

IN BRIEF

Police arrests 2 for murdering 25-yr-old

New Delhi: Two men took a 25-year-old man to a jungle area in Southeast Delhi allegedly on the pretext of having sex but they stabbed him to death after he refused to give them his mobile phone, the police said. The accused, Sumit (20) and Kartik (24), both residents of Gautampuri, have been arrested in connection with the killing of Sanni Dayal, it said. The incident took place on Saturday night at a deserted jungle area of Ali Vihar in Southeast Delhi's Sarita Vihar, the police said, adding that a case under Sections 302 (murder) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Indian Penal Code has been registered. DCP (Southeast) R.P. Meena said, "During investigation, the mobile phone of the deceased was missing and when contacted it was found to be switched off. Call record detail of the mobile number was collected and its last location was traced to Gautampuri in Badarpur."

NCB seizes ₹48cr worth drugs, 7 held

New Delhi: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Sunday claimed to have busted an international heroin smuggling syndicate with the arrest of seven persons, including foreigners, and seizure of drugs worth about ₹48 crore in Delhi. Among the arrested are an African man and a woman from Myanmar, the federal anti-narcotics agency said. The agency unearthed a modus operandi where the mastermind was coordinating the operations from abroad by creating various layers of anonymity, it said. "To circumvent the current situation of controlled international passenger flights, the mastermind and the syndicate involved were exploiting the international courier route," the agency's deputy director (operations) K.P.S. Malhotra said in a statement. The operation began early this month with the seizure of a parcel, originating from South Africa, containing 970gm of heroin from a courier service in the national capital. — PTI

Govt's anti-dengue campaign kicks off

New Delhi: The Delhi government's 10-week anti-dengue campaign kicked off on Sunday, with chief minister Arvind Kejriwal checking his house for stagnant water. The campaign seeks to build greater awareness on prevention of vector-borne diseases in Delhi. "Honourable chief minister Arvind Kejriwal kick-started the anti-dengue campaign by removing the stagnant clean water at his residence. He said that like last year, two crore Delhiites will come together to make this initiative successful and to defeat dengue," the chief minister's office tweeted. Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, cabinet ministers Rajendra Pal Gautam and Kailash Gahlot shared pictures and videos on Twitter as part of the campaign. Mr Sisodia tweeted in Hindi, "Often we feel that there is not a single place in our house where there is stagnant water but if you take 10 minutes to check properly, you will find stagnant water somewhere. That's why it is important to join the #10Hafta10Baje10Minute campaign — to protect your family from dengue @ArvindKejriwal."

Greater Noida: Woman jumps off 16th-floor

Noida: A 21-year-old woman preparing for competitive exams died after she allegedly jumped off her 16th-floor apartment in Greater Noida on Sunday, police said. The woman was living alone and no suicide note was found in the high-rise apartment located in the Birsakh police station area, an official said. The police were alerted about the incident at 4 pm, a local official said. "The woman had completed her nursing training and was preparing for competitive exams. She was staying alone in the house. She jumped off the balcony of the 16th-floor flat and died on the spot," the official told PTI. The reason behind her taking the extreme step is not known, the policeman said. The body was taken into custody and sent for post-mortem, the police said, adding that further probe was underway.

FIR against fake news site on NCPCR plaint**Alt News co-founder booked for doxing girl**

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 6

The Delhi police has registered an FIR against AltNews co-founder Mohammed Zubair for allegedly threatening and torturing a girl child through Twitter.

The FIR was registered against Mr Zubair on a complaint received from the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) under provisions of the Information Technology Act and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) at Cyber Cell. Mr Zubair, however, refuted the allegations and said that this is an absolutely frivolous complaint.

"I will be responding to it legally," he said.

The NCPCR, in the complaint, said the commission took cognisance of the complaint received under Section 13(1) and (k) of the CPC Act, 2005, as in the complaint the picture of a minor girl is



Mohammed Zubair

seen to be circulated and posted by various Twitter handles with indecent and disgraceful remarks and comments, which seems to be a cognisable offence of 'doxing' and requires immediate registration of an FIR.

Notably, 'doxing' involves publishing private or identifying information about a particular individual or organisation on the internet.

"You look into the matter and take prompt action in respect to the Twitter handle and posts harassing, threatening, and stalking the minor girl. Further, you are also requested to ensure the safety of the girl child and

initiate appropriate action against the alleged perpetrators," said Priyank Kanoongo, the NCPCR chief, in his letter.

Mr Kanoongo said he is seeking action under POCSO and relevant acts against online threats and repeated incidents of stalking of a minor girl on Twitter by Mr Zubair.

"As per the complaint, Mohammed Zubair, bearing the Twitter handle zoo online, is harassing, threatening, and stalking a minor girl," he said.

The NCPCR chief has also written to Twitter India to take action in the matter. On Saturday, the NCPCR chief had tweeted, "According to the ATR received in @NCPCR, an FIR has been lodged against the alleged persons for threatening and torturing a girl child on @Twitter. As per the request made by @TwitterIndia, an additional time of 10 days has been provided to them to provide relevant information."

Noida reports 220 cases, biggest single-day hike

Noida, Sept. 6: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar recorded one more fatality linked to Covid on Sunday, pushing the district's death toll from the disease to 47, according to official data.

The district also recorded 220 new patients, the biggest single-day spike in cases yet, a day after 213 people tested positive for the novel coronavirus here, it showed.

The overall infection tally has now reached 8,737, while the number of active cases jumped to 1,429, according to the data released by the Uttar Pradesh health department for a 24-hour period.

However, no Covid patient got discharged during the 24-hour period after a long time, even as a discrepancy emerged in the government data.

The official data shared with the press on

Saturday had put the total recoveries in Gautam Buddha Nagar so far at 7,341 but the figure dropped to 7,261 on Sunday. No official explanation was available immediately over the reduced recovery numbers.

Meanwhile, the mortality rate among Covid patients in Gautam Buddha Nagar reached 0.53 per cent with the latest death, while the recovery rate, according to Sunday figures, stood at 83.10 per cent.

Gautam Buddha Nagar currently stands 22nd among districts in UP in terms of Covid-linked deaths, sixth in recoveries, seventh in infection tally and 10th in active cases, according to the data.

There were 61,625 active cases across Uttar Pradesh on Sunday. — PTI

Delhi records over 3,000 Covid cases

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 6

Delhi recorded 3,256 fresh coronavirus cases on Sunday, taking the tally to over 1.91 lakh, while the death toll mounted to 4567, authorities said.

Twenty-nine fatalities were recorded in the last 24 hours.

As many as 26,829 rapid antigen tests and 9,217 RTPCR/CBNAAT/TrueN at tests were conducted in the last 24 hours. The number of Containment zones stands at 1,076.

The total number of cases stands at 1,91,499, of which 1,65,973 patients have either been discharged, recovered or migrated. The number of active cases stands at 20,909.

According to official

data, there has been a rise of 80 per cent in the number of home isolation cases of Covid in the national capital in the last 16 days, and parallelly the containment zones count too has spiralled up to 976 over the same period.

Amid steady rise in fresh and active coronavirus cases in the last several days, the number of people in home isolation here on Saturday reached the five-figure mark again after over a month's time.

The number of home iso-



A worker sanitises a metro coach as DMRC gears up to resume its services with certain restrictions at Khyberpass yard in New Delhi on Sunday.

Delhi Metro resumes services today, new guidelines issued**DMRC urges people to use transport only if urgently needed**

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 6

After a gap of more than five months, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is all set to welcome passengers in a phased manner in three stages beginning from September 7.

The Metro, which had suspended its services in March due to the outbreak of Covid, is looking to reopen with caution putting into place a series of measures such as closed token counters, limited entry among others to enable commuters to adhere to Covid related social distancing protocols.

On Monday, the Yellow Line (Samyapur Badli to HUDA City Centre) will be opened. Over a period of next five days, i.e. by September 12, rest of the lines will also be made operational with all safety measures in place.

As a precautionary measure and to avoid human contact, automatic thermal scanners have

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been placed at the platforms along with sanitiser dispensing machines for the passengers and the staff. Notably, tokens will not be permitted for travelling; only smart cards will be allowed.

Delhi transport minister Kailash Gahlot visited Rajiv Chowk to take stock of the preparations.

"I am happy that the people of Delhi will again be able to travel by Metro after five months. I request people to follow all the protocols and not to compromise on social distancing norms while standing at the platforms and also inside the train. I would also urge them to avoid travel if not

required," he said.

Also, arrangements have been made for passengers to sit on alternate seats in the train or stand maintaining a gap of one meter. Stripe markers have also been provided at all queuing areas like frisking, ticketing, AFC gates, lifts, and escalators.

CISF personnel deployed at the Metro stations have been tasked with keeping a hawk-eyed vigil on the travellers flouting norms along with security checking and dog squad patrolling. They have been provided not only with masks but also face shields to protect themselves from falling prey to the deadly virus.

As per the DMRC guidelines, trains will be sanitised at terminal stations. Similarly, once they are back to the depots after the end of the day, the trains will again be thoroughly sanitised. Also, the train doors will be kept open at terminal stations to let fresh air in.

Notably, after the Central government suspended the Metro rail services in the last week of March, commuters were compelled to use other public transport such as private cab services and buses in Delhi. Many of them had to wait for hours as transportation was regulated due to the pandemic.

Upon receiving complaints from scores of people, the Delhi government later allowed e-rickshaws, auto-rickshaws, and cycle rickshaws to ply on roads with a single passenger for hassle-free commuting.

