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Vaccine could be available by early next year: Harsh Vardhan page 10



Railways planning to take 'user charge' at redeveloped stations page 9



Donald Trump contradicts CDC chief on masks and vaccinations page 12

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NEARBY



Delhi sees 2nd biggest spike in new COVID cases

NEW DELHI

The Capital witnessed the second biggest spike in fresh COVID-19 cases with 4,432 patients testing positive in the past 24 hours, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. The total number of cases stood at 24,301.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Madhya Pradesh govt. to rethink milling policy

BHOPAL

The M.P. government is planning to overhaul its milling policy with greater emphasis on quality control and inspections, a graded approach to incentives and mobile phone-based solutions in view of thousands of metric tonnes of rice stocks being found to be non-issuable during an ongoing inspection.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 5

NHRC orders solatium for man thrashed by mob

GUWAHATI

The National Human Rights Commission has ordered the Assam government to pay ₹1 lakh to a man who was thrashed more than a year ago in Biswanath district for selling cooked beef at his tea stall. The order was issued on a complaint filed by Congress MLA Debabrata Saikia.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 11

Harsimrat Kaur quits Cabinet in protest against two agri Bills

'My decision symbolises Akali Dal's commitment to safeguarding farmers' interest'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Terming the two agriculture marketing reform Bills passed by the Lok Sabha on Thursday as "anti-farmer" legislation, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) MP and Food Processing Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigned from the Union Cabinet in protest.

The SAD is one of the oldest allies of the BJP, and Ms. Badal was its sole representative in the Narendra Modi government.

Ms. Badal tweeted that she had resigned "in protest against anti-farmer ordinances and legislation. Proud to stand with farmers as their daughter & sister."

I have resigned from Union Cabinet in protest against anti-farmer ordinances and legislation. Proud to stand with farmers as their daughter & sister
HARSIMRAT KAUR BADAL
Shiromani Akali Dal MP



as their daughter and sister". In a four-page letter of resignation to the Prime Minister, she wrote, "My decision symbolises my party's vision, its glorious legacy and its commitment to go to any extent to safeguard the interests of the farmers."

Farmers groups, especially in Punjab and Haryana, have risen in protest against the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance

and Farm Services Bill, 2020, which replace the Ordinances promulgated in June.

The proposed legislations seek to promote barrier-free trade of farm produce by facilitating contract farming as well as agricultural marketing outside notified Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis.

Farmers are worried about the dilution of the existing Minimum Support Price (MSP) regime, as well as the entry of corporates with greater bargaining power than small farmers.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



Giving assurance: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh speaking at the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. ■ PTI

First regulate digital media, govt. tells SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Thursday said the Supreme Court should frame guidelines drawing the line between journalistic freedom and responsible journalism for digital media first rather than mainstream electronic and print media.

The government was responding to a proposal by the court to frame guidelines against communal and derogatory content in mainstream media. The court had mooted the idea while staying the broadcast of the show, Bindas Bol, on Sudarshan TV on September 15. The show is accused of "vilifying" members of the Muslim community who join the civil services.

Senior advocate Anup Chaudhuri, for petitioner Firoz Iqbal Khan, urged the court to initiate contempt against Suresh Chavhanke, the show's anchor and the channel's Editor-in-Chief, for his tweets published after the stay order.

"Mr. Chaudhuri, if he [Chavhanke] has said something, we will ignore," Justice Chandrachud responded, before adjourning the case to Friday.

It was only recently that the top court had punished civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan for contempt because of his tweets.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

'No force can stop our troops from patrolling'

LAC routes are well-defined: Rajnath

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

No force on earth can stop Indian soldiers from patrolling along the normal routes, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh asserted in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday in response to questions about Chinese troops blocking Indian Army patrols along the disputed boundary in eastern Ladakh.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that at the recent meetings between the Foreign Ministers and the Defence Ministers of the two countries in Moscow, there was consensus that "there should be quick and complete disengagement of troops from all friction areas along the LAC [Line of Actual Control]."

To a question from former Defence Minister A.K. Antony, Mr. Singh said, "Patrolling patterns are traditional and well-de-

fined. No force on earth can stop our soldiers from patrolling and our soldiers have sacrificed their lives for that. There will be no change in the patrolling pattern."

Face-offs happened because patrols were interrupted, he said.

"Starting a war is within one's reach, but its outcome cannot be predicted. India has always sent out a message of peace. However, it was amazed that efforts are being made to disturb that peace," he said.

At the weekly briefing, MEA spokesperson Amurag Srivastava said both sides should focus on easing tensions in the friction areas by refraining from any actions that may lead to an escalation in the situation.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

'U.S. TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH INDIA' ▶ PAGE 11

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Resignation too little, too late: Punjab CM

'Akalis forced to take the decision after watching farmers' protests against the Bills'

VIKAS VASUDEV
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Thursday said the decision of Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal to quit the Cabinet was another in the long chain of theatrics being enacted by the Shiromani Akali Dal.

Questioning the Akali Dal's decision to continue being a part of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance at the

Centre, the Chief Minister said Ms. Harsimrat's resignation was nothing more than a gimmick to fool the farmers of Punjab. "But they [the Akalis] will not succeed in misleading farmer organisations," he said, calling the resignation a case of "too little, too late".

"Had the Akali Dal taken a stand earlier and supported the [State] government against the ordinances, the

Centre might have thought 10 times before introducing the ordinances and pushing the anti-farmer legislations in Parliament," he said.

Leader of the Opposition and Aam Aadmi Party MLA Harpal Cheema said Ms. Harsimrat's resignation was a victory for Punjab's farmers. "The Akali Dal has been forced to take this decision after watching farmers' protests against the Bills across

the State. The greed of the Badal family for power at the Centre has been exposed. They were left with no choice but to oppose the Bills to protect their vote bank," he said.

Senior Akali Dal leader and former Minister Daljeet Singh Cheema said the interest of the farmers is foremost for the party. "Without taking farmers into confidence, no final decision should be taken," said Mr. Cheema.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Three militants, woman killed in encounter

CRPF officer sustains injuries; violent protests follow in Srinagar's Batamaloo

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Three militants and a woman were killed, while a CRPF officer sustained injuries in an encounter in the heart of Srinagar on Thursday.

"All the three militants killed in the Batamaloo area of Srinagar were locals from south Kashmir," Director General of Police Dilbagh Singh said at a press conference.

Violent protests broke out

in Batamaloo over the killing of the woman, Kounsar Jan, 45. Residents took to the streets, throwing stones at security forces who fired tear gas to bring the situation under control.

"The killing of the woman in cross firing is unfortunate. I express my sympathies to the bereaved family," Mr. Singh said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



Security personnel returning from the encounter site at Batamaloo in Srinagar on Thursday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Demand for probe into police role in Delhi riots

Opposition leaders meet President

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders met President Ram Nath Kovind on Thursday and demanded an independent probe by a commission headed by a retired or sitting judge into the role of the Delhi police in the February riots and the ongoing probe into them.

Congress treasurer and MP Ahmed Patel, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI general secretary D. Raja, DMK leader and MP Kanimozhi and RJD leader and MP Manoj K. Jha were part of the delegation.

The Delhi police have set up special investigation teams and their Special Cell is probing the aspect of conspiracy behind the riots.

'Premeditated theory'
In a memorandum, the leaders voiced their concern over the probe being conducted by the police. "The entire investigation appears to be aimed at arriving at a pre-meditated theory about a conspiracy propounded by the Home Minister in the Lok Sabha in March 2020, before any investigation had even begun into the riots," it said. The memorandum said that the probe by the police did not inspire confidence as there were serious questions

about its "impartiality". "The investigation cannot be allowed to become a fishing and roving expedition aimed at causing a chilling effect on dissent and protest in the country. We, therefore, urge you to call upon the Government of India to institute an inquiry into this investigation under the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952, headed by sitting/retd judge(s)," the memorandum said. It criticised the police for the reference made to Mr. Yechury in a supplementary chargesheet, citing disclosure statements made by the accused.

"This is a disturbing trend," it said.

The leaders said there were publicly documented accounts and videos of the police being "complicit in the violence, directing mobs pelting stones or looking the other way when mobs were indulging in violence".

The leaders also criticised the police for being a mute spectator to the alleged hate speech of BJP leaders.

The probe appeared to be pursuing a line of inquiry "criminalising the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and portraying them as a conspiracy which resulted in the riots in Delhi", they said.

Perumal Murugan's novel makes the cut

It is on National Book Award longlist

B. KOLAPPAN
CHENNAI

Perumal Murugan's novel, *The Story of a Goat*, is a contender for this year's National Book Award for Translated Literature, set up by *The New Yorker*. "Of the ten authors on the longlist for this year's award, Murugan is the only one who has

been nominated previously," reports the magazine.

In 2018, his novel *One Part Woman* (translated from *Madhorubagan*) was on longlist. It had sparked a controversy and he declared, "The writer Perumal Murugan is dead." *The Story of a Goat* was penned after he resumed writing.

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DU principals call Sisodia's charges baseless

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi University Principals' Association (DUPA) on Thursday hit out at Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia over his unsubstantiated allegations and misleading statements, charging various colleges of misappropriation of funds.

For the last several months, teachers and administration at 12 colleges that are fully funded by the Delhi government have been complaining over delay in release of funds, as a consequence of which salaries of many employees have not been paid.

Of the ₹275 crore due to the colleges, only a sum of about ₹37 crore has been released so far, said Jaswinder Singh, DUPA president and Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College principal, while 75% of the funds should have been released by now.

Reiterating his position, Mr. Sisodia in a statement said that the Delhi government had increased the funds of these colleges by two to three times, despite which they had failed to pay salaries. He added that some of these colleges had been depositing money in fixed deposits which had accrued ₹15 to ₹30 crore, and argued they should be used for the college's expenses.

Capital sees second highest spike in cases

Over 60,000 COVID-19 tests done for third consecutive day

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Capital witnessed the second biggest spike in daily new COVID-19 count with 4,432 cases being reported in the past 24 hours, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday. The total number of cases stood at 2,34,701.

The total number of daily tests was 60,004, which was over the 60,000-mark for the third consecutive day.

Also, 38 more deaths have been reported, taking the total number of deaths to 4,877. This is the highest daily spike in the number of deaths in the two months in the city.

Over 30,000 active cases

Of the total cases, 1,98,103 people have recovered and there are 31,721 active cases. Of the total 14,652 beds available for COVID-19 treatment in the city, 52.9% were vacant, as per government data on Thursday.

However, 61.8% of the ICU beds with ventilators are occupied and 69.03% of the ICU beds without ventilators are full.

The positivity rate (percentage of people testing positive for every 100 tests



People queue up for testing in north Delhi's Adarsh Nagar on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
2,34,701	4,877
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
4,432	38

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

(done) has slightly gone up to 7.3% from 6.8% on Tuesday.

The number of containment zones jumped to 1,670 on Thursday, the highest till now.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that they were increasing ICU beds in hospitals and issued directions in this regard to privi-

C In Delhi, we increased the testing by four times. For 10-15 days there will be higher number of cases. But we will be able to isolate all the positive cases

SATYENDRA JAIN
Health Minister

ate hospitals last week.

"In the Capital, we have increased the testing by four times. For 10-15 days there will be higher number of cases. But we will be able to isolate all the positive cases. After 10-15 days, this move will give positive result for us," said the Minister.

Assembly panel questions 'identical' FIRs

'All five FIRs in connection with riots filed on same day in same police station'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A Delhi Assembly committee has raised questions on five "identical" FIRs filed against five different people from the minority community in connection with the Delhi riots, which broke out here on February.

The five FIRs, which have consecutive numbers, were filed in Dayalpur police station on a single day in a span of seven hours.

'Similar set of words'

All the FIRs read in Hindi, using similar set of words, that "a suspect person on seeing the police party, turned around quickly and started walking away" and was "stopped and questioned" and "on searching, from the right pocket of pants he was wearing, a loaded country-made pistol was seized".

"All the five FIRs were filed on February 27 at Dayalpur police station and the content of the FIRs are the same. Also, all are under Arms Act. In all the FIRs, a



Paramilitary personnel deployed in a riot-affected area in north-east Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

loaded pistol was found from the right pocket," said chairman of the committee and AAP MLA, Amanullah Khan.

The FIRs – 66, 67, 68, 69 and 70 – were filed on February 27, 2020. These were filed against Mohammad Sohib, 22, Shahrukh, 22, Faijan, 28, Athar, 23, and Faiz Ahmed, 30.

The Delhi Assembly Committee on Welfare of Minorities has also asked the Home Department of the Delhi go-

vernment to write a letter to the police on why the FIRs are identical. The officials said the Home Department is yet to write the letter as on Thursday afternoon.

When contacted, a senior officer said during the riots, there were PCR calls of firing in Dayalpur. He said a policeman was also killed by rioters in Dayalpur area. Next, the police were instructed to recover illegal arms from the riot-affected areas.

"It is a set drill used by the

police force while filing FIR in any criminal case. One can check any other cases – similar language and certain common words will be found. Usually, most of the people hold arms on the right side of their waist. We have conducted a fair investigation in all cases related to Delhi riots," said the officer.

Mr. Khan said: "Rajeev Verma [Principal Secretary Vigilance Department] was present during yesterday's [Wednesday] meeting and the committee has asked the Home Department to write a letter to the police regarding the matter."

Mr. Khan also said all 754 FIRs filed in connection with the Delhi riots were not accessible for public.

'A secret'

"The FIRs are not even being shared with the committee and the police said it is a secret. We have asked them to share an order or notification, which says that it is a secret. But they are not giving it also," Mr. Khan added.

Groups chant slogans in riot-affected area: locals

Take action, Karat tells police chief

HEMAMI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

slam their doors while crossing the area. "They try to provoke all of us but we have not said anything. They scream louder behind the mosque," he claimed.

In a related development, Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member, Brinda Karat, wrote to Commissioner of Police S.N. Shrivastava, asking him to take action in the matter.

She said: "You are aware that this was the area where minority communities were attacked, homes burnt and families forced to take shelter in relief camps. It is only now that they are returning to their homes, many of which are yet to be repaired. In such a situation, such processions without police permission are objectionable and need to be stopped," she wrote.

"Locals reached out to the policemen, who patrol near a school in the area. The officers said 'why are you bothered... let them,' she said, adding that the police were then informed on the emergency number after a team reached the spot.

Another resident, Imran, claimed that the groups also



Pinjra Tod member Natasha Narwal. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

probed by Special Cell. This FIR has her registered under Sections of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Ms. Narwal has been informed that she has got bail in FIR 50.

Accused in 3 FIRs

She is accused in three FIRs – 48, 50 and 59 – out of which she has been granted bail in two. Narwal was arrested on March 23 and has been lodged in Tihar jail in the said case.

She has not got bail in FIR number 59, which is being

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Good	0-50	Satisfactory	51-100	Mod.	101-200
Poor	201-300	Very poor	301-400	Severe	>401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M., YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB					

Court takes cognisance of chargesheet under UAPA against 15 persons

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

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councillor Ishrat Jahan, Saifi Khalid (activist of United Against Hate campaign), Jamia Coordination Committee members – Safoora Zargar and Meera Haider. Pinjra Tod members and JNU students Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal respectively are also named in the chargesheet along with Jamia Millia Islamia student, Asif Iqbal Tanha.

The Special Cell of Delhi Police has told the court that while collecting evidence it has relied upon Call Data Records and WhatsApp chats. In its chargesheet, the police have listed 747 witnesses and 51 of them have recorded their statements before the Magistrate under Section 164 of the CrPC.

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Last date is 05.10.2020 and time is till 05.00 pm of Tender submission through E-Tendering.

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Manoj Kumar Singh
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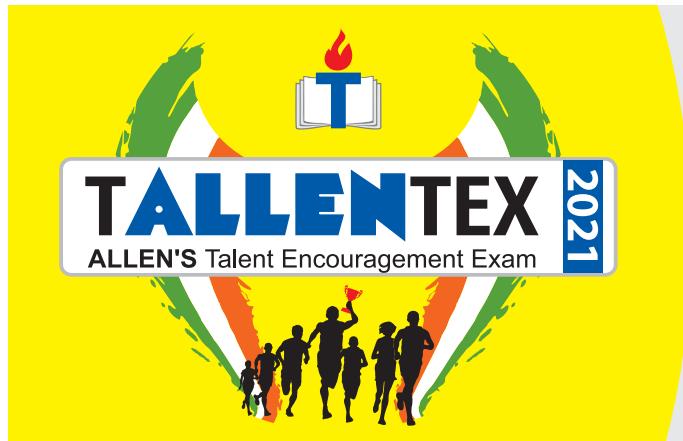
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RISE 07:56 SET 19:58
SUNDAY, SEP. 20
RISE 06:09 SET 18:20
RISE 09:04 SET 20:38

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	37	27
Safdarjung	37	27
Palam	38	28

Delhi Pilm Today
38°C A spell of light rain and thunderstorm may occur at some places with cloudy sky and gusty winds.

