

# THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI THURSDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2020



**NATION | 3**

**Rahul slams govt over eco slump: 'India reeling under Modi-made disasters'**



**NATION | 4**

**Centre betrays trust in GST shortfall pay, Mamata writes to PM**

**TABLOID | 11**

**Shivani Dandekar throws her weight behind Rhea Charaborty in Sushant case**



www.asianage.com

RNI No. 57290/94, Regd No: DL-SW-05/4189/15-17

Vol. 27 No. 198 | 16 PAGES | ₹5.00



Jury president of the 77th Venice Film festival, Cate Blanchett, poses during a photocall of the Venezia 77 main competition jury on the opening day of the festival at Venice Lido on Wednesday. — AFP

## Soviet era poison used on Russia Opp. leader: Berlin

**Berlin:** Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny was poisoned with the same type of Soviet-era nerve agent that British authorities identified in a 2018 attack on a former Russian spy, the German government said on Wednesday, citing new test results. The Berlin hospital treating Navalny said he remains in a serious condition though his condition is improving. It said that it expects a long recovery, and it still can't rule out long-term consequences from the poisoning. — AP

## Army JCO killed in sniper hit at LoC

**Srinagar:** In the second such incident in the past four days, another Junior Commissioned Officer of Indian Army, Subedar Rajesh Kumar, was killed in a sniper attack from across the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district on Wednesday. ■ More on Page 4

## Thai King reconciles with ousted consort

**Bangkok:** Thailand's King has reconciled with his royal consort, whom he stripped of her titles last year after accusing her of seeking to undermine his official wife, the country's queen. Bloggers reported last week that Sineenatra had been reinstated. ■ More on Page 6

## COUNTERPOINT



**I can't afford it now as I lost my job!**

## WEATHER

**Max:** 32°C  
**Min:** 26°C  
**RH:** 78%  
**Rain:** 40%

**Forecast:** Thunderstorm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Bhadrapada Bahula Padyami till 12.28 pm  
**Star:** Purvabhadra till 8.52 pm  
**Variyam:** Nil  
**Durmuhurtam:** 10.12 am to 11.02 am; 3.08 pm to 3.57 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 1.30 pm to 3 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 6.41 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.00 AM**  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW 7.38 PM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 5.49 AM**

## Beijing fury after PLA commander withdrew to avoid clash: US Army repositions troops to track Chinese deployments

**PAWAN BALI**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

The Indian Army has started repositioning its troops even in the "Finger area" on the northern banks of Pangong Tso in Ladakh to "up the ante" against the Chinese. People's Liberation Army which intruded into the area in early May. Sources said the Indian Army on Sunday climbed hills and established posts on the ridgelines between Finger 2 and Finger 3 on Pangong Tso's northern banks. These posts will help the Indian Army to track Chinese deployments on the ridgeline of Finger 4, that it occupied after its intrusion in the area.

This comes after India pre-empted PLA soldiers on the southern banks of Pangong Tso on Saturday night as Indian Army troops occupied many of the peaks there to dominate the area.

During the initial phase of disengagement,

## More paramilitary units sent to Sikkim, U'khand border areas

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

In view of the rising tension with China along the LAC in Ladakh, the Union home ministry has raised the strength of border-guarding forces in other parts of the India-China border, particularly in Sikkim and Uttarakhand. Nearly 100 companies of paramilitary forces, or 10,000 personnel, have been rushed to these areas. Sources said security on both the China and Nepal borders were beefed up substantially, especially at the ti-junction area of China's border with Sikkim and Uttarakhand as intelligence inputs suggest China could try and open another front in these sectors.

cautionary deployment carried out on 30 August, some readjustments of our positions on the north bank of Pangong Tso on our side of LAC had also been carried out," a source said. China has illegally occupied around 8 km of Indian territory in the area between Finger 5 and Finger 8. The Indian Army action comes even as Beijing is reportedly

enraged that its local PLA commander had withdrawn forces when a physical conflict appeared imminent with Indian troops on Pangong Tso's southern banks on Saturday night, where India blocked the Chinese Army and pre-emptively occupied the strategic heights in the area, according to US intelligence reports.

The Indian troops were better prepared to respond to the Chinese provocation after bolstering their presence following the deadly June clash in the Galwan Valley, according to a report published by US News, citing American intelligence sources. The report said Chinese President Xi Jinping would have to have known about each of the latest clashes in advance due to the nature of the Chinese military's decision-making. Mr Xi, besides being President, also heads the country's Central Military

■ Turn to Page 3

## Govt bans PUBG, 117 more Chinese apps

**New Delhi, Sept. 2:** The government on Wednesday blocked 118 more mobile applications, including popular gaming app PUBG, terming them prejudicial to the sovereignty, integrity and defence of the nation.

The banned apps include Baidu, Baidu Express Edition, Tencent Watchlist, FaceU, WeChat Reading and Tencent

Weiyun, besides PUBG Mobile and PUBG Mobile Lite, according to an official statement.

All these banned apps have Chinese links, sources said.

The Centre had earlier banned a number of Chinese apps, including TikTok and UC Browser.

"Government blocks 118 mobile apps which are prejudicial to sovereignty

and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order," it said.

It said the IT Ministry had received complaints from various sources, including several reports about misuse of some mobile apps available on Android and iOS platforms for stealing and surreptitiously transmitting users' data to servers out-

side India.

"The compilation of these data, its mining and profiling by elements hostile to national security and defence of India, which ultimately impinges upon the sovereignty and integrity of India, is a matter of very deep and immediate concern which requires emergency measures," the statement said. — PTI

■ 78,357 cases, 1,045 deaths in 24 hrs

## With rise in Covid cases, India set to march past Brazil

**VINEETA PANDEY**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

The alarming spread of novel coronavirus in India is one of the fastest in the world right now as its overall cases now run close to 38 lakh. At this speed India will shortly beat Brazil to be number two in the world having the highest number of Covid-19 cases after the US which has 60.76 lakh cases till now. Brazil has 39.51 lakh cases, as per Johns Hopkins University bulletin.

India on Wednesday reported 78,357 fresh cases and 1,045 deaths in 24 hours.

Though as per official figures of the Union health ministry, overall cases till Wednesday morning were 37,69,523 and deaths 66,333, COVID19India.org said that total cases were close to 38 lakh. While Maharashtra (15,756), Andhra Pradesh (10,368)

and Karnataka (9,058) continue to detect a high number of cases on a daily basis, Delhi on Wednesday reported a huge jump in fresh cases after nearly two months of control. Delhi Lt Governor Anil Bajjal has ordered officers to ramp up the city's testing capacity by allowing testing on demand, having testing centres at all border entry points and at major construction sites to check the spread of Covid-19. All migrant workers coming to Delhi will now have to undergo tests.

With the recovery of 62,026 people in the last 24 hours, India's Recovery Rate has further improved to 76.98 per cent. Total recoveries in the country have crossed 29 lakh and the last 10 lakh recoveries were recorded in 17 days, compared to the preceding 10 lakh recoveries which were recorded in 22 days, Union health ministry officials said.

## AIIMS wards reserved for serious cases for 2 weeks

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

With increasing number of non-Covid patients being admitted in the emergency ward of AIIMS in the national capital, hospital authorities have suspended routine OPD admissions in general and private wards for two weeks.

"However, routine OPD services to enable patients seek medical advice and counselling, which were recently

resumed, will continue," said AIIMS Medical Superintendent, Dr D.K. Sharma.

According to a circular signed by Dr Sharma, in view of the need to optimise usage of beds for seriously ill, emergency/semi-emergency patients, it has been decided to temporarily stop routine OPD admissions to general wards as well as private wards in AIIMS hospital and all its centres with immediate effect for two weeks.

## Kafeel freed, fears UP govt will frame him in fresh case

**Lucknow/Mathura, Sept 2:** The Uttar Pradesh government, instead of observing "Raj Dharma", was indulging in "Baal Hatth" or child-like-stubbornness and could frame him in another case, Dr Kafeel Khan said after being released from the Mathura jail.

The Allahabad high court on Tuesday quashed Mr Khan's detention under the National Security Act and ordered his immediate release. Following the court's order, Mr Khan was released from Mathura jail late on Tuesday night.

"Mathura jail administration informed at around 11.00 pm that Dr Kafeel will be released, and around midnight, he was released," Mr Khan's lawyer Irfan Ghazi told PTI.

Speaking to PTI after his release from the jail, Mr Khan thanked the court.

"I will always remain thankful to all my well-wishers, who raised their voice for my release. The administration was not ready for release, but because of the prayers (dua) of people, I have been released."

"In Ramayana, Maharshi Valmiki had said that the Raja (king) should act for 'Raj Dharma'. In UP the 'Raja' is not doing 'Raj Dharma' but is doing 'Baal Hatth' (being stubborn like a child)," Mr Khan said.

He also said that he was apprehensive that the government can frame him in any other case, and claimed that the state government was "after" him because of the oxygen issue in BRD Medical College. — PTI



Dr Kafeel Khan (centre) following his release from Mathura jail around midnight on Tuesday, after the Allahabad high court quashed his detention under the National Security Act and ordered his immediate release earlier in the day. — PTI

## Abe's aide-spokesman Suga is frontrunner as next Japan PM

**Tokyo, Sept. 2:** Japan's chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga, a long-time loyal assistant and the public face of outgoing PM Shinzo Abe in daily media briefings, has emerged as a favourite to succeed him in an upcoming internal party vote.

Mr Suga formally announced his candidacy Wednesday, pledging "to succeed policies that Prime Minister Abe has devoted his body and soul and to push them forward". He said that he, as a politician who worked with Mr Abe, decided to run to take over the Prime Minister's unfinished work.

Mr Abe, who has had ulcerative colitis since he was a teenager, last week announced he would resign after setting a record of 2,799 consecutive days in office.

A member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party



Yoshihide Suga

who doesn't belong to any faction, Mr Suga has been approached by leaders of other party wings as someone who can ensure the continuation of Mr Abe's policies, including strengthening Japan's security alliance with the United States, dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and shoring up the economy.

Party executives decided to hold an internal vote on September 14 to pick a new leader, who will then become the Prime Minister after winning parliamentary approval

two days later with the ruling side's majority.

He has earned a reputation for his matter-of-fact twice-daily televised media briefings. He's become known as "Uncle Reiwa" after he was tasked with unveiling the new imperial era name for Emperor Naruhito last year.

The son of a strawberry grower in the northern prefecture of Akita, Mr Suga is a self-made politician, a rarity in Japan's largely hereditary business of politics. He earned his own tuition while working several part-time jobs to graduate from a university in Tokyo.

The next PM will finish the rest of Mr Abe's term, until September 2021.

Two younger contenders, former foreign minister Fumio Kishida and former defence minister Shigeru Ishiba, on Tuesday also expressed their intention to stand for the post. — AP

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

The Opposition parties are up in arms against the government's decision to cancel Question Hour during Parliament's Monsoon Session. In a scathing attack, Congress MP Mr. Shashi Tharoor said questioning the government was the oxygen of parliamentary democracy. "I said four months ago that strongmen leaders would use the pandemic's excuse to stifle democracy and dissent. The notification for the delayed Parliament session blandly announces there will be no Question Hour. How can this be justified in the name of keeping us safe," he said.

Trinamul Congress' Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien said the pandemic was being used as an

► **LOK SABHA** and Rajya Sabha sittings will be held in separate shifts and there will be special seating for MPs to ensure distancing. The Lok Sabha will sit from 9 am to 1 pm on the first day and from 3 pm to 7 pm till October 1.

excuse to "murder democracy". He said in a tweet: "MPs required to submit questions for Question Hour 15 days in advance. Session starts 14 September. So Question Hour cancelled? Opposition MPs lose right to question govt. A first since 1950? Parliament overall working hours remain same, so why cancel Question Hour?" DMK leader Kanimozhi tweeted: "The BJP government's decision to suspend

Question Hour... conveys just one message: 'Even elected representatives have no right to question the government!'"

Opposition leaders say defence minister Rajnath Singh told them if there was a Question Hour, ministers had to be briefed by officials, that would raise the number of Parliament's visitors.

Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha sittings will be held in separate shifts and there will be special seating for MPs to ensure distancing. The Lok Sabha will sit from 9 am to 1 pm on the first day and from 3 pm to 7 pm till October 1. The Rajya Sabha will sit from 3 pm to 7 pm the first day and 9 am to 1 pm the remaining days. Weekends will be working days. There will be no private members' business. There will be a Zero Hour, but the time been cut short to 30 minutes.

## Pranab daughter custodian of diaries, to take publishing call

**New Delhi, Sept. 2:** The late Pranab Mukherjee, former President and long-time Congress leader, made his daughter Sharmistha Mukherjee custodian of the diaries he wrote almost every day during his five-decade political career and authorised her to take a call on publishing them.

"He has left his diaries with me, and left it to my

discretion whether to get them published or not," Ms Mukherjee said on Wednesday.

Mukherjee, 84, who died on Monday after a three-week battle with multiple ailments and was cremated with full state honours on Tuesday, entered politics in 1969 and then served as minister for external affairs, defence, finance and commerce and then as India's 13th

President.

Writing a diary every day was one of Mukherjee's ways to keep his famously encyclopaedic memory razor sharp until the very end, said his close friends.

"I once asked him what the fate of his diaries would be, and he said he'd given them to his daughter because a lot of controversies can take place. In

■ Turn to Page 3

## Govt to start mission to make civil services 'civil'

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

Aimed at initiating structural reforms in Indian bureaucracy, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday cleared

Mission Karmayogi — a national programme for capacity building in civil services. The aim is to close the gap between the bureaucrat and the common citizen and ensure citizen-centric governance by facilitating speedy delivery of services. It will be governed by an HR Council headed by the Prime Minister.

Mission Karmayogi, a nationwide programme, will help civil servants learn about the best practices in governance across the world, Union minister Prakash Javadekar said at a press briefing about the Cabinet's decisions.

"This scheme is based on the government's vision on how a civil servant should be. A civil servant of today, in order to meet the challenges of the world, will have to be imaginative and innovative, proactive and polite, professional and progressive, energetic and enabling, transparent and tech enabled, constructive and creative," C. Chandramouli, secretary, department of personnel and training (DoPT), said.

The Central government will set up a Capacity Building Commission to harmonise training standards. The commission, which will have shared faculty and resources, will supervise all training institutions in the country so that there's common understanding of India's aspirations and development goals, Mr Chandramouli added.



## IN BRIEF

**142 new cases in Gautam Buddha Nagar**

**Noida:** Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar on Wednesday recorded 142 new Covid-19 cases, pushing the infection tally of the district to 8,197, official data showed. The number of active cases reached 1,114, up from 1,067 on Tuesday, 1,055 on Monday and 1,009 on Sunday, according to the data released by the UP Health Department for a 24-hour period. Also, 92 more patients got discharged during the period, it showed. The district remained at 12th position in the state in terms of active cases, the data showed. So far, 7,038 patients have recovered from Covid-19 in Gautam Buddha Nagar, the third highest among districts in UP after Lucknow (21,064) and Kanpur Nagar (11,709), it showed. The death toll in the district stood at 45 with a mortality rate of 0.54 per cent, slightly better from 0.55 per cent on Tuesday and 0.56 per cent on Monday, according to official statistics. The recovery rate dropped slightly to 85.86 per cent from 86.20 per cent on Tuesday, as per the statistics. Meanwhile, Gautam Buddha Nagar (1,114) dropped to the 12th position on the list of districts in the state in terms of active cases. There were 56,459 active cases across Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday.