To maintain orderliness and regulate the flow of passengers with social distancing norms, only one or two gates will be kept open for entry or exit of passengers at a station.

Law varsities to hold CLAT-2020 on Sept. 28

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

The governing body of the consortium of National Law Universities met yesterday, under the chairmanship of its president V. Vijayakumar, hon'ble vice-chancellor of NLIU, Bhopal and took some important decisions not only to clarify the position to thousands of CLAT-2020 aspirants but also to ensure smooth functioning of the Consortium. All the Vice-Chancellors of the Member NLU's were present but the Vice-Chancellor NLSIU had left the meeting in the middle.

The Consortium of National Law Universities unanimously reiterated its decision to hold the CLAT on 28th September, 2020 as announced earlier. Except NLSIU, Bangalore, no other Law University is going to hold its test independently as was erroneously reported in the social media. The interview of Professor Sudhir Krishnaswami, vice-chancellor, NLSIU, Bangalore, to Bar and Bench was purely his personal opinion. No other member University is neither feeling hard pressed in the Consortium nor has any plans of conducting its own independent admission test for 2020.

Nizamuddin Dargah reopens for devotees

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5

The famous Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah, which was closed over five months ago after the outbreak of the coronavirus, opened for devotees on Sunday, with a "moderate" number of people visting the shrine to pay obeisance to the Sufi saint.

Union minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi was among the people who paid obeisance to Sufi saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia on the first of the reopening of the shrine, caretakers of the dargah said.

The minister appreciated measures taken by the shrine to protect devotee from the coronavirus disease, they said.

Delhi riots: Police arrests man who shot dead law student in Shiv Vihar

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT 6

The Delhi police crime branch team probing the February riots said Sunday that a man, who carried a reward of ₹1 lakh on his arrest for allegedly killing a 26-year-old law student near a school in Northeast Delhi, has been arrested.

Mustaqeem, 25, alias Sameer Saifi, a resident old Mustafabad, who allegedly shot dead Rahul Solanki near Rajdhani Public School in Shiv Vihar on February 24, was arrested by a special investigation team on September 3, police said.

He has been sent to judicial custody, they said. Mustaqeem joined the protest against CAA and NRC near Farukia Masjid, they added.

Solanki was pursuing LLB from a private col-

► THE VICTIM was pursuing LLB from a private college in Ghaziabad and had stepped out of his home to buy milk when he was killed

lege in Ghaziabad and had stepped out of his home to buy milk when he was killed.

The SIT has arrested seven other accused — Arif, Anis, Sirajuddin, Salman, Sonu, Saifi and Irshad — in the Solanki case and they have been chargesheeted for actively participating in the riots with a common objective to cause death, burn properties on February 24, police said.

Solanki was shot dead near Rajdhani Public School and a case was registered at Dayalpur police station. Later, the investigation was handed over to the SIT.

During investigation, eyewitnesses described the person who opened fire on Solanki. They identified the accused from his clothes and appearance after they were shown a video of the incident, a senior police officer said.

"We had deployed our sources in Mustafabad to identify the alleged shooter on the basis of his description. Our team questioned hundreds from the area and verified their presence at the spot through physical and technical means. But we did not find any information. After six months, on September 3, one of our sources informed us and he was apprehended from Bhajanpura Majar," the officer said.

Mustaqeem denied his involvement. Initially but accepted after detailed questioning, he said.



People at Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah, which was closed over five months ago after the outbreak of the coronavirus, opened for devotees in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Minor dies inside car due to suffocation

Ahmedabad: A six-year-old boy suffocated to death after accidentally getting trapped inside a car parked by the roadside for a few hours in Ahmedabad on Sunday, police said. The boy's mother, a domestic helper, was taking him along to her place of work around 10 am, when he entered the car parked on Airport Road without her knowledge, police said. The minor, identified as Ajay Saraniya, entered the vehicle out of fun, but accidentally got himself locked inside, an official of the Airport police station said. His body was found inside the car around 1 pm. Prima facie, he appeared to have died of suffocation as he remained locked inside the car for a few hours. Meanwhile, some local residents alerted the police around 1 pm after finding the boy inside the car. The police reached the spot and recovered the body. The body was sent for post-mortem, and a case was registered, police said. — PTI

Woman kills self, ex-beau booked

Nagpur: A 21-year-old man has been booked for allegedly driving his former girlfriend to commit suicide here, police said on Sunday. The woman died in hospital on September 3, a day after she allegedly drank poison at her residence, an official said. The accused, Suraj Gupta, has been upset since the woman ended her relationship with him, and started harassing her, he said. Gupta had allegedly also threatened to harm family members of the deceased earlier, the official said. A case has been registered under section 306 (Abetment of suicide) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). — PTI

Fake aide of mantri held for cheating

Kurukshetra: Police have arrested a man who allegedly posed as an aide of Haryana sports minister Sandeep Singh to cheat people by promising them jobs. Mandeep Saini was arrested by Kurukshetra police on Saturday, police said. On Sunday, a court here remanded the accused to one-day police custody. Police said Saini, a resident of village Tangoli in Kurukshetra district, allegedly defrauded people by promising jobs to them and their family members. Maya Ram, a resident of village Surmi in Pehowa block, lodged a police complaint alleging Saini had duped him and seven others of ₹78,560 on the pretext of providing jobs to their kin. The minister, at a press conference Saturday, said he got a complaint about the man posing as his aide. — PTI

Charred body of Thai woman found

Surat: The charred body of a Thai woman was found in a flat in Magdalla area of Surat in Gujarat, police said on Sunday. Neighbours of the woman, identified as Mimmi, found flames emanating from her second floor rented flat in the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday, an official said. "The door of the flat was locked for inside. Her body has been sent for post mortem to ascertain whether it was murder or suicide," assistant commissioner of police A.K. Varma said. Neighbours said a woman had visited the deceased at around 8:30pm on Saturday. Varma said more information was being collected about the victim from Thailand and CCTV footage of the street, which is part of a containment zone, was being checked. — PTI

BSF chief inspects international border in J&K



Director general of Border Security Force (BSF) Rakesh Asthana during his visit to the International Border area at Samba sector in Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday.

Better vigil on China border soon: MHA

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, SEPT. 6

Amid escalating border tension with China, the Government of India has embarked upon an ambitious multi-pronged strategy to strengthen the border management along the International Border with China by launching schemes aimed at improving the standard of living of people in those areas where they can become the important stakeholders in border management. Disclosing that the secretary of the border management wing of the min-

istry of home affairs Mr Sanjeeva Kumar visited Ladakh to monitor the implementation of the border area development scheme along the border with China, authoritative security sources in the ministry of home affairs told this newspaper that the ministry has asked respective state governments and union territories to prepare the schemes in consultation with the border guarding forces and submit it to the border management wing of the home ministry. Pointing out that improving road connectiv-

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT from zero to 10 kilometres from the international border is given priority under the border areas development scheme, security sources said

ity is the key component of the scheme, security sources said that the ministry has already started massive exercise to improve the connectivity along the international border with China. Stressing the need for augmenting connectivity along the China border

under the present circumstances security sources said that several road projects are at various stages of implementation. Creation of border outposts is another key component of the scheme.

Infrastructure development from zero to 10 kilometres from the international border is given priority under the border areas development scheme, security sources said adding that adequate funds are being pumped in for speedy implementation of the schemes submitted by the state governments.

Another woman also run over by the vehicle

Kolkata woman molested, pushed off speeding car

Kolkata, Sept. 6: A 31-year-old woman was allegedly molested and then pushed off a speeding car, which then ran over another woman who along with her husband tried to stop the vehicle on hearing screams, police said on Sunday.

The incident happened in the Anandapur area in the eastern part of Kolkata on Saturday night, they said. The woman went out for a ride with a friend who allegedly molested her in the speeding sedan, an officer said.

The friend molested her after she insisted on going home, and kept on driving the vehicle aimlessly, he said. She started screaming and a couple on hearing that tried to stop the vehicle, he added.

The couple was leaving a housing complex in the area when they heard the

THE INCIDENT happened in the Anandapur area in the eastern part of Kolkata on Saturday night. The woman went out for a ride with a friend who allegedly molested her in the speeding sedan, a police official said.

screams. As they tried to stop the car, the woman was pushed off the speeding vehicle, the officer said.

The car then hit Nilanjana Chatterjee who along with her husband tried to stop it, police said.

The husband told reporters that as Chatterjee came on the way of the vehicle while trying to stop it, the person behind the wheel stepped on the gas and ran over her.

"We initially did not get any help from the police when I dialled the emer-

gency number. Ambulances were also not willing to come due to the COVID situation. However, on the second attempt, the Anandapur police station arranged an ambulance, which was brought to the spot by a traffic sergeant," he alleged.

He said that though he wanted to file a separate FIR with charges of attempt to murder, he was told by police that it would be included in the case lodged in connection with the molestation.

Police said that a case has been filed incorporating all the charges. Chatterjee has been admitted to a nearby private hospital with fractures in her legs, they said.

The woman who was allegedly molested was rescued and sent to her home, police said. — PTI

Over 90K cases in 24 hrs, India No. 2 in world

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 6

India on Sunday surpassed Brazil's coronavirus tally of 41.23 lakh to be number two in the world with 41.31 lakh cases so far. Despite fewer testing on Sunday, several cases were recorded taking India just behind the United States of America that has 64.32 lakh Covid-19 cases.

