

IN BRIEF

More rains likely till Sept. 22

Hyderabad: For the third day in a row, heavy rains lashed parts of the city, on Friday evening. Abdullapurmet received 107 mm, the most in the city, and Thorur gram panchayat 105.3 mm till 8 pm. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted that rains will lash the city for three more days. It has also issued a heavy rainfall warning till September 22. “Thunderstorm accompanied by lightning are very likely to occur at isolated places over Telangana state. Heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places in the districts,” the forecast said.

CCMB to mark foundation day

Hyderabad: The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) to mark its foundation day, will host the CCMB festival online for a week from September 21. It is open to anyone above 12 years of age with access to a smartphone and internet. The festival includes discussions with scientists on life sciences and panel discussions on urgent and contemporary issues in science and policy-making. The sessions will include fundamental questions of life and its structure, the impact that science on society, and some of the problems that India should focus on to groom a healthy understanding of science among the public. The sessions will run from 10 am to 6 pm each day. Activities including quiz, essay writing and art will be organised.

TS LOGS 2,043 COVID CASES, 11 DEATHS

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 18

Telangana state recorded 2,043 new cases of Covid-19 and 11 deaths on Thursday, taking the Coronavirus infections to 1,67,046, and fatalities to 1,016, the health department said on Friday.

According to the Covid-19 bulletin, the GHMC area comprising mostly Hyderabad city, recorded most number of cases at 314. Ranga Reddy district recorded 174 cases, followed by Medchal-Malkajgiri with 144, Nalgonda 131, Siddipet 121, Karimnagar 114, and Warangal Urban with 108 new cases. Of the caseload of 1,67,046 so far, 1,35,357 have recovered, the health department said, adding that there were 30,673 active Covid-19 cases. While 50,634 tests were conducted between Wednesday and Thursday evening, results for 1,039 tests were pending.

CENTRE WON'T RELEASE OLD MPLAD FUNDS

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 18

The Centre has informed the TS planning department that there was no provision to release funds pertaining to the previous financial years in 2020-21. The Centre was responding to a letter from Planning Board vice-chairman B. Vinod Kumar, seeking release of pending bills for works under MPLADS when he was Karimnagar Lok Sabha member.

The deputy director of MPLADS stated that funds for the scheme for 2020-21 had been placed at the disposal of Union finance ministry for managing the impact of Covid-19. The Union Cabinet had decided not to operate the MPLADS for 2020-21 and 2021-22 and there was no budget head available to release of outstanding installments, including those from the previous years.

Responding to the Centre's reply, Vinod Kumar said that after delaying the release of MPLADS amounting to ₹150 crore under 16th Lok Sabha for the 2014-19 term, the Centre was refusing to release the amount.

He said he had written to Union minister of state Rao Inderjit Singh pointing out that the Cabinet had decided not to operate the MPLADS for two years but had not taken a decision on the expenditure incurred by the 16th Lok Sabha members.

“Small contractors who executed these works are suffering a lot due. I requested the Union minister to release the pending amount at the earliest,” Kumar said.

Rain wreaks havoc

A road in Jubilee Hills Road Number 5 caves in due to continuous rains on Friday.

— R. PAVAN

Tolichowki residents move out of inundated houses

ATHER MOIN | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 18

Many residents of Nadeem Colony, Tolichowki, have moved out of their houses after torrential rains two nights ago flooded their houses. GHMC is yet to drain out the water.

Nadeem Colony gets flooded during every rainy season. Residents have been dealing with waterlogging since two decades. The rains on Wednesday left knee-deep water in the colony.

Sabza Colony, Samata Colony, Nirja Colony, Takht Bowl of Golconda, Hakeempet, Shaikpet and Gulshan Colony are other areas that have been affected. A resident, Ibrahim Shareef, said they had a harrowing night on Wednesday as their house got flooded with rainwater. The water entered their sumps and they do not have clean water to wash or drink. Rainwater stood at around 10 feet in some houses.



A house inundated with water from Wednesday's rain at Tolichowki, on Friday.

The GHMC disaster management department is still struggling to drain out the water.

Another resident, Mohammed Zeeshan, said his neighbours were not able to cook as their kitchens are inundated. “Our misery has been continuing since two decades. The civic body has utterly failed in resolving this issue,” he complained.

The water that stagnates in Tolichowki flows down from Banjara Hills and Jubilee Hills.

As there are no storm-

water drainage channels, water continues stays there for days.

Nawab Zulfqar of the colony said the main reason for such crises is shrinking of water bodies and rainwater channels. In the past, water flowing from Banjara Hills and Jubilee Hills flowed into the Musi River, passing through five ponds and water channels around Golconda.

Most of these ponds have reduced in size. The water channels that took the water to Musi have vanished.

HIMAYATSAGAR GETS WATER

Hyderabad: With heavy rains lashing the catchment areas over the last couple of days, water levels in Himayatsagar and Osmansagar began rising.

On Friday, water stood at 1,747 feet at Himayatsagar against the full reservoir level (FRL) of 1,763 feet and in Osmansagar it was 1,761 feet against FRL of 1,790 feet. The water level rose by 1.3 ft in Himayatsagar and 2.2 ft in Osmansagar.

INAUGURAL OF BRIDGE PUT OFF

Hyderabad: Bad weather has forced the postponement of Saturday's inaugural of the cable-stayed bridge at Durgam Cheruvu and the flyover at Jubilee Hills Road No 45. GHMC officials said the projects will be inaugurated after the rains ease, likely after September 25. The bridge will relieve congestion on Jubilee Hills Road No. 36 and Madhapur road.

