

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
ANANTAPUR | THURSDAY | 8 OCTOBER 2020

## WEATHER



**Max:** 31.0°C  
**Min:** 14°C  
**RH:** 83%  
**Rainfall:** Nil  
**Forecast:** Cloudy sky.  
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 31/14 °C

## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+91,030)	(+1,331)
68,32,646	1,05,551
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+2,154)	(+8)
TS: 2,04,748	1,189
(+5,120)	(+34)
AP: 7,34,427	6,086

### CASES AROUND THE WORLD

3,62,79,666
DEATHS
10,57,896
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
213
worldometers.info/coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

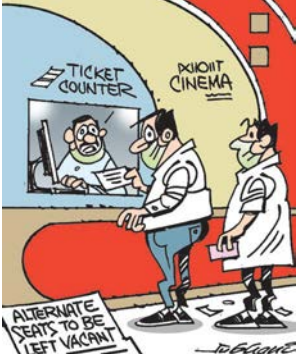
**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Adhika Ashwayujya Bahula Shashti till 4.32 pm  
**Star:** Mrigashira till 10.46 pm  
**Varjyam:** Nil

**Durmuhurtam:** 10.06 am to 10.53 am; 2.48 pm to 3.35 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 1.30 pm to 3 pm  
**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
**Safar ul Muzaffar** 20, 1442 AH

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 5.31 am  
**Zohar:** 12.26 pm  
**Asar:** 4.28 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.05 pm  
**Isha:** 7.21 pm  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 6.08 AM  
**SUNSET TODAY** 6.25 PM  
**MOONSET** 12.42 PM  
**MOONRISE** 12.56 AM

## COUNTER POINT



It's not costly, sir! You can enjoy the luxury of a vacant seat!

## IN BRIEF

## Ex-CBI director found dead

**New Delhi/Shimla:** Former CBI director Ashwani Kumar, who led the Aarushi murder investigation, was found hanging at his residence in Shimla on Wednesday, and officials suspect he committed suicide. The body of Kumar (69), a 1973-batch IPS officer, was found hanging at his residence in Brockhurst, near Chhota Shimla, in the evening, they added. Himachal Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) Sanjay Kundu, Shimla A) Mohit Chawla and other senior police officials reached the spot. A forensic team has also reached the spot.

■ Report on Page 4



## NATION | 4

**OPS names EPS as CM pick in Tamil Nadu**



## WORLD | 5

**16-year-old turns Finland PM for a day**

## SPORTS | 6

**Nadal powers into Paris semifinals**



Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman interacts with farmers during her visit to Jakkula Nekkalam village of Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday while explaining the benefits of the new Farm Bills. — C. NARAYANA RAO

# Reap Farm Bill sops: Nirmala FM says farmers will get good prices for Guntur chillies now

**MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 7**

Union finance minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, who was in Vijaywada on Wednesday, affirmed that new agriculture laws are beneficial to farmers and refuted the allegations of Opposition parties as politically motivated. She stated that farmers can sell their produce in any market in the country for good prices.

Responding about the

pending funds to AP, Sitharaman said that the 14th finance commission funds was a closed chapter and that was intimated to AP finance minister, Buggana Rajendranath Reddy. She said that presently the 15th finance commission is under implementation and the union government would reconsider the pending funds to AP, including the finance commission.

The government decided to continue the five-year,

time-bound GST compensation fund and cess beyond the five years limit, said Sitharaman, adding that regarding GST issues, another meeting would be held on October 22 to resolve the problems. Despite the good demand for Guntur red chillies in north India and other places, farmers still failed to get good prices, said Sitharaman, but now the new laws would help farmers to get good price throughout the country.

Refuting objections and allegations of Opposition parties and saying that they were opposing these Bills with vested political motives, she claimed, “These reforms are not new. Even Opposition parties put these reforms in their manifestos. But now they are opposing them. It means that they, particularly the Congress, is cheating the public.”

■ Page 2: APMCs will stay relevant, says FM

# AP sees steep fall in issue of passports from kendras

**SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 7**

Issue of passports has fallen steeply at the various passport kendras in Andhra Pradesh. The state has three main Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) at Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam and Tirupati, apart from 21 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs), one for each Lok Sabha segment in the state.

Passport authorities on an average issued 2,000-2,500 passports a day from all these outlets before the outbreak of Covid-19, charging a fee of ₹1,500 for each passport. Following the outbreak of Coronavirus, particularly in April and May, there was no issue of passports as all the kendras were shut down.

However, with the number of Covid-19 cases coming down and the centre “unlocking” facilities,

● **PASSPORT OFFICIALS** on an average issued 2,000-2,500 passports a day from all these outlets before the outbreak of Covid-19, charging a fee of ₹1,500 for a passport.

● **FOLLOWING THE** outbreak of Coronavirus, particularly in April and May, there was no issue of passports as all the kendras were shut down.

● **LESS THAN 1,000** passports are being issued now hitting revenues

passport authorities have started receiving applications at their main passport offices located in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam and Tirupati, apart from smaller centres at Vizianagaram, Rajahmundry, Bhimavaram, Gudur, Bapatla and Narsaraopet.

However, the issue of passports at all these centres is less than 1,000 per

day. As a result, revenues too have fallen.

Vijayawada regional passport officer D.S.S. Srinvasa Rao said, “Though we used to issue 2,000 to 2,500 passports a day before the outbreak of Covid-19, at present, we are issuing less than 1,000, resulting in a major impact on our revenues. However, as we are opening POPSKs in places, where the spread of Covid-19 is relatively less, we expect turnout of a good number of people seeking passports.”

Passport authorities have meanwhile advised general public not to approach any agents, fake websites, private agencies or computer centres for passports.

They have asked people to visit the government web portal [www.passport.india.gov.in](http://www.passport.india.gov.in) or use the mPassport seva app on their smartphones to apply online and get their passport.



## RHEA GRANTED BAIL, BROTHER TO STAY IN JAIL

**DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, OCT. 7**

A month after actor Rhea Chakraborty was arrested, the Bombay High court on Wednesday granted bail to her in a drugs case in actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death case.

On September 8, Narcotics Control Bureau had arrested her for procuring marijuana for Rajput who was her boyfriend. Along with Rhea, bail was granted to Rajput aides Depesh Sawant and Samuel Miranda.

However, it rejected bail of Showik Chakraborty and Avdel Basit Parihar, who supplied the marijuana,

# State pins school hopes on edu sop

## Jagan to distribute Jagananna Vidya kits

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 7**

The grammar of the education system in Andhra Pradesh is getting its syntax right in the form of Jagananna Vidya Kanuka kits, which are to be distributed by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to students from Standard 1 to X on Thursday.

The uniqueness of the scheme is that the kit comprises three pairs of uniform, a pair of shoes, two pairs of socks, prescribed text books, notebooks, belt and a school bag, which makes the student fully

ready for the new academic year. The Chief Minister will formally launch the scheme at Punadipadu government school in Krishna district. This is expected to herald a new chapter to strengthen enrollment rate in government schools. Jagananna Vidya Kanuka puts an end to the earlier practice of erratic and non-supply of books, uniform and other essentials to students. The kits will bring relief to parents and will help them save academic expenses significantly and can motivate them to send their chil-

dren to school.

Approximately, 42,34,322 kits will be distributed across the State at an estimated cost of ₹650 crore. The government hopes that this will also bring down the dropout rate.

Krishna district collector Amd Intiaz and Vijayawada commissioner of police Battina Srinivasulu supervised the arrangements at Punadipadu ZP School.

Intiaz said that the Chief Minister will reach the school by 10.35 am and inspect the Nadu-Nedu works. Later, he will also interact with students.

# SC: No protests in public places

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, OCT. 7**

The Supreme Court on Wednesday “unequivocally” said that protests can be held at designated places only and the protesters can't occupy the public places indefinitely causing “grave inconvenience” to the public.

Referring to Shaheen Bagh protest wherein the sit-in by the protesters continued for over two months, Justice Sanjay

Kishan Kaul heading a three judge bench said, “We have to make it unequivocally clear that public ways and public spaces cannot be occupied like this and that too indefinitely.”

Heading the bench also comprising Justice Aniruddha Bose and Justice Krishna Murari, Justice Kaul further said that in the case of Shaheen Bagh it was not just that the protest was taking place at an undesignated

area, but was a “blockage of a public way which caused grave inconvenience to commuters”.

Speaking for the bench, Justice Kaul said, “We have, thus, no hesitation in concluding that such kind of occupation of public ways, whether at the site in question or anywhere else for protests is not acceptable and the administration ought to take action to keep the areas clear of encroachments or obstructions.”



K.S. Jawahar Reddy

## JAWAHAR REDDY APPOINTED NEW TTD EO

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, OCT 7**

Senior bureaucrat K.S. Jawahar Reddy was appointed as new Chief Executive Officer of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams on Wednesday.

He is currently Special CS (Health) and held important assignments of CMO and Panchayat Raj in the past. Mr Reddy's handling of Covid-19 containment operations, in particular tracing the contacts in earlier days and massive testing, received wide appreciation.

It was Mr Reddy's dream to serve as TTD executive head for a long time. Though there was some resistance to his appointment, the Chief Minister kept his word in this regard, sources said.

Known for his proximity to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's family since the days of his father late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, the 1990 batch officer is likely to become Chief Secretary at a later stage.

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# Chemistry Nobel for ‘molecular scissors’

**Stockholm, Oct. 7:** Two scientists won the Nobel Prize in chemistry Wednesday for developing a method of genome editing likened to “molecular scissors” that offer the promise of one day curing inherited diseases and even cancer. Working on opposite sides of the Atlantic, Frenchwoman Emmanuelle Charpentier and American Jennifer A. Doudna developed a method known as CRISPR/Cas9 that can be used to change the DNA of animals, plants and microorganisms with extremely high precision.



Jennifer A. Doudna, left, and Emmanuelle Charpentier.

“There is enormous power in this genetic tool, which affects us all,” said Claes Gustafsson, chair of the Nobel Committee for Chemistry.

■ Report on Page 5

## BOVINE | MISHAP

## Unknown poachers placed explosive to kill wild boars in open field

# Cow dies chewing on crude bomb

**AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, OCT. 7**

A cow died after its jaw was blown to pieces when it accidentally bit on a crude bomb, placed by some unknown poachers to kill wild boars, while grazing in an open field near Chandamama Palli in Tirupati rural limits.

The incident occurred on Tuesday when the cow was grazing in the open field near the village and acci-

dentally bit the explosive material, which was stuffed in some food material.

The incident came to light on Wednesday after P. Rambabu, who owned the cow, lodged a complaint at the M.R. Palli police station.

“The owner of the cow heard a deafening noise and when he rushed to the spot, he saw the cow with its jaw blown away. Our preliminary investigation suggests that it was a crude

bomb which was fixed for wild boars. We are waiting for reports and we can pinpoint what kind of explosive it was only after analysing the report,” M.R. Palli sub-inspector, Prakash Kumar, told this newspaper.

The M.R. Palli police registered a case under Section 286 of the prevention of cruelty to animals act and also under the use of Explosives Act. A team was also formed to nab those who planted the

bomb. “This cruel method is used by local poachers to kill wild boars and other wild animals. This is definitely illegal and we will act on this. We will catch the culprits soon,” Kumar added.

Meanwhile, the owner of the cow sought the help of some local veterinary doctors to check the injured cow.

Though they administered first aid to it and tied a bandage to the jaw, the cow died of its injuries

three hours after the incident. This is not the first time in the district that domestic animals have been injured falling prey to poaching trap.

A 15-year-old cow also died in a similar manner at Kogileru in Peddapannam mandal three days after it bit into a crude bomb on the night of June 28.

Unconfirmed reports say that about six animals have been injured and a few dead falling prey to such traps in the district.



## SHORT TAKES

YSRC GOVERNMENT  
CLEANEST, SAYS  
TAMMINENIK.M.P. PATNAIK | DC  
SRIKAKULAM, OCT. 7

Speaker Tammineni Sitharam threw a challenge at the Opposition asking them to prove any corruption in the present government led by chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Participating in a meeting after reviewing the works related Nadu-Medu, Rythu Bharosa and village secretariat at Shalantri and Kothakota village of Saribujilli mandal of Srikakulam district on Wednesday, the Speaker said the present government came to power 15 months ago and launched several welfare schemes. "Can the Opposition prove any corruption in these welfare schemes," the Speaker challenged. He said the schools which were in dilapidated condition got a corporate look under the Nadu Nedu programme.

LOCATION OF  
CAMP OFFICE CM'S  
PREROGATIVE: AGDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 7

AP advocate general S. Sriram informed the High Court that the Chief Minister has the prerogative to set up his Camp Office at a place based on his requirements of work.

A High Court bench comprising Chief Justice J. K. Maheswari, justice Rakesh Kumar and justice M. Satyanarayana Murthy was hearing a batch of interlocutory petitions on Wednesday against relocation of executive and judiciary from Amaravati and also setting up CM's Camp Office at a place other than Amaravati.

The AG objected to the stay order on issue of CM's Camp Office stating there is no rule that such office be located only within the jurisdiction of the state capital. He asserted that it was the prerogative of the CM to set up his Camp Office, whether at Nellore or Tirupati, based on his need to work. He maintained that there is no ban on relocation of such office as per norms of AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of all Regions Act, 2020.