Delhi Pilm Tomorrow
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Soaring vegetable prices to stabilise soon, say vendors

Pandemic and floods in north India the reasons behind inflation

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI



Customers buying onions from Ghazipur mandi. •
Sandeep Saxena

A combination of supply chain disruption due to COVID-19 and recent flooding in parts of North India had a role to play in the shooting up of vegetable prices here, claim vendors. However, with adverse factors receding, most expect prices to return back to normal soon.

"Two factors have led to the rise in prices," said Anil Malhotra of the Agriculture Produce Marketing Company (APMC). He added that these include a slowdown in farming due to the lockdown and COVID-19 and the recent flooding.

Mr. Malhotra expects prices to stabilise and go back to normal now that lockdown restrictions have eased and people have started going back to work, he said.

Kunal Saxena, a vendor at the Govindpuri vegetable market, argued that there was plenty of supply in the market and that the slow-

down was only temporary because of the flooding. While costs of most vegetables were stable, he pointed out that the cost of tomatoes and potatoes had particularly shot up.

While the sales had been severely affected due to COVID-19, he believed prices would return to normal in about months time, once winter sets in, he said.

Vendors did say that demand was a lot weaker since the lockdown. The same

way it has affected every other business, it has affected the vendors too, said Dhara Singh, who has been selling vegetables for the last 15 years. Earlier, restaurants would purchase supply from the market, but with fewer people visiting them restaurants were also buying less, he said.

With regard to the rise in prices, he concurred that rates would likely return to normal soon and that such fluctuations are common during the monsoon.

Consumers hit hard

The rise in prices has hit the consumers hard as well. "Tomatoes are double the rate," complained Simran Kaur, who said she had become extra wise on her grocery spending.

Rates were not an issue for everyone however. Others such as Ashwin Kumar commenting that such changes were common and weren't changing his purchasing choices.

Govt. to roll out plan to set up public charging stations

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday said that they will roll out a coordinated strategy to set up 200 public charging and battery swapping stations for electric vehicles at prominent locations in the city.

"All government agencies in Delhi, including the three civic bodies, NDMC, DDA, PWD, Transport Department, DTC, DMRC, DSIIDC, will carry out a comprehensive planning exercise in the next two weeks to identify concessional locations within

their jurisdictions for the purpose of setting up public charging stations," the government said in an official statement after the first meeting of the Charging Infrastructure Working Group under the chairmanship of Jasmine Shah, Vice-Chairperson of Dia-

logue and Development Commission of Delhi (DDCD).

The Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy 2020 which was notified last month by the Transport Department lays a special emphasis on accelerated rollout of public charging infrastructure.

SEARCH FOR MISSING



General public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Ayasha, D/o Mohd. Mahboob, R/o H.No. A-1st/399, Madangir, New Delhi, Age: 17 years, Height: 160 csm, Complexion: Fair, Built: Medium, Face: Oval, wearing White colour Suit and Orange colour Salwar**, has been missing from from the area of PS Ambedkar Nagar, Delhi. In this regards a FIR No. 513/2019 U/S 363 IPC, dated 30.10.2019 has been registered at P.S. Ambedkar Nagar, New Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about her please inform undersigned.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax: 011-24368639
Ph. No. : 011-24368638, 24368641
Tel.: 011-29052304, 29051917

SHO
P.S. Ambedkar Nagar,
New Delhi

SEARCH OF MISSING



General public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo), **Namely: Archana, D/o: Sh. Web Bahadur, R/o: H.No. RZ-777/7, Gali No. 16, Raj Nagar, New Delhi, Aged: 20 years, Height: 4'6" cm, Complexion: Fair, Built: Thin, Hair: Black, Clothing: Red Colour Suit and Black Colour Slipper in feet.** Any person is having any information/clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, Palam Village, New Delhi at E-mail: ciccbi@cbi.nic.in or website : <http://cbi.nic.in> Fax No. 011-23011334, Tele No. : 011-23014046(Direct), 011-23015229 & 23015219 Extn. 210

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R.RAJARAM DAVEY (87), Retired Assistant Adv. Officer, THE HINDU, Chennai passed away on 17-09-2020.

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DONATE EYES-GIFT SIGHT

DMRC ridership declined due to protests, riots: Puri

'Lockdown loss amounts to ₹1,600 cr.'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

not include details of the losses as asked.

The MPs also asked about the quantum of losses due to suspension of metro services and any delay in projects during the lockdown. "DMRC has informed that loss of revenue due to closure of metro services in view of COVID-19 pandemic is around ₹1,609 crore," the Minister stated, adding that there had been no delays.

"Preparatory work like detailed designing, preparation of tender schedule, finalisation of tender etc. has been carried out by DMRC during the lockdown," the reply said.

The Minister was asked by MPs Arjun Lal Meena, P.P. Chaudhary, Sunil Kumar Singh and Kaushal Kishore whether the Delhi Metro had suffered losses due to the protests and riots. North-east Delhi had witnessed communal riots in February and there had been anti-CAA protests around the city after the legislation was passed by Parliament in December 2019. The reply did

Centre, State trying to privatise education: Cong.

'Colleges need govt. funds to survive'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

survive on its own.

"The teachers and staffers of 12 colleges under the Delhi government have not got their salaries for the past five months as the Delhi government has not released the funds, but the Deputy Chief Minister, who is also the Education Minister of Delhi, is trying to justify the withholding of funds on one pretext or other, which is bereft of democratic ethos and moral norms," Mr. Kumar said. He added that the teachers and staffers of these 12 colleges are under tremendous financial crisis due to the non-payment of their salaries, with many even not being able to pay their rents, EMIs and other financial obligations.

Mr. Kumar said that there are three kinds of audits in these colleges - internal audit, which is done by the respective colleges; ELFA audit of the Delhi government and AGCR audit, which is done by the CAG on regular intervals in all colleges. He said that there should be action on audit reports of deviations, if any.

Rhea drugs case: actor moves Delhi HC to restrain news channels

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday asked the Union government and the Press Council of India (PCI) to respond to a petition by actor Rakul Preet Singh seeking to restrain news channels from airing contents which are defamatory or "suggestive innuendos" against her in the Rhea Chakraborty narcotics case.

Justice Navin Chawla also issued notice to Prasar Bharati and the News Broadcasters Association, on Ms. Singh's plea directing direction to news channels to broadcast content strictly in adherence to the Programme and Advertising Codes as prescribed in the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1985.

"It is hoped that media houses and TV channels would show restraint and abide by the Program Code and other guidelines while making report in connection with Rakul Preet Singh," the court remarked.

During the hearing, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Chetan Sharma said there cannot be a blanket ban or pre-censorship on airing contents on news channels.

The court also asked the authorities to treat Ms. Singh's petition as a representation and take a decision on it before the next hearing on October 15.

DEATH

OBITUARY



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MANAGING DIRECTOR
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Deeply mourned by his wife **Mrs. HEMALATHA RAJAN** sons **PREM SEKAR & ARVIND** and by his family members, friends and Staffs of CCD TSPL, Chennai.
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DEATH ANNIVERSARIES



With love and deep sorrow we remember
Tmt. Sowmini Vidyadharan, MA, M.Sc., B.T., Retd Headmistress, G.G.H.S.S. Ashok Nagar, Chennai
It is been a year since you have left us.
Your thought lingers every moment in use.
We hope your are safe and guiding us from heaven.
Husband: N.Vidyadharan, Son: Dr. Manoj Narayanan, USA, Daughter: Maya-V, USA, D-in-Law: Deepa Narayanan, USA Grandsons: Anagh Narayanan, USA & Ram Mohan, USA Blood relatives & affectionate friends Ph: 044-2654 0820 / 94465-40158

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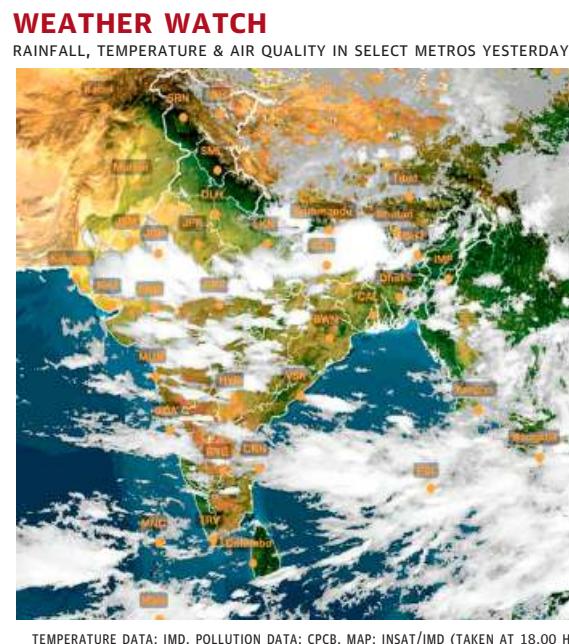
PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, ANJALI Baxla d/o Lakan Oraon born on 09-01-1996 residing at H.No.-109, Ra Hans Vilas, Vikas Nagar, Delhi-110059, declare that the name of my father has been wrongly written as "Lakan Oraon Baxla" in my educational documents. The actual name of my father is Lakan Oraon which may be amended accordingly.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by Mr. Rakesh Singh, President of RASHTRIYA JANA YAKATA PARTYS and office of the party is located at: RZ-3284/37, Tughlakabad Extension, NEW DELHI-110016. The party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1950. Name of the office bearers of the party are as follows:- President : Sangita Roy W/o Sh. Amit Kumar, R/o 37, Gaon-Kratipur, Thana-Kiratpur, Raigarh, Anchal-Bhagavarpur, Distt-Vidisha, MP. General Secretary : Arvind Kumar Suman S/o Sukh



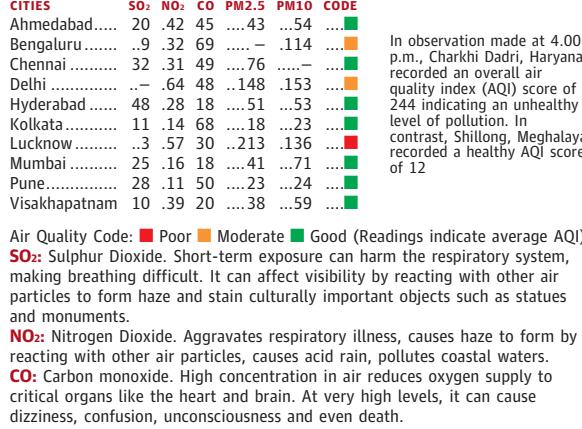
TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, central Maharashtra, Marathwada, Konkan & Goa, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Telangana, coastal Karnataka, Kerala, Mahe and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	1.8	36.0	26.6
Ahmedabad	0.2	34.5	27.3
Aizawl	-	29.2	21.0
Allahabad	-	37.0	28.0
Bengaluru	-	28.2	21.0
Bhopal	-	34.7	25.0
Bhubaneswar	-	35.9	26.7
Chandigarh	-	36.5	26.2
Chennai	19.6	32.8	24.5
Coimbatore	-	32.0	23.0
Dehradoon	-	33.8	23.6
Gangtok	3.8	20.6	17.6
Goa	8.7	30.8	24.0
Guwahati	1.4	30.5	25.0
Hubballi	-	27.0	22.0
Hyderabad	19.9	29.7	21.6
Imphal	1	23.2	20.7
Jaipur	-	37.8	28.5
Kochi	14.8	29.0	23.4
Kohima	-	34.	25.0
Kolkata	-	36.2	28.3

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing



In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Charkhi Dadri, Haryana recorded a poor AQI score of 244 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 12

Kites a menace for Lucknow Metro service

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

The Lucknow Metro may have resumed operations after a long gap due to COVID-19 but kite flying especially the 'Chinese' manjha variety near its corridor continues to act as a menace in its smooth operation.

In the latest incident, on September 14, the overhead electrification (OHE) of the Lucknow metro got tripped near Mawaya station after getting entangled in a 'Chinese' manjha of a kite. This disrupted electrical supply for a few moments before it was restored, said an official.

However, this was not a one-off. A spokesman for the Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation said that kite flying had become rampant in some areas close to the Metro corridor during the lockdown leading to many such incidents of tripping of the OHE in recent past.

The flying of kites near the corridor can cause short-circuit of live 25,000 volt overhead power supply wires, "causing serious damage" to the Metro property and at the same time putting the kite flyers at risk of electrocution if the manjha has metal in it, the Metro said.

Panchanan Mishra, DGM, Public Relations of the Metro, said that in the year 2019-20 five FIRs had been registered against people in breakdowns connected with kite flying.

"Whenever a metallic kite thread or 'Chinese' manjha comes [in contact with] OHE it short circuits with 25,000 volt OHE supply and disruption in supply occurs instantaneously," said Mr. Mishra.

This disruption causes many of the trains in line to stop for some minutes before resumption of the OHE supply.

Odisha asks departments to make proposals based on actual needs

Pandemic has adversely impacted the State's financial health

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BHUBANESWAR

With COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacting State's financial health, the Odisha government directed different departments to prepare proposals based on actual needs for supplementary provisions.

The direction was issued as various departments had in previous years surrendered substantial amount without spending them.

Supplementary statement of expenditure for the financial year 2020-21 will be presented in the Odisha Legislative Assembly towards the month of November.

In a letter to all department, State Finance Secretary Ashok Meena said, "the fight against COVID appears longer, which would require higher expenditure. However, the strategic lockdown

and shutdown to contain the pandemic has adversely affected the economic activities and revenue realization. The national and State economy are likely to contract during 2020-21. There would be resource shortfall both on account of central transfer as well as own revenue."

According to him, the Odisha Budget, 2020-21 was presented in the Assembly on February 18, 2020 prior to onset of the pandemic with focus of the budget on reviving the healthcare - through upgradation of existing facilities and building new state-of-art medical infrastructure, creating industrial and skill development hubs, boosting tourism and transforming rural and urban Odisha.

"The enduring pandemic has completely changed the scenario. In the pandemic

situation, life is above the rest. Saving life of the people has been the first priority of the government. Specialized health infrastructures have been created with critical care facilities and ventilator support for treatment of the COVID patients," he said.

Situation under control' Stating that owing to the prompt real-time decision making and responsiveness of the government, he said COVID situation in the State remained well within control. "States have been allowed additional borrowing of 2% of GSDP with certain conditions. The contraction of the GSDP along-with available higher borrowing can jeopardise the debt sustainability unless a prudent fiscal path is adopted in medium term," said the Finance Secretary.

The Cabinet meeting, which was chaired by Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, also decided to accord priority for providing tap

Wetlands being identified in Rajasthan to protect biodiversity

No waste would be allowed to be dumped in them: Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The wetlands, which have played an important role in the storage of sediment and nutrients, are being identified in Rajasthan for ensuring their utilisation, stopping encroachments on them and enabling the local authorities to maintain them.

While six wetlands are already identified in the State, 52 more have been earmarked for time-bound development. Minister of State for Environment & Forest Sukhram Bishnoi said here on Thursday that the wetlands would be strengthened for increasing vegetation of aquatic plants and protecting biodiversity.

Mr. Bishnoi said at a meet-

ing of the State Wetland Authority that no waste would be allowed to be dumped at the wetlands and effective steps would be taken for water conservation. He said strict action would be taken against those running submersible pump sets for illegal salt mining in the world-famous

Sambhar Lake, where a large number of migratory birds had died last year.

The State Government's Directorate of Environment and Climate Change will function as the secretariat of the State Wetland Authority. Mr. Bishnoi said the environment committees would take up the works for conservation of wetlands and water bodies, which were home to a wide range of plant and animal life, at the district level.

Sreyta Guha, Principal Secretary (Forest & Environment), said the fresh and saline lakes supporting unique ecosystems in the State would be protected with the strict implementation of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2019.

Flamingoes in the famous Sambhar Lake. ■ FILE PHOTO

M.P. govt. to rethink milling policy

Ongoing inspection uncovers tonnes of substandard rice stocks across the State

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government is planning to overhaul its milling policy with greater emphasis on quality control and inspections, a graded approach to incentives and mobile phone-based solutions in view of thousands of metric tonnes (MT) of rice stocks being found to be non-issuable or unfit for human consumption during an ongoing State-wide inspection.

The Madhya Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation Limited didn't have a proper quality control wing, its Managing Director Abhijeet Agrawal told *The Hindu*. "We just have 10-12 third party quality controllers State-wide, and have a huge shortage of such technical manpower. We plan to set up a permanent quality control cadre, having at least 500-600 employees."

Further, just 700 millers State-wide were not commensurate with the increasing yearly procurement: 25.8 lakh MT was procured in December and January, 2019.

