

IN BRIEF

Man arrested for duping firm of ₹21L

New Delhi: A 43-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly duping a company of over ₹21 lakh in a business deal, police said on Tuesday. The accused Jitender Kumar is a resident of Haryana. He was arrested from Vikas Nagar, they said. A probe was initiated after a complaint was received from Meenakshi Nayyar, Manager Legal of Hettich India pvt ltd, against Kumar who she alleged approached her company for supply of materials like furniture, fittings and allied equipment, and assured timely payment. The complainant alleged that the cheques issued by the accused amounting to ₹21,92,106 got dishonoured. She alleged that the accused refused to pay the company and threatened the employees. DCP (Southeast) R.P. Meena said a non bailable warrant was issued against Kumar on October 19, 2018 by a court, and acting on a tip-off, a raid was conducted at Vikas Nagar and the accused was arrested on September 13.

2 held for robbing man at gunpoint

New Delhi: Two drivers, who lost their jobs during lockdown, were arrested for allegedly robbing a person after giving him lift in a cab in Dwarka area. The accused have been identified as Dharmendra Dabas (44), a resident of Salahpur Majra, and Vikash (29), a resident of Kanjhawala. Dabas was a cab driver and Vikash was a DTC cluster bus driver. On the intervening night of September 4 and 5, the police received information regarding a robbery. It was found that complainant Rakesh Gupta was at a bus stop near IFFCO Chowk in Gurgaon when two persons in a taxi offered him a lift to Dwarka Mor, a senior police officer said. When they reached Dwarka, the accused held him at gunpoint and robbed him of Rs 700, a few documents, and a mobile phone. They pushed him out of the car and fled from the spot, the officer said. "During investigation, the complainant's mobile phone was put under surveillance. Thereafter, raids were conducted and the accused persons were apprehended on Sunday evening," DCP (Dwarka) Santosh Meena said.

Mercury likely to rise in Delhi: IMD

New Delhi: Lack of rain will likely to push the mercury further up in Delhi over the next two days, the weather department said on Tuesday. There has been no rain in the city for the past five days. According to the India meteorological department, the maximum temperature will likely touch the 38-degrees Celsius mark over the next two days amid lack of rain. It, however, forecast light rainfall on the weekend. There has been 75 per cent of less rainfall in September in the city so far, according to Met department data. The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, has recorded just 20.9 mm of rainfall against the normal of 83.9 mm this month so far. The Lodhi road weather station has gauged only 18.5 mm of precipitation against the normal of 83.9 mm — a deficiency of 78 per cent. The Palam weather station has recorded 30.3 mm against the 50-year average of 84.9 mm, according to IMD data.

'Education best way to attack poverty'

New Delhi: Education is the best way to attack poverty, which is the main cause of continued impetus to the moment. Comprehensive development of the youth is the way ahead as tested, practiced, and verified in Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) located in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. KISS is home to 30,000 tribal children who get holistic education from kindergarten to post graduation absolutely free and has a strong alumni of about 20,000 students. This world's largest tribal educational institution is based on the model of comprehensive development of its students to fight the quagmire of poverty and usher in a change in the communities. Projects like 'New Mind, New Dream' and 'Go Back to Village' are the mechanism by which the staff and students of KISS, during summer vacation, enable change through plantation, literacy, and life-skill drives.

Covid scare at BJP's office, 17 test +ve

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

The Delhi BJP headquarters will be closed for sanitisation on Wednesday as 17 persons, including office staff and their family members living on its premises, tested positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday. When these Delhi BJP staff and their family members got themselves tested in the party's headquarters at Pundit Pant Marg, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri addressed a press conference. BJP MLAs Vijender Gupta, Abhay Verma, Om Prakash Sharma, and Anil Bajpai were present in the press conference.

Earlier, ahead of the Parliament Session, Lok Sabha members Parvash Verma and Meenakshi Lekhi had tested positive for Covid.

However, Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, who is not well, tweeted that he tested negative for

▶ **ALL THE** staff members and their families, who live in the Delhi BJP premises, were tested through rapid antigen test on Tuesday. Seventeen of them, including a guard, a driver, and two peons, tested positive

Covid.

Delhi BJP media cell head Ashok Goel said that no party leader or office bearers tested positive.

"All the staff members and their families, who live in the Delhi BJP premises, were tested through rapid antigen test on Tuesday. Seventeen of them, including a guard, a driver, and two peons, tested positive," he said.

He added that all the positive people were sent to a Covid care centre and that the whole office premises would be thoroughly sanitised on Wednesday.

The party leaders said that the driver of Delhi BJP general secretary

(organisation) Siddharthan also tested positive for Covid-19. Mr Siddharthan, however, tested negative.

Four days ago, a peon of the Delhi BJP office was tested for Covid-19. He was found positive in the test result that came on Monday.

"The party decided to test all the staff members and their families. All those who came in contact with the positive persons have been advised to get tested and follow preventive measures," Mr Goel added.

The party, however, did not ask the MLAs who were present in the press conference to get themselves tested for the infection. The MLAs told this newspaper that none of them were asked to get tested for corona. Mr Goel said that no MLAs underwent Covid test at the party headquarters.

"They addressed the press conference and left the party headquarters," he added.

EDMC mayor writes to CM, seeks release of 'due funds'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

East Delhi mayor Nirmal Jain, on Tuesday, wrote a letter to the chief minister of Delhi and requested him to release the outstanding amount of ₹1,100 crore (two instalments of the current financial year) to the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) as per the recommendations of the 5th Finance Commission.

Mr Jain said that the Delhi government should rise above political malice and provide the outstanding dues to the EDMC at the earliest. "The EDMC is going through a severe financial crisis. In such a situation, the East Corporation is facing difficulties in providing uninterrupted civil services. Apart from this, the salary of other employees, except sanitation workers, is also pending for 3 months.

The EDMC was not given any money under the 'basic tax assignment' while other corporations of Delhi were given instalments under it," he said.

The mayor has requested the Delhi government to provide the prescribed amount of 'basic tax assignment' to the EDMC at the earliest and that there should be no discrimination against the East Corporation in the budget allocation.

"The EDMC workload has increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The employees of the corporation are working vigorously for the prevention of Covid-19 day and night. They are discharging their duties with full responsibility even in these odd circumstances. But due to the financial crisis, EDMC has been unable to pay them their salary for three months, which is very disappointing," Mr Jain added.

24-yr-old killed by girlfriend, 2 others

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

A 24-year-old woman, her brother and another person have been arrested for allegedly killing her boyfriend in north Delhi's Wazirabad, police said on Tuesday.

The accused have been identified as Varsha, her brother Akash (23) and one Ali (20), they said.

On Friday, police received information that a person was lying unconscious at Wazirabad. Police reached the spot and found the body. There was a small injury mark on the neck of the victim, a senior police officer said. The victim was later identified as Sahil (23), a resident of Wazirabad, police said.

The police analysed CCTV footage of the area

▶ **DURING INTERROGATION,** it was revealed that victim was in a relationship with accused. On the intervening night of Thursday and Friday, Sahil went to Varsha's place where the other accused were also present.

to identify the accused.

"Police checked the CCTV of a hospital where the three accused took the victim. The family members of the deceased identified two of them as Varsha and the other as her brother Akash," DCP (north) Anto Alphonse said. Police raided Varsha's rented accommodation at Shastri Park, but it was found locked. Thereafter, on the basis of technical evi-



People wait outside district hospital OPD for medical consultation amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic in Noida on Tuesday. — PTI

Delhi records 4,263 new corona cases, total tally over 2.25 lakh

36 fatalities push death toll to 4,806 ■ Containment zones jump to 1,560

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

Delhi's Covid tally mounted to over 2.25 lakh after 4,263 fresh cases were reported on Tuesday, with authorities conducting a record 62,669 tests in the national capital.

Thirty-six fatalities pushed the death toll in the national capital to 4,806, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department. Three of these 36 deaths are from the previous day. The death toll from Covid in Delhi stood at 4,770 on Monday.

The active cases tally on Tuesday rose to 29,787 from 28,641 on the previous day, as per the bulletin.

The Tuesday bulletin said that the death toll from the coronavirus infection has risen to 4,806 and the total number of cases have climbed to 2,25,796. The number of containment zones in Delhi jumped to 1,560 on Tuesday from 1,517 on the previous day.

The Delhi government has also significantly ramped up testing in the past few days.

The number of tests con-

Noida: 152 Covid-19 cases, tally climbs to over 10,000

Noida , Sept. 15: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar on Tuesday recorded 152 new Covid cases, taking the district's infection tally to 10,482, official data showed.

The number of active cases came down to 1,928 from 1,979 on Monday and 2,008 on Sunday, according to the data released by the UP health department for a 24-hour period.

On the brighter side, 201 more patients got discharged during the period and the total number of recoveries in the district reached 8,506.

The district, adjoining Delhi, has so far recorded 48 deaths linked to Covid climbed to 4,604, the data showed.

ducted and corresponding fresh cases reported from September 1-14 in that order are: 14,389 (1,358); 20,437 (2,024); 24,198 (2,312); 28,835 (2,509); 32,834 (2,737); 36,219 (2,914) 38,895 (2,973); 36,046 (3,256); 22,954 (2,077); 45,797 (3,609); 54,517 (4,039);

lowest mortality rates — 0.45 per cent — in the state, it showed.

The recovery rate improved to 81.14 per cent from 80.38 per cent on Monday and 79.82 per cent on Sunday, as per the statistics. Gautam Buddha Nagar now ranks seventh among the 75 districts in the state in terms of active cases as well as in recoveries and 28th in the death toll, according to the official figures.

There were 67,335 active cases across UP on Tuesday. So far, 2,52,097 patients have recovered across the state, while the death toll linked to Covid climbed to 4,604, the data showed.

— PTI

Monday stood at 52,271 while the RT-PCR, CBNAAT and True NAAT tests figures were 10,398 in all adding to 62,669, according to the Tuesday bulletin.

The number of tests done per million, as on Tuesday was over 1.18 lakh while the total number of tests stood at over 22.46 lakh.

The positivity rate on Tuesday stood at 6.8 per cent while the recovery rate was over 84 per cent, the bulletin said, adding that the case fatality rate stood at 2.13 per cent.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain in a meeting with medical directors and medical superintendents of all Delhi government hospitals reviewed the status of testing.

Meanwhile, Delhi chief secretary Vijay Dev reviewed Covid-19 management along with district magistrates in a meeting, according to the bulletin.

Since August 18, cases again have been coming in four-figure count in the city. According to the bulletin, out of the total number of beds in Covid hospitals, 7,824 are vacant.

Dismissed cop dies of heart attack in police compound

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NOIDA, SEPT. 15

A 34-year-old man, who was recently dismissed from the Uttar Pradesh Police, died of a heart attack in a police compound in Greater Noida, officials said on Tuesday. Priyavrat Singh served as a constable and was terminated from the service last month, the officials said.

Singh, who hailed from Barot in nearby Baghpat district, was earlier deployed at the Dadri police station and had visited his former colleagues on Monday, deputy commissioner of police, Greater Noida, Rajesh Kumar Singh said.

"He had gone to the bathroom in the residential compound of the police station where he was later found lying unconscious. He was then taken to a hospital where doctors declared him dead," Mr Singh said.

His postmortem report came on Tuesday and confirmed that he died of a heart attack, the DCP said.

He said the body has been handed over to the family.

According to the officials, Singh was named as an accused in five to six criminal cases, including those of robbery, and was first put under suspension and eventually terminated from service last month.

Govt approves Palwal-Sonipat rail project, will decongest NCR network

New Delhi, Sept. 15: The government Tuesday approved construction of the crucial Haryana Orbital Rail Corridor Project from Palwal to Sonipat which will decongest the railway network in the National Capital Region and connect unserved areas of the state.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) cleared the project to be completed at an estimated cost of ₹5,617 crore and with a likely completion time of five years.

This rail line will facilitate diversion of traffic not meant for Delhi, thus decongesting the NCR network and will also help in developing multimodal logistics hubs in Haryana, the statement said.

The project runs via Sohna-Manesar-Kharkehauda and will

▶ **THE CABINET** Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) cleared the project to be completed at an estimated cost of ₹5,617 crore and with a likely completion time of five years.

have connectivity with all the existing railway routes originating from Delhi and passing through Haryana as well as with the Dedicated Freight Corridor network.

This rail line will start from Palwal and end at the existing Harsana Kalan station (On the Delhi-Ambala section).

This will also give connectivity en route to existing Patli Station (On Delhi-Rewari line), Sultanpur station (On Garhi Harsaru-Farukhnagar Line) and Asaudha Station (On

Delhi Rohtak Line).

It will be implemented by the Haryana Rail Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (HRIDCO), a Joint Venture of the Ministry of Railways and the government of Haryana.

The project will have joint participation of the Railways, the Haryana government and private stakeholders.

Once completed, the project will benefit Palwal, Nuh, Gurugram, Jhajjar and Sonipat districts of Haryana.

