

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
VISAKHAPATNAM | SUNDAY | 6 SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER

Max: 33.8°C
Min: 26.4°C
RH: 80%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Mist.
Max/Min temp.
33/26°C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+94,732)	(+1,059)
41,09,476	70,673

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,511)	(+11)
TS: 1,38,395	877
(+10,825)	(+76)
AP: 4,87,331	4,347

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,69,48,953

DEATHS

8,81,347

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES **213**

worldometers.info/ coronavirus

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ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana

Tithi: Bhadrapada Bahula Chavithi till 7.07 pm

Star: Ashwini till 5.23 am (Monday)

Variyam: 12.52 am to 2.40 am (Monday)

Durmuhurtam: 4.44 pm to 5.33 pm

Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm

HJRI CALENDAR

Muharram 17, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.50 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 4.45 pm

Maghrib: 6.15 pm

Isha: 8.15 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.07 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.43 AM

MOONRISE TOMORROW 8.51 PM

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COUNTER POINT



What a wonder!
There are so many games other than PUBG!

BRIEF

80 special trains from Sept. 12

New Delhi: Eighty new special trains will be operational from September 12, reservations for which will begin from next Thursday, Railway Board chairman V.K. Yadav said on Saturday. At a media briefing, the railway board chairman said, "Eighty new special trains or 40 pair of trains will start operating from September 12. Reservations will begin from September 10. These will run in addition to the 230 trains already in operation." Yadav said the railways will monitor all the trains that are currently in operation to determine which trains have a long waiting list.

Army jawan dies in Pak LoC firing

Srinagar: An Army jawan was killed and two others were injured in the latest incident of cross-border firing in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district on Saturday. Defence spokesman, Colonel Rajesh Kalia, said here that Pakistani troops "initiated an unprovoked ceasefire violation" along the Line of Control (LoC) in Nowgam sector of Kupwara by firing mortars and other weapons resulting in on-the-spot killing of one Indian soldier and injuring two others. "They were evacuated to the 92-Base Hospital in Badami Bagh Cantonment and their condition is stable," he said.



NATION | 5

Actress wife slaps DV case against BJD MP



WORLD | 7

Postal voting marks start of US Prez election

SPORTS | 8

Hamilton breaks pole position record in Italy



AP No. 1 in ease of doing biz, TS pushed to third

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

Andhra Pradesh retained its top position in the latest 'Ease of Doing' Business Rankings 2019. The Department of Industrial Promotion and Internal Trade released the State Business Reform Action Plan (State BRAP) rankings for States and union territories on Saturday in a video conference chaired by Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Andhra Pradesh ranked first in 'Overall Best Performers' category followed by Uttar Pradesh and Telangana State. These rankings represent the ease of doing business in the state with increased transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of government regulatory functions vis-à-vis business enterprises.

Ease of Doing Business (EODB) is a joint initiative by the Department for Promotion of Industries and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and World Bank to improve the overall business environment in states.

State industries minister Mekapati Gautam Reddy participated along with industry department officials and highlighted

● **THESE RANKINGS** represent the ease of doing business in the state with increased transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of government regulatory functions vis-à-vis business enterprises.

the efforts taken by the State government in ensuring true business reforms leading to actual ease of doing business with low investments and quick single-desk approvals and 99.9 per cent compliance with Service Level Agreements (SLA).

He said that the state government is the first to come up with a ReSTART package post-Covid for business continuity of MSMEs while fulfilling 90% of the promises made to the electorate and businesses in the very first year of governance. He further mentioned that these rankings, which were done through a survey of the investor community in January-February, stand testimony to the investor-friendly commitment of the state and transparent governance that is already in place.

■ **Page 2: 100% compliant in business reform plan**

South India film industry ignored in Unlock 4 talks

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

South India has again found no place in a meeting that the Centre has called with the film industry to discuss the reopening of cinema theatres as part of Coronavirus Unlock 4.

The Union ministry of home affairs is conducting a meeting on September 8 with representatives of cinemas and multiplexes. No one from the southern states has been invited despite it being the biggest contributors to Indian cinema.

Union home ministry undersecretary Ashish Kr Singh issued a notice on Friday that the Union home secretary will meet representatives of cinema, multiplex associations and hear their views through videoconferencing about reopening of cinema halls and multiplexes in Unlock 4.0.

Those invited were secretary, I&B ministry, PVR Cinemas chairman Ajay Bijli, East India Motion Pictures Association West

Bengal chairman Ratan Saha, UP Cinema Exhibitors Federation member Ashotosh Agarwal, Cinema Owners and Exhibitors Association Gujarat secretary Vadan Shah, Multiplex Association of Gujarat president Manubhai Patel and Central Circuit Cine Association Maharashtra representative Akshaye Rathi. This has shocked Telugu film industry, aka Tollywood, which is the main contributor to Indian film industry with a 17 to 30 per cent of Indian box-office revenue besides being a major player in Bollywood.

A producer of Telugu film industry on the condition of anonymity said that Sahoo is one of the biggest blockbusters and it collected ₹357 crore of revenue. He said that the Tamil film industry produces blockbusters and mega hits in multiple languages. It was the same with Kannada and Kerala film industries.

■ **Page 2: Discrimination by Centre found baffling**

WEAK LINK

After mishaps, department of factories got 90 days for inspections

Low manpower hits factory checks

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

Insufficient manpower in the department of factories may adversely affect the ongoing inspection of over 2,000 factories across Andhra Pradesh.

In the wake of mishaps at LG Polymers in Visakhapatnam and elsewhere in the state, the government directed the department of factories to take up inspection of identified factories to find out within 90 days from the middle of August whether they are complying with

all standard safety norms. Although the officials have taken up the task, lack of staff is slackening the work. The department is rudderless from November 1, following superannuation of the former head and at present, a senior official in the rank of joint chief inspector of factories is functioning as the in-charge.

Deputy chief inspectors inspect factories to find out compliance with safety norms and submit their report factory-wise to the government. The department is also carrying out inspection of minor factories on their own in the districts. Out of 19 posts, 10

are lying vacant. As each district will be having one or two inspectors depending upon the need, all four Rayalaseema districts, including Anantapur, Kurnool, Kadapa and Chittoor, besides Prakasam, Guntur, Krishan, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram are not having an inspector each. Though Guntur has two sanctioned posts, both are vacant. The three joint chief inspectors are handling districts where there are vacancies.

The department is also not having adequate number of clerical and ministerial staff and vehicles forcing the senior officials to do all clerical works, and facing difficulty in moving from place to place for want of vehicles.

Following Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's directions that officials should take up thorough inspections and would be held responsible for lapses, they are a worried lot. Sources say that the ongoing inspection may be delayed beyond the deadline as each official can only inspect two to three factories in a day.

■ **Page 2: Takes time to inspect factories: Official**

India tells China to disengage

No breakthrough in talks at SCO meeting between defence ministers

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5

In the first high-level political contact between the two countries ever since the border tensions between them flared-up in early May, defence minister Rajnath Singh categorically told his Chinese counterpart General Wei Fenghe that there should be no doubt about India's determination to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity and China should not make attempts to unilaterally change status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Mr Singh also said that the current situation should be handled responsibly and that neither side should take any action that could either complicate the situation or escalate matters.

Mr Singh met General Wei in Moscow on Friday at the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Moscow for two-and-a-half hours. However, no breakthrough seems to have emerged from the bilateral meeting.

Chinese state media reported that during the meeting Gen. Wei said that India bears full responsibility for current China-India border tensions and that the Chinese military has determination, capability and confidence to safeguard China's territorial integrity. Gen. Wei reportedly also said that "not an inch of China's territory should be lost."

The Chinese statement comes in backdrop of Indian Army's move to preempt PLA and occupy over two dozen strategic peaks on the southern banks of Pangong Tso and Spanggur Gap. This has not gone down well with Beijing.

Indian defence ministry said in a statement that the two ministers had frank and in-depth discussions about developments in the India-China border areas as well as on India-China relations. "Raksha Mantri categorically conveyed India's position on the developments along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), including in the Galwan valley in the Western Sector of the India-China border areas in the last few months," said the defence ministry statement.

Mr Singh told the Chinese delegation that the actions of the Chinese troops were in violation of the bilateral agreements and not in keeping with the understandings reached between the Special Representatives of two sides. He said that Chinese side should work with India for complete disengagement at the earliest from all friction areas, including Pangong Lake as well as de-escalation in border areas in accordance with the bilateral agreements on maintenance of peace at borders.



A member of the Tibetan community shouts slogans during a protest against China, outside the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on Saturday.

— PTI

Army gears up for winter after growing tall on PLA

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 5

On the hilltops and inhospitable ridgelines at mind-numbing altitudes of more than 15,000 feet, when the temperatures plummet to -25° Celsius and lower, all that one has for "company" constantly are frostbite, chilblain, blood clots, lung infection and even memory loss amid the heavy snowfall. The wind-chill factor makes it worse. Taking it easy for a while could mean sure death, a painful one at that.

High altitude warfare is nothing new for the Indian Army which has battled the elements at Siachen glacier, Ladakh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and several points along the Line of Control with Pakistan. Now, with massive deployments on the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso, after capturing strategic heights from where soldiers are keeping an eye on the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the Indian Army is gearing up to battle the ele-

● **HIGH ALTITUDE** warfare is nothing new for the Indian Army which has fought in Siachen glacier, Ladakh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and points along the LoC with Pakistan.

● **ARMY HAS** procured a large number of extreme cold weather clothing systems and mountaineering kits for soldiers

ments at strategic heights even as the "road open period" to Ladakh from Rohtang and Srinagar-Kargil route will soon close due to heavy snowfall.

Highly placed sources told *Deccan Chronicle* that the Army has procured a large number of extreme cold weather clothing systems and mountaineering kits for the soldiers who have been deployed in massive numbers along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. The soldiers have begun to put on the special clothing as night temperatures have begun to drop. These are similar to the ones

used by soldiers deployed in the Siachen glacier, the world's highest battlefield.

With unpredictable weather throwing a major challenge and frequent avalanches, large quantities of K-oil (kerosene), canned food, medical supplies, repair equipment for communication, vehicles among other logistics are being supplied to the strategic locations. This is beside the massive supply of ammunition to ensure that the soldiers easily sustain for months. The supplies are being divided among all Army posts. Supplies are stocked up well before the road closes. Thereafter, supplies are sent by air when needed.

The weather turns harsher towards October and November after which it remains extreme till February and beyond. Unlike at Siachen, the main culprit in the heights of eastern Ladakh is the wind-chill factor, which makes for a deadly combination along with heavy snowfall.

■ **Page 4: Accommodation still biggest challenge**

China abducts 5 Arunachal porters

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, SEPT. 5

Amid escalating border tension with China in Ladakh, a report that five Arunachalee youths serving as porters for the Indian Army were allegedly been abducted by the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) of China on Thursday has created tension on the eastern frontier though there is no official confirmation of it yet.

Reports claim that the family members of the porters came to know

about the incident through a wireless message of Indian Army. It said, "Five persons have been abducted by the Chinese Army at the Sera-7 area near McMahon line." The kin of those missing then took to the social media to raise awareness and ensure their safe return.

The Upper Subansiri district administration said that they have not received any complaint or information in this regard, but have taken note of social media reports and asked police to go to the

frontier areas where the incident is reported to have taken place.

Deputy commissioner of Upper Subansiri, Kento Dangen, told this newspaper, "We have not received any complaint or even information about such an incident so far. Following the hype created on social media we have asked police to rush officers to the areas where these incidents are reported to have taken place. We are also trying to reach out to the Indian Army."

Mr Dangen said that

they are also in the process of reaching out to the villages and villagers who reported this incident in social media posts.

Security sources in the intelligence wing, engaged in global border management, said that Indian Army headquarters have also been establishing contact with the patrolling teams operating in remote areas along the Mac-Mohan line to verify the villagers' claim. The incident came to light through WhatsApp messages in Arunachal Pradesh.

NGT: Assess costs of illegal sand mining

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, SEPT. 5

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) of Southern Zone, Chennai, directed the committee, constituted by it to assess environmental compensation due to illegal sand mining and the quantum of sand mined, the quantity for which permission was granted to remove the sand and excess quantum of sand mined, to report the findings by November 25.

Sunkara Welfare Organisation President

Karthik filed an application in NGT, regarding the illegal mining of sand from Godavari River mouth and Estuary at Yanam in the border of Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry. He stated that the Godavari River enters the sea at Yanam and the river mouth area is known as Vrudha Gowtham Godavari. It is a highly sensitive ecological fragile area and there is a drifting of sand and river back and forth into the sea four times a day.

■ **Page 2: Illegal sand mining in Yanam**

SHORT TAKES

OFFICIAL: TAKES TIME TO INSPECT FACTORIES

FROM PAGE 1

A senior official from the department of factories said, "If we have to honestly inspect factories for all safety norms as per guidelines, it takes a lot of time and with shortage of manpower, there will be further delay. We appeal to the state government to start filling up all vacant posts in order to ensure all-round industrial safety."

100% COMPLIANT IN BUSINESS REFORM PLAN

FROM PAGE 1

"The Business Reform Action Plan 2019 released by the Centre contains a list of 80 reforms (187 reform action points) to be implemented by 19 State departments. Andhra Pradesh has achieved one hundred percent compliance," the minister pointed out.

He said that they had recently introduced a new industrial policy that provided time-bound land allotment to new industries through the Single Desk Portal, comprehensive e-filing system for online filing of commercial cases at special commercial court at Visakhapatnam, among other such firms.

The minister congratulated the efforts of Karikal Valaven, Special Chief Secretary, Industries, Subramanyam Javvadi, Commissioner of Industries and all officials of the industries department for putting in their best efforts to make AP the top-ranking state in BRAP, by bringing the state government closer to the investor community.

ILLEGAL SAND MINING IN YANAM

FROM PAGE 1

He alleged that indiscriminate, illegal and unauthorised sand mining is being carried out in Yanam and in the border areas of Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry. They were devoid of environment clearance and other statutory authorities. They are also involved in in-stream mining using huge mechanised sand boats while many trucks are used for transporting such illegally mined sand.

Based on the application, the NGT constituted a committee, comprising East Godavari district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy, Yanam regional administrator Shivraj Meena, deputy director of Mines at Kakinada K.L.V. Prasad, APPCB environmental engineer A. Ramarao Naidu, Puducherry Pollution Control Committee scientific officer N. Srinivasa Rao, Puducherry Coastal Zone Management Authority scientist Vipin Babu, and Central Pollution Control Board (Bengaluru) scientist-D Mahima to investigate all lapses and criminal activities and also to indicate precautionary methods adopted by the governments of Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry, in respect of regulating sand mining in river beds especially Godavari River.