So, in a bid to encourage the milling sector, the government planned on a graded approach to incentivise millers based on efficiency parameters, a shift from the flat ₹25 a quintal incentive offered universally, said Mr. Agrawal.

In addition, the government planned to hand over the procured stocks directly to millers, in an attempt to begin milling early to allow for proper inspections in time. "This year, milling began in April, a month late, which pressed officials extensively during inspections," he added.

"Using sortex machines, millers can sort our grains more efficiently. Right now, only 30% have them State-

wide. We are working towards making the machines mandatory," said Mr. Agrawal, besides pointing to the plan to set up district-level quality-control laboratories.

As of September 17, inspection reports revealed 35,000 MT rice stocks in 48 of 52 districts was non-issuable - returnable to millers who have to provide issuable stocks - 14,000 MT issuable and more than 20,000 MT unfit for human consumption. "We have received reports for 70% of the samples as of now," Mr. Agrawal said, while stating supply of rice stocks had resumed.

Stocks withheld
Rice stocks were withheld State-wide last month after the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution found in August samples collected in Mandla and Balaghat districts to be unfit for human consumption, and instead suitable for livestock, cattle and poultry.

"We are backtracking those who declared stocks as con-

firmed standards, and will seek directions from the State government to fix the responsibility for so many people," Mr. Agrawal said. Further, if 10% of the lot with millers was found below the rejection limit, blacklisting proceedings will be initiated against them.

Immense pressure
There was immense pressure on officials in April, May and June to supply huge quantities of rice stocks especially, as wheat mills remained shut during the lockdown, under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, said an official of the Corporation, requesting anonymity. "We had to supply around 8.2 lakh MT of rice, while our annual consumption is 10 lakh MT," he said.

Further, the official claimed transport restrictions in view of the lockdown and diversion of manpower to salvage wheat stocks drenched in cyclone 'Nisarga' didn't allow for adequate inspections of rice stocks, a claim rejected by Mr. Agrawal.

While Mr. Chakma was

accusing the government of being biased, the BJP referred to two cases to drive home its point. One was that of its lone MLA Buddha Dhan Chakma and the other was that of Health Secretary H. Lalengmawia, both having tested positive but asymptomatic.

Manipur Police arrested three persons for their alleged involvement in the loot of ₹1.15 crore from an SBI ATM in Churachandpur district, an officer said on Thursday.

The police arrested the three accused from Churachandpur district on Wednesday and recovered ₹20 lakh of the looted money.

and Hathras have also been raising this demand for some time now.

Distinguished alumnus'

"A distinguished alumnus of Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Raja Mahendra Pratap (1869-1979) is acknowledged as a great freedom fighter and philanthropist," countered Rahat Abrar, Director Urdu Academy, who has collected historical details of the Raja's family's association with the university.

The BJP units of Aligarh

turned to them and the school be named after Raja Mahendra Pratap. "The committee is actively considering it," said the source, refusing to be identified.

Charat Pratap Singh, the great-grandson of Mahendra Pratap, told reporters that he didn't want a functioning educational institution to shut down but he did want the contribution of Mahendra Pratap in the establishment of the university to be acknowledged.

The BJP units of Aligarh

and Hathras have also been

raising this demand for some time now.

connections in the remaining 17.59 lakh households of the State from the tied grants for water under the 15th Finance Commission to meet its 2022 target of 100% piped water connectivity.

The Cabinet also decided to reduce the requirement of constructed area from 50,000 sq. mt. to 30,000 sq. mt. for multi-domain university, and from 20,000 sq. mt. to 15,000 sq. mt. for single-domain university.

"It has been decided to accordingly amend the Punjab Private University Policy-2010," said a govt. state-

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Need for caution

India needs more than one vaccine, but all must come through their long gestation

Russia's candidate vaccine for COVID-19 appears to have found a midwife in India. The Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), which is piloting the Sputnik V vaccine, has announced a partnership with the Hyderabad-based Dr. Reddy's Laboratories to conduct a Phase-3 trial, or large multi-location human trials here. Were the candidate vaccine, developed by Russia's Gamaleya, to prove safe and efficacious, the RDIF would supply 100 million doses through its partnership with Dr. Reddy's Laboratories. However, there is no agreement to manufacture the vaccine here unlike the deal between the Pune-based Serum Institute of India and the United Kingdom-based AstraZeneca, for the Oxford University-developed ChAdOx1 vaccine. Sputnik V is being developed as a two-dose vaccine on a human adenovirus vaccine platform. Several vaccines that are in development are also being deployed on similar platforms, and the evidence so far is that none of these has been commercially approved for use in humans though there is an experimental vaccine for Ebola. Results of the Phase-1 and Phase-2 trials of the vaccine, published in *The Lancet*, suggest that the evidence so far is that it has proven safe and efficacious enough to progress to the next stage of trials. Controversially, Sputnik V has been granted a pre-approval by Russia's regulators even before Phase-3 trials have been completed.

There is immense political pressure globally on regulatory agencies to get a vaccine out at the earliest. Thus, it is incumbent on a company conducting such trials to be particularly vigilant that all good practices and necessary protocols are scrupulously followed. It is well acknowledged that two-thirds of the most common vaccines produced globally are made in India. The Serum Institute has committed to producing 100 million doses of its vaccine for India and other 'Low and Middle Income Countries' at less than \$3 per dose. Reportedly, half of these are for India. All in all, there seems to be a guarantee for only about 150 million doses for India, which given the country's population is minuscule. All of this of course does not account for the vaccines that are being indigenously developed in India: Covaxin, by Bharat Biotech, based on a strain sourced from the Indian Council of Medical Research, and ZyCoV-D, the plasmid DNA-vaccine being developed by Zydus Cadila. In Phase-2 trials now, both are being tested for their ability to produce a satisfactory immune response. India has the capabilities for vaccine manufacture, cold chain storage and distribution to ensure access to citizens – and the world – in reasonable time, but it must not forget that vaccines must go through their inevitably long gestation to ensure that only those that are safe and efficacious make their way to the market.

A push for reform

The UN must change to reflect the altered geopolitical realities in order to stay relevant

As the United Nations commences the 75th session of the General Assembly, the need for internal reforms to suit the 21st century could not be starker. Volkan Bozkir, the Turkish diplomat and politician who is the incoming president of the UNGA, has voiced concern that the structure of the 15-member Security Council ought to be more democratic and representative. But action has been long overdue on the demand, especially from the so-called Group of 4 (G4) countries – Brazil, Germany, India and Japan – which advocate a permanent seat for all of them. Meanwhile, the veto powers that the UNSC's five permanent members enjoy is an anachronism in this age. This instrument is often wielded as a blunt weapon to shore up their geopolitical interests, regardless of the disastrous consequences for the victims of armed conflict. The push for reform gathered momentum following the unilateral declaration of war by the United States and the United Kingdom, against Iraq, in 2003. The General Assembly's 122nd plenary meeting in 2008 decided to facilitate the reform process through the Inter-Governmental Negotiations framework (IGN) on equitable representation as well as expansion of the UNSC. Though the General Assembly's adoption of a 2015 resolution to allow the IGN on the basis of a framework document generated some enthusiasm, it was damped by the U.S., Russia and China being opposed to serious reform of the Council. The G4 bemoaned earlier this year that the IGN process might have outlived its purpose given the absence of a negotiating document which alone could provide a structure to the deliberations. In any case, the exercise has been deferred in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

India's election in June as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, obtaining 184 votes, was a diplomatic triumph, notwithstanding that it was the lone contestant for the Asia-Pacific seat. But in a sign of the difficulties ahead to achieve New Delhi's ultimate objective, reforms to the UN figured no more than as part of a broader vision in the declaration to commemorate the organisation's 75th anniversary. The political and economic architecture of the emerging global order that the allied powers shaped at the end of World War II has been altered since then. The UN remains unreflective of the current trajectory, especially in the strategic and economic arenas. The multilateral framework now faces an unprecedented challenge – to fashion a collective response to humanity's biggest problems, which include global warming and the pandemic. Paradoxically though, the post-war order faces an existential threat to its stability from the revival of nationalism across the globe, with some of the powers that enshrined common principles and rules willing to discard them. All countries must have the voice to influence policy.

Reject this inequitable climate proposal

The UN Secretary General's recent advice to India amounts to asking for its virtual de-industrialisation and stagnation



T. JAYARAMAN &
TEJAL KANITKAR

long-term impact is still very unclear.

What is the state of India's climate action today? The UN Secretary General is quite aware that India, by any yardstick of reckoning, is punching at least on a par, if not above, its weight in responsibility and economic capacity in climate action.

India's track record

Its renewable energy programme is ambitious while its energy efficiency programme is delivering, especially in the domestic consumption sector. India is one of the few countries with at least 2°C Celsius warming compliant climate action, and one of a much smaller list of those currently on track to fulfilling their Paris Agreement commitments.

Despite the accelerated economic growth of recent decades India's annual emissions, at 0.5 tonnes per capita, are well below the global average of 1.3 tonnes, and also those of China, the United States and the European Union (EU), the three leading emitters in absolute terms, whose per capita emissions are higher than this average. In terms of cumulative emissions (which is what really counts in determining the extent of temperature increase), India's contribution by 2017 was only 4% for a population of 1.3 billion, whereas the European Union, with a population of only 448 million, was responsible for 20%.

What then lies behind the UN chief's call to India to set aside coal right away? The UNFCCC itself has reported that between 1990 and 2017, the developed nations (excluding Russia and east Europe) have reduced their annual emissions by only 1.3%. This amounts to practically nil, given the inevitable errors in such accounting. While talking about their phasing out of coal, which is often a decade or more into the future, the global North has obscured the reality of its continued dependence on oil and natural gas, both equally fossil fuels, with no timeline for their phaseout.



While it is amply clear that their commitments into the future set the world on a path for almost 3°C warming, they have diverted attention by fuzzy talk of "carbon neutrality" by 2050, and the passage of resolutions declaring a climate emergency that amount to little more than moral posturing.

A First World strategy

Alongside, large sections of First World environmentalist opinion, while unable to summon up the domestic political support required for climate action, have turned to pressure the developing countries to bear the brunt of climate mitigation. Their strategies include the demonising of coal mining and coal-based power generation, promoting claims that immediate climate mitigation would miraculously lower domestic inequalities and ensure climate adaptation, promoting Third World natural resources as active sites of mitigation and not adaptation, and promoting theories of "de-growth" or the neglect of industrial and agricultural productivity for the pursuit of climate change mitigation.

All of these are accompanied by increasing appeals to multilateral or First World financial and development institutions to force this agenda on to developing countries. A section of concerned youth in the developing countries, fearful of their futures, but unsensitised to global and international inequalities, have also helped promote the undifferentiated rhetoric of a climate emergency for which all are held equally responsible.

The current incumbent of the

post of UN Secretary General has embraced this strategy almost fully. Tellingly, he has rarely, if indeed ever, called out the U.S. for its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, or called out the EU nations for their long-term reliance on gas and oil while hiding behind their overwhelming rhetorical focus on coal. He has been promoting the agenda of carbon neutrality by 2050 as national level goals applicable to all, without any reference to global and international equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in climate action. With this wilful neglect of the core principles of the climate convention, and extreme demands that the developing world cannot satisfy, the UN Secretary General risks unravelling even the Paris Accord, unsatisfactory as it is.

Ending coal investment

What will be the consequences if India indeed ceases all coal investment from this very year? Currently, roughly 2 GW of coal-based generation is being decommissioned per year, which implies that by 2030, India will have only 184 GW of coal-based generation. But meeting the 2030 electricity consumption target of 1,580 to 1,660 units per person per year, based on the continuation or a slight increase of the current decadal growth rate, will require anywhere between 650 GW to 750 GW of renewable energy. Unlike the developed nations, India cannot substitute coal substantially by oil and gas and despite some wind potential, a huge part of this growth needs to come from solar. None of this will really drive industry, particularly manufacturing, since renewables at best can meet residential consumption and some part of the demand from the service sector. Currently, manufacturing growth powered by fossil fuel-based energy is itself a necessity, both technological and economic, for the transition to renewables.

Whether providing 70% to 80% of all generation capacity is possible through renewables depends

critically on technology development, including improvements in the efficiency of conversion of energy from its source into electricity, in the management of the corresponding electricity grids, as well as advance in storage technologies. But since the Copenhagen Accord signalled the end of legally binding commitments to emissions reduction by the developed countries, technology development in climate change mitigation technologies has registered a significant fall. Annual filing of patents shows a marked decline, ranging between 30% to 50% or more from 2009-10 to 2017, across all subsectors and across all developed countries, without exception. The exception is China which has a rising trend in select areas. Regrettably, India's presence in such patenting hovers between minimal to near-vanishing, a persistent trend over decades that is very difficult to reverse any time soon.

Lacking production capacity in renewable energy technologies and their large-scale operation, deployment on this scale will expose India to increasing and severe dependence on external sources and supply chains. It is also a truism that renewables alongside coal will generate, directly and indirectly, far more employment than renewables alone. Apart from the impossibility of India implementing a 45% reduction in emissions by 2030, the advice by the UN Secretary General, taken all together, amounts to asking for the virtual de-industrialisation of India, and stagnation in a low-development trap for the vast majority of its population.

India must unanimously reject the UN Secretary General's call and reiterate its long-standing commitment to an equitable response to the challenge of global warming.

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Criticism, the judiciary and a word of advice

On free speech, there must be a forum to moderate dialogue between the players – lawyers, journalists and the public



SIRRAM PANCHU

The fires created and stoked by Justice Arun Mishra using the power of contempt to convict Prashant Bhushan for free speech still rage. While so, here comes another contempt action, by a Madras High Court Judge. The Tamil actor, Suriya, who supports public causes, had issued a statement highlighting what he felt was differential treatment, *viz.*, that when due to fear of the novel coronavirus, the court is delivering justice through video conferencing, it is asking students to go and write the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (for admission to medical courses) without fear. The judge, Justice S.M. Subramanian, in a letter, has requested the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court to initiate proceedings for contempt.

Possible solutions

The judge is well-intended, and was in the news recently for a generous donation to support young lawyers in these difficult times. So for court watchers, this

was a bit of a surprise. One other matter for surprise was that this letter was given by an undisclosed source to the media; this is hardly proper, it is a letter of importance addressed to the head of the judiciary in the State, and if the confidential nature had been maintained, the Chief Justice could have dealt with it in a variety of ways – discussed it quietly with the judge, perhaps bring about a softening of view, involving other senior members of the Court for a considered decision, etc. A simple solution would have been for the court's Registry to issue a statement explaining how the factual position is obviously different, and that while online court hearings are a viable alternative, none such exists for NEET. Now, the harsh glare of publicity, with strong voices weighing in advocating actions of extreme ends (throw the letter out/throw the actor in) only makes things more difficult for the Chief Justice.

Freedom of speech is not just Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution; it is an article of faith for courts and judges, because they, above all, know that it is essential for the functioning and survival of a democracy, and for making government accountable to the people. The courts are constitutionally cast as Defenders and Protectors



of the public right to free speech and expression. It is a tragic inversion to see judges being cast as the ones who want to limit and abridge it. This is not for the well-being of the institution and those who man it and depend on it, and that means a great many of us.

Avoiding controversy

Judges know that much depends on the factual setting of the case. Now, if only some quiet deliberation had taken place, could not the senior judges have considered if it was rational, wise and prudent to pitch their tent opposing a sea of anxious parents who are quite justifiably petrified about the prospect of their child catching this dreaded infection? God forbid, if such were to happen, we know it is human nature to look elsewhere to blame, and the courts closeted in closed rooms hearings are easy objects to blame. To go in for contempt on this issue will invite and exacerbate this. And the actor seems to have a favourable public

image, especially among the youth. Why do we want to go looking for trouble, could have been the question very easily asked; not so easy to answer, and that would have ended the matter.

Somewhere here one also gets the feeling that the place of criticism and critiquing in a democracy is not being properly understood. As George Orwell said, freedom is the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.

And the response of authority to criticism should echo the words popularly attributed to Voltaire – I disagree with everything you say, but I shall defend to the death your right to say it. Judges are holders of high public office and are not immune from being criticised. They must bear it and carry on, safe in the knowledge that their rightful actions and their garnered reputations are their ultimate shield, and that ill-mannered and ill-meant speech will be recognised for what it is and shunned by people. We want our judges to have broad shoulders with the ability to shrug off such comments, and focus on the matters that matter.

A platform and guidelines

There are multiple voices in the current narrative on this subject; lawyers objecting to their criticism of judges' acts of commission and

omission being proscribed, journalists' fear of chilling effect on free speech, and public bewilderment at what is going on. But there is another set of voices we need to pay close attention to – and these are of judges who have passed strong judgments in seminal cases in favour of free speech and expression, who now can be heard saying that some things have gone too far. And so there is need for introspection, communication and understanding on all sides.

