not be daunted by these actions and would fight for the protection of temples. He expressed suspicion that the government was trying to shield the officials whose negligence led to attacks on temples.

Incidentally, about 2,061 men have committed suicide or insecticide and 1,685 men by self-immolation, while for women the figures stand at 680 and 693 respectively.

The figure for men com-

**Family disputes, illness remain top causes of suicide**

**AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM I DC TIRUPATI, SEPT. 18**

Unable to bear the disturbances in her married life, a 26-year-old woman pushed her two children into a local water body and ended her own life by jumping into the same waters near Thalakona in Chittoor district last week.

Police investigation into the incident revealed that family disputes drove the woman to take the extreme step.

In another case, a 31-year-old man killed his four-year-old daughter and later hanged himself in a hotel room, last week in Chittoor city. In his last words recorded in a selfie video, he said, "I have no option but to take the extreme step as my ex-wife and her paramour were torturing my daughter. Though I have approached the court to get custody of my daughter, no justice was done to me."

These are not isolated cases of death by suicide and murder reported in the state last year. The latest report of the national crime records bureau (NCRB) show that family disputes account for 26.3 per cent and illness accounts for 28.5 per cent of total suicides reported in AP in 2019. The data demonstrate that these two issues alone drive more people to death by suicide.

Going by the NCRB's report, a total of 6,465 persons — 4,740 men and 1,725 women — have ended their lives in the state last year, accounting for 4.64 per cent of total suicides in the country (1,39,123). The report says

Psychiatrists opine that suicides due to family disputes and illness have become an epidemic in the state. They suggest that a comprehensive public health approach is needed to prevent suicides

the state has recorded 21 per cent of increase in suicides during 2019 over 2018 (5,319).

In all, 1,706 persons (M- 1,187, F-519) and 1,845 persons (M-1,178, F-667), ended their lives due to family problems "not related to marriage" and illness respectively. These two causes consistently top the list of causes for suicides in the state.

Problems such as bankruptcy or debt accounted for 828 (M-773, F-55) deaths, followed by love affairs, 179 cases (M-125, F-54), marriage-related issues, 151 (M-73, F-78), failure in exams, 93 (M-54, F-39), poverty, 53 (M-42, F-11), unemployment, 71 (M-62, F-9) are the main other causes separately in the list.

Psychiatrists opine that suicides due to family disputes and illness have become an epidemic in the state. They suggest that a comprehensive public health approach is needed to prevent suicides and teaching coping and problem-solving skills will also help people manage challenges. They also suggest the expansion of options in temporary assistance for those in need and connecting people at risk to effective and coordinated mental and physical health care.

**Poison tops list in means for death**

**DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, SEPT. 18**

The annual data for "accidental deaths and suicides in India, 2019," by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reveals that among the means adopted for killing oneself, consuming poison or insecticide tops the list. 2,741 cases of the total 6,465 suicidal deaths in Andhra Pradesh last year adopted this means.

This is followed by hanging — 2,378, jumping off heights/moving trains and vehicles, 594 (M- 520, F- 74), drowning, 358 (M- 219, F- 139), self-immolation - 125 (M- 64, F- 61) and other means, 269.

Out of the total suicides, about 4,740 i.e. 73.3 per cent of the suicides are committed by men, while women, 1,725, account for 26.6 per cent.

Incidentally, about 2,061 men have committed suicide or insecticide and 1,685 men by self-immolation, while for women the figures stand at 680 and 693 respectively.

The figure for men com-

mitting suicide by both means is reasonably high, while more women are committing suicide by self-immolation.

The data also demonstrated that, on an average, every day (last year) at least 17 people committed suicide in the state. In terms of marital status, 4,572 (M- 3458, F- 1,114) married persons ended their lives, while unmarried persons were 1,453 (M- 996, F- 467) and widowed/widowers were 112 (M- 31, F- 80).

A worrying factor was that out of the total suicides, the number of victims involving farmers and farmhands in the state has increased to 1,029 from 664 in 2018 and the state stood third in the country in terms of such suicides.

Meanwhile, of the total suicide victims, majority have education. About 2,313 (M- 1,679, F- 634) victims have Class X or above education, while 1,005 (M- 748, F- 257) have mid-level education, 1,237 (M- 917, F- 321) have primary education and 1,700 (M- 1,199, F- 501) have no education at all.

**BCs DEMAND 50% GOVT CONTRACTS**

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18**

Backward Classes Welfare Association president Kesana Sankar Rao on Friday submitted a memorandum to BC Commission chairman Justice Sankara Narayana, stating that people belonging to BCs were being subjected to humili-

ation. The memorandum also spoke of growing atrocities against women.

The leaders of 13 backward class associations met Justice Sankara Narayana here on Friday.

He demanded allocation of 50 per cent of government contracts, house sites and houses and full fee reimbursement to backward classes.

**APPCB cautions against fake officials**

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18**

Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board authorities have cautioned the owners of industries that fraudsters claiming to be from PCB, may demand money from them.

The APPCB authorities, in a release issued here on Friday, stated that they had come across a few instances, where some

persons claiming to be PCB officers demanded money from industrialists.

APPCB member-secretary Vivek Yadav said, "It has come to our notice that some persons impersonate themselves as officers of APPCB and contact owners of industries in various districts in the state and demand money. The APPCB has already initiated criminal pro-

ceedings against such callers and the police inquiry is on. The owners of industries and compa-

nies and the general public are advised to remain vigilant and alert the police. They should notify APPCB on phone number 7993477763, if they are approached by fraudsters."

The APPCB cited the example of one Shankar Reddy who called up some industrialists in Srikakulam and Guntur districts from the phone number 8008445437, claim-

ing to be from APPCB and demanded money. The caller asked them to transfer money on Googlepay through phone No 7093993736.

The industrialists and the PCB complained at local police stations. Inquiry conducted by the police traced the phone signal to Kalloor village in Chittoor district and the payment account details to Tirupati.



## OTHER STORIES

**Backwaters flood 14 villages in Kadapa**

**Kadapa:** The backwaters of Somasila reservoir has flooded 14 villages in Atluru mandal in Kadapa district. As a result, road transport facilities to the villages have been disrupted. The water level in the reservoir reached 75 TMC feet as against its full capacity of 78 TMC feet on Friday. With the rising Somsila reservoir backwater, 3.5 feet water flowed over the Vemalur bridge, paralysing traffic to 14 villages in Atluru mandal. Several people had to take a 35-km detour via Badvel to reach Atluru. According to sources, officials are planning to maintain full water capacity in the reservoir.

**Water enters homes in Neelapuram village**

**Kadapa:** On Thursday late night water entered the houses in Neelapuram village in Duvvur mandal of Kadapa district. On Friday morning the water level was more than one and a half feet. However, by 6 pm in the evening the water began to recede slightly. The Duvvur pond in the village was already filled with rainwater. With the additional rains, there was no space for the water to flow out resulting in the flooding.

**34,087 appeared for AP Eamcet-2020**

**Kakinada:** As many as 34,087 students appeared for the AP Eamcet-2020 examinations on Friday out of the 42,019. Around 83.10 per cent turnout was registered, and 6,932 students did not attend the exam. The AP Eamcet-2020 convener Prof V. Ravindra said that 16,474 students out of 19,987 (82.42 per cent) attended the morning session out of which 3,513 were absent. In the afternoon session 17,613 students attend out of 21,032 (83.74 per cent) and 3,419 were absent.

The Eamcet chairman and JNTUK vice-chancellor Prof M. Ramalinga Raju and Mr Ravindra visited the examination centre in Kakinada. As many as 808 students from Anantapur, 1,041 from Chittoor, 1,481 from East Godavari, 2,028 from Guntur, 971 from Kadapa, 1,654 from Krishna, 904 from Kurnool, 927 from Nellore, 1,048 from Prakasam, 743 from Srikakulam, 1,852 from Visakhapatnam, 578 from Vizianagaram, 1,233 from West Godavari district and 1,205 students from Hyderabad (Telangana) attended the exam. Mr Ravindra said that the examinations were held peacefully.

**RTC runs special buses for candidates**

**Kakinada:** The Rajahmundry APSRTC will run 176 special buses for candidates appearing for the Village Secretariat examinations to be held from September 20 to 26. The buses will start at 5 am from the mandal headquarters. Meanwhile, RTC officials said that buses coming to Rajahmundry from agency areas like Chinturu, Kunavaram, Nelliapaka and V.R.Puram are already plying from Friday evening from Kunavaram to Rajahmundry.

The East Godavari District collector D.Muralidhar Reddy said that as many as 1,06,449 candidates for 26 services in village secretariat posts of 1,388 will appear of which 1,877 are disabled candidates. He said that 336 examination centres have been allotted. Candidates will not be allowed even a minute late. West Godavari District Collector R.Muthyala Raju said that as many as 74,711 candidates will appear for the village secretariat post examinations in West Godavari District.

He said that all Covid-19 protocols are being followed and Covid-19 patients would be accommodated in isolation rooms to write the exams.

**MP: Lower electricity wheeling charges**

**Kurnool:** Rajya Sabha MP T.G. Venkatesh demanded that the electricity wheeling charges be rationalised and brought on par with global tariffs. While globally wheeling charges is just 40 paise per unit, the electricity boards is charging ₹4 while the generation cost of one unit of power is ₹3, he said. Speaking in the Rajya Sabha on Friday, the MP said that industries are closed due to the high wheeling charges in Andhra Pradesh.

He said many coal power projects have been closed because of the excessive wheeling charges levied by the electricity boards. Thermal power Units in Nellore and Odisha are closed as consumers are not purchasing power due to high rates. About ₹1 lakh crore was invested in these units which have now incurred heavy losses.

**Getting ready to move**

RTC employees clean and sanitise a city bus at Governorpet depot in Vijayawada on Friday, ahead of the resumption of services after six months of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. — C. NARAYANA RAO

**AP records 8,096 new Covid cases, 67 deaths**

E. Godavari continues to lead with the highest new cases

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

Andhra Pradesh has registered 8,096 new Covid-19 cases, raising the overall tally to 6,09,558, apart from 67 deaths, taking the death toll to 5,244 in the last 24 hours.

State health authorities have released the Coronavirus bulletin here on Friday reporting that out of 74,710 samples tested, 8,096 individuals have tested Covid-19 positive. Out of total 49,59,081 samples tested so far in the state, 5,19,891 patients have been discharged after recovery, while 84,423 patients are undergoing treatment for the virus in various hospitals across the state.

East Godavari continues to lead the state with the highest number of 1,405 new confirmed Coronavirus cases, followed by 1,035 in West Godavari, 902 in Chittoor, 713 in Prakasam, 513 in Guntur, 496 in Srikakulam, 487 each in Vizianagaram and Krishna, 468 in Nellore, 463 in Anantapur, 419 in Kadapa, 371 in Visakhapatnam, and 337 in Kurnool.

With regard to cumulative Covid-19 cases, East Godavari has been the worst-hit district with 83,852 cases, followed by 55,670 in West Godavari, 53,435 in Kurnool, 53,323 in Chittoor, 51,821 in Anantapur, 48,393 in Guntur, 46,590 in Nellore, 46,057 in Visakhapatnam, 40,156 in Prakasam, 38,744 in Kadapa, 34,983 in Srikakulam, 30,516 in Vizianagaram, 23,123 in Krishna district, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery among patients from Covid-19 has been good in East Godavari with 71,227 recoveries, followed by 49,280 in Kurnool, 48,104 in Anantapur, 46,503 in West Godavari, 44,929 in Chittoor, 42,763 in Nellore, 41,330 in Visakhapatnam, 40,934 in Guntur, 33,744 in Kadapa, 28,722 in Srikakulam, 28,055 in Prakasam,

**HC HEARS PIL ON SEEKING STOPPAGE OF PROPERTY SALE**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 18

AP High Court has held a hearing on a petition seeking stoppage of sale of government properties for 'Mission Build AP' here on Friday.