When the court raised a series of queries on the issue, the AG informed that the CM's Camp Office is located in Amaravati and at present, he is staying at his residence-cum-camp office. The court wanted to know whether the state government has constructed any other offices for the CM. The AG asked the court for some time to submit details in this regard. He also sought time to file counter affidavits on relocation of offices of several corporations.

The court agreed for the same and posted the next hearing to Friday.

SPECIAL CELL TO  
REDRESS MARTYRS  
GRIEVANCESDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 7

The state forest department has set up a 'Special Monitoring Cell' for redressal of grievances of the family members of the forest martyrs at the office of principal chief conservator of forests in Guntur.

The PCCF and head of forest forces N. Prateep Kumar has issued a memo here on Wednesday stating that they were establishing SMC with a broad intent of honouring the sacrifices made by the forest martyrs in protection of forests and wildlife.

TULASI REDDY  
PLEA TO  
REOPEN RTPPDC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, OCT. 7

Rayalaseema-based Rayalaseema Thermal Power Project (RTPP) has been closed for the past seven months, said Pradesh Congress Working president Dr N. Tulasi Reddy.

Speaking to mediapersons on Wednesday in Vempalle, Kadapa district, he said if the situation was like this in the CM's own district, what it would be elsewhere in the state. He said the RTPP came to Kadapa district in 1987 as a result of many struggles. RTPP has a total of six units, with a capacity of 1,650 MW and a staff of 4,000. He appealed to the Chief Minister to take immediate initiative to reopen the closed project.

Union minister urged to protect  
Amaravati as solo capital of AP

‘Save Amaravati’ women leaders submit memo to Nirmala Sitaraman

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 7

The Amaravati Parirakshana Mahila JAC women leaders met Sitaraman seeking protection of Amaravati as the solo capital of AP state. They submitted a memorandum to the Union minister and sought intervention of the union government to cancel the decision of three capitals.

APMJAC women leaders Sunakara Padmasree, Akkineni Vanaja, Gadde Anuradha, Nrala Malathi and Chennupati Usharani submitted the memorandum to minister Ms. Sitaraman at Jakkula-nekkalam village of Gannavaram mandal on Wednesday.

The Union minister interacted with farmers at Jakkula-nekkalam and the APMJAC women leaders met her to explain their difficulties due to three capitals decision of YSR Congress government.

Ms Padmasree said that 29,000 farmers had offered their livelihood 33,000 acres of farmlands for the establishment of Amaravati as solo Capital of the state but chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy decided to trifurcate the one Capital into three Capitals which is illegal. She said that it is a death blow to the 29,000 farmers who sacrificed their valuable lands for the noble cause of Amaravati.

Ms Padmasree said that farmers with their family members have been conducting protests for the past 300 days seeking continuation of Amaravati as solo Capital of AP but the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy did not respond to their appeals.

She said that farmers were continuing their battles against three capitals through petitions filed in the High Court seeking justice.

She said that the intervention of the union government will resolve the issue and sought the union government initiate measures for the protection of Amaravati.

Ms Padmasree and other women leaders said that Ms Sitaraman assured them to do justice by taking the issue to the notice of the union government.



Amaravati Parirakshana Samithi women JAC leaders Sunkara Padmasree, Gadde Anuradha, Chennupati Usharani giving representation to Union minister for finance Nirmala Sitaraman at Jakkula Nekkalam village against the Three capitals on Wednesday.

— DC

## APMCs will stay relevant, says FM

From Page 1

Lauding the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, Sitaraman said "Despite many challenges including the Covid-19 pandemic, Modi passed the amendments with a commitment to empower the farmers. Amending labour laws alone will not give proper results. That's why we have made amendments to all three bills at the same time. A farmer can now take his produce to any state and sell it anywhere in the country, without additional burden. They can utilise the e-NAM platform to get more benefit by selling his produce. At the same time, they could also go for agreements with the purchasing companies, can form farmer produce organisations (FPOs), could add value to their farm produce and do much more."

Claiming that she met some farmers "on my way from the airport to here, they thanked Modi for the reforms as they can sell their produce anywhere in India now." Saying that agriculture produce market committees (APMCs) will remain intact, Sitaraman was firm that "we are not touching them. Farmers can transact outside the market yard or out of the state. States will not lose their control over agriculture or agri marketing. The amendments we made are under the central list only. We did not touch APMC as they are under the state list."

Continuing her defence, she said "There will be no tax on agricultural produce but the market yards have been collecting different kinds of cesses, between 8 to 8.5 per cent on sales. These legislations would allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country, maintain stock till they get remunerative prices."

Later addressing a meeting organised by the BJP on the new agriculture laws, Ms Sitaraman explained the laws in detail and asked BJP cadres to create awareness among farmers by explaining the salient features through distribution of pamphlets and other forms of campaigning.

BJP leaders, G.V.L. Narasimha Rao, Sunil Deodhar, Kanna Lakshminarayana, P.V.N. Madhav, Vakati Narayana Reddy, Ravela Kishore Babu and others participated in the meeting.

As part of her Andhra Pradesh tour on Wednesday, Sitaraman visited Jakkula Nekkalam village in Gannavaram constituency. She interacted with the farmers of the village and inquired about crops grown, the minimum support price and the market situation.

The farmers expressed that they have been undergoing hardship as there is no support price for their produce, in particular paddy and sugarcane. They said that the banks are not coming forward to offer loans on sugarcane.

They further requested that for the paddy crop they should be paid ₹2,000 per quintal. They sought the government to buy crops soon after harvest without delay.

They lamented that only ₹2,250 per quintal paid for sugarcane was not enough and asked to be provided bank loans. They stated that it is a slight relief to the farmers that they can sell curry leaves anywhere with the new central government new law.

Reiterating that the Centre had brought the new law to support and solve the problems and difficulties of the farmers, she briefed them about the benefits of the new laws.

Police had arrested a few farmers, farmer's organisations and left party leaders who tried to conduct protests against the agriculture bills and the minister's visit to Vijayawada.

The police arrested left party leaders, K. Ramakrishna, V. Srinivas Rao, D. Subba Rao, Ch. Babu Rao, A. Vanaja, V. Venkateswary, Jamalaiah, Suryanarayana and a few Congress party leaders.

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Cheyutha and  
Aasara all setDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 7

At a review meeting, Chief Minister, Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, directed officials to focus on branding and marketing facilities for the self-help women groups under YSR Cheyutha and YSR Aasara schemes and ensure that they are corruption-free.

"As we have signed MoUs with major companies, the two schemes should be implemented without any hindrance and the expertise of the business houses should benefit the women entrepreneurs to give them the intended results," said Mr Jagan.

Directing the authorities to take an expert opinion on providing livestock to the beneficiaries of Cheyutha, Mr Jagan demanded the preparation of standard operating procedures to buy healthy livestock, certified by a veterinary doctor. He said, "All the beneficiaries who buy milch cattle should be enlisted for getting fodder through Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs)," he said.

Officials informed Mr Jagan that so far 21 lakh beneficiaries were enlisted under YSR Cheyutha and provided with the

● So far 21 lakh beneficiaries were enlisted under YSR Cheyutha and provided with the total financial assistance of ₹3,937 crore

● ₹6,792 crore have been utilised under YSR Aasara for 87.74 lakh beneficiaries

total financial assistance of ₹3,937 crore. Similarly, ₹6,792 crore have been utilised under YSR Aasara for 87.74 lakh beneficiaries.

As many as 13.03 lakh women belonging to self-help groups have benefited from both the schemes.

Of the total target of establishing 33,486 retail outlets in rural areas, 8,836 outlets were started and the remaining will be coming up by the end-October.

Soon, RBKs in 6,510 identified villages would have milk procurement centres and bulk milk cooling units (BMCU) with a capacity ranging from 1,000-5,000 litres and nearly 75 lakh litres of milk can be procured daily.

As many as 3.43 lakh buffaloes and 2.2 lakh cows will be bought in two phases and provided to the beneficiaries. Similarly, 2.97 lakh of goats and sheep will be given to the beneficiaries.

CM Delhi visit to  
save himself: TDDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 7

Telugu Desam MP K. Rammohan Naidu has demanded that Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy explain to people of Andhra Pradesh whether or not he fought for AP's rights and interests during his just concluded visit to Delhi.

He wondered why the CM was not informing people anything about his visit to Delhi. This is leading to suspicions whether his Delhi visit was meant to save himself from the illegal assets cases.

The MP pointed out that in his election affidavits, Jagan Mohan Reddy stated that he is accused in 32 cases of which 11 are being investigated by the CBI.

Mr Rammohan Naidu told the Chief Minister that AP voters gave him

22 Lok Sabha MPs, six Rajya Sabha MPs and 151 MLAs to fight for interests of the state.

But the CM did not have the minimum courtesy to hold a press conference and tell AP people what he has achieved from his Delhi visit, he said.

The MP questioned whether the CM has asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to fulfil the promise of Special Category Status (SCS) for AP promised during reorganisation of the state, apart from a new railway zone at Visakhapatnam.

He pointed out that before elections, Jagan had said he would keep pleading with centre for SCS. But now, he was not talking about SCS at all but visiting Delhi only to serve his selfish interests and wriggle out his assets cases being investigated by CBI.

CM behind Baypark  
deal in Vizag: TDDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 7

Leader of opposition in AP Legislative Council Yanamala Ramakrishnudu on Wednesday alleged that yet another case of benami transactions involving Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has surfaced by way of multi-crore Baypark property in Visakhapatnam.

Mr Ramakrishnudu alleged that the Chief Minister has taken over Baypark in the guise of Hetero, thereby grabbing ₹300 crore worth Rushikonda lands through his benamis.

He demanded that the government explain why Baypark, which was developed with ₹120 crore, changed hands. He alleged that people hold-

● Y accused the Chief Minister of holding various benami companies

ing highest positions in the government were responsible for Baypark going to the Hetero firm. He charged that Jagan's benamis had also taken over Kakinada SEZ recently and now Vizag Baypark is also being grabbed by them.

He accused the Chief Minister of holding various benami companies.

Mr Ramakrishnudu pointed out that Hetero is co-accused in the first charge sheet filed by the CBI in Jagan Mohan Reddy's illegal assets cases. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) too has filed cases against M. Srinivas Reddy, Director of Hetero.

Seema farmers hope more projects  
on Krishna post Apex Council meetD. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC  
KURNOOL, OCT. 7

With Apex Council direction to submit Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) of Projects on Krishna River in Andhra Pradesh, farmers in Kurnool district express happiness that pending projects would get a fillip. The DPR for Gundrevula reservoir, which has been pending, is also being submitted to the Apex Council, said an irrigation official.

Welcoming the Apex Council deliberations which yielded some fruitful milestones, Rayalaseema Saguneeti Sadhana Samiti (RSSS) president Bojja Dasarath Reddy said the Krishna River Board Management (KRMB) office must be located in Kurnool. He said the KRMB is a tribunal and as such Kurnool has already been designated as

● The Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-I also envisages of sharing of 530 TMC of Krishna waters for Rayalaseema districts, therefore the Srisaillam reservoir level must be maintained at 854 feet.

● On Galeru, Handri Neeva, Telugu Ganga project and Gundlakamma, he said the Apex Council clarified once again that they are old projects as they were mentioned in the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014.

Judicial Capital of Andhra Pradesh state, it is but natural it should be set up here. He reminded Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's commitment to decentralise the administration and therefore the administration must decide on Kurnool for location of the KRMB headquarters.

Dasarath Reddy further said that the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-I also envisages of sharing of 530 TMC of Krishna waters for Rayalaseema districts, therefore the

hensions about the Gundrevula reservoir on Tungabhadra since it is a stabilisation project. He demanded that the Chief Minister call for a meet with Karnataka and Telangana states to iron out the differences and pave way for early completion of the Gundrevula Project. Even Rajoli Banda could be taken up on Tungabhadra which would help Telangana districts, he said.

Rayalaseema Joint Action Committee co-ordinator Kamani Venugopal Reddy also demanded that the KRMB headquarters be located in Kurnool as Srisaillam is in the district and Krishna traverses for a length at large in the district. He said it would also be easily accessible to Telangana as Kurnool is on the border between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states.

Srisaillam reservoir level must be maintained at 854 feet. Pothireddypadu could be operational when the reservoir level is at or above the 854 feet of Srisaillam reservoir level, he said. On Galeru, Handri Neeva, Telugu Ganga project and Gundlakamma, he said the Apex Council clarified once again that they are old projects as they were mentioned in the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014.

Dasarath Reddy said there is no need for anyone to harbour any appre-

SIX HELD FOR ATTEMPT TO SWINDLE  
MONEY FROM AP CM'S RELIEF FUND

**Mangaluru, Oct 7:** Six people from Dakshina Kannada district were arrested for attempting to swindle crores of rupees from the AP Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CM-RF) using fake cheques.

Sources said the fraudsters created fake cheques resembling real ones and tried to deposit in the bank. One of the accused had allegedly tried to deposit a ₹52 crore cheque at State Bank of India in Moodbidri here.

The bank officials, who grew suspicious, contacted AP officials and learnt

about the scam, following which the transaction was stopped.

A case in this connection was registered in September in Andhra Pradesh, based on a complaint filed by P. Murali Krishna Rao, assistant secretary of the Revenue Department.

It is learnt that an attempt was made to siphon off ₹117 crore from the AP CMRF using fake cheques.

