

SUNDAY

27 SEPTEMBER
2020

The Sunday Statesman

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KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

ANIL TELLS UK
COURT HIS LIFE IS
VERY DISCIPLINED

P8

TRUMP SET TO
NAME BARRETT
FOR US TOP COURT

P10

LEBANESE
PM-DESIGNATE
RESIGNS

P11

THIEM COULD BE
HARD TO GET
PAST IN PARIS

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 35 and 24 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 88% Min: 46%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 34.3°C (O) Min: 24.3°C (O)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

06:12 hrs 18:11 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

15:56 hrs 02:47 hrs

THUMBNAILS



A woman vendor wearing a facemask as a preventive measure against Covid-19, prepares to install her shop along the roadside in New Delhi on Saturday. **AFP**

Balasubrahmanyam laid to rest: Versatile singer, actor and music composer S P Balasubrahmanyam hailed as "singing moon" by his millions of fans was laid to rest at his farm house near Chennai on Saturday with a 24-gun salute by Tamil Nadu police. After the singer's son S P Charan performed the funeral rites amid Vedic chants by priests, last post was played by a police band and 24 personnel in ceremonial attire gave a gun salute. Later, the body with SPB's glasses on and smeared with 'Thiruneeru' (sacred ashes) on the forehead and draped in zari dhoti was lowered into a deep pit and buried.

Cinema halls, theatres to be allowed in WB from 1 October: Cinemas, jatras, plays, musical programmes, dance recitals and magic shows would be allowed from 1 October with 50 participants, in adherence to physical distancing norms, wearing of masks and compliance to precautionary protocols. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee took to Twitter late Saturday evening to announce this decision. The decision comes amid repeated requests by the Bengal film industry to reopen movie theatres.

NCB questions Deepika, Shraddha, Sara in drugs case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Mutha Ashok Jain, Deputy Director General of NCB, said Prasad will be produced in a court on Sunday.

At present nobody else has been summoned for questioning, he said.

Asked about a video of a party that had allegedly taken place at film-maker Karan Johar's house last year, Jain said it had nothing to do with the present case.

On Friday, NCB had also questioned Dharma Productions' Anubhab Chopra in connection with the alleged film industry-drug nexus.

In a statement on Friday, Johar had said Prasad joined Dharmatic Entertainment, sister concern of Johar's Dharmma Productions, in November 2019 on a contract basis for a project which did not materialise.

Chopra was briefly associated with his banner as an assistant director and worked only on two projects, he said.

The NCB had earlier arrested actor Rhea Chakraborty, her brother Showik and some suspected drug peddlers.

Rajput (34), an emerging Bollywood star, was found hanging in his apartment in suburban Bandra on June 14.

Speaking to reporters,

With 85.3K new cases India closes in on 6 million Covid infections

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

India's Covid-19 tally sprinted past 59 lakh on Saturday with 85,362 fresh cases being recorded in a day, while 93,420 people recuperated from the disease during the period taking total recoveries to over 48 lakh, according to the Union Health Ministry's data.

The data updated at 8 am on Saturday showed that the coronavirus caseload has risen to 59,03,932 with 85,362 infections being reported in a day, while the death toll mounted to 93,379 after 1,089 people succumbed to the disease in 24 hours.

Total recoveries surged to 48,49,584, pushing the country's recovery rate to 82.14 per cent. The Covid-19 case fatality rate was recorded at 1.58 per cent.

There are 9,60,969 active cases

in the country which comprise 16.28 per cent of the total caseload, the data showed.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and it went past 50 lakh on September 16.

According to the ICMR, in total 7,02,69,975 samples have been tested up to September 25, with 13,41,535 being tested on Friday.

Delhi records 46 Covid deaths, highest in 73 days: Delhi today recorded 3,372 new Covid-19 cases from 57,688 tests conducted over the last 24 hours. The city's Covid caseload mounted to 2,67,822. The national capital, however, recorded 46 fresh Covid fatalities - highest in 73 days. The city's Covid death toll thus rose to 5,193.

(SEE PAGE 2)

FACT FILE

TOTAL CASES	59,03,932
ACTIVE CASES	9,60,969
NEW CASES	85,362
NEW RECOVERIES	93,420
TOTAL DEATHS	93,379

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8 AM SATURDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2020

(SEE PAGE 2)

Temporary retention of GST cess, not diversion: Govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Finance ministry sources have countered CAG audit finding of central government wrongly retaining Rs 47,272 crore of GST compensation cess meant for states, saying temporary retention cannot be termed as diversion.

Chopra was briefly associated with his banner as an assistant director and worked only on two projects, he said.

The NCB had earlier arrested actor Rhea Chakraborty, her brother Showik and some suspected drug peddlers.

Rajput (34), an emerging Bollywood star, was found hanging in his apartment in suburban Bandra on June 14.

19 was fully paid to states. Time taken in reconciliation of compensation receipts can't be termed as diversion of GST cess fund when the dues to states were fully released by the central government, they said.

Sources said that in 2017-18, Rs 62,611 crore was collected, out of which the government released full compensation dues of Rs 41,146 crore to the states and union territories (UTs).

In 2018-19, an amount of Rs 95,081 crore was collected, out of which Rs 69,275 crore was paid as full compensation dues to states and UTs.

They said an amount of Rs 47,271 crore collected in the

2017-18 and 2018-19 had remained unutilised for reconciliation post full payment of GST compensation dues.

For the year 2019-20, the central government released Rs 1,65,302 crore as GST compensation against a cess collection of Rs 95,444 crore which it could do so with the unutilised cess of Rs 47,271 crore.

The GST (Compensation to States) Act guarantees all states an annual growth rate of 14 per cent in their GST revenue in the first five years of implementation of GST beginning July 2017. It was introduced as a relief for states for the loss of revenues arising from the implementation of GST.

If a state's revenue grows

slower than 14 per cent, it is supposed to be compensated by the Centre using the funds specifically collected as compensation cess.

To provide these grants, a GST compensation cess is levied on certain luxury and sin goods.

The collected compensation cess flows into the consolidated fund of India (CFI), and is then transferred to the Public Account of India, where a GST compensation cess account has been created.

States are compensated bimonthly from the accumulated funds in this account.

However, instead of transferring the entire GST cess amount to the GST compensation fund during 2017-18 and

2018-19, the CAG found that the Centre retained these funds in the CFI and used it for other purposes.

The finance ministry sources said the compensation receipt in the CFI was subject to reconciliation in the coming months, as usual, in the forthcoming financial year.

If for that reason the amount remained in the CFI, how can that be treated as diversion, they asked adding even the CAG in its report has not said so.

The amount collected under compensation cess fund has been regularly and fully distributed to states as per their dues and budgetary provisions and by the end of July 2020, everything has been accounted for and released, source added.

The CAG in its report tabled in Parliament earlier this week said out of the Rs 62,612 crore GST Compensation Cess collected in 2017-18, Rs 56,146 crore was transferred to the non-lapsable fund.

In the following year (2018-19), Rs 54,275 crore out of Rs 95,081 crore collected was transferred to the fund.

The short transfer in 2017-18 was Rs 6,466 crore and in 2018-19 it was Rs 40,806 crore, the CAG said adding the Centre used this money for "other purposes" which "led to an overstatement of revenue receipts and understatement of fiscal deficit for the year".

India tells Imran: Stop supporting terrorism

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER



Exercising its "Right of Reply" at the UN General Assembly after the Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's virtual address, India said the only way for Pakistan to become a normal country was to abjure its moral, financial and material support to terrorism, turn its attention to the problems faced by its own population including its minorities and stop misusing UN platforms to further its nefarious agenda.

Indian delegate Mijito Vinito (photo), who had earlier walked out of the hall during Khan's pre-recorded address to the General Assembly, rejected the Pakistani leader's speech, saying it was full of "lies, misinformation and war-mongering".

Vinito pointed out that Khan was the same person who referred to the terrorist Osama bin Laden as a "Martyr", adding "This Hall heard the incessant rant of someone who had nothing to show for himself, who had no achievements to speak of, and no reasonable suggestion to offer to the world.

However, the Indian diplomat was unsparing

in his attack on the Khan and said, "The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral and inalienable part of India. The rules and legislation brought in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are strictly international affairs of India."

He said, "The only dispute left in Kashmir relates to the part of Kashmir that is still under illegal occupation of Pakistan. We call upon Pakistan to vacate all those areas that it is in illegal occupation of."

During his virtual address, Khan raised the Jammu and Kashmir issue and denounced the constitutional changes made by India in August last year, something which he has done so often.

However, the Indian diplomat was unsparing

information, war-mongering, and malice spread through this Assembly. The words used today at this great Assembly by the leader of Pakistan (Imran Khan) demean the very essence of the United Nations."

He went to say, "This is the country that brought genocide to South Asia 39 years ago when it killed its own people. This is also the country that is shameless enough not to offer a sincere apology for the horrors it perpetrated even after so many years. This is the same country that provides pensions for dredged and listed terrorists out of State funds. This is the same country that has the dubious distinction of hosting the largest number of terrorists proscribed by the United Nations."

Earlier, India's Permanent Representative to the UN tweeted, "PM of Pakistan statement a new diplomatic low—at 75th UN General Assembly. Another litany of vicious falsehood, personal attacks, war-mongering and obfuscation of Pakistan's persecution of its own minorities & of its cross-border terrorism."

Mukul Roy elevated in revamp of BJP leadership

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER



Farmers shout slogans as they block train tracks during a protest over the passage of agriculture Bills in Parliament, at Devi Dasspura village on Saturday. **APP**

SNS & PTI

CHANDIGARH, 26 SEPTEMBER

The Shiromani Akali Dal has quit the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) over the farm Bills issue, SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal announced Saturday night.

He made the announcement after holding a core committee meeting of the party here.

The highest decision-making body of the SAD at its emergency meeting tonight decided unanimously to pull out of the BJP-NDA alliance, he said.

He said the decision to quit the NDA was taken because of the Centre's stubborn refusal to give statutory legislative guarantees to protect assured marketing of farmers crops on MSP and its continued

insensitivity to Punjabi and Sikh issues like excluding Punjabi language as official language in Jammu and Kashmir.

The SAD becomes the third major NDA ally to pull out of the grouping after the Shiv Sena and the TDP.

Badal said the SAD will continue to stand by its core principles of peace, communal harmony and guard the interest of Punjab and Punjabi in general, and Sikhs and farmers in particular. He said the decision has been taken in consultation with the people of Punjab, especially party workers and farmers. Badal said the SAD was the oldest ally of the BJP but the Central government did not listen to it in honouring the sentiments of farmers.

Chug from Punjab has been brought in as party general secretary. **SNS**
DETAILS ON PAGE 5



Whenever there has been a challenge of any form before the country, we have always been able to convert it into an opportunity and they (scientists) ultimately deliver good for the society

HARSH VARDHAN
UNION SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MINISTER

Will take city water supply to developed world's level: CM

Efforts are on to provide round-the-clock water to every household, says Kejri, ruling out privatisation of water supply

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said the AAP government will make the water supply in Delhi "as good as in developed countries" and will hire a consultant for better water management and for achieving zero wastage of water in the city.

Kejriwal pledged that the Delhi government will ensure round-the-clock water supply in the city in the next five years. He rejected allegations that the water supply in the national capital was being privatised.

"Water supply cannot be privatised. It can never happen. I can assure you that," the CM asserted while addressing a virtual press conference.

He said in the capital cities of developed countries water is available round-the-clock with proper pressure and there is no need for



a submersible pump. "We will make it happen in Delhi. The city's water supply will be as good as in developed

nations," he promised.

"If you visit the capital cities of other nations...London, Tokyo, Paris, you will

get clean tap water 24x7. In Delhi, the water pressure is low, so people install pumps. And if one person installs a pump, it causes a problem to their neighbours. Every household has to install water tanks to store water. We have to bring all of this to an end," Kejriwal said.

After ensuring 24X7 electricity supply, the AAP government was now making efforts to provide round-the-clock water supply to every household in Delhi, he said.

The CM pointed out that a lot of water goes to waste in Delhi. The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) supplies 930 million gallons of water (MGD) per day to the city, which amounts to 176 litres per person per day. Of this, a lot of water gets stolen and leaked. "Accountability should be fixed for every drop of water. There should not be any wastage," he said.

"We are hiring a consultant which will tell us how

to improve our water supply management and to ensure that not even a drop of water is wasted. We have started walking in the direction of providing round-the-clock water supply," Kejriwal said. The coronavirus delayed the process, otherwise it would have been completed by March-April, he added.

"The consultant will tell us about the state-of-art technology, such as the SCADA system, with the help of which water supply can be managed from the central control room," the CM said.

Kejriwal also claimed that his government has been working to increase water availability in Delhi. "We have been working to increase water availability in Delhi. We have been talking (in this regard) to the governments of Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and other states, which have more water," he said.

said: "Citizens must help in spreading awareness about measures to prevent Dengue. They must pick up the phone and call 10 of their friends/relatives and advise them on the good practices of preventing Dengue, such as draining stagnant water and replacing it. They must also advise their friends and relatives to take all measures to remain safe from Coronavirus."

Taking to social media Kejriwal had tweeted: "Delhi will defeat Dengue again, and for this, today, on the third Sunday of the campaign at 10 AM, I checked my house and replaced the stagnant clean water. You must also check your house every Sunday and ask your 10 friends/relatives to do the same."

#10Hafe10Baje10MinuteHrRavivar Dengue Par Vaar."

This week the key focus of the Delhi government would be on the participation of the RWAs. Last year through the participation of the RWAs and other organisations, only 2036 cases and two deaths as against 15867 cases and 60 deaths in 2015. The first edition of the anti-dengue campaign was launched in 2019.