It will provide high-speed seamless connectivity of this region to the dedicated freight corridor network resulting in reduction of cost and time of transportation for EXIM traffic from NCR to the ports of India, making exports of goods more competitive, the statement said.



DPCC president Chaudhary Anil Kumar being greeted by slum dwellers residing along the railway tracks after Congress party filed a petition for them in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Jawan killed, officer injured in Pak firing

Jammu: An army jawan was killed and two others, including an officer, were injured on Tuesday after Pakistani troops fired with small arms and shelled mortars along the Line of Control in J&K's Rajouri district, officials said. The Indian Army launched a befitting retaliation to the Pakistani firing and shelling in Sunderbani sector, they said. "Pakistan initiated the unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and intense shelling with mortars. Some injuries have been reported (on our side), a defence spokesperson said based on preliminary information. However, official sources said three Army personnel, including an officer, were injured in the incident and later one of the soldiers succumbed to the injuries. The officer, along with another soldier, is undergoing treatment at the military hospital, sources said. — PTI

Minor garraped in UP's Ballia, 2 held

Ballia, UP: A 17-year-old girl was allegedly abducted, beaten up and raped by two youth in a village under Phephna police station area here in the district, the police said on Tuesday. An FIR was lodged in the case on the victim's mother complaint and two people were arrested on Tuesday, said SHO Rajiv Mishra. The incident took place on September 9 but came to light on Monday when Lucknow deputy inspector general of police Amitabh Thakur took note of a Facebook post of a social activist, Rajat Singh, on the gangrape, said the police. Mr Singh's Facebook post on the incident was based on a viral social media post in which it was said that the girl was returning home in his village from somewhere when the two boys accosted her at a secluded place and dragged her underneath a bridge, where they beat her up and raped her, they added. — PTI

US-India group holds defence talks

New Delhi: The 10th Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) group meeting was held virtually on Tuesday between India and US to bring sustained leadership focus to the bilateral defense trade relationship and create opportunities for co-production and co-development of defense equipment. The meeting was co-chaired by Raj Kumar, secretary, defence production, and Ellen M. Lord, under-secretary of defence for acquisition and sustainment, from the US department of defence. DTTI Group meetings are normally held twice a year, alternating between India and the United States.

Covid ambulance chased away in MP

Sheopur, MP: A video of villagers in Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh chasing away an ambulance with sticks and stones to stop it from ferrying a coronavirus positive resident to hospital went viral on social media on Tuesday after which the administration had to ask the local BJP MLA to intervene. The incident happened in Kakardha village on Sunday where four people have been detected with Covid-19, and while three have been hospitalised, the ambulance had gone to get the fourth one, said Sheopur district chief medical and health officer B.L. Yadav on Tuesday. — PTI

Man dies soon after testing Covid +ve

Bhubaneswar: A man breathed his last minutes after getting the news of testing positive for Covid-19 at Dhenkanal District Headquarters Hospital, reports said on Tuesday. The deceased, identified as Sushant Kumar Prusty of Angul, was brought to the hospital on Monday morning by his wife and brother-in-law for Covid-19 test as he had developed flu-like symptoms. Prusty's wife alleged that he remained unattended at the hospital for several hours. On knowing that he tested positive for the virus, the man collapsed at the hospital. A heart-wrenching video of the deceased's wife administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to him in an attempt to revive her husband in front of the fever and flu clinic of the hospital has surfaced on social media and gone viral.

Jaya slams fellow actors over 'gutter' remark

Rajya Sabha MP asks govt to stand by film industry

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

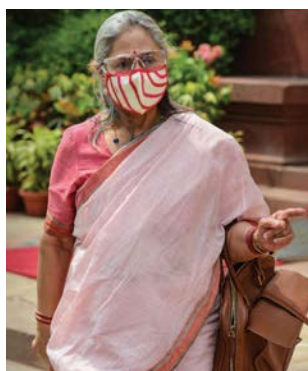
Angry over vilification of the film industry over the ongoing probe into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death case and alleged link to the drug cartel, actor-turned-politician Jaya Bachchan on Tuesday hit out at fellow actor and Gorakhpur MP Ravi Kisan and actor Kangana Ranaut for their act of "*Jis thaali me khaate hain usi me chhed karte hain* (bite the hand that feeds you)." Mr Kisan on Monday in Lok Sabha, while referring to the Narcotics Control Bureau's investigation into the late actor's death case had alleged a conspiracy by Pakistan and China to destroy the country's younger generation and had said that drug addiction was in the film industry too and asked the Central government to take strict action against those involved.

Ms Bachchan did not name anyone in her Zero Hour mention in the Rajya Sabha and asked the government to stand by the entertainment industry because it "always comes forward to help the government."

"They (film industry) come and speak for them, support them if there is a national calamity, they come forward, give money, give their services. And I think it is very important that the government must support this industry and not kill it just because there are a few people, you cannot tarnish the image of the entire industry. It is a shame '*jis thali mein khaate hai usi me chhed karte hai, galat baat hai*,'" said the SP member in the Upper House. She said she completely disagreed with people who made their name in this film industry and called it a gutter; apparently referring to Ms Ranaut's recent remarks calling Bollywood a 'gutter'.



Congress MPs (clockwise from top) Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Shashi Tharoor and others stage a walkout as they protest near Mahatma Gandhi statue demanding discussion over India-China border issue in Ladakh during the ongoing Monsoon Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Tuesday. Parliamentarians in the Lok Sabha attend the ongoing Monsoon Session of Parliament amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Rajya Sabha MP Jaya Bachchan at Parliament House in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI



Parl passes Bill to improve aviation safety

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

Parliament on Tuesday passed the Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which seeks to improve India's aviation safety ratings and provide statutory status to regulatory institutions, including the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) and Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB). The bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha in March, was passed by a voice vote in

Rajya Sabha. Introducing the bill, which also seeks to increase the fine for violations from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said amendments were necessary as tremendous growth in civil aviation has thrown many challenges such as saturated airport capacity, lack of trained manpower, limited manpower capabilities, while adding that these are "happy challenges". The proposed amendments follow the 2012 and the 2015 audit by the International Civil

► **CIVIL AVIATION minister Hardeep Singh Puri said amendments were necessary as tremendous growth in civil aviation has thrown many challenges such as saturated airport capacity, lack of trained manpower etc**

Organisation that had indicated the need to give statutory recognition to these agencies. However, some members, also including Congress's KC Venugopal, accused the government of privatising airports in the name of development and

also centralising powers in its hands.

In his reply to the debate, Mr Puri said the issue of privatisation should be seen in a historical context and noted that country's largest airports Delhi and Mumbai were successfully privatised in 2006 under a previous political dispensation, and proceeds from the process have resulted in getting resources to develop airport infrastructure in the country.

On the Congress' charge of allotting six airports to one group, Mr Puri said the Delhi and Mumbai airports account for 33 per

cent of air traffic and earnings while the six airports that were awarded in 2018 together account for only nine per cent of traffic and earnings.

"In terms of six airports being given to one entity, let me just place it in perspective. When these two airports in Delhi and Mumbai were privatised all subsequent efforts at privatisation contained a stipulation to the effect that prior experience was necessary....So, we fell into a trap of our own making and not by this government and I don't want to make it as a political point."

— PTI

TN: Govt school students get 7.5% quota in medical

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

A Bill to provide 7.5 per cent reservations for students studying in government schools in admissions to undergraduate courses in medicine, dentistry, Indian medicine, and Homeopathy was passed in the Tamil Nadu Assembly on Tuesday.

Moved by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, the Bill provides for preference for students of government schools who have qualified in NEET.

To a query raised by



Palaniswami

DMK MLA R. Masilamani if social justice will be followed in admission to the 7.5 per cent

seats, Palaniswami said the 69 per cent reservation that was given to the State by the late J Jayalalithaa would continue and be applicable in this also.

He said that law was to enable poor and rural students to get admission in the various medical courses. As of now students from government

schools who get admission in medical courses account for just one per cent and hence the 7.5 per cent quota will ensure that 300 students benefit out of it. Palaniswami said.

The bill was framed after a commission headed by former High Court judge P Kalaiyarasan gave its recommendation, he said.

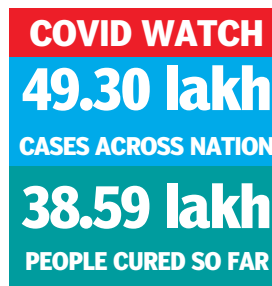
With the opening of the 11 new government medical colleges in the state, the number of students who would benefit from this quota would further go up, he added.

■ Total Covid tally nears 50L mark ■ Recovery rate at 78.28% 84K new cases in India in 24 hrs

VINEETA PANDEY
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

With close to 84,000 fresh cases, India on Tuesday moved closer to the mark of 50 lakh overall cases of novel coronavirus. Till Tuesday morning, the tally, as per the Union health ministry, was over 49.30 lakh while the total number of deaths went past 80,000 with 1,054 new fatalities due to the virus. Covid cases in India have crossed 50 lakh as per Covid19India.org

However, the recoveries too have been equally high with more than 38.59 lakh



patients cured, taking the recovery rate to 78.28 per cent. According to Johns Hopkins University data, India has the highest recoveries in the world, followed by Brazil, the United States, Russia,

Colombia and South Africa. Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan the number of active cases (9,90,061) are only one-fifth or 20 per cent of the total cases (38,59,399) and there are 14 states and Union territories where the number of active cases are less than 5,000 and only four states have more than 50,000 active cases. He underlined that India's Covid-19 deaths per million population at 58 is also amongst the lowest in the world and the global average is 118.

Amid reported cases of re-infection of coronavirus in fully cured per-

sons, director general of the ICMR, Dr Balram Bhargava said the cases of reinfection was very rare. "We have reinfection in many other illness too. So can have re-infection of Covid as well, but it is not a matter of major concern because wherever it has happened, it has been mild," Dr Bhargava said.

Talking about India's Covid-19 fight, he said, "If you look at the countries of Europe and the US, they had a peak and then they came down and during that peak whether it was Spain, the UK or Sweden or Italy, there were a huge number of mortalities."

Arunachal CM is Covid-19 +ve

Itanagar, Sept. 15: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu said that he tested positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday and is presently in home isolation in New Delhi.

"I have undergone Covid test RT-PCR and have tested positive for Covid-19. I am asymptomatic and feeling healthy," Khandu wrote in his official Twitter handle. Khandu went to the national capital on official visit on September 12. — PTI

Modi inaugurates 7 projects in poll-bound Bihar

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, SEPT. 15

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday virtually inaugurated and laid the foundation of seven urban infrastructure projects worth ₹541 crore in poll-bound Bihar.

During the inauguration of these multi-core projects he invoked "Chhathi Maiya", the most popular festival in Bihar which is observed for four days in November.

"With the blessings of Chhathi Maiya Bihar will

be made free from sewage water and this will also help women in Bihar to worship without any trouble during the Chhath festival", Mr Modi said while inaugurating the project on Tuesday.

Among those present in the virtual event was Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi and Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad.

This was the Prime Minister's third mega virtual inauguration of projects ahead of polls in the

► **The Prime Minister used the occasion to slam the previous state government led by Lalu Yadav and Rabri Devi for ignoring "governance" and indulging in "vote bank politics"**



Narendra Modi

state. Assembly elections for 243 seats are to be held in November this year. Sources said that the election commission is likely

to announce the poll dates later this month.

The projects inaugurated include sewerage treatment plants at Beur and Karam - Leechak in Patna. Other water-related projects under the "Amrut" Yojana were inaugurated in Siwan and Chapra.

Besides, foundation stones were also laid for water supply projects in Munger and Jamalpur and River Front Development scheme under Namami Gange in Muzaffarpur.

During the event, the

Odisha now burial ground for leopards

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 15

Odisha, which has already earned a dubious distinction among wildlife lovers as a graveyard for elephants, also seems to be fast turning to be a burial ground for leopards. The seizure of five leopard skins in the last four days at Nabarangapur and Berhampur has exposed the wildlife smuggling racket in Odisha.

Poachers are indulging in mindless killing of the

wild cats for their hides as reports pour in from the districts about seizures.

According to wildlife experts, at least 160 leopards have been poached across Odisha in the past 10 years. In July, 2020 the Special Task Force of Crime Branch of Odisha police had seized five leopard skins indicating its largescale poaching.

Previously in June 2020, a joint team of Chhattisgarh Police and Odisha forest department had arrested a skin trad-

er with a leopard skin in Nuapada district on the Odisha-Chhattisgarh border. In the same month the Special Task Force of Odisha Crime Branch had seized four leopard skins from Ranapur Range and arrested three people in Nayagarh district.

"Odisha is a haven for wildlife poachers and traders as we have been seeing huge levels of tiger and leopard poaching leading to a drastic fall in their population. The forest department

despite abundant resources and legal powers has miserably failed to control poaching even in tiger reserves like Simlipal and Satkosia," alleged wildlife conservationist and former member of National Board for Wildlife Dr Biswajit Mohanty.

Even when leopard skin traders are apprehended red handed they are not prosecuted properly as a result of which there is not a single conviction for leopard skin trading or poaching.

EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION	
Office of the Executive Engineer-(E&M) Disaster Management Centre, Ghazipur, Delhi-96	
NIT No. EE-E&M/EDMC/ENGG./2020-21/15	Dated: 14-09-2020
PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER	
The Executive Engineer (E&M) on behalf of Commissioner, EDMC invites tenders in e-tendering in two stage system i.e. Stage- 1 Documents related to eligibility criteria and Stage :- 2 Financial bid for Name of Work: (1) Operation & Comprehensive Maintenance of Ten nos. MRSM for three years in EDMC. Head of Account: XL-III-D-IV. Tender Amount: Item Rate, Earnest Money: Rs. 24,76,500/- Tender Cost: Rs. 2,000/-, Time of Completion: Three Years. Rate shall hold good for: 120 days, Tender No. 319212. The last date of re-encryption of online bid is 01/10/2020 up to 1500 Hrs. Non EDMC registered contractors opting for e-tendering will have to register in the e-tendering system of EDMC. Other details/information can be seen on website: www.mcdetenders.com . Sd/- RO No. 50/DPJ/EDMC/2020-21 Ex. Engineer (E&M)	
EDMC'S CITIZENS HELPLINE NO. 155303	

SHORT TAKES

Bihar man, who did his MA at 98, dies

Patna: Rajkumar Vaishya, who created a record by doing his MA at the age of 98 three years ago, died at his residence here, family sources said on Tuesday. Vaishya, who was suffering from age-related ailments, died in his sleep on Monday afternoon. He was 101 and is survived by two sons. Vaishya, who had retired from service from a mining company in the early 1980s, passed MA in Economics from Nalanda Open University in 2017. Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar mourned Vaishya's death and said that he has his name in the *Limca Book of Records* for the feat. "I had visited his house to greet him personally on his achievement and had his blessings too," Kumar said in a condolence message on Tuesday. The chief minister had gone to Vaishya's residence on February 6, 2018, and felicitated him. — *PTI*

Bodies of 4 women found from Raj well

Jaipur: Bodies of a woman and her three children were recovered from a well in Rajasthan's Bharatpur district on Tuesday, police said. The family members of the woman have filed a case of murder against her in-laws, they added. The bodies of Sharda Devi (28) and her three daughters Trisha (6), Apoorva (4) and one-and-a-half-year-old Avi were recovered from a well in Khansuriapur village, police said. The post-mortem of the bodies was done by a medical board, SHO of Roopwas police station Hukum Singh said. He said the woman's husband works in Chennai and she was living here with the in-laws. — *PTI*

MP: ₹4cr assets found from official

Ujjain: Unaccounted assets worth over ₹4 crore were discovered during searches conducted at the properties of an in-charge chief municipal officer (CMO) in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday, the Lokayukta police said. Following complaints, raids were conducted at the properties of in-charge CMO of Barnagar Kuldeep Nishunk in Ujjain and Barnagar, said Lokayukta Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Vedansh Soni. The Lokayukta police look into corruption cases. Nishunk began his career as panchayat secretary in 2008 and had received a total of Rs 30 lakh in salary till now, DSP Soni said. During the raids, Lokayukta police found Rs 3.28 lakh in cash, 452 grams of gold, 2.8 kilograms of silver, documents of agricultural land and three houses, he said. — *PTI*

BORDER DISPUTE UNRESOLVED, SAYS RAJNATH IN PARLIAMENT

Continued From Page 1

walked out of the House after the defence minister's statement as it was not satisfied with it and wanted to ask certain questions which was disallowed by Speaker Om Birla.

The party has been repeatedly demanding that the government explain the "real situation" in Ladakh.

Congress MPs on Tuesday carried placards in the House that read: "We want a discussion on China and the PM must answer".

The MPs staged a walkout when the Speaker refused to allow the party's leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury to speak.

Reacting to the matter, Mr Chaudhary later said, "During the 1962 war, Atal Bihar Vajpayee had demanded a discussion on the ongoing war and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had agreed to hold a two-day discussion in Parliament."

Congress MPs later staged a protest outside the House near the Gandhi Statue within the Parliament premises.

Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi, who is currently abroad, tweeted: "It is clear from the statement of the Defence Minister that Modi ji misled the country on Chinese encroachment. Our country has always been, and will remain, with the Indian Army. But Modiji, when will you stand against China? When will we take back the land of our country from China? Do not be afraid to name China".

28 killed in lightning strikes in Bihar, UP as N. India stays warm

Most parts of the country likely to get rainfall over the next 3-4 days

New Delhi, Sept. 15: At least 28 people were killed in separate incidents of lightning strike in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday as rains lashed several parts of the country while most places in northern India experienced sultry and dry weather.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), most parts of the country are likely to get rainfall over the next three to four days and there will be no significant change in the maximum and minimum temperatures.

In the national capital, lack of rain will likely push the mercury further up over the next two days, the weather department said.

IN BIHAR, Gopalganj, Bhojpur and Rohtas districts reported three deaths each, while two deaths each were witnessed in Saran, Kaimur and Vaishali, officials said.

There has been no rain in the city for the past five days.

According to the India Meteorological Department, the maximum temperature will likely touch the 38-degrees Celsius mark over the next two days amid lack of rain. It, however, forecast light rainfall on the weekend.

There has been 75 per cent less rainfall in September in the city so

ACCORDING TO the India Meteorological Department, the maximum temperature will likely touch the 38-degrees Celsius mark over the next two days amid lack of rain

far, according to the Met department data.

In Bihar, 15 people died in six districts after being struck by lightning.

Gopalganj, Bhojpur and Rohtas districts reported three deaths each, while two deaths each were reported from Saran, Kaimur and Vaishali, officials said.

Chief minister Nitish Kumar announced that the next of kin of those killed would be given ₹4

lakh each as ex-gratia amount.

Meanwhile, light to moderate rain occurred at isolated places in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday even as at least 13 people were killed due to lightning strike at different places.

Four people died in Ghazipur, three in Kaushambi, two each in Kushinagar and Chitrakoot, one each in Jaunpur and Chandauli, Relief commissioner Sanjay Goel said in a statement.

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath directed the concerned District Magistrates to provide ₹4 lakh financial assistance to family members of those killed, he said.

— *PTI*

Protest in Kerala for Jaleel's resignation



Police baton charge on BJP Yuva Morcha activists during their protest march demanding the resignation of Kerala education minister K.T. Jaleel in

Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. The Opposition parties, both the BJP and Congress, have been up in arms against Jaleel after the minister was questioned by ED in con-

nection with the allegations regarding aid sought from the UAE consulate during Ramadan in violation of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010. — *PTI*

Khalilzad, EAM discuss post-US Afghanistan

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

The United States Special Representative on Afghanistan Reconciliation, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, was in New Delhi on Tuesday for a brief visit during which he met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla were also present during the meeting. It is learnt, India reiterated its concerns with regard to

security and growth of terrorism in the absence of US troops in Afghanistan to which Mr Khalilzad said the Afghan sides should ensure their territory must not be used by any terrorist group against any other country.

Sources said Mr Khalilzad appreciated India's participation in the Intra-Afghan Negotiations and briefed about the US assessment of IAN and shared the US perspective on the Afghan peace process. While India is supportive of the ₹Afghan-led, Afghan-



Zalmay Khalilzad

owned and Afghan-controlled peace process, it is also wary of the possible use of Afghan soil by Pakistan and Chinese agencies to create trouble for India.

This was the fifth visit of Mr Khalilzad to India since January 2019. He had last visited India on May 7, 2020.

According to sources, the conversation focused largely on the Intra-Afghan peace talks and how India can play a major role in the region once United States security forces start withdrawing from war-torn Afghanistan.

The US government, in a statement issued after the meeting between Mr Khalilzad and Mr S. Jaishankar, said that US

and India share the view that the peace process must continue until there is agreement on a political roadmap and a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire.

"The Afghan sides should ensure their territory must not be used by any terrorist group against any other country," the statement said while adding ambassador Khalilzad stressed regional and international support is critical for the success of these negotiations and the implementation of any agreement.

Pro-Khalistan terror module busted, 2 arrested in Punjab

Chandigarh, Sept. 15: With the arrest of two people, the Punjab police on Tuesday claimed to have busted a pro-Khalistan terror module.

Four .32 calibre pistols, one 9 mm pistol and one .32 revolver, eight live rounds of ammunition, several mobile phones and an internet dongle were seized from their possession, said Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta in a statement here.

The module was busted on the basis of inputs about the nefarious designs of certain pro-Khalistan elements trying to disturb peace and harmony in the state by launching terror attacks, said Mr Gupta.

Mr Gupta said following inputs, the Punjab police had launched a drive to

THE MODULE was busted on the basis of inputs about the nefarious designs of certain pro-Khalistan elements trying to disturb peace and harmony in the state by launching terror attacks, said Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta in a statement.

ensure thorough frisking and checking of all those entering the state from various parts of the country, thus leading to the arrest of Harjeet Singh alias Raju and Shamsher Singh alias Shera, both residents of village Mianpur, Tarn Taran. They were nabbed at the checkpoint near a hotel on Rajpura-Sirhind road by a police team.

A case under relevant sections of the IPC, the Arms Act and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act has been registered against them.

During preliminary investigation, the accused revealed that they received four weapons from Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh, and two from Safidon, in Haryana's Jind district, said the DGP Gupta said they were also wanted in an attempt to murder and an Arms Act case registered in Police Station Sarai Amanat Khan, Tarn Taran.

Initial investigations further revealed that the two men were allegedly planning a major terror attack in Punjab in connivance with five criminals. — *PTI*

BSF foils infiltration bid along border in Samba

Jammu, Sept. 15: The Border Security Force (BSF) on Tuesday foiled a major infiltration bid by five heavily-armed terrorists along the International Border in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district, a spokesperson said on Tuesday.

The terrorists fled back to the Pakistani side after being confronted by the border guarding force, the spokesman said.

He said a strong protest note is being lodged with the Pakistan Rangers for helping the infiltrating terrorists.

The spokesperson said alert troops observed movement of terrorists on the Pakistani side in Samba sector during the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday. "Their movement was

tracked by BSF troops and at about 0030 hours, the group was seen close to the International Boundary where they reached taking advantage of the undulating ground and thick wild growth," the spokesperson said.

He said the five terrorists took refuge in a depression having dense wild growth.

"The BSF troops challenged them to stop but they opened fired on the party," the spokesperson said.

The BSF troops fired on the terrorists with coordinated effective fire and foiled a possible infiltration bid from the Pakistani side, he said.

He said the area was illuminated by the help of parabomb and BSF troops saw the terrorists fleeing. — *PTI*

ED to attach 22 immovable assets of slain Vikas Dubey

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

A day after registering money laundering case against Vikas Dubey and his 10 associates, including his alleged financier Jaykant Bajpai, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has identified at least 22 immovable assets (worth several crores), linked to the slain gangster that will be attached in a day or two.

Sources said Dubey had gathered huge wealth in the form of benami prop-

erties in several states. These assets (around 22) will be attached under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act in a day or two, they added.

"The agency is also trying to gather information about the overseas properties of Vikas Dubey and his associates. "It is believed that Dubey had visited 14 countries in the last three years", sources said. The ED on Monday registered a money laundering case against Vikas Dubey and his associates.

Railways to run 20 pairs of 'clone' trains Sept. 21

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

Considering the huge demand for travel on specific routes, ministry of railways has decided to run 20 pairs of "Clone Special" trains from September 21, 2020. These "Clone" trains will run on notified timings and will be fully reserved trains with limited halts. These Clone Special trains will be in addition to special trains which are already in operation.

Railway officials said these 19 pairs of "Clone Special" trains will run by utilising Humsafar rakes while one pair Lucknow-Delhi Clone special will run as Jan Shatabdi Express. Fare of Humsafar rake will be charged as Humsafar trains and for Janshatabdi rake, fare will be charged as Janshatabdi Express. The ARP (Advanced Reservation Period) will be 10 days for these trains. These trains will be primarily 3 AC and will have speed higher than the existing special trains. "Clone trains have not been operated by the Indian Railways in the past. These trains will be operationalised on the routes having high patronage and demand," official said.

Ranaut seeks compensation of ₹2cr for 'razed' office

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 15

Days after the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) razed unauthorised alterations at Kangana Ranaut's office, the Bollywood actress has demanded compensation worth ₹2 crore from the civic body citing the demolition 'illegal'. She has filed an amended petition before the Bombay high court seeking the damages.

In her amended petition, Kangana has stated that the BMC has demolished 40 per cent of the office, which included valuable property such as chandeliers and rare artworks. She has sought interim relief to take steps to make the property "capable of use" after the demolition.

"The large-scale illegal demolition has caused damage estimated to be around ₹2 crore," the plea said.

The BMC had issued a 24-hour stop-work notice to Kangana on September 8 citing illegal alterations in the renovation and finishing work at her office at Pali Hill, Bandra. To this, Kangana had filed a plea in the HC seeking interim relief of stay on the demolition work.