As per Union health ministry data, India had in the last 24 hours recorded its biggest single-day spike in Covid-19 cases with 90,633 fresh cases. Among the latest to test positive were

actor Arjun Kapoor and Haryana politician Deepender Hooda. In Tamil Nadu, senior PMK leader Velusamy died of coronavirus.

"India now contributes about 30 per cent of daily cases reported across the world," said health economist Rijo M. John.

According to economist Prof Shamika Ravi, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have been two of the largest Covid-19 hotspot states in India since beginning. "Tamil Nadu is showing stability at 6,000 cases daily, while Maharashtra is still on exponential growth —

reporting higher daily cases — now at 17,500 daily," she said.

As many as 1,065 deaths were reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total fatalities in the country to 70,626. The current case fatality rate in India is 1.72 per cent.

India's recovery rate, at the same time, too has picked up and for the second successive day, India clocked a record recovery of more than 70,000 patients in a single day. The total numbers of recoveries have reached nearly 32 lakh, taking the country's recovery rate to 77.32 per cent. "This has

Actress grilled for 6 hours by NCB

'It's witch-hunt, Rhea ready to be arrested'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 6

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Sunday grilled actor Rhea Chakraborty from noon to evening in connection with the drugs case pertaining to Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide. The central agency summoned her early in the day adhering to which she appeared at the agency's office in Ballard Estate, South Mumbai.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is probing the suicide to ascertain the motive behind the actor's extreme step, meanwhile grilled the late actor's sister Neetu at the DRDO guesthouse on Sunday, where the visiting team has set up their base.

The NCB officials grilled Rhea on the lines of the disclosures made by her brother Showik, Rajput's former house manager Samuel Miranda and arrested drug peddler Abdul Basit Parihar. While the probe has revealed that Parihar supplied drugs and Showik

Bollywood blasts media for chaos at NCB office

Mumbai, Sept. 6: Several Bollywood personalities, including actors Taapsee Pannu, Swara Bhasker, and filmmaker Anubhav Sinha, criticised media's mobbing of actor Rhea Chakraborty, flouting all standard protocols amid Covid-19 pandemic, as she reached Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) office on Sunday.

"In the name of justice these people have lynched a human being off her right to live even before proven guilty. I sincerely

pray karma finds the address of each and every human being part of this lowest low of mankind we are witness to," the actor wrote.

This was the "lowest" the country had stooped to, said Bhasker.

"India... witness our lowest! Shameful witch hunt! Disgusting," she wrote.

Mirza said the behaviour by the media present on ground was "reprehensible".

— PTI

facilitated its procurement, the latter has claimed to have done that at the behest of his sister Rhea, a claim made by househelp Dipesh Sawant too in his statement.

"Rhea kept denying the charges despite being put up with relevant material supporting it. She may be confronted with other arrested accused as a part of the investigation," said

an officer privy to the investigation.

"Rhea Chakraborty is ready for arrest... it's a witch-hunt. If loving someone is a crime, she'll face consequences. Being innocent, she hasn't approached any court for anticipatory bail in all cases foisted by Bihar Police with, ED and NCB," Satish Maneshinde, her lawyer, said.

'You are not Maharashtra'

Kangana hits back at Sena leader Raut for abusive language

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 6

The ongoing war of words between actress Kangana Ranaut and Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut heated up on Sunday after the actor hit back at the Shiv Sena leader saying he doesn't represent the entire Maharashtra.

In an editorial in Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana', Mr Raut hit back and asked Ranaut not to return to Mumbai for criticising Mumbai Police. "Sanjay Raut ji, if I criticise Mumbai Police or if I criticise you, then you can't say I am insulting Maharashtra. You aren't Maharashtra," Ranaut said in a video message.

She further added, "Mr Sanjay Raut, you called me 'haramkhor ladki'. You know how many girls are raped every day in the country, how many of them are tortured and killed — sometimes by their own husbands. And you know who is responsible for all this? It is this mindset which you very shamelessly displayed in front of the entire country. The daughters of this country will never forgive



Kangna Ranaut

you."

Asked if he would apologise for his remark against Ranaut while reacting to her tweet on a news channel, Mr Raut said that "anybody who lives and works here and speaks ill of Mumbai, Maharashtra and Marathi people, I would say (to them) to apologise first, then I will consider apologising".

"If that girl apologises to Mumbai and Maharashtra for calling Mumbai a 'mini Pakistan', then I will think about it. Does she have the courage to say the same about Ahmedabad?" he asked.

The actress had recently compared Mumbai to PoK in a tweet, evoking ire of leaders of the ruling Sena.

MONSOON SESSION

Antigen test compulsory for mantris in Maharashtra

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, SEPT. 6

With the Covid-19 cases rising at an alarming rate in the state, the Maharashtra government is facing a tough challenge to hold a two-day monsoon of the State Legislature that goes underway on Monday. The state government has taken elaborate measures including mandatory coronavirus tests to ensure the smooth passage of the shortest-ever monsoon session.

Just a couple of days before the beginning of the session, Nana Patole, the chairman of the Vidhan Sabha, had tested positive. The session proceedings will now be chaired by deputy chairman Narhari Zhirwal.

Congress' Sunil Kedar, the minister for animal husbandry, dairy development and youth welfare & sports, was also tested positive a few days ago taking the total number of ministers affected by the coronavirus to seven. In addition to this, nearly 35 MLAs in the state have been tested positive.

Over 38K Punjab cops tested Covid +ve so far

Chandigarh, Sept. 6: Over 3,800 Punjab policemen have tested positive for Covid-19 since the pandemic began, an official statement said on Sunday.

It said senior police officials are calling up Covid-19 infected personnel to motivate them to fight the disease. The Punjab Police is also providing free health kits with a pulse oximeter, sanitisers and medicines to the infected policemen, it said.

According to the statement, 3,803 policemen in the state have tested posi-

tive for the disease so far. Twenty of them have died, while 2,186 cops have fully recovered. At present, 1,597 policemen are Covid-19 positive, it said.

"All Covid positive police personnel are being provided health kits which include a digital thermometer, pulse oximeter, sanitisers, medicines, vitamins etc. These kits cost ₹1,700 including taxes but are being provided free of cost to the positive police officials," the statement said. — PTI

Social media abuzz with anti-Hindi protests

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR
CHENNAI, SEPT. 6

"I don't know Hindi, get lost." This crypt message evolved into a Tamil hashtag and trended on Twitter the whole of Sunday, besides setting Facebook and Instagram afire, after a photograph of two film personalities in T-shirts was uploaded in a tweet with the words "Deep in discussion, good things coming our way".

Music director Yuvan

Sankar Raja's white tee had the words "I am a Tamil speaking Indian" emblazoned in English and Tamil while the red shirt of Tamil film actor, Shirish, had the words "Hindi theriyadu poda!!!" (I don't know Hindi, get lost). Shirish, who tweeted the picture, was the hero of the Tamil film Metro and Yuvan, who retweeted it, is also the son of music legend Ilayaraja.

"Interesting," said one of the early responses from

DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, evoking comments attacking the DMK and supporting the learning of Hindi. One user uploaded an old video of DMK president M.K. Stalin reading out a Hindi speech and another video showed AIADMK late leader J. Jayalalithaa addressing a meeting in Hindi.

Even the comments on Yuvan's page were mixed, some supporting the idea of opposing Hindi and others a bit scurrilous on the

music director. But within hours, the Tamil hashtag meaning 'I don't know Hindi, get lost' started trending with a tweeple across the world posting comments, replies, memes, videos and cartoons.

Though it was the Tamil speaking people who pushed the hashtag to the top of the trending list, along with other hashtags like #StopHindiImposition and #TamilSpeakingIndia, there were others who joined in. 'I am from Bihar.

My mother tongue is Magali, not Hindi! & I am against imposition of Hindi', tweeted @Kaushik_Raz.

Breaking into the thread of messages was one @batarfli, who wanted Tamil friends to help postpone the NEET exams. But as the day progressed more photographs of Tamil actors and actress T-shirts bearing words like 'I am Indian, I don't speak Hindi' and others were uploaded, promoting the hashtag.



Youngsters collect water lilies from a pond in Nadia district of West Bengal on Sunday.

— PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

7 SEPTEMBER 2020

No more slogans please, we need hard measures

The war on coronavirus, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to win for us in 21 days, gets more hopeless by the day with the daily increase in caseload crossing 90,000, a figure higher than all other nations. India added the last million to the number of infected people in 13 days, a record of sorts in pandemic history the world over. With 41 lakh infections, India is set to become the nation with the second largest number of Covid-19 patients, overtaking Brazil soon.

The nature of the pandemic has also been shifting. Those states which fared better in early stages are now becoming increasingly vulnerable. The southern states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka see no let-up in new cases; even Kerala has started reporting cases upwards of 2,500 every day. Delhi is reported to be witnessing a relapse with the numbers increasing. Telangana's finance minister is the latest high profile person to contract the virus.

When lockdown was declared, India had less than 500 cases but the number rose to 5.6 lakh when it ended on June 30. The economic cost is going to be humongous if the nation cannot arrest the spread of the pandemic.

The saving grace till now has been the case fatality rate which has been quite low but experts fear that the situation could change as the pandemic moves towards the villages from cities and towns where the health infrastructure is in better shape. It is in this context that the criticism of Congress leader and former finance minister P. Chidambaram must be looked at. He has pointed out that India is the only country that has not benefited from the lockdown. When lockdown was declared, India had less than 500 cases but the number rose to 5.6 lakh when it ended on June 30.