Last year Kejriwal had introduced a 5-point action plan for the RWAs for better coordination and cooperation in preventing Dengue in the state.

For the first step, the RWAs were encouraged to ensure that the government's pamphlet on dengue prevention measures reached every household in their localities. Second, Dengue free stickers were delivered to every household, for people to paste the sticker after inspecting their homes for clean and stagnant water on every Sunday to notify others that their house is dengue-free. Third, the RWAs were asked to spread the word via WhatsApp groups to inspect the houses on Sundays. Fourth, every RWA was asked to issue circulars for residents to check their houses at 10 AM every Sunday. Fifth, after inspecting their homes, RWA officials were encouraged to go to their area and convince the residents to inspect their houses at 10 AM every Sunday.

This year, the Delhi government has also launched a telephonic helpline - 01123300012 and WhatsApp helpline - 8595920530 to assist the general public for Dengue.

'Sisodia's condition improves, shifted from ICU to normal ward'

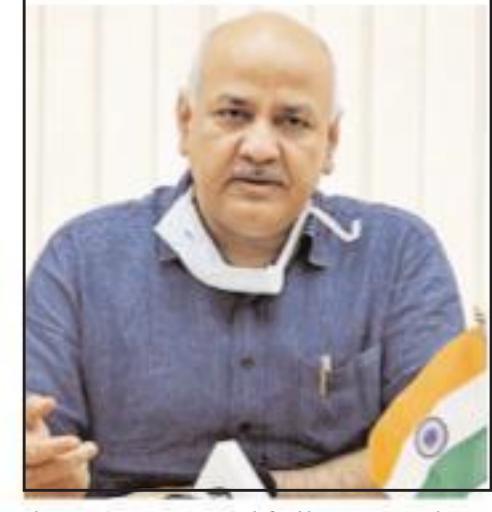
PTI

New Delhi, 26 September

The condition of Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who is suffering from COVID-19 and dengue, has further improved, and he has been shifted from the ICU to a normal ward on Saturday, officials said.

He is currently undergoing treatment at Max hospital, Saket, where he was shifted on Thursday evening after a "falling" blood platelet count and low oxygen level and was administered convalescent plasma therapy on Friday.

On Saturday, an official from Sisodia's office said, "His vitals



have improved following plasma therapy. And, he has been shifted out of the ICU to a normal ward today".

Sources at the Max hospital also said the deputy chief minister is fine and doing better.

Earlier in the day, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain, while interacting with reporters, said that Sisodia's condition "is stable and he is doing fine".

The 48-year-old AAP leader had tested positive for COVID-19 on September 14 and was under home isolation. On Wednesday, he was admitted to the LNJP Hospital for treatment.

He tested positive for dengue a day later and was admitted to the ICU of the private facility in south Delhi.

"He was administered plasma therapy and his condition is now better," an official from the Deputy Chief Minister's Office had said on Friday.

JOBS & CLASSIFIEDS QUEST

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

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SITUATION VACANT

SOUTH Indian, Chinese Cook required. Contact: 9804820766 / 7003734884.

The Sunday Statesman

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is known that my client Mr. Balwani Singh R/o Village Harsaru, Distt. Gurugram Haryana was the owner in Possession of Land Khetia Kheta No. 115/127, Musti No. 58, Killa No. 102/2-7(11A/11/11(1/0-5) Total measuring 7 Kanla 16 Marla situated within the Revenue Estate of Village Harsaru, Distt. Gurugram Haryana and has entered in to Collaboration Agreement with N.A. Bulidwell Pvt. Ltd. vide Collaboration Agreement dated 25.10.2012. That in respect of this agreement, a Special Power of Attorney, Vasiska No. 744 dated 25.10.2012 was also executed in favour of Mr. Balwani Singh Bhakar R/o 16/40, Sector 23, Gurgaon, Haryana. That the builder has not fulfilled the terms and conditions of the Collaboration Agreement dated 25.10.2012 therefore, my client have cancelled the agreement through legal notice served upon the builder and further my client have revoke the Special Power of Attorney executed in favour of Mr. Balwani Singh Bhakar on dated 19-06-2018 vide Vasiska No. 14, further my client have already transferred his aforesaid Land to his sons and grand sons therefore, now concerned with N.A. Bulidwell Pvt. Ltd. in respect of the aforesaid land if case anybody else deals with the builder irrespective of the aforesaid land under that event. My client shall not be responsible for the same.

Darshan Sharma (Advocate)
C. H. No. 2-5, S h a d e Sukhdev Singh Block, Distt. Courts Gurugram

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Khatib Ali Molla, S/o. Late Md. Ejat Ali Molla, R/o.

Rahila Bawhan, 2/11, Jessor Road, East, Bijoy Nagar, P.O. Kazipara, P.S.: Basarat, Dist: North 24 Pgs., Kolkata-700125, do hereby declare that I shall be known as Md. Khatib Ali Molla for all future purpose.

Khatib Ali Molla and Md.

Khatib Ali Molla is same and one identical person vide affidavit (No. 5367) sworn before Lt. Judicial Magistrate First Class Basarat Court dt. 02.09.2020.

I, ROB Elina Laskar, R/o.

Vill: Bankra, Laskar Para,

Howrah, PIN-711403, do hereby declare that 'Rob

Elina Laskar' and 'Rob Elina Laskar' is same and identical

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Delhi Covid surge seems to have plateaued: Jain

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain today said the surge in coronavirus (Covid-19) cases recorded in the city in September "seems to have plateaued" and should show a "rapid fall".

Jain also told reporters that the next sero-prevalence survey, slated to be conducted in Delhi from October 1, is likely to be delayed as the report of the September survey is to be put before the Delhi High Court by this month-end.

"The overall case fatality rate on Friday was 1.95 per cent, so less than 2 per cent. It used to be 3.5 per cent and above earlier. Also, cases which were coming in excess of over 4,000 per day have come down over the past few days. So, the surge in September seems to have plateaued, and it should see a rapid fall," the minister said.

Asked if the testing will now be scaled down, the minister said, "No, it will remain the same." Even

cases reported on Friday were from over 59,000 tests done the previous day, he said.

"The results of the last sero-survey are to be put first before the High Court, so it seems there will be a delay in starting the next round, as it takes time to do preparations, so October 1 starting date it seems highly unlikely," Jain said.



If Siddaramaiah proves even a single charge against me or my family members, I will resign from public life. Will you do the same (resign from public life) if you (Siddaramaiah) fail to prove the allegations against me?

BS YEDIYURAPPA
KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

The Sunday Statesman
NEW DELHI, 27 SEPTEMBER 2020

03

Farm Bills: BJP's oldest ally SAD quits NDA

Keeping his guns trained on Badals, Punjab CM had earlier questioned SAD's continuance in NDA

SNS & PTI
CHANDIGARH, 26 SEPTEMBER

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) has quit the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) over the farm Bills issue. SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal announced late tonight. He made the announcement after holding a core committee meeting of the party here.

The SAD's highest decision-making body at its emergency meeting here decided unanimously to pull out of the NDA, he said.

According to a party statement, Badal said the decision to quit the NDA was taken because of the Centre's stubborn refusal to give statutorily-legislative guarantees to protect assured marketing of farmers' crops on MSP and its continued insensitivity to Punjabi and Sikh issues like excluding Punjabi as one of official languages in Jammu and Kashmir.

The SAD becomes the third major BJP's ally to pull out of the ruling alliance after the Shiv Sena and the TDP.

Badal said the SAD will continue to stand by its core principles of peace, communal harmony and guard the interest of Punjab and Punjabi in general, and Sikhs and



farmers in particular.

He said the decision has been taken in consultation with the people of Punjab, especially party workers and farmers.

Badal said the Bills on agricultural marketing brought by the Narendra Modi government were "lethal and disastrous" for the already beleaguered farmers.

He said the SAD was the oldest ally of the BJP, but the government did not listen to it in honouring the sentiments of farmers.

Earlier in the day, questioning the SAD's continuance in the ruling BJP-led NDA, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh charged

that the "adamant refusal" of the Akalis to quit the NDA coalition showed the "extent of their greed and desperation to cling to power".

Ridiculing the public spectacle of the mutual blame-game between old allies, the SAD and the BJP, Capt Amarinder said the point that "the SAD was holding on to the last vestige of power it continues to enjoy at the cost of Punjab and its farmers, despite being publicly humiliated by the alliance partner, the BJP, had exposed the Akali dual standards and total lack of concern for the farming community".

He was referring to the BJP's purported statement

that it had left the task of convincing the farmers on the Centre's controversial agriculture Bills to the Akalis.

"Why else are the Akalis still a part of the anti-farmer and anti-people BJP-led government at the Centre, which had conspired with large corporate houses to deprive the farmers of their livelihood and, in the process, ruin Punjab?" the CM asked, alleging that the SAD was still "trying hard to stay politically afloat by hook or by crook".

After the "politically-motivated drama" of Harsimrat Kaur's resignation from the Union Cabinet, which she had done only to "save face" amid the widespread farmers'

unrest across Punjab, SAD president Sukhbir Badal was widely expected to pull his party out of the NDA dispensation, but that did not happen, Capt Amarinder pointed out, deriding the Akali leader for his "shameful double-speak".

Lambasting the Akalis for "actively supporting" the Union government's "selling off the farmers' rights to the monopolistic corporate houses through the unconstitutional and undemocratic farm Bills", the CM said the SAD had "completely lost any political credibility or standing after their antics on the new laws".

The Badals will go down in the Akali history as the lead-

ers responsible for the party's "destruction", he claimed.

Taking a dig at Sukhbir's remark that Harsimrat's resignation from the Narendra Modi ministry was like "an atom bomb that had shaken the Prime Minister", Capt Amarinder quipped it was "not even a damp squib of a fizzled-out fire-cracker".

The Prime Minister, and his BJP, do not care for the Akalis, as was evident from the former's criticism of their alliance partner, and also the "promptness" with which Harsimrat's resignation was accepted, said the CM.

It seemed that the BJP wanted to go it alone in the next Punjab Assembly polls, Capt Amarinder claimed, adding that the stage seemed to be set for the NDA to "throw out" the SAD if the latter does not quit the ruling coalition on its own.

Amid the raging war of words between the ruling Congress and the Opposition SAD in Punjab over the Modi government's three contentious agriculture legislations, Capt Amarinder and Akali leaders have continued to trade fireworks, even though both camps have condemned these legislations as "anti-farmers" and "anti-Punjab".

U'khand BJP issues notice to party MLA for raising corruption issue



The BJP's Lohaghat legislator Puran Singh Fartyal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 26 SEPTEMBER

construction work in the House. Rather than the main Opposition party, Congress, the BJP's own leader created a tough situation for the party in the state Assembly.

Kuldeep Kumar, general secretary of Uttarakhand BJP, issued a show-cause notice to Lohaghat MLA Puran Singh Fartyal on Saturday, terming his act as "indiscipline" and asking him to submit his reply within a week.

Everybody expected the party to act against the Lohaghat legislator as he raised the same issue in the recently concluded on-day session of the state Assembly in Dehradun. Fartyal shocked his party ministers and MLAs by raising the issue of corruption in Tanakpur-Jauljibi road con-

The Uttarakhand BJP has provided Lohaghat legislator Puran Singh Fartyal a week's time to provide his clarification.

Equal treatment of all at HP Covid centres, claims health minister after another minister raises questions

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 26 SEPTEMBER

After Himachal Pradesh jai shakti minister Mahender Singh Thakur raised questions over treatment at the Covid facility in Shimla, state health minister Rajiv Saizal on Saturday claimed that equal treatment was being given to all irrespective of any person's status.

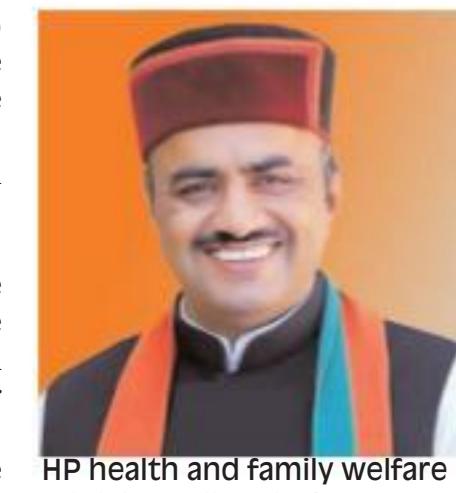
Talking to media persons in Shimla, Saizal said there was no distinction

between a VIP or common Covid patients at the state-run

Covid facilities and that everyone was getting the same treatment there, be it a common person or a minister.

"The patients with severe Corona symptoms are being treated at Covid hospitals and patients with medium symptoms are being treated at Covid Care Centres.

While the patients with mild symptoms are being treated at Covid Care Centres as per set protocol," he said, adding even he would get the same treatment facilities if he contracts the viral disease.



HP health and family welfare minister Rajiv Saizal

He, however, assured to consider the suggestions made by the minister and said the state government was continuously working to make the system better and provide best facilities to Covid patients.

"Our two ministers have contracted the viral disease and they have successfully been cured. They have shared their experience with the state government and directions have been given to the Health and Family Welfare department to overcome shortcomings pointed out by them," he added.

Earlier, Mahender Singh Thakur had raised the issue of

serious and mild symptoms being treated in the same ward at IGMC Shimla and had urged the government to make separate arrangements for treatment of such patients as they may get depressed after seeing deaths of Covid patients.

Saizal also commented on the issue of suicide of a woman in hospital in Shimla and said the woman was suffering from depression which might have been the reason for her to take such extreme step.