MLA: Encroachments caused nala to flood

From Page 1

The girl's body has since been sent to Osmania General Hospital for a post-mortem examination and a case will be registered soon, the police said.

On Friday, Malkajgiri MLA Mynampally Hanu-mantha Rao visited the grieving family and consoled them. He said the flooding of the drain was a result of encroachments in the area that have come up over the past 30 years. This resulted in the rain water coming on the road that could have made the nala invisible for a person on the road.

Removal of the encroachments might not be possible as people were living in the houses that encroached on to the nala, the MLA said.

He promised that ‘box

⚙️ This problem of flooding of the nala has been around for seven to eight years. Despite accidents, like a pregnant woman nearly falling into the nala a year and a half ago, no action was taken. The government should wake up before any more lives are lost.

— Nandikanthi Sridhar
Congress in-charge,
Malkajgiri Assembly constituency

⚙️ This incident is proof of the dismal performance of the civic body and the government. All their claims of development are on paper and the airwaves, there is nothing on ground to show.

— N. Ramchander Rao,
BJP MLC

es that encroached on to the nala, the MLA said.

He promised that ‘box

drains’ would be constructed to prevent any more such incidents from taking place.

Fee complaints against 55 schools received, HC told

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 18

The Directorate of School Education (DSE) has informed the Telangana High Court that it has received complaints from parents against 55 schools for violating Government Order (GO) 46, which restricts private schools from hiking the fee during academic year 2020-21.

DSE director Deva-sena submitted an affidavit in this regard on directions of the court following a petition that complained that private schools were demanding more fee, including special charges, for providing online classes. The court directed the DSE to submit how

● The affidavit said an FIR had been registered against the parents of students belonging to St Andrews High School at Bowenpally for violating Covid-19 norms.

many complaints had been received and inform about the action taken by the department against schools which violated the government orders.

In the affidavit, the DSE director stated that showcause notices had been issued to the schools based on complaints. Replies had been received from 47 schools. She informed the court that action will be initiated against the schools after examining the allegations.

The director told the court that Geetanjali High School at Begumpet had agreed to adjust the enhanced fees paid by parents in the subsequent months.

The affidavit said an FIR had been registered against the parents of students belonging to St Andrews High School at Bowenpally for violating Covid-19 norms. It was not mentioned on whose complaint the FIR was registered.

The affidavit said that issues related to Jubilee Hills Public School and Niraj Public School at Ameerpet had been settled.

The issue related to Vasavi School at Himayatsagar did not come under the purview of government order, the affidavit added.

Talasanani fails to show 1L 2BHKs**Minister leaves tour with Mallu Bhatti midway**

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 18

Minister Talasanani Srinivas Yadav failed to show the one lakh two-bedroom houses that were stated to be ready for distribution to beneficiaries to Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, leader of the Congress Legislature Party, as per a challenge during a heated debate in the recently concluded Assembly session.

Conceding defeat by default, Yadav said, “He (Bhatti)... is only seeking publicity in the media. He says there are hundreds of acres of land available in Hyderabad city and GHMC limits, where two bedroom houses can be built. If he can show us the land, we will build the houses in future.”

Bhatti, claiming victory, said, “He (Yadav), unable to show one lakh two bedroom houses, left the joint tour after showing houses built in Nagaram in Medchal-Malkajgiri district. Totally, they have not even built 6,000 houses in the city. Even

if those outside the GHMC limits are considered, the total does not touch 10,000. We will expose how the TRS is lying to the people of Hyderabad.” A few days ago, a verbal battle over construction of one lakh two-bedroom houses for the poor in city ended in a duel of sorts in the Assembly, with both Yadav and Bhatti agreeing to go on a joint survey to see if the houses are ready as per government claims.

“Talasanani said he will show me one lakh houses yesterday and showed 3,248. Today, he said he will show me the rest and brought me outside GHMC limits to Ranga Reddy and Medchal districts. With the lies of the government exposed, he said he had other things to do and left the tour midway,” said Bhatti.

According to the Congress leader, “Talasanani had no answer to the point that Tukuguda and Nagaram were not in GHMC limits. After failing to show houses as per the challenge, he gave up and said he will give us a list of one lakh houses. This

exposes the hollow claims of the TRS government on distribution of houses for the poor in Hyderabad.”

Yadav, the TRS MLA representing Sanathnagar, dismissed the words of Bhatti, saying, “Congress leaders are speaking irresponsibly. We can give 90 per cent of houses built outside GHMC limits to beneficiaries selected from the city limits. Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao told us one basic principle: never make tall claims.”

The minister also instructed the media to not raise this issue, saying, “there is no need for anxiety in the media on this issue. Is this a joke? Do you know how many hundreds of crores of rupees have been spent to build houses? Who do you think these are meant for?”

Bhatti said, “the truth has been exposed that both KCR and KTR made false claims in the Assembly. We will visit every basti and expose the lies of the TRS government. People should teach TRS a lesson by not voting for it in upcoming GHMC elections.”

Three arrested for 2BHK fraud

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 18

A three-member gang that cheated the poor by promising them allotment of two-bedroom houses was arrested by the Cyberabad police on Friday. The trio of Velisetty Venkata Sathya Krishna Vara Prasad, Eepuri Venkateswara Raju and Kallepalli Padma Durga, collected ₹1,03,37,000 from 89 persons.