Police stand guard near barricades as Bhartiya Kisan Union activists protest against three ordinances passed by the Centre amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic at Badal village in Sri Muktsar Sahib, Punjab, on Tuesday. — *PTI*

Odisha scrap dealer dupes woman, held

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 15

Odisha police on Tuesday arrested a scrap dealer, who was earlier convicted by the Metropolitan Magistrate Court, Kolkata, in a fraud case, and produced him before the district Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) court at Jaipur.

As per information, accused Partha Sarathi Biswal (46) of Kamalpur village in the district ran a private firm Aditya Scrap Private Ltd in Kolkata with investment from different people. Champa Nandy had reportedly invested over ₹3.5 crore in

the company with promise of lucrative return. When the woman did not get any return, she demanded the accused for a refund. However, Biswal failed to fulfill his commitment.

Following this, Nandy moved the Matroplitan Magistrates Court in 2011. On December 21, 2017, the court declared Biswal guilty and sentenced him to one year of imprisonment.

The court also directed him to return the whopping amount of money to the woman.

Challenging the conviction, Biswal moved the higher court. However, the higher court upheld the lower court's decision.

Farming resumes along IB in J&K's Kathua after 18 yrs

Kathua (J&K), Sept. 15: Farming activity on the zero line along the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district resumed after a gap of 18 years with the joint efforts of the Border Security Force (BSF) and the civil administration.

Over 8,000 acres of land across the fencing, spread across 22 border villages from Paharpur to Londi in Hiranagar sector, is lying unattended by border residents due to the frequent ceasefire violations by Pakistan.

The natural growth of wild grass and bushes helped Pakistan to push

Over 8,000 acres of land across the fencing, spread across 22 border villages from Paharpur to Londi in Hiranagar sector, is lying unattended by border residents due to the frequent ceasefire violations by Pakistan

infiltrators and dig underground tunnels, posing a major security challenge.

"On the direction of Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, the civil administration took the initiative with the active support of BSF to start ploughing of the

fields for cultivation of crops," Kathua district development commissioner O.P. Bhagat said. The farmers of the neighbouring country are cultivating up to zero line on their side but the farmers on this side stopped cultivation of the land due to firing from the Pakistani side, thus incurred huge losses over the years.

"In the first phase, 1,200 kanals (150 acres) of land will be cultivated. The process will continue till the entire 8,000 acres of land was brought under the cultivation, Bhagat said.

— *PTI*

THE ASIAN AGE

16 SEPTEMBER 2020

A gross misuse of anti-terrorism laws

It's a paradox that citizens in nations that proclaim themselves to be democratic do not get their democratic rights expanded as time goes by but those sitting in positions of power get theirs. People who have been worst victims of governmental excesses never bother to scarp such systems once they come to power; they would instead use them effectively to strangle their opponents. India is now witnessing such a paradox. The Delhi police last Sunday arrested Umar Khalid, a former student leader of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for 'inciting violence' during the Delhi riots, and got him remanded to its custody for 10 days. It is understood that he has been booked under, apart from various sections in IPC including murder and attempt to murder, the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which would ensure that he remained incarcerated for a long time without bail.

The police action comes close on the heels of it filing a chargesheet in connection with the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, in which it included the names of CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury, Swaraj Abhiyan leader Yogendra Yadav, economist and academic Jayati Ghosh, Delhi University professor Apoorvanand and documentary filmmaker Rahul Roy. They are purported to have "encouraged" anti-CAA protests.

Given the way the Union government uses the legal process to engage people who are ideologically opposed to, as is seen in the case of Bhima Koregaon case, it is not long before all those whose names are mentioned in the chargesheet will find themselves behind bars. What makes it interesting is that it happens on the watch of people, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who cut their teeth in politics fighting the excesses of Emergency.

The BJP government in Uttar Pradesh is going a step further and introducing a parallel system to ensure law and order. Personnel of the newly formed Uttar Pradesh Special Security Force can "without the prior permission of any magistrate and without any warrant, arrest any person". This is a dream project of chief minister Yogi Adityanath! The government clarifies that the provisions are similar to the ones that govern the functions of the Central Industrial Security Force.

None has a doubt that governments need powerful legal tools to tackle terrorism. But in India, tools such as UAPA are used more to rein in political opponents, apart from persecuting the most vulnerable sections of society such as Dalits, tribals, minorities and other marginalised sections of society, than taking on terrorists. The Allahabad high court had to recently intervene to ensure liberty to doctor Kafeel Khan after it found that there was little reason to slap sections of the National Security Act, 1980, on him. The Public Safety Act, 1978, of Jammu and Kashmir is being used to smother popular politicians of the Union territory.

"The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened," former US president John F. Kennedy once reminded his countrymen. Time Indians woke up and kept the wolf from the door.

Govt's utter callousness

The opening day of Parliament's Monsoon Session, held under extraordinary circumstances as the country nears five million Covid-19 cases, made it quite evident why the Narendra Modi government was so keen to avoid answering members' questions on the floor of the House. In reply to a written question by a BJD member, labour minister Santosh Gangwar said the government had "no data" on how many guest workers had died or were injured on the long trek back home in the lockdown months. While the minister acknowledged over one crore such workers had walked or otherwise travelled to their home states after the nationwide lockdown was imposed with just four hours' notice, he also said in response to another question that the Centre had no information on how many had lost their jobs, as "no such survey has been conducted by the Centre". This of course begs the inevitable question: Why not? It is utterly shameful that India's government could display such a callous, unfeeling attitude towards its own people — the minister could get away with it only because the response was laid on the table of the House, and he didn't have to face supplementaries afterwards, as would have been inevitable if he was speaking on the floor. Did the government think if it didn't keep count, the deaths — perhaps in thousands — hadn't happened?

The mass movement by India's guest workers, with searing images of people battling the police, sometimes being sprayed with insecticide, often being huddled together in quarantine shelters, was one of the defining global images of Covid-19's impact. It was possibly the largest migration in India's history since the 1947 Partition. The entire world saw how people were collapsing on their way home, fighting exhaustion and sheer hunger, with many losing their lives. But the government, in an extraordinary lack of empathy, apparently didn't feel the need to record these deaths. Was it because it didn't want to be held responsible, as of course it was, for people losing their lives due to official callousness. Was it because it didn't want to be liable for compensation? The answers are overdue.

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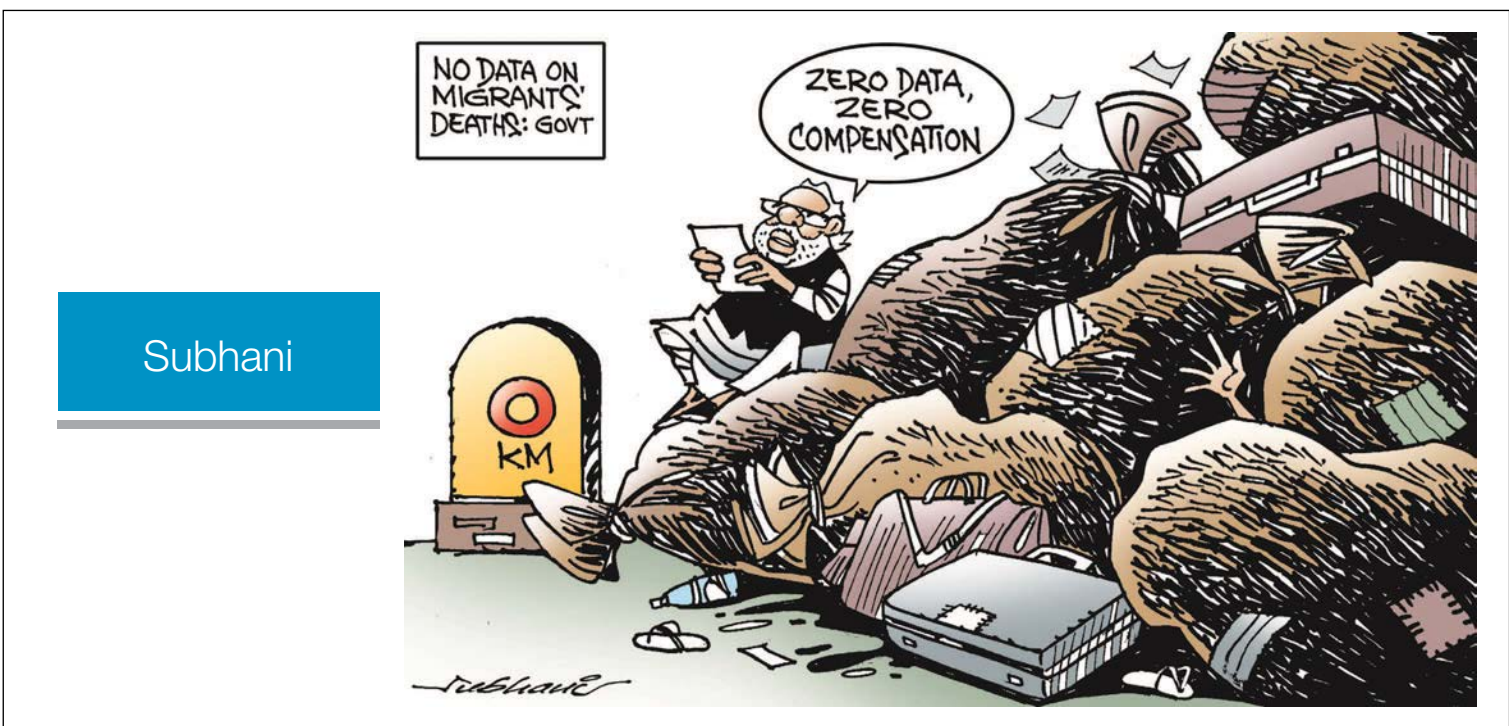
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Subhani

Export agro-produce to sow seeds of prosperity



V. Vijayasai Reddy

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce recently came out with its report on the promotion of India's agricultural and marine exports. A closer reading of the report quantifies extent of fall of Indian agro and marine exports. It highlights problems faced by Indian exporters. Most export items have plateaued, others have been experiencing a negative growth. Some are falling due to availability of cheaper and better alternatives in international markets, others are negatively affected due to low or lack of quality production in India.

The report, beyond outlining problems, also suggests how to address these issues through direct intervention or sometimes through innovative solutions, such as "export only" tobacco farms and promotion of international marketing.

India is exporting a very small percentage of total agricultural products produced in quantitative terms. In 2018-2019 we exported just 0.2 per cent of our wheat, 1.3 per cent of our fruits and vegetables and 1.25 per cent of our pulses. Export of agricultural commodities, with an exception to rice, is less than two per cent of the total production with no significant increase for the last three years, despite India being one of the largest producers of these commodities.

It is not a case that productivity of our soil needs to increased manifold so even after feeding our population we have a large surplus to export. India is already producing enough surplus, therefore, factors like

inefficiency in supply chain, infrastructure development and a higher value addition for promoting agricultural exports is needed.

India needs to leverage newly created goodwill in central Asian countries into trade benefits to augment agri-exports of wheat and rice. We must also work towards market exploration of new emerging trade destinations of Egypt, Mexico, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines for Indian rice.

On marine exports, the report says there was a 5.8 per cent decline in value of marine exports during the April-December period and a 12 per cent quantity decline. Marine produce should be a profitable venture because of the sheer number of people dependent on it, especially in coastal states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The parliamentary committee opined that special focus should be given to production, marketing and export of shrimp, which fetches a comparatively high price in the international market, especially the United States.

There is huge potential in export of tuna, which, if caught in a certain manner with proper "know-how", can fetch a 15 per cent higher revenue. A scheme has to be devised by the Central

India needs to leverage newly created goodwill in central Asian countries in order to create trade benefits to augment the agri-exports of wheat and rice

India is the third largest exporter of tobacco. With thousands dependent on its farming for their livelihoods, steps should be taken for exportable surplus production

Institute of Fisheries Technology for promoting tuna production and export.

Marine export is an infrastructure-heavy sector, right from maintaining a cold chain of export items to ensuring proper storage and packaging.

We lost over a quarter of our total marine production was lost due to factors related to poor or non-existent infrastructure. The potential of marine export is being hampered by inadequate post-harvest infrastructure and dilapidated fishing harbours. Government must prioritise upgradation of infrastructure facilities and modernization of fishing harbours to augment marine production and export. Centre must ensure upgradation of two fishing harbours at Kochi and Nizampattanam at the earliest.

Spices, for centuries, have been closely associated with Indian cultural traditions, preservation, medicine, cooking habits and embalming. Spices have been our historical basis of trade with the world, from Egypt to Persians or Europeans.

It is not surprising that India is the largest producer, exporter and consumer of spices in the world. India accounts for 47 per cent in quantity and 43 per cent in value of global spice trade. Total production of spices, cultivated in all states, was 9.2 million tonnes in 2018-19. Of this, India exported over one million tonnes (12 per cent of total production), while rest is domestically consumed.