However, a magisterial probe had been ordered into the case

and further action will be taken as per the findings of the investigations being done by Additional District Magistrate Shimla. Commenting on the allegations made by Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital (DDU) Medical Superintendent (MS) Lokinder Sharma, he said he should have contacted and briefed us about the issues at the hospital but he chose to speak to the media.

"However, we are looking into the issues raised by Sharma," he said.

State Health minister said

there were always some shortcomings in the system despite best efforts of the government but one can overcome these with dedication.

"There are several Corona

Heroes who are working in

these times of pandemic with

dedication and without com-

plaining about the system or

shortcomings.

The state government is thankful to all Corona Warriors for their dedicated service during this period of pandemic," he added.

Headed that the state gov-

HP Cabinet okays restoration of Vidhayak Kshetra Vikas Nidhi Yojana for 2020-21

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 26 SEPTEMBER

The Himachal Pradesh Cabinet on Saturday gave its approval for restoration of Vidhayak Kshetra Vikas Nidhi Yojana fund for the year 2020-21.

The first instalment of Rs 25 lakh per legislative constituency would be released in October, 2020 and second instalment of Rs 25 lakh would be released after the elections to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The government earlier stopped it in view of Covid-19 crisis. However, there was much opposition to the government's decision by the Congress party. The cabinet meeting was chaired by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur.

An official spokesman said a presentation was made before the cabinet on the proposed visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the state on 3 October.

He said the cabinet decided to set up a statue of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at The Ridge Shimla. It also decided to allot this work to famous sculptors Padam Shri and Padam Vibhushan Awardee Ram V. Sutar and Anil Sutar under Himachal Pradesh Finance

Rule-104 as proposed by Language, Art and Culture Department. The cabinet gave its nod to resume training activities in Industrial Training Institutes of the state with effect from 1st October, 2020 by strictly following the guidelines of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

The cabinet gave its nod to the Draft of Memorandum of Understanding to be executed and entered between the State Government and Temple Trust Chamunda with regard to transfer of land for Lower Terminal Point of Himani-Chamunda Ropeway Project in Kangra district.

It gave its approval to fill up eight posts of different categories in the Planning Department through direct recruitment.

The Cabinet gave its consent to create and fill up 35 posts of pancharma masseur in Ayurveda department on a daily wage basis to provide better Ayurveda medical service to the people.

Experts at the institute have developed what they call as decomposer capsules. Just four capsules can be used to prepare 25 litres of a solution, using some jaggery and chickpea flour, enough to cover one hectare of land.

Scientists say stubble burning reduces soil fertility by killing the good bacteria present in it. But if the crop residue can be turned into manure, the use of fertilizers can be reduced, the letter read.

Kejriwal said this method can be a good solution to the problem of stubble-burning and the city government is going to use it at a large scale to ensure there are "absolutely no farm fires" in the national capital.

He recommended Delhi's

neighbouring states should be encouraged to use it as much as possible.

Scientists say stubble burning reduces soil fertility by killing the good bacteria present in it. But if the crop residue can be turned into manure, the use of fertilizers can be reduced, the letter read.

Kejriwal acknowledged the Centre and states' efforts to reduce stubble-burning, but said the focus has been on crop residue management through machinery.

The Centre has been providing subsidy on farm equip-

ment, still farmers are required to spend a lot of money from their own pocket, he said.

There are a lot of farmers who do not have machines to manage crop residue. They burn it instead. This method (decomposer capsules) can reduce the use of fertilizers and increased crop production, which is a win-win situation for farmers, he said.

The chief minister also sought time from the Union minister to discuss the issue with him.

Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh attract attention during the paddy harvesting season between October 15 and November 15.

Farmers set their fields on fire to quickly clear off the crop residue left behind after harvesting and before cultivating wheat and potato. It is one of the main reasons for the alarming spike in pollution in Delhi-NCR.

Last year, Punjab produced around 20 million tonnes paddy residue. Farmers burnt 9.8 million tonnes of it. Farmers in Haryana burnt 1.23 million tonnes out of the 7 million tonnes of paddy residue produced.

Despite a ban on stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana, farmers continue to do it as there is a short window between harvesting of paddy and sowing of wheat.

The high cost of manual or mechanical management of straw is a major reason why farmers choose to burn it.

State governments are providing 50 to 80 per cent subsidy to farmers and cooperative societies to buy modern farm equipment for in-situ management of paddy straw, installing paddy straw-based power plants and running a massive awareness campaign against stubble-burning.

But these measures are yet to make any significant impact on ground.



HP govt hopes tourism'll gain momentum in coming days

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 26 SEPTEMBER

Himachal Pradesh Tourism and Civil Aviation department director Yunus on Saturday said the government was committed to promote tourism in the state.

He was addressing a webinar organized on the eve of World Tourism Day in which district Tourism Officers, hotel associations, adventure tourism associations participated and discussed various tourism activities.

Yunus said Tourism industry had a major contribution in the economic development of the country and the state.



opment to celebrate the unique role that the sector

plays in providing opportunities outside big cities and

preserving cultural and natural heritage.

GBN sees 120 new Covid cases, tally 12,373

PTI
NOIDA (UP), 26 SEPTEMBER

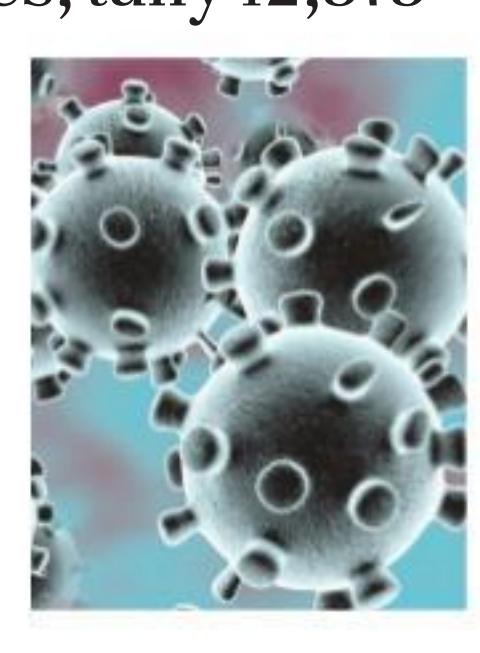
Delhi, has so far recorded 51 COVID-19-linked deaths with a mortality rate of 0.41 percent, it showed.

The recovery rate of patients reached 86.35 per cent, up from 85.52 per cent on Friday, as per the statistics.

The number of active cases stood at 1,637, down from 1,723 on Friday, according to the data released by the UP Health Department for a 24-hour period.

On the brighter side, 206 more patients got discharged during the period, as the total number of recoveries reached 10,685, the data showed.

The district, adjoining



the data showed.

The state's average recovery rate stood at 83.64 percent, up from 82.86 percent on Friday, according to government officials.



Actress Sara Ali Khan arrives to attend questioning by Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) officials, in Mumbai on Saturday. ■ AFP

Two killed in bike crash: Two youths travelling on a bike were killed when their motorcycle collided with a stationary truck near Gujbarba village on the Hansi-Sisai road, about 40 km from Hisar, police said on Saturday. The victims were identified as Sandeep (29) and Rajesh (22), both residents of Rajpura. ■ SNS

CBI probe in Life Mission Project puts LDF govt in a spot

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
26 SEPTEMBER

With CBI getting ready to launch an extensive probe into the alleged scam in Life Mission project, the CPI-M and the LDF government in Kerala have been put on the defensive.

The LDF government, which has been saying that the agreement in the Life Mission Project was between the UAE's Red Crescent and Unitac Builders, which bagged the contract and it has nothing to do with the deal, put in a spot when Swapna Suresh, prime accused in the gold smuggling case revealed before the probe agencies that she had got a commission of Rs one crore in the deal between Red Crescent and Unitac builders in the Life Mission project.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA), the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the Customs and Intelligence Bureau are already investigating cases related to gold smuggling in Kerala.

AT WORK



Women vendors at a roadside shop selling sarees, in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ AFP

We need to have trust in our armed forces' ability to secure our interests: Jaishankar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Amid the border standoff with China in eastern Ladakh, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday said it was an ongoing issue and "we need to have trust in our armed forces and their ability to secure our interests".

Jaishankar said there is also a need to have trust in the ability of the system -- both military commanders and the diplomatic channels -- in negotiating with the Chinese.

Asked about the situation at the border in eastern Ladakh, Jaishankar told Times Now in an interview: "You know this is going to play out. There will be things which China has done. There will be responses that India has made... There are actually negotiations on the way."

"I understand the compulsions on media to know everything yesterday, unfortunately, real life is a little bit different. So, this is about



national security. This is a very complicated ground situation out there," he said.

"We need to have trust in our armed forces and their ability to secure our interests, and frankly in the ability of the system, I mean both military commanders and the diplomatic channels, in negotiating with the Chinese," he said. "Don't call out a match before it is halfway through," the external affairs minister added.

During the interview, Jaishankar also extensively dis-

Rain batters Hyderabad; T'gana issues high alert for all districts

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 26 SEPTEMBER

Telangana administration today issued a high alert to all districts as heavy rains continued unabated for the second day battering the state including the state capital which received copious amount of rainfall leading to waterlogged streets and inundation of low lying areas.

Following instructions from chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao chief secretary Somesh Kumar alerted all district collectors in view of heavy downpour and weather forecast predicting more rains in store.

All districts have been put on high alert. While all officers have been asked to stay put at the district headquarters all leaves and permissions for public holidays have been cancelled.

District administrations have been asked to maintain special vigil at low lying and other vulnerable areas. The

state has received 44.5 mm of rain as against the normal 2.6 mm today.

In fact Telangana has received heavy rains since June all reservoirs are full.

According to Telangana State Development Planning Society under the planning department this year the state's cumulative rainfall from 1 June till 26 June is 1061mm against normal of 704.5mm.

The highest rainfall of 194 mm has been recorded in Nandigam mandal of Rangareddy district, adjoining Hyderabad.

A trough running from South Chhattisgarh to south interior Karnataka across Telangana and Rayalseema has led to heavy rainfall for the past two days and will continue till tomorrow.

The city also experienced incessant rain since last evening leading to flood like situation in many areas, particularly low lying ones remaining submerged and

streets inundated.

In some areas the water level reached knee high causing immense hardship to the commuters.

Water level in Hussainsagar lake has also risen due to the continuous rain battering the city.

Uprooted trees and street light posts also left streets uprooted as teams from Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and traffic police worked round the clock to remove debris from clogged drains and maintain normal traffic flow.

Areas like Namipally, Basheerbagh, Saroor Nagar, Vanasthalipuram, Gulzar Hous near Charminar, Bahadurpura, Tollychowki and Shamshabad saw severe waterlogging.

People took to digging at the TRS government and urban development minister KT Rama Rao for tall claims about the city's infrastructure, particularly after the opening of the new cable stayed bridge.

ED books Bineesh Kodiyeri in PMLA case

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
26 SEPTEMBER

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has registered a case against Bineesh Kodiyeri, son of CPI-M State Secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

The ED has directed the registration department that the properties of Bineesh should not be transacted without informing them as he is suspected to have committed crimes as per section 16, 17 and 18 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). A letter related to this has been accessed by a Malayalam news channel. In the letter, the ED Kochi unit assistant director has asked the registration department to provide the certified copies of sale deeds and encumbrance certificate of all properties owned by Bineesh to him.

The plea, which has made the ministries of law and justice, and social justice and empowerment as parties, referred to the provisions of the IPC of 1860 and recent amendments into the statute and other laws on sexual offences and alleged that none of them talked about the "transgender, transsexuals, kinnar and eunuchs".

"In spite of declaring transgender people to be a 'third gender' by this court, there is no provision / section in the Indian Penal Code which may protect the third gender from the sexual assault by male/ female or transgender," it said.



of crime committed under section 16, 17 and 18 of UAPA 1967 and other related offences.

The ED has on September 9 questioned Bineesh at its Kochi office for over 11 hours in connection with the diplomatic baggage gold smuggling and his alleged links with drug peddler Mohammed Anoop, who was arrested by the Narcotic Control Bureau (NCB) in Bengaluru recently.

It has been reported that three companies, started in partnership with Bineesh Kodiyeri, are under scrutiny.

Two of them - one based in Kozhikode and the other in Bengaluru - were frozen by the Registrar of Companies for not submitting their annual reports since their inception in 2015.

PIL in SC seeks equal protection of law to transgenders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court for equal protection of law to people belonging to the third gender, alleging that there was no penal provision which protects them from offences of sexual assault.

The plea, which has made the ministries of law and justice, and social justice and empowerment as parties, referred to the provisions of the IPC of 1860 and recent amendments into the statute and other laws on sexual offences and alleged that none of them talked about the "transgender, transsexuals, kinnar and eunuchs".

"In spite of declaring transgender people to be a 'third gender' by this court, there is no provision / section in the Indian Penal Code which may protect the third gender from the sexual assault by male/ female or transgender," it said.

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Hathras Additional Superintendent of Police Prakash Kumar told reporters that originally the accused were charged under section 307 (attempt to murder) of the IPC but after receiving more inputs they were charged under section 376 D (gangrape). He said that the legal process of trying the case under a fast track court has also been initiated.

Dalit woman struggles for life after gangrape in UP, 4 accused held

PTI
HATHRAS / ALIGARH, 26 SEPTEMBER

A 19-year-old Dalit woman, who was allegedly raped by four men in Hathras, is struggling for life in an Aligarh hospital where she has been put on a ventilator, officials said on Saturday.

Hathras Superintendent of Police Vikrant Vir said that the four accused named in the rape case, which took place on September 14, have been arrested. He said the teenager has been

admitted to J N Medical College hospital in Aligarh where she has been put on a ventilator, the SP said.