— PTI

**2 juveniles among 5 held for robbery**

**New Delhi:** Three men were arrested while two juveniles were apprehended for allegedly robbing a cab driver of his belongings including his vehicle to visit Murthal to have the famous parathas for dinner, police said on Wednesday. But their trip to Murthal was unfortunately cut short after a quarrel broke out between the group over the place of visit. After beating up the cab driver and robbing his vehicle, an argument broke out between them. While some of them wanted to go for a trip to Shimla others wanted to stick to their earlier plan of visiting Murthal but finally, they all ended up visiting an eatery in Paschim Vihar and collected eatables and spent the time in car, a police officer privy to probe said. The arrested accused have been identified as Pankaj (19), Sagar (20) and Abhijeet (19), all residents of Nangloi in outer Delhi, police said.

**Smog tower to be ready in 10 months**

**New Delhi:** The work to install a smog tower at Connaught Place in central Delhi has started and it will be ready in 10 months, officials said on Wednesday. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was recently signed for the smog tower with Tata Projects Limited. Land has been prepared and soil testing and feasibility survey has been completed, an official of the Delhi Pollution Control Committee said. "The work has started. We expect to complete the construction in 10 months," he said. The smog tower will be 20-meters high and is expected to cost ₹19 crore. The Supreme Court had in January directed the Delhi government to construct a smog tower in Connaught Place within three months. It had also directed the central government to install another such structure to reduce pollution in Anand Vihar in the same span of time. The apex court had last month hit out at the Centre and Delhi government for missing the deadline of April 13 for completing the construction of two smog towers in the city. — PTI

**Havan organised for minister's recovery**

**New Delhi:** The Jaiswal Sarva Vargiya Mahasabha Delhi-NCR on Wednesday organised havan and special puja, praying for the speedy recovery of Union Ayush minister Shripad Naik, here. Naik, who is undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Goa after testing positive for coronavirus, was on Tuesday shifted out of the Covid-19 ward. Havan yagya, performed by Acharya Dr. Vikramaditya, was attended by office-bearers of the Mahasabha — Shailendra Kumar Jaiswal, Jaiswal Brijesh Kumar Gupta, Lal Jee Jaiswal, Jaiprakash Jaiswal, Durgesh Kumar Jaiswal, Hanuman Prasad Jaiswal etc. "In the last few days, the minister has shown recovery in his health," said Brijesh Gupta.

## NOTES OF DESPAIR

**Band, baja, no baraat: Owners, musicians face penury**ARUN SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

The music has gone out of their lives, quite literally, and the band of men who made their living drumming up tunes for parties, wedding processions and sometimes funerals too are on the verge of penury, scrambling for every rupee they can manage.

Almost six months into the pandemic, those in the business of weddings bands have gone bust. With celebrations restricted to just a few people in the era of social distancing and no bookings, some like Khurshid Siddiqui are selling old clothes and others like Mohammad Ali are selling off the accoutrements of the trade the buggy, lights and even the mare.

Drummer Khurshid Siddiqui who ran the band business from his ancestral shop in east Delhi's Laxmi Nagar Market said there hasn't been a single booking in months, not from weddings, celebrations such as births and not even the odd funeral of an old person they sometimes played for.

The 40-year-old said he has put his shop on rent for ₹10,000 and is reduced to selling old clothes on the roadside.

"All our old bookings were cancelled due to which even the little money that was left with us had to be returned," Siddiqui told PTI.

"I have completely stopped the work that had carried on for generations in my family. I have sent some of the items to my village, sold some and am selling clothes," he added.

Mohammed Ali, who owned the Great Band close by, spent a hefty ₹4.5 lakh in January to buy a buggy, lights and a mare, all necessary for a big fat Indian wedding that is incomplete without "band, bajaa".

The mare, he said, cost ₹2.5 lakh and he is now ready to sell it for just ₹50,000 or rent it out for



A marriage band artiste rehearses at his home in New Delhi. A mannequin lies at Sahab Band & Bhai Sahab Ghodi Wala shop at Vaishali in Ghaziabad. Trumpets and other traditional musical instruments at a band shop in Ghaziabad. A marriage band ghodi (mare) in feeble condition. Children play on a marriage band buggy lying abandoned in a field in New Delhi.

₹500 a day.

The buggy is getting damaged in the rain. There is trouble from all sides. The coronavirus has devastated us. And the government is also ignor-

ing us, the 40-year-old said.

The signs of the desperate times are visible in the ribs jutting out of the mare standing in a corner. Part of the buggy lies on a

garbage laden road with children playing inside it. Some kilometres away near the Loni border, trumpet player Navi Jaan echoes the despair.

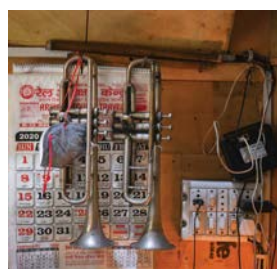
The 58-year-old said he

had been working with a band since 1985 but the owner shut shop and he has been jobless since.

"I have been sitting without any work for the last five months. I called the

owner on Eid for money but he refused, citing the lockdown. There are four people in my family who are dependent on me," Jaan said.

Of his 35 band mates,



► Sometimes, to remind themselves of the times that were, a band member wears the uniform, cap and picks up his instrument

some are selling vegetables and some are driving rickshaws, he said.

Imran, owner of the Sahib Band Wala in Vaishali, opened his shop after five months, hoping to get some work with the lockdown being partially lifted.

"The initial few weeks after the lockdown was imposed were still okay. But the constant re-imposition has created havoc. Because of the lockdown we couldn't deposit the bills and our electricity was disconnected. Since we have had no earnings, we haven't been able to pay the electricity bills and can't resume work."

It's a vicious circle, trapping scores of people. Sometimes, to remind themselves of the good times, a band member dresses up in the uniform, just wears the cap and picks up his instrument. It's a reminder of the times that were.

— PTI

■ Highest single-day spike in 2 months ■ 4,481 deaths so far

**City records 2,509 Covid +ve cases, 19 deaths in 24 hours**AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

The national capital on Wednesday recorded its highest single-day spike in coronavirus cases in two months. According to Delhi government health department data, 2,509 new coronavirus cases and 19 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours, taking the total to over 1.79 lakh. The city has reported 4,481 deaths due to Covid-19. The recovery rate is 88.31 per cent.

The last biggest one-day spike was seen on July 4 when 2,505 cases were reported in the city. Since then, the cases had declined and witnessed 900 to 1,100 cases a day.

As the Delhi government data, the number of active Covid-19 cases in the city increased by around 60 percent in a month, with the city witnessing a marked uptick in new cases. "There were 10,596 active Covid-19 cases on August 1. The number increased to 16,502 on Wednesday," showed an analysis of Delhi government's health bulletins.

The number of active Covid-19 cases peaked to 28,329 on June 27. It tapered off to 10,705 active cases by July 31.

On August 4, it dropped below the 10,000-mark for the first time since May 30 and stood at 9,897, owing to a good recovery rate and less new cases. But just when it seemed the number might drop further, it started rising.

Experts attribute the increase in new cases to increased public movement after easing of lockdown restrictions, non-

**Kejriwal hands over cheque for ₹1cr to corona warrior's family**AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday met the family of pharmacist Rajesh Kumar Bhardwaj, a corona warrior who had laid down his life while serving the people, and offered a cheque for ₹1 crore as financial assistance.

Mr Kejriwal met Rajesh's family and assured them of full support in the future. Rajesh was posted as a pharmacist with the Delhi government and had lost his life while on corona duty.

Expressing condolences on Rajesh's demise, Mr Kejriwal also said that he is proud of all the corona warriors like him who have laid down their lives while serving the people of Delhi.

"Our corona warrior Shri Rajesh Bhardwaj Ji,



Arvind Kejriwal

avir. I met his family today and offered them an assistance of ₹1 crore. I hope that the family will get some help with this amount," Mr Kejriwal tweeted.

Late Rajesh was a pharmacist posted at the CDMO office, Nabi Karim, Central District. He and his family resided in the Faridabad area.

He succumbed to corona in the B.L. Kapoor hospital in Delhi, where he was admitted after testing positive on June 29. He succumbed to corona on July 20.

cases by July 31. On August 4, it dropped below the 10,000-mark for the

first time since May 30 and stood at 9,897, owing to a good recovery rate and

residents coming to Delhi for treatment and return of migrants from other states.

"Delhi has been witnessing a slight increase in the number of new cases because of various factors. People (migrants) are returning. Then there are people from other states who have come to the city for treatment," Dr Desh Deepak, nodal officer for Covid-19 at the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, said.

— PTI

**Rajnath's son stable, say AIIMS docs**AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

The condition of the BJP's Uttar Pradesh vice-president and Noida MLA Pankaj Singh, who is undergoing treatment at the AIIMS here after testing positive for Covid-19, is stable, sources said on Wednesday.

He was admitted to AIIMS' Trauma Centre, which is a dedicated Covid-19 facility, on Tuesday evening and is being attended to by a team of doctors led by Dr Neeraj Nischal, an associate professor in the department of medicine at the premier institute. "Pankaj Singh is stable and doing fine," a source said.

The 41-year-old politician, who is the son of defence minister Rajnath Singh, on Tuesday said that he has tested positive for Covid-19 and urged people who recently came in contact with him to get themselves tested for the infectious disease. He had in March isolated himself as a precautionary measure after it emerged that he was in a room for a press conference with Uttar Pradesh health minister Jay Pratap Singh, who was in a party in Lucknow with singer Kanika Dhillon who was Covid-19 positive.

Government data shows that of the 8,577 Covid-19 patients admitted to city hospitals in August, 2,536 belonged to other states (around 30 per cent) — mostly from neighbouring Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. The rise in the number of new cases has also led to a 35 per cent increase in the demand for beds in hospitals in the city.

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to stay at this stage streaming of Netflix movie *Gunjan Saxena - The Kargil Girl*, on the Centre's plea that it depicts the Indian Air Force (IAF) in bad light.

Justice Rajiv Shakdher asked the Centre as to why it did not approach the court before release of

the movie on Over The Top (OTT) platform, and said an injunction cannot be granted now as the film is already streaming.

Additional Solicitor General Sanjay Jain, representing the Centre, said the movie has dented the image of the IAF as it showed that the force is gender biased, which is not correct.

The high court sought response of Dharma Productions Private

**Licences of all city nursing homes to be renewed till March**SHASHI BHUSHAN  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

In a significant development, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday directed the health department to immediately pass an order by which the licences of all nursing homes will automatically be renewed till March next year.

The nursing home owners of Delhi along with senior members of Delhi Medical Council (DMC) and Delhi Medical Association (DMA) on Wednesday met Mr Kejriwal and flagged the renewal of licences as a very significant issue.

In that meeting, the owners of the nursing homes flagged the issue that every year there is a need to renew the licence to run these nursing homes. The owners of nursing homes pointed out that due to the Covid pandemic some of the nursing homes could not renew their licence after the month of March which is creating issues in the operations of these nursing homes.

In this meeting, health minister Satyendar Jain was also present and after listening to the concerns of nursing homes owners, Mr Kejriwal took the deci-

► THE OWNERS of nursing homes pointed out that due to the Covid pandemic some of the nursing homes could not renew their licence after the month of March which is creating issues in the operations of these nursing homes.

► CHIEF MINISTER Arvind Kejriwal directed the health department to immediately pass an order by which the licences of all nursing homes will automatically be renewed till March next year.

President of Delhi Medical Council, Dr Arun Gupta said: "This will provide immediate relief to the nursing home owners." Ex-president of Delhi Medical Association, Dr. R.K. Gupta said: "The Delhi government has taken commendable measures during the time of corona and has honoured the private and government hospitals and health care workers. The meeting with the nursing home owners was successful. We are very happy with the decision of the chief minister."

It also stated that the film displays inappropriate work culture especially against women in IAF, which is misleading. Calling the summary of scenes and dialogues in the script objectionable, IAF stated that they approached the production house (Dharma Productions, headed by Karan Johar), but they did not delete the scenes.

negative light, read the letter.

It also stated that the film displays inappropriate work culture especially against women in IAF, which is misleading. Calling the summary of scenes and dialogues in the script objectionable, IAF stated that they approached the production house (Dharma Productions, headed by Karan Johar), but they did not delete the scenes.



## SHORT TAKES

**'With no Covid, rich occupying ICU beds'**

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope on Wednesday said that "rich people" are occupying ICU beds in hospitals even when they do not have any symptoms of the coronavirus infection. He was speaking about the death of a Marathi journalist due to Covid-19. "Rich people without any symptoms of Covid infection have occupied beds in ICUs." "The infection is spreading in rural areas. Some 80 per cent people who have tested positive are asymptomatic. But if some rich people are occupying the beds without having any infection or symptoms, then such practice should be stopped immediately," said Mr Tope. The 42-year-old journalist who died on Wednesday did not get a cardiac ambulance in time, his kin have alleged. — *PTI*

**4 Lashkar workers arrested in Budgam**

**Srinagar:** Four overground workers of the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba were arrested in Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam district, officials said on Wednesday. As per the police records, the four were involved in providing shelter, logistics and other support to the active terrorists operating in the area, officials said. "The police, along with 53 Rashtriya Rifles, have arrested four terrorist associates in Pethkoot area of Beerwah in Budgam district. They were linked to proscribed terror outfit LeT," the officials said. The arrested persons have been identified as Shakil Ahmad Wani, Showkat Ahmad, Aqib Maqbool Khan and Ajaz Ahmad Dar, the officials said. — *PTI*

**Pranab daughter to take call on publishing diaries**

■ **Continued from Page 1** his diaries, he wrote whatever he thought, things that were off the record but he didn't want to publish it before his death," said veteran journalist Jayanta Ghoshal.

Ghoshal, who had known the late politician since 1985, said Mukherjee was in the habit of writing diaries since his days as a Cabinet minister in the Indira Gandhi government and continued to write them even after retiring as President.

In fact, the length of his entries had increased after he demitted the President's office, he said.

Gautam Lahiri, another senior journalist and long-time friend, added that the seven-time parliamentarian would write a diary every day, but the entry would be for events that took place two days earlier.

"I asked him once what the secret of his razor-sharp memory was, and he told me he wrote diaries not on the day's events but on what happened two days ago. I try to remember that," he said.

One entry Mr Lahiri knows of is a drawing by Mukherjee's granddaughter. This followed a conversation between Mukherjee, the child and then PM Manmohan Singh.

After Pranab Mukherjee was elected President, Dr Manmohan Singh went to his house and Pranabada called his granddaughter and said: "You were looking for a PM, he is a PM." She didn't believe it and ran away. — *PTI*

**Army repositions troops to track China deployments**

■ **Continued from Page 1** Commission. Meanwhile, the brigade-level talks between India and China on de-escalation on the southern banks of Pangong Tso on Wednesday failed to achieve any breakthrough. This was the third round of brigade-level talks in the past three days.

Since May, the Chinese Army strategy has been to grab unoccupied land at the Line of Actual Control in the Ladakh sector to change the status quo. However, on the southern banks of Pangong Tso, the Indian Army had information that the Chinese would try to occupy some of the peaks. As soon as they saw a large number of Chinese troops moving towards the area, Indian troops late Saturday night and early Sunday morning occupied many of the peaks in the area in a "pre-emptive move". The control of the peaks gives the Indian Army the advantage to dominate the area as it can monitor the movements of Chinese troops.