We must ensure that spices with lesser exportable value are not

given undue importance at the cost of other more significant spices like cardamom and chilli.

A controversial but important agricultural produce dealt was tobacco. India produces about 800 million kilos of various types of tobacco every year, mostly in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. India is the third largest producer and exporter of tobacco in the world, which earned India over ₹6,000 crores in foreign exchange. The land under tobacco cultivation in India has come down considerably. With thousands of tobacco farmers dependent on its farming for their livelihoods, steps should be taken for exportable surplus production to enable farmers to earn income without affecting health of our country.

A step could be to have 'export only' tobacco farms for promoting cultivation of tobacco, specifically for export and look at China, world's largest consumer of tobacco for trade.

The Agricultural Export Policy in 2018 envisaged ways to double agricultural exports by 2022 from present \$30 billion to \$60 billion. We can achieve it because India has an advantage of huge landmass and varied climatic conditions and is a global leader in producing cereals, fruits and vegetables, spices and milk, but our share in international trade is very low (2.2 per cent). We must have several ministries like commerce, agriculture, shipping, food processing, finance and external affairs work closely on "mission mode" to achieve the target. Exports shall be key to doubling income of the farmers and in making India a \$5 trillion economy.

The writer is parliamentary party leader of the YSR Congress Party, and chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce

LETTERS

APING 'LIBERALS'

A PIL filed in the Delhi High Court has sought that same-sex marriages be recognised under the Hindu Marriage Act and Special Marriage Act. The basic purpose of marriage is reproduction for continued existence of the human race. There are aspects like succession and inheritance of those born to such couples hence their relationship needs legal and social sanction which they get after being married. Homosexual couples cannot produce children and hence their living together has no legal or social implications. Calling this relationship "marriage" is a travesty of the great institution.

M.C. Joshi
Lucknow

NO TRUMP CARD

NARENDRA MODI and Donald Trump may have a lot in common, including the spiralling Covid numbers, but the leader of the world's largest democracy has made a costly mistake in cosying up to the President of America. Indian-origin voters may not forget that Mr Trump has in fact not done anything for India. Instead, he changed Visa rules that impacted Indians negatively. His negotiations with Taliban are surely not in India's interest. Why did Mr Trump go on to release aid to Pakistan? His stand on Iran put us in a lot of difficulty, also since Iranian oil is cheaper than Gulf oil resulting in rising fuel prices.

Bidyut K. Chatterjee
Faridabad

LIFE ON VENUS?

ASTRO-BIOLOGISTS have detected some traces of phosphene, a pungent gas, in the atmosphere surrounding the hottest planet in the solar system. The cloud cover may perhaps be able to sustain microbial life forms. During the decade following the end of the WWII and beginning of the Cold War, the world witnessed strange sightings of UFOs. Western nations thought these were space-ships flown by the ETs living on Shukra Grah. Others believed Russia was spying on the US.

Arun Malankar
Mumbai

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

Bela Bhatia



Lockdown for some, lockup for the others

It is obvious that the threat of the coronavirus, a communicable disease, is worst in places of high population density. The prison is one such place. About half a million persons are incarcerated in more than 1,300 jails scattered all over India. More than two thirds are undertrials.

While most prisoners are charged under some section of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), many are also incarcerated under "special laws". Some, like the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act 1967 (UAPA), are all-India laws, but many states also have their own special laws, such as the Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act 2005 (CSPSA). Large numbers of undertrials have been incarcerated under these laws as part of the so-called war on terror, without due process.

Most of them are ultimately acquitted. For example, in the Jagdalpur central jail of Bastar subdivision in Chhattisgarh, the conviction rate is less than three per cent. Meanwhile, however, these undertrials often remain in prison for as long as seven-eight years or even more, because court trials are notoriously slow. Those who are convicted are unable to appeal with ease because the high court is too far and the lawyers are too expensive.

In any case they would be joining a long waiting list since the high court is currently attending to its backlog of pending cases (the last time I enquired, it was hearing cases filed in 2012).

As a human rights lawyer in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and Sessions courts in Bastar, I have witnessed the anguish and frustrations of undertrials and their families whose cases do not move for years. These "Naxali cases" may be under various sections of the IPC as well as under the UAPA or CSPSA. Many undertrials are prima facie innocent villagers who were picked up after a Maoist action in or around their villages (e.g. an IED blast or attack on a contingent of security forces). Sometimes, a single incident involves many accused. Most of them are not named in the FIR because habitually the FIRs of such incidents are made out against known Maoist leaders or cadres of the area, plus "unknown persons". So these are the unknown persons who, after being picked up when they were sleeping, in the market or forest, or attending to other needs like a visit to the hospital, get labelled as "Naxali" for many years, until their trial is over.

There are many such cases involving a group of villagers. A particularly star-

ting example is that of 120 villagers who were arrested from various villages in Sukma district after the Burkapal incident in which 25 CRPF were killed by the Maoists in 2017. That incident is being tried in the NIA court in Jagdalpur and it is still at the initial stage of framing charges.

The UAPA and other special laws like CSPSA are called black laws because the crimes they seek to cover could be dealt with under IPC and because these laws give special, unaccountable power to the police. It is only high-profile cases like those of Binayak Sen, Varavara Rao and others incarcerated in the Bhima Koregaon case that attract national or even international attention. While this attention is justified, most people do not realise that thousands of powerless, impoverished people face similar or worse injustice. These people remain invisible, while their families, fleeced by local lawyers, are forced to sell their land, trees or part with their savings to get them out of jail. No campaigns are organised for these people because they are largely invisible to the public eye. It does not require much intelligence to see that this is the way in which the state troubles ordinary people to get back at the Maoists. For every actual Maoist,

dozens of ordinary villagers get caught in this vicious web of harassment, lies, revenge and ruin.

In "Naxali" cases, bail is routinely denied in the sessions and NIA courts. As per procedure, it is only after a bail is refused there that the accused can approach the high court for bail. In reality, as explained earlier, that option can be exercised by only a few. Bail is even more elusive during the lockdown, when its importance for the life and safety of the prisoner is greater than ever. They remain stuck in prison with mounting fear that the virus will get them as Covid-19 cases spread in Chhattisgarh prisons. Ever since the lockdown started, family members and lawyers of the prisoners have also been denied "mulakat" (visits). There was a time, in the past few months, when the jails were not even accepting parcels from the families for the inmates.

In March 2020, the Supreme Court ordered state governments to consider releasing selected categories of prisoners during lockdown under parole or bail. In Chhattisgarh, however, only a small minority of prisoners (barely 20 per cent) have been released. Chhattisgarh jails are among the most crowded in the country.

More humane provisions are needed

for prisoners, including political prisoners and those charged under special laws. For example, the 120 people charged in the Burkapal case could easily be in their villages (and report to the local thana if required) during this period. They are likely to be safer in the villages, where the density of population is far less. Likewise, it is not clear what the state gains by continuing to incarcerate the disabled professor G.N. Saibaba, 81-year old Varavara Rao, now ill, or others in the Bhima Koregaon case. All these individuals have been working in full public view for decades and could be allowed to stay at home.

Ultimately, we need to do away with these authoritarian special laws. They have no place in a democracy. Greater attention should be paid to the rights and wellbeing of prisoners during the pandemic, the end to which is nowhere in sight. As far as bail is concerned, it is time to return to the principle underlined by Justice Krishna Iyer in a Supreme Court judgement in 1977: "The basic rule may perhaps be tersely put as bail not jail."

Bela Bhatia is an independent researcher and human rights lawyer based in Bastar, south Chhattisgarh

IN BRIEF

China launches nine satellites

Beijing: China successfully launched on Tuesday a solid-propellant carrier rocket from a ship in the Yellow Sea, sending nine satellites into orbit in the second such sea-based launch mission, the official media reported. The Long March 11-HY2, the 10th member of the Long March 11 family blasted off at 9:22 am from the Debo 3, a self-propelled deck barge that was modified for the mission, *China Daily* reported. The nine satellites belong to the Jilin-1 Gaofen 03-1 group. About 13 minutes later, after travelling 535 km, it has deployed nine Jilin 1 high-resolution Earth-observation satellites, three to take videos and six to take photographs in sun-synchronous orbits, the report said.

NBW issued for Nawaz

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 15

Pakistan's Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday issued non-bailable arrest warrants against Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) supreme Nawaz Sharif, who is currently in London due to medical treatment, for September 22 in Al-Azizia reference. The court rejected his plea seeking exemption from the hearing and directed to initiate proceedings to declare him as proclaimed offender. The court also turned down the PML-N supremo's petition to continue the case hearings through legal representative. Nawaz had requested the IHC to nullify its ruling and allow him to become a part of the court proceedings through his representative. He made the request on medical grounds. The IHC had ordered Nawaz to surrender and appear on September 10 at any cost in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills corruption reference.

UK returns 3 idols to India

London: A set of three idols of Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, stolen from a temple in Tamil Nadu decades ago, were restored to the Indian government on Tuesday after a collector voluntarily offered to hand it back on discovering their true history. The theft dates back to 1978 and led to an investigation by the Idol Wing of the Tamil Nadu Police working along with colleagues in the Metropolitan Police in London. The unnamed collector, who had acquired the statues in good faith, was informed about their dubious provenance by the Met Police. After matching them up with archival photographs from the 1950s held at the French School in Pondicherry, it was proved that the idols in his possession were those belonging to the Vijayanagara period and stolen from Sri Rajagopalaswami Temple at Ananthamangalam in Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu. In a ceremony streamed from India House in London, priests from Sri Murugan Temple in London conducted a short religious ceremony.

AVNI DOSHI ON BOOKER PRIZE SHORTLIST

London, Sept. 15: Dubai-based Indian-origin author Avni Doshi is among the six authors shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize for her debut novel 'Burnt Sugar'. The shortlist was unveiled virtually in London on Tuesday after judges re-evaluated the 13 longlisted novels published in the UK or Ireland between October 2019 and September 2020 to whittle down the shortlist for the GBP 50,000 literary prize in November. "This utterly compelling read examines a complex and unusual mother-daughter relationship with honest, unflinching realism — sometimes emotionally wrenching but also cathartic, written with poignancy and memorability," the judges said of Doshi's entry.

Doshi, born in the US and now living in Dubai, has previously spoken about the long journey to her first novel, which was released in India last year as 'Girl in White Cotton' and for its UK release in July. Others in the shortlist include Diane Cook for 'The New Wilderness', Tsitsi Dangaremba for the third novel in her trilogy — 'This Mournable Body', Maaza Mengiste for 'The Shadow King', Douglas Stuart for 'Shuggie Bain' and Brandon Taylor for 'Real Life'. Literary heavyweight and former double Booker winner Hilary Mantel, failed to make the shortlist cut.

Brexit bill clears 1st hurdle in Parl

London, Sept. 15: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's controversial bill that aims to override parts of the Brexit divorce agreement struck with the European Union (EU) cleared its first parliamentary hurdle by winning the first House of Commons vote by 340 to 263 votes. The Internal Market Bill, which has faced strong criticism from the Opposition parties and senior members of Johnson's own Conservative Party, is set for rebellions as it progresses through further stages in its parliamentary process despite Johnson's 80-seat majority in the Commons.

The government says the bill contains vital safeguards to protect Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK if negotiations on a future trade deal with the EU break down. But critics warn that it risks damaging the UK by breaching international law.

Two ruling Tory party members of the parliament — Sir Roger Gale and Andrew Percy — voted against the bill on Monday night, while a further 30 abstained, which includes general absences from the House. During a five-hour debate ahead of the vote on Monday evening, Johnson claimed the EU's current approach could lead to excessive checks and even tariffs on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. He said the bill would ensure the UK's "economic and political integrity",

accusing the EU of making unfair demands to "exert leverage" in the trade talks — including a threat to block food exports. "Now that we have left the EU, and the transition period is about to elapse, we need the armature of our law once again to preserve the arrangements on which so many jobs and livelihoods depend. That is the fundamental purpose of this bill," he told the MPs.

"I regret to have to tell the House that in recent months the EU has suggested that it is ready to go to extreme and unreasonable lengths using the Northern Ireland Protocol in a way that goes well beyond common sense, simply to exert leverage against the UK in our negotiations for a free trade agreement," he claimed.

"I understand how some people will feel uneasy over the use of these powers. And I share that sentiment myself and I have absolutely no desire to use these measures. They are an insurance policy," he added. The prime minister also held a call with his Tory party members of the House of Lords on Monday night in anticipation of the bill eventually moving to the Lords.

The Opposition Labour Party accused the government of renegeing on a deal Johnson signed earlier this year, and on which Conservative members of the parliament campaigned in the December 2019 General Election. — PTI

Bigger response if Iran attacks: Don

Washington, Sept. 15: President Donald Trump has warned Iran that any attack against the US would be retaliated with "1,000 times greater in magnitude" after media reports that Tehran is planning to avenge the killing of top general Qasem Soleimani in January. The death of Gen Soleimani, head of Iran's elite Quds Force, in a US airstrike near Baghdad's airport marks a major escalation in the standoff between Washington and Tehran, since US President Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and imposed crippling sanctions. Iran had vowed to seek revenge for Gen Soleimani's killing.