Giving details of the incident, the SP said that the woman had gone to the fields with her mother on the fateful day and when she resisted their attempts, they tried to strangle her, leading to the cut in the tongue, the official said.

She was later found brutally injured, with her tongue having a serious cut as she bit it while the accused attempted to strangle her, he said.

The SP said initially they came to know that Sandip (20) had tried to kill her following

which he was arrested the same day. Later in her statement to the magistrate, the victim said that besides Sandip, Ramu, Lavkush and Ravinder had raped her and is on ventilator, a JN Medical Hospital spokesman said.

Hathras Additional Superintendent of Police Prakash Kumar told reporters that originally the accused were charged under section 307 (attempt to murder) of the IPC but after receiving more inputs they were charged under section 376 D (gangrape). He said that the legal process of trying the case under a fast track court has also been initiated.

Later, Lavkush and Ramu were also arrested and the fourth accused was arrested on Saturday, the SP added.

Meanwhile, a report from Aligarh said the condition of the girl was "critical".

The girl who was gangraped

on September 14 was brought to the Aligarh hospital the next day. She has injuries on the neck and is on ventilator, a JN Medical Hospital spokesman said.

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Given the trend, around 6000 commuters are likely to travel in six additional services that will be operated during the extended hours.

However, as there is generally a rush for boarding the last metro service of the day by commuters, a provision for around 7000 commuters has been kept using increased capping on issuance of e-passes, according to the demand and availability of seats.

They are also putting efforts to accommodate more numbers of commuters in the last slot which will be of one and a half hours from 7 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

"Although only 400 passengers can be accommodated in a rickshaw, on average, around 1000 commuters travel in a one commercial run from one terminal to another," informed a source in metro.

This is because even though only 400 board the metro from the originating station, several get down in the middle while many others again get into it during a run from the source till the destination stations," he added.

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Bengal BJP welcomes Mukul's new post as national party VP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 26 SEPTEMBER

The Bengal BJP today welcomed the decision of the central leadership of the party to induct Mukul Roy as national vice president and also the inclusion of Anupam Hazra as party's national secretary and Raju Bista as national spokesperson.

The party leaders congratulated them on their newly elected posts and also gave thanks to national president JP Nadda for giving Bengal more priority in the national party.

BJP's MP and Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) president Soumitra Khan said that central leadership always prefer Bengal's growth and development. This is the reason Bengal BJP leaders were elevated to higher posts in the national party, so that the party gains more strength ahead of the Assembly poll to defeat the Trinamool Congress and abolish its misrule.



Those opposing the Centre's agriculture-related Bills are anti-farmer

UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER YOGI ADITYANATH

ADDRESSING BJP WORKERS AT A SCHOOL AUDITORIUM IN JAUNPUR

India

Gujarat HC accepts stripping of 68 girls was 'media hype'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, 26 SEPTEMBER

Principal, hostel warden and two other staff members were arrested and National Women's Commission (NCW) team visited the college in Bhuj.

The Gujarat High Court has now quashed the FIR against the principal and others on the strength of an affidavit filed by one of the complainants who claimed that the 'dispute' was blown up due to 'heated media intervention' in the matter.

It may be appropriately mentioned here that the followers of failed rapist Asharam Bapu too believe that he is innocent and has been convicted merely due to "media hype" created by secularist liberals.

The High Court bench of Justice A C Joshi agreed with the complainant's assertion that she and other girls "understood the entire incident in the proper sense" and the matter has been amicably settled.

Justice Joshi remarked that the alleged offences were "not so grave" like rape and quashed the FIR against the principal, hostel warden and others.



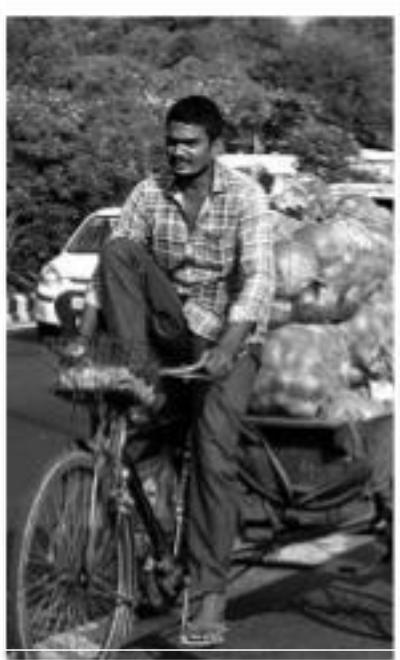
India feels the absence of a PM with the depth of Manmohan Singh

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI
ON MANMOHAN SINGH'S BIRTHDAY

The Sunday Statesman
NEW DELHI, 27 SEPTEMBER 2020

05

THUMBNAILS



A labourer as he rides his cycle-rickshaw loaded with vegetables, along a road in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ AFP

JK officials suspended in Rs 250-cr bank fraud: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Saturday suspended two senior officials pending an inquiry into their conduct in a case pertaining to Rs 250-crore bank fraud, officials said.

PTI

PM announces \$15 million assistance to Sri Lanka

In virtual summit with Sri Lankan PM, Modi pitches for devolution of powers to Sri Lankan Tamils

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today announced a grant assistance of \$15 million to Sri Lanka for promotion of Buddhist ties between the two nations while asking the new government in Colombo to work towards realising the expectations of its Tamil population for equality, justice, peace and dignity.

During a virtual bilateral summit with his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa, he emphasised that the implementation of the 13th amendment to the Constitution of the island nation was essential for carrying forward the process of peace and reconciliation.

Modi said the current sit-

uation provided a unique opportunity for both countries to work more closely with each other in dealing with the economic impact of Covid-19 and deepening engagement on regional and international issues.

This was India's first such summit with a neighbouring country at which the Prime Minister was assisted by External Affairs minister S Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and other senior officials.

Briefing reporters, Amit Narang, Joint Secretary in the external affairs Ministry, said the two leaders reviewed the entire range of bilateral matters and exchanged views on regional and international issues of common concern during the hour-long summit.



The Lankan leader recalled that this was his first bilateral engagement with a foreign leader after being re-elected. The \$15 million grant announced by Modi will assist in deepening people-to-people linkages between the two countries in the sphere of Buddhism through construction/renovation of Bud-

dhist monasteries, capacity development, cultural exchanges, archeological cooperation, reciprocal exposition of Lord Buddha's relics, strengthening of Buddhist scholarship, and supporting the clergy. It was agreed that the Indian side would facilitate the visit of a delegation of Buddhist pilgrims from Sri Lanka in the first inaugural flight to the sacred city of Kushinagar.

The two leaders shared a positive assessment of the ongoing development cooperation partnership. Towards this end, both sides have reached an understanding to extend the MoU on High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) for a 5-year period beginning 2020.

Both leaders agreed to

continue the successful Indian housing project and gave instructions to their officials to fast-track the construction of 10,000 houses in the plantation sector.

The ongoing infrastructure and connectivity projects were also discussed and Prime Minister Modi expressed his confidence that Sri Lanka would take early and decisive steps for their early implementation.

The two leaders expressed satisfaction with the robustness of the security and defence cooperation between the two sides. They agreed to continue and further strengthen the mutual cooperation on personnel exchange and training, maritime security cooperation and India's support to Sri Lanka in the spheres of defence and security.

Cong fumes as MP CM calls for party's 'sanitisation'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHOPAL, 26 SEPTEMBER

A day after the Election Commission of India (EC) announced dates of assembly polls for Bihar, the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shivraj Singh Chouhan tweeted a message today suggesting to 'sanitise' the Congress in the polls of Bihar, MP and other states.

The Opposition Congress in MP reacted to the CM's tweet and lodged an official complaint with the Election Commission.

Chouhan's tweet in Hindi today morning read, 'Mere pyare doston, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka sahit desh bhar me kai jagah chunav hone wale hain. Hamen corona kaal ko dekhte huey chunav aayog ke disha nirdeshon ka poora dhyani rakhna hai. 'Haath' poori

tarah 'sanitise' kar 'saaf' kar dena hai'. Congress lodged its complaint based on the tweet, in which the words 'haath', 'sanitise', and 'saaf' have been put in single apostrophes.

MP Congress spokesperson J P Dhanopia, who has lodged the complaint, alleged that Chouhan has used the three words in violation of the EC's statute. Dhanopia also complained that the MP CM has used EC's name in a misleading manner in his tweet.

Dhanopia said the 'haath' is the symbol of the Congress party. He also said the EC has not said anywhere what Chouhan has tried to convey through his tweet falsely in the name of the EC. In its complaint, addressed to the Chief Election Commissioner, the Congress has urged the EC to register a criminal case against MP CM Chouhan for defaming the EC's name.

New labour codes have 'weakened' trade unions, removed 'security net': Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Describing the three labour codes passed by Parliament as "anti-labour", the Congress on Saturday attacked the government, alleging the legislations have "weakened" trade unions and removed the "security net" for workers.

Parliament on Wednesday approved the three labour codes that will remove impediments to winding up of companies and allow firing of staff without government permission in firms with up to 300 workers from the existing 100.

Attacking the government over the Bills, senior Congress leader and former minister of labour and employment Mallikarjun Kharge said the government's claim that the laws will increase ease of doing busi-

ness is false.

"They have weakened trade unions and finished the security and safety for the workers," he told an online media briefing.

"States' powers have been usurped by the central government with these laws. These codes are anti-worker, anti-labour and it is important to agitate against them," the Rajya Sabha MP said.

"All parties must oppose these laws. The Modi government only listens to corporates and after these laws it will not listen to trade unions," he said.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera alleged this government is "betraying the interests" of different sections one after another.

As the issue of injustice to farmers was ongoing, this government betrayed workers, just like farmers," he

said.

"The government made the excuse while bringing in the new labour laws there will be ease of doing business and it will be beneficial for all. But if you look at the laws it is clear that there is no protection and relief for workers in these laws," Khera said.

Despite the country witnessing the hardships of migrant labourers during the lockdown, there is no provision for them in these laws, he claimed.

"It is in the DNA of the government to set aside democratic principles and force its decisions on the people," Khera alleged and claimed the laws were passed by Parliament in a rush.

Indian National Trade Union Congress president G Sanjeeva Reddy alleged that there is no provision for safety and security of workers in these Bills.

"We will protest and struggle against these unjust, anti-labour and anti-trade union laws," he said.

These laws have been brought for strengthening and helping the capitalists and corporates not the workers, he alleged, claiming that under the new provisions, the workers will not be able to go on strike or raise their voice against unjust practices.

There was protection for workers earlier as permission was needed to lay off more than 100 workers, but now that "security net" is gone with the increase in thresh-

old to 300, he said. "About 2-3 crore small scale industries have been excluded from this protection," he claimed.

On Wednesday, Rajya Sabha had passed by voice vote, the three labour codes on industrial relations, social security and occupational safety amid a boycott by opposition parties, including the Congress and the Left, over the suspension of eight MPs. The first code on wages was approved by Parliament last year.

With passage of these three codes, 29 central labour laws have been codified into four broad codes as contemplated by the government under labour reforms to improve ease of doing business and providing universal social security to workers as well. The three codes were passed by Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

"The purpose of labour reforms is to provide a transparent system to suit the changed business environment," Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar had said in the Rajya Sabha while replying to the debate on the three labour reforms Bills.

The minister had also told the House that as many as 16 states have already increased the threshold for closure, layoff and retrenchment in firms with up to 300 workers without government permission.

The Opposition has also been protesting the passage of three agriculture-related Bills.

Siddaramaiah initiates debate on no-confidence motion against govt

BENGALURU, 26 SEPTEMBER

Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah on Saturday alleged that the BJP government-led by chief minister BS Yediyurappa has lost the people's trust to continue as he initiated the debate on the no-confidence motion introduced by him.

"You never had the mandate to rule the state. You were short of enough votes but you came up with Operation Lotus."

Yediyurappa is the father of Operation Lotus (a term used by the opposition to describe moves to lure legislators to BJP) in the country," Siddaramaiah charged as he began the debate on the no-confidence motion.

Alleging that the government failed to provide relief to the flood affected people in 2019, Siddaramaiah said the government had sought about Rs 35,000 crore relief from the Centre whereas it got only Rs 1,662 crore.

According to him, relief and rehabilitation works have not been completed.

Siddaramaiah claimed the government failed as two people were shot dead in Mangalore during the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act/National Register of Citizens protests.

He alleged that government failed to timely during the recent violence in Bengaluru during which a Congress MLA RAKHANA Srinivasa Murthy's house, and two police stations were torched.

GIVE A TOSS



A man cleans dry garlic at a wholesale market in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ AFP

Amit Shah holds discussion with Ladakhi leaders on LAHDC elections

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, 26 SEPTEMBER

the proceedings with the media and said that the Home Ministry will issue a statement on Sunday. However, they appeared optimistic after the meeting.

Besides Shah, minister of state for home affairs Kishan Reddy and minister Kiren Rijiju were present in the meeting.

Several people joined the protest when Madhav and Kaul reached Leh earlier this week when some senior BJP leaders had also extended support to the boycott call.

All parties of Ladakh were demanding application of the 6th Schedule for Ladakh, which they claimed was a tribal area.

They rejected the offer to apply the Article 371 or the domicile Act in the newly formed UT of Ladakh.

Junaid Mattu expelled from J&K People's Conference

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chief Farooq Abdullah by the opposition parties pledging to strive for protecting the identity of Jammu and Kashmir and struggle for restoration of the Article 370 that was scrapped by the Modi government on 5 August last year.

The flashpoint came this afternoon when Mattu attacked the NC by tweeting: "NC's investment in the 'Gupkar Declaration' is and will always be COSMETIC... It will also WRIGGLE out of the declaration at a higher level. Just a matter of time. Mark my

words!"