The fraud had come to the fore while examining the cheques issued and money sanctioned. —PTI

## HUGE | SUCCESS Tenders invited for re-allotment of 11 cottages

## TTD cottage scheme hits ₹69cr

AVINASH P.  
SUBRAMANYAM | DC  
TIRUPATI, OCT. 7

The Covid-19 pandemic notwithstanding, it is raining donations into the coffers of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD). This gains credence from that the ambitious launched cottage donation scheme, for which the trust board recently invited tenders for re-allotment of 11 of its cottages and guest

houses at Tirumala. The scheme recently netted a whopping ₹69 crore.

Under the scheme, TTD generally extends 30 days of accommodation for a period spread over 20 years for firms and entities and 20 years or lifetime to the donor or spouse in case of individual donations.

According to details provided by the temple management, details of donors and the rest houses allotted in the tender process

are: Sriapati rest house was allotted for ₹7.11 crore to Hyderabad-based Phoenix

Power Infra Limited; Vidya Sadan guest house (₹7.89 crore - Joopalli Syam Rao, Hyd); Sneha Latha guest house (₹7.87 crore - Picchammai Educational and Charitable Trust, Chennai); Karam Nivas (₹6.80 crore - Bhudati Lakshmi Narayana, Hyd); Vakula rest house (₹6.50 crore - Rajesh Sharma, Mumbai); Gumble guest house

(₹5.99 crore - S. Bhagyasri, Chennai); Sri Niketan (₹5.98 crore - Sarathchandra Reddy, Hyd); Godavari ₹5.5 crore - Mega Engineering and Infrastructure Limited, Hyd); Lakshmi Nilayam (₹5.25 crore - AFCONS Infrastructure, Mumbai); Balaji Kuteer (₹5.11 crore - Om Prakash Agarwal, Hyd) and Shanti Sadan (₹5 crore - M.S. Raksha Ramaiah and M.S. Sundar Ram, Bengaluru).



## SHORT TAKES

## ACB TRAPS FOREST OFFICER FOR ACCEPTING BRIBE

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 7

Sleuths of Anti-Corruption-Bureau trapped a forest department section officer of Devarapalli Division in Vizag district while demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹10,000 from a complainant.

ACB officials said they laid a trap and caught Ramesh Kumar red-handed when he received the bribe from the complainant Srinu. The officials said that Ramesh Kumar demanded the bribe from Srinu for issuing permission to cut the trees and shift the logs from Sammidi village to another village.

The arrested Ramesh Kumar will be produced before the ACB Court on Thursday.

## WOMAN KILLS SON WITH HELP OF HER PARAMOUR

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 7

A married woman and her paramour allegedly killed her 16-month-old boy to avoid him at Jaggaiahpetta mandal of Krishna district.

According to Chillakallu police, the woman hailing from Khammam in Telangana was having a 16-month-old boy. She reportedly deserted her husband and eloped with her paramour hailing from Warangal. The duo were living at Anumanchipalli of Jaggaiahpetta mandal in Krishna district.

To get rid of the boy, she along with her paramour allegedly strangled the boy to death and carried his body on their bike to Huzurnagar area falling in Telangana state and burned there to avoid detection by the police on October 4.

However, the police found out the boy and exhumed his body and sent it to the government hospital for post-mortem.

The police booked a case and arrested both the woman and her paramour.

## VETERANS SEEK BRO TO BE SET UP IN RAYALASEEMA

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KADAPA, OCT. 7

The armed forces veterans' society requested the government to set up army recruiting centre at Kadapa.

They have given a representation to the parliamentarian Y.S. Avinash Reddy. Unemployed in Rayalaseema are not aware of military selection.

Hence they have been losing the opportunity to appear for military selections. They have requested to set up a Branch Recruitment Office for Rayalaseema youth.

## ONE MORE CHANCE TO GET WHITE RATION CARD

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KADAPA, OCT. 7

The state government has given another chance to the rejected cardholders to get new card. Deputy Chief Minister S.B. Amjad Basha said that the state government has given another opportunity to the beneficiaries who have been denied white ration card. Those who have been disqualified earlier through a six-step evaluation by village/ward secretariat staff are likely to qualify for the white ration card.

## SKILL TRAINING CENTRE OPENED AT SRI CITY

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUPATI, OCT. 7

Nellore district collector K.V.N. Chakradhara Babu inaugurated the 'Industry Customised Skill Training and Placement Centre' (ICSTPC) at Sri City campus on Wednesday.

The centre was inaugurated in the presence of Challa Madhusudan Reddy, chairman, APSSDC, Dr Arja Srikanth, IRTS, MD, CEO APSSDC and Ravindra Sannareddy, Founder MD, Sri City. This is the first centre of its kind in the state, and was set up jointly by the Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC), industry and Sri City.

## Damaged road



Motorists have a tough time to ride on the roads which were damaged due to recent rains at Akkayyapalem in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

## AP records 5,120 Covid cases, toll touches 6,086

## East Godavari and Chittoor districts reported 807 cases each

**SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC**  
VIJAYAWADA, OCT. 7

Andhra Pradesh has registered 5,120 new Covid-19 positive cases scaling up the overall tally to 7,34,427 and 34 deaths taking the toll to 6,086 in the last 24 hours.

In its Wednesday's Covid-19 bulletin, the state health authorities reported that out of 66,769 samples tested, 5,120 individuals have been found infected. Out of 62,83,009 samples tested so far in the state, 6,78,828 patients have been discharged after recovery from various hospitals while 49,513 patients are still active

and undergoing treatment.

Among the daily new positive cases, both East Godavari and Chittoor reported 807 each followed by 575 in West Godavari, 464 Krishna, 433 Guntur, 424 Anantapur, 367 Nellore, 301 Kadapa, 264 Prakasam, 190 Visakhapatnam, 172 each in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram and 144 in Kurnool.

East Godavari continues to be the worst hit with regard to cumulative confirmed cases with 1,03,246 followed by 71,917 in West Godavari, 67,362 Chittoor, 59,638 Anantapur, 58,106 Guntur, 57,425 Kurnool,

● Out of 66,769 samples tested, 5,120 individuals have been found infected. East Godavari cumulative confirmed cases 1,03,246

55,447 Nellore, 52,411 Prakasam, 51,680 Visakhapatnam, 46,422 Kadapa, 40,980 Srikakulam, 36,587 Vizianagaram and 30,311 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery has been high in East Godavari with 93,642 followed by 65,877 in West Godavari, 60,065 Chittoor, 57,653 Anantapur, 55,330 Kurnool, 52,711 Nellore,

52,377 Guntur, 48,308 Visakhapatnam, 47,294 Prakasam, 42,909 Kadapa, 38,316 Srikakulam, 34,354 Vizianagaram and 27,097 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Among daily cases of death, East Godavari registered five followed by four each in Anantapur, Chittoor, Krishna and Visakhapatnam, three each in Guntur and Nellore, two each in Kadapa, Kurnool and West Godavari and one in Prakasam.

Chittoor registered the highest number of cumulative cases of death of Covid-19 patients with 687 followed by 553 in West Godavari, 551 Guntur, 513

Anantapur, 506 Prakasam, 481 Krishna, 472 Kurnool, 466 West Godavari, 461 Nellore, 459 Visakhapatnam, 388 Kadapa, 327 Srikakulam and 222 in Vizianagaram. The state health authorities have discharged 6,349 patients after recovery from various hospitals in the state in the last 24 hours.

Andhra Pradesh has carried out Covid-19 test on 1,17,659 samples per one million population with Covid-19 positive rate at 11.69 while Maharashtra has tested 57,977 samples with positive rate at 20.24 and Telangana has tested 83,771 samples with positive rate at 6.15.

## Demand to put off degree exams

**K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC**  
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 7

Hundreds of students, mostly members of Student's Federation of India from various degree colleges affiliated Andhra University, staged a protest on Wednesday, demanding the university to cancel the final/end-semester exams for the first and second year degree students in view of the Covid-19 outbreak.

They laid siege to the main entrance creating a tense situation.

The situation aggravated when the protesting students en masse tried to barge into the campus at one go.

The city police, who reached the spot to prevent any untoward event, had to use the ropes to prevent them entering inside the campus.

There was a minor scuffle between the police and the students for a while.

SFI Vizag city president Prabhu said that the government had earlier announced cancellation of exams for both first and second year degree students but Andhra University announced the examination schedule for these students from October 19.

"We demand the university to immediately cancel the exams and promote the students to next classes, taking their health and safety conditions into consideration," Prabhu told reporters.

Andhra University officials, including Registrar

## TNSF DEMANDS POSTPONEMENT OF UG EXAMS

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUPATI, OCT. 7

Telugu Nadu Students Federation (TNSF) activists staged a protest on Wednesday at the Vikrama Simhapuri University, demanding postponement of undergraduate examinations scheduled to commence from October 14. The activists claimed that many students who appeared for the PG examinations were infected with Covid-19 and hence they are demanding the varsity to postpone the UG examinations. They sat in the varsity premises and raised slogans against the decision of the varsity to conduct UG exams. Registrar Dr L.V. Krishna Reddy held discussions with the TNSF and tried to pacify them.

G.V. Ravindranath Babu, reached out to the students and discussed the issue with them.

"The exams can be postponed by a month or so. But we cannot assure you that the exams would be cancelled. We need to discuss the issue with the higher-ups," the registrar told the students. At the assurance of the officials, the students called off their protest and dispersed.

## CLASSES AT SKILL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE START

**Visakhapatnam:** The classes have begun after a gap of six months at the Oil PSUs run Skill Development Centre, Arilova (SDI-A) in the city. The noted petroleum Public Sector Units have been running the SDI-A to

develop skills in various trades to the educated youth. The centre is providing free food, accommodation and uniforms to the youth.

The SDI-A was shut down since March 23 due to the Covid-19.

## e-Ticket must for Pushkaralu

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KURNOOL, OCT. 7

The once-in-12-years Tungabhadra Pushkaralu from November 20 to December 1 are expected to be a tame affair because of the Coronavirus pandemic. Moreover, the District Administration is contemplating several restrictions, which are bound to discourage pilgrims.

District collector G. Veera Pandian on Wednesday also advised the devout to television Pushkaralu from the comfort of their houses than take the risk of entering Tungabhadra waters when the virus risk is high.

He also announced that children below the age of 12 years and adults above the age of 50 years are barred from entering the bathing ghats for a holy dip.

The collector said an e-Ticket system on the lines of Tirumala is being introduced for

Tungabhadra Pushkaralu. Only persons with the e-ticket will be allowed to have a holy dip.

Efforts are also being made to sell bottled holy water through courier and other parcel services, so that people could still get the feel of Pushkaralu water. India Post and other courier agencies would be roped in to ship out bottled Tungabhadra waters, the district collector said.

He pointed out that the state government has already released ₹120 crore through the Roads and Buildings Department for the Tungabhadra Pushkaralu. Five more bathing ghats are being constructed in addition to the existing 16 ghats on the banks of Tungabhadra. Mant-ralayam, Yemmiganur, Kodumuri, Kurnool Urban and Nandikotkur will be having the new ghats.

It is learnt that some MLAs entered into heated arguments with the district collector over selection of the new ghats.

## WOMAN, 76, FOUND DEAD IN LODGE

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VISAKHAPATNAM, OCT. 7

A 76-year-old woman was found dead in a lodge in Visakhapatnam city on Wednesday. Two Town circle inspector K. Venkata Rao said Kasibatla Lakshmi and her son Kasibatla Chakravarthy checked into a lodge on September 1. On Tuesday evening Chakra-varthy left for the Railway Reservation counter to book a ticket for them to visit relatives in Vijaya-wada. He never came back to the lodge after booking a ticket.

He returned to the lodge in the morning and found the room locked from inside. After repeated knocks, he approached the management and got the door force opened.

## Cops solve crimes held in 5 places of worship

**DC CORRESPONDENTS**  
VIJAYAWADA/KURNOOL  
OCT. 7

The Andhra Pradesh police have solved five of the plethora of crimes related to places of worship in AP, in Kurnool, Guntur Rural and West Godavari on Wednesday.

Of the three crimes reported in Kurnool district, in the first case, the police busted a gang involved in vandalising religious places in search of treasure troves and arrested five persons.

Kurnool SP, Kagineeli Fakeerappa, told media persons that one Basheer, a resident of Adhoni, along with his accomplice, Shankar, plotted to explore treasure in Peer Bhale Saheb dargah. The accused gained entry into the dargah on the night of mahamaya amavasya and performed pujas and started digging the lower part of the gummaj. They destroyed the minar and as they failed to find out any treasure, they broke the hundi and ransacked it.

In a second case, the police arrested four persons on charges of desecration of a religious place.

They had inscribed words like 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Om' in Hindi and also 'Ram' and 'Om' on the entrance to the Ranamandala fort causing religious disharmony.

In a third case, the police arrested two minor ragpick-

er girls on charges of breaking the hundi and lifting ₹35,000 at the Hanuman temple at Nandyal town. The theft took place on October 2.

In Guntur district, Narasaraopet town, fake news related to the desecration of a Saraswati idol located on the premises of Krishnaveni college, was circulated on social media platforms by some people on Tuesday.

Upon inquiry, the police found out that the idol was damaged two years ago during the demolition of a nearby shed while the college was being shifted to a new site.

In West Godavari, a case pertaining to theft of a hundi was detected and the two juveniles involved in it were detained.