Following the report, the committee studied the 23-km stretch of River Godavari from Kotipalli to Yanam and identified 23 sand reaches in East Godavari to carry out sand mining to the tune of 8,31,792 metric tonnes. They also looked into whether the 23 reaches like Pasuvulanka, Pedalanka, Pillanka, Muramalla, Govallanka, Old Injaram, Masakapalli, Korumilli, Kapileswarapuram, Jonnada, Vemagiri, Atrayapuram, Ankampalem, Pulindindi, Vaddiparru and other stretches of East Godavari and Yanam in Puducherry had mining plans.

The committee found several irregularities like excess excavation of sand, lack of demarcation and non-maintenance of log books and sand mining in lanka lands. None followed environment laws. The committee submitted its report to NGT, stating that proper scientific method was not used for assessment of the total sand reserves and depth of sand deposited before granting mining permission and recommended the NGT to direct the State government to devise a policy to define sand dunes, lanka lands, shoals, and whether the rivers can be mined or not and CC cameras at every sand reach. The panel urged NGT to direct APMD to depute one official every day for three or five sand reaches to monitor mining activities.

Based on the report the NGT directed the committee to assess loss of environment and its compensation due to illegal mining.

No cheer for pvt teachers

Unpaid for six months, pvt school teachers seek CM's intervention

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

There has been no 'guru pujotsavam' for proponents of the noble profession this Teacher's Day due to the Corona crisis. Most from the fraternity, especially private teachers, are lamenting that they struggled to run their families because of closure of educational institutions.

There were no guru pujotsavam celebrations in educational institutions on Saturday and several organisations conducted the programme under which essential commodities were distributed to teachers reflecting the changed scenario, post-Covid-19.

Many from the Private Teachers and Lecturers Union AP (PTLUAP) observed a 'black day' and urged Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to bail them out of the financial crisis.

Teachers like Sk Rahim, Y. Ramesh and G. Murali regretted that private schools denied them salaries on the pretext of lack of revenue because of the lockdown. They pointed out that in comparative terms their salaries were considerably less than that drawn by government teachers.

They said that in order to sustain their families, many teachers were forced to work as petty traders selling vegetables, footwear, masks, sanitizers, fruits and other essentials. PTLUAP leaders said that they did not need any felicitation or awards for their services as teachers and appealed to the Chief Minister to initiate concrete measures and ensure payment of six months of pending salaries to private teachers.

Rising to the occasion, BJP offered rice during a Teacher's Day felicitation function. Led by former minister Ravela Kishore Babu, the party felicitated as many as 100 best teachers from private schools and offered them a rice bag each. The leaders sought the government's help in bringing relief to private teachers.

Several other organisations also conducted similar programmes across the State.

● Led by former minister Ravela Kishore Babu BJP offered rice during a Teacher's Day felicitation function.

GOVT ISSUES TOURISM GUIDELINES

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

The state tourism department on Saturday released Andhra Pradesh Tourism Trade (Registration and Facilitation) Guidelines, 2020 for registration of tourism operators, to promote and facilitate tourism and improve service standards.

Tourism minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao said that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy had launched Tourism Trade Registration & Facilitation portal a couple of days back. The guidelines are available on the tourism website www.aptourism.gov.in.

The objectives of the guidelines are to promote tourism service standards, encourage seamless growth of tourism and ease of tourism investments in the state. "Tourism is one of the key service sectors in the growth and development of the state. One of the guidelines makes registration mandatory for stakeholders. Secondly, the stakeholder will be eligible for any government sponsored initiatives, incentives, subsidies, schemes, etc."

The minister stated that permission was already given on Friday for resumption of tourism activities as per the guidelines issued by the government of India and likewise boating operations would resume very soon.



Teachers of private schools stage protest against the government demanding house sites for eligible on the Teachers Day near GVMC Gandhi Statue junction in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

Teachers take out rally over salary payment

VADREU SRINIVAS | DC KAKINADA, SEPT. 5

Private teachers at Pithapuram took out a procession, demanding that the government pressure managements to pay their salaries.

On the occasion of Teachers' Day celebrations on Saturday, they staged a protest against private school managements. They started the procession from the Municipal High School to Pithapuram Municipal Office and raised slogans demanding immediate payment of their salaries.

They performed abhishekam to the statue of late chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy with milk. Leading the agitation, teachers' leader Anil Chowdary said that private schools and colleges made use of private teachers to enhance their image but dumped them during the Coronavirus. On the pretext of Covid-19 crisis, private school managements did not pay salaries and the teachers are struggling for livelihood, he said.

The education department commissioner

TULASI REDDY ASKS GOVERNMENT TO HELP PRIVATE TEACHERS

NAGESWARA RAO BALLEDA | DC KADAPA, SEPT. 5

AP Congress working president Dr N. Tulasi Reddy has said private school teachers are facing severe financial problems as schools have not yet opened because of Coronavirus pandemic. Even the state government has not come to their rescue.

As a result, Mr Reddy said private teachers have had to sell sandals and masks on roads. Some of them are even working as masons, labourers and workers in retail shops. Requesting the state government to support private teachers, the APCC

leader said even the 3,720 contract lecturers of government junior colleges in the state have not been paid their salaries for the last six months. He urged the government to release their salaries immediately.

Earlier, the Congress leaders celebrated the 132nd birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, former President of India, at Vempalle.

On the occasion, Tulasi Reddy described late Radhakrishnan as the best teacher and ideal philosopher, who also served as the Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union and vice president.

On the occasion of the Teachers' Day, Participating as a chief guest Alliance Club International advisor Dr Chappidi Venkateswara Rao said that the teachers should teach traditions, customs and moral values to the students.

He issued a GO stating that private school managements should pay salaries to the teachers. But, the managements did not follow it.

Meanwhile, Alliance Saravan Club, led by Dilip Sadanani, felicitated a teacher J.Ramaswamy on

Mishap in Naidu's convoy

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT 5

Andhra Pradesh former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had a close shave in a road accident when a car in his convoy met with a minor accident. Mr Naidu was in the car following the one that met with the accident. Officials said there were no serious injuries to anyone and the former chief minister was safe and secure in his vehicle.

Mr Naidu was on his way to Hyderabad from Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh at the time of the accident that occurred near Dandumalkauram village in Choutuppal mandal of Yadadri-Bhongir district.

The incident happened when the escort vehicle leading the convoy stopped suddenly to avoid hitting a cow crossing the road. This led to the sec-



The damaged car in former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's convoy on Saturday

ond vehicle in the convoy running into the escort vehicle.

The occupants of the two vehicles did not receive any major injuries, and moved into

the other vehicles as the journey was resumed, the police said.

After a few minutes, the convoy left from the spot to Hyderabad, the police said.

HUGE LOSS

Temple owns 921 acres in the name of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy

Old, fund-starved temple deprived of revenue

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC NELLORE, SEPT. 5

In our country, owning land and possessing it are two separate aspects and this applies to temples too.

Lack of support from endowment and revenue departments has been depriving a fund-starved, two centuries-old Sri Kodandarama Swamy shrine at Buchireddypalem in Nellore district of huge amounts of revenue for six decades now.

The temple owns 921 acres in the name of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy, at Reddivarikandriga village in Chejerla mandal. But local farmers have been cultivating the land without paying any rent to the temple and are thwarting the efforts of the temple to take peaceful possession of the land.

In fact, the temple had close to 12,750 acres before the estate abolition Act was implemented in undivided Andhra Pradesh in the 1960s, with a few vil-

● Temple trustee, Dodla Muralikrishna Reddy, has been suggesting that the government take over the land to develop an industrial park

lages being part of the endowment.

Under the Act, even institutional lands were taken over by the government without any thought though it meant to take back excess land from the zamindars and landlords of yesteryears.

DISCRIMINATION BY CENTRE FOUND BAFFLING

from page 1

He stated that the industry was badly affected during the lockdown and was eagerly waiting for reopening of theatres. The discrimination of the Union government is baffling, he said.

He sought the government to take opinions of all stakeholders of Indian cinema, including representatives of southern states.

Another producer unwilling to disclose his name recalled that earlier also the southern film industry was put aside for an interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019. He stated that Upasana Konidala had pointed out the injustice and now once again the Centre is showing bias.

Jagan taking farmers for a ride on free power, says Naidu

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday said that the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government has no moral authority to fix smart meters on agricultural pump sets as he has not talked about this in his election manifesto.

Mr Naidu was emphatic that free power was a natural right that came to Andhra Pradesh farmers over a period of three to four but not a token benefit that is at the mercy of the incumbent Chief Minister. He alleged that YSRC regime was trying to take away this right of over 18 lakh farmers by bringing in backdoor reforms even though Telangana and Tamil Nadu were opting out of this.

Addressing a press conference here, Mr Naidu warned the government of stringent opposition and agitations by farmers and political parties if it pursued power reforms without a human face. He stated that Jagan Mohan Reddy should know that it was the TD that pioneered power sector reforms and, even at the height of those reforms, successive TD governments never proposed meters. He claimed that the very tradition of free power took its roots in the landmark policy of offering power at a lower slab rate during the NTR regime over 40 years ago.

The former chief minister wanted to know the necessity to go for meters and Direct Benefit Transfer scheme when this would help the State to get a meager 0.25 per cent more borrowing eligibility under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) guidelines. He claimed that Andhra Pradesh was already entitled for 0.5 per cent additional borrowings. He

'NAIDU HAS NO RIGHT TO TALK ON FREE POWER'

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

Agriculture minister Kanna Babu has said Leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu has no right to talk about free electricity to farmers. The minister recalled the firing incident during the Naidu regime when farmers demanded reduction in power charges. The minister maintained that the opposition leader is trying to mislead farmers through false propaganda.

Kanna Babu asserted that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is committed to supplying power for nine hours to farmers and has released ₹1,700 crore for this sector. He pointed out that 89 per cent of feeders have already been upgraded while the remaining 11 per cent would be upgraded soon to ensure hassle-free power supply to farmers.

The minister said the government has decided to regularise all unauthorised connections and there will be no burden on farmers. He maintained that reforms in the power sector will bring in more transparency and accountability into the system.

alleged that it was nothing but backstabbing of farmers by the present Jagan regime.

Accusing Jagan Mohan Reddy of breach of trust, Mr Naidu expressed doubts about the implementation of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme for farmers when it was struggling to get funds to pay salaries and pensions and had to auction bonds to get funds from RBI.

Show flaws in DBT: YSRC

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

Municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana has asserted that Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government is implementing farmer-friendly schemes despite being forced to pay interest on un-cleared debts of the previous government. He maintained that the state government is effectively implement free-power scheme for farmers in accordance with the reforms proposed by central government in the electricity sector.

Mr Satyanarayana said Telugu Desam leaders are unnecessarily politicising free-power scheme and creating confusion within the farmer community. He demanded that TD president Naidu clearly point to the possible flaws in the scheme, rather than opposing it pointlessly.

The minister asserted that the state government will implement the scheme effectively, unlike Mr Naidu, who failed to fulfil his promise of waiving farmers' loans. He said, "Chandrababu

Naidu has a history of neglecting the agriculture sector, ruining the power sector, and ditching farmers by making false promises. Mr Naidu increased power charges from ₹50 to ₹600 during TD term and even ordered firing on farmers protesting against the hike in power charges. It was Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, who gave free power to farmers after being moved by the plight of farmers and their suicides," he pointed out.

Mr Satyanarayana clarified that there will be no additional burden on farmers with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of free power subsidy. It will instead bring more transparency and accountability into the system. He further clarified that the electricity bills of farmers will be sent to the government and the amount will be credited to escrow accounts of farmers, which would be paid to Discoms. The minister stated that the new scheme is a permanent solution to safeguard the interests of farmers and Discoms, while fulfilling the promise of nine-hour free power to farmers.

complicated situation as any strong attempt to take possession of the land would result in a law and order problem.

On his part, the area legislator and industries minister, Mekapati Goutham Reddy, has been trying his best to pursue the encroachers to pay rent on the lands in their possession, but they refuse to do so.

Temple trustee, Dodla Muralikrishna Reddy, has been suggesting that the government take over the land to develop an indus-

trial park, pointing to such proposals in the new industrial policy of AP. He said the government should ensure that the compensation being paid, following the land acquisition rules, and start the industrial parks in no time.

"This could be a win-win option with the temple receiving huge compensation and the government avoiding long-term litigation to acquire the land by making necessary amendments to the Endowment Act," Reddy added.

IN BRIEF

3 of a family killed in mishap

Nellore: In a tragic incident, three members of a family killed when a speeding lorry hit a motorcycle from the backside on Chittoor-Kurnool national highway near Garampalli in KV Palli mandal of Chittoor district on Saturday. The deceased have been identified as Shankaraiah 38, his wife Reddemma, 35, and son Akhil, 5, of Chinnagottigallu mandal of Chittoor district. The mishap took place when they were going towards KV Palke. They were crushed to death on the spot when they fell under the wheels of the cement-laden lorry.

Covid woman patient ends life

Kadapa: A woman who was being treated for corona virus allegedly committed suicide on Saturday. A 59-year-old woman from Upparapalle, a village in Vangimalla in Veeraballi mandal, underwent corona tests three days ago and was found to be positive. With this she gets home medical services as per the advice of the doctors. On the order, she went to a mango orchard on the outskirts of the village on Saturday and hanged herself to death.

Durga flyover to open on Sept. 18

MD. ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

The iconic Kanaka Durga flyover opening was once again postponed to September 18 and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and Union minister Nitin Gadkari together will inaugurate it online.

Earlier, the iconic flyover launch was scheduled on September 4 but due to the death of former president Pranab Mukherjee it was cancelled. Now the government decided to inaugurate the flyover on 18 September and is making arrangements accordingly.

Transport department principal secretary M.T. Krishna Babu said that the Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, along with Chief Minister of AP CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, will participate in flyover inaugurations and further other projects taken up by AP on September 18.

Mr Babu said that the Union Minister will be

joining the programme from Delhi through Video Conference. Bhumipuja will be done for 16 projects worth around ₹7,584 crore.

He explained that a total of 877 km of roads belonging to national highways will be developed for which foundation will be laid. He mentioned that similarly, 10 projects completed at an estimated cost of ₹8,038 crore will be dedicated to the nation.

He said that about 533 kms of roads are improved to 6-lane/4-lane/2-lane with paved shoulders.