We also need a forum for moderating dialogue between leaders of these three communities, where concerns and apprehensions can be discussed between them, all of whom want the best for the country and its institutions and people. What could then emerge is a clear set of guidelines, of what is acceptable and what is not. And one can then be sure that the latter category are acts so undefendable that no supporter of free speech will support them, for rights are indeed subject to restrictions; the latter must be reasonable and minimal, but must be obeyed for the former to have full play.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Vaccine pact

It has become clear that only vaccines can halt the pandemic's devastating march across the world (Page 1, "Russia inks pact to test, supply Sputnik V vaccine to India", September 17). With two vaccines entering the third phase of their development in India, public expectations about their imminent arrival, post-approval, are running high. The novel coronavirus entered the country unexpectedly and caught the government off guard. With the vaccines, however, the government has ample time to prepare for a comprehensive policy to ensure universal coverage with a time-bound plan of action. As India is a leading

vaccine manufacturer, it will pose a challenge to balance domestic commitments and international obligations. It is desirable that the government announces its strategies for mass immunisation upfront to facilitate scrutiny and the ironing out of expected glitches, especially on pricing.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

Propagation of hate
It is puzzling how a television channel got the go-ahead in the first place to air a programme (Editorial, "Stop press", September 17) that amounted to vilification of a minority community in India when a broadcasting

code is in place to regulate the contents of the broadcast beforehand. Unless, of course, there are powerful backers in the government for the controversial broadcast to have gone ahead. The signal seems to be an intent to lead a hate campaign against the minorities by all possible means without any let up, hindrance or second thought to the fabric of harmonious relations that have existed and continue to exist for centuries between different religious groups in India. Is there no end to this spread of hate?

V.PADMANABHAN,
Bengaluru

Substance abuse
Amid the simmering controversy over drug use

in the film industry, it is unfortunate that the issue has found its way to Parliament and with a new hue (Inside pages, "Sushant case media coverage heartless, says Trinamool MP", September 17). The mudslinging and war of words are sad as the film industry is in a state of open war. The effort must be to have a clean, honest and transparent cleanup, with the guilty and the big fish punished.

GUNDU K. MANIAM,
Mumbai

■ The allegations and counter allegations between two Members of Parliament on the alleged drugs trade in high places was odd. Both MPs should maintain their self respect as a Member of

Parliament and uphold the dignity of the august House.
YASH PAL RALHAN,
Jalandhar, Punjab

Kapila Vatsyan

Cultural icon and a connoisseur of the fine arts, Kapila Vatsyan who passed away (Inside pages, September 17) has left an indelible imprint on the country's cultural firmament with her rich contributions in multifarious disciplines. Mentored by two legends, Rukmini Devi Arundale and Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, she went on to carve her own niche.

C.V. ARAVIND,
Bengaluru

■ India has lost a leading scholar of Indian classical dance, architecture, and art history. Her service as the founding director of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts was commendable. One only hopes that her ideas will continue to resonate in the new India.

K.M.K. MURTHY,
Secunderabad

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recognition and always preferred to let her work speak for itself. In her passing, the country has lost one of its greatest cultural icons, whose life and work will serve as a beacon for generations to come.

C.V. ARAVIND,
Bengaluru

Is the Quad rising after China's challenge at the LAC?

PARLEY

The Quadrilateral will be useful, but it will not be the answer to the challenge India is facing

As India faces China's challenge over the ground situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), is a maritime coalition in the Indo-Pacific, the Quadrilateral, comprising India, the U.S., Japan and Australia, an effective counter? Ashok Kantha and Tanvi Madan discuss this question in a conversation moderated by Suhasini Haidar. Edited excerpts:

In the past week in Parliament, the Defence Minister has said that we have not seen transgressions across the LAC with China, but that Chinese troops have been amassed along it. There is hope that the five-point agreement in Moscow last week will bring some peace along the LAC. How do you see the situation?

Ashok Kantha: As the Defence Minister pointed out, we are in the middle of an unprecedented situation. We have had stand-offs along the India-China border in the past, but what's happening this time is really different. For one, as the Defence Minister noted, the level of troops amassed by China is of a very high order. And we have also undertaken some deployment to match that. The onus has been placed on the border commanders to move towards early disengagement, de-escalation of troops. As you know, that process has not made any headway since the middle of July. There is a glimmer of hope from the Foreign Ministers' agreement in Moscow. I think there is need for very active involvement and engagement at diplomatic levels, apart from meetings with the border commanders of India and China.

Tanvi Madan: It is clear from what the Defence Minister has said that the Chinese have violated previous agreements on the LAC. So, there's a lack of trust, and even the Indian Ambassador to China pointed out that there's been considerable damage to trust between New Delhi and Beijing. So, how do you trust that the new agreement [in Moscow] is going to work? I think there are some parallels with the 1962 war. But there are also limits to those pa-

rrallels: both China and India are much stronger countries than they were then, and they have dialogue mechanisms, consistent dialogue even today, despite the kind of violations we have seen.

Given the challenge, do you think that the U.S.-India-Japan-Australia Quadrilateral is an effective counter to China's aggression at the LAC?

TM: I think it depends on what you're trying to counter. I think you could call the Quadrilateral a coalition of the willing to try to deter China in the future, to set the rules of the road in the Indo-Pacific, and to ensure that they are maintained, but it's not an exclusive arrangement. Did India's presence in the Quad deter China or the PLA [People's Liberation Army] from transgressing the boundary? The answer is 'no'. But that is also not what one should expect from something like this, which is frankly not an alliance.

I think the Quad is useful in terms of what it can do. What can these countries do to enhance Indian capabilities? And what can the Quad do to shape the future balance of power, even the present balance of power, and try to restore deterrence in Asia, in the Indo-Pacific?

AK: We need to look at the Quad in depth, as part of a much larger jigsaw puzzle that we are faced with today. We have to recognise and acknowledge that our relations with China have entered new territory. The basic paradigm governing this relationship over the last three decades has broken down. Now, as we try and deal with an increasingly aggressive and assertive China, which is rising in a situation where the capability gap between India and China is growing, I think the Quad will be useful, but it will not be the answer to the challenge we are facing. When it comes to our continental challenge vis-à-vis China, the Quad will be of fairly limited use to us. Yes, to some extent, we may get support from partner countries bilaterally in matters like intelligence inputs or credible supplies of mili-



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar shakes hands with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during a meeting in New Delhi on June 26, 2019. ■ PTI

tary hardware, but we are largely on our own when it comes to dealing with the Chinese challenge along the land border. When it comes to the maritime domain, clearly there can be much greater collaboration with like-minded countries, say, in pushing forward the idea of a free and open Indo-Pacific and a whole lot of other areas.

We haven't really seen the Quad emerge from all the questions that were asked about it. For example, right now India is still hesitant to even say that Australia will be a part of the Malabar exercises. Even if that decision has been taken, it has not been announced, presumably because you don't want to exacerbate the situation with China. What might this Quad coalition actually look like?

TM: I don't think the litmus test for the Quad is whether Australia will join Malabar. Japan, Australia, India and the U.S. are four democratic anchors in the region which have spelt out what they would like to do together, including maritime security cooperation, providing alternatives to the Belt and Road initiative, cooperation in 5G, cyberspace and other areas like Artificial Intelligence. You even see things like Quad-plus formats thinking about what a post COVID-19 world would look like, not

C We may get support from partner countries bilaterally in matters like intelligence inputs or credible supplies of military hardware, but we are largely on our own when it comes to dealing with the Chinese challenge along the land border

ASHOK KANTHA

just in terms of the kind of health-care, but also in things like supply chain resiliency. I think it's a question of whether Quad countries can establish more habits of cooperation and interoperability. I don't just mean that in the military sense, that if and when there are scenarios where they need to act together, that could be like the supposed tsunami in disaster relief, but could be something more kinetic. What India needs to do most, which I think has perhaps not been done enough, is use these partnerships for internal balancing, use these partnerships to build India's own capabilities. The continental and maritime are connected in that sense.

How does this closeness with the U.S. in the Quad impact China's behaviour? We've often heard many diplomats say that China actually comes closer to

India when India and the U.S. have a better relationship. How do you think the dynamics work?

AK: Frankly, we have been far too cautious when it comes to developing the Quad or when it comes to developing our own strategic linkages with the U.S. by asking how China would react. A relationship with the U.S. helps in our dealings with China, more so in a situation where the capability gap between India and China is increasing day by day. We have to work with like-minded countries, and that includes the U.S., Japan, Australia and many other countries. At the same time, we have to recognise that what we can achieve through the Quad is limited, it's still work in progress. So, much more effort needs to be put in, to flesh out the idea of Quad and to see how it can become an effective lateral grouping.

TM: Chinese actions at the boundary have tended to be about bilateral issues between China and India, or how Beijing is looking at the region, or thinking about an assertive posture. The other thing that I think we've seen is – and we've seen it in the last six months – Beijing has been acting assertively on multiple fronts, regardless of ties with the U.S. So, the Japanese, for example, have been engaging in a major outreach to China over the last few months. But even they are facing this assertiveness from China. The Philippines was hesitating from signing an agreement with the U.S., and they too have been facing this assertiveness from the Chinese. Australians used to be very hesitant about saying anything to the Chinese. And that didn't prevent the Chinese from pushing against them, which is why you've seen the change towards China in Australia in the last few years. So, you cannot let Beijing veto a relationship that is actually helping you strengthen your own ability to balance China, and particularly if it is acting aggressively against you.

How does India's membership of the eight-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation work with being part of the four-nation Quadrilateral? Do you think India is going to have to

choose between these continental and maritime coalitions, or can these contradictions be managed?

AK: I think these contradictions can be managed. It's possible for us to be part of multilateral groupings which might be seemingly at odds with each other. In fact, the fact that we are part of RIC [Russia-India-China] and BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] and SCO [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation] provides a good rationale for more proactive engagement in the Quad setting. What we need to do is to show the requisite strategy, flexibility. China is a fact of life for us. We need to engage with China, though the nature of this engagement is going to change very significantly in the months and years to come.

TM: India's motivations for being part of the SCO in particular, but also RIC and BRICS, are three or four. One is to keep Russia on its side for defence but also strategic reasons. Russia continues to be important to India and these institutions and groupings are important to Russia. Second, you do not want to leave a platform to your rivals, that is China and Pakistan. I think the third thing is these are platforms to resolve or try to manage some of these contradictions with those rivals when you might not have other platforms to engage with them during a crisis.

The Quad has a very different purpose, and you do not have any inherent disputes between those four Quad countries. In the SCO, however, you have seen that India declined to participate in this SCO military exercise and then walked out of the NSA [National Security Advisors] meeting because of the Pakistanis showing a new map. And if this becomes a venue for India-Pakistan or India-China tensions in the way SAARC has, then you have to question the SCO's value.

India may have multiple partnerships, but they are all not equal. This is not a hub and spoke where each of these relationships is equal. And I think the India-Russia relationship could potentially create strains with the U.S. as it has over the S-400 (anti-missile system). All anybody in the West has to do is just sit back and let these contradictions within the SCO play out themselves. +



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Tanvi Madan
is director of The India Project at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC, and author of 'Fateful Triangle: How China Shaped U.S.-India Relations during the Cold War'



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For the welfare of animals

Several aspects of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act need reconsideration

PARTH MANIKTALA

For a country that claims adherence to *ahimsa*, India's treatment of its animals betrays a moral failure. Over the past year alone, there have been reports of animals being subjected to sexual abuse, acid attacks, being thrown off rooftops, and being burnt alive. A major factor that enables such violence is an inept legal framework.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960 punishes the most serious forms of animal violence with a paltry fine of ₹50. We've had amendment bills, social media campaigns and petitions before the Supreme Court seeking stricter punishment for animal abuse, but to no avail.

However, this is not the only issue plaguing the PCA Act. Several other aspects of this legislation need reconsideration if India is to develop a meaningful animal rights regime.

Classification of offences

Section II lists a series of offences, which vary from abandoning an animal to kicking it, mutilating it or killing it, and prescribes the same punishment for all these offences. Severe offences are treated on a par with less severe ones. This is a clear departure from established principles of penology.

An amendment is required to grade the offences according to their severity, and specify punishments accordingly. Further, the more severe offences must be made cognisable and non-bailable. At present, a majority of the offences under the Act are non-cognisable, which means the police cannot investigate the offence or arrest the accused without the permission of a Magistrate. This facilitates police inaction, and ensures that most culprits of animal abuse go scot free.

The PCA Act creates a plethora of exceptions which significantly dilute the protections available to animals. Though Section II criminalises several forms of animal cruelty, sub-section (3) carves out exceptions for animal husbandry procedures such as dehorning, castration, nose-rope, and branding.

The law does not provide any gu-

ardines for these procedures. This allows individuals to resort to cruel methods. Many farmers remove horns using hot irons, knives or wires. Nose-rope involves piercing the animal's nasal septa using a thick, blunt needle. Branding is traditionally done by applying a hot iron directly to the animal's skin to imprint an identification mark on its body. These procedures cause tremendous physical and psychological pain to animals.

Viable alternatives

On August 10, PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) India moved the Delhi High Court seeking the enactment of proper regulations for such animal husbandry procedures. The petition suggests mandating the use of anaesthetics prior to castration, and the replacement of cruel practices such as nose-rope with face halters and branding with radio frequency identification. Further, as opposed to dehorning cattle, it is recommended that farmers breed hornless cattle.

The exceptions in favour of animal husbandry practices need to be reconsidered as there are viable alternatives that would prevent animals from undergoing such trauma.

The PCA Act also suffers from ambiguity in definition. The law was enacted to "prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals". However, this phrase is not defined anywhere in the Act. This is crucial because what constitutes "unnecessary" is entirely a matter of subjective assessment. In the absence of a clear statutory definition, we are leaving crucial questions of animal welfare to the subjective moral compass of judges. Given that the aim of law is to achieve a certain standard of objectivity, it is essential that the expression "unnecessary pain or suffering" be defined.

The Constitution requires all citizens to "have compassion for living creatures". We must seek to protect the most vulnerable among us. If this promise of the Constitution is to hold any value, our animal welfare laws need an overhaul.

Parth Maniktala is a final-year law student at the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi

A few privileged senior reporters used to have access to the Central Hall, where parliamentarians usually rest. The Central Hall is now closed to everyone except sitting MPs. The media gallery overlooking the Rajya Sabha is equally desolate. Each reporter sits more than six feet apart from the next. And MPs, who in pre-pandemic days used to sit in the chamber a floor below, now sit in the galleries next to the one reserved for the media. With MPs as close neighbours, reporters cannot afford to make any wisecracks, or roll their eyes at certain speeches or drift off to sleep during a soporific speech. You can get caught easily, as I was. A senior leader called to tell me very politely later, "It seems like you were tired and shut your eyes." One of the key symptoms of COVID-19 is fatigue. The fatigue of the pandemic has hit Parliament too, which looks tired and worn out.



NOTEBOOK

Covering Parliament during a pandemic

With new measures in place, piecing together political puzzles is a challenge

SOBHANA K. NAIR

What strikes you the most when you enter Parliament now is emptiness. There are no milling crowds, no chatter, and no reporters tailing parliamentarians.

Strict rules have been put in place to ensure safety. To make sure that there are no big crowds, the number of reporters has been severely limited by both Houses of Parliament. The list of news organisations that are allowed inside the Parliament premises has been trimmed. Many regional and smaller organisations are barred. On any given day, there are not more than 35 reporters allowed inside the premises.

The Rajya Sabha has come up with a roster allocating different dates to each organisation. On the days one doesn't figure in the list, one has no choice but to watch the live transmission from miles away. No photo-

tographers, except from the news agency PTI, have been provided access. No television cameras are allowed except Doordarshan, ANI, Rajya Sabha TV, and Lok Sabha TV. And these camerapersons too are allowed only up to a certain point.

On the days one does get to attend Parliament, the rule is that reporters must exit the building minutes after the session ends. Entry and exit timings are meticulously noted down by the security staff. This means we cannot, in the corridors, accost politicians who have been avoiding us, stop them as they wait for their cars to ask for a few minutes for a briefing, or hang around at party offices to listen to anecdotes or analysis that could help us piece together a political puzzle. You check in, you check out.

A few privileged senior reporters used to have ac-

cess to the Central Hall, where parliamentarians usually rest. The Central Hall is now closed to everyone except sitting MPs.

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One of the key symptoms of COVID-19 is fatigue. The fatigue of the pandemic has hit Parliament too, which looks tired and worn out.