Thereafter, the JKPC announced disassociation with Mattu by tweeting: "The J&K Peoples Conference would like to confirm that Junaid Mattu is no longer associated with the party. The party's association with Mr. Mattu has ended weeks back".

Reacting to the decision of the party, Mattu tweeted: "I'm glad the speculations have ended and there is a confirmation from both sides today that my association with @JKPC has come to an end. This is something that

has evolved over the last couple of months due to my differences on certain stands and issues".

Attacking the NC, Mattu tweeted: "However strong I believe that the party's investment in the Gupkar Declaration is and will be reciprocated only by insincerity and disingenuity by the JKNC - and this time will prove NC's blatant insincerity started with SMC but won't end there. Mark my words".

Referring to the Gupkar Declaration, Mattu tweeted: "I am of the firm opinion that we can't allow August 5th to whitewash history and assume our history starts here. The complicity of today's vanguards and yesteryear's facilitators of erosion and disempowerment that can't be erased or wished away. That's the limited point".

"Absolutely. I don't agree with the party's carte blanche to allow the National Conference to absolve itself of its insincerity and insincerity through history and today in the context of the post August 5th scenario. This is not a personal but a consid-

ered, principled decision".

Thereafter, Mattu in a series of tweets accused the Abdullah dynasty for abrogation of the special status of J&K and also said that Article 370 was "murdered" in cold blood in 1975 when Sheikh Abdullah became chief minister post the "Kashmir Accord".

Mattu, who was a trusted man of Abdullah's deserted the National Conference (NC) and joined the JKPC to become Mayor with the support of BJP. However, he was pulled down from the post in June.

BJP announces new team of national office-bearers

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NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER



Swadeshi Jagran Manch leaders in the party Murlidhar Rao (in-charge of party units in the South) have been removed. In another significant move, Nadda made former RSS leaders in BJP Ram Madhav and former

BJP Mukul Roy national Vice President of the party.

He dropped important leaders like Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, Prabhat Jha and Om Mathur and brought in three former chief ministers Vasund-

hara Raje Scindia, Raman Singh and Raghubar Das into the party central set up.

Former Andhra Pradesh chief minister NT Rama Rao's daughter D Purandeshwari who has served as a minister

along with his legacy is expected to give the BJP a chance to consolidate its position in Andhra politics.

In an indication of the party's readiness to give new faces a chance, Nadda has brought in Tarun Chug, CT Ravi and Dilip Saikia. Chug from Punjab has been brought in as party general secretary.

Ravi belonging to dominant Vokkaliga caste is a MP from Karnataka. Saikia is a MP from Assam. Among the new entrants in the group of seven general secretaries is Dushyant Gautam, a Dalit leader. Bhupendra Yadav, Arun Singh and Kailash Vijayvargiya will retain their positions as the party general secretary.

Grim milestone

By the time you read this, the world will have crossed a grim milestone in its battle with the novel coronavirus. More than one million would have died from the virus, a number thought by many to be on the lower side because of under-reporting from many parts of the world. With the number of infected people at nearly 33 million, this means one in 33 people afflicted by the virus succumbs to it. Research over the past nine months has identified some markers – that mortality is high among those above a certain age, and especially among those who have other health conditions. The numbers also tell us that more than half the deaths have occurred in just four countries – the United States, Brazil, India and Mexico – and the remaining 480,000 or so spread are over 190 countries. Three countries – the United States, India and Brazil – account for more than half the afflictions. While the presence of India, Brazil and Mexico in these lists may be explained by their relative poverty and shortcomings in primary health facilities, that of the United States – a first world nation known as a medical pioneer and the healer of the last resort for patients elsewhere – can be explained only by the muddleheaded responses of those who govern the country. But in the absence of a viable vaccine, it is not to these countries that the world must turn to find out what not to do, but to the few others who have done a commendable job in keeping the virus in check.

New Zealand's success in recording just 25 deaths and a little over 1800 afflictions in a population of five million might be explained by its relative remoteness. But Vietnam, with just 35 deaths and 1,000-plus infections in a population of 95 million; Thailand, with 59 deaths and 3,500 infections in a population of 70 million and Sri Lanka, with 13 deaths and under 3,500 infections in a population of 21 million, offer lessons to the rest of the world on how to battle the virus while keeping people safe. Even Pakistan and Bangladesh, ranked lower on poverty indices than India, appear to have done a fair job, having recorded less than 6,500 deaths each in populations of 220 and 165 million, respectively.

Dr Michael Ryan, Executive Director of the World Health Organisation, believes these numbers can be explained by how well countries had prepared, rather than how well they performed in dealing with the virus. Southeast Asian nations that had faced the scourge of SARS in recent times were better prepared with protocols needed to deal with the crisis than many Western countries that initially responded complacently. The other factor that may have determined outcomes is politics, which when guided by agendas rather than science proved devastating in managing the epidemic. A final factor cited by him – the extent of the community's involvement and willingness to accept medical intervention as a necessity and not an imposition – is just as important.

Change of heart

From calling Jews "swine" and "apes" in school textbooks and spewing anti-Jewish rhetoric from the pulpit at Friday prayers in its mosques, Saudi Arabia appears to have begun a process of peaceful co-existence with the state of Israel and Jews. While Riyadh is unlikely to take a cue just yet from Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates and normalise ties with Israel, it has launched a process of detoxification that augurs well for peace in the Middle East. Observers say while a deal with Saudi Arabia, a fount of Islam and the leading power in the region, will be the consummation Jerusalem would most wish for, this may be difficult at least immediately because the kingdom will be wary of the reactions of its citizens, indoctrinated over generations to vilify Jews because of the unresolved Palestinian problem.

But short of normality, the Saudis seem to be doing all that they can to improve ties. School textbooks are being revised on instructions from the Crown Prince, to edit out uncharitable references to Israel and Jews.

The Saudi state has decided to prohibit disparagement of Jews and Christians. The clergy has been told to tone down rhetoric, and just this month, a sermon by the imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, hitherto known for rabid anti-Semitism, spoke of Prophet Mohammad's friendly ties with Jews in a bid to promote religious tolerance. The kingdom's most prominent English language newspaper caused something of a storm by greeting Jews in Hebrew on their New Year this month.

These are not isolated events but appear part of a design to build better relations between Muslims and Jews before bringing the more contentious issue of diplomatic ties on the table. This has led some analysts to say that normalisation of ties is not so much a question of 'if' but 'when', and of preparing the ground for such a momentous decision by taking baby steps towards normality. But if reports are to be believed, this may not happen easily, and certainly not without opposition from Saudi citizens.

Data from a public opinion poll conducted in the kingdom by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy shows that many Saudis are opposed to a deal, with only nine per cent in support of even business and sports contacts with Israelis. This may not be a surprising response given that Saudis have historically been conditioned to perceive Israel as a murderous, war-mongering state that has trampled on the rights of fellow Muslims. It is those fellow Muslims, the Palestinians, who will feel most chagrined at the course of events – deprived of their rights in their homeland and now slowly being abandoned by the co-religionists they had banked on for so long.

Frontiers of Knowledge ~ I

We know that our chase after material and non-material possessions like property and fame in this temporal world is nothing but meaningless. It is we who create the value and it is we who keep running after them. The concept of money, assets, possessions and valuables is spatio-temporal

Many of us, while going through the grind of humdrum human life, often pause to think of the endless races we find ourselves sucked into. Much as we may try, we remain mired in this often needless and senseless chase after the goodies of life. While the hoipolloi has neither time, aptitude or faculty to even go beyond their daily routine to ponder over the existential philosophies of human life, those who have the time, interest or capability to brood over these existential questions remain disillusioned and disoriented.

Many religious philosophies including Hinduism have attempted to explain the logic behind the fathomless architecture of cosmic creations. But the common man remains oblivious and unconcerned, preferring his/her preoccupations with the daily chase after mindless stuff of material life. Mindless because this chase never ends. The satisfaction of one desire often leads to another, thereby giving rise to a spiral of endless desires, thus keeping us all trapped in the here and now.

This incapacitates and keeps us from getting into the deeper recesses of Divine Creation. Most of us find no time to delve into the various mysteries and secrets of the cosmos even as questions like 'why are we born?', 'what are we doing here?', 'what's the purpose of entire creation' and 'where do we go after death?' keep nagging us. Such questions and the pursuits to unearth their answers find more patronage and benefaction from those who have gone beyond the worries and struggles of quotidian survival.

With hindsight and with the benefit of the knowledge enshrined in the classical and modern philosophies, we can somehow grope about for answers to some of these questions. For example, as believers and students of some of these philosophies, schools of thought and scientific discoveries, we now know the humongous size of the Divine Creation and our relative insignificance. Many believe that we are all born and reborn on physical, spiritual or other planes and dimensions to learn our lessons through time and space.

We do so to gain varied experiences for the gradual evolution of our eternal consciousness to finally merge with the Supreme Consciousness. These experiences and learnings are required for us to get rid of our various imperfections gradually to become equipped for better and bigger challenges and responsibilities as we may face through our myriad avatars and incarnations on our way up the evolutionary ladder. This also means acting as the extension of the



Supreme Soul to guide and enlighten the unenlightened souls to further beautify and extend the glory of the Almighty. We now know, thanks to the widely accepted spiritual and scientific expositions, including the First Law of Thermodynamics and Quantum Physics, that all manifestations of the Cosmos are nothing but different combinations and permutations of energy.

There is a constant exchange and assimilation of different forms of energy, with energy never being created or destroyed but only changing forms.

We all not only come from and return to the same source, but all organisms and matter as combinations of energy are only changing their forms. They keep reverting to their basic elemental forms from which newer forms and objects of creation take shape. Be it humans, animals, plants, trees or other matter, they are all constantly being created and destroyed, thereby acting as the raw material for each other's constitution.

While we may detest each other, it is a truism that our basic constituents may have come from those organisms, groups of humans or non-sentient matters we call unchaste and unholy. Similarly, our mortal remains may become the life supporting building blocks for our antagonist human groups or other expressions of Creation.

We now know that there is an imminent unity in Creation at a basic level and no aspect of the Creation is permanent except our 'soul' or 'consciousness' (whatever we may call it). We know that our chase after material and non-material possessions like property and fame in this temporal world is nothing but meaningless. It is we who create the value and it is we

who keep running after them. The concept of money, assets, possessions and valuables is spatio-temporal. The same is also different for different individuals. No form of these material and non-material possessions that we hoard through our life goes with us to the other world.



SAUMITRA MOHAN
The writer, an IAS officer, is Mission Director, National Health Mission & Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal. The views expressed are personal

But we keep chasing them.

We seldom realise that it is our experiences and interfaces with the material and non-material manifestations of Creation that are more important than the possessions themselves. It is the learnings derived through these experiences and interactions that are more vital than the possessions as they help our 'eternal consciousness' or 'soul' to move up the evolutionary ladder by getting implanted into our consciousness as permanent impressions.

So, it is more than advisable for us to remain engaged in the real, loftier and uplifting pursuits of knowledge to keep enriching and elevating human wisdom so that we may help humanity in comprehending the higher truths and intricacies behind the infinite expressions of Divine Creation. Doing so, we can better understand the yet unexplored facets of Creation to further stretch and enrich our knowledge that may still be available in the still unfamiliar multiverses.

Through our persistent and positive pursuits, we must attempt to stretch human wisdom, knowledge and intelligence beyond what we have known so far. Proponents of science and spiritualism have both been engaged in this pursuit since time immemorial. However, this pursuit can become more productive and useful if we can get away from the needless contredépôts, conflicts and frictions that humans always find themselves embroiled in, thereby frittering away their precious time and energy in mindless chase and rage.

However, there is a flip side to this basic understanding. Often, some humans after they become capable of hazardizing answers to these eternal questions, slowly become alienated and estranged from the material life, losing their interest in continued engagement with the humdrum mundane. At this stage, some either end their life or lose interest in myriad role-plays of human existence, finding them inane and meaningless. They often find themselves withdrawn or disengaged from life's sundry races or pursuits.

Lord Krishna in 'The Bhagavad Gita' does talk extensively about 'Nishkama Karma' i.e. selfless engagements in worldly pursuits without an eye to the outcomes. But that does not mean that one should become completely disinterested in life or its varying pursuits. Otherwise we shall cease to explore and unfold the multi-splendoured genius of God's incredibly beautiful creation. So, even while we remain preoccupied in various pursuits, the outcomes should not move us or impact us negatively.

(To Be Concluded)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Strange logic

SIR, At first we were told that the war against Covid would be won in 21 days. Thereafter we were told India is a 'role model' in the 'unique' fight against Covid. Now with India boasting the second highest number of Covid cases in the world and emerging third in the death toll, we are told by the Union Health minister that 'irresponsible societal behaviour' of common people is responsible for the spurt in Covid cases. In the same breath, he asks citizens of that very 'irresponsible society' to hail the Prime Minister's leadership in tackling the pandemic.

Does the Minister mean to say that the "irresponsible society" needs to be blamed

for the blatantly visible failure in preventing infection and deaths but the government must be hailed for the invisible 'success' in 'tackling the pandemic'? Will the likes of Harsh Vardhan and the Who's Who of BJP enlighten us by which magic formula can Mamata Banerjee's leadership be criticised for West Bengal seeing 2 lakh infections and 4,000 plus deaths, but Narendra Modi's leadership be hailed for India seeing over 54 lakh infections and 90000 deaths?

Yours, etc., Kajal Chatterjee, Sodepur, 24 September.