He stated that one of the technical marvels, Kanaka Durga Flyover taken up at a cost of ₹501 crore which includes state government contribution of ₹146 crore will be dedicated to the nation by CM Jagan and Union minister Gadkari.

He added that Durga flyover is third by three 6-lane bridges in the country supported by a single pier with spine and wing design.

Infant abandoned in sand dunes

VADREVV SRINIVAS | DC KAKINADA, SEPT. 5

An hour-old infant was abandoned in a sand dune near Krishnavaram village in Yetapaka mandal on Saturday.

A cattle servant heard the cry of the infant and informed nearby the people who informed the officials. The infant was brought to a Primary Health Centre in Lakshimpuram village and gave preliminary treatment. The doctors found that the

infant was suffering from a breathless problem and also it was a premature delivery.

The infant was shifted to Area Hospital at Bhadrachalam for further treatment. The ITDA Project Officer A.Venkata Ramana said that the medical and health personnel, Panchayat and Revenue Officials are directed to gather details of pregnant women and child-births within a radius of 6 kilometres of Krishnavaram village to trace out the parents of the infant.

Ambulances cost a bomb in Nellore

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC NELLORE, SEPT. 5

The capacity of private ambulance operators seems to have crossed all limits of reasonableness in the district. For example, an ambulance operator unabashedly charges ₹40,000-₹50,000 to carry a patient in critical condition to any hospital in Chennai, which is 170 km from Nellore.

A patient has to shell down ₹70,000 to go to Bangalore, said an ambulance driver. This is not all. Patients have to pay ₹15,000 to ₹20,000 to a technician to arrange a ventilator, according to patients who had a bitter taste of greedy ambulance operators' greed.

Even within Nellore city limits, they charge not less than ₹15,000 to shift a patient from one hospital to another.

A resident of Saraswathi Nagar here S. Anand said he paid ₹15,000 to a ventilator-equipped ambulance to shift

his wife from Government General Hospital to Narayana General Hospital, hardly 7 km. The ambulance operator sensed the critical state of the woman to drive a hard bargain.

"The driver told us that he had to pay a part of the ₹15,000 to the technician who arranged oxygen to the patient," Mr Anand said adding that, after sparing no expense, he could not save his wife. The grief-stricken Anand urges the administration to take control of private ambulances to save common man from the evil grip of operators. He suggested that the officials fix the charges for each destination and handle the money transactions also to prevent exploitation of patients by ambulance operators.

The relative of a Covid positive patient, P. Mukund said ambulance drivers demanded ₹35,000 to shift the patient to Chennai though she was not in need of oxygen.

Covid-19 +ve cases in state near 5-lakh mark

State carried out tests on 40,35,317 samples so far

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

Andhra Pradesh has neared five-lakh mark of Covid-19 positive cases by registering total 4,87,331 cases with addition of 10,825 new Coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours.

The Covid-19 bulletin released by state health authorities here on Saturday has reported that out of 69,623 samples tested, 10,825 individuals have tested Coronavirus positive and 76 of the infected patients have died, taking the death toll to 4,347.

The state has carried out tests on 40,35,317 samples so far. Of them, 3,82,104 patients have been discharged after recovery while 1,00,880 patients affected by the virus are undergoing treatment in various hos-

pitals of the state.

Among the new confirmed Covid-19 infections, East Godavari takes the lead with 1,399 cases, followed by 1,332 in Prakasam, 1,103 in West Godavari, 1,046 in Nellore, 1,039 in Kadapa, 938 in Chittoor, 765 in Visakhapatnam, 642 in Vizianagaram, 641 in Guntur, 601 in Srikakulam, 549 in Anantapur, 433 in Kurnool and 337 in Krishna.

East Godavari has witnessed the highest cumulative number of 65,704 Covid-19 positive cases, followed by 48,006 in Kurnool, 44,547 in Anantapur, 41,802 in West Godavari, 41,634 in Chittoor, 40,214 in Visakhapatnam, 39,432 in Guntur, 35,979 in Nellore, 30,577 in Kadapa, 28,032 in Prakasam, 27,166 in Srikakulam, 23,318 in

Vizianagaram, 18,025 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery of Coronavirus-infected patients has been good in East Godavari district with 49,489 patients recovering, followed by 41,346 recoveries in Kurnool, 38,640 in West Godavari, 38,195 in Anantapur, 33,270 in Visakhapatnam, 32,156 in Chittoor, 31,464 in Guntur, 28,997 in Nellore, 22,309 in Kadapa, 19,812 in Srikakulam, 15,076 in Krishna, 14,348 in Vizianagaram, 14,107 in Prakasam, 2,461 from other states and 434 recoveries from other countries.

Nellore district has registered the highest 13 deaths of Covid-19 patients, followed by eight each in Anantapur and West Godavari, seven

each in Chittoor and Guntur, six in Vizianagaram, five each in Prakasam and Visakhapatnam, four in Krishna, three in Kadapa, two each in Kurnool and Srikakulam and one in East Godavari.

Chittoor district has recorded the highest number of 464 cumulative deaths, followed by 422 in East Godavari, 411 in Guntur, 391 in Kurnool, 359 in Anantapur, 348 in West Godavari, 338 in Nellore, 315 in Visakhapatnam, 312 in Prakasam, 304 in Krishna, 261 in Srikakulam, 243 in Kadapa and 179 in Vizianagaram district.

State health authorities have discharged 11,941 Coronavirus-infected patients after recovery from various hospitals in the last 24 hours in the state.

Bengal lockdown: Trains cancelled

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 5

Due to complete lockdown in West Bengal on September 7, 11, and 12 2020 several train services will be affected on the dates and following. According to an official release from East Coast Railway on Saturday, train 02245 Howrah-Yesvantpur Duroto Special leaving from Howrah on

September 11 and 12 will be cancelled. Train 02246 Yesvantpur-Howrah Duroto special leaving from Yesvantpur on September 6, 10 and 11 will also be cancelled.

PARTIAL CANCELLATION Train 02704 Secunderabad-Howrah Falaknuma special express leaving from Secunderabad on September 6, 10 and 11 will be terminated at

CONDUCT 5,000 COVID TESTS DAILY: COLLECTOR

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 5

With more number of Covid-19 positive cases being reported, Collector, Vizianagaram Dr. M. Hari Jawaharlal directed the officials to conduct 5,000 Covid screening tests every day. In order to check the deadly virus, the screening tests must be conducted at a large scale, he added.

The collector visited the District Covid Hospital in Nellimarla on Saturday and interacted with the doctors and other officials. Speaking on the occasion, the collector directed the officials that at least 2,000 screening tests must be done by RTPCR every day.

The doctors informed to the collector that the Covid Hospital is receiving 1,000 samples only per day for screening.

The collector also checked the registered and observed that it is less than 1,000 samples coming for the screening tests.

ACTION PLAN READY FOR COVID

Kakinada: East Godavari district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy said that a plan of action was chalked out to curb the spread of Covid-19 and, as a part of it, a vigorous campaign would be taken up with a slogan "Mask is the shield to prevent Covid-19" and every person should wear a mask without fail.

He, however, noted with regret that many people were

not wearing masks in a proper way. He spoke to media here on Saturday evening along with joint collectors G. Lakshminisha, Keerthi Chekuri and G. Rajakumari.

He said that the district administration conducted Covid-19 tests on 4,16,598 people. Of them 67,382 tested positive, 53,267 were discharged from hospitals after recovery.

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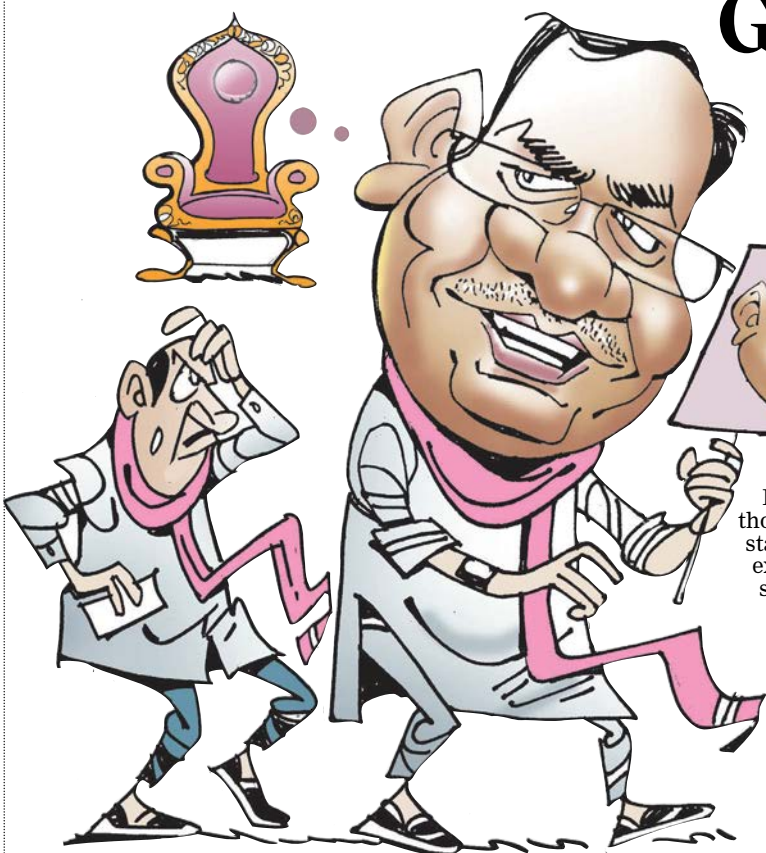
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VOCATIONAL COURSES

Lady Luck smiles on Ramesh Hospitals

When it comes to fortunes and misfortunes, nobody can beat Dr P. Ramesh Babu of the infamous Ramesh Hospitals on the first count. Several people died in the fire mishap at Swarna Palace Hotel which at that time was being used as a Covid care centre by Ramesh Hospitals. In any such incident, it's common for the police to book the owners and the Jagan government wasted no time, taking other factors also into consideration. It was highly appreciated that the Andhra Pradesh High Court highlighted that the government too used the Swarna Palace Hotel as a quarantine centre a few months ago though the building did not have the fire no-objection certificate even then, and the officials should have overseen the arrangements before giving the go-ahead to Ramesh Hospitals. It also asked why top district officials should not be booked in the case. Then, Lady Luck smiled on Dr Ramesh. Instead of directing the police to book cases against district officials too for their negligence along with Dr Ramesh, the court granted an interim stay suspending further proceedings against him.



Gutta relies on KTR to cure his berth pangs

Though Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao made him Chairman of the Legislative Council, Gutta Sukhender Reddy appears to have not given up on his dream of getting a berth in the Cabinet. In a recent chat with the media, Sukhender Reddy seemingly made his pitch and said minister K.T. Rama Rao can handle any post. If KCR makes up his mind, he may make KTR the chief minister, Reddy said. The three-time MP had first tested his luck in the 2004 Assembly elections on a Telugu Desam ticket from Nalgonda but he could not succeed due to the strong wave that dismantled the then ruling party. He shifted to the Congress and was elected to the Lok Sabha in 2009 and 2014. In 2017, he joined the TRS. He did not contest the 2019 Lok Sabha polls though KCR offered him a ticket; Reddy hoped to play an active role in state politics. KCR offered him a Legislative Council seat, though Reddy expected a berth in the Cabinet. With his latest comments, TRS cadre are saying that he may finally succeed if KTR takes over as CM.

TS MLAs' life: From home to House

Telangana state legislators face a tough task set by Assembly Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy. He has requested ministers and members of both Houses to stay away from attending parties and functions till the end of the Assembly session, which begins on Monday, so as not to catch Covid-19. He appealed to them to restrict themselves to moving from their homes to the House and returning straight back. Describing the Coronavirus as an "invisible enemy", the Speaker narrated the story of one of his close associates who had been infected with the Coronavirus after attending a birthday party. The big question is: Will they oblige?

Chalamalasetti Sunil buries hatchet with Jagan, YSRC wary

After Greenco chairman Chalamalasetti Anil Kumar settled matters with the AP government, it's the turn of his brother Sunil to bury the hatchet with Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and rejoin the YSR Congress. Both Jagan and the Chalamalasetti brothers proved that there are no permanent friends or foes in politics and that the adage applies to corporate houses vis-a-vis the people in power. Before the elections, the YSR Congress made a big issue of Greenco's integrated power project in Kurnool and attracted international attention by threatening to revisit the power purchase agreement with it after being elected. Things finally settled down and the state government retained the Kurnool project with Greenco with the narrative that new clauses were incorporated in the agreement that would fetch the state additional revenues. Sunil, who left the party just before polls and joined the Telugu Desam, came back to the YSRC fold with great fanfare, several ministers and MLAs according him a grand welcome. The superstitious among them are now worried in view of the "iron leg" image of Sunil. After losing twice from Kakinada Lok Sabha, Sunil walked away from the YSRC clearly failing to sense the wave in its favour in 2019 at the eleventh hour, only to lose from the same seat for a third time.



DC REVIEW

No thrills

SASHIDHAR ADIVI | DC

V Cast: Nani, Sudheer Babu, Nivetha Thomas and Aditi Rao Hydari
Director: Indraganti Mohan Krishna
Rating: ★★★

What could happen if a man who is on a killing spree challenges a tough cop to nab him? The much-awaited crime-thriller V dropped on Amazon Prime on Friday evening, the first-ever Telugu film to release on an OTT platform. The plot revolves around DCP Adithya (Sudheer Babu), the most happening police officer in town, who's on a hunt to nab the killer Vishnu (Nani). The killer drops clues for the police officer to decipher. So, will the cop nab him? Unfortunately, for all the hype and expectations the film created (and despite having Indraganti Mohan Krishna, a film-maker known for his strong writing skills as director), V seems to have gotten a lot of things wrong in it. The director may even have lost the plot when while making an action thriller for the first time, he chose to focus on elevating the principal characters' design. With the writing and screenplay found wanting, V seemed like heading nowhere. What may have killed it for V is that it is neither a comprehensive crime thriller nor a full-fledged action entertainer. It just hangs uncertainly in between. However, the film does have its share of interesting elements, including good performances, action sequences and technical finesse. V even starts off on an

exciting note — elevating DCP Adithya's heroism, Vishnu's approach, etc. Just as the audience begins anticipating an interesting cat-and-mouse chase, the story fails to take off. Indraganti's attempt to branch out into a new genre is surely welcome, but he falls short of packaging a proper thriller. The killer's flashback doesn't create any sympathy for him. The romantic tracks for both Nani and Sudheer Babu weren't exciting and the climax turns out to be just too ordinary. That said, the writing leaves its mark in a few places with quirky and funny conversations. Nani is the soul of the film, effortless as he is even in a grey character. As much as he brings laughter with his witicism and one-liners, his Army background scenes don't seem convincing. Sudheer Babu does well as a flamboyant cop, and even matches Nani's performance. While Nivetha Thomas's character, called Apoorva, lights up the screen, her role as a crime writer who researches psychopaths was left hardly explored. Overall, V falls short of becoming the true-blue thriller we had hoped for.