# Justice Mishra, one of most controversial judges, retires

*Says he was commanded by his conscience while writing judgments***PARMOD KUMAR**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

Justice Arun Mishra who was at the Centre of many controversies, including the famous press conference by four top court judges on January 12, 2018, retired from the Supreme Court on Wednesday with attorney-general K.K. Venugopal describing him as an "Iron judge" of the top court who was both "firm and unshakable".

Having spent over six years as a judge of the Supreme Court, Justice Mishra in his farewell remarks said, "I have always written judgments from my conscience and thinking about upholding law."

Justice Mishra was sworn in as judge of the Supreme Court on July 7, 2014.

Sitting with Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde, Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Justice Mishra in his parting remarks said, "Analyse every Judgment and don't colour it this way or that way."

Referring to attorney-general Venugopal saying that he would have appreciated if Justice Mishra-led bench had not punished Prashant Bhushan for contempt, Justice Mishra said that they thought till last moment.

## Guj to bring Bill on pay cut of MLAs and mantris

**Ahmedabad, Sept. 2:** The Gujarat government has decided to bring a Bill in the upcoming session of the state Assembly to cut down the salaries of MLAs and ministers by 30 per cent for one year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The decision to bring this Bill, which will replace an ordinance, was taken in the state Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday. However, the schedule of the Assembly session is yet to be announced.

"The announcement about slashing the salaries of MLAs, ministers and chief minister was made earlier. The Cabinet had then issued an ordinance that elected representatives will be paid 30 per cent less salaries due to the Covid pandemic from April 2020 to March 2021," Gujarat minister of state for home Pradeepsinh Jadeja told reporters.

"Now, as this move is required to be cleared by the state Assembly, the Cabinet on Wednesday decided to bring a Bill in the next Assembly session," he said.

The state government will save ₹6.27 crore by reduction in salaries of elected representatives. Mr Jadeja, however, said that the state government is yet to decide on the date of the commencement of the Assembly session. — *PTI*

## Sushant probe: 2 drug dealers held

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 2

The probe into Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide has taken a leap towards investigation in the drugs angle with the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) making few arrests having links with his girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty, the main accused in the case.

The NCB officials have arrested the peddlers who are from Bandra and have seized an assortment of currency to the tune of ₹9.55 lakh. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) meanwhile continued to grill Chakraborty's father for the second day in a row on Wednesday.

One of the arrested peddlers was identified as Zaid Vilatra, from whom

## Dave deprived of speaking at farewell, writes to CJI

**New Delhi, Sept. 2:** Senior advocate and SCBA President Dushyant Dave Wednesday shot off a letter to the Chief Justice expressing disappointment at being allegedly deprived of an opportunity to speak at the farewell ceremony of Justice Arun Mishra.

Mr Dave wrote to the Chief Justice S.A. Bobde expressing "strong disappointment and condemnation" and said he will never again participate in any function being organised by the Supreme Court till his term as Supreme Court Bar Association president is over in December. "I must confess, the

Justice Mishra did not elaborate any further after CJI Bobde desisted him.

The A-G said that bench headed by Justice Mishra has while punishing lawyer Prashant Bhushan for contempt has "elaborately laid down the contempt principle and it will be debated for a long time."

CJI Bobde said he had never come across a per-

son or judge who has like Justice Mishra faced so many adversities — both as a judge and in his personal life — and yet carried on bravely with fortitude.

Recalling the tremendous amount of work and significant judgments delivered by Justice Mishra, the attorney-general said that he would have been given a fitting farewell in presence of

lawyers but for the Covid pandemic.

Referring to sometimes using harsh words in the course of the hearing Justice Mishra said, "Sometimes I have been very harsh in my conduct directly or indirectly. Nobody should feel hurt... If I have hurt anybody then please pardon me, pardon me, pardon me."

Not known for holding back his views, a debate was triggered when he had described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "versatile genius" at the two-day International Judicial Conference 2020 on "Judiciary and the Changing World" in February.



People perform 'Tarpan' rituals for salvation of their ancestors during 'Pitra Paksha' at the bank of the Yamuna river in Mathura on Wednesday. — *PTI*

## Maha: 600-acre Aarey land earmarked as forest

**Mumbai, Sept. 2:** The Maharashtra government on Wednesday decided to reserve 600-acre Aarey land near the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) in suburban Mumbai as a forest and conserve the same.

The decision was taken during a meeting chaired by chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, who said, the forest would be the first example of a "huge jungle" being conserved at the centre of a megapolis, an official statement said.

Environment minister Aaditya Thackeray, forest minister Sanjay Rathod, urban development minister Eknath Shinde, chief secretary Sanjay Kumar and others were present

for the meeting, the statement said.

The chief minister instructed during the meeting to safeguard the rights of adivasi (tribals) while the area is reserved as forest.

The area to be excluded from the forest will be ascertained after seeking suggestions and objections from citizens, the statement said.

Constructions of all types, roads, slums, adivasi pockets and government facilities will be excluded from the first phase of the initiative, the statement said. The slums within the area will be rehabilitated immediately, the statement said.

In a series of tweets after the meeting, Aaditya Thackeray said, "Approx 600 acres of open land being declared as forest while all rights of Adivasi communities will stand protected."

"Rehabilitation of slums within the area would be expedited. This will be phase 1 for which the Forest Dept will move a proposal. Phase 2 survey for additional open/forest land in Aarey, post Phase 1 will begin soon."

"This would help the State protect the flora & fauna existent in SGNP and Aarey," Aaditya added.

The forested Aarey Colony in suburban Goregaon is a prominent green lung of Mumbai. — *PTI*



**Sometimes I have been very harsh in my conduct directly or indirectly. Nobody should feel hurt... If I have hurt anybody then please pardon me, pardon me, pardon me**

— Justice Arun Mishra, Former CJI

lawyers but for the Covid pandemic.

Referring to sometimes using harsh words in the course of the hearing Justice Mishra said, "Sometimes I have been very harsh in my conduct directly or indirectly. Nobody should feel hurt... If I have hurt anybody then please pardon me, pardon me, pardon me."

Not known for holding back his views, a debate was triggered when he had described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "versatile genius" at the two-day International Judicial Conference 2020 on "Judiciary and the Changing World" in February.

■ 10K men deployed ■ High alert along LoC

## Forces increased along Sikkim, U'khand borders

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

In view of the increasing tension with China along the LAC in the Ladakh sector, the home ministry has increased presence of border guarding forces in other parts of Indo-China border, particularly in Sikkim and Uttarakhand. Close to 100 companies or 10,000 personnel of paramilitary forces have been rushed to border areas.

Sources said security along both China and even Nepal border had been beefed up substantially in view of the fresh transgression attempts made by Chinese forces in Ladakh's Chushul area.

Specifically, sources added, security deployment had been increased at the area along China border in Sikkim and Uttarakhand as intelligence inputs suggest that China could try and open another front in these sectors.

Following these intelligence inputs which have also been shared with border guarding forces like the ITBP and SSB who are normally deployed at the China and Nepal borders. Security deployment in the Doklam region in Sikkim and Kalapani region in Uttarakhand

■ **SECURITY FORCES** along the Pakistan border are also on very high alert as BSF suspects that under Chinese influence Pakistan could trigger fresh trouble in border areas

since increased Chinese activity has been noticed in these sectors.

Most of the additional security companies that have been deployed along Chinese borders are those that were pulled out of Jammu and Kashmir a couple of months back.

In addition, security forces along other borders, specially with Pakistan, are also on very high alert as BSF suspects that under Chinese influence Pakistan could trigger fresh trouble in border areas.

"All our security forces are on very alert in all sectors. We will let China or its allies in our neighbourhood to take any advantage of the situation in Ladakh. Enough deployment has been made in the sensitive border areas and arrangements are in place to rush further reinforcements at a short notice if required," a senior home ministry official said.

## Rahul hits out at Modi over Covid, state of economy

*'India reeling under Modi-made disasters'*

**New Delhi, Sept. 2:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the state of the economy, rise in Covid-19 cases and "external aggression" at borders, alleging that India is reeling under "Modi-made disasters".

His attack comes after official data showed on Monday that the country's economy suffered its worst slump on record in April-June, with the GDP contracting by 23.9 per cent as the coronavirus-related lockdown weighed on the already declining consumer demand and investment.

"India is reeling under Modi-made disasters: 1. Historic GDP reduction -23.9% 2. Highest Unemployment in 45 yrs 3. 12 Crs job loss 4. Centre not paying states their GST dues 5. Globally highest COVID-19 daily cases and deaths 6. External aggression at our borders (sic)"

— Rahul Gandhi, Cong leader

Rebutting Mr Gandhi's attack in a video earlier this week on the state of the economy, the BJP had mocked him saying he should release a video about the "G-23", a reference to the 23 leaders who wrote to the Congress chief seeking the party's overhaul.

Chief economic adviser K.V. Subramanian has said the economy was "experiencing a V-shaped recovery" after the lockdown was eased.

Also on Wednesday, Mr Gandhi shared the latest video in the series titled "Dharohar" which looks back at the party's history and its contributions to India during its nearly 135-year-old history.

Sharing the video on the partition of Bengal on 1905, Mr Gandhi said "Divide and rule" was a disgusting policy and will always be.

"The country had defeated such a thinking earlier and will do so even today as brotherhood and goodwill are the foundations of our democracy," he tweeted. — *PTI*



**India is reeling under Modi-made disasters: 1. Historic GDP reduction -23.9% 2. Highest Unemployment in 45 yrs 3. 12 Crs job loss 4. Centre not paying states their GST dues 5. Globally highest COVID-19 daily cases and deaths 6. External aggression at our borders (sic)**

— Rahul Gandhi, Cong leader

recovery" after the lockdown was eased.

Also on Wednesday, Mr Gandhi shared the latest video in the series titled "Dharohar" which looks back at the party's history and its contributions to India during its nearly 135-year-old history.

Sharing the video on the partition of Bengal on 1905, Mr Gandhi said "Divide and rule" was a disgusting policy and will always be.

"The country had defeated such a thinking earlier and will do so even today as brotherhood and goodwill are the foundations of our democracy," he tweeted. — *PTI*

## Rajnath off to Russia for SCO summit

**New Delhi, Sept. 2:** Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday left for Russia on a three-day visit to attend a crucial meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and hold talks with his Russian counterpart Sergey Shoigu on further boosting bilateral defence cooperation.

The defence ministers of all eight SCO member nations are expected to deliberate on regional security challenges like terrorism and extremism and ways to deal with them "collectively" in Moscow on Friday, officials said.

The meeting is taking place under the shadow of a fierce border row between India and China.

Chinese defence minister Gen. Wei Fenghe and Pakistan's Pervez Khattak are expected to attend the SCO meeting.

Asked about the possibility of a bilateral meeting between Singh and Wei on the sidelines of the SCO event, officials said there is no such plan. — *PTI*



Naresh Jain

## Bizman held under PMLA, dubious firms under ED lens

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday arrested Delhi-based businessman and an alleged "hawala" operator Naresh Jain in a money-laundering probe linked to "hawala" transactions worth about ₹20,000 crore.

According to sources Jain has been arrested under sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Several dubious firms and at least 600 bank accounts are under the scanner of the agency in the case, touted to be one of the biggest hawala and trade-based money-laundering cases of the country.

Sources said, "Jain and his associates are being probed for hawala or illegal financial transactions, including overseas ones, worth about ₹20,000 crore that have been carried out over the last few years".

The agency has also found regular modus operandi of "generations of fake invoices for bogus import and exports" of the accused in the case, with Jain allegedly being the key player, they added.

The Delhi-based businessman was under the scanner of probe agencies for long and in 2016, the ED had slapped a ₹1,200-crore notice on him for alleged contravention of the forex law. Jain has allegedly laundered and routed "hawala" funds for years, financed contra-

band networks and was also arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in the past, sources claimed. The ED money-laundering case is based on this NCB complaint. The agency has been on Jain's trail since 2009, after he moved his operations to India from Dubai.

"He will be confronted with several material evidences recently recovered by the agency sleuths during his custodial interrogation," sources said, adding the agency will also nab his other associates.

## Netflix's Bad Boy Billionaires-India stayed by court over Ramalinga's plea

**Hyderabad, Sept. 2:** A local civil court has issued an interim stay restraining Netflix from airing its Web series *Bad Boy Billionaires-India* on a petition filed by B. Ramalinga Raju, who was convicted in the multi-crore accounting scandal of Satyam Computer Services Limited.

Additional chief judge B. Prathima, while issuing notices to Netflix Inc in USA, Netflix Entertainment Services India LLP and nodal officer, department of electronics and information technology, posted the matter for further hearing on November 18 when the plea came up on Tuesday.

The Web series, sched-

## SC no to petition against order on using name of Subrata Roy

**PARMOD KUMAR**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a plea by Netflix Entertainment Services India against an order of a lower court in Bihar restraining it from releasing its series *Bad Boy Billionaires* having reference to Sahara India head

Subrata Roy in its.

Heading a four judge bench, Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde at the outset of the hearing wondered how a plea could be filed directly in the Supreme Court against a lower court order.

Netflix had come against the order of a lower court in Araria in Bihar.

and corruption that built up — and ultimately brought down — India's most infamous tycoons".

Ramalinga Raju alleged that the so-called investigative docuseries will infringe his rights of fair trial and privacy besides defaming and tarnishing his image across nations.

The petitioner requested the court to declare the proposed move to release the docuseries as amounting to defamation and conducting of media trial

pending the adjudication of case against him in the competent courts of law.

In April 2015, the additional chief metropolitan magistrate's court had awarded seven-year rigorous imprisonment to Satyam Computers founder B. Ramalinga Raju and nine others in the over ₹7,000-crore accounting fraud. — *PTI*



## SHORT TAKES

## Guj Cabinet clears 'anti-goonda' law

**Ahmedabad:** The Vijay Rupani-led BJP government in Gujarat on Wednesday cleared a proposal to enact a new law to rein in habitual criminals and anti-social elements with the legislation stipulating seven to 10 years of jail terms for offenders.

The proposed "Gujarat Gunda and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act", which seeks to strictly deal with criminals, covers a wide range of illegal activities besides providing for special courts to fast-track cases. The state Cabinet gave its approval to a proposal to bring an ordinance "soon" to enforce provisions of the proposed legislation, said Minister of State for Home Pradeepsinh Jadeja.