The economic cost the nation is made to pay is going to be humongous if it cannot arrest the spread of the pandemic. The nation's GDP experienced a historic contraction by 23.9 per cent in the first quarter. It will be cold comfort to think that the period was spent mostly in lockdown. This quarter, which started with half-a-million infections, will see the number multiplied several times when it ends.

It is time the government explained to the people what its game plan was when it declared the lockdown and set a deadline to win the war, and how it all went awry. The lockdown had not only shut down the economy completely, it had also put people to untold miseries. Millions of guest workers were made to trek their way back home in villages from the towns and cities and several of them fell and died by the wayside. There was little help coming from the government; even the courts refused to see the unfolding human catastrophe in the earlier days.

It will be suicidal for the nation to return to lockdown; instead, it must launch a massive awareness campaign on the pandemic and educate the people on the need of social distancing. It must also ramp up the health-care infrastructure in the interiors. Instead of advising the resource-starved states to borrow, the government must loose its pursestrings instead. The time for hollow slogans and meaningless gestures has passed long ago.

Kesavananda's lessons

At a time when socialism has emerged as a saviour to the suffering in a coronavirus-hit world, the Supreme Court's landmark Kesavananda Bharati judgment holds a few lessons. It was this judgment that led to the formulation of the basic structure doctrine for the Constitution, one that has been cited over and over again to settle multitudes of lawsuits having far reaching impact on our society and governance.

Led by then chief justice of India S.M. Sikri, the 13-judge constitution bench's 7-6 verdict in the apex court's longest trial at 68 days put much-needed curbs on a government's unbridled majoritarianism, holding the Constitution of India above it, ruling that even the Parliament cannot tamper with the basic structure of the document, in particular Part Three concerning fundamental rights. The seminal verdict included the concept of the welfare state in the ambit of that basic structure.

Today a tribalist, populist government is invoking *force majeure* to escape accountability after single-handedly decimating the economy. Its stooges have filed a petition in court to remove the words "socialist" and "secular" from the Preamble.

Few are aware that *Kesavananda (1973)* validated the constitution amendments enacted by the then Indira Gandhi government to uphold the nationalisation of banks and abolition of privy purses. The judgment also defined the extent to which Parliament could limit property rights, in order to redistribute large land holdings to cultivators.

Kesavananda Bharati, pontiff of Kasaragod's Edneer Mutt, who, at 29, contested in court the Kerala government's move, under two state land reform acts, to take partial control of his temple property, is no more. But the eponymous judgment that bears his name is a legacy critical to India's functioning as a parliamentary democracy.

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G. Kishan Reddy



NEP presents Telangana with opportunity to course-correct

A lot has been deliberated on the transformative potential of the recently issued National Education Policy (NEP). The policy that has stood out for introducing sweeping changes in school and higher education is a boon for Telangana where it will improve learning outcomes, especially for socially and economically vulnerable students.

It is important to understand the performance of Telangana in education. The performance grading index used by the ministry of education ranks Telangana at 17 out of the 37 states and Union territories in 2018-19. The broad-based metrics included learning outcomes and quality, access, equity, infrastructure and facilities, and governance processes. Telangana was ranked 30th in infrastructure and facilities and 20th in access. It also performed below-par in two other parameters — learning outcomes and quality, and access to education.

The National Achievement Survey, conducted by NCERT, too, revealed that the performance of Telangana students from classes five to eight as

poorer in comparison to students from other southern states. Even the Comptroller and Auditor General in its audit report in 2018 pulled up Telangana, where 14-26 per cent of primary school students and 21-47 per cent of upper primary school students scored less than 40 per cent between 2014 and 2017.

It is thus imperative for Telangana, which is financially well endowed, to implement the NEP.

The NEP understands the critical importance of good quality childhood care and education (ECCE). Experts believe that over 85 per cent of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of six. By bringing ECCE to the centre of education with an explicit focus on building foundational and numerical skills for every child by end of Grade 3, a quantum improvement in learning outcomes is expected. The NEP also aims for a holistic, comprehensive education as it breaks down prevailing insularity by introducing the 5+3+4+4 system of school education.

The NEP further strikes the right chord in terms of equity and access.

Schools are often regarded as the second home in a child's life and this will thus, in turn, build an inclusive and empathetic society. In both domains of school and higher education, the NEP has opted for restructuring of the system in terms of curriculum, pedagogy and recreational opportunities to prevent any form of exclusion or isolation of disadvantaged communities. The NEP aims to provide food and nutrition in terms of breakfast and midday meals in government schools. This will encourage parents of children, who often have to make their child work for their next meal, to send them to school.

Another striking example to improve equity is the attempt to include the mother tongue as the medium of both educational and vocational education. By including regional languages, in this case Telugu, as a medium of instruction, NEP 2020 strives to focus the child's energies on learning concepts rather than a new language. The NEP also acknowledges special mechanisms required to ensure that children belonging to tribal communities receive the benefits of

these interventions. The decision to promote tribal languages will contribute to their educational empowerment. Telangana has at least 10 districts with scheduled areas and children belonging to Lambada, Koya, Gond, Yerukala, Chenchu and other communities will stand to benefit.

One of the reasons for poor infrastructure and facilities of schools is lack of funds with states. The NEP stipulates the Centre and states work together to increase public investment in the education sector to six per cent of GDP. The Telangana state government's budget allocations to education for the 2020-21 fiscal saw a reduction from previous allocations. This is of major concern given that data recorded by the 2011 census shows Telangana's literacy rate as 66.4 per cent, much below the national average of 74.4 per cent.

Lastly, the NEP has proposed sea changes in higher education that will better align with the needs of a changing employment market. Telangana has a Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of 36.2 per cent. The NEP issues a bold call for enhancing GER in higher edu-

cation including vocational education to 50 per cent by 2035. It also aims to enhance access by establishing more high-quality higher education institutes (HEI) in aspirational districts and special education zones containing larger numbers of social and economically disadvantaged groups. By 2030, the NEP aims to have at least one large multidisciplinary HEI in/near every district. Aspirational districts in Telangana such as Jayashankar Bhoopalpally, Kumarambheem Asifabad and Khammam will benefit.

Education is a concurrent subject and this stipulates the collaboration of both the Centre and the state to enact proposed reforms. State governments will also now need to act in a manner in which we can truly usher in the vision of India as a "knowledge powerhouse" as envisaged by the Prime Minister. This is an opportunity that the state of Telangana cannot afford to miss at any cost.

The writer is Union minister of state for home affairs and represents Secunderabad in the Lok Sabha

Subhani



A controversial judge with a tumultuous legacy



Faizan Mustafa & Pranav Verma



View with apprehension the attitude of judges", remarked Lord Atkin in his storied dissent in *Liversidge (1941)*, "who show themselves more executive-minded than the executive". Justice Arun Mishra has demitted office, and it is worth evaluating the implications of his tenure on the independence of the judiciary. As his critics have argued, his tenure may have contributed even more to the already alleged transformation of the Indian Supreme Court into an executive court — or, as Lord Atkin warned against, a court more executive-minded than the executive itself.

Growing deference to the executive: Constitutional democracies are predicated upon a natural and healthy tension between the executive and the judiciary, with the latter serving as a counter-majoritarian check upon the former. However, the first clear indication in recent years of this basic principle having come under strain was the public adulation by Justice Arun Mishra (appointed as Supreme Court judge on July 7, 2014, after the UPA government had twice blocked his well-deserved elevation) for the Prime Minister, calling him "an internationally acclaimed visionary", and "a versatile genius who thinks globally and acts locally". Justice M.R. Shah who sat on many benches with Justice Mishra too in 2018, immediately after taking over as Chief Justice of Bihar, had called Prime Minister a "model and hero". True, an overwhelming majority of Indians similarly admire Prime Minister but should a judge say so publicly is the moot question. To be fair, Justice Mishra's praises were not unprecedented by any means. It was, in fact, a grim reminder to an earlier time where the Supreme Court bent way over backwards for the

executive. When Mrs Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980, Justice P.N. Bhagwati wrote to her, that "... I am sure that with your iron will and firm determination, uncanny insight and dynamic vision, great administrative capacity and vast experience, overwhelming love and affection of the people and, above all, a heart which is identified with the misery of the poor and the weak, you will be able to steer the ship of the nation safely to its cherished goal." Interestingly, the same Justice Bhagwati in *State of Rajasthan (1977)* had favoured mass dissolution of nine elected Congress governments by the Janata government by observing that "never in the history of this country has such a clear and unequivocal verdict been given by the people, never a more massive vote of no-confidence in the ruling party".

It appears that the clock seems to have started to run backwards for the Supreme Court, unlearning the lessons on the need for an independent judiciary acting as a check over the untrammelled powers of the executive. Justice Ranjan Gogoi's nomination to Rajya Sabha and his justification of acting as "bridge between Parliament and judiciary" rather than a watchdog over the legislature and government gave further credence to the allegation of an executive court.

That the judiciary is independent from the executive is equally a matter of perception as it is of fact — i.e. it must not only be independent, but in order to inspire confidence, it must also appear to be so. The government is the biggest litigant — ie in 80 per cent cases — before the courts, and the implications implications of such praises of the chief executive upon an

ordinary citizen's perception of the top court are axiomatic. A strained relationship with the Bar: Justice Mishra also leaves behind a legacy of a liberal and frequent use of contempt threats against the Bar. In fact, long before the contempt case against Mr Prashant Bhushan was instituted, the judge threatened contempt action against senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan while the latter was arguing for Justice Mishra's recusal in the Indore Development Authority Case (2019). Justice Mishra not only threatened contempt in the midst of the oral arguments, but also promised to "see through" the conviction. On senior lawyers' objection, he offered *dandavat pranam* ie prostration in abject apology.