And the Parliament can never be a one man's game. It is a collective attempt on the part of the people in a country to realise their ultimate sovereignty in the State. In a country like India struggling for freedom from foreign domination, it is this collective aspect of the fight that must be particularly borne in mind. This is especially so at the present crisis, when the nation wants, as one man, to make its power felt against an unrepentant Government so as to vindicate its wounded honour and self-respect. Individuals do, now and then, figure prominently as leaders inspiring the people with valuable ideas and holding up before them noble ideals of action which they have already realised in their individual lives. Their magnetic personalities must necessarily influence the politics of their time a great deal in matters of general policy and outlook. But they can never, by themselves, entirely exhaust the political game, nor completely identify their personal greatness and political capacities with those of the people. For, it must always be remembered that political progress is of the people as a whole and not solely achieved by the martyrdom of a few heroes.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 18, 1970

Danger of fratricidal war in West Asia

The situation in Jordan has altered so radically by the open confrontation between the Palestine guerrillas, led by Mr. Yasser Arafat, and King Hussein's military Cabinet that public opinion here now fears an intervention by other Arab States more than by Israel [London, September 17]. King Hussein's action, which he stayed till it became inevitable, has had the result of reuniting the commando groups under Mr. Arafat, virtually creating a military State under him within his (King Hussein's) own military State and making it clear that two sets of military authorities cannot continue to rule the country separately. Each wants to subdue the other. President Al-Bakr of Iraq and the ruling Baath Party have proclaimed that they cannot contemplate a defeat of the guerrillas. President Nasser cannot contemplate an Iraqi domination of Jordan either. If the Jordanian army looked like going down under the combined strength of the Palestinians and the Iraqis (and possibly the Syrians), President Nasser may feel obliged to move in for King Hussein's support, and it will be fratricidal war in the Arab world.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO SEPT. 18, 1920

Politics and Programmes
(From an editorial)

Politics can never be a one man's game. It is a collective attempt on the part of the people in a country to realise their ultimate sovereignty in the State. In a country like India struggling for freedom from foreign domination, it is this collective aspect of the fight that must be particularly borne in mind. This is especially so at the present crisis, when the nation wants, as one man, to make its power felt against an unrepentant Government so as to vindicate its wounded honour and self-respect. Individuals do, now and then, figure prominently as leaders inspiring the people with valuable ideas and holding up before them noble ideals of action which they have already realised in their individual lives. Their magnetic personalities must necessarily influence the politics of their time a great deal in matters of general policy and outlook. But they can never, by themselves, entirely exhaust the political game, nor completely identify their personal greatness and political capacities with those of the people. For, it must always be remembered that political progress is of the people as a whole and not solely achieved by the martyrdom of a few heroes.

CM YK

FROM PAGE ONE

Harsimrat Kaur quits in protest against agri Bills

During the Lok Sabha's debate on the Bills, which extended its session by almost three hours, the Opposition parties also slammed the Centre for overstepping its Constitutional jurisdiction, as agriculture is a subject on the States' list. States will also be deprived of the much-needed revenue as transactions outside the APMC mandis could not be taxed, said Congress MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

"MSP was, is, and will continue to remain in future," said Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, not responding to the Opposition demands to include MSP as a legal entitlement for all farmers in the legislation.

Responding to the debate, he said the Bills would give farmers more choice,

with competition for their produce leading to remunerative prices, and improved infrastructure and services. He said States' APMC Acts would continue to remain in force, and farmers were free to sell in the mandis as well.

SAD chief and MP Sukhbir Singh Badal also emphasised that the Congress had included abolition of APMCs in its own election manifesto. "It is Congress that is doing a U-turn, not the Shiromani Akali Dal," he said.

At the conclusion of his speech, he announced that his wife and Union Minister Ms. Badal would quit over the party's opposition to these Bills and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 that was cleared by the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

"No force can stop our troops from patrolling'

'No force can stop our

"This requires strict adherence to the bilateral agreements and protocols and not making unilateral attempts to change the status quo," he said.

As several political parties expressed support to the government in the ongoing stand-off with China, Mr. Singh stated that the country had fought many wars and "however big the challenge, we stand united."

He added that he could not say more due to sensitivities around operational requirements. The morale and motivation of the armed forces were very high. "This time also, our soldiers have chosen patience and courage over aggression."

Since early May, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops have made ingresses into the Indian side of the LAC, undertaken massive build-ups at several locations and blocked Indian Army patrols from going further.

Three militants, woman killed in J&K encounter

The encounter broke out around 2.30 a.m. when a joint team of the police and the CRPF zeroed in on a house, following a tip-off, in the congested locality of Bataamloo. "They were offered [the option] to surrender but they refused," Mr. Singh said.

One house was also damaged in the encounter. The slain militants were identified as Zakir Ahmad Paul from Shopian and Ubair Mushtaq Bhat from Kulgam, both associated with the Hizbul Mujahideen, and Abdil Hussain Bhat from Awantipora, associated with the Al-Badr.

A magisterial inquiry has been ordered into the death of a youth from Sopore, who was allegedly found dead the day he escaped from the custody of the police on Wednesday in Baramulla district.

Seventh operation
"Efforts are always put in to ensure zero collateral damage. Today's operation was the seventh in Srinagar this year," Mr. Singh said.

The deceased woman's

son, Sofi Aqib, said the car he and his mother were travelling in was fired upon from behind during the operation. "Bullets hit my mother in the head. She was seated next to me and died on the spot," Mr. Aqib said.

After completing the first round of investigation into the drug racket with alleged links to the Kannada film industry, the Central Crime Branch (CCB) police have intensified the search for prime suspects who are absconding. They include film producer Shiva Prakash and Sheikh Faazil, who allegedly

hosted parties in India and Sri Lanka where drugs were sold.

According to the police, Shiva Prakash was at one time a close friend of actor Ragini Dwivedi, who is in judicial custody, and would organise parties for her.

"The accused are well known in the drug peddling circle and were regular visitors to the farmhouse of Aditya Alva where parties were organised on weekends," said a senior police official.

Aditya is the son of the

late minister Jeevaraj Alva and the brother-in-law of Bollywood star Vivek Oberoi. "He is absconding. Efforts are on to track him down," said the police official.

CCB officials are banking on the arrest of local drug dealers and African nationals to lead them to bigger players in the racket.

Meanwhile, on Thursday the CCB arrested three persons and seized 90 kg of marijuana worth ₹50 lakh at Doddabanhalli. Acting on a tip-off, a police team raided

an apartment in Doddabanhalli and arrested Azam Pasha, 25, the owner of the flat, along with two of his associates Masthan Vali, 25, and Mohammed Abbas, 27. Another accused managed to escape and efforts are on to track him down.

According to the police, the gang sourced marijuana from Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

"Shipments were smuggled into the city concealed in goods vehicles. The accused would store the ganja in the flat and sell it to smaller peddlers in the city as well

as college students," said a police officer.

Brown sugar seized

The Bengaluru City Market police on Thursday arrested a 25-year-old man for allegedly dealing in drugs and recovered 90 grams of brown sugar from him. The accused, Vikram Khileri, is a resident of Giri Nagar. The drugs were concealed under the cover of his helmet.

Vikram claimed that the contraband was smuggled into the city via private transport and courier services under the guise of prasad.

First regulate digital media, govt. tells SC

The government said web-based news portals, YouTube channels as well as Over The Top (OTT) platforms had huge potential to become viral. Unlike mainstream publication and telecast, digital media was perpetually widening its viewership, like in a loop, through multiple web and social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook.

Hence, what was written or shown in digital media had "serious impact and potential", the government said.

In a separate affidavit, Mr. Chavhanke justified the content of his programme. He maintained that "there is no

journalistic freedom is not absolute".

On September 15, the court underlined that "journalistic freedom is not absolute".

Among educationists, in-

dustryists, and doctors in his circle, Krishnakumar, who was also the founder of the AVP Research Foundation and Chancellor of the Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, is remembered as a person who was always helpful and was focused on values.

Under his leadership, the Arya Vaidya Pharmacy (Coimbatore) Limited, ex-

panded to new terrains of research, Ayurveda and allied services. While the AVP hospital campus in Coimbatore and the manufacturing facility at Kanjikode in Kerala were started by his father P.V. Rama Varier, Krishnakumar started an Ayurvedic college at Patanjali Puri at Mangarai in Coimbatore rural in 1978. Seven batches of students got trained in Ayurveda free of cost at the centre which functioned as per the guru-kula model.

To give more focus on re-

search in Ayurveda, the AVP Research Foundation was started in 2003. He has borne the tuition fees of so many needy students, says Premavathy Vijayan, Vice-Chancellor of the University.

Krishnakumar's personal helper K. Gunasekaran, who has been with him over the last 30 years, recounts: "On his visits to Kerala, he used to ask the driver to halt in

front of a petty shop where he used to order food. Seeing how the shop struggled with minimal facilities and utensils, he bought them a whole set of items."

Ravi Sam, managing director of Adwaitha Lakshmi Industries and Head of the CII southern region sub-committee for CSR, says: "He was such a helpful person and we saw him take AVP to new heights. Spiritual and political leaders would flock there for treatment."

Kerala's 4,351 cases in one day set a new record

9,366 test positive in Karnataka; Telangana's declared incidence remains flat; total cases in A.P. breach 6-lakh level

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala's COVID-19 case graph soared on Thursday with 4,351 new cases. As the epidemic scaled a new peak, experts predicted a further rise. The number of samples tested in the last 24 hours was 45,730.

Cases being treated in hospitals stood at 34,314, of whom 299 persons were critically ill, and 75 were on ventilator support.

Ten more deaths were added to the official death list. Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam reported three deaths each, Thrissur two, and Malappuram and Kozhikode one death each.

The rise in active cases was a major concern as health system capacity may not be able to keep up with the surge. Even with the districts launching home care of asymptomatic and mild patients, Thiruvananthapuram

had over 6,000 active cases, while Kozhikode, Malappuram and Ernakulam had over 3,000 active cases. Of the new cases, 95% were locally acquired infections.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan told the media that disease transmission in the capital was a matter of concern.

The district on Thursday reported 820 cases, of which all except one were locally transmitted infections. In the past week, Thiruvananthapuram reported 4,184 cases.

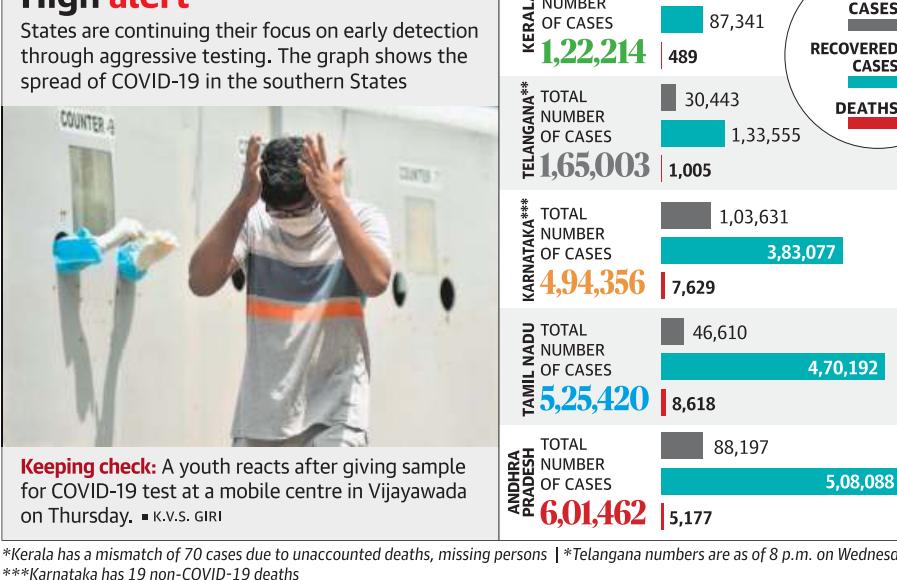
Telangana's reported incidence was flat at 2,159 cases on Wednesday. Around 60,000 samples were tested during weekdays, but only around 55,000 per day from September 14-16.

The death of nine more patients was reported. The new cases included 318 from Greater Hyderabad and 176 in Rangareddy.

With 8,702 infections and 72 deaths on Thursday, And-

High alert

States are continuing their focus on early detection through aggressive testing. The graph shows the spread of COVID-19 in the southern States



*Kerala has a mismatch of 70 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons | *Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Wednesday
***Karnataka has 19 non-COVID-19 deaths

hra Pradesh was the only State after Maharashtra to witness over six lakh infections.

Over ten days, 71.8 lakh samples were tested, and the

positivity rate was 13.21%. Active cases were down to 88,197. In 24 hours, the State tested 77,492 samples, its highest level yet.

East Godavari reported

1,383 new cases, the highest tally, and five deaths in 24 hours; West Godavari (1,064 & 4 deaths), Chittoor (905 & 12), Prakasam (705 & 10), Kadapa (637 & 7), Nellore (610

& 6), Srikakulam (567 & 2), Guntur (550 & 6), Anantapur (545 & 4), Vizianagaram (526 & 1), Visakhapatnam (449 & 4), Kurnool (394 & 6) and Krishna (367 & 5).

Karnataka's cases on Thursday stood at 9,366, besides 93 deaths. Bengaluru Urban reported 3,799 cases; also 34 of the 93 deaths were from Bengaluru.

5,560 fresh cases in T.N.
Tamil Nadu reported 5,560 fresh cases and 59 deaths on Thursday.

Chennai accounted for 992 new cases and 12 deaths. This was followed by Coimbatore with 530 cases. Of the 59 fatalities, 52 persons had co-morbidities. According to the Health Department, only 20 of the 59 persons were in their 60s.

(With inputs from Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Bengaluru and Chennai bureaus)

IN BRIEF



Musician quizzed on Balabhaskar death case

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The CBI on Friday questioned musician Stephen Devassy in connection with its probe into the death of violinist Balabhaskar (photo) in a car accident in 2018. Mr. Devassy was among those who had visited Balabhaskar before he died at the hospital. The investigators wanted to know if Mr. Devassy had any financial transactions with Balabhaskar or his troupe members.

MLA injured
Protesters broke COVID-19 protocol and grappled with the police in Thiruvananthapuram, Kottayam, Thrissur, Kozhikode, and Kannur, resulting in injuries on both sides. They damaged the office of Mr. Jaleel in Malappuram.

A Youth Congress march to the Palakkad Collectorate turned violent, leading to a police lathicharge and stone throwing. Over two dozen protesters, including V.T. Balaram, MLA, were injured in the police action. Ten police personnel too were injured in stone throwing.

Low-key celebrations mark liberation day
HYDERABAD
The Hyderabad Liberation Day celebrations were a subdued affair on Thursday due to fear of COVID-19 but all the political parties observed the event at their offices. TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao hoisted the national flag at the party office amid leaders. Telangana Congress committee chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, former BJP State president K. Lakman and Telangana TDP president L. Ramana too observed the event.

Raichur BJP MP Ashok Gasti passes away

BENGALURU
BJP Rajya Sabha member Ashok Gasti from Raichur in Karnataka, who was undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Bengaluru for COVID-19, passed away on Thursday. He was admitted to Manipal Hospitals 15 days ago. He took oath as a Rajya Sabha member on July 22. A low-profile leader who rose in the ranks through his work in the RSS, Mr. Gasti is credited with organising the BJP in Raichur district.

Search on for main accused in drug racket case

2 film producers among prime suspects: police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU

After completing the first round of investigation into the drug racket with alleged links to the Kannada film industry, the Central Crime Branch (CCB) police have intensified the search for prime suspects who are absconding. They include film producer Shiva Prakash and Sheikh Faazil, who allegedly

hosted parties in India and Sri Lanka where drugs were sold.

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Vikram claimed that the contraband was smuggled into the city via private transport and courier services under the guise of prasad.



IN BRIEF

States have to share crisis cost: BJP MP

Rajya Sabha discusses COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Amit Shah discharged from AIIMS
NEW DELHI
Home Minister Amit Shah was discharged from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Thursday at 5 p.m., confirmed hospital sources. He was admitted here four days ago for what the hospital authorities said was a routine check-up before the monsoon session. The Minister had been suffering from post-COVID medical complication. He was previously admitted to AIIMS on August 18 after his recovery. He had tested positive for COVID-19 on August 2 and received treatment at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram.

5 platoons to enforce norms in Bhubaneswar

BHUBANESWAR
A day after Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed displeasure over non-adherence of COVID-19 guidelines in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, the city police announced that five platoons of armed police will be deployed to enhance enforcement. The COVID-19 situation continues to worsen in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, Khordha district, of which Bhubaneswar is a part, now leads the COVID-19 tally with 28,794 cases. Ganjam district is now at the second spot with 19,444 cases.



Rajeev Chandrasekhar

Later in his speech, he responded to the Opposition's criticism that the government had not acted quickly enough.

While honouring those fighting against the coronavirus, he termed it the "China virus". Mr. Chandrasekhar responded to Opposition MPs' demand that the Centre give States financial help to tide over the crisis by suggesting that the cost should be borne by the whole country.