In a release from the DGP's office here on Wednesday, the police said that after the burning of a chariot at Antarvedi temple in East Godavari, 33 cases were booked related to crimes in places of worship and out of them, 27 cases were solved and three interstate gangs busted.

The police said that they would not tolerate any activities aiming to stir up communal violence in the state and warned stern action against the perpetrators of such crimes, even as they ruled out any connection between the various crimes.

## Three arrested for collecting money

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUPATI, OCT. 7

Dargamitta police arrested three persons for cheating the public by illegally collecting deposits worth ₹85 crore from them in the name of online trading in just 7 months. The police, however, managed to recover only ₹1.29 crore, 5 laptops and one car from the accused.

According to Nellore district SP Bhaskar Bhushan, the accused were identified as Yallagolla Michel Suman Babu, 48, of Vakadu, who is now residing in Vedayapalem in Nellore city, Yeturi Ravi Kumar, 39, of Nandyal in Kurnool district and Dandugula Yalla Srinu, 31, of Chandrasekhar Nagar in Kurnool town.

The accused, who plotted to mint money illegally from public, started a company titled as "WELPAY

COMPANY" in February, 2020 at Vedayapalem. They engaged one 'Eye 3 solutions' to develop an online application for securing deposits from public. The company has offered public that they will be paid ₹200 per every working day, against a deposit of ₹10,000 and the scheme will be continued for a period of 100 days.

Agents and the sub-agents were deployed to secure deposits and they were assured a commission of 0.5 per cent and 0.25 per cent respectively. The company also assured that amounts will be credited directly into the accounts of customers and agents. The accused trio had collected nearly ₹85 crore from as many as 12,600 customers within 7 months.

The Dargamitta Police had received a complaint against the company, which failed to pay customers.

## Sirimanotsavam on October 27

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIZIANAGARAM, OCT. 7

The Vizianagaram administration is going ahead with Sirimanotsavam of Sri Pydithalli Ammavari Jataru on October 27 following Covid protocol. The district has registered around 36,000 positive cases and 250 deaths.

However, there is no clarity on the participation of devotees. The jatara is celebrated on the first Tuesday

after Dasara festival every year. The festival draws close to four lakh people from Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

On Wednesday, the tamarind tree for the Sirimanu was identified at Balarampuram village near Bheemasingi.

The locals believe that the deity would appear in the dream of the temple priest and indicates where the tree is located from Sirimanu.

## Ongole police nab 2 burglars

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUPATI, OCT. 7

Ongole police on Wednesday arrested two burglars including an interstate thief, who committed multiple thefts in both Telugu states. The accused were identified as K. Sai Kumar, 31, hailing from Narayanpet of Telangana and Shaik Rahul of Ongole.

According to the police, on the instructions of Prakasam SP Siddarth Kaushal, the department has formed special teams headed by DSP K.V.V.N.V. Prasad to zero-in on old offenders involved in burglaries.

Acting on a tip-off, Ongole II town police along with CCS personnel arrested

both the accused at the railway flyover in the town on Wednesday.

Police said, the inter-state burglar Sai Kumar had till date committed over 30 offences in Telangana state and various districts in AP, while Shaik Rahul has committed four offences in Ongole town limits. They both were convicted in few cases and the court recently awarded imprisonment to them.

Both the accused, however, were released in September after they were infected with Covid-19. Since then the accused were at large and managed to evade police surveillance.

Acting on a tip-off the police arrested them on Wednesday.



SHORT TAKES

EX-CBI DIRECTOR  
ASHWANI KUMAR  
FOUND DEAD

Shimla/New Delhi, Oct. 7: Former CBI director and Nagaland Governor Ashwani Kumar was found hanging at his residence in Shimla on Wednesday, officials said.

Kumar became CBI director in 2008, succeeding Vijay Shanker, in the midst of the agency's probe into the Aarushi Talwar murder case that hogged the headlines.

Kumar later became Governor of Nagaland, they said.

He was presently Vice Chancellor of a private university in Shimla, they said.

The body of Kumar, a 1973-batch IPS officer, was found hanging at his residence in Shimla Wednesday evening, they said.

STONES THROWN  
AT KAMAL NATH'S  
CONVOY

BHABHRA NATH  
CHOUHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, OCT. 7

Former chief minister Kamal Nath's cavalcade was on Wednesday stoned by some miscreants when he was leading an election rally in Annapur.

The incident happened when the youth wing of BJP was staging black flag demonstration to protest Mr Nath's visit to Annapur assembly constituency which is going to by-elections along with 27 other seats in Madhya Pradesh on November 3.

The demonstrators tried to block Mr Nath's cavalcade while holding the demonstration and shouting slogans against him. However, the security personnel deployed in the area chased them away to clear the way for Mr Nath's convoy to proceed to the venue of the public meeting in the town. Some youths who were part of the demonstration then suddenly started pelting stones at Mr Nath's vehicle.

However, Mr Nath's cavalcade had passed by then.

A video catching the violent demonstration went viral immediately after the incident.

Congress condemned the attack, saying that the BJP was resorting to violence against Congress leaders out of frustration.

"The attack on Mr Nath's vehicle is a clear demonstration of BJP's frustration over growing popularity of Congress. In democracy, there is no place for violence", senior Congress leader and former Union minister Arun Yadav said.

He said Mr Nath enjoyed Z plus security and slammed the Shivraj government for security lapses leading to attack on his vehicle.

UGC DECLARES  
24 UNIVERSITIES  
AS FAKE

New Delhi, Oct. 7: The University Grants Commission (UGC) on Wednesday announced a list of 24 "self-styled, unrecognised institutions" in the country, terming them as "fake" with the maximum of them operating from Uttar Pradesh followed by Delhi.

"Students and public are informed that currently 24 self-styled, unrecognised institutions are functioning in contravention of the UGC Act, which have been declared as fake universities and these are not empowered to confer any degree," UGC Secretary Rajnish Jain said.

The majority of eight of these universities are from Uttar Pradesh — Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya, Varanasi; Mahila Gram Vidyapith, Allahabad; Gandhi Hindi Vidyapith, Allahabad; National University of Electro Complex Homeopathy, Kanpur; Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Open University, Aligarh; Uttar Pradesh Vishwavidyalaya, Mathura; Maharana Pratap Shiksha Niketan Vishwavidyalaya, Pratapgarh and Indraprastha Shiksha Parishad, Noida.

Delhi has seven fake universities — Commercial University Ltd, United Nations University, Vocational University, ADR Centric Juridical University, Indian Institution of Science and Engineering, Vishwakarma Open University for Self Employment and Adhyatmik Vishwavidyalaya (Spiritual University). Odisha and West Bengal have two such universities each. Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Puducherry and Maharashtra have one each.

# Crisis blows over, OPS names EPS as CM pick

11-member steering committee as asked by OPS set up

G BABU JAYAKUMAR  
& D. SEKAR | DC  
CHENNAI, OCT. 7

With sweets and firecrackers, it was early Deepavali at the AIADMK headquarters premises on Wednesday morning soon after the party coordinator, O. Panneerselvam, named the incumbent Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami as the Chief Ministerial candidate for the 2021 Assembly elections.

The meeting, scheduled for 10.00 am, started a little ahead of time with the party headquarters wearing a festive look since morning and the first announcement was on the formation of the 11-member steering committee, which had been Panneerselvam's long time demand.

Party deputy coordinator K.P. Munusamy, who was among those working till 3.30 am to bring about a rapprochement between Panneerselvam and Palaniswami, read out the names of the members of the steering committee, which he said was formed on the basis of a decision taken at the General Council.

Also Panneerselvam put his stamp of approval on the list by signing on it in front of the crowd.

The steering committee members are Forest Minister Dindigul C. Seenivasan, Electricity Minister P. Thangamani, Municipal Administration Minister S.P. Velumani, Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar, Law Minister C. Ve. Shanmugam, Food and Civil Supplies Minister R. Kamaraj, former MLA J.C.D. Prabakar, former MP Manoj Pandian, former Minister P. Mohan, former MP R. Gopalakrishnan and Sholavandan MLA K. Manikam.

Munsamy and Vaithilingam, another deputy coordinator, had shuttled between the official residences of Panneerselvam and Palaniswami to finalise the name of the committee members till the wee hours as that was the last hitch to be ironed out to bring both the leaders together to make the announcement they were united.

Once the truce was called, the entire party



AIADMK coordinator O. Panneerselvam greets Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami in Chennai on Wednesday

leadership geared up for the meeting and trooped to the venue. Panneerselvam arrived by around 9.40 am and he was followed by Palaniswami in another five minutes. Musical bands heralded their arrival with welcome notes and supporters, some of them wearing full face masks with the images of the leaders, cheered them with slogan shouting.

Then the two leaders, along with the other party functionaries, chatted for some time before the meeting was called for order. It was rumoured that they wanted the announcements to be made at an auspicious hour that came before 10 am.

Whatever be the reason,

the meeting turned out to be a simple affair with the presentation of shawls, brief expression of thanks and appreciation and several rounds of applause without slipping into long winded harangue that normally marked political meetings.

Then the top brass of the party, including Palaniswami and Panneerselvam, dove down to the MGR memorial. Both of them paid homage to MGR and also J. Jayalalithaa at their respective samadhis and then drove away.

When Jayakumar was asked by the media on the steering committee having more Palaniswami supporters, he said that

the names were chosen unanimously. He said the show of unity in the party was a huge blow to betrayers and opponents of the AIADMK.

Vaithilingam, to a question on some senior leaders not figuring in the committee, said that there were other vacancies in the party and they would be soon filled up with the senior leaders who were not part of the panel.

AIADMK cadre, both men and women, cheered the leaders for putting up a show of unity with their jubilant gigs and slogan shouting.

A marked sense of relief and celebration filled the air as they distributed sweets and lighted firecrackers.



Gupteshwar Pandey

SHIV SENA TO  
CONTEST 50  
SEATS IN BIHAR  
ELECTIONS

BHAGWAN PARAB  
MUMBAI, OCT. 7

Maharashtra's ruling party Shiv Sena has announced that it will contest 50 seats in the forthcoming Bihar Assembly polls. The party has also decided to field its candidate against former Bihar police chief Gupteshwar Pandey, who is likely to contest the polls on JDU ticket.

Mr Pandey had criticised the Mumbai police and Maharashtra government in the actor Sushant Singh Rajput death case. He later joined the ruling Janata Dal (United) after taking voluntary retirement from the service. He is expected to contest the elections on a JDU ticket from Buxar.

Senior Shiv Sena leader Anil Desai said, "Maharashtra, Mumbai and Shiv Sena were unnecessarily defamed in the Sushant Singh death case by playing vendetta politics. The Shiv Sena will now fight back by contesting the polls. We will contest 50 seats in Bihar."

According to Sena leaders, the party had contested the 2015 assembly polls too, in which it had polled more than two lakh votes.

Defending the decision to contest against the former Bihar DIG, Mr Desai said, "Not just Maharashtra but the entire nation saw his theatrics. His statements were unbecoming for his post. But our Shiv Sainik is ready to fight against him."

The Shiv Sena had earlier accused the Bihar politicians of trying to make Sushant Singh's death an electoral issue. Some issues can be shipped from Mumbai if they don't have real issues, another Sena leader Sanjay Raut had said.

Bihar will go to polls in three phases: October 28, November 3 and November 7.

## BJP spares 11 seats for associate partner VIP

Patna, Oct. 7: The BJP on Wednesday allocated 11 seats to associate partner Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) from its quota of 121 seats in Bihar assembly polls.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had announced at a joint press conference Tuesday that while JD(U) will spare some seats to Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) of former chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi from its share of 122 seats and the BJP will accommodate VIP from its quota of 121 seats in the 243-member assembly.

JD(U) has provided seven seats to HAM.

The seat distribution to VIP was announced at a press conference addressed by Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi, Bihar unit president Sanjay Jaiswal and VIP chief Mukesh Sahni.

Jaiswal told reporters that VIP will also be provided one seat in Bihar legislative council in future.

VIP floated a couple of years ago by former Bollywood set designer Mukesh Sahni, was with the opposition Grand Alliance till last week.

Sahni had on Friday last announced an abrupt exit from the opposition coalition in protest against "back-stabbing" by RJD,

which helps the anti-NDA grouping, and its de facto leader Tejashwi Yadav.

Sahni expressed happiness over return to the BJP-led NDA with which he had started his political innings in 2014 general election with an aim to make Narendra Modi Prime Minister of the country.

Meanwhile, Bihar BJP leader Usha Vidyarthi joined the Lok Janshakti Party on Wednesday after meeting its president Chirag Paswan, and is likely to be fielded from the Paliganj assembly seat where the JD(U) will contest as well.

Vidyarthi, a former MLA, joined the LJP a day after another senior BJP leader from the state, Rajendra Singh, who was associated with the RSS for a long time, joined Paswan's party.

Singh wanted to contest from Dinara but the seat has been allotted to the JD(U) as part of its seat-sharing arrangement with the ally BJP for the Bihar assembly polls.

The Lok Janshakti Party, which has announced that it will contest from seats given to the JD(U) and not fight against the BJP, hopes that many more leaders from other parties will join it in the coming days. —PTI

## I-T RAIDS LOCATIONS IN BIHAR, U.P. IN PROBE AGAINST BUSINESSMAN

New Delhi, Oct. 7: The Income Tax Department has conducted searches in poll-bound Bihar and Uttar Pradesh against a businessman involved in mining and the hotel industry and the chairman of a "large" cooperative bank, the CBDT said on Wednesday.