REGION

POLICE SEIZES LIQUOR WORTH ₹21.65 LAKH

MD. ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

Andhra Pradesh police on Saturday foiled an attempt of bootleggers to smuggle huge stocks of liquor in a water tanker and seized stocks worth ₹21.65 lakh. They also arrested six persons involved in smuggling of this liquor.

Addressing a press conference, Guntur rural SP Vishal Gunni said it is for the first time that such a high amount of non-duty paid liquor in 9,096 bottles had been seized. They have also impounded a car and a water tanker in which the liquor bottles were hidden. Vishal Gunni said they have arrested the bootleggers.

ACCOMMODATION REMAINS BIGGEST CHALLENGE

From Page 1

The biggest challenge remains accommodating the soldiers. For now, soldiers are being sent to the heights on rotation. Besides the posts where men are squeezed in, trenches have been dug up to fight the enemy.

"In the harsh weather, even urine becomes ice immediately. Exposing the skin for a few seconds can end up in frostbites and other health issues which can be fatal, just like it is in Siachen. Now that we know that this is going to be a long haul, we are fully geared up and there are several other plans in place," they said adding that every unit has their own RMO.

They said that unlike China, officers in the Indian Army are compulsorily posted at high altitudes for five to six years which gives them all the exposure they need to make them battle-hardened. This gives them an edge over PLA, which is not used to facing their opponents in such temperatures.

SPECIAL TRAIN TO DELHI FROM ANANTAPUR

NAGABHUSHANAM HOSKOTE | DC ANANTAPUR, SEPT. 5

A special kisan train will leave Anantapur for New Delhi on September 9 with about 460 tonnes of fruits and vegetables grown in various parts of Anantapur district. The train will be flagged off by Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy through virtual conferencing. A meeting was held on Saturday in this regard between Anantapur collector Gandham Chandrudu and Guntakal railway divisional manager. Officials of the market yard and horticulture department participated in the meeting. The collector said all arrangements have been made to transport fruits and vegetables to the Azad Fruit Mandi in New Delhi.

He said the train flag off ceremony will be attended by district ministers, MPs, MLAs, MLCs and other public representatives. A list of horticulture, agriculture and marketing officials is being prepared. They will be accompanying farmers and traders to assist them in marketing their products in Delhi.

LOCKDOWN | BLUES

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 5

Though there is no scientific data that the deadly Covid-19 virus can enter human body through eyes, a large number of people are complaining about eye-related issues, including blurred vision, myopia and headache. As a result, they are seeking medical intervention, though this could largely be due to spending long hours every day with mobile phones, laptops and TVs.

Navy Shakti



Indian Naval Warship, INS Shakti, along with Russian Federation Navy ships, RuFN Ships Admiral Vinogradov, and Admiral Tributs sails close to each other during the ongoing bilateral maritime exercise between the Russian Navy and Indian Navy, INDRA NAVY-20 off the sea near Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

Kadapa will turn into a sports hub

NAGESWARA RAO BALLEDA | DC KADAPA, SEPT. 5

Kadapa district will soon be developed as a sports hub, declared Deputy Chief Minister S. B. Amjadbasha, who is also the minister for minority welfare. After visiting the municipal stadium and indoor stadium in Kadapa on Saturday, the Deputy Chief Minister said in the early days of Coronavirus outbreak, the district administration had taken a decision to relocate

the old vegetable market to the municipal ground with the intention that people do not congregate at one place. He said due to the decline in the Coronavirus cases, the market has been shifted back to its old location. He said shifting the vegetable market to municipal grounds had made the whole place dirty. With the market going back to its old place, the ground will be cleaned immediately and restored. The minister said the municipal stadium will be fully developed, so that children

are able play there. Authorities have been instructed to make estimates for construction of a new building as the existing administrative building is undergoing repairs. If estimates are prepared quickly, he would bring the issue to the notice of Chief Minister, so that work on it could start immediately. The Deputy CM was accompanied by municipal commissioner Lavanna, STEP CEO Ramachandra Reddy, and municipal health officer Srinivas Reddy.

Fire officials start state-wide drive

To check public buildings and industries

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5

Fire service authorities have taken up a special drive to check whether hospitals providing Covid-19 treatment, industries and educational institutions have mandatory firefighting equipment.

In the aftermath of the death of 10 Covid patients in a fire in Swarna Palace Hotel in Vijayawada on August 9 and also subsequent incidents of minor fire mishaps elsewhere in the state, fire service authorities are set to launch a drive to ensure that all public buildings, industries and educational institutions have fire safety measures.

As per the Andhra Pradesh Fire and Emergency Operations and Levy of Fee Rules, 2006, Rule 15, any person proposing to construct a high-rise building of more than 15 meters height for commercial/business purpose and 18 meters and above height for residential purpose and buildings for schools, cinema halls, function halls and religious places, located in

● A team of officials comprising station fire officer, assistant district fire officer and district fire officer, will inspect buildings in all the districts. There are about 1,800 buildings housing educational institutions, nearly 300 Covid-19 treatment centres and several buildings housing industries in the state.

more than 500 square meters plot area or having a height of six meters and above; shall apply to the director general or any member of the service for a 'No Objection Certificate'. Similarly, as per norms of National Building Code of India dealing with part four pertaining to fire and life safety, the fire service authorities are taking up inspection of all the three above mentioned categories of buildings.

A team of officials comprising station fire officer, assistant district fire officer and district fire officer, will inspect buildings in all

the districts. There are about 1,800 buildings housing educational institutions, nearly 300 Covid-19 treatment centres and several buildings housing industries in the state.

Official sources say that lack of coordination between the fire personnel and municipal authorities is resulting in non-compliance with fire safety norms by a large number of owners of the buildings. For instance, the authorities can impose a maximum fine of ₹25,000 on a building owner for non-compliance with fire safety norms.

This hardly proves a deterrent as the department doesn't have powers like civic bodies, which can cut water supply and drainage connection for non-payment of property tax.

Regional fire officer G. Srinivasulu said, "We have started a special drive and expect to complete the exercise by the end of 2020. We will serve show cause notices on those who fail to comply with norms and file charge sheet in the court of law."

People are complaining of eye-related issues after spending time watching TV, mobiles etc.

Children close to myopic challenge due to Covid-19

● All India Ophthalmological Society is conducting a study on how Covid-19 has impacted eyes. The study is being presently evaluated by experts before releasing the results.

for treatment. Not only children, youth, middle-aged and senior citizens are also facing issues with their eyes. Apart from providing treatment and suggesting spectacles, ophthalmologists

are also advising people to give rest to their eyes and avoid spending long times with laptops, I-pads and smartphones.

It is a fact that ciliary muscles of eyes grow up to 15-16 years of age. With children spending more time on screens, particularly laptops, I-pads and smartphones, the risk of them developing myopia is high, Dr. T. Katyanani told Deccan Chronicle. She suggested that instead of taking refuge in screens, children, parents and elders of

a household could play the large number of indoor games that are available. Unfortunately, parents and elders too are getting addicted to smartphones and laptops.

Meanwhile, All India Ophthalmological Society is conducting a study on how Covid-19 has impacted eyes. The study is being presently evaluated by experts before releasing the results.

Dr Chaitra Jayadev, joint secretary of All India Ophthalmological Society

and well-known retina surgeon, told Deccan Chronicle that parents must cut down their children's time on smartphones and laptops. But bringing additional worry are the online classes being conducted by various educational institutions.

A major recommendation in this regard is that educational institutions must give more of home work involving paper and pen. This would proportionately cut down the time spent by children on digital instruments.

SHORT TAKES
7 GUEST
WORKERS KILLED
IN ROAD MISHAP

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, SEPT. 5

At least seven guest workers were on Saturday killed and a dozen others injured when a bus in which they were travelling had a head-on collision with a truck on the outskirts of Raipur. The mishap took place at around 3.30 am.

The ill-fated bus was carrying around 75 guest workers from Ganjam to Surat.

The passengers who had returned to their villages in Ganjam district following nationwide lockdown enforced in March due in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak were migrating to Surat to resume their work.

“Seven people were killed and seven others injured in the incident. All the injured have been admitted to local government hospital”, Raipur senior superintendent of police Ajay Yadav said.

The tragedy took place when the speeding truck coming from the opposite side rammed into the speeding bus near Indira Gandhi Agriculture University in Raipur.

The accident was so severe that the front portion of the bus mangled trapping many passengers. Police with the help of locals removed the bodies of the deceased as well as the injured from the bus.

MOSQUE WILL BE
OF SAME SIZE AS
BABRI MASJID

Lucknow, Sept. 5: A mosque that will come up in Ayodhya pursuant to the Supreme Court verdict in the Ram Jannabhoomi case will be of the same size as Babri Masjid, said an office-bearer of the trust formed for its construction.

The five-acre complex in Ayodhya’s Dhamnipur village will also house a hospital, a library and a museum among others, the office-bearer said, adding that retired professor and noted food critic Pushpesh Pant will be consultant curator of the museum.

“The complex of the mosque, which will be built in Dhamnipur, will also have facilities like a hospital, a museum at the Indo-Islamic Research Centre. The mosque will be on 15,000 square feet, while the rest of the land will have these facilities,” Athar Hussain, the secretary and spokesperson of Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation said on Saturday. “Noted food critic Pushpesh Pant gave his consent to curate the museum on Friday,” Hussain said.

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

ACTRESS WIFE
SLAPS DV CASE
AGAINST BJD MP

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 5

Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Lok Sabha member from Kendrapara, Anubhav Mohanty, on Saturday landed in trouble as his wife and noted Odia film actress Barsha Priyadarshini filed a case of domestic violence against him.

The case was filed under Section 12 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act against the MP for allegedly assaulting and harassing Barsha.

In her petition filed before the Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate Court, Cuttack, Barsha appealed to the court seeking monthly maintenance from Anubhav, besides an indemnity of ₹15 crore.

Barsha in her petition said that Anubhav is a habitual drunkard and he often drinks with his friends at home. The MP also assaulted and harassed her mentally, she alleged.

“He invites his friends to our bedroom and drinks with them. If I resist, he would beat me up severely. He often asked me to leave his home,” the actress said.

The actress further alleged that whenever she tried to prevent Anubhav from drinking, he would become violent and physically assault her and tried to throw her out of the house.

Levelling another serious allegation, she said Anubhav has extramarital affair with multiple women from the Hollywood or Odia film industry.

Take nation into confidence, says Cong

Congress says people want to know about the outcomes of the repeated conversations with China

New Delhi, Sept. 5: The Congress on Saturday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to take the nation into confidence on talks with China on the border row in Ladakh, saying people want to know about the outcomes of the repeated conversations with the Chinese side.

The Opposition party’s demand comes a day after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Chinese counterpart Gen. Wei Fenghe held an over two-hour-long meeting in Moscow with a focus on easing escalating border tension in eastern Ladakh.

Congress’ chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said it was “Rajdharm” of the prime minister and the defence minister to take the nation into confidence on the important issue.

Listing the various levels of talks held with the Chinese from the foreign ministers level and corps commanders level to the defence ministers’ discussions, Surjewala asked what is the outcome of these talks.

“What is the conversation about, what is happening. Will Prime Minister Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh take the country into confidence?” he asked.

Surjewala also referred to Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla’s remarks that it was an “unprecedented” situation at the India-China border and “we’ve never had this sort of a situation since 1962”, to underline the seriousness of the issue.

“The important part is what is the outcome of the repeated conversations with the Chinese counterparts by our government.... How will we ensure that Chinese transgressions are defeated,” Surjewala said in a

● **CONGRESS’ CHIEF** spokesperson Surjewala also referred to Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla’s remarks that it was an “unprecedented” situation at the India-China border and “we’ve never had this sort of a situation since 1962”, to underline the seriousness of the issue.

● **CONGRESS LEADER** Rajeev Shukla said they hoped that the issue can be resolved through talks, but he added conflicting statements coming from the government on the border stand-off are a matter of worry.

video posted on his Twitter account.

He said people want answers to questions such as how the Chinese will be repulsed to “reclaim our motherland”.

“We hope Prime Minister Modi and the defence minister will come forward and take the nation into confidence. That is the true Rajdharm. We will await an answer,” he said.

Later, at an online briefing, Congress leader Rajeev Shukla said, “We hope that the issue can be resolved through talks.”

He, however, demanded that the government should give a clear picture of the situation.

“Conflicting statements coming from the government is a matter of worry for us,” he added.

The tension between the two sides had escalated manifold after the violent clashes in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on June 15 in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed. The Chinese side also suffered casualties but it is yet to give out the details. According to an American intelligence report, the number of casualties on the Chinese side was 35.

- PTI



China’s Minister of National Defence Wei Fenghe, left, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, center, and Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, right, pose for a photo with their colleagues at a Joint Meeting of Defence Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Commonwealth of Independent States and Collective Security Treaty Organization Member States in Moscow.

- PTI

Army helps out stranded Chinese citizens

New Delhi, Sept. 5: At a time it is engaged in a fierce standoff with China’s PLA in eastern Ladakh, the Indian Army on Wednesday provided food, warm clothes and medical assistance to three Chinese citizens who had lost their way in sub-zero temperatures at an altitude of 17,500 feet in a border area in North Sikkim, officials said.

The Army personnel deployed in the area also guided the Chinese citizens, including a woman, to return to the Chinese side and reach their destination.

The humanitarian ges-

● **THE HUMANITARIAN** gesture by the Army came when it is dealing with an aggressive behaviour by the Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh.

● **THE ARMY** said the three Chinese citizens lost their way in the Plateau area of North Sikkim.

ture by the Army came when it is dealing with an aggressive behaviour by the Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh.

The Army, in a statement, said the three Chinese citizens lost their way in the Plateau area of

North Sikkim. “Realising danger to the lives of the Chinese citizens in sub-zero temperatures, the soldiers of Indian Army immediately reached out and provided medical assistance including oxygen, food and warm clothes to protect them from the vagaries of extreme altitude and harsh climactic conditions,” the Army said.

It said the Indian troops also gave them appropriate guidance to reach their destination after which they returned.