— PTI

## Pitri Paksha Mela in Gaya cancelled

**Gaya:** The 15-day long "Pitri Paksha Mela" scheduled to start at Gaya on Wednesday has been cancelled due to the surging Covid-19 pandemic in Bihar. The state government has already issued a notification cancelling the fortnight-long event in view of lockdown across the state till September 6 to check spread of the virus. Hindus from world over visit Gaya on the occasion to pay homage to their ancestors, especially through 'pind daan' or food offerings. The annual event is organised with the 'Vishnupad Temple', having the footprints of Lord Vishnu, at its centre. But, the city wore a deserted look during the day in the absence of the event which witnesses hectic activities in the pilgrim town during this time of the year. — PTI

## Girl kills self over love affair

**Bulandshahr:** An investigation into the suicide of a girl here revealed that she took the extreme step after being scolded by her family over her love affair with a boy, police said on Wednesday. However, the girl's family had claimed that she killed herself after being harassed by three boys, they said. The girl allegedly died by suicide on Monday night and her family cremated her without informing police. The family then lodged a complaint against three boys alleging that they harassed the girl, police said. The three boys were detained by police and the investigation revealed that the girl had a love relationship with one of them, they said. — PTI

## 641 new Covid cases in J&amp;K

**Srinagar:** Jammu and Kashmir recorded 641 fresh cases of the novel coronavirus, raising the tally to 38,864 while the death toll from the disease rose to 732 with 15 fatalities in the past 24 hours, officials said on Wednesday. Among the new COVID-19 cases, 274 were from the Jammu region, while 367 from the Kashmir Valley. Jammu district reported a maximum of 167 new cases, followed by 131 in Srinagar district, the officials said. There are 8,053 active Covid-19 cases in the Union Territory, while 30,079 patients have recovered from the infection so far, they said. Fifteen people infected with the coronavirus died in Jammu and Kashmir in the past 24 hours till 5 pm on Wednesday, the officials said. They said while five of these fatalities took place in Jammu, 10 were reported from the Kashmir Valley. — PTI

## 2 Army personnel drown in lake

**Ramgarh:** Two Army personnel have drowned in a lake while undergoing training at the Sikh Regimental Centre (SRC) in Jharkhand's Ramgarh district, officials said on Wednesday. The incident took place on Tuesday when the two sepoys, both hailing from Punjab, were undergoing training in a lake on the SRC campus, Ramgarh Deputy Commissioner Sandeep Singh said. Their bodies were fished out of the lake and handed over to the civil administration for post-mortem examination, he said. Accase of unnatural death has been registered with the Ramgarh town police station, Superintendent of Police Prabhat Kumar said. — PTI

## School, 4 houses damaged in LoC firing

## J&amp;K: Army JCO killed in another sniper hit

AGE CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, SEPT. 2

In the second such incident in the past four days, another Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) of Indian Army was killed in a sniper attack from across the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district on Wednesday. Subedar Rajesh Kumar was a resident of tehsil Mukerian of Hoshiarpur district, Punjab.

Meanwhile, six structures including four residential houses, a government school building and a madrasa (Islamic religious school) were damaged in cross-LoC firing in Gurez sector of Kashmir Valley on Wednesday, the officials said.

The Army and police officials said that a Naib Sebedar posted at a forward location in the Tarkundi area along the LoC was killed after being targeted from across the de facto border. Earlier the facing armies had exchanged small arms fire for some time in this area without causing any casualties or damage on the Indian side, the officials said.

On August 30, Naib Sebedar (JCO) Rajvinder Singh of 1 Sikh Regiment—a resident of Amritsar—was killed possibly in a sniper attack in the LoC's Nowshera sector in Rajouri. Separately, four residential houses, a high school building and a madrasa were partially damaged in Pakistani firing in Gurez sector J&K's

## Bill to include Kashmiri, Dogri &amp; Hindi as official languages

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, SEPT. 2

The Centre's decision to make Hindi, Kashmiri, Dogri and English as official languages of Jammu and Kashmir apart from existing Urdu has been both hailed and assailed by people of the twin regions—Valley and Jammu—of the Union Territory.

However, many people saw 'anti-Urdu bias' behind the move and also believed that the same has been done for political reasons by the present dispensation at the Centre. The legal experts, on the other hand, said that it is a violation of the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 which empowers the new Legislative Assembly of the UT to take such a decision.

northern Bandipora district on Wednesday, the officials said.

They said that the Pakistani troops targeted two forward Indian Army posts near Tarabal in Bagtore area of Gurez with light machine guns, which was "effectively retaliated (to)".

The police sources said that the intermittent exchange of fire between the two sides stopped after a few hours. It is not known if any casualties or damage occurred on the other side of the LoC.

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday, more than a year after J&K was stripped of its special constitutional status and split up into two UTs, approved the introduction in Parliament the J&K Official Languages Bill 2020 in which 5 languages Urdu, Kashmiri, Dogri, Hindi and English will be official languages.

Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Prakash Javadekar, claimed that this has been done based on "public demand" but did not elaborate. Urdu has been the official language of the erstwhile state of J&K since 1888 when Dogra rulers recognized it as the state and official language, replacing Persian which had been the official language of the state for several centuries.

The Indian and Pakistani armies and border guards often clash along the LoC and also International Border (IB) in J&K. As per official statistics, 17 Army and BSF personnel, three civilian porters working for the Army, seven militants and infiltrators and an equal number of civilians were killed in the incidents of cross-border firing and shelling, clashes and sneak attacks carried out by militants along the LoC and 198-km stretch of the IB.

## ■ 'Congress leader using platform to further his agenda'

## FB official appears before Parl panel

**New Delhi, Sept. 2:** Amid a political slugfest over the Facebook issue, the company's India head Ajit Mohan on Wednesday appeared before a parliamentary panel, which is discussing alleged misuse of social media platforms.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology, headed by senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, had called representatives of Facebook to hear their views "on the subject of safeguarding citizens' rights and pre-



Ajit Mohan

vention of misuse of social/online news media platforms including special emphasis on women security in the digital space," according to agenda of the meeting.

Mohan, Managing Director of Facebook

India, appeared before the panel this afternoon, officials said.

The panel has also called representatives of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on the same issue. Mr Tharoor's announcement that the panel would like to hear from Facebook about a report published in the *Wall Street Journal* claiming that the social media platform ignored applying its hate-speech rules to politicians of the BJP in India, had evoked a strong

reaction from BJP members of the panel. BJP MP Nishikant Dubey had alleged that the Congress leader has been using the panel's platform to further his and his party's political agenda. A fresh round of political slugfest started on the matter on Monday with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi claiming that the international media has "exposed" Facebook and WhatsApp's "brazen assault" on India's democracy and social harmony. — PTI

## Assam: Future of 19L people excluded from NRC uncertain

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, SEPT. 2

Fate of over 19 lakh people whose names were excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam continues to hang in balance with the process of issuing rejection slips to those left out yet to start and Assam government reiterating its stand for 10-20 per cent re-verification of names included in the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) published last year.

Assam agriculture minister Chandra Mohan Patowary while responding to a question in the state assembly on status of NRC said, "We had given an affidavit in the Supreme Court saying that there should be re-verification of 20 per cent

included names in the districts bordering Bangladesh and 10 per cent in the rest of the districts." Sticking to the stand of the party and government he further said, "We need a re-verification because people of Assam want a correct NRC." It is significant that about 19 lakh applicants were left out of the NRC. The NRC process has hit a stonewall as the rejection orders to the 19 lakh excluded persons — which will allow them to appeal against the exclusion in the Foreigners' Tribunals — is yet to be issued. The NRC authorities have cited the Covid-19 pandemic as a reason for the delay.

The Supreme Court, which proactively supervised the process of NRC preparation from 2013, has not heard the matter since January 6.

In July last year, the Assam government and the Centre had petitioned the Supreme Court for such a re-verification exercise, but it was dismissed by the apex court after then NRC coordinator Prateek Hajela submitted that re-verification of 27 per cent names was already done. The Supreme Court had mentioned the prospect of sample re-verification in an order in 2018, saying that the court could consider re-verifying 10 per cent of the names included in the second draft of the NRC.

Mr Patowary argued, "The Supreme Court had earlier mentioned a re-verification but the former NRC coordinator did not work properly."

## MP held while trying to offer prayers at mosque

**Aurangabad, Sept. 2:** AIMIM MP Imtiaz Jaleel was briefly detained by the police here in Maharashtra on Wednesday while he was on his way to a mosque to offer prayers defying Covid-19 restrictions, a senior officer said.

The local MP and state unit president of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen had last week said he would offer prayers at mosque if the state government fails to open all religious

places, which are shut due to Covid-19. Jaleel was detained when he was on his way to Shahaganj mosque and then taken to the office of the city police commissioner, the officer said. Jaleel said similar agitations would take place across the state, if the government fails to reopen all religious places for people.

Police Commissioner Chiranjeev Prasad said Jaleel was detained near his office. — PTI

## Malls reopen in Maha even as cases soar



Employees hold placards to welcome customers after a shopping mall was reopened following ease in restrictions during Unluck 4 in Thane on Wednesday. Maharashtra on Wednesday reported 17,433 new Covid-19 cases, highest single-day count so far, taking its tally to 8,25,739, said a health official.

— PTI

## Ex-CM Manjhi returns to NDA fold

NAYEAR AZAD PATNA, SEPT. 2

Former Bihar chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi on Wednesday said that his party, Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM), will contest the Assembly elections as a constituent of NDA in Bihar.

Making a formal announcement regarding his entry into the NDA, Mr Manjhi said, "We are not going to merge our party but have decided to remain in alliance with the JD(U). From now onwards, we are part of NDA in Bihar."

His entry into the NDA is being seen as a major setback for the grand alliance ahead of Assembly elections slated to be held in October-



Jitan Ram Manjhi

November this year.

Sources said that after quitting the grand alliance in August, Mr Manjhi also explored the possibility to ally with several political parties. HAM insiders said that he discussed the issue with Pappu Yadav of Jan Adhikar Party (JAP) and Mukesh Sahani of Vikasheel Insaan Party, but talks failed.

## Trinamul MP writes to Zuckerberg over 'bias'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2

After the Congress, it was the turn of the Trinamul Congress on Wednesday to raise the issue of alleged bias of social media platform Facebook towards the BJP. In a letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, TMC MP Derek O'Brien has claimed that there is enough evidence in public domain to substantiate this charge. Mr O'Brien also reminded the Facebook CEO of an earlier meeting between the two where he had raised some of these concerns. TMC sources said that Mr O'Brien met Zuckerberg in October 2015 in Delhi.

"We, the All India Trinamul Congress (AITC), India's second-largest opposition party, have had serious concerns about Facebook's role during the 2014 and 2019 general elections in India," the letter said.

"With the elections in the Indian state of West Bengal just months away, your company's recent blocking of Facebook pages and accounts in Bengal also points to the link between Facebook and the BJP. There is enough material now in the public domain, including internal memos of senior Facebook management, to substantiate the bias," it said.

## Betrayal of trust: Mamata to PM on GST shortfall

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, SEPT. 2

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene in his government's "betrayal of trust" by suggesting the states to borrow funds to meet their GST revenue shortfall. She described the Centre's move to not compensate the states for the GST shortfall amid Covid-19 pandemic "an act of subterfuge to undermine the trust reposed by the states in the spirit of cooperative federalism."

In a letter to the PM, Ms Banerjee wrote, "I am deeply anguished by the GST imbroglio which tantamounts to a betrayal of the trust and moral responsibility of the Government of India towards the states, violating the very premise of federalism. This is a travesty and an abrogation of the fundamental basis on which the States gave up 70% of their taxing powers, including the entire VAT regime, to usher in the GST regime."

She told him, "May I remind you that, not only you, as chief minister of Gujarat, opposed the implementation of GST on various grounds, but Late Shri Arun Jaitley also unambiguously and publicly stated, in December 2013, that the sole reason why BJP was opposing the GST imple-



Mamata Banerjee

mentation is because BJP did not trust the then Government of India in honouring compensation of GST losses to the States! Today, his words are ringing in our ears as we are losing trust on the BJP Government in the Centre, in honouring its solemn promise of fully compensating GST losses to the states."

The Trinamul Congress supremo then added, "I sincerely urge you to intervene on this matter to rekindle the trust between States and the Centre at the GST Council — a trust that had held for over 3 years and 40 meetings of the Council, despite occasional differences across party lines."

"On behalf of my state and all the States, sincerely urge you not to belie the trust between the states and the Centre on matters of GST which has been hailed world over as the finest example of cooperative federalism. I further urge you not to allow an insufferable blow to the federalist polity of our nation."

## Row in MP over eggs in Anganwadi meals

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, SEPT. 2



Madhya Pradesh women and child welfare minister Imarti Devi on Wednesday revived her demand for introduction of egg in diet of children in anganwadi centres to combat malnutrition menace in the state, causing a flutter in the ruling BJP here.

The minister had triggered a debate on the issue when she, as minister for women and child welfare in the previous Kamal Nath government, had initiated the move to add egg in diet of children in

anganwadi centres in the state, inviting criticism from BJP then.

BJP has been opposing any such move arguing that any attempt to tamper with dietary habit of a particular section of people would lead to cultural conflict in the society.

"It is a conspiracy to change dietary habit of innocent children from vegetarian to non-vegetarian against tradition and faiths of their families. The move will trigger cultural conflict leading to social unrest in the state", BJP spokesman Rajneesh Agrawal had then said.

Talking to reporters here, the minister said she was strongly in favour of adding egg in the diet of children in anganwadi centres as well as in mid-day meal served to school children, to tackle malnutrition among them.

"Egg is a very good source of nutrition", she

said. She however said the egg would not be imposed on anybody and it would be left to the children to opt for suitable replacement of egg in their diet if they wished.

Opposition Congress here took the opportunity to dare the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government to implement the proposal mooted by the minister.

"BJP was opposing the decision by the previous Kamal Nath government to introduce egg in the food menu in anganwadi centres. Now, a minister in the BJP government in the state wants to implement the proposal.



THE ASIAN AGE

3 SEPTEMBER 2020

Govt letter to FB baffling, but an inquiry is in order

The Government of India, through law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, has petitioned the chief executive of social media platform Facebook that the personnel heading the company's India operations have been inimical to the right of the centre political thought and that they have been aligned with those who "stoke internal divisions and social disturbances" in the country. The minister has also inferred that reports putting Facebook's activities in India under cloud reflect "nothing but an internal power struggle within your company for an ideological hegemony".

That the government has refused to see the impropriety of a minister, who ought to represent the people at the left, right and the centre of the political spectrum and even those who are beyond politics, taking a partisan approach cannot be missed. But the more serious issues that the letter raises, and their background, need careful assessment.

It was not long ago that the *Wall Street Journal* came out with a report that Team Facebook India short-changed its own policies and refused to act against people and organisations affiliated to the BJP and the Sangh Parivar who used the platform for inciting violence and spreading communal hatred. The company's top officials, the report said, cited potential loss of business should it go against the interests of the ruling dispensation.

In an apparent effort to turn the tables on critics, the law minister accuses Facebook of torpedoing BJP's election propaganda by deleting pages or substantially reducing the reach of the people who are supportive of its ideology. He says the people at the management are tools in the hands of those who "are trying to discredit India's democratic process". The minister has

in no uncertain terms told Mr Mark Zuckerberg that it is problematic when Facebook employees are on record abusing the Prime Minister and senior cabinet ministers, and pointed out that political biases of individuals at the company impinge on the freedom of speech of millions of people.

The charges, to sum up, are too critical: Facebook's actions seek to undermine or interfere with our democratic process and harm freedom of speech; it colludes with "anarchic and radical elements" who target social harmony using the platform and stoke social disturbances.

The law minister, wittingly or unwittingly, has echoed the Opposition charge that Facebook in its present form is a biased media platform that has the potential to damage our democracy; only the interpretation on who makes use of it has changed. It, along with a lot of like-minded people, has already demanded an investigation by a joint parliamentary committee to get to the bottom of the allegations. Since the government shares these concerns, it must order a comprehensive probe that can address them all.

In the meantime, the government may also reflect on the demands it has made on the social media giant and what it has been doing about putting in place community guidelines that "respect the social, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity of India".