The HC bench comprising justice Rakesh Kumar and justice J. Uma Devi heard the PIL filed by social activist Suresh. In the course of arguments in the case, the additional advocate general P. Sudhakar Reddy commented that they wanted to run for which the court asked him whether he intended the court or the petitioners.

The additional AG clarified by saying that he meant the petitioners and not the court.

**Doctor lost his eye due to infection**

From page 1

Another doctor lost his eye due to the coronavirus infection. The eye was removed as he was diabetic and his lungs had heavy infection, said a doctor. "We are risking our lived serving Covid-19 patients. But the government has not kept its promise of ₹50 lakh compensation," he said.

In a statement, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) alleged that the union health minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan's, statement to Lok Sabha had concealed the morbidity and mortality of doctors, nurses and health care workers. This indifference to the sacrifice of doctors and health care workers is the reality of Covid-19. It appears that they are dispensable.

The IMA further said, "No nation has lost as many doctors and health care workers as India. Doctor mortality is four times the mortality of ordinary citizens and private practitioners is eight times ordinary mortality on the same

scale."

A Kurnool district medical and health officer (DMHO) said that at least six government medical staff died due to Covid-19. One staff nurse, a lab technician, an ophthalmic assistant, a medical educator died. He said the details have been sent to higher authorities about their claim petitions for compensation. He said ₹50 lakh compensation would only be given to government staff and not private doctors.

The IMA found fault with Vardhan who said that public health and hospitals come under the state and so the insurance compensation data is not available with the Central government. This amounts to abdication of duty and abandonment of doctors who have stood up for patients. IMA finds it strange that after having formulated an unfriendly partial insurance scheme for bereaved families, a struggle with the ignominy of the government disowning them altogether stares at them.

21,681 in Vizianagaram, 19,724 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Among new cases of deaths due to Covid-19, Kadapa has registered eight deaths, followed by seven each in Chittoor and Krishna, six each in East Godavari, Guntur and Visakhapatnam, five each in Anantapur, Nellore and Srikakulam, four in West Godavari, three each in Prakasam and Vizianagaram, and two in Kurnool.

With regard to cumulative deaths, Chittoor has recorded the highest number of 571 deaths, followed by 487 in Guntur, 478 in East Godavari, 437 in Kurnool,

434 in Anantapur, 416 in Nellore, 409 in West Godavari, 408 in Prakasam, 380 in Visakhapatnam, 374 in Krishna, 335 in Kadapa, 305 in Srikakulam, and 210 in Vizianagaram.

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SHORT TAKES

COVID-19 DEATH TOLL CLOSE TO 85,000-MARK

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 18

With 96,424 fresh cases, India on Friday recorded close to 52.15 lakh cases of Coronavirus. The number of deaths in a day was 1,174 taking the total number of fatalities due to Covid-19 to 84,372, as per Union health ministry figures. However, according to covid19india.org, the total number of cases had crossed 52.50 lakh by Friday evening and deaths were close to 85,000.

Health ministry officials said India has recorded an “unprecedented high” of single day recoveries after 87,472 persons recovered and discharged in the past 24 hours. The Recovery Rate has reached 78.86% as total recovered cases touched 41.12 lakh. India’s Case Fatality Rate (CFR) currently stands at 1.62%.

“India has been consistently reporting a very high level of daily recoveries of more than 70,000 for the past 11 days. Recovered cases are 4.04 times the number of active cases as recoveries outnumber the latter by 30,94,797,” they said.

Officials said 90 per cent of the new recoveries are reported from 16 states and Union Territories. Maharashtra (19,522) contributed 22.31% of the new recoveries while Andhra Pradesh (12,24%), Karnataka (8.3%), Tamil Nadu (6.31%) and Chhattisgarh (6.0%) followed with 32.8% of the new recoveries.

In view of rising cases in the city, Delhi government has announced to continue closure of schools till October 5.

Meanwhile, ministry of health and family welfare has decided to depute a high level Central team to Jammu after a high number of cases were reported from there.

Earlier, a special team had visited Srinagar Valley to review Covid management with the district collectors. The current Central team too will interact with the district collectors and visit hospitals in Bakshinagar and Gandhinagar.

The total number of confirmed Covid cases in Jammu is 9,428. Of these, 3,196 have recovered. Covid deaths are reported to be 117.

There are 6,115 active cases in the district. The total cases one week ago were 6,878. Jammu has been reporting Doubling Time of 15.4 days, Recovery Rate of 33.9% and CFR of 1.24%.

Meanwhile, Kerala on Friday reported 4,167 new cases of Covid-19 taking the total number of infected persons in the state to 1,26,381.

Of the total cases, 90,089 persons have recovered and 35,724 patients are under treatment in various hospitals across the state.

Of the new cases on Friday, 3,849 persons contracted the infection through contact, the source of infection among 410 is yet to be traced, 48 came from abroad, 165 from other states and 102 health workers got infected. As many as 2,744 persons recovered from infection.

The state recorded 12 more deaths taking the official toll to 501.

# Army admits to killing of three J&K youths

Army finds evidence against its men in Shopian encounter

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, SEPT. 18

The Army on Friday admitted that three youths of Jammu and Kashmir’s frontier Rajouri district who had disappeared a day after their arrival in Shopian district in July to work as labourers in a local apple orchard to earn livelihood were killed by its troops during an “operation”.

It said that “disciplinary action” is being initiated by it under the Army Act against the officers and soldiers involved in the operation as the inquiry conducted by it “has brought out certain prima facie evidence indicating that, during the operation, powers vested under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 1990 were exceeded and the Do’s and Don’ts of Chief of Army Staff (COAS) as approved by the Hon’ble Supreme Court have been contravened”.

It has said that the slain men’s “involvement with terrorism or related activities is under investigation by the J&K police”.

According to the families of three labourers Muhammad Imtiaz, Abrar Ahmed Khan and Abrar Yusuf, the trio were killed by the troops in a fake encounter in Shopian’s Amshipora area on July 18. A night before, the youths had informed their respective families over the phone that they had reached Shopian where they had been hired by a local fruit grower to work in his apple orchard.

After their killing, the Army had passed them off as “terrorists”.

## ‘Action taken must be transparent’

Srinagar, Sept. 18: National Conference leader Omar Abdullah on Friday said the process of disciplinary action against those found guilty of killing three young men from Rajouri in an alleged fake encounter in Shopian should be transparent.

“The families of the three murdered men had continued to proclaim their innocence. Disciplinary action initiated by the army would suggest the army agrees with the families. The

process must remain transparent & the guilty must face the full weight of the law,” Omar tweeted.

He was reacting after the Army said it has found “prima facie” evidence that its troops “exceeded” powers under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act during an encounter in Kashmir’s Shopian district in which three men were killed in July this year and has initiated disciplinary proceedings.

— PTI

Earlier this month, the families accused both the Army and the J&K police of dilly-dallying in the probes ordered by them separately into their complaint.

In a letter to J&K’s Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, they sought his personal intervention into the matter. They also demanded that an impartial and fair inquiry be held, the DNA reports made public and, if it is established that their kin are the same youth who were killed in the purported July 18 encounter at Amshipora, they be allowed to exhume their bodies so that the victims are given a decent burial by them.

Sinha had while speaking to reporters here on September 14 assured that justice would be done with the families of slain youths.

He had said, “The Army has ordered its own inquiry and the administration is doing its own probe. I want to assure that justice will be done.”

J&K’s DG Police, Dilbag Singh, said on Thursday that the DNA reports in the case would be made public soon.

The DNA samples of the parents and siblings of the missing youth were collected from Rajouri under the aegis of Jammu and Kashmir Police in August and subsequently sent for matching with the trio killed on July 18.

Defence spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia, said here on Friday that the inquiry ordered by the Army authorities into Operation Amshipora has been concluded.

He said that since the inquiry has brought out certain prima facie evi-

dence indicating that during the operation, powers vested under the AFSPA 1990 were exceeded and the Do’s and Don’ts of the Army Chief as approved by the Supreme Court were contravened, the competent disciplinary authority has directed to initiate “disciplinary proceedings under the Army Act against those found prima facie answerable”.

He added, “The evidence collected by the inquiry has prima facie indicated that the three unidentified terrorists killed in Operation Amshipora were Muhammad Imtiaz, Abrar Ahmed Khan and Abrar Yusuf, who hailed from Rajouri. Their DNA report is awaited. Their involvement with terrorism or related activities is under investigation by the police.”

He said, “Indian Army is committed to ethical conduct of operations. Further updates on the case will be given periodically without affecting due process of the law of the land”.

Last month, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch called for investigation and prosecution into the alleged extrajudicial execution of the three labourers by independent civilian authorities, saying civilian investigations and trials “offer a degree of transparency and independence that is missing from the military justice system”.

Various political parties and human rights activists in J&K too demanded an impartial probe into the alleged staged encounter.

# Chinese intel mounts pressure on Muivah

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, SEPT. 18

The Chinese government has not only been snooping on over 10,000 Indian individuals and organisations through a global database but its Intelligence agencies have been working in the northeast to rope in rebel leaders to create “internal” unrest and delay the ongoing peace process in the region.

Disclosing that Chinese Intelligence agencies wanted NSCN (I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah to delay the settlement of ongoing Naga peace-talks, authoritative security sources told this newspaper that the Union government had prior input about the ongoing attempt of China.

Informing that the action of Chinese agencies coincided with problem in Galwan Valley in June, security sources said that it was almost the same time when NSCN (I-M) general secretary after agreeing on all the major issues suddenly changed his stand and started raising some of the irrelevant issues about the interlocutor.

Asserting that the ministry of home affairs had such inputs of China trying

● **REPORTS STATE** that the Chinese Intelligence agencies have been working in the northeast to rope in rebel leaders to create ‘internal’ unrest and delay the ongoing peace process in the region.

● **SECURITY SOURCES** disclose that Chinese Intelligence agencies wanted NSCN (I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah to delay the settlement of ongoing Naga peace-talks.

to create problems in the northeast, security sources claimed that Chinese agencies have very strong connection with NSCN (I-M) leaders who had been taking shelter in China since 1966 before the ceasefire agreement was signed.

Claiming that intelligence inputs were corroborated with NSCN (I-M) general secretary taking hostage to Naga peace process by raising some rhetorical issues, security sources said that all these started in June. The NSCN (I-M) also started laying more stress on demand for a separate flag and constitution once again in June.

It is significant that the Centre had outrightly rejected the demand of a separate “flag and constitution” in October 2019.

Apart from the civil society groups, all the stakeholders of Nagaland including NNPGs have said their discussion with the Centre has concluded and the “agreed position” has been signed.

The Forum for Naga Reconciliation, which is leading the voice for reconciliation between NSCN(IM) and NNPG, are also saying that it is time for these two Naga political groups to meet and take forward the unfinished task of reconciliation.

Meanwhile, NSCN (I-M) chairman Q. Tuccu, vice president Tongmeth Wangnao and 13 others have also reached New Delhi to join general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah in the ongoing informal talks but differences among the rank and file of the NSCN (I-M) was quite visible as its chairman Q. Tuccu and his team has been living at a separate location in New Delhi.

However, the Centre has facilitated accommodation for both the chairman and the general secretary at one place.

# Odisha sees a spurt in ganja peddling

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 18

A section of people in Odisha reportedly got active in ganja (cannabis) peddling owing to their links in other states by taking advantage of Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown and shutdown restrictions. Deployment of police personnel in Covid duty has provided them the much needed opportunity for unrestricted movement on highways and seamless transportation of the contraband.

In the past one week, the state excise department officials and police personnel have seized ganja worth about ₹1 crore and arrested nearly six people.

The seized ganja was being transported to different districts in Odisha and to other states also. Odisha cannabis is sold between ₹5 lakh and ₹8 lakh per quintal in domestic markets.