"The difference is this, when States have losses due to floods and droughts, the Centre steps in. But, this loss is for the entire country and the whole country needs to bear this. There is no one else to forward these losses to. There is nobody else. Unless, maybe China accepts their responsibility and there is a case for reparation," he said.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan told the Rajya Sabha on Thursday that there was a possibility that a vaccine against COVID-19 would be out by early 2021 and that the government was aiming to bring down India's mortality rate from the novel coronavirus to less than 1% from the current 1.64%.

The Minister said that the Science and Technology Ministry, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and drug companies were working together to find a solution. "Vaccines can come in future. Extensive planning is under way to execute how to manage the scenario," Dr. Vardhan said.

He said three vaccine candidates had reached Phase 1, 2 or 3 trial levels.

Global coordination

"Under the Prime Minister, an expert group is studying this. We expect by the beginning of next year, we can have a vaccine in the country. In this regard, we are also coordinating with the WHO (World Health Organization) and global organisations," he said.

India was among the few countries globally that had succeeded in isolating the virus, he added.

Rebutting the Opposition criticism as the number of

Vaccine by early 2021: Vardhan

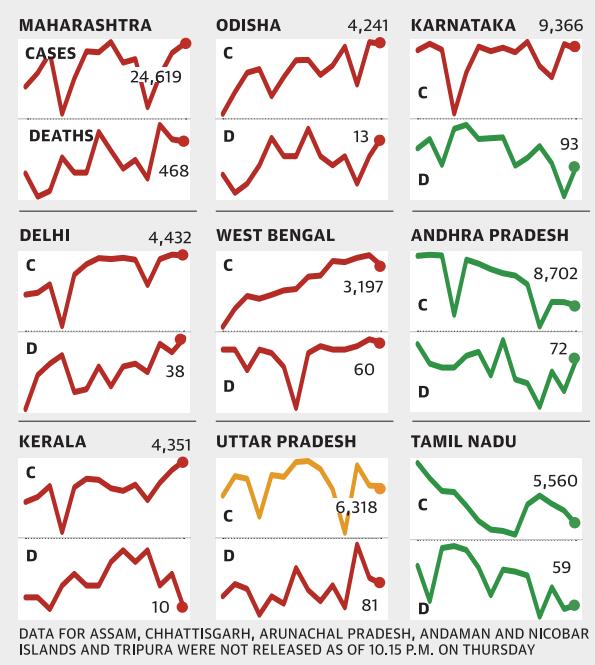
Extensive planning on for the management of the scenario, says Health Minister

Viral tracker

With 91,770 COVID-19 cases recorded on Thursday, India's tally stood at 52,08,027. As many as 1,148 new deaths were registered, taking the toll to 84,391. The graphs depict new cases and deaths in the last 14 days in select States. The States are classified based on where cases/deaths are rising (red); falling (green); or showing a mixed trend (orange).

NEW CASES AND DEATHS

CASES	91,770	7 DAY-CHANGE	-0.2%
DEATHS	1,148	7 DAY-CHANGE	-1%



Over 40% new COVID-19 deaths from Maharashtra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Maharashtra accounts for more than 40% (474) of the new COVID-19 deaths in the country in 24 hours, while Uttar Pradesh (86), Punjab (78), Andhra Pradesh (64) and West Bengal (61) contributed 25.5%, show data released by the Union Health Ministry on Thursday. The total fatalities comes to 1,132 in 24 hours, the Ministry said.

Close to half (48.45%) of the active cases were concentrated in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Together with Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the five States contributed nearly 60% of the total active cases, it noted.

The Ministry however, said over 82,000 patients had recovered and been discharged in the past two days and 82,961 active cases were found free of COVID-19 in 24 hours.

Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh together accounted for 57.1% of total new recoveries.

"More than 40 lakh patients have recovered so far. Recovered cases have exceeded the active cases today by more than 30 lakh [30,15,103] and are four times the latter," it stated.

Not all convalescent plasma may have protective effect

While three kinds of antibodies are produced in an infection, neutralising effect most visible only in IgGs, finds study

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

Not all plasma from those who have recovered from COVID-19 in India may contain enough protective antibodies, says a multi-institutional study led by researchers in the country and the U.S.

When scientists checked the antibodies from 42 persons who had mild to moderate infection and had recovered, 38 of them expressed IgG (Immunoglobulin G) responses – the antibodies that are produced a week or two of the infection. However, only half of them had appreciable neutralising antibody titres", say the scientists in a paper uploaded on BioArxiv, an online repository



Taking chances: Hospitals continue to advise caregivers to procure plasma for ailing patients. ■ FILE PHOTO

of scientific papers.

Plasma therapy, the administration of filtered serum from the blood of those who had recovered from the infection to those who are battling it, is among the permitted off-label interventions

However, in the PLACID

trial, among the largest studies of its kind and spread across 39 hospitals and 464 participants, the ICMR concluded that plasma therapy neither helped reduce mortality nor prevented moderately ill patients from manifesting severe COVID-19.

No peer review

ICMR Director-General Balram Bhagava said on Wednesday that the PLACID results had not been "peer-reviewed" and only after that would the organisation consider changes to recommendations in plasma use as therapy.

Several hospitals in India continue to advise caregivers – frequently through their own means – to procure

plasma for ailing patients.

The latest study underscored that only those IgG antibodies that bind to the receptor binding region of the coronavirus spike protein, which attaches itself to the body's healthy cells and infiltrates, had a "neutralising response".

Antibodies that bind to other parts of the virus did not succeed in provoking such a response. Thus, doctors, when assessing plasma therapy, would be well served to evaluate the quality of the plasma via an assay, or a chemical test, that specifically evaluates the levels of RBD (receptor-binding domain)-specific IgG titres and not just crude IgG levels.

There are at least three

kinds of antibodies produced in an infection: IgG, IgA, IgB but the neutralising effect was most visible only in the case of the IgGs, the authors noted.

"It's important to note that many Indian government agencies and institutions are already making efforts to bring these RBD-based IgG assays more widely available, and thus this study is very relevant and timely to scientifically validate these efforts," the ICGB-Emory said in a statement. The ICMR-funded study is led by Anmol Chandele and Kaja Murali Krishna of the ICGB-Emory Vaccine Center at the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology.

CBI books six firms for fake pop-up warning scam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

(Uttar Pradesh), Gurugram, Faridabad and Jaipur.

The Central Bureau of Investigation has booked six private companies which allegedly transmitted pop-ups to personal computers with bogus warnings about serious technical issues, prompting users to install unwanted programmes and pay online for resolving the fictitious problems.

On Thursday, the agency conducted searches in this connection in 10 locations in Delhi, Noida, Mainpuri

+ The CBI identified the companies as Softwill Infotech Private Ltd., InnovanaThinklabs Ltd., Benovellent Technologies Private Ltd., Systweak Software Private Ltd., Saburi TLC Worldwide Services and Saburi Global Services.

The accused companies were targeting the Microsoft Windows operating systems of computers through the fake messages about malware infection.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Department of Agriculture, AP invites bids for selection of Agency to develop Multifunctional Kiosk Software with web Dashboard for Rythu Bharosa Kendral. For other details please visit : www.apagrisnet.gov.in or www.tender.approcurement.gov.in

Sd/- Sri H. Arun Kumar, Commissioner of Agriculture

DIPR 325PP/CL, Dt.17/07/2020

GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN RAJASTHAN RAJYA VIDYUT PRASARAN NIGAM LIMITED REQUEST INVITING e-BID CONTRACTS-I/2020-2021/BN-9018002002 & 9018002003	
Online e-bids are invited for Turnkey Project for Procurement & Installation of Aviation Equipments on 400 KV D/C Twin AC/DC Mouse Transmission line from Ramgarh (Jaismal) to Akal (Jaismal) in Charged condition (100 Kms) (Bn No. 9018002003& UB No. NPV2021WS080905) & Turnkey Project for Procurement & Installation of Aviation Equipments (400 KV D/C Twin AC/DC Mouse Transmission line from 400/220 KV Pooling Station (Bhadra) to LILIO point at 400 KV S/C Jodhpur Merta line in charged condition (200 KMS) (Bn No. 9018002002 & UB No. NPV-N0-2021WS080904) including supply of all equipments, materials, erection testing & commissioning on turnkey basis.	
The detailed NIB and Bid documents/specification are available for viewing/downloading on the website http://eproc.rajaasthan.gov.in . Details of NIB are available on website energy.rajaasthan.gov.in .	
The bidder will have to procure Digital Signature Certificate (D.S.C.) as per IT Act-2000 to sign their electronic bid. The offers which are not digitally signed will not be accepted.	
The interested bidders shall submit/upload the bids online in electronic format on the website http://eproc.rajaasthan.gov.in for participating in the bidding process.	
Any extension in bid submission/opening date if any will be floated/uploaded on http://energy.rajaasthan.gov.in/rvnpn/TR-49712020	
Sd/- XXXXX CHIEF ENGINEER Brij Samwadi/C4580/2020-2021 Superintending Engineer (Contracts-I)	

GOVERNMENT OF KERALA
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)

Procurement (Output and Performance Based Maintenance Contract ("OPBRC") following Single stage Two Envelope Bidding Process)

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

Dated: 17.09.2020

- The Government of India has received financing as Development policy loans from the World Bank towards the cost of rebuilding climate resilient infrastructures in Kerala and Government of Kerala (GoK) intends to apply a part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the contract for construction of works as detailed below.
- Bidding will be conducted through National Competitive Bidding procedures as per the World Bank & GoK guidelines. Bidding is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the World Bank's Guidelines: **Procurement of Goods, Works and Non-Consulting Services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers**
- The Project Director, Kerala State Transport Project, Public Works Department, Government of Kerala, now invites online bids through OPBRC mode of execution for the maintenance of roads as detailed below:

STATE	BID NO.	NAME OF WORK	LENGTH KM	PERIOD OF CONTRACT
Kerala	KSTP II/OPBRC- 03	Kollam - Ayoor - 30.75Km, Kayamkulam-Mavelikkara-Thiruvalla-8.925 Km K P Road - Kayamkulam to Adoor - 25 Km Thrikkunnipuzha, Thattarambalam-12.879 Km Pandalam Kaipattoor-8.7 Km	86.254 Km	7 years

- The complete bid document can be viewed/downloaded from the e-procurement portal of Kerala Government <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in/> from 17/09/2020 to 16/10/2020 (up to 15:00 Hrs. IST). Bids received online shall be opened on 16/10/2020 (at 15.30 hours IST).
- Bids received through any other mode shall not be entertained. However, EMD, tender fee, Power of Attorney, joint bidding agreement, etc. shall be submitted physically by the Bidder on or before 16/10/2020 (up to 15:00 hours IST). Please note that the Authority reserves the right to accept or reject all or any of the bids without assigning any reason whatsoever.
- The address for communication is as under:
Project Director, Kerala State Transport Project, Project Management Team, T.C.11/339, SreeBala Building, Keston Road, Nanthancode, Kowdiar P.O., Thiruvananthapuram – 695003, e-mail:pdkst@kerala.gov.in, cepmtkst@gmail.com
time of submission of bid: 16/10/2020 15.00 Hrs. Bid opening: 16/10/2020 (at 15.30 hours IST).

Sd/- Project Director, KSTP

F.I./Blindness/2020/363
Dated: 10/09/2020
Notice Inviting Bid

Bids for supply of Pressbyopic Glasses With Frame Elderly Persons in The State of Rajasthan of subject matters of Procurement are invited from interested bidders upto 6.00 P.M. 05.10.2020. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <https://sppp.raj.nic.in>) of the state, and DPR and <http://www.rajswasthya.nic.in> in departmental website.

UBN MHS2021GLRC01495

DIPR/C/7332



Mission: my first bakery

From balancing their studies to whipping up a creamy batter, students are using lockdown to experiment with launching a business, to earn some extra pocket money even as they upskill

PADMALA JAYARAMAN

Jannani Mohan, a Psychology student pursuing her Bachelor's degree at Madras School of Social Work, began selling cupcakes from her home in July 2018. How did she manage a business along with her studies? Jannani says, "It is important to know how much one can handle; I don't take orders during exams."

On the other hand, Berine Vinola Simon, a Statistics undergraduate at SIES College of Arts and Science in Mumbai says, "My colleges ends at 1 pm. So there is a lot of time to bake." Vinola clearly remembers her first order: "I baked a cake for a classmate in college. After tasting that, a teacher wanted one for her son's birthday. That was my first order. I didn't want to reject it, so I said yes. Then I felt like I can do this." Now, Vinola delivers around 10 cakes a month, joining a host of students around the country who are turning their baking skills into a source of income.

This largely-teenage fraternity is an enterprising one, but functions at a scale that is far from commercial or standardised. They are not afraid to admit that they are still testing the waters. For instance, 13-year-old Rasmika Rangarajan from Chennai, who bakes and sells under the name 53, Baker Street, describes how she began, "After referring to different recipes from cookbooks, websites and online videos, I modify them and create my own."

Rashmika recalls the number of times she tried out each recipe, "For I wanted to get the best possible result, perfect in texture, taste and look. There is a lot to learn; I am eager to fine tune my skills."

Vinola attended a course in baking in Kharharg, Navi Mumbai. "By the end of the course, I grew confident," she says.

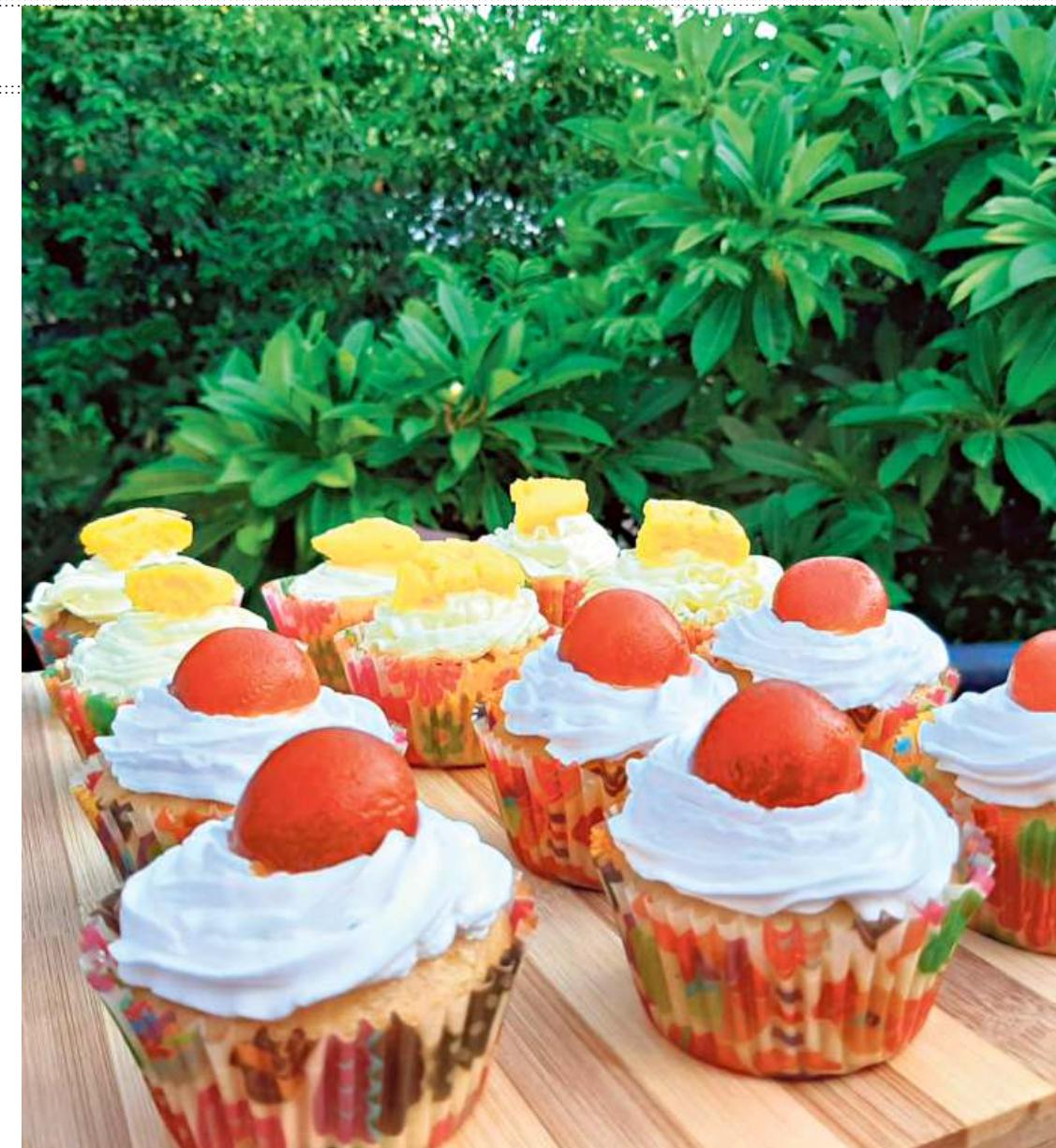
She suggests that beginners do the same. "Sign up for a course or workshop. Basics are important. Baking is like chemistry; if even one thing is more than needed, the whole thing will become a mess."