RETICENCE EXPLAINED

SIR, Apropos the editorial,

'Disturbing ignorance' (24 September), the opening day of Parliament's monsoon session made it evident why the Narendra Modi-led government was keen to avoid answering questions raised by members on the floor of the House.

Despite not keeping any data relating to coronavirus cases during lockdown and displaying such an unfeeling attitude towards its own people, the Centre could get away with it because the response was laid on the table of the House and the minister did not have to face follow-up questions.

Is it because the government does not want to be held accountable for the sufferings of people caused by its own criminal negligence? For how long can an illusion affecting the lives of millions be kept up

before it collapses?

The IMA seems to have found an answer to the question when it called out the Centre's 'hypocrisy' for extolling Covid-19 frontline healthcare workers as 'warriors' while, at the same time not bothering to keep track of those among them who have lost their lives to the virus.

That it fell to the IMA to point out that 382 doctors had died from Covid-19 is telling, as is the fact that the Union health ministry insisted, at the time of a national-level health crisis, that health is a state subject.

Mr Modi goaded the nation to honour Covid warriors but several other crippling dimensions of the crisis remain unaddressed. Doctors in Bihar – the BJP is eyeing the state in the forthcoming polls – are on record saying that one of the chief reasons for deaths in the fraternity is the supply of substandard protective equipment.

There have been other irregularities as well. Theatrics can do little to mask the stench of death in the trenches. Your concluding para to commission a White Paper on all aspects of its response to the epidemic and share with the citizens by the government is highly justified.

Yours, etc., SS Paul, Nadia, 24 September.

PUT OUT FIRES

SIR, Early signs of stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana demands the immediate attention of the Union and state governments in north India. In a few weeks, after the kharif harvest is over, tradition will dictate that paddy stubble be burnt to prepare the ground for rabi sowing. As the smoke fans out, North Indian states bear the brunt of air quality decline from mid-October onwards. A spurt in respiratory ailments associated with dipping air quality during winter will double this year with the Covid pandemic that causes respiratory distress in serious cases.

Researchers have found that air pollution worsens the impact of Covid-19 and increases death counts. This forecasts a nightmare scenario, with ICU bed availability already being low in most cities. Incentives like 80 per cent subsidies to custom hiring centres (CHCs) and cooperatives purchasing happy seeder and other stubble management machines must be encouraged. Farmers' plea that stubble burning saves them labour and equipment hire costs is illogical in view of their families being at greater risk of respiratory/ cardiac ailments. Covid has introduced more complications. Labour is in short supply. Governments are cutting costs due to the economic crisis but this is one area to loosen purse strings. More CHCs must open so that every village gets these machines. Claims of small farmers that machine rentals costs are too high merit consideration of a 100 per cent subsidy. A huge cost is incurred in treating respiratory illnesses and on deploying officials to monitor fires and impose fines. With health systems at a tipping point, the fires should be put out before they are lit.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra, Mohali, 25 September.



paper.thestatesman.com

Farm legislation will ensure inclusive development

RAMESH POKHRIYAL 'NISHANT'

The other day, I was reading the book, *Bringing it to the Table: On Farming and Food* by Wendell Berry. The author profoundly opens a question. "Why do farmers farm, given their economic adversities on top of the many frustrations and difficulties normal to farming? And always the answer is: Love. They must do it for love." The sheer love for farming has made agriculture the largest source of livelihoods in India.

The Economic Survey Report of 2019-20 estimates that around 70 per cent of rural households depend principally on agriculture for their livelihood, with 82 per cent of farmers being small and marginal. Agriculture sector plays a vital role in not only in national food security but also for employment, income generation and rural livelihood. But still, unfortunately, the country has witnessed the lack of suitable marketing facilities in the agricultural sector.

I can elucidate it very well from my experience as the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, looking after the development of the whole state while focussing mainly on the agriculture economy of the state. Inadequate marketing facilities became one of the major bottlenecks for the well-being and security of the agriculture-dependent population of Uttarakhand. Thereby, to assure and streamline the marketing possibilities for farmers such that the farmers of the land can make fanfare with new investments, I had approved the APMC Act and Contract Farming act.

A four-member expert team of agriculturists was set up, which toured states such as Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka to study their system of APMC. The Act enabled provisions for establishing private mandis, enablement of contract farming and constitution of a regulatory authority to avoid exploitation of farmers. Setting up of private mandis made it possible to cut out extra cess such as mandi cess, which finally, helped in reduc-



ing the final costs at both consumer and buyer end. This process initialized better gains for farmers.

I did the whole exercise as agriculture marketing was starting to behold a significant transformation in India and across the world; mainly because of the phenomena of liberalization of the trade, including agricultural commodities. This movement impinged the restructuring of the agriculture market with a more integrated and strengthened approach.

While the farming community must be empowered for global market access opportunities, while ensuring fair trade between buyers

and sellers for effective prices of farmer's produce, the farmer should also not be stifled between the forces of traders, commission agents and other associations and unions.

Realising the challenges, the central government in 2017-18 had released the model APMC and contract Farming Acts. After that, several steps were adopted to develop strategies for economically liberalizing farmers. The measures included the formation of the Standing Committee (2018-19) and High-Powered Committee of seven Chief Ministers in July 2019. Rigorous and comprehensive discussions were undertaken

for the implementation of model Acts by states and needed changes for attracting private investment in agricultural marketing and infrastructure.

I am embarking upon the strenuous steps under by my colleague Mr Narendra Singh Tomar, who under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has bought a set of milestone reforms to ensure that farmers get remunerative prices for their produce. It is the moment that I must congratulate him for being adamant on raising the farmer's status.

The passing of two bills namely, The Farmers' Produce Trade and

Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 and The Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 is truly a "watershed moment in the history of Indian agriculture." The bills will bring economic liberation for farmers from the tight constraints they had faced through the years. It is the time that their incomes would be doubled. The prosperity and well-being of farmers will bring economic transformation of the country. While saying so, I condemn the ill narrative that is being built to misguide the farmers.

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020 will facilitate both intra and inter-state trade of farmers' produce. The bill will also condemn the market fee, cess or levy by the state governments outside APMC areas. Though on the one end, it enables contract farming, on the other hand, it will also allow a three-tier dispute settlement mechanism. The Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 will help farmers in engaging with multiple stakeholders such as the processors, wholesalers, large retailers, exporters etc. A shield will be enabled for farmers from market unpredictability. A marketing platform with key features of transparency, accessibility and efficiency will be developed. Research and new technology will be embedded in the agriculture sector like never before, adhering to the needs of the 21st century.

I am sure that these reforms brought in by the government will lead to real inclusiveness in development, promoting the economic liberalization of farmers. The Bills will indeed hold to the quotation that "If the farmer is rich, then so is the nation." Revamped agriculture marketing will bring in the required economic transformation in the country.

The writer is Minister for Education, Government of India.

NOW AND AGAIN

Many roles of the doctor

DEVENDRA SAKSENA

Half a century ago, modern medicine was still in its infancy; doctors had to make diagnoses by sheer experience, without the aid of advanced diagnostic tools that are available now. Expensive patented medicines were not yet common; custom-made mixtures were prepared for every patient by 'compounders.' You returned from the doctor's clinic with a bottle of red, green or yellow medicine with the doses marked out by a zig-zag paper strip stuck on the bottle. No wonder, medical treatment did not cost a bomb, as it does today. Most doctors earned their livelihood by the large number of patients they cured and not by charging fancy fees from a few.

In those challenging times, my brother-in-law, Avinash, used to practise medicine in a crowded locality of Kanpur. Once, as a young boy, I accompanied Avinash to his crowded clinic. I was wondering how he could attend to so many patients at once; he would be talking to one patient, holding the wrist of another while palpitating the abdomen of a third.

On our way back, Avinash explained: "Most people suffer from common ailments. When the summer starts and uncovered watermelon slices are sold on the streets, I know that people with upset stomachs would have a particular infection. Similarly, at the advent of winter most people get a particular type of flu. I examine only those patients seriously, who show alarming symptoms or those who come back to me without any improvement."

Doctors in those days were treated as respected family members. On rakshabandhan day, Avinash would return home with his wrist full of rakhis, tied by grateful patients, most of them Muslim. One evening, when Avinash was about to call it a day, a very agitated young gentleman came to his clinic, imploring the good doctor to accompany him, as his wife was dying. On the way, the gentleman told Avinash that his wife had swallowed a fistful of sleeping pills.

Attending to the patient was not easy, she would not allow any one near her. She was in a terrible mood; her rosy complexion was now pale and her beautiful face had turned ashen. Seeing her husband entering her room, she sternly told him to get out. She was not so rough with Avinash, to whom she had tied a rakh, and soon he could get her to talk.

It emerged that the lady came from a very rich and noble family. Her father had paid a huge dowry that had helped her husband set up his business. But after getting rich, her husband was constantly making fun of her and for good measure, called her moti. After some reassurance from Avinash, she confided that she had eaten only a few tablets, the rest were under her tongue which she would swallow when her brother reached. That way, she would witness her husband getting his much-deserved comeuppance.

It was decidedly a difficult task and time was slipping away but somehow after making the lady sentimental with the mention of her rakh, Avinash persuaded her to spit out the tablets in her mouth. Avinash also made her husband see the error of his ways and say a heartfelt sorry to her. As in fairy tales, the couple had a long and happy life together.

Whenever I remember the incident, I marvel at the exemplary skill of Avinash, a true doctor, who would cure the hearts and minds of his patients along with their illnesses.

100 YEARS AGO

THE POST OFFICE

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - I have from time to time been reading complaints against post offices in The Statesman. People speak of parcels and letters, but I shall speak of packets. In the months of December and January, there are many losses of such packets, which contain calendars for the New Year. Out of many experiences I shall record one. On the 1st of July, I sent a packet containing some printed matter to a friend of mine at Agra. A week or so afterwards, I received a letter from him to the effect that the packet had not reached him.

My friend advises me to refer the matter to the higher authorities, but they will bombard me with "Was the packet sent per registered post?" Surely it was not, because it did not contain any jewellery or currency notes or chocolates. In the coming reformed regime I hope the reformers will pay special attention to the Post Office.

D.N.T.
Nainital, U.P.

RACE PROGRAMMES

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - The change in the typography of the official R.C.T.C., programme can hardly be commended and I would strongly urge the resumption of the old style unless there are reasons to the contrary. In the first place the eyes of all regular race-goers have become used to the time-honoured types, and secondly the changes now made have serious drawbacks. I would enumerate them: (1) The owner's name, which previously appeared below that of the horse, now appears against it, with the result that little or no space is left for writing the jockey's name. (2) Indication of the owner's colours, which formerly appeared in italic type now appears in bold Roman which, falling just below the heavy type in which the name of the horse is recorded. (3) Very little space is left between the names of the horses, and the result is very tiring to the eyes. It is earnestly hoped that the next programme will be printed like the old ones.

CONSERVATIVE.
Calcutta.

POLITICAL DIARY | KALYANI SHANKAR

A session marked by acrimony



cott the house. A no-confidence motion against Deputy Chairman Harivansh, who had been re-elected on 14 September, followed.

Expressing anguish, Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said in his valedictory speech: "For the first time in the history of this august House, a notice of motion for removal of the Deputy Chairman has been given. It had to be rejected for the reasons I have elaborated while doing so. The developments in the House surrounding this unprecedented move have been deeply painful for all those who hold the stature and the dignity of this august House dear to their

hearts."

Some feel that had the government taken the opposition into confidence citing the pandemic to ensure smooth functioning of the brief session, the bitterness would not have been so visible. But there was no meeting point between the two.

Meanwhile, the bills including the controversial farm bills and crucial labour bills were pushed through in the absence of the opposition. Ghulam Nabi Azad, leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, said: "We are shocked to see how bills are passed since this government came to power in 2014. No bill

is sent either to a standing committee or a select committee for further scrutiny. This is not good for democracy."

On the final day of the session, the opposition resorted to various forms of protests including submitting a memorandum to the President requesting him not to give assent to the controversial Bills.

Despite all this, the Lok Sabha registered 167 per cent productivity in the session — the highest in the history of Parliament, Speaker Om Birla announced in the house.

The Upper House utilized 100.5 per cent of its allotted time in what was its second-shortest monsoon

session since 1952. The Rajya Sabha has consistently recorded its highest productivity in the last four sessions.

The second fallout was that the controversial farm laws opened up a new political front in the form of farmers' protests, which are spreading fast all over the country. It is a sensitive issue.

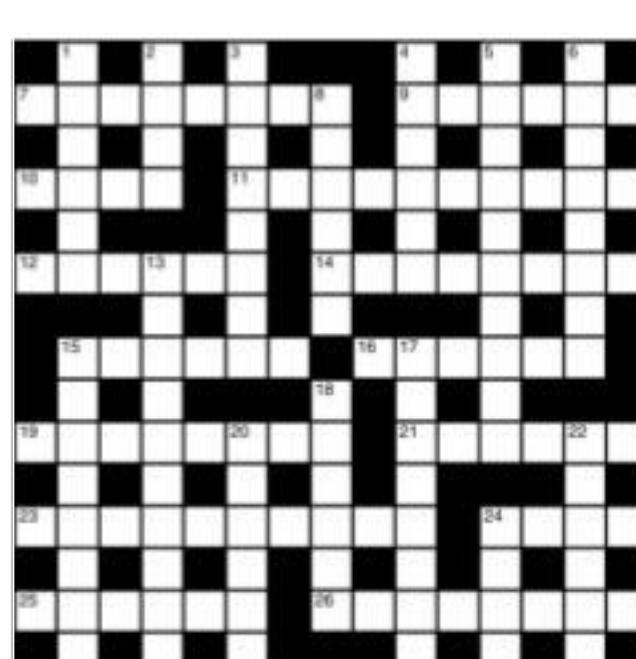
The third was the exit of the lone Akali Dal minister Harsimrat Badal from the Modi cabinet. The SAD had to take this decision in view of the pressures of farmers on the ground and the taunting of Punjab chief minister Captain Amerinder Singh. However, SAD has said that a decision on quitting the NDA altogether will be taken later. If it decides to quit, then the BJP will lose its second-longest ally after the Shiv Sena parted company last year.