It said the raids were conducted on Tuesday in Patna, Sasaram and Varanasi on the basis of "actionable intelligence" and ₹1.25 crore cash was seized while fixed deposit receipts of ₹6 crore were placed under "prohibitory orders."

"During the search, an amount of ₹75 lakh was found in a car belonging to the businessman involved in mining and hotel industry. Subsequent investigations led to the finding

that this amount was unaccounted and was also linked to the chairman of a large cooperative bank," the CBDT said in a statement.

"Unaccounted cash and documents with details of substantial cash transactions were found and seized. These transactions are not reflected in the corresponding returns of income," it said.

The Board did not identify those who were raided but sources said the businessman has links with a political party in Bihar.

Polls for the 243-member Bihar assembly will be held in three phases — October 28, November 3 and November 7 — and counting of votes will take place on November 10. —PTI

## POCSO accused done to death

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
OCT. 7

A 37-year-old Kerala man, who was an accused in POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) case and out on parole, was hacked to death by unidentified persons in Thrissur district.

The accused had carried out the alleged sexual assault on a tribal girl in Pazhayannur in Thrissur. His body was found in a vacant plot. The police has registered a case and the probe has begun.

The local police said Sathesh was found with injuries in a vacant house near his home in Eland in Thirumani village. He was taken into custody about eight months ago in connection with the case of sexual assault on a tribal girl. After being released on parole, he was residing in Malappuram.

However, of late he was often seen near the spot where the tribal girl was sexually assaulted. There were also reports that some people used to visit the village looking for him which led to the suspicion that he might have committed something wrong in Malappuram.

Local residents told police that two persons from Malappuram district had visited the village recently enquiring about the whereabouts of Sathesh.

The cops are trying to find out if they are linked to the incident in any way.

● **LOCAL RESIDENTS** told police that two persons from Malappuram district had visited the village recently enquiring about the whereabouts of Sathesh.

● **THE COPS** are trying to find out if they are linked to the incident.

The cops are also in the process of collecting the details of persons who visited the village to ascertain their identity. The local police is in touch with the Malappuram police to check whether any case is registered against Sathesh in any of the police stations, especially in the area where he used to live.

Though the house where Sathesh's body was found was abandoned, a group of persons used to assemble there for drinking sessions. According to villagers they used to create ruckus in the house.

Sathesh was on parole as part of the government decision to release under-trials and remand prisoners in view of Covid-19 pandemic.

The Kerala high court had earlier permitted parole for prisoners who are serving less than 6 years term in jail.

The Poojappura central jail in Thiruvananthapuram had reported the highest number of cases with over 470 inmates and about a dozen officials getting infected with Covid-19.

## Scribe, 3 others booked for sedition two days after being held by UP cops

Lucknow/Mathura, Oct. 7: The Uttar Pradesh police on Wednesday booked four persons including Kerala journalist Siddique Kappan on sedition and other charges at Maant police station in Mathura, two days after they were held while on their way to Hathras.

Charges under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the IT Act have also been filed against the four who were later remanded in judicial custody for 14 days by a Mathura court, officials said.

The FIR claimed that police recovered pamphlets "Justice for Hathras victim", six mobiles and a laptop from them, and during the initial probe it was found that they were going to Hathras with an intention to breach the peace as part of a conspiracy.

The four were held on Monday when they were on their way to Hathras, where a Dalit woman had died after allegedly being gangraped — an incident that has sparked widespread outrage.

Police had earlier claimed that the four, identified as Kappan, a journalist of Malapuram in Kerala, Atiq-ur-Rehman of Muzaffarnagar, Masood Ahmad of Bahraich and Alam of Rampur, had links with alleged radical group Popular Front of India and its affiliates.

They were on Wednesday booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code including 124A (sedition) and



Police produce journalist Siddique Kappan and three others, suspected to have links with the Popular Front of India and its affiliate in Mathura, in a court in Mathura on Wednesday.

— PTI

153A (Promoting enmity between different groups on ground of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony), according to the FIR.

They have also been charged with IPC Section 295A (Deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious belief).

The recovered pamphlets, Am I not India's daughter, made with Carrd.co, encourage social discord and public unrest," the FIR said.

The FIR alleged that internet platform Carrd.co and website Justice for Hathras were being used to instigate cast violence, riots and collecting donations.

Such websites are spreading anti-national propaganda in the country and distorting facts to create tension and disturb law and order, it alleged.

In this way, it is clear that prima facie internet platform Carrd.co and website Justice for Hathras have committed offences under various sections of the IPC and other Acts.

The four persons and other unidentified persons have been found to be involved in these criminal acts and an investigation is necessary to find the details of their actions, it said.

It has to be probed from where and why these websites are being operated, how much money is being collected through this platform/website, where was this amount used and

who were beneficiaries, the FIR said.

Chief Judicial Magistrate Anju Rajput granted the police a 14-day judicial remand of the four persons, saying the offence is of serious nature and requires more interrogation.

Earlier, the Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) had sent a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking Kappan's release and also filed a habeas corpus petition in the Supreme Court.

The Press Association and the Indian Women Press Corps on Wednesday described the journalist's arrest as the Uttar Pradesh government's attempt to "silence" the media and demanded his immediate release. —PTI

## SIT PROBING HATHRAS CASE GETS MORE TIME TO FILE REPORT

Lucknow, Oct. 7: The UP government has given an additional 10 days to the three-member SIT investigating the alleged gangrape and killing of a 19-year-old Dalit woman in Hathras as the "probe is not complete", a senior official said Wednesday.

The special investigation team, constituted on September 30 and led by Home Secretary Bhagwan Swarup, was initially given seven days to submit its report.

But the UP government later sought a CBI probe into the case and the criminal conspiracy to spread caste conflict it has suspected. On Tuesday, it told the Supreme Court it wanted an apex court-monitored CBI inquiry into the incident to ensure "no vested interests will be able to create fake, false narrative with oblique motives".

"Yes...the time for submitting report for the SIT has been extended by 10 days," said Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi. Asked about the reasons for the extension, he added, "The reason is one. The probe is not complete."

The Yogi Adityanath government is fighting severe criticism for its handling of the case, particularly after the local police burnt the woman's body at night without the family's approval. —PTI



## IN BRIEF

**N. Korea ex-envoy to Italy defected**

**Seoul:** A senior North Korea diplomat who had vanished in Italy in late 2018 lives in South Korea under government protection, a lawmaker said Wednesday. If confirmed, Jo Song Gil, the North's former ambassador to Italy, would be the highest-level North Korean official to defect to rival South Korea since the 1997 arrival of Hwang Jang-yop, a senior ruling Workers' Party official who once tutored leader Kim Jong Un's father, late leader Kim Jong Il. South Korea's spy agency earlier told lawmakers that Jo had left his official residence in Rome with his wife in November 2018 and was under protection at an unspecified location outside the European country. Lawmaker Ha Tae-keung, who sits on the intelligence committee of the National Assembly, wrote on Facebook that Jo arrived in South Korea last year and is under the protection of the South Korean government.

**40 nations flay China over HR**

**United Nations:** Nearly 40 mainly Western countries criticised China's treatment of minority groups, especially in Xinjiang and Tibet, on Tuesday and expressed grave concern at the impact of its new national security law on human rights in Hong Kong. The US, many European countries, Japan and others called on China to allow "unfettered access" to Xinjiang for independent observers, including UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet, and to urgently refrain from detaining Uighurs and members of other minorities. The 39 countries also urged China in a joint statement read at a meeting of the General Assembly's human rights committee, "to uphold autonomy, rights and freedoms in Hong Kong, and to respect the independence of the Hong Kong judiciary". It was immediately followed by a statement from Pakistan on behalf of 55 countries opposing interference in China's affairs when it comes to Hong Kong.

**Guitar legend Eddie Van Halen dies**

**New York:** Eddie Van Halen, the guitar virtuoso whose blinding speed, control and innovation propelled his band Van Halen into one of hard rock's biggest groups and became elevated to the status of rock god, has died. He was 65. A person close to Van Halen's family confirmed the rocker died Tuesday due to cancer. The person was not authorised to publicly release details in advance of an official announcement. "He was the best father I could ask for," Van Halen's son Wolfgang wrote in a social media post. "Every moment I've shared with him on and off stage was a gift." With his distinct solos, Eddie Van Halen fuelled the ultimate California party band and helped knock disco off the charts starting in the late 1970s with his band's self-titled debut album and then with the blockbuster record "1984," which contains the classics "Jump," "Panama" and "Hot for Teacher". Van Halen is among the top 20 best-selling artists of all time, and the band was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2007.

**PM FOR A DAY: TEEN FILLS TOP JOB IN FINLAND**

**Helsinki, Oct. 7:** Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin faced a quieter day than usual on Wednesday after handing power to a 16-year-old as part of a campaign to promote girls' rights. Aava Murto, from Vaasky in southern Finland, said she was having an "exciting day" as she faced media on the steps of parliament after meeting with the chancellor of justice. Murto added that she had "learnt some new things about legislation". In the afternoon, the student who actively campaigns on climate and human rights issues was to speak with MPs and the minister for development and foreign trade. Her message to decision-makers has been that girls "need to realise more how important they are, and how they are just as good at technology as boys," she said. "I think young people could teach adults to be more innovative and think more about the future," she added. The swap is part of a global "Girls Takeover" campaign by children's rights charity Plan International, which aims to raise awareness of girls' digital skills.

**Court: Greek party criminal body****Guilty verdicts delivered against many of the far-right Golden Dawn party's ex-lawmakers**

**Athens, Oct. 7:** A Greek court has ruled that the far-right Golden Dawn party was operating as a criminal organisation, delivering a landmark verdict in a marathon five-year trial. The court on Wednesday delivered guilty verdicts against several of the party's former lawmakers for participating in a criminal organisation, and deemed others guilty of leading a criminal organisation. The 68 defendants in the trial include 18 former lawmakers from the party that was founded in the 1980s as a neo-Nazi organization and rose to become Greece's third largest party during the country's decade-long financial crisis.

The court was assessing four cases rolled into one: The fatal stabbing of Greek rap singer Pavlos Fyssas, attacks on migrant fishermen, attacks on left-wing activists and whether Golden Dawn was operating as a criminal organisation. The presiding judge of the three-member panel delivered a guilty verdict against Giorgos Roupakias for the murder of Fyssas.

That prompted applause inside the courtroom and among the crowd outside. — *AP*



Thousands of people gather for a protest outside a court in Athens on Wednesday.

— AP

**Pence, Harris all set for one-off V-P debate****Biden against second debate if Trump still suffers from Covid**

**Washington, Oct. 7:** Vice President Mike Pence and his Democratic challenger Senator Kamala Harris are all set for a crucial debate, which comes as President Donald Trump is ill with Coronavirus that has claimed over 200,000 American lives and battered the country's economy. Harris, whose mother was from India and father from Jamaica, scripted history in August when she was picked up by the Democratic Party as its vice presidential nominee. She is the first Black woman and the first Asian-American woman to be selected as the vice presidential nominee of a major political party in the US. It will be for the first time in the American history that an Indian-origin person will be taking up the podium for a vice pres-

idential debate in Salt Lake City, Utah on Wednesday night. Political analysts believe that an aggressive Harris, 55, who aspires to be the first woman vice-president in history, will easily

prevail over Pence, 61, during the only vice-presidential debate and help Biden, 77, to widen his lead over Trump, 74. The debate comes nearly a week after the first of the three presidential debates in Clevel-

and on September 29 wherein Biden termed Trump a "liar" and a "clown" as the two candidates fiercely clashed over a number of issues, including racism, economy and climate.

Following the first presidential debate, Trump was tested Covid positive and admitted to a military hospital, a development that upended his hectic campaign just weeks before the presidential elections on November 3.

He returned to the White House on Monday night after spending four days at the hospital, but his doctors say the president may not entirely be out of the woods. Biden, in the last few days, has widened his lead over Trump by double digit. However, the Trump Campaign believes that Pence could come out with a stellar performance during the debate. The debate gains added significance, given the Covid-19 infecting Trump, triggering speculation that Pence may be taking over the reigns of the country temporarily. — *PTI*

Nashville, Tennessee. Biden said they should follow very strict guidelines. "Too many people have been infected. It's a very serious problem, so I will be guided by the guidelines of the Cleveland Clinic and what the docs say is the right thing to do," he said. — *PTI*

delay but to focus full time on approving his outstanding nominee to the US Supreme Court, Amy Coney Barrett. "Our Economy is doing very well. The Stock Market is at record levels, JOBS and unemployment also coming back in record numbers. We are leading the World in Economic Recovery, and THE BEST IS YET TO COME!" Trump said. In another tweet, he alleged that "crazy" Nancy Pelosi and "the radical Left" Democrats were just playing "games" with the desperately needed workers' stimulus payments. "They were never in it to help the workers and they never will be," he alleged. But Pelosi accused Trump of "putting himself first at the expense of the country". "He shows his contempt for science, his disdain for our heroes... and he refuses to put money in workers' pockets, unless his name is printed on the cheque," she added. "Clearly, the White House is in complete disarray," the top Democrat said. — *PTI*

**Virus stimulus bill after poll: Don**

**Washington, Oct. 7:** President Donald Trump has instructed his officials to stop negotiating with the Democrats on another stimulus package for the coronavirus-hit US economy until the November 3 presidential election, alleging that Speaker Nancy Pelosi was not holding talks in good faith.