Some of her peers honed their basics at home. Lakshmi Muralidharan, an English Literature student of St Thomas College, Thrissur, would bake at home with her sister Gowri. Says Lakshmi, "I have been baking at home for a long time for other special occasions, even before starting my venture Cake Bay."

Numbers, numbers everywhere

The learning curve, however, is more than just about cooking. Vinola recalls one of her first challenges: "I had a small microwave, with which I could bake only one cake at a time, that too not more than one kilogram. When I got an order for a two kilogram cake, I had to bake two cakes and attach them."

And then, of course, there is the business itself, which some found easier than others. "My parents had gifted



me an oven-toaster-griller. I invested ₹5,000 and bought a handwhisk, ingredients, and muffin tins," says Jannani.

Not all parents, however, are keen on their child juggling their studies with a startup. Vinola has been fighting

these odds since 2015. "It was only after orders started coming in and I proved myself to my parents, that they started supporting me. But they still want me to find a job with a decent salary."

For her first order, she had just

₹500 in hand, with which she bought whipping cream, flour, butter, sugar and one packing box. With subsequent orders, she gradually bought other items for her business.

Vinola explains, "I sell up to 10 cakes a month, and I make a profit of 25%". Rasmika makes around 20%-30% profit on completing 30 to 40 orders a month.

Jannani and Vinola say that they ask customers to place orders at least one day ahead. Vinola delivers the cakes herself, seeks the help of her father, or uses the local train. She does not charge for deliveries for up to 25 kilometres. Jannani uses delivery apps like Dunzo and Task Hopper.

These bakers are working without

Ready, set, whisk (Clockwise from far left) Creations by Jannani, Rasmika and Vinola; brownie batter ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



teams or high-end appliances, but, according to Jannani, every baker should invest in a pair of weighing scales.

"For baking professionally, you need a trusty set of weighing scales. Cup measurements are volume-based and depend on how you scoop your ingredients; the amount will be different almost every time. Weighing ingredients is easier and far more accurate, enabling me to maintain the same flavour profile. Electronic scales can cost as little as ₹300 and as much as ₹2,000," she says. They ensure a standard taste, as does Lakshmi's personal rule: "We use the same brand of compounds or chocolates to melt and to bake."

Crowd pleasers

Rasmika describes her best-selling Ferrero Rocher cake. "It has layers of moist eggless chocolate sponge cake with a home-made hazelnut filling, with a cream frosting and topped with a ganache drip and Ferrero Rocher chocolates on top."

Jannani's stars, on the other hand, are "my double chocolate cupcakes, closely followed by my fudgy brownies." Clearly, there can never be too many people selling brownies.

NAHLA NAINAR

It is mid-afternoon on a hot Sunday in Othakadai, a town in Narasingam Panchayat, barely 20 minutes away from Madurai. Here, there is no sign of the weekend lull at Patchi Raja Vilas as passengers disembark from mini buses and cars and rush in to place their orders. "I want 10 grams," says a woman, clutching a cloth bag. "A hundred grams for me," says another, as a man clamours for "my 250 grams". And as the aroma of hot ghee fills the tiny stall, we finally snatch a glimpse of the product that customers have been hankering for.

Patchi Raja Vilas and its sister concern Sri Lakshmi Vilas across the road, have been selling a version of Tirunelveli's iconic wheat halwa over 50 years, and the translucent amber dessert has become so famous in its own right, that local residents and Madurai foodies refer to it as 'Othakadai Halwa'. And in a nod to nostalgia, the gooey treat comes in a distinctive wrapping of *mandharai* (yellow orchid) leaves and newsprint (for servings up to 250 grams).

Says proprietor Senthil Murugan, "My father Paramasivam Pillai started making wheat halwa, based on the Tirunelveli style recipe, in the late 1960s in a small hut, and established this shop in Othakadai in 1971." He adds, "I joined him soon after finishing school, and worked with him for 20 years, learning all his recipes for traditional sweets and snacks. In fact, *appaa* was actively involved in the business until his demise last week at the age of 80."

Thought to be an import from North Indian cuisine, wheat halwa is a favourite in the roster of traditional southern Indian menu of sweetmeats, with each region having its own spin on the glutinous dish.

Othakadai halwa is lighter in texture and less sweet than the Tirunelveli version, and since it is cooked at an extremely high temperature, it has a long shelf life, says Senthil Murugan.

"Some of my friends in the US take a large serving with them, freeze it, and then reheat and eat small helpings through the year,"



Sweet success (Top) Othakadai halwa ready for sale in a brass cauldron; (above) Patchi Raja Vilas proprietor Senthil Murugan • NAHLA NAINAR

he says while showing us around the kitchen off Thirumogur Road where the day's batch of halwa is already on the boil, alongside savouries like *murukkus*, masala peanuts and *omapodi*, a vermicelli served sev flavoured with thyme.

Though there are only three ingredients: wheat, sugar and ghee, besides cashewnuts for crunch and nutmeg for fragrance, cooking the halwa is a time-consuming process. "It takes us two days

to soak the samba wheat and make a soft batter with manual stone grinders. The batter rests for a day, following which we strain it through cloth to get *godhumai paal* (wheat milk or extract)," says Senthil Murugan, who sells approximately 50 kilos of the sweet at the stores daily, besides catering orders.

"We use one measure of wheat milk with four measures of sugar and three of ghee for the halwa," he adds. "But the hardest part is cooking this mixture down to the right consistency, because you have to stir continuously for at least four hours until it starts resembling *nongu* (ice apple) in texture."

The toast of Othakadai

Tirunelveli halwa might sound more familiar, but the version made in Madurai district's Othakadai town has its own, pilgrim-like following

When we visit, a huge cast iron *kadhai*, set on an earthen cooking station, its fire fuelled by cashew-nut husks, is bubbling away with the day's second batch of halwa.

Senthil Murugan wields the long-handled iron spatula with ease as he stirs and scrapes the hot mixture in circular motions. In four hours, the beige wheat milk has caramelised and turned darker, the sugar and ghee giving it a glossy finish. "The halwa is ready when it begins to leave the sides of the pan and the ghee floats to the top. At this stage, you can easily roll it into small balls."

The halwa is transferred into heavy-bottomed brass vessels and

then taken to the store where sweet chaos reigns from 8.30am to 10.30pm as customers troop in for their dessert fix, usually balanced with a handful of savoury *omapodi*.

Demand has been steady, including during the earlier restricted business hours of lockdown, says Senthil Kumar, as he requests people to maintain physical distance while he serves them.

"Though it is such an old recipe, several generations of customers relish the taste of this sweetmeat. The best lesson I learned from my father was patience – whether in making halwa or in life, some things in life are worth waiting for," says Senthil Murugan.

HORS D'OEUVRES



A collector's piece

Bowmore Islay Single Malt Scotch Whisky and Aston Martin have unveiled their first collaborative creation; Black Bowmore DB5 1964. This concept brings together a whisky and a car in a bottle of equal parts, featuring single malt and a genuine Aston Martin DB5 piston. With only 25 bottles for sale, the rare Black Bowmore DB5 1964 is marketed to be a celebration of time. In keeping with a commitment to craftsmanship, the Black Bowmore DB5 bottle is handcrafted by Glasstorm, a bespoke contemporary glass studio, based in northeast Scotland. With over 50 years of glass design, sculpting and creative expertise, each bottle took up to one week to be complete, reflecting the continued thread of attention to detail and skill which defines this collaboration. Black Bowmore DB5 1964 is presented in a handmade presentation box; itself a work of art. Inspired by the distillery's coastal home, the deep blue colour and wave embossing evoke a true sense of place. Created from the finest string-grain calfskin, featuring a custom solid brass latch and hinges, plated with nickel, reflective of the DB5.



Subscribing to pizza

It's so simple, it's brilliant. Pizza lovers in Toronto, Canada can now opt for a monthly supply of pizzas all at once, by availing monthly subscription stacks of four, six, eight or 10 pizzas at a time, with choice of topping. The plan was announced by local restaurant General Assembly Pizza, and is being described by many as the world's first pizza subscription service. Subscriptions begin at 39 Canadian dollars for a stack of four. The restaurant claims to deliver this contact-free throughout the city of Toronto at present, and plans to expand it across the state of Ontario next year. The three-year-old fast casual restaurant was founded by Ali Khan Lalani, a certified pizzaiolo.

The good memes starter pack

Memes have long been used for imparting information, registering protest or simply being funny. But what makes a good meme? Meme-makers weigh in



much content on social media. "It is no longer relevant and a meme like it will not be understandable today."

Makers also advise against trying too hard to sound funny. Sowmya who single-handedly runs @rajavarivarmamemes, says, "Keep it simple – use the ironic instances in your day-to-day to make memes. There is a lot of food for thought – the arts, culture, Bollywood, politics, the society we're surrounded by. Pick what you relate with and which can be a source of abundant supply of content."

For Sowmya, text precedes image because she lifts off instances directly from her own life. "I do not know anything as well as I know myself," she is quick to add. And, most importantly, she says, the process should be as enjoyable to make them as it is to view them: "humour is happiness multiplied".

As memes continue to be used as an active medium to express dissent and challenge the system, it is important to know how to tread carefully. Trolls are inevitable as makers reach an expansive audience with varied beliefs. When it comes to political content that is likely to attract criticism, Adrita sticks to a single philosophy – "You always have to punch up and not punch down. Per-

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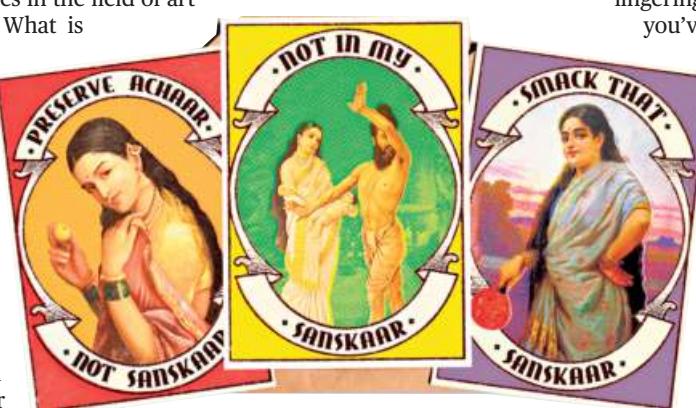
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Shared happiness
"Life has been hard for a whole lot of us, with salary cuts, job losses, the grief over losing loved ones to the virus... We deserve to let down our walls, and find a place where we can laugh together, if only as a way to release all the pent-up stress," says Sowmya.

The lockdown and isolation led her to look at life differently: make fun of everything. This reflected in her memes as well. "My constant craving for meals, the never-ending Zoom calls, the silver-lining quarantine-joy of being 'bra-less' and the lingering smell of Pril long after you've done the dishes, nothing was off limits."

With the increase in time spent on social media, people are also looking for content that lifts their spirits.

Trusted meme accounts then become safe spaces, Somya concludes, "for those few precious moments when you engage with a meme and tag those who you think might relate."



the information imparted also forms a major component of what makes good memes work.

On the other hand, trying to make one intentionally, might backfire. "Figuring out what you want to talk about and finding a funny way to express it, matters," she adds. Finding one's own voice is key, as is the case with any other content creators.

"Memes die down very quickly. They have a very fine sensitivity," says Abhinit Khanna, the creator of #ArtWorldMemes adding that being updated about current affairs lends a lot to the shelf life.

His 10 years of experience in the art field, led to a lot of observations which resulted in the popular hashtag: #ArtWorldMemes. It takes a dig at oft-seen issues in the field of art and curation. What is news today, might seem alien to us in the coming week, he adds, citing the example of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindi speech during lockdown which was fodder for

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Trump contradicts CDC on vaccination

President reiterates that vaccine distribution could start in October, calls face masks a 'mixed bag'

SIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday contradicted the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Robert Redfield on the efficacy of masks and the schedule for vaccine availability. Mr. Trump told reporters at the White House that Dr. Redfield had probably not understood the question on vaccine distribution correctly at a Senate hearing earlier on Wednesday. Coronavirus cases in the U.S. are soaring with over 6 million infections and around 200,000 deaths.

The President faces a tough contest for re-election in November and has proclaimed a vaccine would be available by the end of the year. Dr. Redfield, testifying with other officials at a U.S. Senate committee hearing on the government's pandemic response, had told Senators that it would probably take until the "late second quarter, third quarter 2021" for the vaccine to be "fully available" to the American public so people could "get back to regular life".

There will be an initial vaccine available sometime between November and December but it will be in "very



Denial mode: Donald Trump pointing to a COVID-19 chart as he briefs reporters at the White House. ■ REUTERS

limited supply" and just for priority use, Dr. Redfield said.

Incorrect information'

"I think he made a mistake when he said that... it's just incorrect information," Mr. Trump said about Dr. Redfield's comments. Mr. Trump reiterated that vaccine distribution could start in October but "certainly during November and December would be the latest".

There would be a "very full distribution" as soon as the vaccine was ready. He said a "vast section" of the U.S. would receive the vaccine and then other countries as well. The President also contradicted Dr. Redfield on masks. The CDC chief, hold-

ing up a mask, had said masks were "the most important, powerful, public health tool we have". The scientists appealed to all Americans to wear a mask and said if they did for 6-12 weeks, the pandemic could be brought under control.

"I might even go so far as to say that this face mask is more guaranteed to protect me against COVID than when I take a COVID vaccine because the immunogenicity may be 70% and if I don't get an immune response, the vaccine is not going to protect me. This face mask will," Dr. Redfield said. During his testimony, the doctor also advised social distancing, hand washing and being cautious about crowds.

The President said he had spoken on the phone with Dr. Redfield after the Senate Hearing about the scientist's comments on masks and vaccinations. "It's not more effective by any means than a vaccine and I called him [Dr. Redfield] about that..." Mr. Trump said. "I believe that if you ask him he would probably say that he didn't understand the question."

Dr. Redfield showed no visible or verbal signs of confusion over the question at the hearing nor has he issued a statement to that effect following the President's comments. At another point in Wednesday's briefing, Mr. Trump said, "the mask may help" and that he hopes masks help. "But again, the mask is a mixed bag, there are some people, professionals... who don't like the mask because of the touchiness... and then you're touching everything else."

Significant evidence that Mr. Trump downplayed the coronavirus threat and criticisms that he misled the public on its severity in January and February have emerged with the recent publication of investigative journalist Bob Woodward's book *Rage*. A former White House official, Joe Grogan, had said the President did not want to

create panic, the *Washington Post* reported.

India visit

As late as February 23 when the President was leaving the White House for Joint Base Andrews so he could board Air Force One to India, he had said the virus "very much under control". As Mr. Trump travelled in India over the next two days - attending a rally with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ahmedabad, visiting the Taj Mahal and participating in official events in New Delhi - the public in the U.S. was learning that the virus could be a more serious public health issue than Mr. Trump had let on.

Mr. Woodward writes, "...on February 25, as Trump boarded Air Force One to return from a state visit to India, the director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the CDC, Dr Nancy Messonnier, issued a stark public warning" that schools may be closed, people may need to work from home and that the disruption to life may be "very severe." "Trump on his way back to the U.S. from India, called Azar [the Health Secretary] and threatened to fire Messonnier."

Pak. to make Gilgit-Baltistan a full-fledged province: report

Imran to make announcement during his visit to the region'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has decided to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan's status to that of a full-fledged province, a Pakistani media report on Thursday quoted a senior Minister as saying.

India has clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of the country by virtue of its fully legal and irrevocable accession.



Tinderbox: India has said that Pakistan has no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it. ■ GETTY IMAGES

vernment has decided in principle to give constitutional rights to Gilgit-Baltistan, the Minister told reporters.

India's objections

India has said the Government of Pakistan or its judiciary has no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it.

ternal Affairs said in May while protesting Islamabad's efforts to bring material change in Pakistan occupied territories.

Mr. Gandapur also said that work on the Moqondass Special Economic Zone would begin under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The CPEC is a collection of infrastructure and other projects under construction throughout Pakistan since 2013.

U.K. defends planned Brexit law

Biden has slammed British move to breach the withdrawal pact with the EU

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON

The British government struggled on Thursday to overcome American opposition to its plans to breach the Brexit withdrawal agreement with the European Union, after Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden became the latest U.S. politician to express alarm.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's move to break parts of the EU divorce deal relating to Northern Ireland has triggered fears it could undermine the 1998 Good Friday peace accord that ended decades of violence between Irish nationalists and British unionists.