Parliament members have four basic duties - law making, scrutiny of the budget, holding the government accountable, and raising the problems of people in Parliament. In a democracy, the opposition is important even if its members do not agree with the treasury benches. The question is whether they are playing their role as people's representatives. Will the Opposition play a constructive role, or will it continue to be confrontational? Will the government walk that extra mile to reach out to the opposition?

One would have expected Parliament to spend time in discussing vital issues but the members in their wisdom did not think so with the result it was a disappointing session. The government too did not want to walk the extra mile.

NO 28086

CROSSWORD



SOLUTION FOR 20 SEPTEMBER

ACROSS

- 7 SWAN PLECTRUM
- 9 DDT TALLEE
- 10 UNDER THE WEATHER
- 11 DRESS CODE SODA
- 12 ORDERLY SLOGAN
- 13 ANYHOW AUSTERE
- 14 FETA REMAINDER
- 15 ARK OAIC
- 16 CROSSWORD PUZZLE
- 17 IUUAUASEV
- 18 DESOLATE IDLE
- 19 Spooner says Le Pétomane's an object of historic interest (8)

- 21 Rubbish people working away at Oxford? (8)
- 23 Having sex without affection ultimately is sickening (6)
- 24 Conservative leader breaks soft strike deal (4)
- 25 To mate with pint, getting drunk could be one (10)
- 26 A kid with a chilled-out demeanour (2,4)
- 27 Succeed in marrying aristocrat, a man of property (8)
- 28 Grab a nap, having necked last of beer (6)
- 29 Big old gun member of the clergy picked up (6)
- 30 Spooner says Le Pétomane's an object of historic interest (8)
- 31 Johnny Morris finally to meet PM in 1971 (6)
- 32 When people must take on board one or some disparaging remarks (10)
- 33 Prison in Texas first to execute crook? (4)
- 34 Particle split by head of thermodynamics in city abroad (6)
- 35 Chattering pirate's first to be saved by navy chopper (8)
- 36 Partite split by head of thermodynamics in city abroad (6)
- 37 Continue to desire a licentious woman? (6)
- 38 Flute Lance played could create noisy blasts? (10)
- 39 European article published about revolutionary Pole (8)
- 40 Drop of sherry's more than enough for a little taste (6)
- 41 Teenagers vandalised houses close to Muslim settlements (10)
- 42 Supporters one charged after a scrap! (8)
- 43 One helping a relative to cross last section of bypass (8)
- 44 Competitive games on the rise, leading to fits of bad temper (6)
- 45 Toxic gas from behind engulfing almost all of pub (6)
- 46 I take digs from granny that's offensive all round! (6)
- 47 Drug that's fine being taken in church (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)





Despite the pandemic our capital expenditure for this financial year remains unaffected

ABHIJIT ROY
MD & CEO, BERGER PAINTS

THUMBNAILS

Franklin Templeton-CFMA: Amid an outcry over losses suffered due to closure of certain schemes by Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund, investors group CFMA has said it is contemplating filing a class-action suit against the global fund house for recovery of money and to claim damages. The CFMA (Chennai Financial Markets & Accountability) has requested all aggrieved investors to come together for filing the class-action suit, it said in a statement. The CFMA also asked all investors to file their complaints to the economic offence wing of Chennai Police, so that all the pleas can be collectively pursued in Madras High Court. PTI

MMTC-PAMP buy-back: Bullion refiner MMTC-PAMP on Saturday launched a buy-back and exchange offer for gold in the national capital in a move to help the pandemic-affected people offset their economic hardships. For a nominal transaction fee, sellers can receive the maximum value of gold as a direct bank transfer or in the form of a gold bar with 999, 999 and 995 purity, it said. Starting with its Lajpat Nagar centre in Delhi, this facility will be rolled out soon across the country, it added. PTI

Handicrafts Mela: Amazon.in on Saturday said it will host a virtual "Handicrafts Mela" from 26 September - 10 October, showcasing more than 270 art and craft forms from various parts of the country. Over eight lakh artisans and weavers associated with 1,500 Amazon Karigar sellers and 17 government emporiums, including Tantuja, Harit Khadi, Tribes India and national-level artisan organisations like Craftmark and Dastkari Haat Samiti will benefit from this mela, Amazon India said in a statement. PTI

Dr Reddy's launch: Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Saturday said it has launched Dimethyl Fumarate delayed-release capsules, used to treat multiple sclerosis (MS), in the US market. PTI

Private equity inflows in real estate fall 85%

Investors remained cautious due to Covid-19 pandemic, according to a report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Private equity investment in Indian real estate plunged 85 per cent during January-August period of this year to \$866 million (around Rs 6,500 crore) as investors remained cautious due to the Covid-19 pandemic, according to Colliers International and Ficci report.

The private equity (PE) inflow stood at \$5,795 million in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Data centres segment attracted maximum investment so far this year at 46 per cent of the total inflows.

REPORT FINDINGS

» Private equity investment in Indian real estate plunged 85 per cent during January-August period of this year to \$866 million (around Rs 6,500 crore)

» Investors remained cautious due to the Covid-19 pandemic, according to Colliers International and Ficci report.

» Data centres segment

attracted maximum investment so far this year at 46 per cent of the total inflows.



real estate against the backdrop of the ongoing pandemic," said the report "Future India: Captivating Strategic and Private Equity Investments".

"According to Colliers International, through August 2020, overall private equity inflows into Indian real estate stood at Rs 65 billion (\$866 million), which is just 15 per cent of the corresponding period in 2019," it added.

The report said that newer asset classes such as data centres and rental housing gained prominence among

investors.

"During 2020 through August, the leading segments have been data centres, driven by demand for cloud infrastructure, as well as offices as, they tend to offer steady rental income. Robust domestic consumption also maintained investors' confidence in industrial and logistics assets," the report said.

During January-August 2019, office segment got 47 per cent of the total PE inflows that stood at \$5,795 million. Industrial and warehousing had

received 9 per cent funds, hospitality 12 per cent, housing 8 per cent, retail 18 per cent and mixed use development 6 per cent.

Colliers International advised investors to focus on data centres in order to leverage growing demand for cloud computing. It recommended them to continue to focus on the office segment to capitalise on steady rental income as well as enhanced liquidity offered by the Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs).

"Against the backdrop of robust demand from e-commerce and other consumer-led occupiers, we recommend investors stay focused on the industrial and logistics segment in order to reap the benefits," the consultant said.

It suggested investors to consider equity investments in completed units of affordable and mid-segment residential projects. Investors should consider partnering with top-tier developers and invest in greenfield residential projects to capitalise on inherent end-user demand.

RIL's retail arm receives ₹7,500 cr from Silver Lake

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) today said it has received Rs 7,500 crore from US private equity firm Silver Lake Partners, which has picked up 1.75 per cent stake in its retail arm.

Earlier, on 9 September, Reliance Industries had announced that Silver Lake would invest Rs 7,500 crore in its arm Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL).

RRVL has received the subscription amount of Rs 7,500 crore from SLP Rainbow Holdings Pte Ltd (Silver Lake), RIL said in a regulatory filing today.

Following the allotment of equity stake, "SLP Rainbow Holdings holds 1.75 per cent of the fully diluted equity share capital" of RRVL, it said.

This investment had val-

This is the second billion-dollar investment by Silver Lake in a Reliance Industries subsidiary after the \$1.35 billion investment in Jio Platforms announced earlier this year.

used RRVL at a pre-money equity value of Rs 4.21 lakh crore.

This is the second billion-dollar investment by Silver Lake in a Reliance Industries subsidiary after the \$1.35 billion investment in Jio Platforms announced earlier this year.

With more than \$60 billion in combined assets under management and committed capital and a focus on the world's great tech and tech-enabled opportunities, Silver Lake is the global leader

in large-scale technology investing.

Its other investments have included Airbnb, Alibaba, Alphabet's Verily and Waymo units, Dell Technologies, Twitter and numerous other global technology leaders.

Late last month, Reliance acquired the retail and logistics businesses of Future Group for Rs 24,713 crore to boost its retail vertical.

Silver Lake was the first US private equity firm to invest in Jio after tech giant Facebook took a 9.99 per cent stake in the company for Rs 43,573.62 crore. Silver Lake bought 2.08 per cent in Jio in two tranches for a total of Rs 10,202.55 crore.

Rival private equity groups KKR, Vista and General Atlantic followed Silver Lake to take stakes in Jio. Other notable investors included Google and Abu Dhabi's sovereign wealth fund Mubadala.

Job searches in hospitality, tourism on rise

MUMBAI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Job searches for roles in the hospitality and tourism sector have been on the rise since May, coinciding with the easing of lockdown measures across the country, says a report. Searches by job seekers saw a 30 per cent increase between May and August 2020, according to a report by global job site Indeed.

Jobs in hospitality and tourism are bouncing back in India, its data suggest. Job postings in the sectors were down only 58 per cent in September, against the 69 per cent drop in May this year when compared with 2019 levels.

The report is based on data on job postings and searches on Indeed site during March to August.

Further, the report revealed that the tourism industry saw job postings decrease by 49 per cent between March and August compared to the same period of 2019. PTI

Forex reserves at life-time high of \$545b

MUMBAI, 26 SEPTEMBER

The country's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$3.378 billion to touch a life-time high of \$545.038 billion in the week ended 18 September, RBI data showed.

In the previous week ended 11 September, the reserves had declined by \$353 million to \$541.660 billion.

During the reporting week, the forex kitty rose mainly due to an increase in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves. FCAs swelled by \$3,943 billion to \$501,464 billion in the reporting week, the central bank data showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves were down by \$580 million in the reporting week to \$37,440 billion.

The special drawing rights with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were up by \$1 million to \$1,483 billion.

The country's reserve position with the IMF rose by \$14 million to \$4,651 billion during the reporting week. PTI

Trai drops probe against Voda Idea on priority plan issue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

The move brings down curtains on the controversial priority plan issue, which saw the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) initiating a probe into telco's claims of priority network and faster data speeds for premium customers.

informed VIL that "the authority has decided not to proceed with the investigation/ further inquiry".

Trai letter noted that the operator had slapped a notice on VIL over its priority mobile plan, saying the earlier RedX plan had been discontinued and that a new tariff plan of RedX, without the claim of priority network feature with faster speed, has been filed.

"It has been further stated that VIL believes the same would address the concerns of the authority and based on the same, VIL requested the authority to grant closure to the pending enquiry," the regulator said.

Around 125 new foundries coming up in Bengal: IIF

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 26 SEPTEMBER

Around 125 new foundries are coming up in West Bengal, primarily in foundry parks located in Ranibhati, Amta Road, Uluberia (Howrah) & Raniganj-Asansol areas, according to the Institute of Indian Foundrymen (IIF).

"It is estimated that these upcoming foundries will have an estimated investment of nearly Rs 2,500 crore and will generate direct and indirect employment opportunities for around 20,000 people in the next two-three years," said Vijay Shankar Beriwal, incoming national president (2020-21) of IIF.

The foundry industry body with over 3,000 members drawn from foundries, foundry equipment and foundry material & service providers held its 69th annual general meeting here today.

Speaking on the occasion,

Beriwal said: "IIF highly appreciates the newly introduced industrial policy named 'Shilpasree' by state government and with the help of the policy nearly 125 new foundries are coming up in the state."

Beriwal, however, requested the state government to provide electricity to the foundry industry at a concessional rate to enable them to compete in the international market where huge opportunities have come due to shift of preference of buying from China to India.

West Bengal is having nearly 350 foundries, majority located in Howrah, Durgapur & Asansol areas providing direct and indirect employment to nearly one lakh people and good news is that there is no impact of the pandemic on labour force as foundries in Bengal are dependent on local labours, the foundry industry body

stated in a statement.

During this pandemic period, the foundry industry has suffered tremendously as a majority of them are in the micro, small and medium enterprises sector and with local trains not in operation and limited bus services in the areas of the factories ~ foundries could not run at more than 30 to 50 per cent capacity. Foundries in the south & west have been affected seriously as they are dependent on migratory labours, very few of whom have returned.

Fall in order from the automotive sector is affecting foundries located in auto ancillaries zones such as Kolhapur and Belgaum. Foundries involved in manufacturing of Railways' rolling stock castings are suffering badly due to very less orders from Indian Railways for rolling stock castings, IIF said.

India, Denmark sign pact to increase cooperation on IPRs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

India and Denmark today inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to increase cooperation in the area of intellectual property rights (IPRs) by exchanging best practices and collaborating in training programmes.

The two sides will draw up a biennial work plan to implement the MoU which will include detailed planning for carrying out cooperation activities, including scope of action, the commerce and industry ministry said in a statement.

The MoU aims to increase IP cooperation between the two countries by way of exchange of best practices,

experiences and knowledge on IP awareness among authorities, businesses and research and educational institutions, and collaboration in training programmes, exchange of experts, technical exchanges and outreach activities.

Both the sides would also exchange information and best practices on processes for disposal of applications for patents, trademarks, industrial designs and geographical indications, as also for protection, enforcement and use of IP rights.