“The Chinese citizens expressed their gratitude to India and the Indian

Army for their prompt assistance,” the Army said. The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in a bitter border row in eastern Ladakh for the last four months. The tensions had escalated manifold after 20 Indian Army personnel were killed in a fierce clash between the two sides in Galwan Valley on June 15. The Chinese military is yet to reveal the casualties it suffered in the clash.

Tensions flared up again in the region after China unsuccessfully attempted to occupy Indian territory on the southern bank of Pangong lake around a

week back.

Following the attempts, India occupied a number of strategic heights on the southern bank of Pangong lake and strengthened its presence in Finger 2 and Finger 3 areas in the region to thwart any Chinese actions. China has strongly objected to India’s move.

India has also rushed in additional troops and weapons to the sensitive region following China’s transgression attempts.

Defence ministers of the two countries met on the sidelines of a multilateral meet in Moscow on Friday.

- PTI

COVID DEATHS INCH CLOSER TO 70,000-MARK

New Delhi, Sept. 5: Covid-19 infection tally sprinted past 40 lakh officially, just 13 days after it crossed 30 lakh, with a record 86,432 cases being reported in a day, while recoveries have surged to 1,07,223 on Saturday pushing the recovery rate to 77.23 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 40,23,179, while the death toll climbed to 69,561 with 1,089 people succumbing to the disease in a span of 24 hours, data updated at 8 am showed.

India’s Covid-19 cases jumped from 10 lakh to 20 lakh in 21 days. It took 16 more days to race past 30 lakh and 13 days more to cross the 40-lakh mark.

It took 110 days for the Covid-19 cases in the country to reach one lakh while it had taken 59 days more to go past the 10-lakh post.

The case fatality rate due has further declined to 1.73 per cent.

- PTI

Seat sharing is a thorny issue for RJD-led alliance

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, SEPT. 5

Seat sharing among Grand Alliance partners has turned into a thorny affair as most of the political parties including smaller partners have been demanding sizable seat share for the ensuing Assembly elections.

Political analysts believe that Tejashwi Yadav, the political heir of RJD Chief Lalu Yadav will have to leave his rigidity to end brewing resentment among Grand Alliance partners over the issue of seat adjustments in Bihar.

RLSP leaders in Patna recently met RJD state president Jagdanand Singh and submitted a list of seats it wanted to contest.

Sources in the grand alliance said that the negotiations among partners were in the final stages and likely to get sorted out by mid-September.

RLSP insiders told this newspaper that the party has staked claims on 48

● **THE GRAND** alliance in Bihar comprises RJD, Congress, Upendra Kushwaha’s RLSP, Mukesh Sahani’s VIP and three Left parties (CPI, CPM and CPI-ML).

seats which include 23 seats it contested in 2015 besides 25 other constituencies where the party claims to have a vote base.

Besides, three Left parties the CPI, the CPM and the CPI-ML have also submitted their lists and have urged the RJD to finalize the seat-sharing deal without delay.

Another smaller partner Mukesh Sahani of the Vikasheel Insaan Party (VIP) has also sent a list of its candidates demanding “sizeable seat share” for the party.

With Jitan Ram Manjhi in NDA fold and no clarity yet on Sharad Yadav’s Loktantrik Janata Dal (LJD), the grand alliance in Bihar comprises RJD, Congress, Upendra Kushwaha’s RLSP,

Mukesh Sahani’s VIP and three Left parties (CPI, CPM and CPI-ML).

Upendra Kushwaha with around 10 per cent voter base of his Koeri community is considered a strong player in the grand alliance. Mukesh Sahani’s Nishad community accounts for 14 per cent of the state population and the RJD’s M-Y combination forms about 30 per cent vote share (Muslims 16 and Yadav 14 per cent).

Sources said both RJD and Congress will take a call on the number of seats that would be distributed to alliance partners RLSP, VIP and left parties. The date of their meeting is yet to be finalized but “things these things will be sorted out soon. There is no trouble regarding seat-sharing among the grand alliance partners”, a senior RJD leader said.

He further said that the formula will need final approval from RJD chief Lalu Yadav who is serving a jail term in fodder scam case.

HC SAYS NO FOR CBI PROBE INTO HONEY-TRAP SCANDAL IN MP

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, SEPT. 5

The Indore bench of Madhya Pradesh high court on Saturday rejected a petition seeking a probe by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the honey-trapping and blackmailing scandal that surfaced in the state last year.

The scandal came to the fore when the MP police busted a racket involved in honey trapping and then blackmailing several bureaucrats and politicians in the state, in November last year, leading the previous Kamal Nath government to constitute a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the matter.

However, several petitions were filed in the Indore bench seeking a CBI probe into the issue arguing that SIT would not be able to unearth the truth considering the high profile nature of the scandal.

A division bench of the high court dismissed the petitions saying that it was satisfied with the progress of the probe by SIT into the matter and there was no need for a CBI probe into it. The SIT has earlier submitted a report detailing the progress in its probe.

The court, however, ordered the SIT to submit the forensic reports of the electronic evidence gathered in connection with the scandal before it as soon as they were available.

The SIT has recovered 4,000 smut videos, sex chat screenshots, photographs in which the accused were seen in compromising positions with their victims, from the laptops, cell phones and other electronic surveillance gadgets seized from the honey-trapping ring that allegedly hooked quite a significant number of movers and shakers in the state.

SSR | SUICIDE The NCB on Saturday has also arrested Sushant’s house help Dipesh Sawant

NCB summons Rhea, to be grilled with Showik

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 5

A day after the arrest of actress Rhea Chakraborty’s brother Showik and late actor Sushant Singh Rajput’s former house manager Samuel Miranda, the NCB arrested house help Dipesh Sawant on Saturday.

Showik and Miranda have been remanded to the NCB custody till September 11 in connection with the narcotics angle pertaining to the actor’s suicide probe.

The central agency sent summons to Rhea for questioning next week after Showik claimed to be acting at her behest and

procuring drugs. The officials are also probing the mode of payment used for obtaining the narcotics substances.

The investigators said that the probe in the case has revealed debit and credit card transactions. The details of the debit and credit cards are being investigated to ascertain whom did they belong to and how many such transactions were done in the past. The officials said that they would grill Showik and he would be confronted with Rhea in a joint questioning session of the NCB.

The revelation has also hinted towards the possibility of her passing on the contraband to others,

including celebrities, identities of whom are yet to be established.

“NCB is a national probe agency and we wouldn’t shirk the responsibility. We are discussing evidence with the public prosecutor and all those found involved will be picked,” said Mutha Ashok Jain, deputy DG of NCB.

On Friday, the NCB raided Rhea Chakraborty’s and house manager Samuel Miranda’s residences in connection with the ongoing case. They seized their laptops, mobile phones and several documents. The agency also took custody of Abdul Basit Parihar, who was allegedly in direct contact with Rhea’s brother

SANJAY RAUT SOFTENS STAND ON KANGANA’S PoK JIBE

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, SEPT. 5

The Shiv Sena on Saturday appeared to have softened its stand on the controversy involving Kangana Ranaut, who had likened Mumbai to PoK (Pakistan occupied Kashmir).

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut said he does not have any personal issue with the actress and added that he raised his voice because

she spoke against Maharashtra. Meanwhile, RPI chief and Union minister for state Ramdas Athawale said his party would take care of Ranaut’s security in Mumbai.

Mr Raut said that those who are insulting Maharashtra, should remember that Maharashtra is because of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb

Showik and has claimed that he would peddle drugs as per Showik’s requirement.

The searches began at

Thackeray.

“I don’t have any personal issue with Kangana Ranaut. But insulting Mumbai and Maharashtra will not be tolerated,” the Shiv Sena leader said, adding that linking Mumbai with PoK is a very serious offence.

The Shiv Sena and Congress have been alleging that BJP IT cell is behind Kangana Ranaut’s tweets.

angles surrounding Rajput’s death are being probed by the CBI, Enforcement Directorate and NCB.



DECCAN Chronicle

6 SEPTEMBER 2020



Krishna Shastri
Devulapalli

Off the beaten track

Blame it all on those vile Mughals

Apparently, our glorious land was ruled at various times by, among others, the Mauryas for 550 years, the Chalukyas for 600 years, the Satavahanas for 500 years, the Cholas for 1,000 years, the Pandyas for 600 years and the Kapoors for 100 years (okay, the last one I made up). But all we hear about, Facebook and WhatsApp tell me of late, is the wretched Mughals who ruled for a measly 300 years. And that this injustice should be corrected at once on a war footing as we scream *Jai Hind*.

As a baby step, I don't know, perhaps we could ban biryani, a diabolical Mughal invention that has enslaved us for several centuries. And make Chole Bhature, an all-time favourite of Raja Raja Chola's, the most ordered dish on Swiggy for the next one year and show those arrogant, if dead, Mughals a thing or two. And be declared the most patriotic nation in the universe by Nasa. And have that underwritten by Unesco.

Jokes apart, why is it important that we read up on these kings? With immediate effect? As opposed to those other terrible kings about whom far too much has been written?

Well, could it be because, unlike those dastardly Mughal invaders, these were all good, benevolent, tolerant kings, who didn't bump off their own family members to ascend the throne, had no blood on their hands, whose armies didn't rape, pillage or plunder, didn't hanker after power, were uniformly kind to their subjects, didn't ever impose taxes, planted shady trees, built wide roads and never ate biryani? And that Kangana Ranaut and Arnab Goswami have in their possession UHD videos from centuries ago as incontrovertible proof of their munificence?

Indulge me as I relate a tiny tale with a happy ending.

A man was travelling with his family along a long and winding road. It had been quite a journey. There was no denying the path had been bumpy and unpredictable, and his car rattled and wheezed a bit from the strain. But there was also no denying he had made progress. Mainly because he had kept his eyes open. And on the road ahead.

Suddenly a man waving a bright red flag jumped in his path and stopped the car.

"You know what a horrible, dangerous, pot-hole filled road you have been driving on so far?" he said. "Don't you see the injustice of it? Shouldn't you be taking all those responsible for building such an evil, un navigable road to task, make them pay? And keep looking out for how dangerous and harmful the road behind you is?"

"Yes, you are absolutely right, sir," the driver said gratefully. "From now on, I won't take my eyes off the rear-view mirror when I drive. I'll keep a keen eye on how bad the road behind me is. Thanks for the invaluable tip."

The driver restarted his car, and proceeded, his eyes firmly on the rear-view mirror. And promptly drove off a cliff at the next bend, family and all. And they all lived happily ever after.

Not a believable story? Why then are so many of us obsessed with the road that we have already negotiated? Good, bad and ugly, though it might have been. Like any long road. At the expense of looking at the road ahead?

Understanding history and its older sibling, mythology, is okay. Good even, up to a point. But isn't it obvious that we have gone way past that? Obsessively looking at the past — real and mythical — is merely not wanting to look at the present; an inability to deal with reality. And an unwillingness to take responsibility.

How about we put history aside for a bit, and mythology, too, and brush up on reason, scientific thinking and logic instead. Even get ourselves a (slim) book on compassion, perhaps. Maybe it's time to forget yesterday for a minute and figure out what we need to do today so that we actually have a tomorrow. Not be diverted by people who don't want us to see the here and now.

See what we've allowed to happen because we've been told to stare at the rear-view mirror.

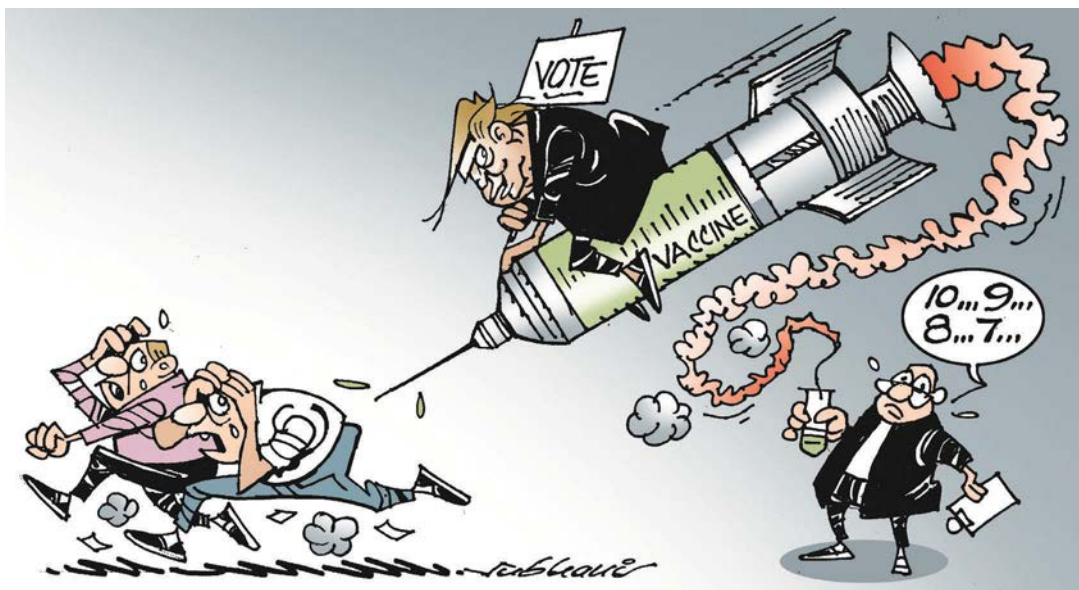
And, yes, let's thank god for biryani.

Krishna Shastri Devulapalli is a humour writer, novelist, columnist and screenwriter



As a baby step, I don't know, perhaps we could ban biryani, a diabolical Mughal invention that has enslaved us for several centuries. And make Chole Bhature, an all-time favourite of Raja Raja Chola's, the most ordered dish on Swiggy for the next one year and show those arrogant, if dead, Mughals a thing or two.

Subhani



For democracy's sake, don't scrap Q-Hour



Pavan K. Varna

Chanakya's View

Frankly, to have a Parliament session without question hour is like visiting a forest without trees. The BJP's decision to scrap Question Hour in the forthcoming parliamentary session is both worrisome and opportunistic. The BJP may be in power right now, but surely it must remember its days in the Opposition, and not lose sight of the fact that it could be there again. In democracy — and in life — nothing ever remains unchanged. Ghalib's immortal line comes to mind: *Har bulundi ke naseebon mein hai pasti ek din*: it is the in the destiny of every pinnacle to hit the dust sometime.