On Friday morning, the excise department officials intercepted a Mahindra Bolero vehicle at Bharatpur on the outskirts of capital city Bhubaneswar and seized 93 kilograms of the cannabis hidden in three specially designed chambers placed under the front and rear seats.

Two persons were arrested in connection with the transportation of the contraband. The market price of the seized ganja was estimated to be worth ₹5 lakh.

Minutes later, the excise department sleuths inter-

cepted a mini-truck bearing Chhattisgarh registration number at Chandiput-Luhagudi in Gajapati district and seized seven quintals of ganja worth ₹35 lakh.

On Sept. 8 and Sept. 11 the excise department officials had also seized ganja worth over ₹16 lakh from two separate places on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar city.

A couple of days ago, two persons from Uttar Pradesh using a car with Army logo were arrested while transporting ganja in their vehicle.

Surprisingly, ganja traders have become more active ever since the lockdown process started as the demand for the contraband increased following the shutting down of liquor shops. Even though lockdown restrictions have been removed, ganja still remains in high demand for booters because of its affordability.

“With liquor prices registering steep high due to imposition of 50 per cent (now reduced to 15 per cent) Covid tax, booters find ganja an easy substitute,” said Dr Ramachandra Behera, a resident of Rayagada.

The local youths in tribal areas are encouraging villagers in inaccessible forest and hilly areas of Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Gajapati and Nagarhar districts to undertake ganja cultivation by promising them hefty remuneration.

# Fashion designer found dead at Kolkata residence

RAJIB CHOWDHURY | DC KOLKATA, SEPT. 18

Renowned fashion designer Sharbari Dutta, who earned accolades for her creations in Bollywood and Tollywood, was found dead with a leg injury and blood on face at her home in South Kolkata under mysterious circumstances early Friday. She was the daughter of Bengali poet Ajit Dutta.

While her Facebook profile shows May 7, 1957 as her date of birth reflecting her to be aged 63, the Kolkata Police, however, found it 78 actually after talking to her family members.

Dutta’s body was recovered by her son Amalin, also a fashion designer, and daughter-in-law Kanaklata from the ground floor bathroom of their two-storeyed residence on Broad Street at around

12.30 am. Amalin and Kanaklata, living at the first floor, said they went down to search for Dutta at the ground floor, where she used to stay, after getting calls from the members of a photo-shoot team which failed to connect with the fashion designer repeatedly throughout Thursday.

Dutta, who created ‘Shunnya’ fashion label, had plans to go out with the team on Friday to choose a location for a photo-shoot.

Though cardiac arrest looked as the cause of her death in the initial findings of the doctors at Calcutta National Medical College and Hospital where the body was taken, blood stains on her face and an injury mark on her left ankle prompted them to send the body for post mortem.

The city police also

started a probe after finding Amalin was unaware of his aged mother’s whereabouts for long hours despite his presence at the same house.

Kanaklata told the police she last saw her mother-in-law on September 16 evening.

The mother-son relation was not reportedly well following a tiff about a family property at Ahmedpur in Birbhum.

But Amalin said, “We had good relation. I did not see her on Thursday as I was very busy in my work. I thought she was busy too.”

In the evening Dutta’s post-mortem report indicated that she fell down at the bathroom after suffering cerebral attack which left her dead at least 24 hours ago.

The autopsy surgeons ruled out foul

# Nath launches campaign in Scindia’s bastion

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, SEPT. 18

Election campaign by the BJP and Congress, for the crucial by-elections to 28 Assembly constituencies in Madhya Pradesh, expected to be held by end of October this year, on Friday gained momentum with former chief minister Kamal Nath launching poll campaign for the grand old party in Gwalior, considered traditional bastion of erstwhile Scindia royal family.

Nath’s two-day-tour to Gwalior, commenced on Friday, is viewed with significance in the political circle here since 16 out of 28 assembly seats those are going to by-elections fall in Gwalior-Chambal region, considered stronghold of senior BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia.

All the 16 former Congress MLAs who along with six other party legislators resigned from Assembly as well as the party in

March this year to pull down the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government, belonged to Scindia’s camp.

Nath held a mega road show in Gwalior to drum up support for his party in the ensuing by-elections in the 16 Assembly seats in Gwalior-Chambal region.

The 14-kilometre road show began from Airport Road and ended at the memorial of Rani Laxmibai.

Addressing people lined along the roads, Nath said history would be made in the Gwalior-Chambal region during the bypolls.

He was scheduled to interact with party cadres of Gwalior-Chambal in the city over two days to galvanise them for the crucial Assembly by-elections in the region.

This was his first visit to the region after he was ousted from power in the state in March this year.

“Nath is going to prepare a poll strategy for the party to counter Scindia’s influence in

Gwalior-Chambal region”, Congress sources said. “Congress plans to target Scindia in Gwalior-Chambal by dubbing him as a betrayer who dumped Congress to embrace BJP for power”, sources added.

Nath took a jibe at Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan for laying foundation stones for various projects in election-bound Assembly constituencies in the last couple of weeks. “The Chief Minister carries a coconut in his pocket and wherever he gets the opportunity, he breaks it and makes an announcement”, Nath said.

“The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has defamed the state. Even Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar would not have thought that such an unethical incident would take place in Madhya Pradesh,” Kamal Nath said in an apparent reference to the BJP’s return to power after toppling his 15-month-long government earlier this year.

# Another BJP leader joins Cong

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, SEPT. 18

Former BJP MLA Parul Sahu on Friday joined the Congress ahead of crucial by-elections to 28 Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh. She is the third BJP leader to quit the saffron fold and join Congress in the last fortnight. “It is homecoming for me”, Sahu who was inducted in Congress by former chief minister Kamal Nath here, told reporters. Sahu, who hails from a traditional Congress family, joined BJP before 2013 Assembly elections. Her father, Santosh Sahu, was a senior Congress leader.

She was given ticket by the BJP to fight assembly polls from Surkhi in 2013. She won the seat by

defeating Govind Singh Rajput of Congress by a slender margin of 141 votes. She was, however, denied a ticket by BJP in the 2018 Assembly elections.

She is most likely to be fielded by Congress in the upcoming by-elections.

The seat fell vacant after the sitting MLA Govind Singh Rajput resigned from the Assembly as well as Congress along with 21 other Congress MLAs in March this year leading to fall of the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government.

All the 22 former MLAs including Rajput joined BJP later. Rajput has since been inducted in the Shivraj Cabinet. He is most likely to be re-nominated for the seat by BJP in the ensuing by-elections.

# HC SEEKS MAHA’S REPLY OVER PIL ON COVID DRUGS

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, SEPT. 18

The Bombay high court on Friday directed the Maharashtra government to file a reply to a PIL seeking that drugs used to treat Covid-19 patients be made available directly at hospitals, isolation and quarantine centres.

The direction was given by a bench led by Justice K.K. Tated and Justice N.R. Borkar while hearing the PIL filed by a local NGO, All Maharashtra Human Rights Welfare Association.

The plea claimed that drugs like Remdesivir 100 and an injection Actemra 400 and FabiFlu tablets are crucial in treating Covid-19 patients but these drugs are available only at selected chemists.

Petitioner’s lawyer Prashant Pandey argued before the court that in the current situation, a patient loses much time in availing treatment.





## SHORT TAKES

### FRANCE DEMANDS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST TURKEY

Nicosia (Cyprus), Sept. 18: France on Friday backed Cyprus' calls for the European Union to consider imposing tougher sanctions on Turkey if the Turkish government won't suspend its search for energy reserves in eastern Mediterranean waters where Cyprus and Greece claim exclusive economic rights.

French Minister for European Affairs Clement Baume said sanctions should be among the options the 27-member bloc considers employing if Turkey continues to "endanger the security and sovereignty of a member state." "We believe that the European Union must be ready to activate...all available tools and certainly to resort to sanctions, if developments don't proceed in a positive direction," Baume said after talks with Cypriot Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides in Nicosia.

## POLISH PARLIAMENT PASSES ANIMAL RIGHTS LAW

Warsaw, Sept. 18: Poland's Parliament on Friday passed an animal rights law that had angered fur farmers and kosher meat producers and divided the country's right-wing governing alliance.

The junior partners in the three-party ruling coalition had refused to vote in favour, provoking the ire of Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the powerful leader of the Law and Justice (PiS) ruling party that put forward the legislation.

Kaczynski, who is known for his love of cats, has threatened to exclude his coalition partners from the government during a planned Cabinet shuffle or even call snap elections.

After a marathon session that began hours earlier on Thursday and with the support of the liberal opposition, the legislation passed the lower house of parliament with 356 votes in favour, 75 against and 18 abstentions. The measure, which still requires the approval of the senate, bans the breeding of animals for fur and stops exports of halal and kosher meat.

## BELARUS BORDERS REMAIN OPEN DESPITE WAR TALK

Minsk, Sept. 18: Belarus' borders remained open on Friday after President Alexander Lukashenko announced they would be closed as he warned of a possible "war" with neighbouring countries he accuses of supporting a burgeoning opposition movement.

The border guard service said on its Telegram channel that "checks have been stepped up" and "tactical reinforcements have been deployed", but that "checkpoints are permitting people to enter and leave". Lukashenko, a strongman who has ruled for 26 years, had told a women's forum on Thursday that "half" of the Belarusian army would be deployed to the borders with Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Ukraine. The frontiers themselves would be closed in view of the threat of a "hot war", he added.

"I don't want our country to enter a war, and even less for Belarus, Poland and Lithuania to become the scene of military actions, where other people's problems would be sorted out," Lukashenko said.

## EMISSIONS TO ADD 15 INCHES TO SEA RISE BY 2100: STUDY

Washington, Sept. 18: Greenland and Antarctica's ice sheets could together contribute more than 38 centimetres to global sea level rise by 2100, if greenhouse gas emissions continue, according to a study led by Nasa.

The findings are in line with projections in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) 2019 Special Report on Oceans and the Cryosphere or portions of Earth's surface where water is in solid form, Nasa said. Meltwater from ice sheets contribute about a third of the total global sea level rise, it said.

The IPCC report projected that Greenland would contribute 8 to 27 cm to global sea level rise between 2000-2100 and Antarctica could contribute 3 to 28 cm, according to the US space agency.

The findings, published in the journal The Cryosphere, come from the Ice Sheet Model Intercomparison Project (ISMIP6) led by Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center.

# China flies 18 military aircraft near Taiwan during US talks

## Unusually large show of force in response to US envoy's visit to Taipei

Taipei, Sept. 18: The second high-level US envoy to visit Taiwan in two months began a day of closed-door meetings Friday as China conducted military drills near the Taiwan Strait after threatening retaliation.

China's military sent 18 planes including fighter jets over the Taiwan Strait in an unusually large show of force on Monday as a US envoy held a day of closed-door meetings on the self-governing island claimed by China.

Undersecretary of State Keith Krach, who handles the economic growth, energy and the environment portfolio, held talks with Taiwan's minister of economic affairs and the Cabinet's vice premier. He was due to meet with business leaders over lunch and dine with President Tsai Ing-wen later on Friday.

In response to Krach's visit, the Eastern Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army held combat exercises near the Taiwan Strait, at least the second round of war games this month aimed at intimidating supporters of the island's independent political identity.

"This is a legitimate and necessary action taken in response to the current situation across the Taiwan Straits to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity," said China's defense ministry spokesman Ren Guoqiang. In a brief message on its microblog, the Eastern Theater Command said the exercises involved naval and air force units in the Taiwan Strait aimed at gauging their ability to carry out joint operations. China on Thursday con-



Taiwan's foreign minister Joseph Wu meets with US Undersecretary of State Keith Krach in Taipei, Taiwan on Friday.

— AP

demned Krach's visit and warned it could retaliate. It views Taiwan as part of its own territory and strongly opposes any type of formal interaction between other countries and the self-ruled island democracy.