A whistleblower's vindication

At a time that the Supreme Court is being seen as a muzzled watchdog silent in the face of rampant rise in hate crimes and unconscionable negligence, it is the high courts that have emerged as a beacon, offering limited succour to the persecuted. This time around, it has come to the rescue of two brave citizens.

Allahabad high court chief justice Govind Mathur has to his credit a long line of recent orders upholding fundamental rights. Many of them have come in suo motu cases. It was Justice Mathur's bench, for instance, which directed the Uttar Pradesh government in March this year to remove hoardings erected at public places displaying photos and addresses of alleged Citizenship (Amendment) Act dissenters. And it is his bench that ordered the release of Gorakhpur paediatrician Kafeel Khan, setting aside the Yogi Adityanath government's detention order against him, declaring his speech at Aligarh Muslim University campus on December 13, 2019, a call to unity and national integration. Most importantly, it ruled the invocation of the National Security Act in the case two full months later as unsustainable. Mr Khan had been granted bail in February but was kept in jail under the provisions of the NSA.

However, anti-CAA activist Devangana Kalita, who was granted bail by Delhi high court judge Suresh Kumar Kait who ruled that her presence in the protests at Jafrabad Metro station on the night of February 22 failed to prove that she had instigated Muslim women to violence or given a hate speech, will continue to remain in jail. She is in custody under another FIR filed under the draconian UAPA and has been refused bail in that case.

In his speech at AMU, Mr Khan, whose family has been made the target of miscreant attacks, had called attention to the appalling absence of doctors and basic infrastructure in heartlands, and he had also mentioned that as a member of his community he refused to be browbeaten into silence. He had criticised the impunity with which a labourer was killed in Rajasthan in 2017, simply for being Muslim. In February, Mr Khan's own uncle became the victim of a shooting. The courts should compensate Mr Khan for the sufferings that he has endured and the months that he has spent in jail — in 2017, too, he was harassed by the same administration for exposing medical negligence. A rational and pluralistic polity should heed his views.

THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY  
Editor in Chief

Printer & Publisher: K. SUDHAKAR  
THE ASIAN AGE offices are located at:  
New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 25211124. **Mumbai:** Sigma House, # 43, Ground Floor, R. A. Kidwai Marg, Near Wadala Rly Station, Wadala (West), Mumbai - 400 051 Phone (022) 24195301 Fax (022) 24195347 **Kolkata:** 4th Floor, Chowdhury Building, 8/A Little Russell Street, Kolkata 700 071. Phone: (033) 2289 0676/77 Fax (033) 2289 0686  
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office in the United Kingdom Air surcharge for Kathmandu and J&K ₹1  
Published and Printed on behalf of and for  
► Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301. ► Mumbai: Dangat Media Pvt Ltd, Plot No 22, Digha MIDC, TTC Industrial Estate Area, Vishnu Nagar, Digha, Navi Mumbai-400708. ► Kolkata: Satyajug Employees Cooperative Industrial Society Ltd, 13/A, Prafulla Sarkar Street, Kolkata 700 072. ► London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.  
RNI Registration number: 57290/94 Postal registration numbers: DL(S)-05/4189/15-17

Saeed Naqvi



Wide Angle

Rahat Indori: A theme for Bollywood with built-in lyrics

Corona ridden Bollywood may well be asking script writers to try their hand on Rahat Indori, the Urdu poet whose popularity has shaken up the literary world particularly since his death on August 11. He is a most unlikely icon. The actor who could have played the role most convincingly also died recently — the adorable comic, Soorma Bhopali of *Sholay* fame. They both came from impoverished backgrounds from the Bhopal-Indore belt and had similar accents, flattening their vowels, imparting to their speech a typical Bhopali lilt.

Rahat Indori was five years old when the much loved poet Majaz died of a stroke after he was found on the freezing terrace of a country liquor shop in Lucknow's Qaisar Bagh. As someone born to a poor cloth mill labourer, Rahat's nightmare of financial insecurity only increased watching the economically circumscribed lives of Urdu poets. Majaz was only one of them. Rahat worked hard educating himself right upto PhD on a subject which was to stand him in good stead in subsequent years — Urdu Mushaira. And what a performer he became in Mushairas charging upto ₹10 lakhs for an appearance — quite unprecedented.

This is precisely the reason why

Rahat's dominance of the media space following his death is such a phenomenon. Andy Warhol's observation is succinct: society has reached a point where everybody will have fifteen minutes of fame. But applying this quip to Rahat Indori would be an insult. Rahat had an extraordinary following for decades.

Rahat missed out on any personal experience of the greats like Faani Badayuni, Jigar Moradabadi and Yaas Yagana Changezi. He was too young. But Josh Malihabadi and Firaq Gorakhpuri were around till the late 80s, and a 30 year old budding poet of Indore must have overlapped in a Mushaira or two. Firaq, ofcourse, taught English literature in Allahabad University, but Josh mostly depended on feudal patronage after the abolition of zamindari in 1952. Some experiences for a man of his ego were humiliating. For instance when Josh was introduced to the Patiala Durbar, the state's Prime Minister Sardar K.M. Panikkar, ill equipped to place any value on an Urdu poet, decided on a stipend of ₹75 per month. The Maharaja, an admirer of Josh, was embarrassed: he increased the amount to ₹300, a princely sum those days.

The fastidious would not rank Rahat among the finest poets, but the poets

who would qualify for their esteem would never have audiences of thousands in their thrall, Mushaira after Mushaira, across India, indeed, worldwide.

What will be Rahat's place in literature? There is a singular lack of endorsement of a large swathe of contemporary Urdu poetry by critics, scholars, connoisseurs and those who have grown in an informed Urdu milieu. Ironically, this turns out to be in inverse proportion to the unprecedented popularity of poets like Rahat. How does one explain this equation? It is almost axiomatic that with rising egalitarianism a taste for classics will decline. In his diction and delivery, Rahat had cultivated an exaggerated "abhinay", a knack for coming across as a street fighter.

The danger of feudal patronage drying up was real but mostly in North India. The South remains much the more civilized thanks to such institutionalized treats in dance and music annually as "The Season" in Chennai. In the Hindi belt, just as the feudal patronage tapered off, enlightened business houses like the Bharatrams, Charatrams and the Sarabhais stepped in massively. They have now been superseded by the unbelievable explosion of music on the social media. Everything, from the earliest

recordings in 1900, is available with the flip of a switch.

Compared to music, the graph of Urdu poetry is more complex. After Partition it was assumed that interest in Urdu would decline. Josh Malihabadi's dictum that "a language which does not give you bread will die" did operate to the extent that the number of scholars, critics, indeed even university faculties dwindled. A more formal and educated appreciation of poetry was a distinct casualty. Highbrow literature did begin to make way for more popular genres. But Urdu was able to frequently shock those who had written its obituary. Never was this shock more telling than during the unprecedented success of Jashn e Rekhta, a celebration of Urdu in all its forms, an annual carnival which fills up half a dozen venues at New Delhi's National Stadium day and night for three days. This brainchild of a remarkable cultural entrepreneur Sanjiv Saraf is an unparalleled contribution towards uplifting the drooping morale of Urduwallas. Urdu's demise, in any case, was prematurely predicted after the resilience it had demonstrated in Bollywood in the field of lyrics, diction, dialogues both, their content and delivery. Little wonder, Rahat became a sought after lyricist with music directors like Anu

Malik and A.R. Rehman.

Artist M.F. Hussain became one of Rahat's obsessive admirers after watching him keep a packed hall spell-bound during a poetic symposium in Qatar. They became close friends. In fact the cover of one of Rahat's collections, has been designed by Hussain. There is stunning irony about his death. Rahat wrote:

"Waba phaili hui hai har taraf  
Abhi mahaul mar jaane ka naheen"  
(A pandemic is spreading everywhere)

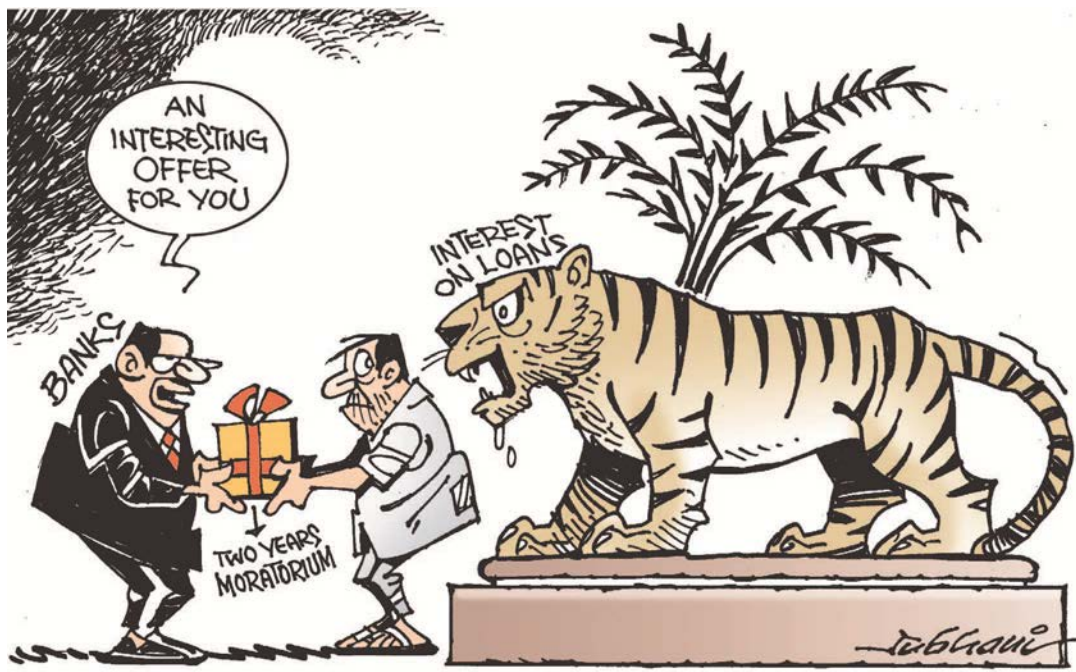
This is not the proper season to die.) The poet who wrote these lines is declared Corona positive on the night of August 10 and is dead by August 11. Is there a galloping strain of Corona? Remember how Habib Jalib's "*Main naheen manta*" became an iconic song during the anti-citizenship stir? Equally evocative and direct was Rahat's couplet:

"Sabhi ka khood hai shamil yahan  
ki mitti mein;  
Kisi ke baap ka Hindostan thodi hai"  
(The blood of all of us has mingled in this soil;

Hindostan is not the property of anybody's father)

The writer is a senior journalist and commentator based in New Delhi

Subhani



Dada's politics: Adept at managing power games



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

The death of former President Pranab Mukherjee on the evening of August 31 after battling medical complications, including Covid-19, has opened the debate, a right-ful and meaningful one too, about Pranab Mukherjee the politician and what is to be counted as his legacy, if there is one. Political colleagues and journalists have tried to assess the man and most of them had zeroed in on the "elephantine memory" and "troubleshooter" aspects. Some journalists had showed a bit more courage and talked about how he could not become the Prime Minister either in 2004 or in 2009 because he did not seem to inspire Congress president Sonia Gandhi's confidence, that was sine qua non for getting the job. It is tempting to rephrase the position of Pranab Dada — the generic Mukherjee would take away from the man of flesh and blood that he actually was — as "the man who became President because he could not be Prime Minister".

But he was not a natural choice for the presidency because he was a politician to reckon with and neither of the two major parties — the Congress and the BJP — wanted a seasoned politician to be President. That is why Atal Behari Vajpayee fell back on non-politician A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in 2002 though his first choice was Indira Gandhiera bureaucrat P.C. Alexander, and in 2007 Dr Manmohan Singh and Mrs Sonia Gandhi chose a little-known politician from Maharashtra, Pratibha Patil. The last active politician who became President before Pranab Mukherjee was

Shankar Dayal Sharma in 1992. So it was not an easy going for Pranab. He had to lobby hard, including through Samajwadi Party supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav with a possible nudge from Reliance's Anil Ambani in 2012.

Some journalists have thrown in the interesting speculative line about the possibility that never became a reality: that Dr Manmohan Singh should have been sent to Rashtrapati Bhavan and Pranab should have been made the Prime Minister. And how it could have saved the Congress Party many of the blushes and ignominies. Of course, this was never really in the realm of possibility given the intense rivalries and feuds between the senior leaders in the party. And there was of course Sonia Gandhi's trust deficit factor. But Pranab was in the habit of taking whatever came his way and making it his own. During his five-year term, he fulfilled the obligations of the high office and used his political judgment every bit of the way, including his acceptance of a BJP government led by Narendra Modi in 2014. It would have been easier for a Congressman to accept a BJP leader other than Narendra Modi. But showed no hesitation in seeing Mr Modi as the popularly elected leader and he accepted the 2014 verdict with an open mind. It is this open mindedness that made him go to address Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh workers in Nagpur in 2018, after leaving office, and tell them about India's pluralist traditions.

Pranab's political career falls into two clear phases. The first is the Indira Gandhi years, where he was the charismatic leader's trusted lieutenant, but he was no

mere loyalist. He brought an intelligent man's grasp to policy matters. There is the general feeling that Indira Gandhi surrounded herself with mindless sycophants. Pranab was not one of them. It is one of the reasons that Indira Gandhi gave him ministerial responsibilities that would have been generally considered far beyond his years.

The second phase, and the longer one, began with the tragic assassination of Indira Gandhi. He now had to face rivalries in the party, including the perceived one from Rajiv Gandhi himself, and he was metaphorically swimming in shark-infested waters, as it were. Rajiv Gandhi had his own group of talented people, who were a generation younger to him. He could have thrown in the towel, but he was not the man to do that. He sat out the difficult days.

P.V. Narasimha Rao, who became PM once the Congress returned to power after Rajiv's assassination, knew Pranab's worth well, but Rao had his own cunning way of handling talent. Pranab being offered the post of deputy chairman of the Planning Commission was no demotion. It was a job that suited Pranab eminently if you forget the fact that the Planning Commission was an antiquated institution. Rao was not a wholehearted votary of the economic reforms that he had launched. He did not give up his own Nehruvian faith in a planned economy. And Pranab too was not a reforms enthusiast, in the manner of Manmohan Singh and P. Chidambaram.

It can be said that

**Pranab really came into his own in the UPA years when he was the manager of governmental workings even as Sonia Gandhi was managing political affairs for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh**

Pranab really came into his own in the UPA years — the eight years from 2004 to 2012 where he was the manager of governmental workings even as Sonia Gandhi was managing political affairs for Prime

Minister Manmohan Singh. Pranab showed that he was capable in dealing with the intricacies of administration without handing over the levers of power to the bureaucrats. But he also showed that he was not infallible, and this came out most starkly when he committed the blunder of going to meet yoga guru and agitator Baba Ramdev. It was a clear sign of loss of nerve by the gritty politician, and it was one of the reasons that the Congress fared so badly at the hustings in 2014.