Trump's sudden decision on Tuesday to pull the plug on the negotiations is a major blow to millions of Americans still struggling with the fallout from the pandemic that has badly hit the economy and killed over 210,000 people in the country. "I have instructed my representatives to stop negotiating until after the election when, immediately after I win, we will pass a major stimulus bill that focuses on hardworking Americans and small businesses," Trump said in a series of tweets on Tuesday. Trump's instructions came a day after he was discharged from a military hospital where he was treated for Covid-19.

For the past a few weeks, senior officials from his administration were nego-

**ISRAELI PM'S WIFE MAY HAVE VIOLATED CURBS**

**Jerusalem, Oct. 7:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's wife may have violated the country's Coronavirus lockdown by inviting a hairdresser into the official residence last week to prepare her for a public service video advocating the wearing of masks. The incident, first reported by the Yediot Ahronot daily, was the latest in a string of lockdown violations by Israeli leaders and public figures — drawing widespread criticism. — *AP*

tiating with the House Democrats on a major stimulus package before the presidential election. Analysts have warned that the recovery of the world's largest economy risks stalling without further aid. While the US has regained about half the jobs lost in

**Another Trump aide tests positive for virus**

**Washington, Oct. 7:** Stephen Miller, a top aide to President Donald Trump, tested positive for Covid-19, taking the number of White House staffers infected by the deadly virus to at least 10. "Over the last five days I have been working remotely and self-isolating, testing negative every day through yesterday. Today, I tested positive for Covid-19 and am in quarantine," Miller said in a statement. President Trump, along with First Lady Melania Trump, tested positive for Coronavirus last Thurs-

March and April, more than 10 million people remain unemployed.

"Nancy Pelosi is asking for \$2.4 trillion to bailout poorly run, high crime Democrat states, money that is in no way related to Covid-19. We made a very generous offer of %1.6 tril-

lion and, as usual, she is not negotiating in good faith," the Republican president alleged. "I am rejecting their request and looking to the future of our country," he said. Trump said he has asked Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell not to

**Belarus Oppn asks Germany to mediate**

**Berlin, Oct. 7:** Belarus opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya said Wednesday that German Chancellor Angela Merkel would be an ideal person to mediate the political crisis in her country. Tsikhanouskaya said in Berlin that Merkel is "aware of what's going on there" and "would be really helpful in solving this problem." Tsikhanouskaya met with Merkel behind closed doors on Tuesday. Tsikhanouskaya laid out her aspiration following talks with Norbert Roettgen, a top lawmaker in Merkel's conservative party. "So, our main ask for her was to be a leader in this mediation, to call for other countries to partici-

pate in mediation for starting these negotiations," Tsikhanouskaya said. Merkel has not indicated whether she would be willing to take on such a role, and even if she did, Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko has rejected repeated calls for dialogue with the opposition. Tsikhanouskaya went into exile in Lithuania after the Aug. 9 presidential election in Belarus, which election officials claimed that Lukashenko won in a landslide. Opposition figures and some poll workers say the results were fraudulent and tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets to protest. — *AP*

**T-Rex fossil sells for record \$31.8 mn**

**New York, Oct. 7:** One of the most complete specimens of a T-Rex fossil in the world was sold for a record \$31.8 million Tuesday by Christie's in New York, nearly quadrupling the previous highest price for a dinosaur at auction. The apex predator made mince meat of Christie's opening price of between six and eight million dollars, showing off the lasting power of the T-Rex. It then shredded the previous record set by a specimen called Sue that was sold for \$8.4 million in October 1997 by Sotheby's to the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Only around 50 Tyrannosaurus fossils have been discovered since the first was unearthed in 1902. Bids hit the \$9 million mark in less than two minutes after the start of the auction, but after 14 minutes there were just three bidders left in the race, until the hammer came down on an offer of \$27.5 million, to which were added costs and commissions.

The sale was organised in New York, where the expert assessor was located, but with lines open to Hong Kong and London, where Christie's specialists were taking calls from collectors. The fossil, nicknamed Stan, stands 13 feet (four metres) high and 40 feet long, with puncture marks in the skull and neck that experts believe show evidence of fights with fellow T-Rexes. He would have weighed in at around eight tonnes when alive, some 67 million years ago. The fossil was discovered in South Dakota in 1987 and named after the amateur paleontologist who came across the remains, Stan Sacrison. Paleontologists from the Black Hills Institute of Geological Research in South Dakota spent more than 30,000 hours excavating and then assembling the 188 bones of the skeleton. Casts were then taken for dozens of museums around the world. — *AFP*

**Pearl killers get 3 months' more jail**

**Islamabad, Oct. 7:** British-born al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and his three aides — the main accused in the abduction and murder of US journalist Daniel Pearl — will remain in jail for another three months, according to an order issued by Pakistan's Sindh government on Wednesday. The announcement of extending their detention was made by prosecutors during a hearing of the Supreme Court, which

was to decide on Sheikh's release. The apex court last week barred the government from releasing them. Faisal Siddiqi, the lawyer representing Pearl's family, told the media that the government prosecutor, Fiaz Shah, told the judges he needed more time for paperwork to prepare for the case. The court accepted his argument and adjourned the hearing till October 21. — *PTI*

**Charpentier, Doudna win Chemistry Nobel****PEACE PRIZE: WHO, GRETA OR PRESS WATCHDOGS?**

**Oslo, Oct. 7:** The World Health Organisation is the bookies' favourite to win the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday, though experts say Greta Thunberg or press freedom groups are also contenders. — *AFP*

"There is enormous power in this genetic tool, which affects us all," said

Claes Gustafsson, chair of the Nobel Committee for Chemistry. "It has not only revolutionised basic science, but also resulted in innovative crops and will lead to groundbreaking new medical treatments." He said that, as a result, any genome can now be edited "to fix genetic damage," adding that the tool "will provide humankind with great opportunities." But he cautioned that the "enormous power of this technology means we have to use it with great care." It has already raised serious ethical questions. — *AP*



French researcher in Microbiology, Genetics and Biochemistry Emmanuelle Charpentier (left) and US professor of Chemistry and of Molecular and Cell Biology, Jennifer Doudna.

— AFP



DECCAN  
Chronicle

8 OCTOBER 2020

## Quad's future: Too early to talk of an 'Asian Nato'

While the physical gathering of the foreign ministers of India, the United States, Australia and Japan in Tokyo this week — fairly unusual in these Covid-19 times — sent an unmistakable signal to China that these nations were determined to stand up to its bullying in the neighbourhood and beyond, and uphold the principle of a “rules-based international order” in a “free and open Indo-Pacific region”, which India's external affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said meant “respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty and the peaceful resolution of disputes”, it was left to US secretary of state Mike Pompeo to really turn the heat on Beijing. In a direct attack not only on the Chinese government but also the Communist Party of China, America's chief diplomat — who made it a point to go ahead with his visit despite the churn back in election-eve Washington — blasted China's “exploitation, corruption, and coercion” in the “South (China Sea), East China Sea, Mekong, the Himalayas and the Taiwan Straits”. He also openly accused China of initially “covering up” the coronavirus pandemic in Wuhan and “silencing the very brave Chinese citizens who raised the alarm”.

The Quadrilateral, the grouping of the four nations that met in Japan, has been around for a while, but what has given the strategic partnership new heft is China's renewed aggression of late — most visibly in the People's Liberation Army's intrusions into Indian territory in eastern Ladakh — which Mr Pompeo pointedly referred to in his remarks, but also in its newfound claims to the South China Sea, which mostly lies in international waters, and its blatant attempts to intimidate the democratic government in Taipei through an excessive show of force in the Taiwan Straits. India has a direct interest in ensuring freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, through which so much of our trade transits, which recently prompted New Delhi to send naval warships to show the Indian flag in these waters.

Everybody is well aware that the “Quad” is aimed at countering China, but it was noticeable only the US leader explicitly targeted the People's Republic, while India, Australia and Japan were more circumspect. That doesn't mean they don't share the same views about Beijing's aggression, which affects them far more than it does the US, but they also don't want to aggravate China beyond a point — to ensure, say in India's case, it doesn't adversely impact the ongoing negotiations over the Ladakh de-escalation process. Japan too has become more vigilant as China has got increasingly assertive about its claims to some islands. All four nations are united on the need to counter the waves of disinformation from Beijing, such as over the source of the coronavirus, or the use of so-called “wolf warrior diplomacy” by which the PRC targets smaller nations — like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh or Nepal — to name just a few in our neighbourhood.

Where is the “Quad” headed? Will it, as some commentators predict, evolve into a kind of “Asian Nato”? Or will it focus not just on security, but also try to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative and help develop 5G networks that don't depend on Huawei? There are many in India who may welcome an “Asian Nato”, but we should remember that if we want an independent foreign policy, we have to safeguard our borders ourselves, this can't be easily outsourced even to our closest allies.

## AIADMK: Who really won?

In what was a win-win situation, a long drawn imbroglio in Tamil Nadu's ruling party, AIADMK, came to a close, on expected lines and at the expected hour on Wednesday. Deputy chief minister O. Panneerselvam, who started it all on Independence Day when some posters made an appearance in his hometown expressing his followers' desire to see him as the next chief ministerial candidate of the party, concluded it by announcing his rival Edappadi K. Palaniswami as the chief ministerial candidate. But the acrimony with which the two leaders fought the battle for supremacy and fact that unlike many other political parties in the State or the country, AIADMK is no more a personality oriented or ideologically driven party give rise to the doubts if the differences can really blow over.

For, what we have is a cabal of leaders, who had been chosen to whatever positions they held by the former supremo J. Jayalalithaa, or by default her confidante V.K. Sasikala. Of them, many aspire to lead the party or the government run by it, though the opportunity has come to only two of them through cruel twists of fate.

Those two on whom the mantle had fallen agreed among them to one being chief minister and the other deputy chief minister, ensuring that the rest remained in the sidelines. But when the deputy became more ambitious on seeing the chief minister cornering all the glory and anything else that came along with the job, the fight started.

With the rest of the leaders on the sidelines sensing the dangers such an in-fighting could engender, put an end to it. But the fact that the parleys went into the small hours of Wednesday and that there are some loose ends to be tied up, too, only indicate that it can erupt again. For it is not clear as to who the victor is now.

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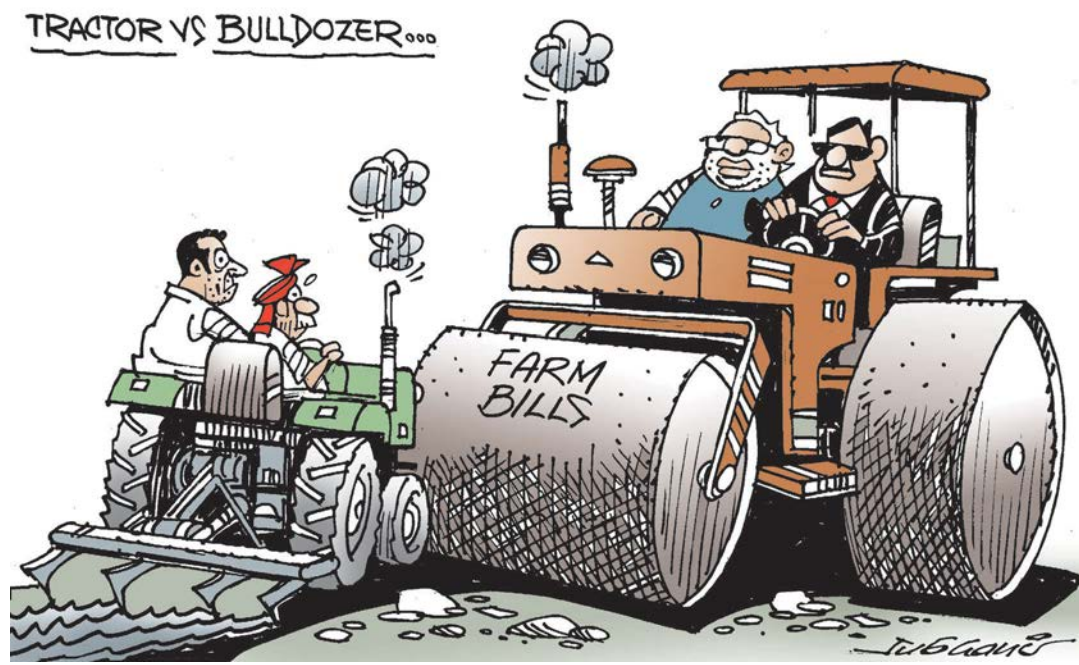
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Subhani

TRACTOR VS BULLDOZER...



## Empower IAF to fight aerial war on 2 fronts

Abhijit  
Bhattacharyya

At 88, the Indian Air Force (born in 1932 as the Royal Indian Air Force) can certainly look back with pride as it evolved into an outstanding professional force, which is the nation's pride and the envy of our neighbours. Even before the RIAF was born, an 18-year-old Indian pilot, Lt. Indra Lal Roy of the Royal Flying Corps, had downed 10 German fighters in just 14 days in the skies over France, and laid down his life while still in his teens, on July 22, 1918. Posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Roy was India's sole flying ace in the First World War. The standard set in 1918 continues to date.