The cheating came to light after the police began investigating a complaint in February by Yerramsetti Thulasamma of Srinivasa Colony, Kompally, who said she was cheated by the fraudsters of ₹1.5 lakh in the name of allotting a 2BHK house.

The police said Padma showed a fake allotment letter and collected between ₹1.2 lakh and ₹1.7 lakh from her victims. In all, she collected ₹47.60 lakh from 34 individuals, the police said.

She kept ₹5.8 lakh and paid the rest to Raju, her relative.

Raju collected ₹97.57 lakh from 51 others, deducted his commission of ₹69.87 lakh and paid the balance of ₹27.7 lakh to Prasad.

Police said Prasad had overheard a conversation about a fake house allotment letter at a local liquor shop and hit upon the plan for the fraud. He convinced those who were talking about the fake letter to allow him to make a photocopy.

With the help of one Venkat, Prasad learnt how to make fake allotment letters. He convinced his relative, Aduri Murali Krishna Murthy, that he had contacts in the Secretariat and could get house allotment letters. Following this, Murthy introduced him to his friend Raju who got his relative Padma to join the fraud.

The police recovered ₹1,02,30,000 in cash, a plot of land in Thadepalli Gudem, and fake allotment letters.

CHRISTIANS STAGE PROTEST NEAR GRAVEYARD

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC NIZAMABAD, SEPT. 18

A dispute arose between Christians and people from other communities in Dharmpally mandal headquarters on Friday over burial of the body of a 60-year-old person. It led to a dharna by Christians who had come with the body.

A section of people raised objection over the burial near a temple at Bheemgal road. The temple had recently been constructed near the graveyard and villagers decided to conduct last rites at other places. Reportedly, Christians tried to bury the body in an old graveyard, which led to the controversy.

Police were deployed in Dharmpally to avoid clashes between the two groups. Nizamabad ACP G. Srinivas Kumar, Dharmpally mandal tahsildar P. Anand Kumar and other officials rushed to the spot and calmed the groups.

After intervention of police, the Christians buried the body in a new graveyard on the village outskirts. Revenue officials had already earmarked graveyards for different communities in the village outskirts.

● A SECTION of people raised objection over the burial near a temple at Bheemgal road.

● THE TEMPLE had recently been constructed near the graveyard and villagers decided to conduct last rites at other places.

Cops tell people: Beware of illegal lucky draw schemes

DC CORRESPONDENT NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY, SEPT. 18

Illegal lucky draw schemes are thriving in undivided Nizamabad district. Following the Coronavirus pandemic, the schemes were halted during the months of March, April, May and June. However, for the last three months, the lucky draw schemes have resurfaced in Kamareddy and Nizamabad district.

The organisers target the lower income and poor families and collect lakhs of rupees from the members. They offer cars, motorbikes, laptops, mobile phones and other valuables as gifts and attract the people. To get the confidence of members, initially, the organisers hand over a few gifts to the new comers.

Hoping for huge gifts for a lesser amount, a section of people throng to enrol in these schemes. Based on their paying capacity, the members shell out ₹500 to ₹5,000 per month. Reportedly, the lucky draw

and enterprises organisers are unable to handover all the assured gifts and they may disappear from the district.

Police taskforce carried out raids on two lucky draw shops in Nizamabad city and arrested two persons recently. Police found brochure, receipt books and few gift items in the shops. Earlier, few lucky draw owners had cheated the people by offering huge gifts and absconded with the cash. In view of this, police alerted people to be cautious on lucky draw and enterprises schemes.

Kamareddy district police on Friday said that people should inform the police about lucky draw schemes and enterprises. They said that they received information about few persons in the district who are trying to conduct lucky draw schemes. Police said that people should complain on 9490618024, 9440795423, 9440795410, 7901135001 and 08468223633 numbers. The details of informants will be kept secretly, police said.

NUTRITION COUNSELLING GOES DIGITAL

DC CORRESPONDENT KHAMMAM, SEPT. 18

Nearly 1,498 WhatsApp groups with 43,615 members have been created as part of the digital nutrition counselling process. Women in 1,837 anganwadi centres are being encouraged to have nutritious food during pregnancy and after delivery.

The programme encourages the raising of backyard gardens in every house.

Pregnant women and new mothers are being counseled through these groups on nutritious food. Related video clips are being sent. There are 1,837 anganwadi centres in the district and the staff have been asked to be cautious. Anganwadi teachers will collect details of Covid-19 patients and will send it to the government. Health of children especially those underweight will be given priority.

OTHER STORIES

FOUR HELD FOR ROBBERY, ₹25,000 CASH RECOVERED

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, SEPT. 18

Four persons who were involved in robbing people on the outskirts of Warangal city were arrested by the Central Crime Station and Hasanparthy police on Friday. Two bikes and ₹25,000 cash was recovered from them. The accused were identified as Md Aslam, Md Imran, Md Yakub Pasha, Md Abid Pasha residents of Sundaraihnagar in Enumamula.

Central zone in-charge DCP K. Pushpa said that the four accused work as welders in a shop. In a bid to earn more money, they turned to robbery and targeted an auto rickshaw near Arepally on the outskirts of the city. They beat up two persons and ran away with ₹25,000 cash.