Pranab's stint as finance minister from 1982 to 1984 and from 2009 to 2012 remains controversial. In his 1980s' stint as finance minister he could be seen encouraging indirectly through budgetary incentives

Reliance's Dhirubhai Ambani and playing corporate politics. And in his second stint as finance minister he was faced with the 2008 global financial meltdown, and it seemed his misgivings about a free market economy had been confirmed. The stimulus package he had rolled out was a sign of government patronage of the private sector more than a mere policy measure. He believed in state regulation of the economy, where the private sector flourished but it did not have a free run. The strings of power remained with the State — and that is almost the atavistic economic thinking of Pranab. Arun Jaitley had described Pranab's 2009 Budget as a rollback to the 1980s. But when he was finance minister, Jaitley simply could not resist the temptation of asserting the rule of the State, more than the rule of law, over the economy. Pranab would have approved of it.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

LETTERS

THE POMPOUS PM

PM Narendra Modi's monthly radio show, *Mann Ki Baat*, receiving over five lakh dislikes against less than 1.5 lakhs likes has led to a flutter in ruling party circles. Sycophants have blamed it on the ubiquitous "foreign hand", urban Naxals and the Opposition. The Prime Minister's Office has disabled the like and dislike buttons and in so doing taken the easy way out instead of reckoning with the reality of his deteriorating image. This has led to much mirth among news watchers.

Bhagwan Thadani  
Mumbai

GRANDMASTERS

**KUDOS TO THE** Indian chess contingent comprising Pragnanandhaa, Divya Deshmukh, Nihal Sarin, et al, which emerged as joint winners with title favourite Russia at the Chess Olympiad. It was the first to be hosted on a virtual platform. It is unfortunate that the finals proved indecisive due to technical glitches. India's chess players deserve more attention after the Olympiad triumph as with the right assistance they can easily match the prowess of chess superpowers like Russia, China and the United States.

Sankar Paul  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

BOUND TO CRASH

**EVEN BEFORE** the nationwide lockdown, the economy was witnessing a slowdown in growth. The 23.9 per cent contraction in GDP places India as one of the worst performing economies on a global scale. When you think of it, the contraction is supposed to be more but the official data does not reflect it. This is because most of the unorganised sector is not taken into consideration. Certain economic policies that were introduced also seem to have contributed to the downfall. I find myself agreeing with Rahul Gandhi when he says that the crash was one that was bound to happen someday or the other. Poor show, Modi government.

Subhashini Ramasamy  
Mumbai

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: letters.asianage@gmail.com.



## IN BRIEF

**\$27 mn cash seized from ship**

**San Juan:** Federal authorities have announced that they seized \$27 million in undeclared cash aboard a ship bound for the US Virgin Islands, the largest such seizure ever in the region. US Customs and Border Protection on Tuesday said a dog inspecting cargo on Saturday aboard a ship docked in Puerto Rico alerted agents to the money found inside home moving boxes destined for St Thomas. No one has been arrested.

**Germany porn: 50 houses raided**

**Berlin:** A thousand police officers in Germany raided the homes of 50 people as part of a nationwide crackdown on the online sharing and distribution of child pornography, Cologne police said Wednesday. None of the 48 men and two women suspected of involvement was arrested during Tuesday's raids, but investigators seized around 2,000 phones, computers and other devices upon which images were stored, police said. The suspects are accused of sharing images of child sexual abuse through networks such as social media and messenger services, Michael Esser, director of criminal investigations for the Cologne police, said. None of them are suspected of directly abusing any children, according to the current state of the investigation. "Behind every picture there is a victim of sexual abuse," Esser said. "We will never give up the fight against pedophile criminals." The suspects present a cross section of society, young and old, single and married, Cologne prosecutor Markus Hartmann said.

**14 on trial over Paris attacks**

**Paris:** Thirteen men and a woman went on trial over the 2015 attacks against a satirical newspaper and a kosher supermarket in Paris that marked the beginning of a wave of violence by the Islamic State group in Europe. Seventeen people and all three gunmen died during the three days of attacks in January 2015. Those on trial in France's terrorism court are accused of buying weapons, cars, and helping with logistics. Most say they thought they were helping plan an ordinary crime. Three, including the only woman accused, are being tried in absentia after leaving to join Islamic State. The attacks from January 7-9, 2015, started during an editorial meeting at *Charlie Hebdo*, whose offices had been unmarked and guarded by police since the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad years before. Brothers Cherif and Said Kouachi gunned down 12 people before carjacking a vehicle and fleeing. They claimed the attacks in the name of al-Qaida. Two days later Amedy Coulibaly stormed the Hyper Cacher supermarket, killing four hostages in the name of the IS group as the brothers took control of a printing office outside Paris.

**THAI KING RECONCILES WITH CONSORT**

**Bangkok, Sept 2:** Thailand's king has reconciled with his royal consort, whom he stripped of her titles last year after accusing her of seeking to undermine his official wife, the country's queen. The restoration of Sineenatratana Wongvajirabhakdi to the good graces of King Maha Vajiralongkorn was confirmed by an official announcement published Wednesday in the Royal Gazette. The announcement, dated August 29, said she was being given back her royal and military titles. It said Sineenatratana was not tainted by any wrongdoing, and the record should not show that she ever lost her privileges. Bloggers who follow royal news had reported last week that Sineenatratana had been rehabilitated. She had not been seen publicly after her fall from grace last year and her whereabouts were never made clear.

# Protesters target Portland mayor

**Riot declared after fire in his apartment**

## Gun at protest prompts curfew

**Portland, Sept 2:** Protesters in Portland, Oregon, shifted their focus to the city's mayor, and police declared a riot as people broke windows, vandalised a business and set a small fire inside the upscale apartment building where Mayor Ted Wheeler lives. The demonstration that began late Monday and extended into Tuesday fell on Wheeler's 58th birthday and featured shiny golden alphabet balloons that protesters used to spell out an expletive. They sang on the street outside the mayor's building, some wearing party hats, and the fire was set with a bundle of newspapers in a store housed on the ground floor of Wheeler's building. There were no reports of major damage or injuries.

Wheeler, who is also police commissioner, has come under fire for his failure to bring the violence in Oregon's largest city under control and for heading up a police force that has used tear gas multiple times against demonstrators.

Some also blame the mayor for engaging in a war of words with President Donald Trump instead of focusing on local needs. Trump has put Portland and other Democrat-led cities in the crosshairs of a "law and order" re-election campaign theme — a move that's escalated tensions in the city and drawn the attention of right-wing Trump supporters.

A supporter of the right-wing group Patriot Prayer was killed Saturday during clashes between dueling protesters. A caravan of Trump supporters, estimated at about 600 cars, encountered Black Lives Matter protesters as they drove through the downtown and skirmishes broke out.

Police have not announced an arrest in the slaying of Aaron J. Danielson, 39, of Portland, and have said nothing about what led up to the shooting. Police Chief Chuck Lovell denounced the vandalism and said it was an escalation of previous protester actions. "The families that live inside have done absolutely nothing to provoke a threat to their lives," he said. —AP

**Tallahassee (US), Sept 2:** A Florida county instituted a curfew Tuesday, several days after a man pulled a gun at a protest against police violence, officials said. Leon County Commission Chairman Bryan Desloge signed an order declaring a local state of emergency that includes a curfew from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. starting Wednesday and lasting for a week. The proclamation cites Tallahassee protests that have turned violent, specifically a Saturday confrontation where a man pulled a gun on protesters. The Tallahassee Police Department said in a statement that the incident occurred during a protest downtown. Police said a white man

began "documenting the protest" and then was pushed from behind.

A fight ensued, police said, and the man was knocked to the ground. The man got up and pulled a gun, police said. Officers took the man into custody and dispersed the crowd. No charges were filed, and no injuries were reported.

Police said the man with the gun "was lawfully carrying a concealed weapon as a license holder." The demonstration was organised by the Tallahassee Community Action Committee in response to the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, which has sparked protests across the country. —AP

## Trump spins tale of orchestrated protests

**Chicago, Sept 2:** President Donald Trump is recycling a baseless conspiracy theory to claim that recent protests have been orchestrated by powerful people in "dark shadows" intent on undermining his reelection prospects. The claims first took root on Facebook and Twitter earlier this year after racial justice protests swelled across the country following the deaths of PoC in police custody. Thousands of social media users shared posts suggesting a covert network was coordinating the protests and rioters were descending on communities across the country.

Trump appeared to amplify those unfounded conspiracy theories in an interview with *Fox News* host Laura Ingraham that aired Monday night, suggesting that protests in Washington during the Republican National Convention were orchestrated by unspecified forces.

"We had somebody get on a plane from a certain city this weekend. And in the plane, it was almost

completely loaded with thugs wearing these dark uniforms, black uniforms with gear and this and that," said Trump, adding that the matter is under investigation.

When asked by reporters Tuesday for additional details on his assertion, Trump said someone else witnessed the activity and he would have to check to see if that person was willing to speak with news media.

Vice President Mike Pence was asked in an interview on Tuesday evening to explain what President Trump was talking about.

"Well, I think what the president's referring to is actually what we heard in many of the cities. I know in Detroit there were a large number of arrests several weeks ago and the vast majority of people were from out of state. The same thing occurred in arrests that took place in recent cities," Pence said on *Fox News Channel's* "Special Report with Bret Baier." —AP

# PIA sacks 74 more staff for fake degrees, malpractices

**Islamabad, Sept 2:** Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has sacked 74 more employees for having fake degrees, engaging in drug smuggling and for poor performance, according to a media report. Of the 74 employees sacked by the national carrier last month, 27 were dismissed for fake degrees, 31 for unauthorised measures, six for not following rules, four for damaging property, one for involvement in drug trafficking and three for stealing government records, PIA officials told the *Express Tribune* newspaper.

Apart from these, four employees were demoted, and 11 others were penalised for various disciplinary issues. —PTI

**ISLAMABAD TO BE FIRST PAKISTAN CITY TO GET ELECTRIC TRANSPORT**

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPTEMBER 2

Pakistan Minister for Science and Technology, Fawad Chaudhry, on Wednesday vowed to make Islamabad Pakistan's first city where transport will be fully electric.

Speaking at a news conference here, Fawad Chaudhry said that federal government will import 120 electric buses this year and local assembling of battery powered buses will start next year.

"Electric buses will operate in Pakistan this year as the government is

all set to import 120 buses," he said and added that domestic manufacturing of these buses will start in three year time.

The minister said the government was focusing on the electric vehicles as it will bring revolution in the transport sector.

He said high technology farms will be developed to promote the production of unconventional crops.

Commenting over the industrial and medical use of hemp, he said that government has identified Peshawar, Jhelum and Chakwal as sites for the cultivation of hemp.

## Mirror image



A gardener at work mirrors in an artwork by British Indian artist Anish Kapoor on a sunny day at the sculpture museum set in nature in Cologne, Germany, on Wednesday. —AP

# China plans military facilities in Pak, Lanka, Myanmar: Pentagon

**Washington, Sept 2:** China is seeking to set up more robust logistics facilities in about a dozen countries, including three in India's neighbourhood, to allow the PLA to project and sustain military power at greater distances, according to a Pentagon report. In addition to the three neighbours of India — Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar — the other countries where China is considering to base its military logistics and infrastructure facilities are Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates, Kenya, Seychelles, Tanzania, Angola and Tajikistan, the report said on Tuesday.

In its annual report "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020" that was submitted to the US Congress, the Pentagon said these potential Chinese military logistics facilities are in addition to the Chinese military base in Djibouti, which is aimed at supporting naval, air and ground forces projection. "A global PLA (People's Liberation Army) military logistics network could both interfere with US military operations and support offensive operations against the US as the PRC's global military objectives evolve," the Pentagon said in the report.

China has probably already made overtures to Namibia, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands, it said, adding the known focus areas of PLA planning are along the Seal Lines of Communication from Hormuz, Africa, and the Pacific Islands. Similarly, the Pentagon said, Beijing uses the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative to support its strategy of national rejuvenation by seeking to expand global transportation and trade linkages to support its development and deepen its economic integration with nations along its periphery and beyond.

"OBOR projects associated with pipelines and port construction in Pakistan intend to decrease China's reliance on transporting energy resources through strategic chokepoints," it said. —PTI

## World sidelining China: Pompeo

The entire world is beginning to unite against China's unfair practices and countries like India, Australia, Japan and South Korea are going to partner with the US to push back Beijing on every front, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said. The US is intensifying pressure on China, piling on visa bans, sanctions and other restrictions that are battering the already unsettled ties between the world's two largest economies.

In an interview to *Fox News* on Tuesday, Pompeo said, "I think you're seeing the entire world begin

to unite around the central understanding that the Chinese Communist Party simply is going to refuse to compete in a fair, reciprocal and transparent way." "So, whether it's our friends in India, our friends in Australia, friends in Japan or South Korea, I think they have all come to see the risk to their own people, to their own countries, and you'll see them partner with the US to push back (China) on every front that we've talked about this evening," he said, to a question posed by the host, Lou Dobbs, on India reportedly sending a warship into the South China Sea. —PTI

**CHINA TOOK 'NAIVE' U.S. FOR A RIDE: HALEY**

**Washington, Sept 2:** China has taken a "naive" US and its leaders for a ride over the past several decades, according to former top Indian-American diplomat Nikki Haley, who said the Trump administration through its robust Indo-Pacific strategy is now learning who its real friends are.

Speaking at the third India-US Leadership Summit organised virtually by the US India Strategic and Partnership Forum (USISPF), former US Ambassador to the UN Haley on Tuesday said Americans know that Indians are not a threat to them. —PTI

**STUDENTS IN INNER MONGOLIA PROTEST CHINESE LANGUAGE POLICY**

**Taipei, Sept 2:** Ethnic Mongolians, including students and parents, in China's Inner Mongolia region are demonstrating their anger in rare public protests against a new bilingual education policy with nations along its periphery and beyond. "OBOR projects associated with pipelines and port construction in Pakistan intend to decrease China's reliance on transporting energy resources through strategic chokepoints," it said. —PTI

"We senior students were talking and we thought we had to do something," said the student, Narsu, who like most Mongolians has only one name. "Although this doesn't directly affect us now, this will have a huge impact on us in the future." The policy, announced on Monday ahead of the start of the new school year, requires schools to use new national textbooks in Chinese, replacing Mongolian-language textbooks. —AP

# Navalny poisoned with nerve agent

**Berlin, Sept 2:** The German government says tests performed on samples taken from Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny showed the presence of the Soviet-era nerve agent Novichok.

Navalny, a politician and corruption investigator who is one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critics, fell ill on a flight back to Moscow from Siberia on August 20 and was taken to a hospital in the Siberian city of Omsk after the plane made an emergency landing. He was later transferred to Berlin's Charite hospital, where doctors last week said there were indications that he had been poisoned.

Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman, Steffen Seibert, said in a statement Wednesday that testing by a special German military laboratory had shown proof of "a chemical nerve agent from the Novichok group." Novichok, a Soviet-era nerve agent, was used to poison former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Britain. It is a cholinesterase inhibitor, part of the class of substances that doctors at the Charite initially identified in Navalny.

Seibert said the German government will inform its partners in the European Union and NATO about the test results. He

said that it will consult with its partners in light of the Russian response "on an appropriate joint response." Navalny's allies in Russia have insisted he was deliberately poisoned by the country's authorities, accusations that the Kremlin rejected as "empty noise."

The Russian doctors who treated Navalny in Siberia have repeatedly contested the German hospital's conclusion. —AP

**Race pitted two well-liked progressives against one another with Ed Markey winning**

# End of a dynasty? Joe Kennedy loses in US Senate bid

**Boston, Sept. 2:** Congressman Joe Kennedy, long seen as a rising star, crashed to defeat Tuesday in his bid for a US Senate seat, the first time the storied American political dynasty lost a statewide election in Massachusetts.