The IAF officers of today remain worthy torchbearers of their legendary predecessors, notwithstanding a few hiccups over the pace of its fleet modernisation. War or peace, they operate with great elan. Their offensive as well as defensive ops over the “forward edge of battle area” in the 1965, 1971 and 1999 wars have been true to the Latin dictum “*Per Ardua ad Astra*” (Through adversity to the stars). However, India faces a major challenge today from an aggressive Communist Party of China, and the IAF, and India, have to be adept at tackling it.

Forty years ago, in 1980, China's infant aviation industry was based mainly in Shenyang and Harbin; with the Soviet-licensed Yak-18, AN-2 biplane and Mi-4 helicopter; besides the F-6 (MiG-19), and F-7 (MiG-21) under production. With the start of the 1978 Deng Xiaoping era, by 1990, things had changed visibly. “Chinese factories carry out sub-contract work on Airbus A-300, A-310 and A-320; ATR-42; British Aerospace 146; Boeing-737, 747, and 757; McDonnell Douglas MD-

80 series” (*Jane's All the World's Aircraft 1991-92*). A Chengdu factory develops the JJ-5 (MiG-17), J-7 (MiG-21F); multi-role helicopter Zhi-8; Harbin made SH-5 maritime bomber; China-France joint ventured Z-9 Haitun helicopter; Nanchang made Q-5 close-air-support fighter (also exported to Pakistan); Shaanxi Aircraft developed Y-8 (derivative of Soviet AN-12 transport); Shenyang Aircraft built J-8 air-superiority fighter; and Xian Aircraft produced (Soviet-licensed Tupolev-16) strategic bomber.

From early on, China made its intent to build indigenous aircraft quite clear. It was determined to be self-sufficient and reduce its dependence on imported aircraft to fight its foes, just like the United States and the erstwhile Soviet Union earlier. It would build its own war machine, keep the best for its own forces and give the second best to its friends, allies and followers with a lower price tag; keeping them militarily and financially dependent on the CPC. Military hardware is an effective tool of foreign and defence policy and serves as an instrument of geostrategic influence by putting smaller client states under pressure, enhancing their non-planned expenditure.

Indeed, China aggressively pursued an unfriendly posture from the start of the twenty-first century — with self-production, market distribution (selling it to smaller, friendly foreign customers) and consumption of its own product, thereby cutting import costs. This entire area needs a thorough relook by the Indian ruling class, as imported equipment still rules the roost in this country. Mass scale indigenous defence hardware/software production eludes the IAF.

By 2001, China had

exported its J-7 single-seat fighter and close air support machine to India's neighbourhood — Bangladesh (16), Pakistan (24), Sri Lanka (4). The Pakistan Air Force too started acting “big” — “Number 2 Squadron Masroor, Numbers 18 and 20 Rafiqi and Number 25 Mianwali” (*Jane's All the World's Aircraft 2000-01*). A clear signal was given to New Delhi two decades ago — that the Dragon was working in tandem with the Pakistani military-ISI — but the Indian government failed to react, and in fact opened its economic and commercial doors to China around the same time.

After Islamabad made a mockery of Atal Behari Vajpayee's Lahore bus diplomacy, the Kargil misadventure followed, and though it led to a “victory” for India, it was over the dead bodies of over a thousand soldiers. The history of 1965 was repeated in 1999, when the initial loss and subsequent recapture of our own territory couldn't be hidden behind India's “Kargil Vijay Diwas” celebrations. It was not an inspiring message for citizens.

China must have made a careful note of India's plight in tackling Pakistan. By 2010, Beijing moved further up the aerial ladder. It set up a helicopter hub at Tianjin, general aviation at Zhuhai and aero engines at Shanghai. Its long-term aviation policy was aimed not just at competing, but also challenging the West by stealing its technology and “compelling” it to “voluntarily” cooperate with Beijing. The West was lured into Beijing's trap over its greed for profits.

Beijing was deeply embedded to Airbus for commercial aircraft

**The Indian Air Force, with its back to the wall, needs to give high priority to the production of multi-combat craft, as it is the actual user,**

development, and a key supplier of fighters to Pakistan. Of 19 multi-role fighter types in the world, China, with four types (CAC J-7, CAC J-10, SAC J-8 AND SAC J-11B), stood joint second with Russia (MiG-29/MiG-35, Su-30M, Su-35, Su-50) as the United States remained number one, with five types (Boeing F-15E, Boeing F/A-18E/F, Lockheed F-16, Lockheed F-22 Raptor and Lockheed F-35 JSF). Regrettably India, with its sole (developing) light combat aircraft, was nowhere in global aircraft production competition. A big country like India can't expect to win long-drawn battles only with imported fighters.

China's PLA Air Force banks heavily on indigenous research, development and production of combat aircraft. This can be seen from *Military Balance 2020 (London)*, the “2,517 combat capable aircraft” of the PLA Air Force comprise indigenous (and not imported) inventory — bombers, fighters, electronic warfare, tankers and transporters. India's slow indigenisation process, and its unplanned forced expenditure due to the rising threat from China, poses a major hurdle for this country: our excessive reliance on imported fighter jets will have its repercussions.

The Indian Air Force, with its back to the wall, needs to give high priority to the production of multi-combat craft, as it is the actual user, and boost its in-house research and development capabilities. No time should be lost. The fighter, transport and rotor-craft production base must be widened, because otherwise the country's indigenous production capacity and capability will not proceed at battle speed, retarding its readiness for multi-front conflicts. The IAF must make the fullest use of its human resources, the sooner the better.

*Today, October 8, is Indian Air Force Day*

*The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College. The views expressed here are personal.*

## LETTERS

## BIGGEST LOSERS

The Covid pandemic shattered lives, economies, life expectancy and education of students. Parents felt happy that their children got promoted without exams. They were not interested in sending their children to school or attend online classes for their own reasons this year. By now students might have lost interest in studies.

D.S.P. Rao  
Kakinada

## GST STALEMATE

The GST stalemate continues at the expense of states (*GST cess: Centre must act quickly, responsibly, DC, Oct. 7*). I suggest a middle path if the states and Centre can borrow 50 per cent each as it is a calamity wrought by God and hence misery should be shared by all equally. Under normal circumstances, the GST Council has obligation under Law to compensate states for the shortfall in tax collection till 2022.

K. Nehru Patnaik  
Visakhapatnam

## CONTROL COVID

Though the Covid infections continue unabated in AP, it has been proved that lockdown cannot ensure the control of the virus. We should appreciate the fact that in the present situation wearing a mask is the foolproof way to avoid it apart from social distancing. However, in the state we see many people moving freely without masks, risking themselves and those nearby. We could take a cue from Tamil Nadu that imposed a fine of ₹1,000 and Karnataka ₹2,000 for not wearing a mask in public places.

R. Sekar  
Visakhapatnam50 YEARS AGO IN  
DECCAN  
Chronicle

## Probe into Shastri's death demanded

NEW DELHI, Oct. 7. Mr. T.N. Singh, a former Union Minister, today reiterated his demand for a judicial enquiry into the causes of death of the late Prime Minister Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri and now a Member of Rajya Sabha, said he planned to go round the country and launch a signature campaign in support of his demand. He was also planning, in consultation with other leaders, to set up a committee to press the demand for an enquiry.

The demand for probe into Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's death at Tashkent more than four years ago was voiced by Mr. Morarji Desai here today.

Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu

## Ex-DGP Pandey and the power of 'good offices'

The three-month mandatory cooling-off period has been waived for IPS officer Gupteshwar Pandey, who was DGP Bihar and sought voluntary retirement (VRS). This was done to allow him to join politics and possibly contest the upcoming state Assembly elections. Mr Pandey, who shot into the headlines with his controversial comments on the investigation into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide, applied for VRS and received the approval from the Bihar government within 24 hours!

Normally, an officer seeking VRS has to give a three-month notice to the government before quitting. Sources say that it takes up to two months for the government to clear the paperwork before granting retirement. In Mr Pandey's case,

however, there was an unseemly hurry to grant his request.

Few, however, were surprised at Mr Pandey's resignation from the IPS. His political ambitions had been the subject of much speculation weeks before he actually took the plunge. He has gone down this road earlier in 2009 when he took VRS to fight the Lok Sabha elections that year. He lost and was reinstated into the IPS. It pays to be well-connected.

HARYANA TO SEE CHANGES  
AT THE TOP

With the retirement of Haryana chief secretary Keshni Anand Arora and the appointment of principal secretary to the chief minister, Rajesh Khullar, as executive director of the World Bank, observers expect a major adminis-

trative change in the state.

According to those in the know, several senior IAS officers are in the succession race. Among them, Vijay Vardhan, a 1985-batch IAS officer and current home secretary, is the strongest claimant for the post of chief secretary. Others in the fray are 1986 batch IAS Sanjeev Kaushal, and 1987 batch IAS Rajeev Arora. V. Umashankar, a 1993 batch IAS and additional principal secretary to CM, is reported to be very close to the CM Manohar Lal Khattar. Apparently, being close to the CM makes one a good contender for a plum posting.

Some observers point out that the caste factor may play an important role. Both Keshmi Anand Arora and Rajesh Khullar are Punjabis, as is chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar. So, will he choose babus

from the Punjabi community to fill the slots? Will the caste factor play a role? Any guesses?

BABUS AND OTHER  
VIP SQUATTERS

There is nothing new about the reluctance of public servants to move out of the residential accommodation allotted them after retirement from service. It has been debated in public and private by citizens and VIPs, discussed in the courts who have issued directions to governments, but not much has changed.

The latest effort to ensure that government accommodation is not misused by babus is a directive from Delhi high court to the Centre to ensure that it gets illegally occupied houses vacated and recovers the rental dues for the period of the

illegal occupation. Apparently, according to the data submitted by the ministry of housing and urban affairs, the government has managed to wrest 565 government accommodations that were illegally occupied by retired public servants and recovered Rs 3 crores in rental dues. However, it also stated that Rs 9 crores was still outstanding from other illegal occupants and it has issued notices to the offenders.

For now, the dispensers of justice seem to have been appeased but this issue is not off the table. And won't be until babus, and our worthy netas, learn to let go of their official trappings once they no longer have the privilege to enjoy them.

*Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.*



quick BITES

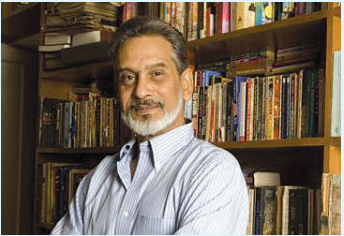
INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,878.95	0.77
Nifty 50	11,738.85	0.66
S&P 500*	3,404.35	1.29
Dollar (₹)	73.32	0.20
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.72	0.56
Euro (₹)	86.22	0.28
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,215*694	1.35
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	41.66	-0.99
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.014	-0.012
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.780	0.040

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

NHA awards 1,330 km NH projects in H1

The NHA said it awarded projects for building 1,330 km of highways in April-Sept., up 60 per cent from the year-ago period. The projects are valued at Rs 47,289 crore. "NHA has awarded projects for a total cumulative length of 1,330 km in the current financial year. The projects awarded so far in first half of the current financial year are 1.6 times higher of 828 km awarded in FY19-20 and 3.5 times higher of...FY18-19."

Stimulus should continue for 3 yrs: Pranob Sen



The Centre should continue with the stimulus to revive the economy for three years and it should not be a one-off measure, Pranob Sen, chairman of the standing committee on statistics, ministry of statistics and programme implementation, said. The improvement in economic activity at the moment is due to the pent up demand, he said. "The government game-plan should be to continue with the stimulus for three years."

Nilesh Shah re-elected Amfi chairman

Nilesh Shah, MD, Kotak Mahindra AMC has been re-elected as chairman of the Association of Mutual Funds in India. Some new faces have also been inducted to the Amfi. Vishal Kapoor, CEO IDFC AMC has been elected as chairman, Amfi standing committee of certified distributors. Radhika Gupta, CEO Edelweiss Asset Management Ltd, has been elected as the chairperson of Amfi ETF committee.

Maruti reports 26% rise in Sept. production

Maruti Suzuki India said its total production in September increased 25.63 per cent to 1,66,086 units. It had produced a total of 1,32,199 units in the same month last year. Passenger vehicles production stood at 1,61,668 units last month as compared with 1,30,264 units in September 2019, a growth of 24.1 per cent. Production of mini cars comprising Alto and S-Presso models were at 30,492 units versus 23,073 units.



— Reuters

Q2 profit misses analysts estimate TCS unveils ₹16K cr share buyback plan

New Delhi, Oct. 7: Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Wednesday announced a mega Rs 16,000-crore buyback plan at Rs 3,000 per equity share. In 2017 and 2018 too, TCS had undertaken buyback offers of similar sizes. The current offer price of Rs 3,000 per share is 9.6 per cent higher than the stock's closing at Rs 2,737.40 on the BSE on Wednesday.

TCS, which reported a 5 per cent rise in net profit for the September 2020 quarter but missed analysts estimates, said its board has declared a second interim dividend of Rs 12 per equity share.

In a regulatory filing, TCS said its board has approved "a proposal to buyback up to 5,33,33,333 equity shares of the company for an aggregate amount not exceeding Rs 16,000 crore, being 1.42 per cent of the total paid-up equity share capital at Rs 3,000 per equity share."

The buyback will be conducted via a tender offer route through the stock exchanges, it said.

A public announcement setting out the process, timelines and other requisite details will be released in due course following the buyback regulations, the filing said.

In 2018, TCS had undertaken a share buyback plan worth up to Rs 16,000 crore, offering Rs 2,100 per equity share and entailing up to 7.61 crore shares.