A team constituted of Crimes ACP Babu Rao, CCS and Hasanparthy inspectors Ramesh Kumar and Sridhar Rao went through the CCTV cameras in the area and identified the accused.

The four were arrested on the Paidipally-Desaipet road on Friday and confessed to their crime.

GUTKA WORTH ₹10 LAKH SEIZED, EIGHT ARRESTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, SEPT. 18

Kesamudram police seized banned gutka packets worth ₹10 lakh on Friday. Eight persons were arrested and three cars, one bike, five cell phones and ₹1 lakh cash was seized from them.

The accused were identified as G. Upendra, P. Satyanarayana, G. Venkatanarayana residents of Thirumalayapalem village in Khammam district, B. Anjaiah of Chandanpalle mandal in Nalgonda district, T. Satish from Nellikuduru mandal, K. Harish of Thorur, P. Naresh of Teegalavani village in Gudur Mandal under Mahabubabad district and L. Manikanta from Miryalaguda in Nalgonda district.

Mahubabad Superintendent of Police (SP), N. Koti Reddy said that the eight persons have been taken into custody after they were caught during a vehicle check near Korukondapalle crossroad.

During investigation, they confessed that they were importing the banned gutka in 25 bags in three cars from Bidar in Karnataka to Mahubabad district.

They said that they were supplying the banned gutka to different shops in Mahubabad town upon receiving orders over the phone. A case is registered and investigation on the SP said.

Kesamudram inspector B Satish and other staff for were appreciated for their vigilance.

SEETHAKKA HELD, THUDUMDEBBA STAGES RASTA ROKO

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, SEPT. 18

Activists and leaders of the Adivasi Hakkula Porata Samiti (Thudumdebba) on Friday staged a rasta roko at the collectorate chowraha in Adilabad town protesting against Mulugu MLA Seethakka's arrest in Hyderabad. They demanded for her unconditional release.

Speaking to media, Thudumdebba district president Godam Ganesh said that the state government arrested Adivasi MLA Seethakka for questioning the double standards of the government as far as farmer's issues are concerned.

He said that the state government has failed to issue pattas to the podu and forest lands being cultivated for a long time by Adivasis. Many Adivasi farmers are not getting Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bheema. Godam Ganesh said that Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao promised in the state Assembly to issue pattas to the podu and forest lands.

Thudumdebba leaders Salam Jangu Patel, Vetti Manoj, Kumra Shyamrao, Arke Sheshrao, Kudimetha Prakash, Chahakati Suneel and Sedmaki Anand were present.

● **GODAM GANESH** said that the state government arrested Adivasi MLA Seethakka for questioning the double standards of the government as far as farmer's issues are concerned.



Water released from LMD in Karimnagar district.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Water level in LMD reaches full capacity

People rush to view the dam brimming with water after 16 yrs

PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC

KARIMNAGAR, SEPT. 18

For the first time since 2004, the Lower Manair Dam (LMD) has reached its full capacity of 24.03 tmc, thanks to heavy rainfall upstream and inflow of water from Mid Manair Dam (MMD) and Sri Ram Sagar Project (SRSP).

On hearing the news, people of Karimnagar city and surrounding areas, mostly confined to their homes since the past five months, reached LMD just to watch the dam brimming with water, which is also being released downstream by lifting its gates. It was a tremendous sight to see after a gap of 16 years.

With heavy inflows of around 68,017 cusecs for the past three days, water



People throng to get a view of full water levels in Lower Manair Dam (LMD) after 16 years in Karimnagar district.

— Deccan Chronicle

storage level in LMD reached 23.60 tmc against its full capacity of 24.03 tmc of water. Following this, officials lifted all its 20 gates on Tuesday for the first time after 16 years. 18 gates remained open on Wednesday and since Thursday, eight gates are open.

Officials said around 50,000 cusecs of water is being released through the eight gates. Another 2,500 cusecs of water is being channelled through Kakatiya Canal and about 300 cusecs of water has been sent for meeting drinking water needs under the Mission Bhagiratha project.

Owing to the heavy rush of people at LMD, police have made tight security arrangements for preventing any untoward incidents.

Police commissioner V. B. Kamalasan Reddy has ordered officials to keep an eye on crowds and check eve-teasing and theft cases.

PATIENTS HIDE NEWS OF COVID FROM KIN

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, SEPT. 18

Many youth are hiding information from their families that they have tested positive for Coronavirus.

Admitting themselves at RIMS, Adilabad and undergoing treatment in the Covid-19 isolation ward or private hospitals, they inform their parents that they were going to some other city on personal work or with their friends.

Fearing that their family members will not tolerate them for violating their advice not to venture outside during the epidemic without any purpose and also celebrating with their friends, they hide the information.

After five or 10 days, they join their family members as if they have returned from a journey.

Showing a callous attitude while undergoing treatment at RIMS, Adilabad, they are not taking the Coronavirus seriously even after being affected and many of them are overconfident about recovering. Often, their health condition deteriorates and they are referred to Hyderabad.

Youth account for 60 per cent of Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment at RIMS, Adilabad. Unlike in the past, youth are falling victim thanks to not wearing the masks, physical distance and violating other Covid-19 norms in daily life.

Kakatiya mega textile park is a ruse, says Cong

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, SEPT. 18

In a bid to woo the voters of Warangal, Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao duped the people by promising to set up the Kakatiya Mega Textile Park and provide 1.20 lakh jobs, said District Congress Committee President Naini Rajender Reddy.