Krach's trip follows a visit in August by US health secretary Alex Azar, the highest-level US Cabinet official to make the trip since the U.S. switched formal relations from Taiwan to China in 1979. It is one of a series of moves by the Trump administration to strengthen relations with Taiwan, including stepped-up arms sales and support for the island's participation in interna-

tional forums. Before Krach's arrival, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Kelly Craft, had lunch Wednesday with Taiwan's top official in New York, in a meeting she called historic.

On Saturday, the last day of his visit, Krach will also attend a memorial service for former President Lee Teng-hui, who led the island's transition to democracy and died at age 97 in July. Tensions between Washington and Beijing have already reached high levels as the governments spar over the coronavirus pandemic, trade, technology, Hong Kong and the South China Sea.

The frequency of

Chinese exercises near Taiwan recalls the last major crisis between them in 1995-96, when China fired missiles near the island and held war games in a bid to intimidate voters in Taiwan's first direct presidential election.

Those actions were largely seen to have backfired. Taiwan said Chinese warplanes entered its airspace over two days last week during large-scale war games that it called a "serious provocation to Taiwan and a grave threat to regional peace and stability."

Such actions by the PLA threaten the entire region, it said, calling on the international community to respond. China has

increasingly relied on military threats and diplomatic isolation to pressure Taiwan.

That follows the apparent failure of its efforts to win over the island's 23 million people to the prospect of political unification under the "one country, two systems" framework in place in China, with a large majority of Taiwanese favoring maintaining the status quo of de facto independence. China cut contacts with Taiwan's government following Tsai's 2016 election.

She was reelected by a large margin this year while her Democratic Progressive Party maintained its majority in the legislature.

— AP

# Restrictions in Europe, Israel in lockdown as Covid cases cross 3 cr

## S. Korea to fine church for spreading Covid-19

Madrid, Sept. 18: Large parts of Europe on Friday geared up for broad new restrictions to stop the Coronavirus and Israel enforced a second nationwide shutdown, as infections worldwide topped the 30-million mark.

Spain was set to unveil a raft of restrictions as officials in Madrid warned the capital had been overwhelmed by the virus and called for "decisive" action from central government. Santiago Usoz, a medic working at accident and emergency in Madrid's October 12 hospital, said there was a lack of both beds and staff. "Intensive care units are overwhelmed with Covid patients," he said.

Britain and France are both rolling out new measures in the face of surging caseloads, with UK officials warning that a national lockdown could be reimposed. Almost 9.50,000 people have now died from the virus since it first emerged in China late last year, Europe accounting for almost a quarter of those fatalities. Israel imposed a three-week nationwide shutdown from 2:00 pm (1100 GMT) on Friday hours before Rosh Hash-

ana, the Jewish new year. The measures, under which people will be limited to within 500 metres of

their home, will also hit other key religious holidays including Yom Kippur.

Seoul, Sept. 18: The metropolitan government in South Korea's capital Seoul said on Friday it would seek 4.6 billion won (\$4 million) in damages against a church for causing the spread of the coronavirus by disrupting tracing and testing efforts.

A fresh wave of infections erupted at a church whose members attended a large protest in downtown Seoul in mid-August, becoming the country's largest cluster in the greater capital area. The outbreak has driven triple-digit increases in daily Covid-19 cases for more than a month.

The Seoul city government said it will file a lawsuit against the Sarang Jeil Church and its leader, Rev. Jun Kwang-hoon, accusing them of disrupting coronavirus tests and providing

inaccurate lists of its members which it said aggravated the latest epidemic.

"The city is seeking to hold the church and the pastor responsible for contributing to the nationwide re-spread of Covid-19 by refusing and hindering epidemiological surveys or aiding and abetting such acts, as well as submitting false materials," it said in a statement.

Calls to the church seeking comment went unanswered. Jun, a harsh critic of the government, was re-imprisoned early this month for attending the Aug. 15 rally in violation of his bail in April, when he participated in an illegal political protest ahead the parliamentary election and was indicted on charges of breaking election laws.

— Agencies

## HASIDIC JEWISH PILGRIMS LEAVE UKRAINE BORDER

Kiev, Sept. 18: Hundreds of Hasidic Jewish pilgrims, who had massed along the Belarusian border attempting to enter Ukraine, began leaving on Friday after Kiev upheld an entry ban to guard against the Coronavirus.

At least 1,000 Orthodox Jewish believers were camped out this week in no-man's land between Ukrainian and Belarusian border crossings ahead of Jewish New Year celebrations.

Tens of thousands of Hasidic Jews travel to the central Ukrainian city of Uman every Jewish New Year to visit the tomb of Rabbi Nahman, the founder of the Breslov Hasidic movement.

The standoff between the pilgrims and armed Ukrainian security services sparked tensions at the Novi Yarylovychi border crossing and inflamed a diplomatic row between Minsk and Kiev.

— AFP

# FBI chief warns Russia actively targeting Biden

Washington, Sept. 18: FBI Director Christopher Wray on Thursday warned that Russia is interfering in the 2020 US presidential elections with a steady stream of misinformation aimed at Democrat Joe Biden as well as sapping Americans' confidence in the election process.

Moscow is also attempting to undercut what it sees as an anti-Russian US establishment, Wray told the Democratic-led House of Representatives' Homeland Security committee.

He said his biggest concern is a "steady drumbeat of misinformation" that he said he feared could undermine confidence in the result of the 2020 election.

Wray's testimony follows an August 7 warning by the director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center that Russia, China and Iran were all trying to interfere in the November 3 election.

Wray said the FBI is increasingly worried about possible violent clashes between ideologically-motivated extremist groups before the November election. The FBI is keeping a close eye on groups who have faced

off in protests in cities such as Portland, Oregon, and Kenosha, Wisconsin.

In those places, anti-racism and anti-police groups have squared off with right-wing and white nationalist activists who are often armed.

Wray also told lawmakers that antifa is an ideology, not an organisation. Wray did not dispute that antifa activists were a serious concern, saying that antifa was a "real thing" and that the FBI had undertaken "any number of properly predicated investigations into what we would describe as violent anarchist extremists," including into individuals who identify with antifa.

Hours after the hearing, US President Donald Trump took to Twitter to chastise Wray for his statements on antifa and on Russian election interference. Referring to antifa, the President wrote: "And I look at them as a bunch of well funded Anarchists & Thugs who are protected because the Comey/Mueller inspired FBI is simply unable, or unwilling, to find their funding source, and allows them to get away with "murder". Law & Order!."

—Reuters/AFP/AP

# US court turns down H1-B plea by Indians

Washington, Sept. 18: An Indian-American federal judge has turned down an appeal by 169 Indian citizens who had challenged the proclamation of President Donald Trump that barred foreign nationals on H-1B specialty occupation visa from entering the US till the end of the year.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

US District Judge Amit P. Mehta of US District Court

for the District of Columbia in its order on Wednesday said that Indian citizens, who are now trapped abroad during trips to India when borders closed, are unlikely to win their case contesting the travel ban proclamation of Trump.

The 169 Indian nationals in their lawsuit had sought an order directing the Secretary of State and the United States consulates "to process, adjudicate, and render final decisions on Plaintiffs' DS-160 visa applications. But requiring such swift processing would be an exercise in futility when the complainant would remain ineligible to enter the country until January 1, 2021, at the earliest," Mehta said.

—PTI

# US bans WeChat, TikTok citing risk

Washington, Sept. 18: The US will ban the use of WeChat Sunday to "safeguard the national security of the United States."

The Chinese app TikTok will also be banned by Nov. 12, but Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said early Friday on CNN that access to that app may be possible if certain safeguards are in place.

"At the President's direction, we have taken significant action to combat China's malicious collection of American citizens' personal data, while promoting our national values, democratic rules-based norms, and aggres-

sive enforcement of US laws and regulations," Ross said in a prepared statement.

The government said its order, previously announced by Trump in August, will "combat China's malicious collection of American citizens' personal data." The government previously said that using and downloading the app to communicate won't be a banned transaction, although messaging on the app "could be directly or indirectly impaired" by the ban, and people who use it for messaging won't be subject to penalties.

—AP

## FILM | FESTIVAL

### Documentary offers viewers a peak into her life, slamming leaders, attending climate strikes

# Meet Greta, a real 'pain in the a\*se' of world leaders

SUPARNA SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 18

Greta Thunberg is 16 years old and many world leaders can't stand her. But young people, especially school-college kids, environmental activists and tree-huggers, those getting ready to inherit the earth, love her. For them she's a beacon of hope.

Director Nathan Grossman's film opens in the Atlantic Ocean. Greta and her father are on a racing yacht. It's August 2019, and she's on her way to address the UN Climate Action Summit. The trip on the choppy seas, which took 15 days as opposed to 8 hrs and 22 minutes of flying time, led to the now

international news channels. When Jair Bolsonaro calls her a "brat", and Donald Trump asks her to "work on her anger management problem", and then adds, "Chill Greta, Chill!"

Climate change deniers don't want to engage with her because, they say, "There is no proof of global warming. It's all a money making hoax..." Greta is being exploited by her parents, is propped up by vested interests."

But they can't ignore her or the growing protests against inaction. So they attack her on Twitter, and she gets so many death threats that her worried father has had to take



courses in emergency life-saving procedures.

Grossman's film opens in the Atlantic Ocean. Greta and her father are on a racing yacht. It's August 2019, and she's on her way to address the UN Climate Action Summit. The trip on the choppy seas, which took 15 days as opposed to 8 hrs and 22 minutes of flying time, led to the now

famous, "How dare you?" speech where statistics and solutions were bracketed in Greta's GIF-friendly fury.

The film then goes back to where it all began, on August 20, 2018, across the street from Sweden's Parliament.

That summer was particularly lethal. Sweden's hottest in 262 years.

Elections were on, and Greta sat on the footpath till September 9, with her red water bottle and a hand-written placard: "School strike for climate". Elderly, concerned ladies stopped to tell her to go back to school because that's how she'll make a real difference.

"But why would I need an education if there is no future, if there is no planet worth living?" They thought her silly, alarmist, misinformed.

But Greta didn't budge. And then someone asked her, "May I sit with you?" Few more joined. And a few more. And soon, the climate school strike, Fridays for Future, began to spread.

A year later, in

September 2019, between two Fridays — 20-27 — 7.6 million people marched across 1,600 cities in what is called the biggest climate strike in history. It began on that footpath in Sweden, with that girl who has Asperger syndrome.

I Am Greta travels with her to the EU Parliament, to UN Climate Change Conferences, to grand palaces and presidential houses. But it also gives us glimpses of her life in between attending climate strikes and scolding world leaders.

Greta doesn't like grown-ups much because they "say one thing and do something completely different". Even at meetings where they applaud her short speeches, they do nothing. "It feels like every-

one is in a role playing game... it's all just pretend... feels fake... Why am I even invited?" she asks.

What worries her most is that these meetings "make people think that we are making progress".

I Am Greta is not in activist mode. It doesn't give us proof of global warming, nor does it tell us how emissions are not really reducing. It simply challenges the rightwing's concerted attempts to dehumanise this incredible school kid by introducing us to Greta Thunberg, the girl in pigtails who writes her speeches herself, who cries on the choppy sea because she is missing home, her dogs. It watches her dancing alone on a train sometimes.



## DECCAN Chronicle

19 SEPTEMBER 2020

### Does the govt wish grief upon farmers?

After a long time, politics at the national level was impacted by farmers as their months' long movement against three controversial bills the Lok Sabha passed has led to the first big resignation from Narendra Modi's NDA 3.0 government in the person of food processing minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal. The pressure is now on Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala to pull the rug from under the Manohar Lal Khattar government by exiting with his 10 MLAs. Not unexpectedly, this crisis has led to a belated awakening of the electronic media to the issue, one that affects the livelihoods of the maximum number of Indians and is critical to the nation's food security, even though the ordinances which form the basis of the bills were passed in June and farmers have been agitating since then.