In 2017, TCS had conducted a similar share purchase exercise. The compa-



WIPRO TO CONSIDER BUYBACK ON OCT. 13

New Delhi, Oct. 7: IT services major Wipro on Wednesday said its board will consider a buyback plan on October 13. However, no other details were provided.

"The outcome of the Board meeting will be communicated to the stock exchanges soon after conclusion of the Board meeting on October 13, 2020," Wipro said in a regulatory filing. —PTI

ny had said its buyback offer was part of its long-term capital allocation policy of returning excess cash to shareholders.

In a separate filing, TCS said its chief financial officer V. Ramakrishnan would be retiring from the company on April 30, 2021 and the board has appointed Samir Seksaria as CFO-designate.

TCS reported 4.9 per cent

rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 8,433 crore for the September 2020 quarter, excluding Rs 1,218-crore provision towards legal claim. Including this number, the net profit is Rs 7,475 crore. The company had a net profit of Rs 8,042 crore in the September 2019 quarter. TCS missed analysts' profit estimates of Rs 7,805 crore, according to Refinitiv data.

Its revenue grew 3 per cent year-on-year to Rs 40,135 crore from Rs 38,977 crore a year ago.

TCS said the interim dividend will be paid on November 3 and the record date for the same is October 15.

Also, the company will roll out salary hikes effective October 1. TCS' consolidated headcount stood at 4,53,540 as of September 30.

"We want to thank all TCsers for the incredible resilience they have shown during these trying times. We are happy to announce that we will be rolling out salary increases, effective October 1st," Milind Lakkad, global head, HR of TCS said. —Agencies

Rajeshwar Rao appointed RBI deputy guv



M. Rajeshwar Rao

New Delhi, Oct. 7: The government on Wednesday appointed RBI's senior-most executive director M. Rajeshwar Rao as the deputy governor of the central bank.

Rao was appointed to the post vacated by N. S. Vishwanathan, who stepped down three months ahead of his extended tenure on health grounds.

According to the RBI Act, 1934, the central bank needs to have four deputy governors—two from within the ranks, one commercial banker and another an economist to head the monetary policy department. —PTI

HDFC Bank to give up to ₹40 L loan to pay Apollo medical bills

Mumbai, Oct. 7: HDFC Bank on Wednesday announced a tie-up with Apollo Hospitals through which its customers can avail unsecured loans of up to Rs 40 lakh to pay for medical expenses incurred at the healthcare chain.

The loans will be disbursed almost instantly as and when a need for money arises, and the hospital patients who are customers of HDFC Bank will also receive preferential treatment, its CEO & MD Aditya Puri told reporters.

Most generic drug ingredients made in Asia: EU lobby group

Berlin, Oct. 7: Two-thirds of the active ingredients needed to make generic drugs are manufactured in Asia, a study showed on Wednesday, the latest evidence to underscore Europe's reliance on foreign imports for its medicines.

European governments were rattled at the start of the coronavirus outbreak when India, one of the biggest producers of drug ingredients, banned exports of certain products relevant to the pandemic, prompting concerns about disruptions to supply chains and a shortage of medicines.

Although those fears were largely unfounded, European Union health ministers have vowed to boost local drugs production to safeguard against future bottlenecks.

The study by German generics lobby group Pro Generika analysed the global production of 565 active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and found 63 per cent of the quality certificates,



which grant them suitable for use in medicinal products, were held in Asia, up from around 31 per cent in 2000.

Price pressure and lower regulatory requirements have led to a shift in drugs production from Europe to Asia over the past two decades, Pro Generika said.

More than 80 per cent of Asia's certificates are held by manufacturers in India and China where the majority of producers are concentrated in just a few states and provinces, the study found. For more than half of the APIs, there are only a handful of manufacturers worldwide.

Europe holds 31 per cent of API certificates, down from 59 per cent in 2000

with producers mainly in Italy, Germany, Spain and France focussing on ingredients with low sales volumes that are complex to manufacture.

Spooked by the pandemic, France in June announced plans to bolster local production of medicines with president Emmanuel Macron pledging 200 million euros (\$236m) to help domestic research and manufacturing of medicine.

Austria is also investing money to shore up production at an anti-biotics plant owned by Swiss drugmaker Novartis's Sandoz division in Tyrol.

Industry players warn bringing production home may be a complicated process, saying higher labour costs and tougher environmental standards make it impossible to compete with Asian suppliers on price.

Novartis said it was seeking to establish at least two sources for key ingredients to have fallback options. —Reuters

Rice exports could jump to record on Thai drought

RAJENDRA JADHAV MUMBAI, OCT. 7

India's rice exports in 2020 may rise by nearly 42 per cent from a year ago to record highs because of reduced shipments from rival exporters and a depreciating rupee, industry officials said this week.

Higher shipments from India, the world's biggest rice exporter, could cap global prices, reduce the country's bulging inventories and limit Indian state stockpiler purchases from farmers.

India's rice exports could jump to 14 million tonnes in 2020, up from last year's 9.9 million tonnes, the lowest in eight years, said B.V. Krishna Rao, president of the Rice Exporters Association.

"Thailand's shipments are falling due to the drought. Vietnam is struggling because of lower crop. That share is naturally coming to India," Rao said.

Thailand, the world's second-largest rice exporter, suffered through a drought earlier this year that has affected the rice crop. Shipments in 2020 could fall to 6.5 million tonnes, the lowest in 20 years.

Vietnam, the third-biggest global exporter, has contended with low water levels in the Mekong River Delta, the country's main rice growing region, that has limited supply.

India mainly exports non-basmati rice to Bangladesh, Nepal, Benin and Senegal, and premium basmati rice to Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

India's rice shipments in 2020 will rise because of robust demand for non-basmati rice from African countries, said Nitin Gupta, vice president for Olam India's rice business.

"Basmati rice demand is more-or-less stable, but in non-basmati we have seen a huge surge in demand due to attractive prices," Gupta said.

India's non-basmati rice exports may double from a year ago to 9.5 million tonnes, he said.

Electric 2-wheeler mkt picks up in September

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, OCT. 7

After prolonged sales slump due to Covid-19-induced lockdown, the electric two-wheeler industry is showing signs of revival in Asia's third biggest economy.

In September, sales of high-speed electric two-wheelers (HS E2W) increased 72 per cent year-on-year. The registration stood at 2,544 units in September 2020, as against 1,473 vehicles sold in the corresponding month of the last year.

"We are experiencing huge customer interest in greener vehicles as they have seen how the environment looks like when no fuel-guzzling vehicles are running on roads," Sohinder Gill, director general at the Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles, or SMEV, said on Wednesday.

The lockdown has increased customer interest in greener vehicles, he said.

The upcoming festive season would add to the pent-up demand and help com-

panies to recover what they lost in the first two quarters due to the lockdown, Gill pointed out.

Hero Electric Vehicles, Okinawa Autotech, Ather Energy, Ampere Vehicles, Revolt Intellicorp, Jitendra New EV-Tech, are some of the major EV players in the country

The first six months of the FY21 have been a jumpy ride for the EV industry. The financial year started with uncertainty due to Covid-19 and lockdown.

Between April and September'20, the industry registered sales of 7,552 units of HS E2W as against 10,161 HS E2W sold in the corresponding months last year.

Gill said lately there have been many positive news on the EV policy front from central and state governments that has led to a higher confidence amongst manufacturers, component suppliers and investors.

"We look forward to a big push by the government to set right what went wrong with FAME 2 so as to assist generation of demand," he added.

Not many companies seeking loan restructuring: SBI chief

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, OCT. 7

The country's largest lender, State Bank of India's (SBI) newly appointed chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara, in his first press interaction, on Wednesday said his top three priorities would be safety of the bank's employees, safety of customers and maintaining quality of the bank's balance sheet.

In his inaugural address, Khara said his endeavour would be to deliver value and customer convenience and quality. "The bank has embarked on a journey of digital distribution and is increasingly leveraging digital and analytical capabilities and will continue this journey."

In context of the Covid-19 pandemic, Khara said that business is "70-80 per cent back to the pre Covid-19 levels," for the bank.

The government had on Tuesday appointed Khara as SBI chairman for three years, effective from October 7. Before this, Khara was a managing director at the bank and



Dinesh Khara, SBI chairman

was responsible for overseeing global markets and subsidiaries of SBI.

On a question on credit growth, Khara said, "We are witnessing a credit growth of 6-7 per cent. I think, I am sanguine that retail is doing well. On the corporate loan growth, many companies are going to the debt capital market. So if we look at growth in our non-SLR (statutory liquidity ratio) portfolio, the growth is 10 per cent. We have to re-adjust to the corporate desire whether it is credit or investments."

Speaking about the bank's response to loan restructuring both retail and corporate, Khara said both corporate and retail loan

restructuring requests are within manageable limits.

"We are very closely observing the behaviour of people who are showing interest in restructuring. We have created a website for people wanting to enquire about restructuring. The hits on the site reflect the interest of people wanting to restructure and we feel that the number is quite manageable considering our book. When it comes to corporate restructuring, I think as of now we have not seen many of the corporates reaching out for restructuring, but, yes ofcourse there are some. But whatever numbers are seen, I would say it is not very unusual but within the manageable limits."

Khara also ruled out any immediate plans for the bank to raise equity capital. "There were options in tier I and Tier II category also apart from the equity raising. So I think what we have decided as of now is that we have raised money from Tier I and Tier II and our current capital adequacy position is fairly comfortable," he said.

Govt's interest waiver is manageable, say analysts

FC BANKING BUREAU MUMBAI, OCT. 7

The government's decision to waive interest-on-interest on loans under moratorium would be a manageable outcome, as the value impact of waiving interest-on-interest is limited, feel experts.

According to rating agency Icr, assuming that not more than 30-40 per cent of the overall loans of the banks and NBFCs would be eligible for relief, the cost to the government should not exceed Rs 5,000 to Rs 7,000 crore.

Jefferies India analysts in a report said, "If the extent of waiver from banking sector to borrowers is limited to interest-on-interest only, it would be a manageable outcome as value impact of waiving interest-on-interest is quite limited and will also address the overhang."

Anil Gupta, vice president, financial sector ratings at Icr, said, "Assuming not more than 30 to 40 per cent of the overall loans of the banks and NBFCs will be eligible for relief, the cost to the government should not exceed Rs 5,000 to Rs 7,000 crore. This is assuming all borrowers are given relief irrespective of they are availing of the moratorium or not."

"Given the intent of the government to absorb the cost of the waiver, we expect the impact to be minimal on profitability of lenders," added Gupta.

The Centre, in an affidavit in the Supreme Court, has supported waiving compound interest or 'interest on interest' for small ticket loans up to Rs 2 crore. The relief would be available to all borrowers, the government said.

According to a Reuters report, domestic banks fear that the government's decision would create unnecessary work for lenders and lead to more litigation, without providing much of a boost for the sagging economy. "Getting the money back from the government is a painful exercise," it quoted a senior banker as saying.

FRESH | CHALLENGE

Abuse of Android OS position in smart TV market alleged

Google faces new antitrust case in India

ADITI SHAH & ADITYA KALRA NEW DELHI, OCT. 7

Alphabet Inc's Google is facing a new antitrust case in India in which the US tech giant is alleged to have abused its Android operating system's position in the smart television market, a source and two lawyers involved in the case said.

The case is Google's fourth major antitrust challenge in India, one of its key markets where it is currently facing public criticism from local start-ups for enforcing certain policies and company charges they contend hurt their growth.

It also comes as Google faces new antitrust challenges in the US and a

potential antitrust probe in China that is set to look into how it allegedly uses its dominance of its Android mobile operating system to stifle competition. Google has denied any wrongdoing.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has since June been looking into allegations that Google engages in anti-competitive practices by creating barriers for firms wanting to use or develop modified versions of Android for smart TVs, such as Amazon Fire TV's operating system, according to the source.

The case has been filed by two antitrust lawyers, Kshitiz Arya and Purushottam Anand. They both confirmed the case filing against Google

for alleged abuse in the smart television market, but declined to comment further.

The source said the CCI had directed Google to submit its written responses to the allegations and that the company has sought more time.

Smart TVs, or Wi-Fi-enabled TVs with apps for streaming services like Netflix and YouTube, have become increasingly popular in India.

Data from Counterpoint Research shows 8 million smart TV sets were sold in India in 2019. Three in five smart TVs sold in India are based on Google's Android system, which also powers nearly 99 per cent of India's half a billion smartphone user base. —Reuters

GOOGLE, ORACLE IN COPYRIGHT CLASH

Washington, Oct. 7: Tech giants Google and Oracle are clashing at the Supreme Court in a copyright dispute that's worth billions and important to the future of software development.

The case before the justices Wednesday has to do with Google's creation of the Android operating system now used on the vast majority of smartphones worldwide.

Google says that to create Android, which was released in 2007, it wrote millions of lines of new computer code. But it also used 11,330 lines of code and an organization that's

part of Oracle's Java platform. Google has defended its actions, saying what it did is long-settled, common practice in the industry, a practice that has been good for technical progress. But Oracle says Google "committed an egregious act of plagiarism" and sued, seeking more than \$8 billion.

The case has been going on for a decade. Google won the first round when a trial court rejected Oracle's copyright claim, but that ruling was overturned on appeal. A jury then sided with Google, calling its copying "fair use." —AP



— *PTI*

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