"Any attack by Iran, in any form, against the United States will be met with an attack on Iran that will be 1,000 times greater in magnitude!" Trump said in a tweet after news reports emerged that Iran is planning some kind of attack against the US. "Iran may be planning an assassination or other attack, against the US in retaliation for the killing of the terrorist leader Soleimani, which was carried out for his planning a future attack, murdering US Troops,



Donald Trump

and the death & suffering caused over so many years," Trump wrote.

In a news report based on unnamed intelligence sources, the *Politico* said "the Iranian government is weighing an assassination attempt against the American ambassador to South Africa Lana Marks. "If carried out, it could dramatically ratchet up already serious tensions between the US and Iran and create enormous pressure on Trump to strike back — possibly in the middle of a tense election season," the American news outlet said. An intelligence source told *Fox News* that the intel community is taking the threat against the ambassador seriously. — PTI

India beats China to win poll to UN women panel

United Nations, Sept. 15: In a significant victory, India got elected as Member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the principal global body focussed on gender equality and women empowerment, beating China in a hotly-contested election. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The 54-member ECOSOC, holding the first plenary meeting of its 2021 session in the General Assembly Hall on Monday, held elections for two seats in the Asia-Pacific States category with Afghanistan, India and China in the fray. Afghanistan, which is led by Ambassador Adela Raz at the UN, garnered 39 votes and India got 38 votes of the 54 ballots cast.

China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, got only 27 votes and could not even cross the half-way mark and also failed to get the required majority of 28 votes. "India wins seat in prestigious

● **AFGHANISTAN GARNERED 39 votes and India got 38 votes of the 54 ballots cast. China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, got only 27 votes and could not even cross the half-way mark and also failed to get the required majority of 28 votes.**

#ECOSOC body! India elected Member of Commission on Status of Women #CSW. It's a ringing endorsement of our commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all our endeavours. We thank member states for their support," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti tweeted. India beat China in the hotly-contested election to the prestigious UN body in the year when the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, that was held in Beijing in 1995, is being commemorated around the world.

Don to preside over historic Arab-Israeli recognition deals

Power dynamics to shift as Prez to get a boost ahead of the Nov. US election

Washington, Sept. 15: President Donald Trump is set to preside over the signing of historic diplomatic deals between Israel and two Gulf Arab nations that could herald a dramatic shift in Middle East power dynamics and give him a boost ahead of the November US election.

In a White House ceremony aimed at showcasing presidential statesmanship, Trump will host more than 700 guests Tuesday on the South Lawn to witness the sealing of the agreements between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Trump and his allies hope the occasion will burnish Trump's credentials as a peacemaker at the height of his re-election campaign. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Emirati and Bahraini foreign ministers are to ink the deals before the crowd, which will include representatives of supporting nations from the Washington-based diplomatic corps but few other dignitaries from overseas. Some Congressional Democrats who have offered muted praise have been invited to attend.

In addition to the individual bilateral agreements signed by Israel, the UAE and Bahrain, all three will sign a trilateral document, officials said. The agreements are dubbed the "Abraham Accords" after the patriarch of the world's three major monotheistic religions. Trump is expected to sign as a witness.

INDIA, U.S., INK DEFENCE TECH COOP STATEMENT

Washington, Sept. 15: India and the United States on Tuesday signed a statement of intent to strengthen the bilateral dialogue on defence technology co-operation. It was signed by Raj Kumar, Secretary, Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, and Ellen Lord, US Under Secretary of Defence for Acquisition and Sustainment, during the 10th Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) Group Meeting held virtually. Kumar and Lord co-chaired the meeting, during which the groups reported to the co-chairs on ongoing activities and collaborative opportunities, including a number of near-term projects.

The co-chairs signed a statement of intent (SOI) that declared "to strengthen our dialogue on defence technology cooperation by pursuing detailed planning and making measurable progress" on several specific DTTI projects. — PTI

Rulennis Munoz, 33, said she had called a crisis intervention organisation and a police non-emergency number to get her brother involuntarily committed. "He had an episode. He was just incoherent and acting out," she said. "I called to find out what the procedure was to get him some help."



Demonstrators, mask-clad due to the Covid-19 pandemic, hold Palestinian flags during a protest against the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain's decisions to normalise relations with Israel, in the city of Nablus in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday. Palestinians had in August accused Abu Dhabi of a "stab in the back", as the UAE became only the third Arab nation after Egypt and Jordan to announce it would have formal relations with Israel. — AFP

'NO PROBLEM' SELLING UAE ADVANCED F-35: TRUMP

Washington, Sept. 15: US President Donald Trump said Tuesday he would have "no problem" selling advanced F-35 warplanes to the United Arab Emirates, despite objections from close ally Israel.

"I personally would have no problem with it," he said on Fox News. "I would

have no problem in selling them the F-35." He said the sale would mean "tremendous jobs at home". The UAE is eyeing the stealth fighter jet as a component in its ambitious plans to make the small, wealthy country into a regional military power. Israel — currently the only country

in the region to possess the US warplanes — has pushed back, insisting on retaining its overwhelming technical advantage against its Arab neighbours. Analysts say that the UAE has used its demand for F-35s as a bargaining chip in agreeing to sign the Trump-brokered deal. — AFP

Police shoot, kill knife-wielding man in Lancaster, set off protests

Lancaster (US), Sept. 15: A police officer fatally shot a man with a knife after his sister said she called police to get him involuntarily committed, leading to street protests and vandalism in what the mayor of the small Pennsylvania city of Lancaster called a "heartbreaking day". Police posted the officer's body camera video on social media, showing the man chasing the officer down a sidewalk with a knife before he was fatally shot.

Police eventually used tear gas early Monday to disperse hundreds of protesters who took to the streets of the diverse city of 59,000 people in the heart of Pennsylvania Amish country following the shooting death of Ricardo Munoz on Sunday afternoon. Munoz, 27, was mentally ill — diagnosed with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia — and hadn't been taking his medications, his sister said.

Rulennis Munoz, 33, said she had called a crisis intervention organisation and a police non-emergency number to get her brother involuntarily committed. "He had an episode. He was just incoherent and acting out," she said. "I called to find out what the procedure was to get him some help."

Police chief fired over Prude death

Rochester (US), Sept. 15: Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren fired the police chief and suspended her top lawyer and communications director Monday in the continuing upheaval over the suffocation death of Daniel Prude.

Chief Le'Ron Singletary announced his retirement last week as part of a major shakeup of the city's police leadership but said he would stay on through the end of the month. Instead, Warren said at a news conference that she had permanently relieved him while suspending Corporation Counsel Tim Curtin and Communications Director Justin Roj without pay for 30 days following a cursory man-

agement review of the city's role in Prude's death. "This initial look has shown what so many have suspected, that we have a pervasive problem in the Rochester Police Department," Warren said.

"One that views everything through the eyes of the badge and not the citizens we serve. It shows that Prude's death was not taken as seriously as it should have been by those who reviewed the case at every level."

Officers found Prude running naked down the street in March, handcuffed him, put a hood over his head, then held him down until he stopped breathing. He died a week later. — AP

immediately explain why an officer was dispatched, although Munoz was facing four counts of aggravated assault after he was accused last year of stabbing four people, including a 16-year-old boy in the face, following a fight. The body camera video posted by police late Sunday showed the officer fire several

shots while running away from Munoz, who then falls to the ground.

Protesters gathered outside the police station and, in video posted to social media, they chanted, "Hands up, don't shoot", "No justice, no peace" and "What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!" — AP

FEDS PROBING IN-CUSTODY DEATH OF POC

Batan Rogue (US), Sept. 15: Federal authorities are investigating the death of a PoC during what Louisiana State Police described as a struggle to take him into custody following a rural police chase last year. The death of Ronald Greene, 49, remains shrouded in secrecy because State Police have declined to release body-camera footage related to the May 2019 chase north of Monroe, Louisiana. Troopers say it began when Greene failed to stop for an unspecified traffic violation.

Greene's death drew new attention after his family filed a wrongful death lawsuit this year alleging state troopers "brutalised" Greene and "left him beaten, bloodied and in cardiac arrest" before covering up his actual cause of death. Greene's family said authorities initially claimed Greene died after crashing into a tree but omitted what police now acknowledge was the "struggle" preceding his death. — AP

Leave waters, Indonesia to China

Jakarta, Sept. 15: An Indonesian patrol ship confronted a Chinese coast guard vessel that spent almost three days in waters where Indonesia claims economic rights and are near the southernmost part of China's disputed South China Sea claims.

The Indonesian Maritime Security Agency said it detected Chinese ship 5204 entering Indonesia's exclusive economic zone in what Indonesia calls the North Natuna waters on Friday night. The agency sent a patrol ship that closed within a kilometre (0.6 mile) of the Chinese coast guard vessel and they communicated to affirm their position and their nation's claims to the area, said Aan Kurnia, chief of the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency. "We asked them to

US BANS IMPORT OF 5 CHINESE GOODS PRODUCED USING 'FORCED LABOUR'

Washington, Sept. 15: The US has banned the import of five goods from China, including computer-parts, cotton and hair products, alleging that they are produced in forced labour camps in the restive Muslim-majority Xinjiang province.

In a statement, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said the products subject to the import ban are cotton, apparel, computer parts, and hair products.

The fifth ban is on all products made with labour from the Lop County Number 4 Vocational Skills Education and Training Centre in Xinjiang. — PTI

"The Chinese coast guard vessel finally left the North Natuna Sea on Monday at 11:20 am," he said. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin indicated that China saw nothing wrong with the ship's actions and said the two countries are in

contact over "relevant maritime issues". "China's rights and interests in the relevant waters of the South China Sea are clear," Wang said at a daily briefing on Tuesday. "As far as I know, Chinese coast guard vessels have been performing normal patrols in the waters under China's jurisdiction." China's "nine-dash line" delineates its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea. A 2016 international arbitration ruling involving the Philippines invalidated most of China's sweeping claims in the sea, but China has ignored the ruling and called it a sham. Indonesia does not have a territorial claim to the South China Sea, but a section of Indonesia's exclusive economic zone lies within China's "nine-dash line". — AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,044.35	0.74
Nifty 50	11,521.80	0.71
S&P 500*	3,415.34	0.94
Dollar (₹)	73.64	-0.21
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.97	-0.56
Euro (₹)	87.52	-0.39
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,019.422	0.70
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	40.16	0.55
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.029	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.679	0.010

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Gujarat okays Lol for first CNG terminal

The Gujarat government approved a letter of intent (LoI) for the world's first CNG terminal at Bhavnagar port with an investment of Rs 1,900 crore, an official statement said. The LoI was approved by chief minister Vijay Rupani, it said. The project will be developed jointly by UK-headquartered Foresight Group, Mumbai-based Padmanabh Mafatlal Group and a Netherland-based consortium.

IndiGo, GoAir told to fly with altered PW engines



Aviation regulator DGCA has asked IndiGo and GoAir to fly only aircraft that have modified Pratt and Whitney engines on them, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said. The PW engine-powered A320 neo planes in IndiGo and GoAir fleets have been facing glitches since 2016. Puri said IndiGo has 134 A320neo and A321neo and have modified PW engines on them. He said GoAir has 46 A320neo and 30 are modified.

Aurobindo ties up with Birac to develop vaccine

Aurobindo Pharma announced collaboration with the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (Birac), set up by the Department of Biotechnology, for developing a Covid-19 vaccine. Birac has facilitated setting up of 'the r-VSV vaccine' manufacturing platform for the first time in India by supporting Aurobindo Pharma's Covid-19 vaccine development, the company said.

Sugar mills owe nearly ₹13,000 cr to cane farmers

Sugar mills owed nearly Rs 13,000 crore to cane farmers as on Sept. 11 for the crop procured during 2019-20 marketing season that started October last year. "Out of total cane dues payable of Rs 75,585 crore for sugar season 2019-20 as on September 11, 2020, about Rs 62,591 crore have been paid to the sugarcane farmers & only Rs 12,994 crore cane dues are yet to be paid," minister D.R. Dadarao said in the Lok Sabha.

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‘We won’t exit India, but we won’t scale up’ Toyota says won’t expand in India, blames high taxes

ANURAG KOTOKY SEPT. 15

Toyota Motor Corp. won't expand further in India due to the country's high tax regime, a blow for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who's trying to lure global companies to offset the deep economic malaise brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

India is planning to offer incentives worth \$23 billion to attract firms to set up manufacturing, people familiar with the matter said last week, including production-linked breaks for automakers. The country is the fourth-biggest car market in the world but international players have struggled to find a niche in a sector that's dominated by cheap, fossil fuelled vehicles.

The government keeps taxes on cars and motorbikes so high that companies find it hard to build scale, said Shekar Viswanathan, vice-chairman of Toyota's local unit, Toyota Kirloskar Motor. The high levies also put owning a car out of reach for many consumers, meaning factories are idled and jobs aren't created, he said.