He along with several Congress leaders visited the Pylon at Sangem on Friday and inspected the area. They pointed out that the place has become a hub for anti-social activities.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Rajender Reddy said that three-and-half-years after the foundation for the textile park was laid not a single company have set up their office.

"Before laying the foundation stone for the textile park, the Chief Minister had said 27,000 people would receive employment directly and another 60,000 would find livelihood indirectly because of the park creating 1.20 lakh jobs within a span of five years," Reddy reminded.

"Apart from the fact that the park has seen no development so far, when we filed an RTI to find out information regarding the MoUs with the textile park, we got a reply stating that they do not have any information regarding the park. This implies, the park was not useful either for the youth or the farmers," he noted.

Mr Rajender Reddy further alleged that the farmers were given very less

DAILY DRINKING WATER SUPPLY TO BEGIN: MINISER

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, SEPT. 18

Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar said that drinking water under Mission Bhagiratha's Amritha scheme will be given every day to 75,000 tap connection holders soon. The laying of new lines is nearing completion and a bulk water test will be done within 45 days. About 25,000 new connections against the 45,000 proposed are slated for Khammam Municipal Corporation limits.

He said that the government has allocated ₹229 crore while Minister for Municipal Administration K.T. Rama Rao sanctioned ₹61.47 crore.

Ajay gave the cheque to Larsen and Toubro project manager Hariprasad in Khammam Collectorate on Friday. "Though there are financial problems in Telangana due to Covid-19, the Chief Minister and Rama Rao sanctioned money for the drinking water project. With this, the government paid ₹135 crore so far", he said.

Nearly 562 kms distributor lines under MB in Khammam district have been completed so far. On the new LRS GO, he said that the government has extended relief in payments and people should utilise it. The time-limit is till October 31 for payment of property tax in KMC.

The villages that demerged from KMC will come under Suda (Shambadri Urban Development Authority) and plot owners can pay LRS to the additional collector.

He said that the double bedroom housing construction is also being expedited and distribution would start soon. He said despite low revenue collection, the government is not stopping any scheme.



Jayashankar Bhupalpally district collector Md Abdul Azeem inspects the washed off bund of the Shivashankar Project on Friday.

— DC

Temporary bund to be built soon on Shivashankar project

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, SEPT. 18

Jayashankar Bhupalpally district collector Md Abdul Azeem has asked the irrigation department officials to immediately take up the temporary construction of the Shivashankar project tank bund which got washed off due to the recent heavy rains.

Mr Azeem visited the tank in Veerapur village of Kataram mandal on Friday. When he realised the road leading up to the bund was slushy, he rode a bullock cart to inspect the bund.

He asked the irrigation and agriculture officials regarding the water capacity and land under cultivation under the project.

Speaking on the occasion, he said 60 acres of agriculture fields got inundated due to the breach. As the heavy rains are expected to continue for another three or four days, he asked the officials to make temporary arrangements to rebuild the bund and hold the water. He also asked the irrigation engineer Satya Rajchandra to prepare plans for the building of a permanent bund.

The agriculture officials were instructed to prepare the damage report at the earliest. Later, he interacted with the villagers who placed several issues in front of him including laying of roads, construction of the panchayat raj building, palle prakruthi vanam, drainage system, etc.



Jayashankar Bhupalpally district collector Md Abdul Azeem rides a bullock cart to reach Shivashankar Project.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

OPEN GOVERNMENT HOSTELS DURING EXAMS, SAYS SFI

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, SEPT. 18

The district vice-president of the Student Federation of India (SFI), Gajjala Srikanth on Friday demanded that the government start hostels affiliated to the government colleges keeping in view the final year semester examinations which will begin from September 21 in Karimnagar district.

Members of the SFI submitted a memorandum to the superintendent of the SC (Schedule Caste) hostel, Ms Suhasini and urged her to take steps to open the hostels for convenience of the students appearing for the examination.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Srikanth alleged that while the government announced the schedule for conducting the examinations, it did not issue orders to the Government degree and PG colleges to open the hostels affiliated to them. Many students from rural areas pursued their education staying in the government hostels before the lockdown. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the students were asked to vacate the hostels and return home.

Now, without the hostels opening, where will they stay when they come to write the exams, he questioned.

He demanded that the government open the hostels immediately and sanitise them. He also asked that the water tanks be cleaned with bleaching powder and nutritious diet to be provided in the hostels in view of rapid spread of the Coronavirus. He asked that masks and gloves be distributed to all students appearing for the examinations on September 21.

● **MEMBERS OF THE SFI** submitted a memorandum to the superintendent of the SC (Schedule Caste) hostel, Ms Suhasini and urged her to take steps to open the hostels for convenience of the students.

BIG | MILESTONE

District is competing against Kerala's Wayanad and Karnataka's Belgaum

Warangal Rural in race for PM excellence award

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, SEPT. 18

The Telangana state government is working towards strengthening all the sections financially, Warangal Rural district collector M. Haritha said during a video conference with Yugandar Singh, director of housing and urban development, Government of India.

Mr Singh was conduct-

ing the third phase screening after Warangal Rural district was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's excellence award for district administration.

Warangal Rural district is among the three districts shortlisted for the award. 222 nominations were received from districts across the country under the Inclusive development in credit through priority sector learning

category. During the video conference the collector explained the various sectors that received loans and how they benefited. "From 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2020 the agricul-

ture sector was provided a loan of ₹2,339.92 crore against the target of ₹2,495.45 crore. ₹735.55 crore towards industries, ₹2,253.55 crore for the weavers," the collector explained.