The Indore Development Authority Case (2019) also reignited the debate on recusal by judges when Justice Mishra steadfastly denied multiple pleas seeking his recusal on the ground of him leading a bench which was to re-examine his own earlier opinion passed as part of a smaller bench — this raised a significant perception of bias. Lord Esher in *Allison (1894)* observed that the question is not that the judge, in fact, was biased. It is the "perception" of bias that has to be the guiding factor. The Indian Supreme Court, too, in *Ranjit Thakur (1987)* held that judge should look at the party's perception.

The ghost of the Judges' press conference: The year 2018 marked a watershed moment for the Indian Supreme Court when four of its senior-most judges took to the media and alleged through an open press conference, that sensitive cases were being allotted to a select few judges. The then future CJI Ranjan Gogoi, during the press conference, indicated that the assignment of Judge Loya's case to Justice Arun Mishra was one of the reasons that

forced the judges to go public. Justice Mishra in Bhushan's sentence order said that it must be the 'first and the last occasion that judges had gone to press' (Para 44).

Justice Mishra was part of 540 benches and delivered as many as 132 judgments, which means he really worked very hard. Several matters with significant stakes for the central government came to be heard by benches which were led by Justice Mishra — these include, the Rajasthan disqualified MLAs case; the dispute over the control of Delhi government over services; the Karnataka disqualified MLAs case; the CBI director Case; the AGR dues case; Sahara papers; a total of eight cases pertaining to the Adani group. The last being Adani Power Rajasthan Ltd (2020) delivered last Monday benefitting the Adani Group with Rs 5,000 crore. He delivered a controversial judgment in *Haren Pandya (2019)* convicting the accused who were acquitted by the Gujarat high court. Justice Mishra has also held in *Davinder Singh (2020)* that sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes is permissible. His judgment in *Chebrolu Leela Prasad Rao (2020)* quashing 100 per cent ST reservation of primary teachers in ST areas was also seen as diluting the reservation scheme. The final order was eviction of 48,000 slum clusters. In many cases, Justice Mishra overlooked the earlier precedents. But Justice Mishra's judgment in *Vineeta Sharma (2020)* upholding coparcenary rights of Hindu daughters is widely appreciated.

Justice Mishra's tenure at the Supreme Court would be located in the context of the court's overtly deferential approach towards the executive, a strained relationship with the Bar, and a continuing lack of clarity in allocation of sensitive cases, all of which seem to have contributed to the tumultuous legacy that he leaves behind.

Faizan Mustafa is a constitutional law expert. Pranav Verma is an LL.M student at Cambridge University. The views are personal.

LETTERS

NEHRU AND MODI

This refers to "Blame it all on those vile Mughals" (Sep 6).The nation is into debating the roles of each among the pantheon of leaders who helped shape Independent India. The names of Nehru and Gandhi often spark heated debates. But history's palimpsest is constantly overwritten by aspirations of the day. Compared to today's trajectory, the Nehru era was ahead of its times and it enabled sustenance of both democracy and economic progress at fair levels. The first of the famed IITs was established ahead of our first general election and several technological and research institutes would go to form the bulwark of our macroeconomics.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

DON'T CUT PAY

A PART OF THE salary of the chief minister, state ministers, MLAs, state service officers and state government employees will be deducted every month from September. This money will be deposited in the Chief Minister's Medical Assistance Fund. Perhaps, this decision was taken in haste. Government employees are pulling out all stops to do their jobs. They must, therefore, be given their salaries. The MLA funds, MP funds and all relief funds, including the three at the disposal of the Centre, should be put to use to save the coronavirus-hit.

B. Shafiq
Lucknow

ACTION SONGS

NOWADAYS, the number of Catholics going for Sunday and weekday Mass have decreased considerably. Some don't find the time, while others find the homilies boring. In my opinion, action songs should be sung during every Mass so that the atmosphere in the church becomes more lively. This way, more people will attend Mass. The reason why all retreat centres draw huge crowds is because action songs are sung and Mass is celebrated. Also, the Sunday Masses in our churches are only celebrated for 40 minutes. Like retreat centres, they should be celebrated for two full hours.

Jubel D'Cruz
Mumbai

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to M.N. Alam (Sep. 2). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

China's reusable spacecraft
board a Long March-2F
carrier rocket. — AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,357.18	-1.63
Nifty 50	11,333.85	-1.68
S&P 500*	3,426.96	-0.81
Dollar (₹)	73.14	0.48
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.22	0.46
Euro (₹)	86.62	0.27
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,770▼56	0.10
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	42.66	0.00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.930	0.034
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.721	0.00

* As of Friday/Saturday

Faceless vetting of all imports by December 31

The Customs Department will roll out pan-India faceless assessment for all imported goods by October 31, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs has said. While faceless assessment for import of certain goods was already rolled out in Bengaluru and Chennai ports on June 8, it was extended to Delhi and Mumbai Customs on August 3. This will now be extended in phases to all ports across the country by December 31.

Thriveni Earth bags ₹31,428 cr NTPC contract



Thriveni Earthmovers has bagged a contract worth Rs 31,428 crore from NTPC to develop and operate Talaiipalli coal mine in Chhattisgarh. "Thriveni Earthmovers... a Coimbatore-based mining company, has bagged another mine development and operation contract from NTPC on August 26, with a contract value of Rs 31,428 crore," an official said. NTPC had terminated the contracts awarded to BGR Mining & Infra.

EV charging kiosks at 69,000 pumps mull

The Centre is mulling setting up at least one electric vehicle (EV) charging kiosk each at nearly 69,000 petrol pumps across the country to induce people to go for electric mobility. The government is also thinking of making it compulsory to install EV charging kiosks at all company-owned, company-operated petrol pumps of state refiners. Power minister R. K. Singh suggested oil ministry officials to issue an order in this regard.

Airtel launches 'unlimited' net plans at ₹499

Bharti Airtel launched 'unlimited' category broadband plans starting at Rs 499 per month, which will come bundled with subscription to video entertainment apps and high definition set-top box (STB) against refundable deposit. The move comes within a week of Reliance Jio revising broadband plans with unlimited data usage and bundling subscription fee of video entertainment apps in them.

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■ Rangarajan says half the economy may do well Chances of positive growth this fiscal

New Delhi, Sept 6: A small positive economic growth in 2020-21 may not be ruled out as sectors like agriculture and essential goods and services were fully operational in the first quarter despite coronavirus-induced lockdown, according to a paper co-authored by former RBI governor C. Rangarajan.

Although many international and national agencies have projected a sharp contraction in the GDP in 2020-21—ranging from World Bank's projection of 3.2 per cent to SBI's 6.8 per cent—there are reasons to believe that the outcome may be better than these strong contractionary prospects, the paper said.

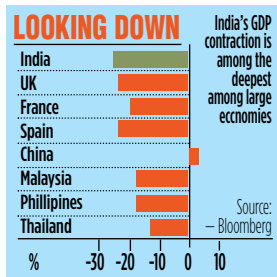
"We may note that some key sectors like agriculture and related sectors, public administration, defence services and other services may perform normally or better than normal given the demand for health services," said the paper authored by Rangarajan and India EY India chief policy advisor D. K. Srivastava.

However, the paper, titled 'India's Growth Prospects and Policy Options: Emerging from the Pandemic's Shadow' also stated that the story of the Indian economy as it unfolds under the impact of Covid-19 is disquieting.

The report said half the economy could support positive growth. It pointed out that goods and services categorised as essential



C. Rangarajan



TATA STEEL PRODUCTION BACK AT 100% CAPACITY, SAYS NARENDRAN

New Delhi, Sept. 6: Tata Steel's production level has now recovered to 100 per cent as the company sees a revival in domestic demand in the current quarter led by a good monsoon and rural economy, its CEO and MD T. V. Narendran has said.

The company is now less dependent on exports compared to the first quarter, he added. Due to the lockdown,

steel makers like Tata Steel were forced to cut down their operations by up to 50 per cent in April. The players also had to turn to exports to find markets for their produce. However, with the relaxation of lockdown norms, the company ramped up its production in a phased manner. "Production is running at 100 per cent," Narendran told PTI.

goods and services in other sectors, technically called 'permitted goods and services' together with agriculture and public administration, defence and other services, may have a weight in the range of 40-50 per cent of total output. "These were fully operational even in the first quarter of 2020-21. Thus, nearly half of the economy may perform normally or better than normal over the full 2020-21," it said.

Also, given the current geopolitical situation, the government at the central and state levels have become more active in attracting investment from abroad. "Thus, a small positive growth may not be ruled out," the paper said.

India's economy has suffered its worst slump on record in April-June quarter of 2020-21, with the GDP contracting by 23.9 per cent.

—PTI

Over ₹10 L cr loans may come up for restructuring: Bankers

New Delhi, Sept. 6: Banks may restructure loans of more than Rs 10 lakh crore, largely attributed to five-to-six critical sectors, including aviation, commercial real estate and hospitality, according to bankers.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman last week asked banks and NBFCs to roll out one-time loan restructuring scheme for Covid-19 related stress by September 15.

According to a top official of a public sector bank, it is win-win for both lenders and borrowers.