It would seem ironical that the government has set out to kill the proverbial golden goose. Agriculture is the only sector that beat the pandemic as, in the April-June quarter, the GDP shrank, for the first time, by a massive 23.9 per cent. As such, in passing these bills, the government is also encroaching — and dismantling the constitutional ideal of cooperative federalism, the subject of agriculture being squarely on — the state list. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill is an assault on states' revenues as states will no longer be allowed to exact market fee, cess or levies under the state APMC Act from farmers and traders.

But the most insidious effects of the bill will be on the farmers themselves. The APMC market yard or the mandi, with all its existing problems and the presence of greedy commission agents and middlemen, has so far been serving as the mechanism of setting the minimum support price, MSP. Now that the majority of transactions will take place elsewhere and its need is obviated, there will be no benchmark. No trading licence will be required for traders. Thus farmers will be left open to unprecedented exploitation.

The Farmers (Empowerment & Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020, opens the door to big business in agriculture. Food producer organisations, comprising a thousand-odd farmers, are now being put on a par with big corporations to compete in the marketplace. It is unclear why FPOs are being over-regulated when the FPO movement is in a nascent stage. The arrival of corporate farming will mean less decision-making power for small farmers who form the majority of the farming community. At worst, it will be land-grab. The requirement of written agreements has been removed from the bill. Yet the farmer no longer has access to civil courts, only to a grievance disposal mechanism, likely to be rigged against them. The farmer's remuneration is no longer not tied to the MSP. It also raises the real fear of monopoly, coupled with hoarding by corporates which is being legalised by the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill.

The agriculture minister has gone on record trying to sell his bills with the hope of corporate-built infrastructure. Experience shows that investment only happens in ancillary areas like hospitality and food processing. Hence, the vision of aggregation of suppliers sold by the government is a flawed one. Aggregation has proven benefits when happening at the production side in the form of farmer cooperatives that these bills undoubtedly hurt.

Turning the farmer to a landless labourer, with no crop set aside for their family's own food security, dependent on the mercy of an artificial "market", while the corporates does easy business, nay profiteering, seems to be the singular sinister motive of these bills. The Opposition must build more pressure on the government so that it has no choice but to withdraw them.

### IPL's here to entertain

The hoopla and razzmatazz of Indian Premier League (IPL) inaugurals featuring Bollywood stars, nautch girls and cheerleaders will be missing as IPL 2020 is slated to get off to a no-frills start today in Abu Dhabi. The fact that the IPL is being played at all is a tribute to the spirit of Indian cricket towards presenting to the people a shade of normalcy amid the pandemic. The IPL is not only about the money it lavishes on around 200 cricketers. It is an entertainment industry with a big slice of TV time to fill and the show must go on to keep a ₹4,000-crore ecosystem ticking.

The wisdom of shifting the action to a bio-secure bubble in the UAE becomes more apparent as India grapples with a rising Covid-19 caseload close to one lakh fresh infections every day. Even those who have endured the crisis and the lockdown while personally suffering the ill-effects of the coronavirus may welcome the relief in this daily dose of cricket featuring their favourite teams and their Indian and international stars competing in the universally popular T20 format. Pro sport has already shown the way forward to life in the new normal and cricket has also thrown up thrilling contests in England.

There is no reason to believe the elaborate bio-bubble will be any less secure. It is the responsibility of the millionaire stars to follow the strict protocols, including not sharing water bottles and umpires not being allowed to be the friendly repository of the bowlers' caps, sunglasses, etc. Every detail has been put down in the book of the new normal and the least expectation is there will be quality cricket even if the players have to learn to do without the adrenaline rush of cheering in-stadium spectators. A captive TV audience in millions of Indian households will be too happy to stay tuned.

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ADITYA SINHA  
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR  
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DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

**Hyderabad:** 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderbad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256

**Vijayawada:** No.C-3 & 4 Putamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-255284/255287; Telefax: 0866-255234

**Visakhapatnam:** Survey No.1/5A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

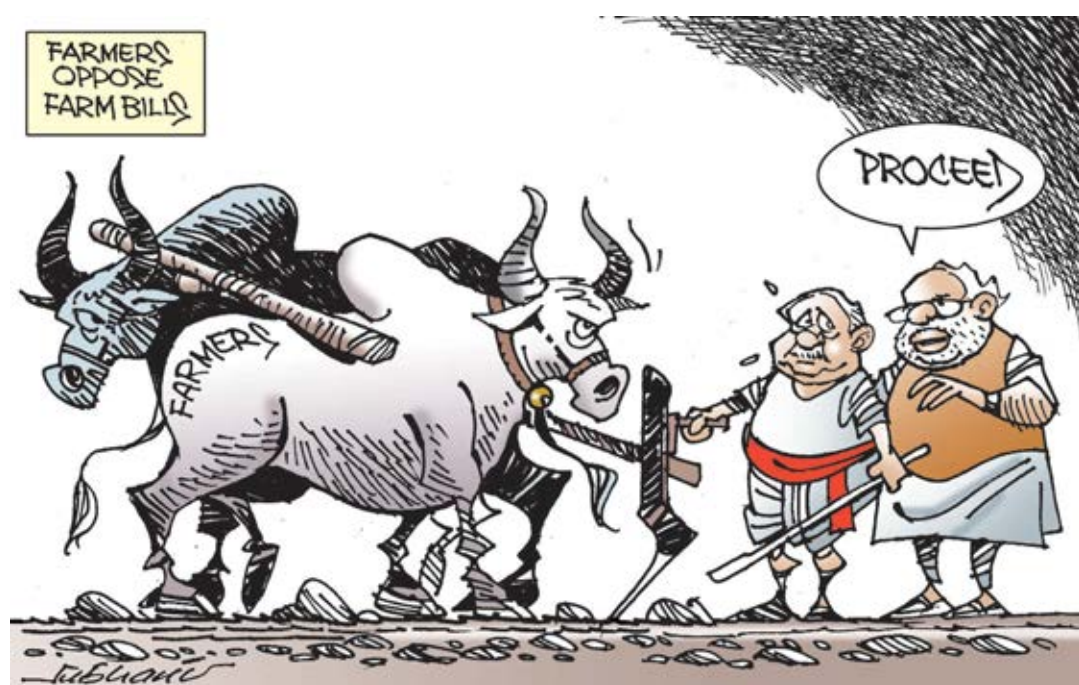
**Kochi:** No.3-B, 3rd Floor of DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408

**Thiruvananthapuram:** St Joseph's Press, TC 15/1040, Cotton Hill, Thiruvananthapuram 695 014

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

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Subhani



## A reign of obstinacy and self-centredness

Shobhaa De

Abhishek "Manu" Singhvi used a lovely phrase the other evening, as he responded to questions on a prime-time television show. The topic was the prompt go-ahead given to the construction of a brand new Parliament House building. He called it the 'Politics of Zidd'. To that, let me humbly add, it can also be called the "Politics of Ego" Never before in the history of India have we witnessed such a display of egotism. The new Parliament House will be the ultimate symbol of a government that only and exclusively thinks of its own grandeur and brand positioning — a monumental error is being made by men with monumental egos who have not bothered to consult their countrymen before sanctioning such a project. An announcement says the contract will be awarded to an infrastructure major after the mandatory scrutiny. This is hardly the point. Whosoever bags the contract (CPWD's estimated cost is ₹899 crores) will no doubt do a competent job and create a handsome house for our parliamentarians. The more important question is this: does India need a swanky new Parliament House? For what? Beyond the redundancy of the project looms an even larger issue — and I am not going into the delicate debate about propriety. Why was no thought invested in ecological concerns? At a time when the whole world is thinking of what is good for the planet, now that we know our post-pandemic priorities a little better and are acutely aware of how arrogantly we have abused our precious ecosystems — should

this grand plan still be on? It involves stripping prime urban areas in central Delhi of tree cover and creating havoc with a whole host of other concerns. But here is an administration merrily going ahead and building on a precinct that is stunningly beautiful and aesthetically perfect the way it is. The way it has been for 85 years. People from all over the world come here to admire the architectural beauty of Rajpath. To think it is going to be marred by an ill-conceived proposal, hastily pushed through by those in an obvious hurry to create a different "legacy" for future generations.

What sort of a "legacy" is this? The young are far more engaged with global crises — environmental issues top their list. Delhi remains one of the worst polluted cities in the world. Adding to the terrible air over the capital will be the construction of this controversial building. A timeline of 24 months is in place — which must be a record of sorts. The timeline is not arbitrary. Nothing that the Narendra Modi government undertakes can be viewed in isolation. Take the design elements for one — there will be *shlokas* inscribed on the walls. Surprise! Read the writing on the walls, folks. Oh yes, instead of the original tall spur atop the monument, it's

**Whosoever bags the contract will no doubt do a competent job and create a handsome house for our parliamentarians. The more important question is this: does India need a swanky new Parliament House?**

**The timing to get this project up and running is incredibly insensitive. Forget the tanking of our economy during the pandemic — so many countries are dealing with Covid-driven economic crises.**

now going to be a gigantic national emblem. No quarrel with that. Approvals for the Central Vista project? Ummmm... no problem, boss. Those will be given *phataphat*. Those who have any issues with the plan — well, too bad. Cribbing will get you nowhere.

The timing to get this project up and running is incredibly insensitive. Forget the tanking of our economy during the pandemic — so many countries are dealing with Covid-driven economic crises. But here in our own backyard, we have a Prime Minister admitting his government does not possess the data on the deaths of migrants — how many died on those roads, desperately attempting to reach their distant villages on foot. India is still reeling from Covid deaths, with experts telling us we have not peaked so far. Health remains one of our biggest concerns, with countless Covid centres falling short of oxygen cylinders and ICU beds. Can we really afford to spend on a new Parliament House during such dark and dire times?

For all the proclamations of austerity and simple living, what citizens have seen is the arrogant strut of the peacock. Nobody in the PM's circle lives modestly. Not even the PM himself. Crores of taxpayers' hard-earned money is spent on ensuring our elected representatives live life kingsize — with sprawling homes and lavish perks. Nobody grudges them their indulgences. Citizens are large-hearted enough to say, "Be comfortable — *khaao, peeyo,*

*jiyo.*" But hello! Spare a thought for us, less privileged beings too. By digging up those beautiful lawns to build this House of Vanity is like rubbing our noses into the dirt thrown up by bulldozers uprooting magnificent trees and going into the bowels of what is public property — which rightfully belongs to all of us.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi celebrated a landmark birthday this week. He turned 70 — an excellent age for reflection and introspection. One wonders what his conscience tells him when he presides over such a redundant project, using resources India can barely afford to fritter away at this critical stage. Heritage and history need to be respected, even by those determined to rewrite both. The magnificence of Rajpath cannot be arbitrarily trifled with, based on the whims of politicians in power. Ironically, India lost one of its most valued cultural doyennes during the same week, on September 16. Kapila Vatsyayan was the grande dame of India's glorious cultural heritage. A formidable intellectual and a highly respected scholar who authored 20 books. She passed away at the age of 91. Her obituaries were tucked away into obscure corners of our dailies. The front page was reserved for more "important" news — like Tata Projects Ltd emerging as the lowest bidder for the new Parliament House building project, beating Larsen & Toubro to it by a whisker. Hurrah! Says something about shifting perspectives, doesn't it?

Mirza Ghalib said it all in the aftermath of 1857: "*Bazeachaye aafal hai dunhya mere aagey.../ Hota hai shabe-roz tamashaa mere aagey...*" Meanwhile, Happy 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Narendraji! Your birthday present will be delivered by July 2022. Mubarak!

Readers can send feedback to [www.shobhaade.blogspot.com](http://www.shobhaade.blogspot.com)

#### LETTERS

##### NEROS FIDDLE

The editorial had an apt headline (*As Neros fiddle, DC, Sept. 18*) with the 23.9 per cent GDP shrinkage. It is also an apt comparison of today's rulers with the ancient kings who resorted to flagrant expenses in building monoliths while their subjects lived in penury. This expenditure of ₹861.9 crore could well have waited till the economy reached \$5 trillion. Is Modi becoming an autocratic maharaja unmindful of his subjects' miseries?