Several direct beneficiaries spoke during the video conference and shared how they benefited from the loans.

While the district featured in the last 12 districts that were shortlisted after the first screening, the district found place in the last five after the presentation delivered by the district collector Haritha on 11 September to enter the last three.

Kerala's Wayanad, Karnataka's Belgaum, and Warangal Rural district from Telangana are now in the race for the award.

Speaking after the video conference Ms Haritha said one more round of screening would be conducted by the Cabinet secretary along with an enquiry. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi will award the finalist on October 31 in Gujarat," she said.

SHORT TAKES

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

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 18

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Army admits to killing of three J&K youths

Army finds evidence against its men in Shopian encounter

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, SEPT. 18

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

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

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

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

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

‘Action taken must be transparent’

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

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

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

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

— PTI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chinese intel mounts pressure on Muivah

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, SEPT. 18

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Odisha sees a spurt in ganja peddling

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 18

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

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

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

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

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

Minutes later, the excise department sleuths inter-

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fashion designer found dead at Kolkata residence

RAJIB CHOWDHURY | DC KOLKATA, SEPT. 18

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

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

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

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

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

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

The city police also

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

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

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

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

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

The autopsy surgeons ruled out foul play.

Nath launches campaign in Scindia’s bastion

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, SEPT. 18

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gwalior-Chambal region”, Congress sources said.

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

Nath took a jibe at Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan for laying foundation stones for various projects in election-bound Assembly constituencies in the last couple of weeks.

“The Chief Minister carries a coconut in his pocket and wherever he gets the opportunity, he breaks it and makes an announcement”, Nath said.

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

Another BJP leader joins Cong

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, SEPT. 18

Former BJP MLA Parul Sahu on Friday joined the Congress ahead of crucial by-elections to 28 Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh. She is the third BJP leader to quit the saffron fold and join Congress in the last fortnight.

“It is homecoming for me”, Sahu who was inducted in Congress by former chief minister Kamal Nath here, told reporters. Sahu, who hails from a traditional Congress family, joined BJP before 2013 Assembly elections. Her father, Santosh Sahu, was a senior Congress leader.

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

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

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

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

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

HC SEEKS MAHA’S REPLY OVER PIL ON COVID DRUGS

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, SEPT. 18

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

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

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

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



SHORT TAKES

FRANCE DEMANDS EU SANCTIONS AGAINST TURKEY

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

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

POLISH PARLIAMENT PASSES ANIMAL RIGHTS LAW

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

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

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

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

BELARUS BORDERS REMAIN OPEN DESPITE WAR TALK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

China flies 18 military aircraft near Taiwan during US talks

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

The frequency of

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

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

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

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

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

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

— AP

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

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

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

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

S. Korea to fine church for spreading Covid-19

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Agencies

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

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

— AFP

HASIDIC JEWISH PILGRIMS LEAVE UKRAINE BORDER

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

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

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

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

— AFP

FBI chief warns Russia actively targeting Biden

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Reuters/AFP/AP

US court turns down H1-B plea by Indians

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

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

US District Judge Amit P. Mehta of US District Court

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

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

— PTI

US bans WeChat, TikTok citing risk

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

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

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

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

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

— AP

FILM | FESTIVAL

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

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

SUPARNA SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 18

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

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

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

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

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



courses in emergency life-saving procedures.

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

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

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

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

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

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

A year later, in

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

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

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

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

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

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

DECCAN Chronicle

19 SEPTEMBER 2020

Does the govt wish grief upon farmers?

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

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

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

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

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

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

IPL's here to entertain

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

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

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

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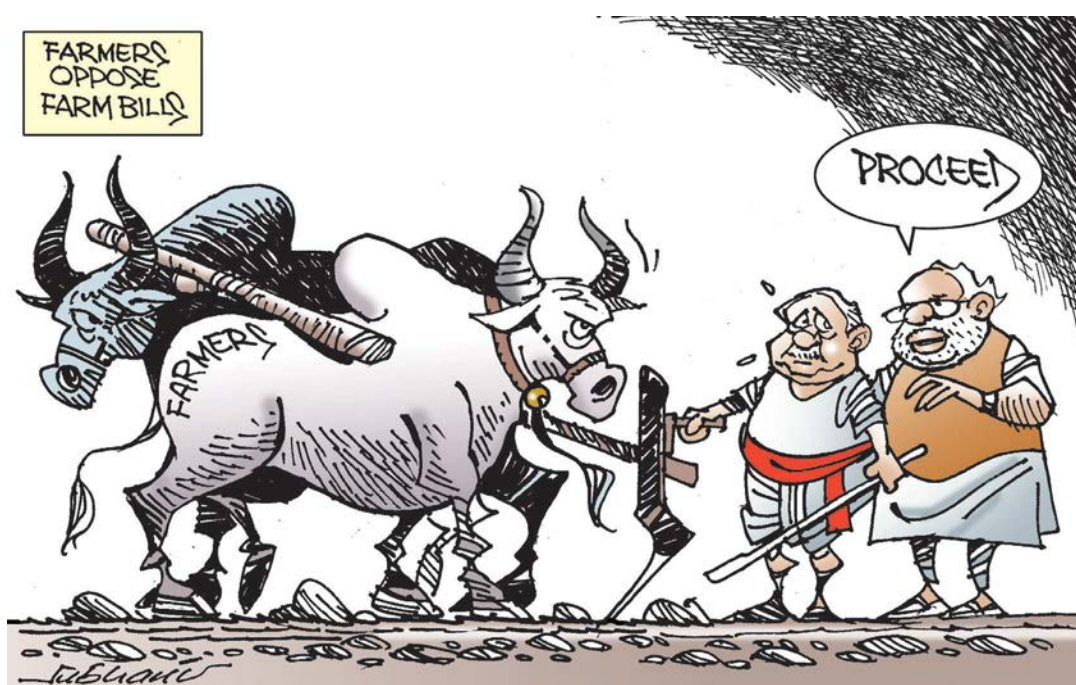
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Subhani