If the BJP would have been in the Opposition today, would it welcome a parliamentary session without the opportunity to put the government on the mat? Especially if there were burning issues to discuss like there are today: the economic crisis, the handling of the Corona pandemic, and Chinese aggression on the border. The reasons being touted against holding the question hour are hardly convincing. Democratic governments function on the basis of accountability. Within the hallowed precincts of Parliament, the nation's highest democratic forum, question hour is the one institution where government ministers can be directly questioned. Nothing else substitutes for this interrogatory interaction, and compels the government to explain and defend its

actions and policies. Let us examine the arguments against Question Hour being put by the ruling dispensation. Firstly, it is said that even in the absence of Question Hour, written answers can be provided to questions provided in advance. My experience of being in Parliament compels me to unhesitatingly throw this argument out of the window. There are two categories of questions that can be asked in Parliament, unstarred and starred. The first merit only written replies. This incorporates the art of drafting a reply, that mostly says as little as possible, while fulfilling the perfunctory requirement of answering the question. As a diplomat-bureaucrat before joining politics, I have been on the other side of the fence of drafting replies to unstarred questions. The achievement lay in hiding the full truth, and revealing only what is unavoidably necessary, playing on words, and using the loopholes in the question itself — many of which are badly drafted — to get off the hook. The answers are circulated in Parliament, and mostly forgotten, except as a written record of what little the government had to say when asked a straightforward question.

Starred questions, on the other hand, come up in Question Hour. The concerned minister, and sometimes the Prime Minister himself, has to physically answer the question. Moreover, each question allows for a minimum of three sup-

The argument that Question Hour can be substituted by Zero Hour or by special leave mentions, is fallacious. Both are usually about urgent but localised issues, and do not allow for the range of interrogation that a question hour does.

plementary questions related to the original question. This requires the minister to prepare himself fully, and gives the Opposition a much needed opportunity to hold the government accountable in a much more direct way than the anonymity of a written reply. If the minister prevaricates, or seeks to evade the questions asked, the Chair of the House can pull him up, and if she does not have the answers it becomes an embarrassment for the government. In other words, if Parliament's principal purpose is to provide a democratic forum for holding the government accountable, this is the hour when it happens best.

The argument that starred questions require the minister to be accompanied by a number of officials from the ministry concerned since, depending on the question asked, they can quickly send across from the officials' gallery briefing notes or facts to the minister, is fallacious. If even MPs will now be able to enter Parliament only with a negative certificate on Corona, why can't each ministry identify a few selected officials required to be present on question day, to do the same?

The argument that Question Hour can be substituted by Zero Hour or by special leave mentions, is fallacious too. Both are usually about

urgent but localised issues, and do not allow for the range of interrogation that a question hour does. Short duration discussions on specific subjects, or call attention motions, are difficult to schedule, and do not allow the exercise of accountability to be exercised on a daily basis as happens during question hour. The fact that some state Assemblies have dispensed with Question Hour, should be no reason why Parliament, the apex legislature where national issues need to be discussed, has to do the same. Similarly, for the BJP to argue that because Question Hour has frequently been disrupted by the Opposition, Question Hour itself can be dispensed with, is hardly tenable. Unfortunately, disruptions do take place in Parliament. But, the BJP when in Opposition perfected the art of such disruptions. Would it have then agreed that as a result of its behaviour Question Hour should be scrapped?

It is true that these are not normal times. The Corona pandemic has led to modifications in the working of institutions. It is for this reason that the session of Parliament is taking place after a prolonged hiatus, and for a truncated period. Parliament cannot only be a mechanical institution for a ruling party with a brute majority in the Lok Sabha, and a usually managed majority in the Rajya Sabha, to pass legislation. A government has to be held accountable. It is hoped that the BJP's own professed commitment to democracy will prompt it to rescind its decision to do away with Question Hour.

The writer, an author and former diplomat, is in politics

LETTERS

TTD FUNDS

The successive governments in AP have all along refused to disclose collections and utilisation of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams funds (*Demand to get TTD under RTI gathers pace, DC, Sept. 5*). There is a cloud of secrecy about TTD assets. From time to time devotees heard allegations about misuse of funds either by the government or by the TTD Board. Hence, there were allegations regarding donations.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

CHILD EDUCATION

The article 'Early childhood education is hit the worst during pandemic times' (*DC, Sept. 5*) was thought-provoking. I agree with the author that instead of technology-leveraged remote learning, it calls for a physical environment which grows listening, speaking and interacting for the healthy mental growth of a child. Social and emotional skills are possible only in the company of other children.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

In a swift move, Facebook appeased the two complaining parties (the Congress and BJP) by proclaiming its unbiased ethics and banning a loudmouth Telangana MLA from using its network. Shashi Tharoor panel has postponed further hearing to a later date. Your editorial (*Facebook's clean-up act, Sept. 4*) rightly concluded that our Parliament missed the bus to corner Mark Zuckerberg to answer to its people, unlike the US Congress which in 2018 made Facebook cough up US\$ 5 billion as fine.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

RUSSIAN VACCINE

Now that the Russian vaccine passed early trial test, (*DC, Sept. 5*), India should accept Sputnik V for production initially because we are in dire need due to unbridled spread of Covid-19. The PM should take this risk without further delay.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

Ailing MP to princes' rescue

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5 But for the lone vote of an ailing Jana Sangh member, the Constitution (24th Amendment) Bill to abolish privy purses and privileges of former rulers, would perhaps have gone through the Rajya Sabha today. Mr. Sri Kant Mishra, who had been under treatment for lung cancer at the Wellington Nursing Home here, was brought by his party colleagues to vote against the Bill.

He was driven to Parliament in an ambulance, about half an hour before the division took place, and carried to the chamber on a stretcher. Dr. R.K. Caroli, Physician of the nursing home, told UNI that the member had been taken away by party workers against medical advice.

Post Shah illness, now stars don't seem aligned for BJP rejigs

Scindia kept waiting

The expansion of both the BJP national executive and the Union Cabinet is unlikely before the Parliament session. It has been nine months since J.P. Nadda took over as party president but there is no sign of a new team. The BJP office bearers were supposed to be appointed in August but home minister Amit Shah's illness is said to have delayed it. Now the stars have turned hostile. BJP insiders now claim that an "inauspicious" Shraadh fortnight has come in the way of a BJP executive and Cabinet expansion. Jyotiraditya Scindia will be disappointed if he fails to join Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Cabinet before the Madhya Pradesh Assembly bypolls. Mr Scindia thinks he can influence voters in 27 constituencies if he is given a Cabinet rank.

Mukul must pay

The Congress's Mukul Wasnik is finding himself on a sticky wicket following his move to align with the 23 dissenters. Mukul is AICC general secretary in charge of Madhya Pradesh where crucial Assembly

by-elections are to be held. But Mr Wasnik is unable to visit on account of his 'rebel' stance.

There are four AICC secretaries under him who in private are giving him an earful for allegedly "compromising" their integrity and loyalty to the party. In principle, AICC secretaries are supposed to take direction and guidance from the general secretary but in Mr Wasnik's case, neither side is speaking to one another. Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath fears this deadlock would cost the party dearly.

Thirty minutes only

Criticised for cancelling 'Question Hour', the Narendra Modi government will allow a 30-minute question hour in the upcoming Parliament session scheduled to be held from September 14 to October 1. So far, India and Russia had been two democracies dithering on convening their Parliaments in the wake of Covid-19. On the other hand, as many as 105 parliaments worldwide have been meeting and discussing issues amid the pandemic. In the British Parliament, Prime Minister Boris



By WAQYANAWIS

Johnson has been fielding questions after spending a considerable time in the hospital

ICU after getting infected by the Coronavirus.

A piece of Mukherjee

With former President Pranab Mukherjee gone, attempts to usurp his legacy are underway by non-Congress parties, particularly by the BJP and the Trinamul. PM Modi had a picture of him touching Pranab's feet while Rahul Gandhi's rather 'perfunctory' tweet was subject to social media criticism.

Pranab's diaries

Pranab Mukherjee's daughter Sharmishta, currently the Congress spokesperson and the Delhi Mahila Congress unit head, is said to be in possession of her father's diaries. These entries, written at the end of each day as his habit, are more than a goldmine. Sharmishta's brother Abhijit is also in the Congress, having served two terms in the Lok Sabha. Pranab's diaries are being eyed by the Congress, BJP, the Trinamul and several publishing houses.

Sonia calls Sharmishta

When Pranab Mukherjee was battling for his life at the Army's Research and Referral hospital in Delhi, Sonia Gandhi reportedly called up Sharmishta enquiring not just about Pranab but her as well. When she learnt that Sharmishta was alone, Sonia got restless and worried over the young Mukherjee, who had to calm and assure her that she was fine.

Priyanka's new abode

Priyanka Gandhi has a new address in New Delhi. She has a duplex in Sujan Singh Park, facing the Ambassador Hotel and in the vicinity of Khan Market. It is one of the most sought-after addresses in the capital. Built by Khushwant Singh's father, Sujan Singh Park is one of the first residential apartments of Delhi, where stories of the residents are as interesting as its architecture. Sujan Singh was Khushwant's grandfather. Priyanka, reliably learnt, is staying there as a tenant.

The writer is a keen observer of the goings-on in backrooms of power

SHORT TAKES

AFGHAN FORCES
KILL 46 TALIBAN
TERRORISTS

Kabul, Sept. 5: The Afghan forces have killed 46 Taliban terrorists and injured 37 others during an operation in the northern Faryab province.

Several Taliban units attacked the Qaisar district of the Faryab province but were pushed back by the military, Mohammad Hanif Reza, a spokesman for the 209th corps of the Afghan National Army, also known as the Shaheen Corps, told Sputnik on Saturday.

The spokesman added that the district was under the control of the Afghan forces.

At the same time, Reza said the military operation was still underway, while the Afghan armed forces were clearing the area from the Taliban terrorists.

Meanwhile, the provincial government said several high-ranking members of the Taliban were injured during the operation.

The movement has not yet commented on the incident.

16 KILLED IN
BANGLA MOSQUE
GAS EXPLOSION

Dhaka, Sept. 5: A suspected gas explosion tore through a Bangladesh mosque killing at least 16 people while dozens suffered life-threatening burns, police said on Saturday.

Worshippers were at Friday evening prayers when the blast sent a ball of flames through the mosque in the central district of Narayanganj, emergency services said.

Investigators suspected a spark from an air conditioner — which came on after a power cut — set off the gas.

“Leaked gas entered the mosque,” Narayanganj fire chief Abdullah Al Arefin said.

“When they shut the windows and doors and switched on the air conditioners there was an electricity spark that led to the explosion inside the mosque.” The 16 who died were among 37 taken to a specialist burns hospital in Dhaka, said hospital spokesman Samanta Lal Sen.

He added that the condition of the remaining 21 patients was “very critical” and all had suffered 70 to 80 percent burns.

Police said at least 45 were injured by the blast and that people had spoken of smelling a gas leak.

TALIBAN SAY TEAM
IN QATAR FOR
PEACE TALKS

Kabul, Sept. 5: The Taliban’s negotiating team has arrived in Qatar, a spokesman said on Saturday, in a sign that long-delayed peace talks with the Afghan government are inching closer to starting.

A date for the talks, to be hosted in Doha, has not been set but the warring sides have this week made signals that negotiations could launch soon, including efforts to wrap up a drawn out prisoner exchange.

“All members of our negotiating team have arrived in Doha. The talks will begin once some small technical issues are resolved,” Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said.

The Taliban team had recently been in Pakistan discussing the peace process with the government in Islamabad.

Qatar authorities have been imposing a seven day quarantine period on all arrivals to the country, but have made exemptions for some delegations who undergo regular testing.

The Afghan government’s negotiating team remained in Kabul on Saturday, but a logistics team landed in Doha earlier this week.

Postal voting marks start
of US Presidential election

North Carolina was to begin mailing out more than 6 lakh ballots

Washington, Sept. 5: The US election is officially open: North Carolina on Friday launched vote-by-mail operations for the November 3 contest between President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden, which is getting uglier by the hour.

With two months until Election Day, Trump is seizing on fears over violent protests in US cities and questioning the integrity of voting by mail, while challenger Biden intensified his criticism of a “deplorable” leader who he said is not fit for office.

Worries about the unabated spread of Coronavirus are expected to prompt a surge in the number of ballots cast by mail, as millions seek to avoid polling stations.

In a country on edge over the health crisis and a national reckoning about race, the next 60 days will test the ability of the world’s largest economy to organise its election while

profoundly changed by a pandemic that has killed 1,87,000 Americans.

North Carolina was to begin mailing out more than 6,00,000 ballots, in response to a major spike in demand. Other key battleground states such as Wisconsin — which both candidates visited in recent days — will follow in the coming weeks. How Americans vote has become another flashpoint in an increasingly divisive political landscape.

A recent poll by USA Today and Suffolk University showed that 56 percent of Republican voters surveyed said they would go in person to vote, while only 26 percent of Democrats plan to do the same.

One out of every four Biden voters said that if the Democratic former vice president loses on November 3, they would not be ready to accept a Trump victory as “fairly won.” About one in five Trump voters said a simi-

lar thing. As he seeks a second four-year term, Trump has for months sowed doubt among his base about the legitimacy of an election with a significant number of mail-in votes.

Trump — who himself voted by mail in his adopted home state of Florida — has repeatedly, and without evidence, said mail-in voting could lead to widespread fraud.

He even has suggested to his supporters that they try to vote twice to test the system — earning him scorn on social media and from Democrats.

The tense campaign battle heated on Thursday when *The Atlantic magazine* reported — citing four anonymous sources who said they had firsthand knowledge of the discussions — that Trump had referred to US Marines buried in a World War I cemetery in France as “losers” and “suckers” for getting killed in action. — *AFP*

Don team pushes SM
limits as polls loom

Washington, Sept. 5: A message saying you “won’t be safe” in Joe Biden’s America. The former vice president shown “sleeping” during a television interview. Biden “hiding” — alone — in his basement. All three videos featured in social media of President Donald Trump and his team as recently as the past week as he sought to close the gap on his Democratic rival. And each was labeled as false or manipulated content by social media giants and fact checkers.

While negative campaigning has long been a fixture of American politics, the open use of digitally-altered images by Trump and other candidates in 2020 has tech giants worried.

Twitter has cracked down by removing or labeling several of the president’s tweets. Facebook, citing the risk of civil unrest, announced on Thursday that it would not allow new political ads on its platform in the last week of the November 3 race.

There remain questions whether such messages — almost impossible to stop once they become viral — are working on voters but a line has already been crossed.