"The message we are getting, after we have come here and invested money, is that we don't want you," Viswanathan said in an interview. In the absence of any reforms, "we won't exit India, but we won't scale up."

Toyota, one of the world's biggest carmakers, began operating in India in 1997. Its local unit is owned 89

Market India always has to precede Factory India, and this is something the politicians and bureaucrats don't understand"



Shekar Viswanathan, vice-chairman, Toyota Kirloskar Motor

The message we are getting, after we have come here and invested money, is that we don't want you...You'd think the auto sector is making drugs or liquor"

per cent by the Japanese company and has a small market share -just 2.6 per cent in August versus almost 5 per cent a year earlier, Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations data show.

In India, motor vehicles, including cars, two-wheelers and sports utility vehicles, attract taxes as high as 28 per cent. On top of that there can be additional levies, ranging from 1 per cent to as much as 22 per cent, based on a car's type, length or engine size. The tax on a four-metre long SUV with an engine capacity of more than 1500 cc works out to be as high as 50 per cent.

The additional levies are typically imposed on what are considered to be "luxury" goods.

General Motors Co quit the market in 2017 while Ford Motor Co agreed last year to move most of its assets in India into a joint venture with Mahindra &

Mahindra after struggling for more than two decades to win over buyers. That effectively ended independent operations in a country Ford had once said it wanted to be one of its top three markets by 2020.

Such punitive taxes discourage foreign investment, erode automakers' margins and make the cost of launching new products "prohibitive," Viswanathan said. "You'd think the auto sector is making drugs or liquor," he said.

Toyota, which also has an alliance with Suzuki Motor Corp to sell some of Suzuki's compact cars under its own brand, is utilising just about 20 per cent of its capacity in a second plant in India.

Taxes on electric vehicles, currently 5 per cent, will probably also go up once sales increase, Viswanathan said, referring to what he says has become a pattern with suc-

cessive governments.

While discussions are ongoing between ministries for a reduction in taxes, there may not any immediate agreement on an actual cut, heavy industries minister Prakash Javadekar said this month.

Automobile sales in India were weathering a slump before the pandemic, with at least half a million jobs lost. A lobby group has predicted it may take four years for sales to return to pre-slowdown levels.

The biggest players are the local units of Suzuki and Hyundai Motor Co., which have cornered the market for compact, affordable cars. Maruti and Hyundai have a combined share of almost 70 per cent.

Toyota in India has largely pivoted toward hybrid vehicles, which attract taxes of as much as 43 per cent because they aren't purely electric.

But in a nation where few can even afford a car, EVs or their hybrid cousins have yet to gain much acceptance. Elon Musk, the founder of Tesla, has said import duties would make his vehicles unaffordable in India.

"Market India always has to precede Factory India, and this is something the politicians and bureaucrats don't understand," he said. India needs to have demand for a product before asking firms to set up shop, yet "at the slightest sign of a product doing well, they slap it with a higher and higher tax rate," he said.—Bloomberg

E-com, logistic firms kick off festive season hiring

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

Having waited a little longer to assess the festive season demand, e-commerce and logistics firms have started framing their season's hiring plans. After Ecom Express, Flipkart has on Tuesday made a big announcement of helping generate over 70,000 direct and lakhs of indirect seasonal jobs.

Flipkart will be creating direct job opportunities, including delivery executives, pickers, packers and sorters, across its supply chain. Further, there will also be additional indirect jobs created at Flipkart's seller partner locations and kiranas.

The on-boarding of more than 50,000 kiranas by Flipkart for last-mile delivery will also create thousands of seasonal jobs to deliver millions of packages this season.

"By generating employment and enabling our sellers to scale their businesses during this time, we're doing our part to drive growth in the industry and the economy," said Amitesh Jha, senior vice-president, ekart and marketplace, Flipkart.

Flipkart is undertaking training programmes for its direct hires in various aspects of the supply chain through a mix of classroom and digital training. For lakhs of seller partners, MSMEs and artisans, Flipkart provides separate training in warehouse management and packaging.

On Monday, logistics firm Ecom Express had



said that it will be hiring over 30,000 people as part of its seasonal recruitment exercise for its hubs and delivery centres, among others, to meet the festive season demand. These seasonal positions have been created across the country with 75 per cent of the total hiring for beyond metros as well as cities including, Ahmedabad, Surat, Vijayawada, Chandigarh, Indore, Patna, Lucknow, Kanpur, Bhopal and Jaipur.

During the lockdown in May, Amazon had announced plans to open 70,000 seasonal jobs. "We will continue to create thousands of additional opportunities across the network to support customer demand across the country this upcoming festive season," Amazon said. The e-com giant had created 90,000 jobs in the 2019 festive season.

Snapdeal would rely on third-party logistics partners to meet the seasonal delivery needs. "We are working in close coordination with our third-party logistics partners to prepare for the surge in festive orders. Our partners are in the process of augmenting their deliv-

ery capability through additional hiring and expansion of their delivery fleet to ensure time-bound pick-up and delivery of our shipments," said a Snapdeal spokesperson.

According to the Indian Staffing Federation (ISF), logistics and e-commerce are the sectors still hiring in the Covid-19-hit festive season. "There has been a shift in consumerism to the digital platform from physical stores due to the pandemic. This shift will help e-commerce sales this festive season despite an overall subdued demand. However, the e-commerce firms have been waiting to see how Unlock India has been helping the demand situation. Usually, festive season hiring plans are finalised a quarter before the season itself. This time, it got delayed," said Suchita Dutta, executive director, Indian Staffing Federation.

As per ISF data, in the second half of 2018, different sectors had hired around two lakh people for temp jobs. In 2019, despite the gloom in the economy, hiring had seen a 10 to 15 per cent growth.

US tariffs on China illegal: WTO

JAMEY KEATEN GENEVA, SEPT. 15

The World Trade Organization said on Tuesday that Trump administration tariffs on Chinese goods totalling more than \$200 billion are illegal under the rules of the global trade body.

The decision marks the first time the Geneva-based trade body has ruled against a series of tariffs that President Donald Trump's government has imposed on a number of countries,

allies and rivals alike.

Trump has repeatedly criticised the WTO, which oversees international disputes on trade, for allegedly treating the US unfairly.

In its decision, the WTO ruled against the Trump administration's argument that China has engaged in practices harmful to US interests, on issues including intellectual property theft, technology transfer and innovation.

The ruling, in theory, would allow China to

impose retaliatory tariffs on billions worth of US goods—if the process is completed. But the US government can appeal the decision announced by the WTO's dispute settlement body, and the WTO's appeals court is no longer functioning—largely because of Washington's refusal to accept new members for it.

The US tariffs target two batches of Chinese products. Duties of 10 per cent were imposed on some \$200 billion worth of goods in September 2018,

and were jacked up to 25 per cent eight months later. An additional 25 per cent duties were imposed in June 2018 against Chinese goods worth \$34 billion in annual trade.

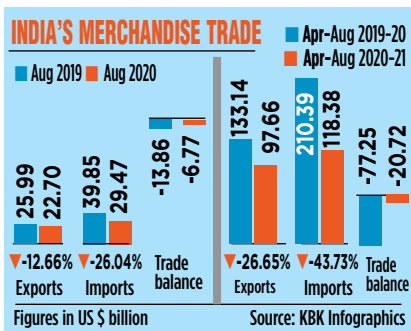
The WTO panel ruled that the US measures violated long-standing international trade rules as they only applied to products from China, and that the US had not substantiated its claim that the Chinese products hit with the extra duties had benefited from unfair Chinese practices. —AP

Merchandise exports decline 12.6% in August

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

Merchandise exports continued to decline for the sixth month in August. While exports were down 12.6 per cent, imports fell by 26 per cent year-on-year. On a sequential basis, the trade deficit further widened in August, making the surplus in June a one-off event.

In August, merchandise exports stood at \$22.70 billion compared to \$25.99 billion a year ago, a negative growth of 12.66 per cent. In rupee terms, the negative growth was 8.33 per cent. Gems and jewellery, petroleum products, man-made yarn, fabrics and made-ups, marine products and leather continued to see decline in ship-



ments. The growth in shipments of rice, other cereals, iron ore, oil meals, oil seeds and drugs & pharma did not help much.

Volatility in markets natural: WFE

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 15

World Federation of Exchanges (WFE), the global industry association for exchanges and clearing houses, has issued guidance on fair and orderly markets at a time when global markets are witnessing a high degree of volatility due to the pandemic impact.

"There has been a marked increase in retail participation in some countries, in both securities and derivatives. This has made it especially important to have a fair, transparent price-formation process," the WFE said.

"This year has seen a diminished global eco-

nomie outlook due to Covid-19, along with a series of actions by authorities that are unprecedented in modern times: restrictions on commerce and movement alongside trillions of dollars of fiscal and monetary stimulus. In such an environment, characterised by profound uncertainty and a fast-changing policy environment, volatility in the prices of financial assets is to be expected," the federation said.

A well-functioning exchange is one that facilitates continuous trading in securities and derivatives, and which provides for the transfer of risk and maximises the incorporation of new information in the value of financial instru-



ments, WFE said.

The purpose of these markets remains to serve the real economy—to raise capital for businesses, to facilitate the investment of savings, and to transfer risk to the parties willing and able to bear it.

Market infrastructures –

exchanges, central counterparties and central securities depositories—are amongst the critical elements of the financial system which must in principle remain open. For this reason, they have well-developed business continuity plans, which were executed.

As in past crises, any extraordinary closure has been as strictly limited as possible. After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, for example, the New York Stock Exchange was closed for six days, as IT infrastructure connecting into the market that had been damaged was repaired.

"Under their successful business continuity plans (including remote working), market infrastruc-

tures have been operating their business robustly as usual, with record volumes of trading. In a small number of jurisdictions, the government or regulator did put in place certain restrictions on trading as a result of Covid-19, for reasons of social distancing," WFE said.

Under no circumstances should restrictions on trading be invoked because a set of participants is concerned about the movement of asset prices, whatever the direction of that movement, the WFE said.

"Falling (or, rapidly rising and falling) asset prices do not imply a lack of integrity in the market on which those assets are traded," it said.

‘Developing Asia’ to shrink for 1st time since 1962: ADB

KAREN LEMA MANILA, SEPT. 15

The coronavirus pandemic will cause economic output in "developing Asia" to shrink for the first time in nearly six decades in 2020 before it bounces back next year, the Asian Development Bank said on Tuesday.

"Developing Asia", which groups 45 countries in Asia-Pacific, is expected to contract 0.7 per cent this year, the ADB said, forecasting the first negative quarterly figure since 1962. The ADB's previous forecast in June had reckoned on 0.1 per cent growth.

For 2021, the region is forecast to recover and grow 6.8 per cent, still below pre-Covid-19 predictions, the ADB said in an update of its Asian Development Outlook report.

China, where the coronavirus surfaced in December, is seen bucking the trend as the ADB kept its 2020 growth forecast at 1.8 per cent. The world's second largest economy is expected to rebound strongly to 7.7 per cent in 2021, the ADB said.

India's economy is expected to contract 9.0

per cent this year, ADB said, a far worse outcome than the 4.0 per cent contraction previously forecast, ADB said. But it also expected India to bounce back with 8.0 per cent growth next year.

The updated forecasts show the damage brought to Asia by the pandemic was greater than previously thought, with about three-quarters of the region's economies forecast to slump this year.

"Most economies in the Asia and Pacific region can expect difficult growth path for the rest of 2020," ADB chief economist Yasuyuki Sawada said in a statement. "The economic threat posed by the Covid-19 pandemic remains potent, as extended first waves or recurring outbreaks could prompt further containment measures," Sawada said.

Latest forecasts suggest a more protracted "L" shaped recovery for "developing Asia", Sawada said.

Depressed demand and lower oil prices allowed the ADB to keep its inflation forecast for developing Asia at 2.9 per cent, and it is predicted to slow further to 2.3 per cent in 2021. —Reuters

Home prices across India fall 2.3% in first half

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

A 2.3 per cent drop in residential prices in the first half of 2020 pulled down India by 11 spots to 54th position in the Global House Price Index of Knight Frank.

Home prices have been coming down in the last one year. As on Q2 2020, prices declined by 1.9 per cent for the 12-month period. For the six-month period of Q1 and Q2 of 2020, prices were down 2.3 per cent compared to the same period last year. In Q2, prices were down by 1.6 per cent.

This saw India moving down 11 spots from 43rd position to 54th position among 56 countries and territories tracked by Knight Frank India.

"The residential sector has been impacted by low demand across most markets in India. Further, the slowdown due to the pandemic in the global economy has adversely affected the real estate sector and the purchasing power of homebuyers. Whilst a lot will depend on when the economy opens up completely, the current softening of prices can be beneficial for the end users to make their purchase decisions. Further, lower home loan interest rate, can provide the right motivation for house purchase," said Shishir Bajjal, chairman and managing director, Knight Frank India. Reduction of stamp duty by some states too will force the fence-sitters to make the jump.