A reign of obstinacy and self-centredness

Shobhaa De



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Readers can send feedback to www.shobhaade.blogspot.com

LETTERS

DIGITAL MEDIA

It is amusing that the government wants the SC to first regulate digital media (*Not TV channels, regulate digital media first, Centre tells top court, DC, Sept. 18*). Probably it is vexed with the media for being in the forefront to nail the shortcomings of the Centre while TV channels are obliging the government. DD has become its "megaphone."

S. Natarajan
Hyderabad

PRIVATE TEACHERS

My heart bleeds to see the plight of private school teachers (*Protest over pay, DC, Sept. 17*). It's a deliberate affront to teachers who are playing a pivotal role in shaping the future of students. They are in a tight spot and facing an excruciating financial crisis. Students whom they had taught are well-settled not only in India but also abroad. Even if teachers don't want to seek any relief from their former students, the students must give it a thought.

Zubair Khan
Hyderabad

DRUG ABUSE

While I appreciate the article *Any substance in it?* (*DC, Sept.17*) to highlight the evils of drug abuse, I fear it may make youth to try drugs. I doubt if the youth are mature enough to discern what was written and may be tempted to try the drugs, which is enough to make them addicted. Such articles need to focus more on the negative effects.

K. Mahesh Warriar
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Jordan launches massive thrust into guerrilla positions

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

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

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

G. Babu Jayakumar



Why NEET wreaked havoc on Tamil Nadu youth alone

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,845.82	-0.34
Nifty 50	11,504.95	-0.10
S&P 500*	3,305.47	-1.54
Dollar (₹)	73.45	0.27
Pound Sterling (₹)	95.39	-0.007
Euro (₹)	87.07	-0.12
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,672.224	0.42
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	42.72	-0.58
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.014	-0.019
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.686	0.004

* As of 9:30 PM IST

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

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

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



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

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

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

Kia launches Sonet, prices start at ₹6.71 L

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



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

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, SEPT. 18

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



ential rate will have to be made by the importer in the 'bill of entry.' Further, the certificate of origin must be defaced before the out of charge (OOC) at the port of import. From September 21, marking defacement of each certificate uploaded for a bill of entry will be mandatory, without which OOC would not be allowed by the system. "With effect from 21 September 2020, businesses availing benefits of FTA would be required to comply with the revised bill of entry format declaring additional particulars in relation to FTA benefits, and will be required to upload the copy of certificate of origin on the customs portal. While the intent of the government is clearly to curb wrongful claim of concessional customs duty by routing the exports to India through preferential trade countries, practically, compliance even by genuine importers at short notice will be challenging," said Abhishek Jain, tax partner, EY. According to K. Unnikrishnan, deputy director general, Federation of Indian Export Organisations, the government has made the rules stricter in order to check Chinese goods getting routed through FTA and PTA countries. "Import of some of the automotive parts from FTA countries with components coming from China as part of the global value chain may become tougher," he said. The commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said India is engaging with the 10-member Asean to review the free trade agreement. In the India-Asean Economic Ministers Consultations held on August 29, officials will determine the scope of review. "Provisions are envisaged to periodically address any gaps, shortcomings and imbalance. India proposes to suitably use these provisions," Goyal said. The Asean-India Trade in Goods Agreement came into force on January 1, 2010.

Select high frequency indicators move up

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, SEPT. 18

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

Standing crops hit by heavy rains: Govt

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



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

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

IPOs of Angel Broking, Chemcon next week

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 18

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

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

DR REDDY'S LAB RISES OVER 10%

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 18

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

Apple to launch first online store in India

SANKALP PHARTIYAL & AAKRITI BHALLA NEW DELHI, SEPT. 18

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



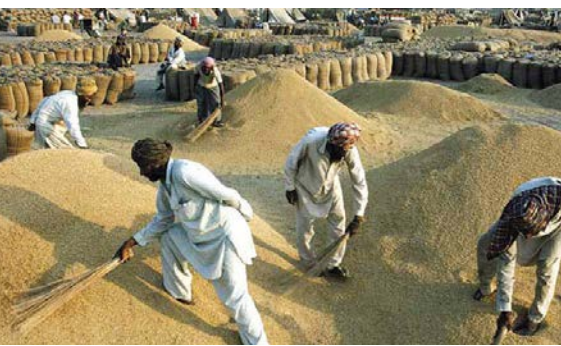
users to personalise some devices, including iPads, with engravings, it said. The website will also allow Mac customers to configure their laptops according to their needs. The opening of Apple's online store presents another challenge for bricks-and-mortar retailers whose business has suffered due to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