K. Nehru Patnaik  
Visakhapatnam

##### NAIDU'S PLANNING

Chandrababu Naidu, while developing Amaravati, did not forget the judiciary and provided plots (*Naidu defends house sites given to High Court Judges in Amaravati, DC, Sept. 18*). It was a great foresight. It is worth remembering the edict of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who said that Naidu used Polavaram project as ATM to fund the development of Naidu's family dairy business.

P. A. S. Prasad  
Visakhapatnam

##### ROAD CESS

The cash strapped AP government is searching for ways to raise additional funds because it is not able to meet the expenditure on account of social welfare schemes (*State to levy ₹1 road cess on petrol, diesel, DC, Sept. 18*). This new cess will have a cascading effect on all goods.

Govardhana Myneedu  
Vijayawada

#### 50 YEARS AGO IN

## DECCAN Chronicle

### Jordan launches massive thrust into guerrilla positions

BEIRUT, Sept. 18 Dawn brought fresh fighting to Amman today as Field Marshal Habes Majali flung his troops back into attack against guerrilla position which had defied a tank thrust 24 hours ago.

The Jordanian Commander-in-Chief said his forces were continuing their massive operation to restore order to the capital and Amman Radio said the curfew imposed after the battle began yesterday would remain in force indefinitely.

Field Marshal Majali repeated is last-chance offer to the commandos to leave the capital with their weapons under the safe conduct and move down to the Jordan valley front against Israel.

G. Babu Jayakumar



## Why NEET wreaked havoc on Tamil Nadu youth alone

A spate of suicides in Tamil Nadu over the fear of NEET, the all-India medical entrance examination held on September 13, may be a matter of intrigue to many well-meaning people outside the state. In unsympathetic people, both within and outside the state, the suicides evoked gleeful ridicule that got expressed through insensitive sarcasm or trolls or memes on social media and elsewhere.

For many others it was an opportunity to blame politicians, who had been demanding the scrapping of the exam and also paying condolences to the families of the deceased students. But by no means can one accuse any politician of compelling a student to commit suicide. So the question: Why has NEET provoked so many suicides, starting from that of Anita in 2017. For those interested in statistics, there were four in 2018, six in 2019 and six in 2020.

To understand it, one has to take a stroll down the lanes of history.

First, medical education in Tamil Nadu was out of bounds for the masses who did not know Sanskrit. The rule was changed by the government run by the Justice Party, the precursor of the Dravidian Movement. Subsequently the ushering in of social justice, which imbued in subaltern communities a quest for education, enabled even first generation learners from impoverished homes to become doctors and also serve in their own communities in the remotest of rural areas, enabling the state to build a robust medical infrastructure that most states cannot aspire to achieve in the near future with or without NEET.

Since those doctors from poor homes did not aspire to go abroad or win the Nobel Prize through research or work for a corporate hospital, they worked in public health centres or set up cheap clinics in villages, inspiring local children, who always found in doctors a role model for emulation. Seeing doctors as an embodiment of educa-

tion, knowledge, empowerment and social respect, most children in rural areas grew up with dreams of becoming doctors. But it was common knowledge that to become a doctor one has to study well.

The state's education system facilitated the students who scored high marks in the final school examination to enter courses of their choice and that was how the state achieved an outstanding GER of 49.3 per cent. The best of the students necessarily made it to medical colleges, not just realising childhood dreams but also uplifting families and serving local communities, earning respect and often shedding caste prejudices. Seeing such success stories, more children dreamt of becoming doctors, which can emancipate them from many socio-economic oppressions.

With teachers, parents, relatives and the local community often turning cheerleaders of the high scorers in their race to storm Hippocrates' citadel, students came under pressure to perform well.

Yet, they know pretty well that the game was over if they scored less and looked elsewhere for alternative career options.

But when NEET came in with a bang, it suddenly shifted the goalposts for lakhs of such rural, poor, hardworking students, who only knew the game of studying well and entering college based on the marks they scored. Suddenly they were told to take an exam afresh in some centre in a faraway town, sitting in an unfamiliar ambience. And it was here they were made to realise their own cultural and economic backwardness.

For example, Vignesh, the boy from Elanthankuzhi in Ariyalur district who jumped into a well and killed himself a few days before the examination, had to travel 10 km to Jayamkondan to take a print out for the NEET hall ticket. He would have changed two buses to reach his examination centre, 110 km away from home, in Tiruchirappalli. He had seen his father selling property to fund his

coaching for NEET, for which he was to appear for a third time and could not bear the thought of failing again.

Most rural students who spend a year or more preparing exclusively for NEET often feel that it is the end of the road when they don't make it. Those who had seen their seniors making it just by studying well in school become too "tired" — to borrow the word used by Jothishree Durga in her suicide note — going through the processes of applying for NEET online from villages without any connectivity and the rest of the procedures. Repeated attempts at NEET also brings with it the anxiety that is, tragically, too much for poor, rural children to handle.

The realisation that NEET was to ensure that medical education was for children from elite, urban and privileged backgrounds has not sunk into the minds of children in rural hinterland. Once it does, they will not aspire for it. And of course will not think about suicide.



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,845.82	-0.34
Nifty 50	11,504.95	-0.10
S&P 500*	3,305.47	-1.54
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)*	42.72	-0.58
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.014	-0.019
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.686	0.004

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

Govt liabilities rise to ₹101.3 L cr in Q1: FinMin

Total liabilities of the government increased to Rs 101.3 lakh crore at end-June 2020 from Rs 94.6 lakh crore at end-March 2020, according to the latest data on public debt. The total debt of the government stood at Rs 88.18 lakh crore at end-June 2019. Public debt accounted for 91.1 per cent of outstanding liabilities. Nearly 28.6 per cent of the outstanding dated securities had a residual maturity of less than five years.

Fan-makers want GST lowered to 5% from 18%



Fan manufacturers sought lower GST rate at 5 per cent on fans, saying the existing 18 per cent tax is "adversely" impacting the industry. "The current GST rate standing at 18 per cent is adversely impacting the industry as well as the entire supply chain, from distributors to end-consumers," said Atul Jain, chairman, Indian Fan Manufacturers Association (Ifma). A lower GST slab would make the fans more accessible, Ifma said.

Forex reserves down by \$353 mn to \$541.66 bn

After touching a life-time high in the previous week, the country's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$353 million to \$541.660 billion in the week ended September 11, Reserve Bank data showed. In the previous week ended September 4, the reserves had increased by \$582 million to a record high of \$542.013 billion. Foreign currency assets decreased by \$841 million to \$497.521 billion.

Kia launches Sonet, prices start at ₹6.71 L

South Korean auto major Kia Motors launched its compact SUV Sonet in India, priced between Rs 6.71 lakh and Rs 11.99 lakh (ex-showroom), marking its foray into the highly competitive and fast-growing segment. The sub-four metre model comes in both petrol and diesel engine options. Kia Motors India said the Sonet will be available across 17 variants, including two petrol engines.



Bid to stop China goods entry via trade bloc  
Govt tightens vigil over Asean route

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, SEPT. 18

In a move that will check Chinese products being routed through Asean countries, the government has decided to strictly enforce production of 'certificate of origin' for every imported item claiming free and preferential trade concessions. Further, the government said it will engage with the Asean countries to review gaps or imbalances in the free trade agreement (FTA). The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs has made some changes in the declarations made by importers while claiming free trade and preferential trade duties. These changes will come into effect from September 21. Whenever such claims are made, documents pertaining to the certificate of origin of every item will have to be mandatorily uploaded on eSancti and the 'invoice reference number' should be declared in the supporting document table for the item. "If imported goods are transported directly from the country of origin and not through another country, then the certificate of origin code itself can be given in the transit country field. In case of transport through a different country then the country code of that country should be indicated in the transit country field. A self-declaration that the items qualify as originating goods for a prefer-



ential rate will have to be made by the importer in the 'bill of entry.' Further, the certificate of origin must be defaced before the out of charge (OOC) at the port of import. From September 21, marking defacement of each certificate uploaded for a bill of entry will be mandatory, without which OOC would not be allowed by the system. "With effect from 21 September 2020, businesses availing benefits of FTA would be required to comply with the revised bill of entry format declaring additional particulars in relation to FTA benefits, and will be required to upload the copy of certificate of origin on the customs portal. While the intent of the government is clearly to curb wrongful claim of concessional customs duty by routing the exports to India through preferential trade countries, practically, compliance even by genuine importers at short notice will be challenging," said Abhishek Jain,

tax partner, EY. According to K. Unnikrishnan, deputy director general, Federation of Indian Export Organisations, the government has made the rules stricter in order to check Chinese goods getting routed through FTA and PTA countries. "Import of some of the automotive parts from FTA countries with components coming from China as part of the global value chain may become tougher," he said. The commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said India is engaging with the 10-member Asean to review the free trade agreement. In the India-Asean Economic Ministers Consultations held on August 29, officials will determine the scope of review. "Provisions are envisaged to periodically address any gaps, shortcomings and imbalance. India proposes to suitably use these provisions," Goyal said. The Asean-India Trade in Goods Agreement came into force on January 1, 2010.

Select high frequency indicators move up

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, SEPT. 18

Providing more hope of recovery, some of the high frequency indicators, including electricity consumption, digital payments, real estate purchases in select cities and railway freight volumes have moved closer to pre-Covid levels in the first half of September. E-way bills generated by businesses and transporters in August were also higher sequentially. Electricity consumption over the seven-day period ending September 16 showed the country consumed more power during the period compared to a similar period in the previous year, said a Kotak Institutional Equities' report. In digital payments, daily average UPI and IMPS transaction values recorded an all-time high in September. NETC-Fastag transactions are at pre-Covid levels. The e-waybills generated in August numbered 4.87 crore, valued at over Rs 13.85 lakh crore. The numbers stood at 4.76 crore and 4.27 crore in July and June, valued at Rs 13.66 lakh crore and Rs 12.40 lakh crore, respectively, GSTN data showed. Railway freight volume was up in September compared to the same period last year: Volumes also have returned to February 2020 levels. But container volumes in most ports declined in September.

Standing crops hit by heavy rains: Govt

New Delhi, Sept. 18: Heavy rains in some parts of the country have affected standing crops including paddy, pulses, oilseeds, spices, fruit and vegetables, Parliament was informed on Friday. "There have been extreme weather events in the form of heavy rains in some parts of the country which affected the standing crops," agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha. Tomar also shared the state-wise details of crops affected, as reported by the state governments. In Telangana, 1,43,388.38 hectares have been hit by the heavy rains. The crops affected include paddy, cotton, redgram, greengram, soybean, blackgram, jowar, groundnut, maize, sugarcane, banana, guava, apple, oil palm, turmeric,



chilly, papaya, drumstick, vegetables, flowers, and red chilli. As much as 52,551.99 hectares in Andhra Pradesh have been affected. The impacted crops include banana, vegetables, betelvine, onion, papaya, flowers, yam, chillis and tomato. Karnataka has reported 3,31,334.97 hectare area being affected. The impact-

ed crops include paddy, cotton, redgram, greengram, soybean, blackgram, jowar, groundnut, maize sugarcane, ragi, bajra, foxtail millet, cowpea, sesamum, sunflower and tobacco. In Kerala, 4,754.09 hectares have been affected, with damage to crops like coconut, cardamom, ginger, tuber crops, turmeric, cashew, rubber, pepper, tapioca, beetel-

vine, vegetables, arecanut, banana, coffee, pineapple and paddy affected. Tamil Nadu has reported 787.26 hectares of affected area having crops like paddy, maize, gingelly, groundnut, sugarcane, jowar/sorghum, pulses/green gram and coconut. Assam has reported 1,90,176.73 hectares being impacted. Rice, maize, jute, pulses and vegetables have been affected. In Bihar, 9,22,038.82 hectares with paddy, maize, fruit and vegetables crops have been hit. In Maharashtra, the impacted area covers 1,70,899 hectares with crops like groundnut, tur, cotton, jowar, turmeric, maize, sugarcane, soybean and vegetables. Odisha has reported that 2,21,262 hectares (paddy and horticulture crops) have been affected. —PTI

Paytm back in Play after ousted by Google

New Delhi, Sept. 18: Google on Friday restored the Paytm app on its Play store after removing it for a few hours for violating its policy on sports betting activities.