“There’s a long tradition in politics of competing politicians presenting their opponents’ words or beliefs in edited ways, right? That’s part of politics,” Ethan Porter, assistant professor of media and public affairs at George Washington University, said. — *AFP*

FB FORBIDS
LIVESTREAMED
DEATH

Dijon, Sept. 5: Facebook said on Saturday it would block the livestream of a Frenchman suffering from an incurable condition who wanted to broadcast his death on the social media platform.

Earlier, Alain Cocq announced that he was now refusing all food, drink and medicine after President Emmanuel Macron turned down his request for euthanasia.

Cocq, 57, who suffers from a rare condition which causes the walls of his arteries to stick together, said he believed he had less than a week to live and would broadcast his death from Saturday morning.

“Although we respect (Cocq’s) decision to want to draw attention to this complex question, following expert advice we have taken measures to prevent the live broadcast on Alain’s account,” a Facebook spokesman said. — *AFP*

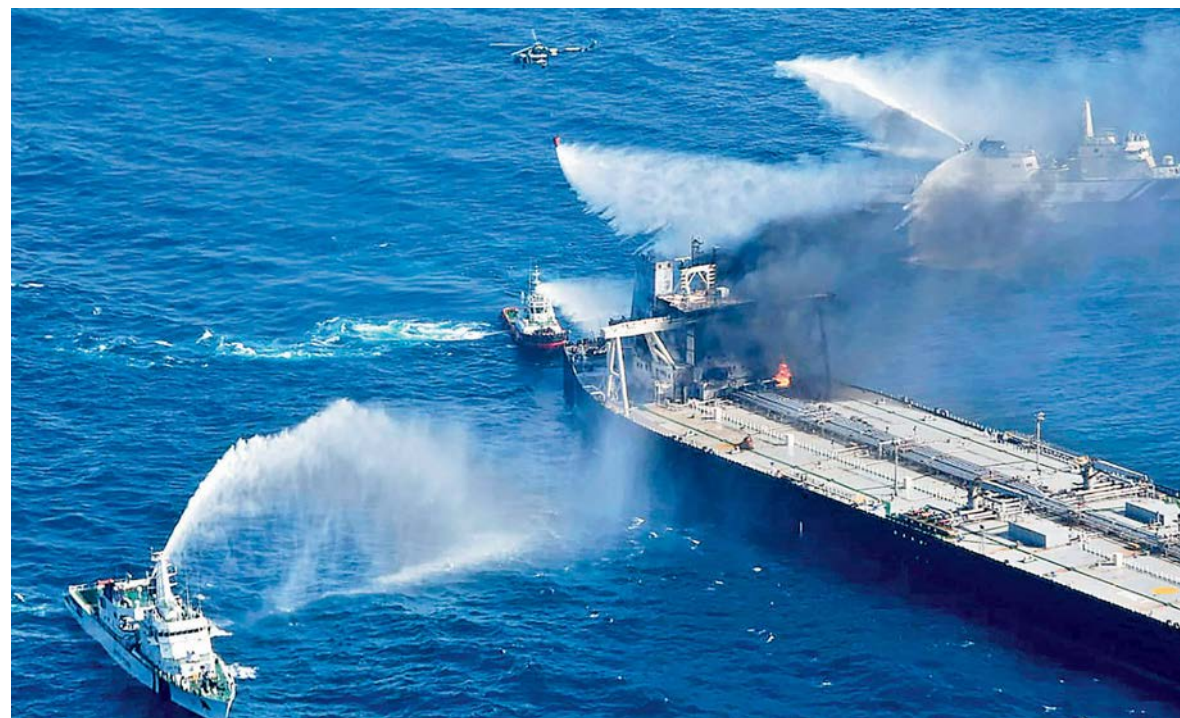
UK CLIMATE
ACTIVISTS TARGET
NEWSPAPERS

London, Sept. 5: Climate change protesters in Britain blockaded two printing presses on Saturday, disrupting the distribution of numerous national newspapers as they step up 10 days of protests demanding action on environmental issues.

Activist group Extinction Rebellion (XR) targeted both the plants, just north of London and near Liverpool in north-west England, causing delays to deliveries of papers including *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Sun*.

Dozens of activists blocked roads outside the sites using vehicles and by attaching themselves to other obstacles, “to expose the failure of these corporations to accurately report on the climate and ecological emergency.” — *AP*

Tanker fire under control



Tug boats and ships battle the fire on MT New Diamond in the Indian Ocean, on Saturday. The fire on the large oil tanker off Sri Lankas coast has been brought under control but is still not extinguished, the navy said on Saturday. The tanker, carrying nearly 2 million barrels of crude oil, was drifting about 20 nautical miles (37 kilometers) from Sri Lankas eastern coast and on Friday evening a tug boat towed it to the deep sea away from land, said navy spokesman Capt. Indika de Silva.

— *AP*

Biden confirms Covid-19 test,
says he’ll be tested regularly

Wilmington, Sept. 5 : Joe Biden has said that he’s been tested at least once for the Covid-19 virus and promised he will be tested regularly during his general election campaign against US President Donald Trump.

The Democratic presidential nominee on Friday told reporters of his testing protocol during a wide-ranging news conference in which he blasted Trump for downplaying the Coronavirus and thus ensuring that it will continue to kill Americans and ravage the economy.

For much of the summer, Biden’s advisers deflected questions about whether the former vice president was being tested himself as he anchored his campaign almost exclusively from his Delaware home, travelling sparingly as a precaution.

“They’re going to do it on a regular basis,” Biden said of the testing. He noted that the Secret Service agents assigned to protect him and “everyone” else who comes into his home is tested already. Biden said he didn’t know specifically when his next test would be. “I just, ‘yes, sir,’ show up and put my head back,” Biden said.

“I imagine it’ll be sometime this week, but it will be a regular basis,” Biden and Trump offer voters a sharp contrast on the pandemic and its economic fallout.

In the Oval Office on Friday, Trump hailed a new jobs report and repeated his optimism that a Covid-19 vaccine could be available even before the November 3 election.

Hours later, during a fundraiser, Biden said, “I

hope like hell they have a vaccine,” but questioned Trump’s timeline and ability to distribute it. “We’ve got to make sure they’re not just hyping... that they actually finish all the testing,” Biden said, adding that Trump’s public questioning of scientists and medical experts will reduce confidence in a vaccine whenever it comes online.

“People don’t trust a damn thing he says,” Biden quipped. Further, the former vice president questioned how well the administration is planning for distribution, given the White House’s rocky distribution of Covid-19 tests and protective equipment.

“Discovery of a safe vaccine isn’t enough,” Biden said. “The road from approval to injection is a long road.” — *AP*

BIDEN SLAMS DON
FOR MOCKING
U.S. MARINES

Washington, Sept. 5: Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden declared President Donald Trump “unfit” for the presidency on Friday, delivering an impassioned reaction to a report that Trump — who never served in uniform — allegedly mocked American war dead.

The allegations, sourced anonymously, describe multiple offensive comments by the president toward fallen and captured US service members, including calling World War I dead at an American military cemetery in France “losers” and “suckers” in 2018. — *AP*

Russia defiant
over Navalny

Moscow, Sept. 5: Russia defied threats of new sanctions over the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, as US President Donald Trump said on Friday he had not yet seen proof that the Kremlin critic was a victim of Moscow’s Novichok programme.

A new crisis in ties between Russia and the West broke out after Germany said this week there was “unequivocal evidence” that President Vladimir Putin’s top foe had been poisoned using the Soviet-era nerve agent.

Western leaders and many Russians have expressed horror at what Navalny’s allies say is the first known use of chemical weapons against a high-profile opposition leader on Russian soil.

The 44-year-old lawyer fell ill on a Siberian flight last month and was evacuated to Germany for treatment. He has been in an artificially induced coma for the past two weeks.

The Kremlin again denied responsibility for the attack on Friday.

● **WESTERN LEADERS** and many Russians have expressed horror at what Navalny’s allies say is the first known use of chemical weapons against a high-profile opposition leader on Russian soil.

“A whole number of theories including poisoning were considered from the very first days,” Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. “According to our doctors, this theory has not been proved.”

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Germany’s justice ministry had so far failed to share any findings with Moscow’s prosecutors, adding that Russian authorities had “nothing to hide”.

Trump said on Friday he had yet to see proof from Berlin that Navalny had been poisoned.

“I don’t know exactly what happened. I think it’s tragic, it’s terrible, it shouldn’t happen,” the president told a press conference. — *AFP*

Violent typhoon
heads for Japan

Kagoshima, Sept. 5: An extremely powerful typhoon was barreling towards southwestern Japan on Saturday as authorities issued evacuation advisories to thousands of residents, warning of unprecedented violent winds, heavy rain and high waves.

Haishen churned near Okinawa in southern Japan on Saturday afternoon and was expected to approach Kyushu late Sunday or early Monday, the meteorological agency said.

The storm is expected to affect Japan from late Saturday, with winds of up to 290 kilometres per hour (180 miles per hour), making it a “violent” storm — the top level on the country’s classification scale.

“There is a danger of record winds, heavy rain, high waves and storm surge,” Yoshihisa Nak-

amoto, an agency officer, told a news conference, calling for an early evacuation and “maximum caution.” Yuhei Takamura, a government official, said, “A disaster will occur. There is almost no doubt about it.” About 4,600 people in Tatumizu, Kagoshima, were urged to evacuate swiftly, while authorities in other areas of Kyushu were warning their residents to prepare.

Satoshi Sugimoto, another agency official, said the latest typhoon could generate high waves as powerful as a tsunami.

“It’s going to be the last chance to flee” when the agency formally issues the nation’s highest storm warning, Sugimoto told reporters.

Authorities on Minami-daitojima instructed about 1,300 residents to evacuate as the storm was expected to hit the remote island, east of Okinawa. — *AFP*

SU♦DO♦KU

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				5			4
4		3			2	5	
6		7		3			5
	1		7		6		8
2			8		7		6
		9	5		6		7
8				7			
		2	9		1		5

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WHAT
TO DO

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only one correct solution.

YESTERDAY’S ANSWER

4	6	7	9	3	5	1	2	8
9	2	1	7	8	6	5	4	3
8	3	5	2	1	4	7	9	6
1	4	9	5	6	3	8	7	2
3	5	6	8	2	7	4	1	9
2	7	8	4	9	1	6	3	5
6	8	2	1	7	9	3	5	4
7	9	4	3	5	8	2	6	1
5	1	3	6	4	2	9	8	7

SU♦DO♦KU 2

9			7		4			2
	5			6			1	
	8						4	
5			8		3			1
6		8				3		5
3			6		7			8
	9						5	
	6			1			9	
1			2		6			4

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Did you think
SU♦DO♦KU

on the left was easy? Try this. Check the solution tomorrow. Tips available at www.sudoku-xts.com DC-AGE SU DO KU FORUM: Discuss the SU DO KU puzzles printed and contribute mini teasers of your own at www.sudok-el.com/forum

YESTERDAY’S ANSWER

3	9	5	2	8	7	6	1	4
1	4	7	6	9	3	8	5	2
8	2	6	4	5	1	3	9	7
6	3	4	8	7	9	1	2	5
2	1	8	3	4	5	9	7	6
7	5	9	1	2	6	4	3	8
4	8	3	5	1	2	7	6	9
9	6	2	7	3	8	5	4	1
5	7	1	9	6	4	2	8	3

NEW | LIFE

Pak court had approved the relocation of an elephant to Cambodia after a campaign

‘World’s loneliest elephant’ okayed to quit zoo

Islamabad, Sept. 5: An elephant who has become a cause celebre for animal rights activists around the world will be allowed to leave his Pakistani zoo and transferred to better conditions, the animal welfare group helping with the case said on Saturday.

Dubbed the ‘world’s loneliest elephant’ by his supporters, Kaavan has languished at a zoo in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad for more than 35 years.

Martin Bauer, a spokesman for Four Paws, said the elephant has been finally given medical approval to travel, most likely to Cambodia, where he will find companionship and better conditions.

The overweight elephant Kaavan underwent a full medical examination at the zoo on Friday, said Bauer.

In May, Pakistan’s High Court ordered the Marghazar Zoo closed because of its abysmal conditions

blamed on systemic negligence.

Rescuing Kaavan from the zoo’s dire conditions attracted the attention of animal activists around the world, and celebrities including US singer Cher, who lobbied for his relocation.

“Unfortunately, the rescue comes too late for two lions that died during an attempted transfer at the end of July after local animal handlers set a fire in their enclosure to

force them into their transport crates,” Bauer said in a statement released on Saturday.

He said Four Paws was invited by the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board to safely transfer the remaining animals in the zoo.

Kaavan has until now been forced to live a solitary life in a small enclosure.

Friday’s medical examination showed the elephant was over-

weight, even as he showed signs of malnutrition. His nails were cracked and overgrown apparently from years of living in an improper enclosure with flooring that damaged his feet.

“Following the checks, which confirmed Kaavan is strong enough, steps will now be taken to finalize his relocation to an animal sanctuary potentially in Cambodia,” Bauer said. — *AP*



A team of veterinarians from the international animal welfare organization Four Paws briefs media prior to examining an elephant Kaavan at Maragzar Zoo in Islamabad, Pakistan.

— *AP*

SHORT TAKES

Hami takes pole with record lap

Monza, Italy: Lewis Hamilton claimed pole position with a new lap record at Monza for Sunday's Italian Grand Prix with Valtteri Bottas taking second in Saturday qualifying for another Mercedes front row lock-out. McLaren's Carlos Sainz posted the third fastest time and is joined on the second row by Sergio Perez for Racing Point. The session proved another humbling experience for out-of-sorts Ferrari with Sebastian Vettel going out in Q1 and Charles Leclerc, who won at the circuit last year, in Q2. This means no Ferrari inside the top 10 at Monza for the first time since 1984. The championship leader and six-time champion clocked a fastest lap in one minute and 18.887 seconds to beat the Finn by 0.069 seconds. In pure speed, Hamilton's track lap record performance produced an unconfirmed fastest lap in F1 history. — *AFP*

Messi misses Barca training

Barcelona: Lionel Messi was a no-show at training with Barcelona on Saturday morning despite his decision to stay at the club under sufferance, AFP reporters at the training ground said.