Explaining the rationale, the banker said, companies will try to save their

business from turning non-performing asset (NPA) and buy crucial time for getting cash flow back for servicing the debt.

Secondly, banks have to make only 10 per cent provision against restructured account as compared to 15 per cent if the same account turns into NPA, the official said, adding that the lure of 5 per cent conservation of capital will also push banks for recast.

Given the benefit, the official said, it is estimated that 12-15 per cent of total loan book would avail of one-time restructuring.

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are already covered under the ongoing restructuring scheme which was tweaked recently to cover those impacted by Covid-19 crisis.

A total Rs 100 lakh crore worth of loan is outstanding in the banking system.

Another banking official said nearly half of the 30 per cent of the total loan book which sought moratorium that ended on August 31 may opt for restructuring.

Companies in about half-a-dozen vulnerable sectors—hospitality, aviation, entertainment, commercial real estate and travel

& tourism—whose businesses have been impacted severely due to the Covid-19 crisis will make a bee-line for the scheme.

The K. V. Kamath committee report is expected to give financial parameters like hair cut, debt service coverage ratio, debt-equity ratio post-resolution and interest coverage ratio for recasting corporate loans for over half a dozen vulnerable sectors, the official added.

Last month, Punjab National Bank managing director S. S. Mallikarjuna Rao said about 5-6 per cent of loan book would go for restructuring as per RBI guidelines. —PTI

SBI mulls VRS for 30K staff

New Delhi, Sept. 6: In a bid to optimise its costs, the State Bank of India (SBI) has planned a voluntary retirement scheme (VRS). About 30,190 employees are eligible to opt for the scheme.

The country's largest lender has a total employee strength of 2.49 lakh, at the end of March 2020, down from 2.57 lakh in the previous year.

According to sources, a draft scheme for VRS has been prepared and the board approval is awaited. The proposed scheme—Second Innings Tap VRS-2020—is aimed at optimising human resources and costs of the bank. Besides, by

PTI, said it will provide an option and a respectable exit route to employees who have reached a level of saturation in their career; may not be at the peak of their performance, have some personal issue or want to pursue their professional or personal life outside the bank.

The scheme will be opened to all permanent officers and staff who have put in 25 years of service or completed 55 years of age on the cut-off date.

The scheme will open on December 1 and remain open till the end of February.

As per the proposed eligibility criteria, a total of 11,565 officers and 18,625

staff members will be eligible for the scheme. The total net savings for the bank would be Rs 1,662.86 crore if 30 per cent of eligible employees opt for retirement under the scheme, as per estimates based on July 2020 salary.

"The staff member whose request for retirement under VRS is accepted will be paid an ex-gratia amounting 50 per cent of salary for the residual period of service (up to the date of superannuation), subject to a maximum of 18 months' last drawn salary," the draft report said. Other benefits like gratuity, pension, provident and medical benefits will be given to employees seeking VRS.

A person retired under the scheme will be eligible for engagement or re-employment in the bank after a gap of two years.

Ahead of amalgamation of SBI's five associates with it in 2017, the merging subsidiaries had announced VRS for their employees. In 2001 also the bank had announced VRS to optimise human resources.

However, the scheme is not finding favour with bank unions. Such a move at a time when the country is in the grip of a pandemic reflects the anti-worker attitude of management, Ashwani Rana, vice-president, National Organisation of Bank Workers, said. —PTI

Suddenly ed-tech is hot, gets over \$1 bn from PE/VC funds

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 6

Companies in the online education space have attracted over 200 per cent more private equity and venture capital funding in the first eight months of this year compared to last year.

Between January and August this year, ed-tech companies have received a total funding of \$1,191 million across 36 deals. In the same period last year, they could garner only \$373 million across 31 deals—a growth of 219 per cent. During the entire calendar year 2019, the space had witnessed just 43 deals aggregating to \$409 million, as per data from Venture Intelligence.

The growth in investments also saw ed-tech companies increasing their share in the total venture capital funding in the first eight months of this year to 23.1 per cent against 5.2 per cent in 2019. Though the ed-tech space has seen a gradual rise of investments and share in the past five years, 2020 saw a quantum jump. In 2015, ed-tech companies had



received just \$84 million and had a minimal share of 1.1 per cent in the venture capital funding.

Emergence of newer companies to tap the opportunity in online education combined with maturing of some of the larger companies has led to the increase in the funding. However, the pandemic was a game-changer. The new education policy of the government too enhances the role of online in continuous learning.

"In this pandemic situation where every other sector is struggling to survive, ed-tech is one and only sector that has seen maximum traction from VC/PEs, and the ed-tech industry has seen the highest investments in the last 3 months. Due to Covid-19, the complete education sector has

been forced to move online whether its schools or colleges or traditional classroom training centres, and if we see the education sector has moved 10 years ahead. With a lot of job losses around the globe, there is a heavy demand for high-quality skills programmes that can help freshers and professionals to secure their careers and job in this pandemic situation," said Divakar Chittora, founder and CEO of IntelliPaat.

According to Bengaluru-based RedSeer, online higher education is expected to grow 10-fold to \$5 billion by FY25. This will see several new companies coming up in the space, consolidation and some of the larger ones growing stronger. All these will attract more venture capital.

Among the larger deals, Byju's received \$300 million from Tiger Global in January, \$200 mn from General Atlantic in February and \$122 mn from DST Global in Aug-ust. Unacademy got \$150 mn from SoftBank and others, and \$110 mn from Steadview Capital and others.

Equity mutual funds see redemptions in August

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 6

Retail mutual fund investors booked profit in equity mutual funds in August too, just like in July, encouraged by gains in the broader market and need to protect their savings in times of job losses and salary cut.

Equity mutual funds have seen almost daily redemptions last month, barring a few days of net buying, as per August month data now available with Securities and Exchange Board of India. Data released by custodians to Sebi shows August saw redemptions worth Rs 8,358.68 crore from equity mutual funds, a tad lower than Rs 9,195.04 crore reported in July 2020.

In August, equity mutual funds saw redemptions on all but four trading days during the month. Only on August 31, when the equity market fell sharply due to Indo-China border stand-off and extremely negative first quarter GDP data fears, equity mutual funds turned net buyers by a sizable amount of Rs 891.58 crore, being the highest single day investment in the month.

The redemption trend remained similar to those seen in the month of July and the first day of September also saw redemption worth Rs 263.68 crore. Monthly data to be released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India later during the week, will throw more light on equity mutual fund trends in August.

At the same time fixed income/debt mutual funds have seen investments worth Rs 24,293.21 crore in August as against Rs 31,897.85 crore in July, indicating investors are moving away from equity mutual funds but getting back to debt investment.

Debt mutual fund investments had turned negative in April (-Rs 9,797.50 crore) after Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund had closed six funds abruptly on April 23, 2020.



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Vaccine-makers plan to resist Trump pressure

ROBERT LANGRETH SEPT. 6

Drugmakers are planning a public pledge to not send any Covid-19 vaccine to the FDA for review without extensive safety and efficacy data, according to people familiar with the effort.

The joint stance is seen as a bulwark against political pressure being applied on the Food and Drug Administration to get a vaccine out as soon as possible. It is likely to be announced in a multi-company statement as soon as this week. The plans, which could still change, were described by people involved in the effort on condition of anonymity.

The companies involved in the discussions include Pfizer Inc, Moderna,

Johnson & Johnson, GlaxoSmithKline, Sanofi and possibly others. All are developing vaccines for Covid-19.

The drug industry has long relied on the FDA as a gold-standard seal of approval for its drugs and vaccines, assuring patients that the products are safe and effective. But in the middle of the pandemic, the agency has made several controversial decisions to allow emergency use of therapies without rock-solid evidence they work.

A vaccine, which will need to be taken by millions of healthy people, requires significant uptake to be effective in battling down the virus in the US. One recent poll found that a majority of the public thought a vaccine approval would be



driven by politics.

Health officials inside the Trump administration have said the process will be based entirely on science, and FDA commissioner Stephen Hahn has said he would not participate if he thought a vaccine were being rubber-stamped.

At the same time, the president has accused the agency of slowing work to hurt him politically, and said he believes a vaccine will be ready before

election day on Nov. 3.

At a news conference at the White House on Friday, President Donald Trump said a vaccine could be ready "maybe even before November first" or "some time in the month of October."

"I think you're going to see results that are shockingly good," Trump said. It's not clear what Trump was talking about, since results of trials are typically kept confidential while they're ongoing, with occasional looks by a panel of experts to see if there are safety issues, or overwhelming signs a product is working or failing.

Much of the vaccine work is being done under the umbrella of the government's Operation Warp Speed, which has struck deals with drug-

makers to fund development and manufacturing.

Others in the administration, including Moncef Slaoui, the chief adviser for the Warp Speed programme, have tamped down those expectations. Slaoui told National Public Radio last week that it's "extremely unlikely" a vaccine would be ready by election day.

In an interview with the news organisation Axios last week, Eli Lilly & Co chief executive officer David Ricks said that most companies in the industry wouldn't submit a Covid-19 product to the FDA until they were confident in the science behind it. The company is developing a Covid-19 treatment, but isn't among the companies that are part of the vaccine effort. —Bloomberg

Financial advisers give women a ride

RONOJOY MAZUMDAR SEPT. 6

Women looking to manage their investments wisely now have another thing to worry about: whether the advice they are getting is biased.

A two-year academic study covering every local financial-planning firm in Hong Kong found consultants frequently pushed women into chancier investments than they recommended for men with similar risk appetite.