The Global House Price Index tracks the movement in mainstream residential prices across 56 countries and territories using official statistics. In the 12-month period between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020, Turkey led the annual rankings with prices up 25.7 per cent, followed by Luxembourg at 13.9 per cent YoY.

SHORT TAKES

Messi in sporting billionaires club

Paris: Lionel Messi may have had to stay put at Barcelona but the Argentine legend did succeed in joining one new club this year — the one reserved for sporting billionaires, according to *Forbes* magazine. The Argentine striker's career earnings of over one billion dollars (840 million euros) places the six-time *Ballon d'Or* winner in a group of mega-wealthy sports figures containing just Tiger Woods, Floyd Mayweather and his great rival on the pitch, Cristiano Ronaldo. *Forbes* said that in 2020 Messi was the best paid footballer in the world with an income of \$126 million from his Barca salary (\$92 million for the 2020/2021 season) and \$34 million from sponsors and other sources. The 33-year-old knocked Juventus forward Ronaldo (\$117 million) off the top of the football salary chart with Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar (\$96 million) in third place. — *AFP*

French Open wild card for Murray

Paris: Andy Murray received a wild card into the French Open. The former No.1 was the only non-Frenchman of eight players to be given a free pass into the main draw of the clay Grand Slam which starts in 13 days. Murray was also awarded a wild card into the US Open, after his struggles with pelvic and shin injuries dropped his ranking to 129th. He went two rounds in New York, and improved to 110th, but still too low for the French Open when it published its main draw entry list. Murray's best French Open result was the final in 2016. Tsvetana Pironkova of Bulgaria and Eugenie Bouchard of Canada were the only non-Frenchwomen to receive wild cards. Pironkova, who made the US Open her first comeback tournament since 2017 after having a son, achieved an impressive first-time run to the quarterfinals, where she was stopped by Serena Williams. — *AP*

Covid-19 made Manpreet stronger

Bengaluru: India hockey skipper Manpreet Singh says going through a stressful isolation period while recovery from coronavirus has made him a mentally strong player who is now equipped to tackle any situation on the field. Manpreet was one of the six hockey players to test positive for Covid-19 at the team's training base in Bengaluru last month after they arrived for the national camp. Having started their individual sessions after recovering, Manpreet said they still miss being part of the rest of the squad, even though Hockey India, Sports Authority of India and support staffs are doing their best to keep them upbeat. "Hockey India officials would check on us almost every day if the food being provided is good, if our tele-treatment was done regularly, if we are monitoring our oxygen levels regularly and so on," he said. — *PTI*

156 Tour riders pass virus test

La Tour-Du-Pin, France: The remaining 156 Tour de France riders were authorised to keep racing on Tuesday after the latest coronavirus tests. All 785 tests on Sunday and Monday of riders and staff members of the 22 teams returned negative, Tour organizers and cycling governing body the UCI announced before Stage 16 in the Alps. No rider has tested positive since the race started on Aug. 29 in Nice. The latest screening around the race's second rest day was the fourth since the beginning of the Tour, and the last one before the peloton reaches the Champs Elysees on Sunday. — *AP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

England vs Australia 3rd ODI from 5.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

WWE NXT

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

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FORECAST SUNNY

SRH among top-4 likely contenders for play-off spot

New Delhi, Sept. 15: Armed with a lethal top-order and a solid spin attack, Sunrisers Hyderabad as usual are an epitome of a balanced T20 side which will again be among the top four likely contenders for a play-off spot in this year's Indian Premier League.

Not exactly as high-profile as Mumbai Indians or a Chennai Super Kings, the low-key presence armed with a solid core coaching group comprising Trevor Bayliss (KKR's IPL winning former coach), V.V.S. Laxman and Muttiah Muralitharan, which has done remarkably well to identify their core strengths.

Best part is all three have been in dug-outs of successful IPL outfits and have that been there and done that aura about them.

In David Warner, who is back as captain for this season, the franchise has an inspirational leader and a superb batsman, who would like to lead from the front.

The southpaw led Sunrisers to a title triumph in 2016 and has made the tournament his own, winning the 'Orange Cap' thrice.

Last season, alongside Jonny Bairstow, Warner shattered multiple records including the highest opening partnership in IPL history. The duo single-handedly led Sunrisers to the knock-out stage.

The Australian was the leading run-getter, amassing 692 runs in 12 matches, with eight half-centuries and a ton. While Bairstow scored 445 runs in 10 games, notching up two fifties and a century.

This year again, the pair will be expected to do the heavy lifting with the bat, while senior India pacer Bhuvaneshwar Kumar and the Afghanistan T20 captain Rashid Khan will be manning the bowling resources. Siddarth Kaul and Shahbaz Nadeem are potent Indian bowling options while Billy Stanlake can crank it up considerably.

Sunrisers' blind spot in the lack of depth in their batting order. The team will rely on Manish Pandey and Kane Williamson to provide direction provided Warner and Bairstow fail to click as a pair. — *PTI*



Sunrisers Hyderabad pacer Bhuvaneshwar Kumar (left) interacts with teammate T. Natarajan during a practice session in this file photo.

FORMER INDIA PLAYER PATIL PASSES AWAY

Mumbai, Sept. 15: Former India player Sadashiv Raoji Patil, who represented the country in one Test match, died at his residence in Kolhapur on Tuesday.

He was 86 and is survived by wife and two daughters.

"He died in his sleep in the wee hours on Tuesday at his residence in Ruikar Colony in Kolhapur," Ramesh Kadam, a former office bearer of Kolhapur District Cricket Association, said.

BCCI mourned the death of Patil and recollected his cricketing journey, largely restricted to domestic cricket.

"Patil, a medium-pacer, had made an instant impact on his first-class debut for Maharashtra in the 1952-53 season. Playing against Mumbai, he bowled unchanged to skittle the domestic champions for 112 after Maharashtra were bowled out for a mere 167," BCCI said.

"In the 2nd innings, he took three wickets for 68 as Maharashtra secured a 19-run win. He earned the prized India Test cap (No. 79) when he made his debut at the Brabourne Stadium against the visiting New Zealand team in 1955 under the captaincy of Polly Umrigar."

Though he never played for India again, Patil continued to play for Maharashtra. — *PTI*

Players want quarantine reduced

New Delhi, Sept. 15: Australia and England's IPL-bound stars, who are supposed to undergo a six-day quarantine after arriving in the UAE, have requested the BCCI to reduce the duration to three days to ensure their availability from the start of the tournament.

Around 21 players, currently part of an England-Australia white-ball series, will be boarding a chartered flight from Manchester to Dubai, touching base on September 17. They can only be available from September 23, while tournament gets underway

Desperate to not miss a single game, a big-hitting star has requested BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, on behalf of the players from both countries, to lessen the quarantine period to three days.

Ganguly, who is in the UAE along with other office-bearers to oversee the tournament's preparations, wasn't available for a comment but a senior IPL source admitted that a plea has been made. "Yes, the BCCI president has received a request. It may have been written by one of the players but it is something that all the English and Australian players, who are coming from the UK, feel," a senior IPL source said on conditions of anonymity.

The players feel that since they are already in a bio-bubble — first in Australia and then in UK — it's only logical that "they be allowed to enter from one bio-bubble to another" as they haven't been in contact with the outside world. "If you go through safety bubble that the ECB created, not even housekeeping was allowed in the rooms of the players. Also they are taking a chartered flight and not a commercial one. So they do have a point when they talk about entering from one bio-bubble to another," the source said. — *PTI*

Chelsea off to bright start

Brighton, Sept. 15: Frank Lampard believes Chelsea are already showing the benefits of his £200 million (\$257 million) spending spree as they kicked off their Premier League campaign with a 3-1 win at Brighton on Monday.

Blues boss Lampard has splashed out on a host of new signings and the early returns on his lavish investment were promising. Germany striker Timo Werner, a £53 million recruit from Leipzig, won the penalty that Jorginho converted to put Chelsea ahead.

Kai Havertz, who made a £70 million switch from Bayer Leverkusen, wasn't quite so impactful, but Lampard will be confident there are better days to come from the young Germany forward.

"Timo's speed to win the penalty showed he is sharp and he was a threat all night. He is very mobile and I liked his performance," Lampard said, adding, "With Kai we saw a lot as well. To get these minutes will only be good and both of them will be huge players for this club."

Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga was guilty of another mistake when Leandro Trossard equalised for Brighton.

But Reece James' superb strike put Chelsea back in front before Kurt Zouma's deflected effort sealed the points.

It was an encouraging result for Lampard, who has accepted he is under pressure to deliver a title



Brighton's Aaron Connolly (left) and Chelsea's Andreas Christensen vie for the ball during their English Premier League match at Falmer Stadium in Brighton, England, on Monday. The Blues won 3-1. — *AP*

challenge after spending more than any other club so far in the summer transfer window.

"I think to expect everything to click on day one is very difficult. But what they did do was show a bit of determination," Lampard said.

@I really liked the work ethic and the discipline of the team. We've been

together as a team for four days after the international break. We had a lot of quarantines before that and new signings. "We might have dropped points in this game last season. I'm not getting excited by that on day one, but it had a little bit of determination and resilience about it I thought." — *AFP*

THE RESULTS

Brighton (Trossard 54)	1
Chelsea (Jorginho 23-pen, James 56, Zouma 66)	3
Sheffield United	0
Wolverhampton (Jimenez 3, Saiss 6)	2

Thomas-Uber Cup postponed

New Delhi, Sept. 15: The Thomas and Uber Cup in Denmark was on Tuesday postponed to next year by the Badminton World Federation following a wave of withdrawals by top teams due to the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

India had announced both the men's and women's squads for the prestigious event which was scheduled to be held in Aarhus, Denmark from October 3 to 11.

However, after Indonesia and South Korea on Friday joined Thailand, Australia, Chinese Taipei and Algeria in pulling out due to the dreaded disease, the sport's governing body held a virtual emergency council meeting on Sunday.

"The Badminton World Federation (BWF), in full consultation and agreement with local host Badminton Denmark, has made the tough decision to postpone the TOTAL BWF Thomas & Uber Cup Finals 2020 in Aarhus, Denmark," BWF said in a statement.

"The decision comes following the withdrawal of a number of participating teams from the TOTAL BWF Thomas and Uber Cup Finals and the European leg of the adjusted HSBC BWF World Tour."

"BWF is looking into possible alternative dates to reschedule the World Men's and Women's Team

Championships, but on dates not before into 2021," it added. BWF had tried to rope in Singapore and Hong Kong as replacements but they declined the invitation. There were also reports that Japan was contemplating withdrawing from the event, while China too was awaiting government's approval. September 18 was the last date for confirmation. Among top players, India's Saina Nehwal had raised concerns about the timing of the event, asking whether it would be safe to go ahead with it in the middle of the pandemic.

Saina, along with Olympic silver medallist P. V. Sindhu, were supposed to lead the 10-member women's team in Uber Cup, while former world no.1 Kidambi Srikanth would have spearheaded the Indian men's campaign in Thomas Cup. — *PTI*



Former India badminton coach Vimal Kumar.

Vimal blames it on teams from Asia

New Delhi, Sept. 15: Former India badminton coach Vimal Kumar on Tuesday blamed the withdrawals by Asian nations for the postponement of the Thomas and Uber Cup Final, calling it a "big setback" for the sport.

"What Asian nations have done, it is really disappointing. There are no major issues in these countries, they are having local events there, so to pull out in this way, is a big setback for the sport."

What Asian nations have done, it is really disappointing. There are no major issues in these countries, they are having local events there, so to pull out in this way, is a big setback for the sport. — **VIMAL KUMAR** badminton coach

Vimal said: "It was an ideal way to revive the circuit. The platform was there."

"We are not as big as China but India stood positive, we wanted to participate but if big countries don't play, what can BWF do? How will they conduct events? I'll blame the Asian nation for this mess."

The international body, though, decided to proceed with the Denmark Open in Odense, a HSBC BWF World Tour Event, as originally planned from October 13-18, while cancelling the Denmark Masters that was slated for October 20 to 25.

India had announced both the men's and women's squads for the event. However, after Indonesia and South Korea on Friday joined Thailand, Australia, Chinese Taipei and Algeria in pulling out due to the dreaded disease, the BWF decided to push the event to next year. — *PTI*

SAI UPGRADES COVID-19 SOP TO TACKLE THREAT

New Delhi, Sept. 15: Athletes who get the nod to train at the restarted national camps will have to undergo 15-day self-isolation before joining in, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) announced on Tuesday, "upgrading" the Standard Operating Procedure to tackle the Covid-19 threat at its facilities.

A six-member committee, headed by SAI secretary Rohit Bharadwaj, had in May formulated the original SOP for resumption of sporting activities across the country. National camps have resumed for boxing, athletics, and badminton among others after over five months of a shutdown.

"The (upgraded) SOP is in continuation of the SOP released by SAI earlier, and includes procedural changes with regard to new trainees joining the training camps," a SAI statement read.

The upgraded SOP will apply to the ones who will join now or for the camps which will begin later. — *PTI*