The Argentine superstar announced on Friday he had been forced to remain at Barcelona, claiming after club president Josep Maria Bartomeu broke his word to let him leave. It came after 10 days of tension since his bombshell fax telling Barcelona he wanted out. But while other players including Jordi Alba and Philippe Coutinho arrived for the session, Messi failed to appear at the Joan Gamper training complex for the session which began at 0730 GMT. — *AFP*

Dutch go past Poland; Italy held

London: Steven Bergwijn ensured the Netherlands did not feel the absence of recently departed coach Ronald Koeman to beat Poland 1-0 in the Nations League, while Italy were held 1-1 by Bosnia and Herzegovina on Friday. Koeman left to take charge of Barcelona last month, less than a year before he was due to lead his country to a major international tournament for the first time. A rejuvenated Netherlands reached the final of the inaugural Nations League under Koeman last year after missing out on the 2018 World Cup. Also in Group 1, Italy extended their two-year unbeaten run but had to settle for a point against Bosnia in Florence. — *AFP*

Heat push Bucks to brink with win

Miami: Jimmy Butler powered the Miami Heat to a 115-100 victory over Milwaukee on Friday that pushed the top-seeded Bucks to the brink of elimination in the NBA playoffs. Butler scored 17 of his 30 points in the Heat's scorching fourth quarter, Miami out-scoring the Bucks 40-13 in the final period to seize a 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference semi-final series. It was the most lopsided final period in a playoff game since the NBA introduced the shot clock in 1954. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

England vs Australia 2nd T20 from 6.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FORMULA ONE

Italian Grand Prix
Main Race from 6.35 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

St Kitts & Nevis Patriots vs Trinbago Knight Riders from 7.30 pm; St Lucia Zouks vs Jamaica Tallawahs from 11.30 pm on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

US OPEN TENNIS

Matches from 8.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 2, HD

UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

Wales vs Bulgaria from 6.30 pm; Ireland vs Finland from 9.30 pm; Spain vs Ukraine from 12.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD; Switzerland vs Germany from 12.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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No.1 cruises into 16

Top seed Djokovic makes US Open pre-quarters

New York, Sept. 5: Novak Djokovic sailed into the last 16 of the US Open on Friday as off-court intrigue forced the delay of a men's singles match over issues linked to coronavirus.

Djokovic outclassed Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff 6-3, 6-3, 6-1 in a routine victory for the world number one, who is chasing an 18th Grand Slam singles title.

Far from routine was a last-minute attempt by New York health officials to prevent France's Adrian Mannarino from playing his last-32 encounter against German fifth seed Alexander Zverev.

The intervention led to a back and forth between tournament organisers and the state government and resulted in the match, which Zverev won in four sets, starting over three hours late.

"It was a weird situation for me," said Mannarino, one of 11 players put under enhanced safety protocols earlier this week after compatriot Benoit Paire was withdrawn from the tournament after testing positive for coronavirus.

"I was just laying on the sofa still trying to be focused just in case I would go on court," he said, following

Zverev's 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 victory. Zverev will now play unseeded Spaniard Alejandro Davidovich Fokina in the last 16 while Djokovic will play Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta for a place in the quarter-finals.

TSITSIPAS STUNNED
In the men's draw, Croatia's 27th seed Borna Coric staged a remarkable Houdini act to stun fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas in a 4hr 36min late-night thriller.

Coric appeared to be heading for certain defeat after Tsitsipas, leading by two sets to one, opened up a 5-1 lead in the fourth.

But Coric rallied superbly, saving six match points and fighting back to take the set 7-5 to force a decider.

Tsitsipas went a break up once more in the fifth but couldn't press home the advantage as Coric forced a tie break before clinching a 6-7 (2/7), 6-4, 4-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7/4) win.

Twelfth seed Denis Shapovalov recovered from 5-2 down in the fourth set to pip American number 19 seed Taylor Fritz 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2.

Fritz, 22 was within two points of victory before the 21-year-old Shapovalov completed a remarkable comeback. — *AFP*

THE RESULTS

Men's singles third round (number in brackets denotes seeding): Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) bt Jan-Lennard Struff (GER x28) 6-3, 6-3, 6-1; Denis Shapovalov (CAN x12) bt Taylor Fritz (USA x19) 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2; Pablo Carreno-Busta (ESP x20) bt Ricardas Berankis (LTU) 6-4, 6-3, 6-2; David Goffin (BEL x7) bt Filip Krajinovic (SRB x26) 6-1, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4; Jordan Thompson (AUS) bt Mikhail Kukushkin (KAZ) 7-5, 6-4, 6-1; Alejandro Davidovich (ESP) bt Cameron Norrie (GBR) 7-6 (7/2), 4-6, 6-2, 6-1; Alexander Zverev (GER x5) bt Adrian Mannarino (FRA x32) 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-2, 6-2; Borna Coric (CRO x27) bt Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x4) 6-7 (2/7), 6-4, 4-6, 7-5, 7-6

(7/4); Corentin Moutet (FRA) bt Daniel Evans (GBR x23) 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/1)

Women's singles third round: Jennifer Brady (USA x28) bt Caroline Garcia (FRA) 6-3, 6-3; Angelique Kerber (GER x17) bt Ann Li (USA) 6-3, 6-4; Yulia Putintseva (KAZ x23) bt Aliaksandra Sasnovich (BLR) 3-6, 6-2, 6-1; Petra Martic (CRO x8) bt Varvara Gracheva (RUS) 6-3, 6-3; Naomi Osaka (JPN x4) bt Marta Kostyuk (UKR) 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-2; Anett Kontaveit (EST x14) bt Magda Linette (POL x24) 6-3, 6-2; Shelby Rogers (USA) bt Madison Brengle (USA) 6-2, 6-4; Petra Kvitova (CZE x6) bt Jessica Pegula (USA) 6-4, 6-3.



Germany's Alexander Zverev returns to Adrian Mannarino of France in their US Open third round match in New York on Friday. Zverev won 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-2, 6-2. — *AP*

Osaka battles into Last 16

New York, Sept. 5: Two-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka battled into the last 16 of the US Open on Friday, requiring three sets to defeat 18-year-old Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk.

Osaka, the 2018 US Open champion, needed 2hr 33min to beat the unseeded world number 137 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-2 inside an empty Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"She was very good. I'm kind of scared of how she is going to be in the future," Osaka said of her vanquished opponent.

Frustration got the better of the Japanese fourth seed in the second set. After recovering from 5-3 to force a tie-break she threw her racket when Kostyuk tied the match 1-



Japan's Naomi Osaka wears a protective facemask with the name Ahmaud Arbery stenciled on it after winning her third round match against Marta Kostyuk of the Ukraine on Friday. — *AFP*

1. "I just felt like I had so many points that I didn't capitalise on. I think when I went up, I became

a bit passive and then she came in because she has no fear," Osaka said. But Osaka's experience

came through in the deciding set as she held her serve and broke Kostyuk twice for a place in the quarter-finals.

Osaka walked onto the court wearing a facemask emblazoned with the name of Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed black man who was shot dead in broad daylight while jogging in the town of Brunswick, in southern Georgia, in February.

Elsewhere, sixth seed Petra Kvitova breezed past American Jessica Pegula 6-4, 6-3 to set up a last-16 encounter with Shelby Rogers, also of the United States.

Eighth seed Petra Martic of Croatia swept aside unseeded Russian Varvara Gracheva 6-3, 6-3. — *AFP*

BOPANNA IS IN MEN'S DOUBLES SECOND ROUND

New York, Sept. 5: Experienced Indian Rohan Bopanna and his Canadian partner Denis Shapovalov advanced to the second round of the US Open men's doubles event here. Bopanna and Shapovalov hardly broke a sweat to get past their American rivals Ernesto Escobedo and Noah Rubin 6-2, 6-4 in their tournament opener that lasted one hour and 22 minutes on Friday.

The Indo-Canadian pair will next play sixth seeds Kevin Krawietz and Andreas Mies.

Bopanna is the lone surviving Indian in the tournament after the exits of Sumit Nagal and Divij Sharan. — *PTI*

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Watson relieved after 1st session

Dubai, Sept. 5: Former Australian all-rounder Shane Watson on Saturday said it won't take long to regain touch despite a bit of rustiness as he hit the nets with his Chennai Super Kings teammates ahead of the 13th IPL beginning on September 19.

Rocked by a series of Covid-19 cases, Chennai Super Kings led by Mahendra Singh Dhoni could finally start training on Friday after clearing a third round of testing for the virus.

"How exciting it was to be back with all of my @ChennaiIPLmates for our first training session!!! It was so much fun. There was a little rust that will not take long to go," Watson wrote on his twitter handle.

The 39-year-old, who was bought by CSK ahead of the 2018 IPL, has scored 953 runs in 32 matches for the franchise in the last two years, besides capturing six wickets.

His highest score was 117 not out in the finals of the 2018 edition against SunRisers Hyderabad.

Watson is an important member of the CSK team which has been left depleted after the pull out of senior players Suresh Raina



Shane Watson

● **The 39-year-old, who was bought by CSK ahead of the 2018 IPL, has scored 953 runs in 32 matches for the franchise in the last two years, besides capturing six wickets.**

and Harbhajan Singh.

CSK was forced to delay its training plan after completing the six-day quarantine after Deepak Chahar and Rituraj Gaikwad tested positive last week along with 11 members of the the contingent.

The 13th IPL is scheduled to be held from September 19 to November 10 across three venues — Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah. — *PTI*

EMPTY STADIUMS CAN BE CHALLENGING: RCB COACH

Dubai, Sept. 5: Royal Challengers Bangalore head coach Simon Katich feels that while younger guys will feel lesser pressure in empty stadiums but it could well be a challenge for the senior cricketers as they gear up for Indian Premier League.

The 13th edition of the IPL, which begins on September 19, will be held in a bio-secure environment behind closed doors — at least the first phase — in wake of the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

"Personally, I think some of the younger players actually enjoy the fact that there will be a little less pressure with less people at the ground, creating all that noise and distraction," Katich said during RCB's YouTube show 'Bold Diaries'.

"I think it will be more of a challenge for some of the older guys that are used to the buzz of the crowd and getting their adrenaline going. But I think there will still be a lot of motivation within our squad to go out and perform well," he added.

Experienced mental conditioning coach Paddy Upton had earlier said that cricketers like Virat Kohli who depend on external stimulation and are used to 'pressure' are "really going to struggle" in front of empty stadium but self-motivated players will "do a hell lot better" in this year's IPL.

RCB completed their mandatory quarantine upon their arrival in Dubai and had started their training camps last week. — *PTI*

England pip Aussies in final-ball thriller

FIRST TWENTY20

Southampton, Sept. 5: Tom Curran held his nerve as England beat Australia by two runs in a final-ball thriller to win the first Twenty20 international at Southampton on Friday and go 1-0 up in a three-match series.

Australia, in their first competitive match for nearly six months because of the coronavirus, were making light work of a target of 163 while captain Aaron Finch (46) and David Warner (58) were putting on 98 for the first wicket.

But star batsman Steve Smith's exit for just 18 sparked a collapse that saw

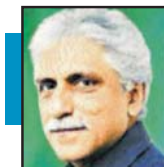
Australia lose four wickets for nine runs in 14 balls.

A target of 15 off six balls became five off one.

But Marcus Stoinis, having hit a six off Curran earlier in the over, couldn't hit another six needed for a win or the four that would have tied the scores and taken the match into a Super Over. — *AFP*

Brief scores: England 162/7 in 20 overs (D. Malan 66.J. Buttler 44; Richardson 2/13, Maxwell 2/14) bt Australia 160/6 in 20 overs (D. Warner 58, A. Finch 46; Archer 2/33, Rashid 2/29).

Are sudden IPL pullouts signs of an emergency?



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

The past few days haven't been kind to Chennai Super Kings. Two players (from 13 in all, including support staff and management) tested positive for Covid with barely a fortnight for the IPL to start, raising doubts whether the franchise would be ready to play in the opening tie on September as scheduled.

While the two players, Deepak Chahar and Rituraj Gaekwad, have tested negative since, CSK suffered other serious setbacks. Within days of each

other, senior pros Suresh Raina and Harbhajan Singh have pulled out of the tournament for 'personal reasons'.

This leaves the three-times champions beleaguered, however CSK is not the only team to feel distress. Mumbai Indians veteran Lasith Malinga, the highest wicket-taker in IPL history, and still a force to reckon with despite his advancing years, has also pulled out for personal reasons.

Malinga's decision has not invited as much media scrutiny as Raina's and

Harbhajan's because he is not an Indian star. But overall, the timing of these pull-outs as well as lack of clarity in why they have done so has left diehard IPL followers flummoxed.

The timing of the pull-outs by these players, as well as lack of clarity in why they have done so has fueled speculation and set tongues wagging about whether there is more than meets the eye about what the real reason for their belated withdrawal.

There is nothing that can, or should, prevent a player to withdraw from an event or tournament. As free agents, players have the absolute right to ply their skills — or not — within contractual limits.

'Personal reasons' is ordinarily a valid enough ground for a player's absence, but extremely

● **There is nothing that can, or should, prevent a player to withdraw from an event or tournament. As free agents, players have the absolute right to ply their skills - or not - within contractual limits.**

wide in its ambit to find complete acceptance in these trying times where the usual yardsticks don't apply and it is incumbent on players, teams, federations to be upfront on such matters to prevent misapprehensions.

The issue with Raina, Harbhajan and Malinga is not of the kind that Leo Messi, who wants to leave Barcelona Football Club

after spending a lifetime with them because of a tussle with the team's management. But it could be argued Messi also wants to leave Barca for 'personal reasons'.

That Messi has since backtracked because of a complex contract that could cost him dear is another story altogether. Seen in a wider perspective, how much better that the real issue in the Messi story was in the public domain. This prevented misplaced conjecture and needless conspiracy theories.

Transparency is all the more important in these extraordinary times, when the fear of Covid is all pervasive. It redounds to the credit of Rafael Nadal that he took a decision early and candidly on not participating in this year's US

Open because of the corona virus factor.

In the case of the three cricketers under discussion, their sudden pull-out from the IPL bespoke of an emergency. But in the present circumstances, it is imperative to know what this urgency was about? Is it family related, Covid-linked or some other?

I don't know much about Malinga's recent situation, but Raina has had a terror assault on his family which may have brought him back. (Though why he went to UAE then remains unanswered). Harbhajan's mother has been ailing for a while, and he may have stretched the waiting period to take a final call.

These are strong reasons for not playing a tournament. And if so, why can't these be publicly disclosed? In Raina's case, the

flip-flop statements by the owner of CSK N. Srinivasan and the player himself added more grist to the rumour mill.

Within the IPL fraternity itself, lack of clarity leads to rise in conjecture and paranoia. I've received class from people associated with different franchises, wanting to know what's happening.

The issue goes beyond salacious gossip about dissonance within teams. Given the present environment, these people may be more worried about Covid infection, and whether they are being told the truth about the scale of problem, and how safe it is to be playing the tournament.

That's a dangerous route, which is why full disclosure in such matters is imperative.