Incumbent Senator Ed Markey, a political veteran who recast himself as the fiery liberal in the race, harnessed the state's progressive energy to handily turn back a challenge from Joseph Kennedy III, the grandnephew of assassinated president John F. Kennedy. The 39-year-old Kennedy said he "called Sena-

tor Markey to congratulate him and to pledge my support to him and his campaign in the months ahead." With votes still being counted, Markey was leading 53.5 percent to 46.5 percent. "Obviously, these results are not the ones we were hoping for," Kennedy said. The race pitted two well-liked progressives against one another, but it was Markey's organisational energy and appeal to the ascendant left that won out over Kennedy.

"Tonight is more than just a celebration of an election, it is a celebration of a movement," Markey

wrote on Twitter. Since he is not allowed to be on the ballot as a candidate for both the House and Senate, Kennedy is not running for re-election to his House seat. Come January, there will be no one from the Kennedy clan in elected office. The grandson of slain attorney general Robert F. Kennedy is part of the family's fourth generation to carry the political torch, entering the House of Representatives in 2013. "Every race I've ever run, I've made it clear it's me on the ballot," Kennedy said as he stumped for 11th-hour votes Tuesday in

Boston. "You're not going to get my father or my grandfather or any of his brothers or sisters. This is on me." After his loss he told supporters that together they "built a campaign for working folks of every colour and creed, who carry the economic injustice of this country on their backs".

At 74, his rival Markey is a generation apart, a progressive political workhorse who spent 37 years in the House before rising to the Senate in 2013.

He led Kennedy in recent polling and was able to seal the deal with strong

support in Boston and college towns like Amherst.

For the Kennedy clan, there was much on the line. For all but two years since 1947 — nearly a third of the history of the United States — a Kennedy has served in elective office.

They are the quintessential American dynasty, one of the closest things the country has to royalty. Like his presidential great-uncle, the lanky, red-haired Kennedy ran on the promise of a new generation. And he had received the rare endorsement of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who in 2018 appointed

Kennedy to deliver the Democratic response to President Donald Trump's State of the Union speech.

Markey, who framed his candidacy on a liberal, anti-establishment platform, has powerful supporters too. They include Senator Elizabeth Warren and rising star progressive congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, with whom Markey co-authored the Green New Deal on tackling climate change.

Markey is virtually assured victory in November's general election; only two Republicans have won US Senate seats from Massac-

husetts in the last half century. The Democratic National Convention last month hinted that the Kennedy clan may indeed have a political future, when it aired a video message from JFK's daughter Caroline Kennedy and her 27-year-old son Jack Kennedy Schlossberg.

"We can reach these new frontiers, but only with a president who asks what he can do for our country," Schlossberg said, echoing his grandfather's 1961 acceptance speech, when he famously said: "Ask not what your country can do for you." —AFP



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,086.03	0.48
Nifty 50	11,535.00	0.56
\$&P 500*	3,548.63	0.62
Dollar (₹)	73.03	0.20
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.50	0.36
Euro (₹)	86.65	0.75
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,314*614	1.17
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.59	-0.99
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.920	-0.023
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.679	0.008

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

## RattanIndia sells solar assets to GIP for ₹1,670 cr

RattanIndia Group said it has sold its solar plants with a combined capacity of 306 MW to Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP) for about Rs 1,670 crore. GIP is among the largest infrastructure investment managers with over \$51 billion AUM. RattanIndia Group had solar portfolio of 306 MW, comprising ground assets of 297 MW in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and UP and 9 MW rooftop solar projects in 10 cities.

## Dumping duty on acrylic fibre from 4 nations likely



India may impose anti-dumping duty on a certain type of fibre imported from European Union, Belarus, Ukraine and Peru as the commerce ministry's arm DGTR has recommended for the same after conducting a probe. The Directorate General of Trade Remedies in its findings concluded that acrylic fibre from these countries has been exported at below its associated normal value.

## Coal India Q1 profit drops 55% to ₹2,080 crore

Coal India Ltd posted a 55 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,079.60 crore for the June quarter on the back of lower sales. The company had posted consolidated profit from "continuing operations" of Rs 4,629.67 crore in the year-ago period. Sales in April-June were at Rs 17,007.10 crore as against Rs 23,223 crore a year-ago period. The coal output on a consolidated basis dropped to 121.04 mt from 136.94 mt YoY.

## Bookings start for VW Polo, Vento automatic

Volkswagen Passenger Cars India said it has commenced bookings for automatic variants of BS-VI compliant Polo and Vento models. The Polo GT trim is priced at Rs 9.67 lakh while Vento Highline Plus variant is tagged at Rs 12.99 lakh (ex-showroom). "At Volkswagen, our brand philosophy is to be a premium accessible car manufacturer in India," Volkswagen Passenger Cars India director Steffen Knapp said.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

■ HFCs, NBFCs in bid to shock-proof assets

## LICHFL looks to raise ₹50,500 cr

FC BANKING BUREAU MUMBAI, SEPT. 2

A host of non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs) are raising capital to strengthen their balance sheets to guard against unexpected asset quality shocks or to finance organic and inorganic business opportunities. The latest to announce capital raising plans was LIC Housing Finance, which on Wednesday said it will seek shareholders' approval in the annual general meeting this month to raise up to Rs 50,500 crore by issuing debt securities or other hybrid instruments on a private placement basis.

So far leading non-bank lenders, such as Shriram Transport Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services, L&T Finance and HDFC have announced or already raised capital. More NBFCs are expected to approach the capital markets to raise funds as the sector would take more than a year to recover from the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic. The sector is nearly two years into its crisis, which was triggered by the default of IL&FS.

LIC Housing Finance's annual general meeting (AGM) will be conducted through video conference on September 28. The approval of the members is being sought by way of "special resolution, authorising the board of direc-



tors to issue NCDs and/or any other hybrid instruments which can be classified as being Tier II capital under the provisions of the Housing Finance Companies (NHB) Directions, 2010, up to an aggregate amount not exceeding Rs 50,500 crore on a private placement basis," the company said in a regulatory filing.

LIC Housing Finance said its overall borrowing power is of Rs 3 lakh crore and the proposed fund raise plan is within the limit.

Analysts feel that equity issuance may pick up in the near-term as issuers seek to bolster capital positions.

A. M. Karthik, vice president and sector head, financial sector ratings, Icria Limited said, "Banks and NBFCs are highly leveraged entities with leverage of 4-10 times and generally operate at thin operating profitability of 2-4 per cent of assets.

Ability to absorb even a 4-5 per cent loan loss without eroding capital will be challenging task for many lenders and hence strong

capital position or fresh capital raising to absorb expected losses will remain a key driver for credit profile of the lenders."

"In particular, the NBFCs, though they are fairly comfortable on current capital position, based on the extent of estimated slippages, they may need to raise equity capital of upto Rs 2,500-35,000 crore in the current fiscal to shore up their solvency and also provide comfort to their lenders on their ability to absorb shocks. Icria also notes that the pre-provision profits of non-banks are about 4 per cent, which would also support their capital position as assets under management growth is expected to be negligible, in the best-case scenario, with a bias towards a contraction, as the impact of pandemic may linger around longer in the current fiscal.

Further, for NBFCs, the funding constraints would remain a key concern for the sector in the near to medium term," added Karthik.

## India ranks 48th in innovation index

New Delhi, Sept. 2: India has joined the group of top 50 countries in the global innovation index for the first time, moving up four places to the 48th rank and keeping the top position among the nations in central and southern Asia.

According to the Global Innovation Index (GII) list, 2020 released jointly by the World Intellectual Property Organization (Wipo), Cornell University and Insead Business School on Wednesday, the rankings show stability at the top but a gradual "eastward shift in the locus of innovation" as Asian economies like China, India, the Philippines and Vietnam have advanced considerably in the innovation ranking over the years.

Switzerland, Sweden, the US, the UK and the Netherlands lead the innovation ranking, and the top 10 positions are dominated by high-income countries, Wipo said in a statement.

India, it said, has become the third most innovative lower middle-income economy, thanks to newly available indicators and improvements in various areas of the GI.

India ranks in the top 15 in indicators such as ICT services exports, government online services, graduates in science and engineering, and R&D-intensive global companies. —PTI

## Arbitrageurs bump up gold imports

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 2

After a lull of several months, gold imports almost doubled in August to 60 tonnes as demand from arbitrageurs and large investors surged when the gold prices were shooting up.

Against 32.1 tonnes in August last year, imports were almost double at 60 tonnes and the highest in eight months. Even in terms of value, imports were more than double at \$3.7 billion against \$1.37 billion.

Imports were almost negligible in the past few months of lockdown and restrictions. In May the country had imported 1.4 tonnes and in June, 11 tonnes. By July, the imports had moved up to 30 tonnes.

According to an indus-



try expert, arbitrageurs and large investors were active in the market as the gold prices were going up. They have been trying to use the arbitrage opportunity on import tariff rate which is revised every 15 days. They have been expecting that the prices will further move up. But they are now stuck with the gold after prices fell. "Large investors have

been buying bars and coins in July and early August when the gold prices were shooting up. However, when the prices fell in a matter of days, the market came into a discount. Currently, gold is available at a discount of \$50 per ounce," said Vipin Raina, president, bullion sales and trading, at MMTC Pamp.

However, the demand among the end consumers have not picked up yet as has been evident from the dullness at the jewellery stores. "This is a tell-tale evidence of the disconnect between the fundamental market of gold consumers and people who use the metal for arbitrage purposes. This has been happening due to the absence of an appropriate trading system," said the expert.

## Airlines can fly 60% of pre-Covid flights

New Delhi, Sept. 2: In further easing of restrictions, the government on Wednesday permitted Indian airlines to increase the number of domestic passenger flights to 60 per cent of their pre-Covid services, according to an official order.

On June 26, the Ministry of Civil Aviation had allowed the airlines to operate a maximum of 45 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic flights.

The ministry had restarted domestic passenger services from May 25, after a gap of two



months due to the coronavirus-triggered lockdown.

However, the airlines were allowed to operate not more than 33 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic flights.

Modifying its previous

order of June 26 where it had put the 45 per cent limit on the number of domestic flights, the ministry issued an order on Wednesday stating that, "45 per cent capacity may be read as 60 per cent capacity."

The average occupancy rate in domestic flights since their resumption in India on May 25 has been around 50-60 per cent.

Scheduled international passenger flights continue to remain suspended in the country since March 23 due to the pandemic.

—PTI

## Centre plans to extend job guarantee scheme to cities

VRISHTI BENIWAL SEPT. 2

The government is considering extending its flagship jobs programme in villages to workers in cities left unemployed by the pandemic-induced lockdowns, a government official said.

The programme, when approved, may be rolled out in smaller cities and initially cost about Rs 35,000 crore (\$4.8 billion), said Sanjay Kumar, a joint secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

"The government has been considering this idea since last year," he said. "The pandemic gave a push to this discussion."

The government is already spending more than Rs 1 lakh crore on the rural jobs programme, MGNREGA, this year, under which workers in the hinterland can earn a guaranteed minimum daily wage of Rs 202 for at least 100 days a year. An urban version of the plan will soften the blow on citizens most affected by the



coronavirus fallout, which has set Asia's third-largest economy on course for its deepest contraction in history.

The idea is to start with smaller towns because big-city projects typically need professional expertise, Kumar said.

The rural programme involves employing people for local public works projects such as road building, well digging and reforestation. It now covers more than 270 million people and was used as a tool to provide employment to migrant workers returning from cities amid the lockdown.

That said, Covid-19 also

decimated livelihoods in urban India, creating a new underclass of workers who are being pushed into poverty, according to an analysis by the London School of Economics.

More than 121 million people lost jobs in April.

"A national level commitment to overcome the livelihood crisis is therefore essential for preventing urban workers from falling into poverty and for countervailing the sharp and sudden rise in inequality," wrote Shania Bhalotra, Swati Dhingra and Fjolla Kondirulli, the authors of the report—City of dreams no more: The impact of Covid-19 on urban workers in India—published by LSE's Centre for Economic Performance.

Economic affairs secretary Tarun Bajaj earlier spoke of the programme in an interview to a newspaper, raising expectation of a fiscal boost after a previously announced Rs 21-lakh crore support package fell short in terms of actual outgo.

—Bloomberg

## Cap on export benefit to hit auto, steel firms

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 2

The cap imposed on export benefits under the Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS) at Rs 2 crore for individual exporter will affect large exporters who account for more than 30 per cent of the total shipments from the country.

The government has late Tuesday notified that the total reward availed of by any exporter under MEIS cannot exceed Rs 2 crore during the September-December period. The ceiling may be subject to further downward revision to ensure that the total claim under the scheme for the four-month period does not exceed Rs 5,000 crore allocated for the scheme.

"Though the number of exporters affected by the cap is less, they account for more than 30 per cent of the exports. These are large automobile companies, steel companies and commodity exporters," said Ajay Sahai, director general and CEO of Federation of Indian Export Organisations.



According to Sahai, exporters would have already contracted the orders for the next four months and would have factored in the MEIS benefits into their pricing. This will hurt their profitability and in turn affect the exports from the country. Further, there is also no certainty about the Rs 2 crore refund. If the total allocation of Rs 5,000 crore exhausts, the cap will be further lowered.

"The cap of Rs 2 crore may have significant impact for large exporters currently claiming MEIS benefits of over Rs 2 crore per quarter. As some of these benefits are typically factored by businesses in their costs/ pricing, businesses may need to revisit these aspects with this new

embargo," said Abhishek Jain, tax partner, EY.

"Exports have started picking up. Now that the margins will get affected with the MEIS cap, companies will have to do cost cutting wherever possible and defer purchases so that they still remain competitive in terms of pricing," said R. V. Ramanandan, an exim expert.

In 2018-19, the government had refunded Rs 36,615 crore under the MEIS scheme and in 2019-20 refunds amounted to Rs 40,934 crore. This year the total allocation under MEIS between April and December 2020 is just Rs 9,000 crore. Exporters have not yet received the refunds under MEIS for the five-month period.

## TATA NEXON XM(S) ADDS SUNROOF

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, SEPT. 2

Tata Motors, India's biggest automaker by revenues, on Wednesday launched an XM(S) variant of the Nexon SUV priced Rs 8.36 lakh at Delhi showroom.

Nexon is a key product in Tata Motors car portfolio and the automaker may be looking at cementing its base in the sub-compact SUV segment, especially because newer rivals like Kia Sonet and Nissan Magnite are threatening to take a chunk of the market share when launched.

Available with petrol and diesel engine options and in manual and AMT auto form, the new variants are priced between Rs 8.36 lakh and Rs 10.30 lakh.

The XM(S) will get an electric sunroof which, the firm said, would make it the most affordable SUV.

## Electric Skoda Enyaq iV SUV unveiled in production form

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, SEPT. 2

The Czech automaker Skoda on Wednesday unveiled its Enyaq iV, the battery-electric SUV ahead of it going on sale in international markets towards the end of this year.

The new EV offers two battery capacities, rear or four-wheel drive and a RS performance variant. International deliveries are earmarked to begin early next year.

The first electric SUV from Skoda will be a cornerstone of the Czech carmaker's future sustainable development.

"The ENYAQ iV is a true milestone for the brand. It's our first electric car based on the MEB platform. The ENYAQ iV is made in SKODA's heart-

land, Mladá Boleslav, here in the Czech Republic, with the focus on advancing electrification and digitalisation," Thomas Schäfer, Skoda chairman, at the electric SUV's premiere in Prague.