The app was back on the Google Play store on Friday evening after the Softbank-backed Paytm removed the 'cashback' feature from a recently launched game on the application. "Update: And we're back!" Paytm said in a tweet. On Friday morning, Google removed the Paytm app—which facilitates use of wallet and payments bank services—from the Play store. However, users who had already downloaded the app could continue using the services. "The app was blocked for violation of Play policies—a clarification of our policy was released earlier today ahead of the IPL tournament," Google said in an e-mailed response, adding that only the app availability on Play store was impacted. Google, in a blog post earlier on Friday, said it does not allow apps facilitating sports betting and will remove such apps from the Play store. These policies are in place to protect users from potential harm, it added. "We don't allow online casinos or support any unregulated gambling apps that facilitate sports betting. This includes if an app leads consumers to an external website that allows them to participate in paid tournaments to win real money

or cash prizes, it is a violation of our policies," the blog post said. Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma said the company has already removed the scratch cards which offered the cashbacks, complying with Google's concerns. Stating that Google was not allowing it to acquire new customers by blocking Paytm's promotion, Sharma said India needs support for further growing the startup ecosystem. "Platforms like Google are dominating platforms and with power comes responsibility. I believe that they should be responsible for this country's growth and startup ecosystem... India's ecosystem needs support, not stifling of innovation," he told a news channel. A Paytm spokesperson said the company had recently launched the 'Paytm Cricket League' on its consumer app for users to engage in their passion of cricket and get cashbacks. "The game allows users to get player stickers after each transaction, collect them and get Paytm cashback. Cashback is legal in India and we strictly follow all rules and laws of the land.

"Unfortunately, Google believes this to be a violation of its policies and has unlisted the Paytm Android app from the Play store," the spokesperson said. The spokesperson added that the cashback feature has been removed and confirmed that the app has been restored on the Play store. Google, in its blog post, had said that when an app violates its policies, it notifies the developer of the violation and removes the application from Google Play until the developer brings it into compliance. "And in the case where there are repeated policy violations, we may take more serious action which may include terminating Google Play Developer accounts. "Our policies are applied and enforced on all developers consistently," said the blog post by Suzanne Frey, vice president-product, security and privacy, Android. There is often a surge in launches of such apps before major sporting tournaments like the IPL. The latest season of the Indian Premier League is scheduled to start from September 19 in the UAE. —PTI

IPOs of Angel Broking, Chemcon next week

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 18

Two initial public offerings worth over Rs 900 crore are scheduled to open next week. Angel Broking, a Mumbai-based retail equity broker, announced initial public offering of equity shares aggregating to Rs 600 crore in the price band of Rs 305 to Rs 306 per equity share of face value of Rs 10 each. The public issue opens on September 22 and closes on September 24. The IPO comprises a fresh issue aggregating up to Rs 300 crore and an offer for sale aggregating up to Rs 300 crore. The offer for sale consists of a bunch of promoters selling shareholders (Rs 180 crore) and

by private equity investor selling shareholder International Finance Corporation (Rs 120 crore). Vadodara-based Chemcon Speciality Chemicals is offering shares worth Rs 318 crore in the IPO that opens on September 21. Chemcon is a manufacturer of speciality chemicals such as hexamethyldisilazane (HMDS) and chloromethyl isopropyl carbonate (CMIC) which are predominantly used in the pharmaceutical industry. It manufactures inorganic bromides used as completion fluids in the oilfield industry. Chemcon has fixed a price band of Rs 338 to Rs 340 per share of Rs 10 face value. The public issue of Chemcon closes on September 23.

DR REDDY'S LAB RISES OVER 10%

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 18

Pharma stocks were in demand on positive news flow for Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Cipla and Lupin. Dr Reddy's Lab. shares gained 10.36 per cent on BSE to close at Rs 5,326.0 and touched 52 week high of Rs 5,497 in intra-day trading over settling the dispute with Bristol Myers Squibb. Cipla (7.29 per cent) and Lupin (4.58 per cent) gained after their competitor Ireland headquartered Perrigo Company announced a recall of albuterol sulfate inhalation aerosol from the US market over consumer complaints. Other stocks like Divi's Laboratories (4.24 per cent), Glenmark (3.31 per cent) and Natco Pharma (14.43 per cent) also rose.

Apple to launch first online store in India

SANKALP PHARTIYAL & AAKRITI BHALLA NEW DELHI, SEPT. 18

Apple Inc will launch its first online store in India on September 23, the iPhone maker said on Friday, coinciding with the country's holiday season that brings some of the biggest sales for retailers every year. Apple sells its products in India through third-party vendors and e-commerce operators such as Amazon and Flipkart. The Cupertino, California-based tech giant's iPhones are coveted by tens of millions of Indians but their price keeps them out of the reach of many. Chinese companies led by Xiaomi Corp dominate in the world's second-biggest smartphone market, with Apple accounting for just 1 per cent of shipments. Through its online retail platform, Apple plans to offer assistance to customers in English and Hindi, while allowing



users to personalise some devices, including iPads, with engravings, it said. The website will also allow Mac customers to configure their laptops according to their needs. The opening of Apple's online store presents another challenge for bricks-and-mortar retailers whose business has suffered due to discounts by e-tailers, said Subhash Chandra L., managing director of Sangeetha Mobiles. "At least some of Apple's die-hard customers are likely to shift to buying from its online store," said Chandra whose chain operates more than 650 stores in southern and western India. —Reuters

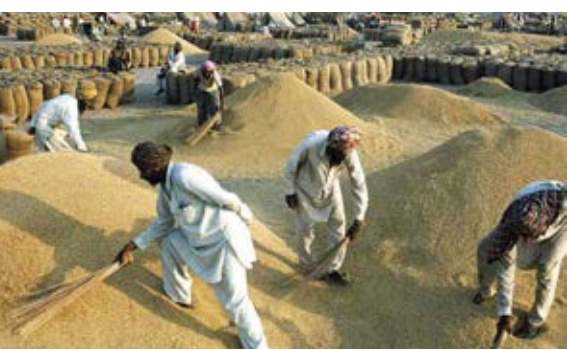
SKODA UNVEILS RAPID AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION

Mumbai, Sept. 18: The new Skoda Rapid TSI Automatic Transmission is available at an ex show-room price starting from Rs 9.49 lakh across the country. The most affordable automatic option in its segment, the new Skoda Rapid TSI Automatic Transmission with its class leading torque output delivers a 'fun to drive' experience like none another. With a six-speed torque converter, it offers exceptional power (110 PS) and fuel economy (16.24 kmpl). Mr. Zac Hollis, Brand Director-Skoda Auto India, said: "With the introduction of a six speed Automatic Transmission across the refreshed Rapid TSI range, the Czech marque has raised the benchmark within the segment. It is a reliable technology, provides a dynamic drive experience, and deems to be the best seller in its class." Introduced in 2011, the Rapid marked Skoda Auto's foray into the popular C segment in India.

What makes farm bills contentious

Three key agriculture bills, approved by the Lok Sabha, are facing staunch opposition from within the ruling coalition, with senior minister Harsmrit Kaur Badal resigning in protest and farmers hitting the street.

Here is an explainer on what the new bills are all about: ■ The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020: This proposed legislation seeks to give freedom to farmers to sell their produce outside the notified APMC market yards (mandis). This 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 Act. ■ Benefits: It will widen 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. ■ Opposition: States will lose revenue as they will not be able to collect 'mandi fees' if farmers sell their produce outside registered Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) markets. Also, commission



Explainer

agents stand to lose if the entire farm trade moves out of mandis. More importantly, farmers and opposition parties fear it may eventually lead to the end of the minimum support price (MSP)-based procurement system and may lead to exploitation by private companies. ■ The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020: This legislation 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. ■ Benefits: It seeks to transfer the risk of market unpredictability from farmers to sponsors. Besides giving them access to modern tech and better inputs, it also seeks to boost farmer income by reducing the cost of marketing. ■ Opposition: Farmer bodies and opposition parties say the law is framed to suit "big corporates who seek to dominate the Indian food and agriculture business". It will weaken the negotiating power of farmers. Also, big private companies, exporters, wholesalers, and processors may get an edge. ■ The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020: This proposed legisla-

tion seeks to remove commodities like cereals, pulses, oilseeds, onion, and potatoes from the list of essential commodities and will do away with the imposition of stock holding limits on such items except under 'extraordinary circumstances' like war, famine, extraordinary price rise and natural calamity. Benefits: It is aimed at attracting private investment/FDI into the farm sector as well as bringing price stability. ■ Opposition: Big companies will have the freedom to stock commodities, helping them dictate terms to farmers. ■ Government Stand: Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar has said the MSP mechanism for farmers will continue. Also, the proposed laws would not encroach upon the APMC Acts of the states. These bills are to ensure that farmers get better prices for their produce without being subject to the regulations of mandis, he has said, adding the Acts will increase competition and promote private investment which will help in the development of farm infrastructure and generate employment. —PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Hari goes down, stays in 5th place

**Chennai:** Indian Grandmaster P. Harikrishna maintained his joint fifth place in the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz online chess tournament even as American Wesley So climbed to the top spot ahead of world champion Magnus Carlsen. Competing in the last three rounds of the Rapid event, Harikrishna started well with a win over American player Jeffery Xiong in 66 moves. After a draw against another US player Hikaru Nakamura, the India number was outlasted by So in 69 moves on Thursday. The win allowed So to take the lead after nine rounds of the Rapid competition with two days of Blitz events to come. Carlsen crashed to a 46-move defeat at the hands of Russian Alexander Grischuk. So is in sole lead with 13 points followed by Carlsen (12) and the two Russians Ian Nepomniachtchi and Alexander Grischuk on 10. After a bright start to his campaign with two victories on the opening day, Harikrishna could manage only one more win in his other six games. — PTI

## Injured Osaka out of French Open

**Paris:** US Open champion Naomi Osaka has pulled out of the French Open because of an injured left hamstring. Osaka joins defending champion Ash Barty in skipping the French Open, which opens on September 27 in Paris. In another blow to the clay Grand Slam, tournament organisers announced a further reduction in crowd sizes, because of France's worsening Coronavirus epidemic. The new limit is 5,000 spectators per day, organisers said in a statement late Thursday. They'd previously been planning for 11,500 spectators, split among three sites at Roland Garros. It is important for the sporting, social and economic life of the country that a major event like Roland-Garros can be put on while respecting health imperatives, organizers said. Osaka hurt the hamstring last month at the Western & Southern Open, also in New York, and withdrew from that tournament's final because of it. — AP

## Justin grabs lead at US Open golf

**New York:** Justin Thomas closed with a 25-foot birdie putt to seize a one-stroke lead after Thursday's first round of the 120th US Open, while three other major winners lurked within two shots. Third-ranked Thomas, the 2017 PGA Championship winner, fired a five-under par 65 at Winged Foot with a pack one back on 66 including Reed, the 2018 Masters winner who had a hole-in-one, 21-year-old American Matthew Wolff and Belgium's Thomas Pieters. "This is one of the better rounds I've had tee to green," Thomas said. Top-ranked Dustin Johnson and 15-time major winner Tiger Woods each opened on 73. Johnson, who won the US PGA Tour Championship two weeks ago, managed only two birdies against a double bogey and three bogeys. Elsewhere, Indian golfer Tvesa Malik shot an opening round of one-under 70 in blistering hot conditions in the Open De France to be tied-seventh on the tough par-71 Chateaux Course. — Agencies

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**IPL:** Mumbai Indians vs Chennai Super Kings from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, 2

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Everton vs West Bromwich Albion from 5 pm; Leeds vs Fulham from 7.30 pm; Manchester United vs Crystal Palace from 10 pm; Arsenal vs West Ham United from 12.30 am (Sunday) on Star Sports Select 2, HD

**Spanish League:** Villarreal vs Eibar from 7.30 pm; Celta Vigo vs Valencia from 12.30 am (Sunday) on LaLiga page on Facebook

**Italian League:** Fiorentina vs Torino from 9.30 pm; Verona vs Roma from 12.15 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

## TENNIS

**Rome Masters:** Matches in two sessions — from 3.30 pm and 9.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

## UFC FIGHT NIGHT

**Colby Covington vs Tyrion Woodley** and other bouts from 5.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

## BASKETBALL

**NBA Eastern Conference Finals (Game 3 of best-of-7):** Boston Celtics vs Miami Heat from 6.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Six, HD

## CLASH OF TITANS

## Dhoni fresh and determined as IPL begins today

**Abu Dhabi, Sept. 18:** His sabbatical from the game has done Mahendra Singh Dhoni a world of good, Chennai Super Kings coach Stephen Fleming said on Friday, asserting that the enigmatic skipper is "mentally engaged and determined" to encounter the challenges of a "tactically different" IPL.