"Advisers think they can fool the women and get away with selling them advice with subpar results," study co-author Utpal Bhattacharya of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology said, suggesting that's because they perceive women to be less financially literate than men. "This is what we call statistical discrimination."

The motivation, the researchers suggest, is the financial planners saw an opportunity for commissions. The logic goes that women were less likely to be able to spot bad advice and more likely to buy products if the recommendation chimed with what they wanted to do anyway.

It's an attitude that could cost not only clients but backfire on the advisers themselves. A separate gender-bias survey from Bank of America Corp recently found wealthy female investors who have negative experiences with their financial advisers are in fact more likely than men to fire them. —Bloomberg



SHORT TAKES

Gasly wins after Hamilton penalty

Monza, Italy: Pierre Gasly won an extraordinary Italian Grand Prix at Monza on Sunday for his maiden Formula One success in his 55th race and the first by a French driver since 1996. Alpha Tauri's Gasly benefitted from a 25-minute red flag suspension after Charles Leclerc crashed his Ferrari. Spain's Carlos Sainz was second in a McLaren with Canada's Lance Stroll of Racing Point in third. Pole sitter Lewis Hamilton was on his way to a comfortable win before a 10-second stop-go penalty pushed the Mercedes world champion to the back of the pack. The six-time champion eventually ended up in seventh place. "It was such a crazy race and we capitalised on the red flag," said Gasly who was dropped by the Red Bull team last season. "I have been through so much in the space of 18 months, to get my first win in Formula 1 I am struggling for words." — *AFP*

Mick grabs first F2 win of season

Monza, Italy: Mick Schumacher, son of legendary Formula One driver Michael, won for the first time this season in the European Formula 2 Championship on Saturday at Monza in Italy. The 21-year-old German finished 3.185 seconds ahead of Italian Luca Ghiotto with Dane Christian Lundgaard in third. Schumacher's fourth consecutive podium finish, and seventh this season, lifted him to third in the driver standings on 131 points. Schumacher had hit a wall in qualifying on Friday and told the F2 website that he had his mechanics on the Italian Prema Racing team to thank for his win. "It was a long night for the boys," he said. "They stayed up until 2am yesterday and worked on the car to get it ready. They did that and they did it in style, so I am very, very proud of them." — *AFP*

Heavyweights off to winning starts

Paris: European heavyweights England, France, holders Portugal and Belgium all enjoyed winning starts to their Uefa Nations League campaigns on Saturday even if there were signs of international rust after the coronavirus shutdown. England needed a stoppage-time penalty to beat Iceland 1-0 while world champions France saw off Sweden by the same scoreline. Portugal shrugged off the absence of Cristiano Ronaldo to thrash Croatia 4-1 with top-ranked Belgium coming away from Denmark with a 2-0 win. In Reykjavik, Raheem Sterling's last minute penalty salvaged England from another embarrassing result against Iceland. Gareth Southgate's men also survived going down to 10 men and seeing Birkir Bjarnason miss a late spot-kick for the hosts. — *AFP*

Nuggets numb Clippers in playoff

Miami: The Denver Nuggets bounced back with a vengeance on Saturday, powering to a 110-101 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers to even their NBA playoff series 1-1. It was all-square between the Toronto Raptors and Boston Celtics, too, after the Raptors notched a second straight win, 100-93, to knot their Eastern Conference semi-final series 2-2 in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida. The Nuggets turned the tables with a blistering first half in which they led by as many as 23 points. — *AFP*

Live on TV

US OPEN TENNIS

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

UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

Bosnia-Herzegovina vs Poland from 12.15 am (Tuesday) on Sony Six, HD; Netherlands vs Italy from 12.15 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

WWE RAW

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

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ROYAL OPENING

IPL schedule out, MI to face CSK in first match

Dubai, Sept. 6: Ending days of anxious wait, the BCCI on Sunday released the schedule for the upcoming IPL, and in keeping with tradition, defending champions Mumbai Indians will take on runners-up Chennai Super Kings in the opener in Abu Dhabi on September 19.

Moved out of India due to a surge in Covid-19 cases, the upcoming edition of the world's biggest T20 league will be held in the three venues of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah in the UAE.

After the tournament-opener in the capital city, Dubai will host its first game the next day when Delhi Capitals take on Kings XI Punjab followed by the third match on Monday between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bangalore.

The action will then shift to Sharjah on September 22 when Rajasthan Royals will host Chennai Super Kings.

There will be 10 double headers, with the first match starting at 3:30pm IST and the second 7:30pm, according to a BCCI release.

In all, 24 matches will be held in Dubai, 20 in Abu Dhabi and 12 in Sharjah.

Venues for the playoffs and the IPL 2020 final will be announced later. The final is slated for November 10.

The upcoming 53-day edition is by far the longest in the history of the league.

The schedule was expected to be out in the last week of August but the announcement was delayed after 13 personnel of the Chennai Super Kings camp tested positive for the dreaded virus.

Also, due to different quarantine rules in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, IPL's operations team took time to finalise the schedule. As per IPL rules, the defending champions and the last year's runner-up face off in the tournament opener. The same is going to happen this year after concerns over Chennai Super Kings' readiness were erased with their first practice session in Dubai on Friday.

This year's IPL was originally scheduled to be held from March 29 to May 24 but was postponed barely two weeks before the start of the tournament due to the virus outbreak. — *PTI*



Mumbai Indians players Rohit Sharma (left) and Japrit Bumrah at a practice session in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

Chahar 'touch and go' for opener

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, SEPT. 6

They may have suffered a series of blows, with a dozen Covid-19 positive cases and player pull-outs, but Chennai Super Kings are not worried about the preparation time, or lack of it. As expected, M.S. Dhoni's team will take on Mumbai Indians in the opening match of IPL-13 to be held in Abu Dhabi on September 19.

Having started their training a week late due to extended quarantine period, Super Kings have the least preparation time going into the high-profile showdown against their arch-rivals.

CSK CEO K.S. Viswanathan, however, said Super Kings are rar-

ing to go. "A great leader on and off the field, Dhoni has navigated the team through a difficult phase. All members are in good shape and in a positive frame of mind. We have had three training sessions so far (including Sunday) and our preparation is on track. We have no worries in playing the opener," said Viswanathan.

Along with a couple of net bowlers, the team's throwdown specialist and analyst are also in quarantine. Viswanathan said the support staff, headed by Stephen Fleming, has ensured that players get adequate training in the run-up to the tournament. "We have enough bench strength. We have another throwdown specialist who is available

● **Viswanathan said the support staff, headed by Stephen Fleming, has ensured that CSK players get adequate training in the run-up to the tournament.**

and part of the nets."

Deepak Chahar, who is Dhoni's No.1 choice in the fast bowling department, and Ruturaj Gaikwad, considered Raina's replacement, will complete their 14-day quarantine on September 11. They will undergo two Covid-19 PCR tests, 24 hours apart. Their return to the bubble is subject to those test results. They must also undergo a car-

diac screening before resuming training.

"We can't predict (when they will return) at this point of time. They have to complete their quarantine period and then undergo a series of tests. It will be touch-and-go," said Viswanathan.

Viswanathan also said the team management hasn't decided on replacements for Suresh Raina and Harbhajan Singh.

CPL PLAYERS TO LAND ON SEPTEMBER 12

Players who are currently part of the Caribbean Premier League are expected to land in the UAE on September 12. The CPL final is scheduled to be held on September 10. They have to undergo a six-day quarantine upon arrival.

THE RESULTS

Men's singles third round: Matteo Berrettini (ITA x6) bt Casper Ruud (NOR x30) 6-4, 6-4, 6-2; Andrey Rublev (RUS x10) bt Salvatore Caruso (ITA) 6-0, 6-4, 6-0; Frances Tiafoe (USA) bt Marton Fucsovics (HUN) 6-2, 6-3, 6-2; Daniil Medvedev (RUS x3) bt Jeffrey Wolf (USA) 6-3, 6-5, 6-2; Vasek Pospisil (CAN) bt Roberto Bautista (ESP x8) 7-5, 2-6, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2; Alex De Minaur (AUS x21) bt Karen Khachanov (RUS x11) 6-4, 0-6, 4-6, 6-3, 6-1; Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x15) bt Corentin Moutet (FRA) 6-1, 6-0, 6-4; Dominic Thiem (AUT x2) bt Marin Cilic (CRO x31) 6-2, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

Women's singles third round: Alize Cornet (FRA) bt Madison Keys (USA x7) 7-6 (7/4), 3-2 retired; Tsvetana Pironkova (BUL) bt Donna Vekic (CRO x18) 6-4, 6-1; Maria Sakkari (GRE x15) bt Amanda Anisimova (USA x22) 6-3, 6-1; Serena Williams (USA x3) bt Sloane Stephens (USA x26) 2-6, 6-2, 6-2; Victoria Azarenka (BLR) bt Iga Swiatek (POL) 6-4, 6-2; Karolina Muchova (CZE x20) bt Sorana Cirstea (ROU) 6-3, 2-6, 7-6 (9/7); Elise Mertens (BEL x16) bt Caty McNally (USA) 7-5, 6-1.

Serena survives Sloane scare

New York, Sept. 6: Serena Williams battled into the US Open last 16 Saturday.

Williams, chasing a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam title, came from a set down to oust 2017 champion Sloane Stephens 2-6, 6-2, 6-2, in what she called an "intense" encounter on Arthur Ashe Stadium. "In that first set I don't think she made any errors, honestly. She was just playing so clean and I just said, 'I don't want to lose in straight sets'," said Williams, who will play 15th seed Maria Sakkari for a place in the quarter-finals.