Described as "the start of a new era for Skoda" by new CEO Thomas Schäfer at Skoda, the SUV has an "emotive, powerful and dynamic" exterior design. The EV is almost as big as the Skoda Octavia and significantly larger than the Kia e-Niro, which it rivals globally. According to Skoda the space inside is on par with its seven-seat Kodiaq SUV.

Of the rear-wheel-drive Enyaq models, the 60 Enyaq iV comes with a single, 179hp motor and a 62kWh battery for a 389km range and a 0-100kmph time of 8.7 seconds.



## SHORT TAKES

## Messi's father arrives in Barca

**Barcelona:** Lionel Messi's father arrived in Spain early on Wednesday and is expected to meet with Barcelona club officials to discuss his son's future.

Jorge Messi, who is also Lionel Messi's agent, landed in Barcelona from Argentina. He is expected to meet with club president Josep Bartomeu and other team officials, but it's unclear when this meeting will take place.

"I don't know anything," Jorge Messi said briefly after being questioned at the airport. Lionel Messi last week told Barcelona he wanted to leave the club and invoked a contract clause that allowed him to depart for free at the end of the season.

But Barcelona claimed the clause expired in June and said he must see out his current contract until June 2021, or leave by paying the buyout clause of \$700 million euros (\$837 million).

Barcelona has been saying it will not facilitate Messi's departure and will only negotiate a contract extension.

— AP

## Tennis player Carla has cancer

**New York:** Former top-10 player Carla Suarez Navarro has announced that she will need six months of chemotherapy to treat Hodgkin lymphoma.

Suarez Navarro pulled out of the US Open last month. In a video posted on *Twitter* on Tuesday, the Spaniard said she was diagnosed recently. "I'm fine and calm at the moment and willing to face whatever comes," Suarez Navarro said.

She turns 32 on Thursday. Suarez Navarro has been ranked as high as No.6 and is currently No.71.

She is a seven-time Grand Slam quarterfinalist, including at the US Open in 2013 and 2018. — AP

## First online poker event from today

**Mumbai:** PokerStars India is set to host the first edition of the India Championship of Online Poker (INCOOP), offering a total of ₹9 crore as prize money.

Starting on Thursday, the three-week tournament series will include 205 events including 100+ knockout tournaments, culminating in a three-day main event.

INCOOP follows the second edition of the India Summer Championship of Online Poker (INSCOOP) which took place in May this year and hosted over 185 events.

## Belgian Aert wins Tour's fifth stage

**Privas, France:** Belgian rider Wout van Aert won the fifth stage of the Tour de France on Wednesday in a sprint finish, while Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe kept the race leader's yellow jersey.

A day after producing a tremendous effort in the Alps in support of his Jumbo Visma team leader Primož Roglic, Van Aert posted a second career stage win at the Tour.

Van Aert used his power in the slight uphill finish to win by half a wheel ahead of Cees Bol and Sam Bennett.

"It was a heavy finish. It was maybe the most easy stage I ever did in a cycling race because there was no breakaway, not a high pace at all, but then the last hour was really hectic with the wind," Van Aert said. — AP

## Live on TV

## TOUR DE FRANCE

Stage Six from 3.30 pm on Eurosport, HD

## CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Jamaica Tallawahs vs St Kitts & Nevis Patriots from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

## US OPEN

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

## UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

Latvia vs Andorra from 9.30 pm; Germany vs Spain from 12.15 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2, HD; Ukraine vs Switzerland from 12.15 am (Friday) on Sony Six, HD

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002, and Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C-9, Sector-III, Noida-201301. Editor - T. Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.

## Super Sumit show

## Nagal downs Klahn, to meet Thiem in 2nd round

**New York, Sept. 2:** Sumit Nagal became the first Indian to win a round at a Grand Slam in seven years when he downed American Bradley Klahn in his US Open first round, setting up a contest against World No.3 Dominic Thiem, here.

Returning to the Flushing Meadows where he took a set off Roger Federer, the Indian got past the local rival 6-1, 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 in two hours and 12 minutes on Tuesday night.

Somdev Devavarmman was the last Indian to win a main draw match at a major and incidentally, it was at the US Open in 2013 when he beat Slovakia's Lukas Lacko after coming through qualifiers.

"I qualified for a junior Slam in 2013 here and then the men's and now to win my first round here means a lot. I enjoy playing here and it has worked out in my favour few times," Nagal said.

"It was not easy to walk inside the court knowing this match is more in your favour. I was definitely nervous and especially playing for my first slam win but I did the things I was supposed to and kept my composure," he added.

After Somdev, Indian tennis saw the rise of Yuki Bhambri, Ramkumar Ramanathan and Prajnesh Gunneswaran but none of them could win a main draw round.

Ramkumar did not even qualify for a main draw in many attempts.

Bhambri had to cope with injuries and that halted his progress. Between 2015 and 2018 he competed all four majors but never crossed a round. Nagal said Indian tennis should have done better and partly blamed it on the not-so-helpful "system" as well.

Up next for him will be Austria's top player Thiem, who advanced when his Spanish rival Jaume Munar retired before the start of the third set. Thiem was leading 7-6(6), 6-3 when Munar found it difficult to continue as he injured his knee during the second set.

Nagal hardly cares for reputations and is expected to make it tough for the World No.3. — AFP

**I qualified for a junior Slam in 2013 here and then the men's and now to win my first round here means a lot. I enjoy playing here and it has worked out in my favour few times.**

— SUMIT NAGAL after beating Bradley Klahn in US Open first round

## LANKA LEGEND MALINGA PULLS OUT OF IPL

**New Delhi, Sept. 2:** Veteran Sri Lanka paceman Lasith Malinga has pulled out of the Indian Premier League "to be with his family", his team said on Wednesday, adding to growing list of players abandoning the Coronavirus-hit Twenty20 tournament.

Malinga has asked to be let go for personal reasons the Mumbai Indians said, while also announcing he would be replaced by Australian quick James Pattinson.

"James Pattinson will join MI Family currently based in Abu Dhabi this weekend," current champions Mumbai said in a statement.

"There is no denying the fact that we will miss Lasith's cricketing acumen this season," Mumbai team owner Akash Ambani said.

Malinga has been with the Mumbai team since the inaugural edition in 2008.

Other players who have opted out of the tournament include England's Jason Roy, of the Delhi Capitals, and Suresh Raina, who quit the Chennai Super Kings after two players tested positive for Coronavirus.

— AFP



Sumit Nagal of India returns a shot to Bradley Klahn of USA during their first round match at the US Open tennis championships in New York on Tuesday. Nagal won 6-1, 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.

## Murray back from the brink

## SELECTED RESULTS

**Men's singles first round (number in brackets denotes seeding):** Sumit Nagal (IND) bt Bradley Klahn (USA) 6-1, 6-3, 3-6, 6-1; Andy Murray (SCO) bt Yoshihito Nishioka (JPN) 4-6, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4), 6-4; Marin Cilic (CRO x31) bt Denis Kudla (USA) 6-7 (3/7), 3-6, 7-5, 6-3; Dominic Thiem (AUT x2) bt Jaume Munar (ESP) 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, 0-0 abandon; Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x14) bt Tommy Paul (USA) 6-4, 6-3, 6-1; Daniil Medvedev (RUS x3) bt Federico Del Bonis (ARG) 6-1, 6-2, 6-4; Roberto Bautista (ESP x8) bt Tenny Sandgren (USA) 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3); Milos Raonic (CAN x25) bt Leonardo Mayer (ARG) 6-3, 6-2, 6-3; Vasek Pospisil (CAN) bt Philipp Kohlschreiber (GER) 7-6 (7/4), 7-5, 7-6 (7/3); Alex De Minaur (AUS x21) bt Andrej Martin (SVK) 6-4, 6-3, 7-5; Richard Gasquet (FRA) bt Ivo Karlovic (CRO) 7-6 (7/0), 7-6 (7/4), 6-1.

**Women's singles first round (number in brackets denotes seeding):** Serena Williams (USA x3) bt Kristie Ahn (USA) 7-5, 6-3; Sofia Kenin (USA x2) bt Yanina Wickmayer (BEL) 6-2, 6-2; Madison Keys (USA x7) bt Timea Babos (HUN) 6-1, 6-1; Alize Cornet (FRA) bt Lauren Davis (USA) 6-3, 1-6, 6-0; Garbine Muguruza (ESP x10) bt Nao Hibino (JPN) 6-4, 6-4; Johanna Konta (GBR x9) bt Heather Watson (GBR) 7-6 (9/7), 6-1; Karolina Muchova (CZE x20) bt Venus Williams (USA) 6-3, 7-5; Sloane Stephens (USA x26) bt Mihaela Buzarnescu (ROU) 6-3, 6-3; Victoria Azarenka (BLR) bt Barbara Haas (AUT) 6-1, 6-2; Ekaterina Alexandrova (RUS x21) bt Kim Clijsters (BEL) 3-6, 7-5, 6-1; Donna Vekic (CRO x18) bt Kristyna Pliskova (CZE) 3-6, 7-6 (8/6), 6-4; Margarita Gasparian (RUS) bt Monica Puig (PUR) 6-3, 6-7 (0/7), 6-0; Sorana Cirstea (ROU) bt Christina McHale (USA) 6-4, 7-5; Tsvetana Pironkova (BUL) bt Liudmila Samsonova (RUS) 6-2, 6-3.

by black artists is displayed in honor of the Black Lives Matter movement against racial injustice.

Meanwhile, world number one Ashleigh Barty, the second-ranked Simona Halep and Canadian Bianca

Andreescu — who stunned Williams in last year's final — are all absent from the behind-closed-doors tournament.

A title win for Williams would also see her become the most decorated women's player at the US Open in the modern era.

She is currently tied with Chris Evert on six.

Murray secured a stunning 4-6, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 come-from-behind victory in a bruising 4 hr and 39 min encounter against Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka.

The Scotsman, who who has barely played in 2020, said he had learnt a lot about his physical condition and the metal hip he received during surgery last year. "I've just played a four-and-a-half hour match when I never thought I'd be able to," he told reporters.

Tenth seed Garbine Muguruza, the 2016 French Open champion, advanced to round two with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Japan's Nao Hivino.

Also in the women's draw, second seed American Sofia Kenin needed just over an hour to score a 6-2, 6-2 win over unseeded Belgian Yanina Wickmayer. And ninth seed Johanna Konta beat compatriot Heather Watson 7-6 (9/7), 6-1 in a tie dubbed the "Battle of Britain." — AFP

## PAK WIN FINAL T20 vs ENG, SERIES DRAWN

**Manchester, Sept. 2:** Pakistan signed off their cricket tour of England with a five-run win in their third and final Twenty20 international to draw the series 1-1 on, with veteran batsman Mohammad Hafeez setting up victory with a 52-ball 86.

Hafeez tied his best T20 score in his 94th match in the format to help Pakistan to 190-4 after being put into bat. Key to the innings was Hafeez's 100-run partnership for the third wicket with 19-year-old Haider Ali, who hit 54 on his T20 debut.

Moeen Ali starred in England's reply with 61 off 33 balls, but was one of two wickets to fall in a superb next-to-last over bowled by Wahab Riaz (2-26). England needed 12 off the final two balls and although Tom Curran struck a six off the first, he swung and missed off the last delivery of the innings by Haris Rauf to leave the hosts on 185-8. — AP

**Brief scores: Pakistan 190/4 in 20 overs (M. Hafeez 86 n.o., Haider Ali 54; Chris Jordan 2/29) bt England 185/8 in 20 overs (Moeen Ali 61, Tom Banton 46; Wahab Riaz 2/26).**

## Sindhu pulls out from Uber Cup

**New Delhi, Sept. 2:** World champion P. V. Sindhu has pulled out of next month's Thomas and Uber Cup Finals due to "personal reasons" and could also miss the subsequent Super 750 tournaments in Denmark.

The Thomas and Uber Cup Finals, scheduled to be held from October 3 to 11 in Aarhus, Denmark is the first tournament in the revised calendar, which was launched by the sport's governing body BWF last week.

"Sindhu will not be able to participate in the Thomas and Uber Cup Finals due to some personal reasons," the Olympic silver-medallist's father P. V. Ramana confirmed.

"She has some personal work, so unfortunately she will have to skip the event. We have informed the Badminton Association of India about her decision," he added.

The Thomas and Uber Cup Finals will be followed by the Denmark Open I (October 13-18) and Denmark Masters (October 20-25).

An Olympic hopeful, Sindhu, who has been training at the national badminton camp in Hyderabad, had been plan-

● **India's top women's shuttler P. V. Sindhu will not be representing India at the Thomas and Uber Cup Finals, to be held from October 3 to 11 in Aarhus, Denmark, due to personal reasons.**

ning to participate in the prestigious tournament.

Asked if she would be participating in the two 750 events in Denmark, Ramana said: "Actually that is also (in doubt)... I mean the entries have been sent for both the events, but it depends on her personal work if she would be able to play both or not."

"She may have to skip one tournament in Denmark. If she can complete her personal work then she will play one."

Sindhu had resumed training last month under the supervision of Korean coach Park Tae-Sang after the Sports Authority of India (SAI) allowed the national camp for eight Olympic hopefuls following approval from the Telangana government on August 1. — PTI

## WRESTLER VINESH IS NOW COVID NEGATIVE

**New Delhi, Sept. 2:** India's top woman wrestler Vinesh Phogat has recovered from Coronavirus, returning negative tests twice, but remains in isolation for precautionary purpose.

The 24-year-old could not receive her 'Khel Ratna' as she tested positive just ahead of the virtual National Sports Awards ceremony on August 29.

"I underwent a second Covid-19 test yesterday (on Tuesday) and am happy to report that I have received a negative result," Vinesh tweeted.

The only woman wrestler to have qualified for Tokyo Olympics, Vinesh said she would prefer to be in isolation as a precautionary measure a big thank you to everyone for your prayers," she added.

Vinesh's personal coach Woller Akos is still in Belgium and she trained with Om Prakash Dahiya, who also tested positive, and perhaps got infected during training. Om Prakash was selected for Dronacharya. — PTI



Michael Porter Jr. (in black) of the Denver Nuggets shoots against Utah Jazz during Game Seven of the Eastern Conference NBA Playoffs in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, on Wednesday. Nuggets won 80-78. — AFP

## Nuggets are too spicy for Jazz

**Los Angeles, Sept. 2:** Nikola Jokic had 30 points as the Denver Nuggets punched their ticket to the Eastern Conference semifinals with a thrilling 80-78 game seven victory over the Utah Jazz on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old Serbian star, who also had 14 rebounds and four assists, had been taking a back seat to scoring phenom Jamal Murray in the series, but Jokic busted out in the winner-take-all showdown in Orlando, Florida.

The Nuggets advance to the conference semis where they will face the Los Angeles Clippers in another best-of-seven series. The first game is Thursday in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Florida.

Tuesday's game finished with a wild sequence that

included Utah's Mike Conley throwing up a desperation shot at the buzzer that ringed the basket but failed to drop in.

Donovan Mitchell also had a chance to tie it on Utah's previous possession but he lost the ball on a drive to the basket. Denver immediately went down to the other end but they missed an easy layup on their final possession of the game that would have sealed it.

Murray scored 17 points and Michael Porter finished with 10 points and nine rebounds for the Nuggets who advanced in a series for the first time in franchise history after being down three games to one. They are just the 12th team in league history to rally and advance after being down 1-3. — AFP