Dhoni's CSK will take on Rohit Sharma's Mumbai Indians in the tournament opener on Saturday. Fleming, a former New Zealand captain, stressed that his team's experience of winning big matches will come in handy during the next 53 days.

Dhoni retired from international cricket last month after being on a break for over one year and when asked about the 39-year-old's preparedness for the IPL, Fleming said, "It has been no different. He's very fit and mentally, he's been very engaged and determined."

"In some ways the break can work for the experienced and older players that we have. MS is fresh and ready to go," Fleming said in a pre-tournament interview to CSK's official website.

The three-time champions are banking heavily on their 35-plus players, including Dhoni himself, Shane Watson, Dwayne Bravo, Kedar Jadhav, and Imran Tahir to name a few.

"...experienced players identify key times and that's why they've done so well in their careers. They can turn games, absorb pressure or just sum out the situation. That's what experience is about and that's why we value it so highly. And that's why we've been able to get over the line in so many close games because the key player has been one with a lot of experience," Fleming further said.

Starting against a quality side like MI is certainly



Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (left) and Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma in this file photo.

## NUMBERS GAME

## HEAD TO HEAD

## OVERALL:

- Matches: 28
- Mumbai Indians won: 17
- Chennai Super Kings won: 11

## MEETING IN 2019

- Mumbai Indians defeated Chennai Super Kings by 37 runs at Mumbai (League)
- Mumbai Indians beat Chennai Super Kings by 46 runs at Chennai (League)
- Mumbai Indians beat Chennai Super Kings by 6 wickets at Chennai (Qualifier 1)

- Mumbai Indian beat Chennai Super Kings by one run at Hyderabad (final)

## FOR THE RECORD

- Rohit Sharma who scored 4898 runs at an average of 31.60 in 183 innings of 188 matches for Deccan Chargers and Mumbai Indians is the third highest scorer in IPL behind Virat Kohli (5,412 runs in 177 matches) and Suresh Raina (5,368 runs in 193 matches).
- Dwayne Bravo who claimed 147 wickets in 131 innings of 134 matches, needs just three wickets to become the fifth bowler to take 150 wickets in IPL.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

exciting for Fleming, who wants his men to have a crack at the defending champions after their agonising last-ball loss in the previous edition.

## BRETT BETS ON CSK

Former Australian speedster Brett Lee has tipped three-time champions Chennai Super Kings to win the 13th IPL, saying the variety in their spin department gives them an

advantage in the UAE conditions.

"They (CSK) are up there. I have picked them to win and I think CSK have a good chance because of their spin attack," Lee said on Star Sports' show *Game Plan*.

"With Santner, Jadeja needs to step up and be the no.1 spinner and CSK have got great variety and none of the spinners are same, so they are at an

advantage for the conditions in the UAE as the tournament progresses," he added.

Mumbai Indian will miss the services of their bowling spearhead Lasith Malinga who opted out of the tournament citing personal reasons.

However, Lee said he has no doubts that Jasprit Bumrah will be able to fill in the shoes of the experienced seamer. — PTI

## ICC has task to balance cricket against IPL burnout

**New Delhi, Sept 18:** The ICC faces a serious challenge in striking a financially viable balance between the thriving T20 leagues and international cricket over the next decade, says renowned coach Andy Flower.

He also feels it is important for stars like Virat Kohli to keep "talking up" the five-day format.

Led by the BCCI-backed IPL, most ICC full members have their own T20 product and the rapid growth of franchise-based cricket has put more stress on the international cricket calendar and its

viability, leaving the big three — India, Australia and England — aside.

"It is a serious challenge for the ICC to make a fine balance between viable international cricket and the burgeoning franchise world. That is going to be interesting to watch over the coming decade. I still think there is huge interest, primarily in three nations (India, England, Australia), in Test cricket. We have had two good series in England without spectators, as a TV product, the five-day format offers a lot to the broadcaster," Flower said. — PTI

**Manchester, Sept. 18:** England head coach Chris Silverwood has no doubt that competing in a world class event like IPL will help his players prepare well for the T20 World Cup but is worried about players burning themselves out.

As many as 10 England players, including seven cricketers who were involved in the recent limited over series against Australia, reached UAE on Thursday from the United Kingdom ahead of the IPL which begins on Saturday.

Silverwood said the



Chris Silverwood

players need to be cautious against burn-out as they have to stay in the bio-bubble for another seven weeks.

"It's their decision really but we'll have to keep an

eye on them," he said after England's three-wicket defeat in the third ODI at Manchester.

"Obviously, the contracts are good for them but equally as well we're looking forward at a T20 World Cup. The more high-class T20 they can play will be a good thing for us. The one thing that I have encouraged is that they keep talking to us. We need to make sure that they don't burn out as well," he added.

The next T20 World Cup is scheduled to be held in India next year in October-November. — PTI

## BARCA PREZ TO FACE VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE

**Barcelona, Sept. 18:** Barcelona president Josep Bartomeu faces a vote of no confidence after club members gathered enough signatures to force a referendum on his future.

The vote will be held after the club verifies all the signatures. Bartomeu would have to step down if two thirds of the votes are against him, and new elections would have to be scheduled.

The opposition members had announced their intention to remove Bartomeu from the presidency after Lionel Messi told the club last month he wanted to leave amid one of its worst crises ever.

Pressure on Bartomeu increased after the team's embarrassing 8-2 loss to Bayern Munich in the quarterfinals of the Champions League. The defeat prompted Bartomeu to announce big changes at the club and call for new presidential elections for next March. — AP

## Tanguy saves Spurs blushes

**London, Sept. 18:** Tottenham Hotspur scored twice in the final 10 minutes to avoid a humiliating Europa League exit to Lokomotiv Plovdiv as Jose Mourinho's men came from behind to beat the nine-man Bulgarians 2-1 on Thursday.

Harry Kane's penalty and Tanguy Ndombele's winner five minutes from time ensured the 2019 Champions League finalists did not fall at the first hurdle of their Europa League campaign to a side that have never progressed beyond the qualifying stages of European competition.

Mourinho named a strong side featuring Kane, Hugo Lloris and Son Heung-min with just four changes from Sunday's 0-1 defeat to Everton to start their EPL campaign. The tie swung back in Spurs favour nine minutes later when Momchil Tsvetanov punched clear off his own line and the referee had no option but to point to the spot and send Tsvetanov off. Birsent Karagaren was then also shown a second yellow



Tottenham's Ben Davies (second from left) vies for the ball with Lokomotiv's Lucas Salinas during their Europa League match in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, on Thursday. — AP

card before Kane scored from the spot-kick.

## BALE BIDS ADIEU TO MADRID

Gareth Bale arrived at Real Madrid as the world's most expensive player and the heir to Cristiano Ronaldo.

After seven years, he will leave for next to nothing, a dramatic return to

Tottenham allowing Madrid's fans and accountants to breathe a heavy sigh of relief. They will be rid of the player that delivered jaw-dropping moments but overall failed to justify the expectations or expense, neither of which were of his own making.

Bale's flashes of brilliance will leave an indeli-

ble mark, not only on his own career but on the history of the club too.

He can lay claim to scoring the greatest goal in a Copa del Rey final, at the end of that barnstorming run that began on the halfway line, circled almost into the stands and finished with Barcelona crumpled in a heap. — AFP



Armand Duplantis of Sweden clears 6.15 metres to set a new men's pole vault world record during the IAAF Diamond League competition at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Thursday. — AFP

## INTO THE CLOUDS!

## Duplantis high over 26-yr-old Bubka bar

**Rome, Sept. 18:** Swedish pole vault star Armand Duplantis eclipsed Ukrainian legend Sergey Bubka's 26-year mark, setting a outdoor new pole vault world record of 6.15 metres (20 feet, 2 inches) at the Diamond League meeting in Rome on Thursday. Duplantis bettered the mark of 6.14m (20 feet, 1 1/2 inches) set by Bubka in Sestriere, Italy, in July 1994.

The 20-year-old succeeded on his second attempt in a competition he dominated in perfect warm and windless conditions, but without spectators to celebrate in an empty Stadio Olimpico.

Duplantis already holds the world indoor record of 6.18m (20 feet, 3 1/4 inches).

"I think I'm still up in the clouds right now. It's a surreal, super crazy feeling," said the US-born athlete.

Ukrainian Bubka broke the world record on 17 occasions in the 1980s and 1990s, famously edging the mark up by one centimetre on no fewer than nine occasions between 1988 and 1994 so he could collect a bonus each time.

Duplantis was a child prodigy who broke age-group records on his way to joining the pole vaulting elite. He chose to compete internationally for Sweden, his mother's home country. He won the silver medal at last year's world championships.

Born and raised in Louisiana, Duplantis is a photogenic new star in a sport searching for star quality since the retire-

ment of Jamaican sprint legend Usain Bolt in 2017. His exuberant celebrations and looks straight out of a teenage romantic film mean he fits the bill.

Coached by his American father Greg, a former pole vaulter, Duplantis is a product of a track and field-crazy family which had their own vaulting apparatus in the garden. His older brother Andreas vaulted for Sweden at various age-group championships, while another sibling Antoine dropped pole vault in favour of baseball.

Armand spent summers with his Swedish grandparents, keeping the link with his former heptathlete mother's home country.

He started pole vaulting, which requires the speed and strength of sprinter and the flexibility of a gymnast, when he was four years old.

He announced his talent to the world when he cleared 5.90m aged just 17 at the Texas Relays in Austin in 2017. He turned professional last year after one season on a scholarship at Louisiana State University. — AFP

## Goran shines as Heat pip Celtics

**Miami, Sept. 18:** The Miami Heat turned it up in the second half, rallying again for a 106-101 victory over the Boston Celtics and a 2-0 lead in the NBA Eastern Conference finals.

Trailing by 17 in the second quarter and down 60-47 at halftime, Miami thrashed the Celtics 37-17 in the third quarter and held on for the victory.

The Celtics, who let a big lead slip in a 117-114 game one overtime defeat on

Tuesday, regained the lead in the fourth quarter and were up 94-89 with 4:25 left to play.

But the Heat chipped away with a hook shot from Adebayo and a steal and dunk by Jimmy Butler.

Goran Dragic followed up two free throws with a three-pointer over Boston big man Daniel Theis that put the Heat ahead 100-95 with 1:42 remaining and Miami powered to the finish line. — AFP

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