The Greek player, who stunned Williams at the Western & Southern Open last month, progressed with a 6-3, 6-1 dismantling of America's 22nd seed Amanda Anisimova.

Back on the court on Saturday, Russian third seed Daniil Medvedev, Italy's sixth seed Matteo Berrettini and Andrey Rublev, all entered the last 16 with easy three-set wins.

Second seed Dominic Thiem also progressed to round four, overcoming 2014 champion Marin Cilic 6-2, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

And Canada's 94th-ranked Vasek Pospisil shocked eighth-seeded Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut and Australia's 21st seed

ROHAN IN DOUBLES QUARTERS

New York, Sept. 6: India veteran Rohan Bopanna and his Canadian partner Denis Shapovalov stunned sixth seeds Kevin Krawietz and Andreas Mies in a hard-fought three-setter to advance to the quarterfinals of the US Open men's doubles event here.

The unseeded Indo-Canadian pair on Saturday overcame a set deficit to beat the German duo 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 in a second round encounter that lasted one hour and 47 minutes.

Bopanna and Shapovalov will take on Dutch-Romanian combination of Jael-Julien Rojer and Horia Tecau in the quarterfinals. — *PTI*

Alex de Minaur upset 11th-seeded Russian Karen Khachanov.

In the women's draw, unranked Bulgarian Tsvetana Pironkova, playing her first tournament in three years, knocked out 18th seed Donna Vekic.

Second seed Sofia Kenin defeated Tunisia's Ons Jabeur 7-6 (7/4), 6-3. — *AFP*



Sofia Kenin of the United States returns to Tunisia's Ons Jabeur in their US Open third round match in New York on Saturday. Kenin won 7-6 (7/4), 6-3. — *AFP*

Fresh controversy hits US Open

New York, Sept. 6: The US Open was plunged into controversy on Saturday after New York health officials ordered the women's top doubles pairing be withdrawn from the tournament due to possible exposure to coronavirus.

Number one seeds Kristina Mladenovic and Timea Babos were yanked from the competition after Mladenovic was instructed to quarantine for coming in contact with Benoit Paire, who tested positive for

Covid-19 last weekend. "All persons who were identified as having prolonged close contact with the infected player will quarantine in their rooms for the remainder of their quarantine period," the United States Tennis Association said.

"Kristina Mladenovic is one of these individuals, and as the women's doubles competition has begun, the women's doubles team of Mladenovic and Babos has been withdrawn from the

US Open," it added.

The USTA said that local public health issues had issued the quarantine notices, which prevented the players commuting from their hotel to the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center.

The shock intervention came a day after health officials tried to prevent Adrian Mannarino, who had also been in contact with Paire, from playing his last-32 match.

— *AFP*

IPL FIXTURES

M	Date	Time	Teams	Venue
1	19-Sept	7.30 pm	MI vs CSK	Abu Dhabi
2	20-Sept	7.30 pm	DC vs KXIP	Dubai
3	21-Sept	7.30 pm	SRH vs RCB	Dubai
4	22-Sept	7.30 pm	RR vs CSK	Sharjah
5	23-Sept	7.30 pm	KKR vs MI	Abu Dhabi
6	24-Sept	7.30 pm	KXIP vs RCB	Dubai
7	25-Sept	7.30 pm	CSK vs DC	Dubai
8	26-Sept	7.30 pm	KKR vs SRH	Abu Dhabi
9	27-Sept	7.30 pm	RR vs KXIP	Sharjah
10	28-Sept	7.30 pm	RCB vs MI	Dubai
11	29-Sept	7.30 pm	DC vs SRH	Abu Dhabi
12	30-Sept	7.30 pm	RR vs KKR	Dubai
13	1-Oct	7.30 pm	KXIP vs MI	Abu Dhabi
14	2-Oct	7.30 pm	CSK vs SRH	Dubai
15	3-Oct	3.30 pm	RCB vs RR	Abu Dhabi
16	3-Oct	7.30 pm	DC vs KKR	Sharjah
17	4-Oct	3.30 pm	MI vs SRH	Sharjah
18	4-Oct	7.30 pm	KXIP vs CSK	Dubai
19	5-Oct	7.30 pm	RCB vs DC	Dubai
20	6-Oct	7.30 pm	MI vs RR	Abu Dhabi
21	7-Oct	7.30 pm	KKR vs CSK	Abu Dhabi
22	8-Oct	7.30 pm	SRH vs KXIP	Dubai
23	9-Oct	7.30 pm	RR vs DC	Sharjah
24	10-Oct	3.30 pm	KXIP vs KKR	Abu Dhabi
25	10-Oct	7.30 pm	CSK vs RCB	Dubai
26	11-Oct	3.30 pm	SRH vs RR	Dubai
27	11-Oct	7.30 pm	MI vs DC	Abu Dhabi
28	12-Oct	7.30 pm	RCB vs KKR	Sharjah
29	13-Oct	7.30 pm	SRH vs CSK	Dubai
30	14-Oct	7.30 pm	DC vs RR	Dubai
31	15-Oct	7.30 pm	RCB vs KXIP	Sharjah
32	16-Oct	7.30 pm	MI vs KKR	Abu Dhabi
33	17-Oct	3.30 pm	RR vs RCB	Dubai
34	17-Oct	7.30 pm	DC vs CSK	Sharjah
35	18-Oct	3.30 pm	SRH vs KKR	Abu Dhabi
36	18-Oct	7.30 pm	MI vs KXIP	Dubai
37	19-Oct	7.30 pm	CSK vs RR	Abu Dhabi
38	20-Oct	7.30 pm	KXIP vs DC	Dubai
39	21-Oct	7.30 pm	KKR vs RCB	Abu Dhabi
40	22-Oct	7.30 pm	RR vs SRH	Dubai
41	23-Oct	7.30 pm	CSK vs MI	Sharjah
42	24-Oct	3.30 pm	KKR vs DC	Abu Dhabi
43	24-Oct	7.30 pm	KXIP vs SRH	Dubai
44	25-Oct	3.30 pm	RCB vs CSK	Dubai
45	25-Oct	7.30 pm	RR vs MI	Abu Dhabi
46	26-Oct	7.30 pm	KKR vs KXIP	Sharjah
47	27-Oct	7.30 pm	SRH vs DC	Dubai
48	28-Oct	7.30 pm	MI vs RCB	Abu Dhabi
49	29-Oct	7.30 pm	CSK vs KKR	Dubai
50	30-Oct	7.30 pm	KXIP vs RR	Abu Dhabi
51	31-Oct	3.30 pm	DC vs MI	Dubai
52	31-Oct	7.30 pm	RCB vs SRH	Sharjah
53	1-Nov	3.30 pm	CSK vs KXIP	Abu Dhabi
54	1-Nov	7.30 pm	KKR vs RR	Dubai
55	2-Nov	7.30 pm	DC vs RCB	Abu Dhabi
56	3-Nov	7.30 pm	SRH vs MI	Sharjah

RCB coach all praise for Kohli

New Delhi, Sept. 6 Basu Shanker, the man responsible for the fitness transformation of the national team, feels India and RCB skipper Virat Kohli has returned from the long break an even fitter athlete after working on "specific physical pointers" that needed attention.

Kohli was stuck in Mumbai for five months due to the coronavirus-enforced lockdown and had his first proper hit in the nets only after his arrival in the UAE for the Indian Premier League, beginning September 19.

However, he ensured during the break that his supreme fitness level was not impacted and, in fact, it helped him skill-wise on his return to action even though he was "scared" to hit the nets.

"He (Kohli) has come back in much better shape. He is at his best weight at the moment and his movement patterns are pretty much in sync with his best self in the past," former India trainer Basu, who is now the strength and conditioning coach of Royal Challengers Bangalore, said from Dubai.

"He has taken this break as an opportunity to work

on all the pointers which needed attention from a physical point. I guess his motto to life is 'Bear the cross and wear the crown'," said the man who worked with the Indian team between 2015 to 2019.

He has worked extensively with Kohli, both at RCB and during his time with the Indian team.

Basu said Kohli was able to work on things which an international cricketer finds it difficult to do in a packed calendar. "He had the time to be very specific with his meal plans and running intervals at home. He did not have much of a choice during the lockdown and he invested on a treadmill and worked on his endurance which is otherwise not possible during a packed calendar.

"Apart from that, his customised strength work to compliment that was his mantra during the lockdown. So a combination of running and strength work and he kept it simple by just following this to the T," said Basu.

The RCB squad has been training for a week now and Basu said it is only a matter of time before the players are match ready.

— *PTI*

BUTTLER SHINES AS ENG SEAL T20 SERIES

Southampton (United Kingdom), Sept. 6: Jos Buttler made a dashing 77 not out as England beat Australia by six wickets in a series-clinching win in the second Twenty20 international at Southampton on Sunday.

Victory saw England go an unbeatable 2-0 up in a three-match contest.

England, set 158 to win, finished on 158-4 with seven balls to spare. They needed 18 off the last two overs, with Australia having failed to score 19 off two overs in a dramatic two-run defeat in the first game. — *AFP*

Brief scores: Australia 157/7 in 20 overs (A. Finch 40, M. Stoinis 35) lost to England 158/4 in 18.5 overs (J. Buttler 77 n.o., D. Malan 42; Agar 2/27).