"We can't allow the Good Friday Agreement that



Joe Biden

brought peace to Northern Ireland to become a casualty of Brexit," Mr. Biden tweeted.

"Any trade deal between the U.S. and U.K. must be contingent upon respect for the Agreement and preventing the return of a hard bor-

der. Period," he wrote.

Britain and the EU jointly promised in the Brexit agreement to ensure there are no customs posts or other obstacles on the Northern Ireland-Ireland border. The open border is key to the stability that underpins the peace settlement.

Raab in Washington

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab is in Washington this week, and has been trying to assuage American concerns that a pending government Bill would undermine Northern Ireland peace, if passed by lawmakers.

Mr. Raab insisted the U.K. has an "absolute" commitment to the Good Friday Agreement. He described

Britain's planned law as "precautionary" and "proportionate."

Mr. Johnson argues the law is intended to be an insurance policy against unreasonable behavior by the EU that could threaten the unity of the U.K. by disrupting trade between Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K.

The bloc has demanded the U.K. drop the plan by the end of September or face legal action.

The Bill has also caused an uproar in Britain. Five former British PMs have criticised Mr. Johnson's willingness to break international law, and the government's top legal civil servant and most senior law officer for Scotland have both resigned.

Alarming virus transmission in Europe'

WHO says rise in cases a wake-up call, warns against shortening quarantine periods

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COPENHAGEN

The World Health Organization warned on Thursday of "alarming rates of transmission" of Covid-19 across Europe and cautioned countries against shortening quarantine periods.

The WHO's regional director for Europe Hans Kluge said the number of novel coronavirus cases seen in September "should serve as a wake-up call for all of us."

"Although these numbers reflect more comprehensive testing, it also shows alarming rates of transmission across the region," he told an online press conference from the Danish capital Copenhagen.

The health body also said it would not change its guidance calling for a 14-day quarantine period for anyone exposed to the novel coronavirus.

European countries, such as Portugal and Croatia, are currently considering reducing their recommendations.

"Knowing the immense individual and societal impact even a slight reduction in the length of quarantine can have... I encourage countries of the region to make scientific due process with their experts and explore safe reduction options," Kluge said, adding that the "concept of quarantine must be protected" and "continuously adapted."

In France for instance, the recommended length for self-isolation in case of exposure has been reduced from 14 to seven days.

It is 10 days in the U.K. and Ireland, and several other

cording to the organisation's own figures.

The number of daily cases recorded is currently between 40,000 and 50,000, comparable to a daily peak of 43,000 on April 1 - although testing in many countries has increased considerably.

A new record was set on September 11, with some 54,000 cases recorded in 24 hours.

Noting reports that Europeans were experiencing COVID-19 "fatigue", he said that rather than returning to lockdowns authorities ought to "focus on reducing harm, where and when possible."

"Engage the youth in finding new and safe ways to be social," Mr. Kluge said.

Barr 'suggested' sedition charges on rioters

'He told prosecutors to consider exploring criminal charges against Seattle Mayor'

KATIE BENNER
WASHINGTON

Attorney General William Barr told federal prosecutors in a call last week that they should consider charging rioters and others who committed violent crimes at protests in recent months with sedition, according to two people familiar with the call.

The highly unusual suggestion to charge people with insurrection against lawful authority alarmed some on the call, which included U.S. attorneys around the country, said the people, who described Mr. Barr's comments on the condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.



William Barr

The Attorney General has also asked prosecutors in the Justice Department's civil rights division to explore whether they could bring criminal charges against Mayor Jenny Durkan of Seattle for allowing some resi-

dents to establish a police-free protest zone near the city's downtown for weeks this summer, according to two people briefed on those discussions.

Late Wednesday, a department spokesman said that Mr. Barr did not direct the civil rights division to explore this idea.

Aggressive path
The directives are in keeping with Mr. Barr's approach to prosecute crimes as aggressively as possible in cities where protests have given way to violence. But in suggesting possible prosecution of Durkan, a Democrat, Mr. Barr also took aim at an elected official whom Presi-

dent Donald Trump has repeatedly attacked.

A Justice Department repre-

sentatives did not respond to requests for comment.

The Wall Street Journal first reported Mr. Barr's remarks about

Thursday.

The disclosures came as Mr. Barr directly inserted himself into the presidential race in recent days to warn that the United States would be on the brink of destruction if Mr. Trump lost. He told a *Chicago Tribune* columnist that the nation could find itself "irrevocably committed to the socialist path" if Mr. Trump lost and that the country faced "a clear fork in the road." ■ NY TIMES

Man jailed for 'insulting' Prophet

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DHAKA

A Hindu man has been jailed for seven years in Muslim-majority Bangladesh for insulting the Prophet Mohammed on Facebook, a prosecutor said on Thursday.

Although Bangladesh is officially secular, criticism of Islam is taboo.

Jibon Krishna Roy, a se-

curity guard, was found guilty on Wednesday of posting "obscene, derogatory and objectionable comments on Prophet Mo-

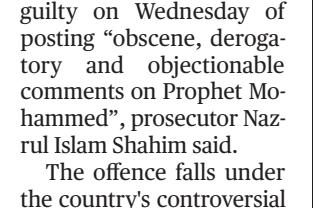
hammed", prosecutor Nazrul Islam Shahim said.

The offence falls under the country's controversial Internet laws.

THE HINDU
on Sunday IN SCHOOL

AN EXCLUSIVE WEEKENDER FOR CHILDREN

30 TOPICS
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NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020



RACE TO THE MOON



INDIA-CHINA FACE-OFF



CONTACTLESS BIOMETRIC TECHNOLOGY

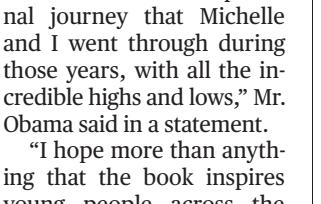


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Elsewhere



U.S. sends top diplomat to Taiwan, angering China
TAIPEI
A top U.S. diplomat landed in Taiwan on Thursday, the highest-ranking State Department official to visit in 40 years, in a sign of Washington's willingness to defy China and its campaign to isolate the self-ruled island. China said it opposes Keith Krach's visit. "China strongly opposes this," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said. ■ AFP

Obama book coming out in November

First volume of the memoir will be released two weeks after U.S. elections

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Former U.S. President Barack Obama on Thursday announced the publication in November of the first half of his memoirs, *A Promised Land* - two weeks after the election pitting Donald Trump against Joe Biden.

Publisher Penguin Random House said the book will be released in 25 languages on November 17.

"There's no feeling like finishing a book, and I'm proud of this one," Mr. Obama, 59, tweeted.

Vladimir Putin, the statement from Penguin Random House said. It will also revisit the Democratic leader's approval of

a May 2011 raid in which Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was killed in Pakistan.

"I've also tried to give readers a sense of the personal journey that Michelle and I went through during those years, with all the incredible highs and lows," Mr. Obama said in a statement.

"I hope more than anything that the book inspires young people across the country -- and around the globe -- to take up the baton, lift up their voices, and play their part in remaking the world for the better."

THE HINDU
on Sunday IN SCHOOL

AN EXCLUSIVE WEEKENDER FOR CHILDREN

30 TOPICS

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	38,980	-0.82
US Dollar	73.66	-0.19
Gold	52,463	-1.07
Brent oil	42.22	-0.62

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	346.10	-7.45
Asian Paints	2007.95	-4.15
Axisc Bank	442.90	-3.10
Bajaj Auto	3019.20	-18.75
Bajaj Finserv	6007.00	-138.95
Bajaj Finance	3471.95	-49.55
Bharti Airtel	479.00	-2.75
BPLC	415.60	-2.55
Britannia Ind	3195.65	-28.85
Cipla	751.50	-1.10
Coal India	124.30	0.45
Dr Reddys Lab	4827.25	199.35
Eicher Motors	2145.45	-18.30
GAIL (India)	90.75	-1.10
Grasim level	724.70	4.30
HCL Tech	808.30	19.05
HDFC	1744.35	-23.80
HDFC Bank	1083.60	-10.05
HDFC Life	591.85	-6.75
Hero MotoCorp	3061.00	4.80
Hindalco	175.85	-7.95
Hind Unilever	2128.20	-15.30
ICICI Bank	369.00	-5.70
IndusInd Bank	617.35	-4.30
Bharti Infralet	196.40	-3.75
Infosys	1011.00	9.25
Indian Oil Corp	81.80	-0.90
ITC	178.60	-2.05
JSW Steel	286.85	-1.80
Kotak Bank	1305.10	-20.30
L&T	906.30	-15.50
M&M	636.80	-2.65
Maruti Suzuki	7085.85	27.90
Nestle India Ltd.	16121.35	-76.45
NTPC	88.65	-1.00
ONGC	73.15	0.10
PowerGrid Corp	168.30	-3.65
Reliance Ind	2298.75	-25.80
State Bank	195.45	-2.75
Shree Cement	19888.40	-499.45
Sun Pharma	512.00	-6.50
Tata Motors	147.65	-3.80
Tata Steel	398.70	-5.90
TCS	2460.95	-42.05
Tech Mahindra	786.95	-5.05
Titan	1182.40	0.70
UltraTech Cement	3968.95	-5.95
UPL	530.55	2.05
Wipro	311.70	-0.45
Zee Entertainment	221.10	5.25

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.45	73.77
Euro	86.60	86.98
British Pound	95.25	95.66
Japanese Yen (100)	70.11	70.43
Chinese Yuan	10.85	10.89
Swiss Franc	80.57	80.92
Singapore Dollar	54.01	54.26
Canadian Dollar	55.61	55.85
Malaysian Ringgit	17.73	17.83
Australian Dollar	53.57	53.82

Source: Indian Bank

TVS appoints new distributor in Colombia

NEW DELHI
TVS Motor said it has tied up with Autotecnica Colombiana SAS (Auteco SAS), a leading motorcycle assembler in Colombia. PTI

Petrol usage returns to pre-COVID level

Sales rise 2.2% year-on-year from Sept. 1-15 to recover from Aug.'s sharp drop; diesel demand 6% lower



Back in business: Petrol sales rose to 9.65 lakh tonnes in the first half of Sept. from 9.45 lakh a year earlier. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

AAI may suffer a loss in FY21

Airports operator has sought a ₹1,500-crore loan, says Puri

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

State-owned Airports Authority of India (AAI), which runs more than 100 airports and has been a cash-rich entity that pays a dividend to the government, will likely be in the red at the end of the current fiscal, the government told Parliament.

To run various airports at a time of depressed demand and revenue, the AAI has sought a loan of ₹1,500 crore from the State Bank of India, Minister for Civil Aviation Hardeep Puri told the Lok Sabha.

Payment deferrals

Despite this, it has allowed deferrals in annual payments to be made to it by the four biggest airports in the country – Delhi, Mumbai,



Desperate times: AAI had been cash-rich and had been paying its net profit as dividend to the govt. ■ C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

Bengaluru and Hyderabad – with which it has a public private partnership agreement.

The government had ordered AAI to pay its entire profit after tax (PAT) as dividend to it from FY18, raising it from 30% of PAT it used to pay earlier. This was despite AAI's own financial requirement for maintenance and

expansion of airports. According to its last annual report, it paid ₹1,780 crore to the government in FY18.

National carrier Air India has also taken a hit and seen its revenue drop to ₹1,531 crore from ₹7,066 crore despite operating 2,600 international flights since May for the repatriation of Indians from around the world.

IRDAI panel pushes for pandemic risk pool

Moots govt. backstop of ₹75,000 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

A working group of insurance regulator IRDAI has recommended the setting up of an Indian Pandemic Risk Pool with public-private-government participation to cover losses resulting from pandemics such as COVID-19 in the future.

IRDAI said the quantum of loss due to an epidemic/pandemic is huge and beyond the capacity of public and/or private companies and/or government alone. Thus, a risk-pooling mechanism with public-private-government participation would be an appropriate resolution to address similar concerns in future.

The group said since MSMEs and the unorganised sector were the worst hit by COVID-19, the first phase of the proposed pool

The first phase should cover income losses due to business interruption

should cover income losses due to business interruption resulting from a future pandemic event and subsequent lockdowns.

Pandemic losses are covered under available health insurance products. Hence, the coverage for losses in health segment due to a pandemic, beyond a threshold, may be covered under the second phase.

The coverage may later be expanded to life insurance. The group proposed a government backstop of about ₹75,000 crore initially, considering the pool can be designed to cater to four crore MSME workers.

MSMEs used tech to survive lockdown'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Information Technology (IT) infrastructure helped businesses tide over the challenges arising from the lockdown, Tally Solutions said in a report.

According to a study it conducted, about 94% of MSMEs in India had adopted technology to stay afloat in the last few months.

About 67% of respondents in western India adopted full-fledged IT infrastructure in their businesses post-lockdown, compared with just 29% during the lockdown. Similarly, 60% respondents from the south had adopted complete IT infrastructure, the study found.

The COVID-19 pandemic has driven the digital transformation of micro, small and medium enterprises.

Tankers cruise; rates for containers, dry bulk fall

Oil contango spurred rush for tankers'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Tanker owners have remained insulated from the disruption in global trade due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has resulted in charter rates of dry bulk and container carriers crashing as demand has dried up, Crisil Research said.

"That's because a crash in crude oil prices earlier this year had led to a situation known as 'oil contango', wherein the price of an oil futures contract exceeded the spot price. This sparked a rush for booking vessels to be used as floating storage. Thus, even as dry bulk and container rates wallowed, tanker charter rates were 44% higher on-year in the first half of 2020," it said.

Crisil Research expects dry bulk trade to fall 4-6%

15, 2019, period. Sales were 1.78 million tonnes in the first half of August this year.

Local lockdowns hamper

Industry sources said while the Indian economy has started to pick up with lockdown restrictions being lifted since June, local lockdowns by States had hampered a quick pick-up in demand. Petrol sales have picked up as commuters are increasingly preferring personal transport to public conveyance.

The rise in September for petrol is a turnaround from the sharp drop witnessed in August.

Demand for diesel, the most-consumed fuel in the country, fell to 2.13 million tonnes, from 2.25 million tonnes for the September 1-

tonnes were down 60% in the first half of September but were 15% higher than the 1,03,000 tonnes in August.

Cooking gas sales were up 12.5% at 1.13 million tonnes and 13.5% month-on-month.

Wholesale sales of cars rose 14% in August, while two-wheeler sales increased by 3%.

Shrikant Madhav Vaidya, Chairman, Indian Oil Corp., India's largest fuel retailer – earlier this week said that there were signs of demand recovery, but that the pandemic's impact could linger and monthly consumption may edge back to pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year. Fuel demand is expected to rise further in October as the festive season kicks in.

The Centre's stimulus measures and the structural features of these deals will partially offset rising risks, Moody's said. For example, as part of the relief measures, the government has guaranteed new and outstanding SME loans, which will help alleviate liquidity pressures in the sector, added Moody's.

'SMEs' asset-backed securities to be impacted'

Loan recovery, a challenge: Moody's

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

COVID-19-induced economic and property market disruptions would cause loan delinquencies in micro,

small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This will impact the firms' asset-backed securities (ABS) over the rest of the year, hurting refinancing prospects and leading to lower recovery rates said Moody's Investors Service.

"This will challenge SMEs' refinancing of loans against property (LAP) and hurt the recovery prospects for defaulted loans, affecting the quality of ABS that we rate," Mr. Rustagi added.

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'Telcos must conduct special security audit of networks'

Move follows concerns over use of Chinese equipment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

P

Pharma major Dr. Reddy's Laboratories and Celgene, a wholly owned subsidiary of Bristol Myers Squibb, have settled their litigation relating to patents for multiple myeloma drug Revlimid (lenalidomide) capsules.

In settlement of all outstanding claims in the litigation, Celgene has agreed to provide Dr. Reddy's with a licence to sell volume-limited amounts of generic lenalidomide capsules in the U.S., beginning on a confidential date after March 2022, subject to regulatory approval. The agreed-upon percentages are confidential, Dr. Reddy's said on Thursday.

The move assumes significance as it comes at a time when there are renewed discussions in the country over allowing the use of telecom equipment supplied by China-headquartered firms due to security and surveillance concerns.

"Government is aware that in the modern age, the telecom equipment and networks used for provisioning of telecom services

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecom has directed all telecom service providers in the country to carry out a special audit of their networks by an external agency to ensure security, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

The move assumes significance as it comes at a time when there are renewed discussions in the country over allowing the use of telecom equipment supplied by China-headquartered firms due to security and surveillance concerns.

"Government is aware that in the modern age, the telecom equipment and networks used for provisioning of telecom services

are prone to spyware/malware, including the backdoor and trapdoor vulnerabilities," Minister of State for Communications and IT Sanjay Dhotre said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

Mr. Dhotre added that as per license conditions, each licensee had to get their networks audited for security once in a financial year by a