SKODA UNVEILS RAPID AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION

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

What makes farm bills contentious

Three key agriculture bills, approved by the Lok Sabha, are facing staunch opposition from within the ruling coalition, with senior minister Harsmrit Kaur Badal resigning in protest and farmers hitting the street. Here is an explainer on what the new bills are all about: ■ The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020: This proposed legislation seeks to give freedom to farmers to sell their produce outside the notified APMC market yards (mandis). This is aimed at facilitating remunerative prices through competitive alternative trading channels. Farmers will not be charged any cess or levy for sale of their produce under this Act. ■ Benefits: It will widen choices for farmers, reduce marketing costs, and help them get better prices. It will also help farmers of regions with surplus produce to get better prices. ■ Opposition: States will lose revenue as they will not be able to collect 'mandi fees' if farmers sell their produce outside registered Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) markets. Also, commission



Explainer

agents stand to lose if the entire farm trade moves out of mandis. More importantly, farmers and opposition parties fear it may eventually lead to the end of the minimum support price (MSP)-based procurement system and may lead to exploitation by private companies. ■ The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020: This legislation seeks to give farmers the right to enter into a contract with agribusiness firms, processors, wholesalers, exporters, or large retailers for the sale of

future farming produce at a pre-agreed price. ■ Benefits: It seeks to transfer the risk of market unpredictability from farmers to sponsors. Besides giving them access to modern tech and better inputs, it also seeks to boost farmer income by reducing the cost of marketing. ■ Opposition: Farmer bodies and opposition parties say the law is framed to suit "big corporates who seek to dominate the Indian food and agriculture business". It will weaken the negotiating power of farmers. Also, big private companies, exporters, wholesalers, and processors may get an edge. ■ The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020: This proposed legisla-

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

SHORT TAKES

Hari goes down, stays in 5th place

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

Injured Osaka out of French Open

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

Justin grabs lead at US Open golf

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

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

FOOTBALL

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

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

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

TENNIS

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

UFC FIGHT NIGHT

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

BASKETBALL

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

CLASH OF TITANS

Dhoni fresh and determined as IPL begins today

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

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

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

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

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

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

Starting against a quality side like MI is certainly



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

NUMBERS GAME

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:

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

MEETING IN 2019

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

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

FOR THE RECORD

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

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

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

BRETT BETS ON CSK

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

advantage in the UAE conditions.

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

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

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

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

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

ICC has task to balance cricket against IPL burnout

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

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

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

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

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

Manchester, Sept. 18: England head coach Chris Silverwood has no doubt that competing in a world class event like IPL will help his players prepare well for the T20 World Cup on Thursday from the United Kingdom ahead of the IPL which begins on Saturday.

Silverwood said the players need to be cautious against burn-out as they have to stay in the bio-bubble for another seven weeks. "It's their decision really but we'll have to keep an



Chris Silverwood

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

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

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

BARCA PREZ TO FACE VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE

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

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

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

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

Tanguy saves Spurs blushes

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

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

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



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

card before Kane scored from the spot-kick.

BALE BIDS ADIEU TO MADRID

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

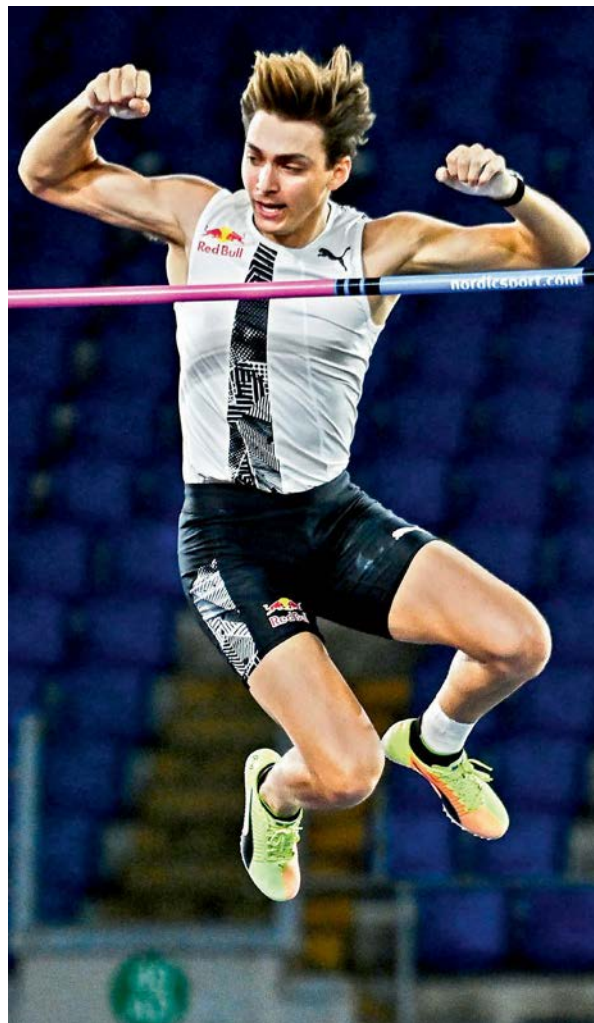
After seven years, he will leave for next to nothing, a dramatic return to

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

Bale's flashes of brilliance will leave an indeli-

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

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



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

INTO THE CLOUDS!

Duplantis high over 26-yr-old Bubka bar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goran shines as Heat pip Celtics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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