Besides, the MoU is aimed at enhancing cooperation in development of automation and implementation of modernisation projects, new documentation and informa-

Anil tells UK court his life is very disciplined

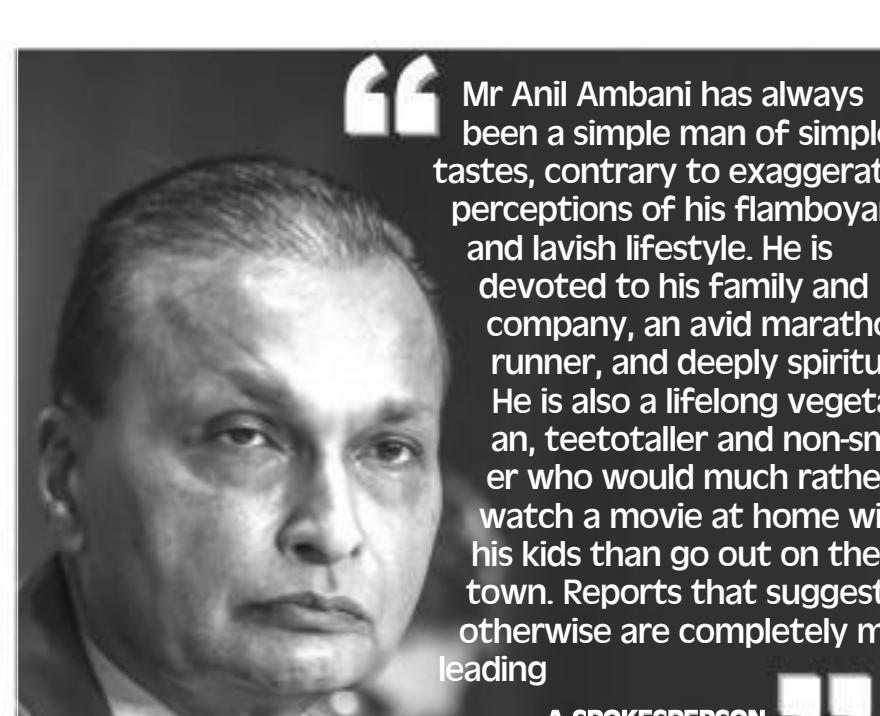
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 26 SEPTEMBER

Reliance Group chairman Anil Ambani has told a UK court that suggestions of his lavish tastes are speculative because his lifestyle is "very disciplined" as he gave evidence in a dispute involving a loan agreement with three Chinese banks.

The 61-year-old former billionaire appeared via video-link from Mumbai before the high court on Friday for compulsory cross-examination in aid of an asset disclosure order obtained by the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Ltd Mumbai Branch, China Development Bank and Exim Bank of China.

The order required Ambani to give full disclosure of all of his assets worldwide exceeding \$100,000.

"My needs are not vast and my lifestyle is very disciplined," Ambani told the London court. Asked about his fleet of luxury cars and other references to his lavish lifestyle



Mr Anil Ambani has always been a simple man of simple tastes, contrary to exaggerated perceptions of his flamboyance and lavish lifestyle. He is devoted to his family and company, an avid marathon runner, and deeply spiritual. He is also a lifelong vegetarian, teetotaller and non-smoker who would much rather watch a movie at home with his kids than go out on the town. Reports that suggest otherwise are completely misleading

A SPOKESPERSON FOR ANIL AMBANI

as the counsel for the banks cross-examined him, the Reliance Communications chief dismissed them as "speculative" media stories.

"Mr Anil Ambani has always

been a simple man of simple tastes, contrary to exaggerated perceptions of his flamboyance and lavish lifestyle," said a spokesperson for Anil Ambani.

"He is devoted to his family and company, an avid marathon runner, and deeply spiritual. He is also a lifelong vegetarian, teetotaller and non-smoker who would much rather watch a movie at home with his kids than go out on the town. Reports that suggest otherwise are completely misleading," the spokesperson said.

The dispute revolves around an alleged breach of a personal guarantee on a company debt refinancing loan of around \$925 million dating back to February 2012. Ambani denies providing authority for any such guarantee, resulting in the high court action in the UK,

the jurisdiction agreed upon as part of the terms of the loan agreement.

In May, the Commercial Division of the high court of England and Wales in London had ruled that the personal guarantee was binding on Ambani and directed him to pay early \$717 million to the three Chinese banks.

"The banks will use the information from the cross-examination to pursue all available legal avenues to protect their rights and recover the outstanding loans owed to them," the banks said in a statement this week.

At a hearing in the case earlier in the year, a UK judge had ruled that he did not accept Ambani's defence that his net worth was nearly zero or that his family would not step in to assist him when "push came to shove".

Debt mutual funds log outflow in August

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

After recording net inflows for four months in a row, debt-oriented schemes witnessed a net outflow of Rs 3,907 crore in August, largely on the back of a significant pull-out from overnight and liquid fund categories.

The latest outflow was largely on the back of significant withdrawals from overnight fund and liquid fund categories, Srivastava said.

Growth co-founder and chief operating officer Harsh Jain said the outflow could be on account of redemptions by corporates to pay advance tax in September.

Liquid schemes recorded a net outflow of Rs 15,814

PULL-OUT FROM OVERNIGHT & LIQUID FUNDS

» According to the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi), mutual funds (MFs) that invest in fixed-income securities or debt funds saw an outflow of Rs 3,907 crore in August as compared with an inflow of Rs 91,392 crore in the preceding month.



The state has been upgrading its power infrastructure...and will invest Rs 20,000 crore in power sector in five years...

WEST BENGAL POWER MINISTER SOBHANDEB CHATTOPADHYAY
AT THE CII-ORGANISED 11TH ENERGY CONCLAVE

The Sunday Statesman
NEW DELHI, 27 SEPTEMBER 2020

09

Odisha reports biggest single day COVID spike

4,356 fresh cases, 4.08% of country's active cases in Odisha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 26 SEPTEMBER:

Odisha on Saturday reported the biggest single day spike of 4,356 COVID-19 cases, which raised the tally to 2,05,452, while record 16 fatalities pushed the death toll in the coastal state to 783.

Odisha currently has 39,184 active cases, while 1.65 lakh patients have recovered so far.

The State's share is 3.38% in the country's virus caseload while the active cases are 4.08% of India's total active cases. Odisha has so far reported 0.84% of the country's Coronavirus deaths.

More than 30,62,717 sample tests have been conducted in the state so far, including 53,534 on Friday. Odisha has reported 6.71% positivity rate.

The State today reported

COVID testing of MLAs begins

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 26 SEPTEMBER:

Ahead of the 29 September assembly session, Odisha government today began the COVID-19 test exercise of MLAs, their personal security officers (PSO) and drivers, besides staff of the assembly.

Nearly 900 people including MLAs are being tested for COVID-19. It will continue for the next three days.

The RT-PCR test will also be done for the employees of

the 11th successive day 4,000-plus spike of the disease. Given the current growth rate, the tally is most likely to breach the 3 lakh figure by mid-October unless the virus curve flattens.

the Assembly secretariat along with those of the offices of the chief minister, other ministers, the leader of the opposition, and chiefwhips from 7.30 AM to 9.30 AM from September 26 to 28 on the Assembly premises.

Again on October 4 after the assembly session concludes, there will another round of RT-PCR test of all the members, the officials said.

A total 37 MLAs including 9 ministers of the 147-member state assembly have been

infected already. At present, the assembly has 145 members as two seats are vacant due to deaths. Majority of the infected members have recovered while more than a dozen of them are yet to recover from virus infection.

The ministers who have tested positive are Tusharkanti Padmanabha Behera, Samir Ranjan Dash, Ranendra Pratap Swain, Tukuni Sahu, Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, Susanta Singh, Arun Kumar Sahoo and Padmini Dian.

The pandemic's growth rate in September is to the tune of 48 per cent, projecting towards the grim situation in the State.

The current month has proved to be the worst phase of the State's battle against Coronavirus. As many as 98,891 infections have added to the State's tally in the past 26 days of September.

Of the 4,356 fresh cases reported today, 2,529 were

reported from various quarantine centres, and the rest 1,827 were detected during contact tracing.

Khurda, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, accounted for the maximum number of new cases at 902, followed by Cuttack at 409 and Angul at 197. Fifteen other districts registered over 100 cases each in the last 24 hours.

The Khurda district with 33,353 positive cases accounts for 16% infections has emerged as the COVID hotspot of the State.

In the gender-wise breakup of the infected persons, 68% are men while women constitute 32% of total patients. 54% of the total patients are in the 15-40 age-group.

With as many as 1,65,432 patients getting cured of the disease, the state has reported an impressive 80% recovery rate while the case fatality rate currently stands lowly at 0.38%.

Odisha opts for borrowing Option One to cover GST shortfall

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 26 SEPTEMBER:

Odisha government has opted for 'Option one' of the two borrowing options provided by the centre to meet the shortfall in GST compensation cess.

Relying on another serious issue, the sources said if the diverted GST funds had been used in the divisible pool it would be a double whammy for the states. The states had received the money two years ago and now it could be adjusted.

In the second option of borrowing towards full shortfall by the state, the centre will repay the principal after 2022 and not the interest on the loan.

Seen in this context Odisha has preferred Option one said the sources while adding that in the entire process the centre is not shouldering any burden as the repayments are to be done from the compensation cess.

Given the recently tabled CAG report on how GST

funds were diverted, the fact remains that there is a huge mess in accounting and credibility of the centre is at the lowest, said the officers here while speaking on conditions of anonymity.

Accountability should be fixed, he added.

Asked about the compensation in money terms as far as Odisha is concerned, the officer said the maximum would be around Rs 10,000 crore.

It may be noted here that Odisha has been relatively quiet in its reaction to the centre's offer to borrow. While others like CM's of Delhi, Kerala, West Bengal have protested the move to ask states to incur loans, Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik has remained silent.

The contention as to why the centre is not borrowing instead of asking states to do it has not been raised by Odisha CM. The centre can get loans at lesser rates than the states.

Evidently, this idea of asking the state to borrow is to somehow make the balance sheet of the centre look good, remarked sources in the finance department here.

Single-day recoveries surpass fresh cases in Bhubaneswar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 26 SEPTEMBER:

The single-day recoveries surpassed the number of new infections for the 8th consecutive day on Saturday in Bhubaneswar with 353 recuperating from the disease as against 319 new infections detected during the past 24 hours.

Bhubaneswar has reported a recovery rate of almost 82% with over 16,000 patients getting cured of the disease till date.

Today the capital city recorded 319 positive cases with the city's caseload soaring to 20,538.

Apart from the steep spike of infection, the detection of 80 per cent of the positive cases

from local contacts was the disturbing feature of the day. Of the fresh infections, as many as 257 were local contact infections while the remaining 62 cases were sourced from quarantine centres.

Of the total tally of positive cases, 3,574 are active cases while 16,864 have recovered from the contagion till date. 84 patients from the city have succumbed to the virus in the city.

However the redeeming feature of the COVID graph in the city lies in the fact that the infection number is on a downward trend since the past fortnight. From 400-plus, the number of infections is dipping to 300-plus.



Odisha Assembly Speaker Suryanarayan Patro undergoing a COVID test in the Assembly premises. All MLAs and staff are to be subjected to the test ahead of the session scheduled to commence from 29 September. SNS

NINL employees warn of eco blockade

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAJPUR, 26 SEPTEMBER:

Demanding payment of seven months salary and immediate resumption of production at NINL, the staff and workers warned of an economic blockade at Dubri.

"Decision of strategic dis-investment of 100 per cent shares of Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd (NINL) adopted by both centre and state gov-

ernment in Jan 2020, resulted in suspension of production from March and salaries have not been paid since February", decried the employees.

Employees including land losers/oustees said they had resorted to a strike and had blocked the NH on 18 September. Two employees tried to self immolate but were prevented by the police.

The police gave a written

assurance to arrange a meeting with the collector for discussion on their demands within seven days.

Pritiranjan Gharai, MLA, Sukinda has also written letter to Chief Secretary to take up the matter with MMTC for release of salary & arrears of the employees.

If the demand is not met we will resort to a economic blockade threatened the employees today.

Tusker electrocuted

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DHENKANAL, 26 SEPTEMBER:

A tusker was electrocuted near Patharakhambha village in Parjang under Kamakshyanagar [west] forest range.

It is alleged that farmers have laid live cables in and around the crop land for

protection from wild animals and the tusker came in contact with the live wire.

Forest officials arrested one Bairagi Biswal.

We have reports that farmers are resorting to such measures to protect their crop in the Parjang block, said Prakash Chand Gogineni, DFO.

Demanding payment of seven months salary and immediate resumption of production at NINL, the staff and workers warned of an economic blockade at Dubri.

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The police gave a written

Bridge to woo Tirtol voters

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAGATSINGHPUR, 26 SEPTEMBER:

With an eye on Tirtol assembly-by-poll, the BJD government has awarded a tender for construction of a bridge on Mahanadi River at an estimated cost of Rs 118.56 crores as poll gift to woo the voters.

The bridge will benefit over 50,000 people of 10 panchayats and other areas of Kendrapara and Cuttack dis-

trict Villagers of Gopalpur, Danilo, Kanimul, Bisnupur, Krishanadapur and other panchayats of Cuttack and Kendrapara districts will be benefited for proposed bridge. These villagers have been demanding for a bridge from Posal to Sankeswer on Mahanadi River in Tirtol block.

In the absence of a bridge in the area, people had to travel a long distance to go to Tirtol and Jagatsinghpur.

The department of rural

works has started the tender process.

Tirtol block unit Congress president Ashok Das welcomed the announcement but added that this only shows that the Naveen Patnaik government had been sleeping for 20 years.

The by-poll to Tirtol assembly seat has woken the government, he charged.

BJP leader Rajkishore Behera too spoke on the same lines.

ly reached the cemetery where the half burnt body was found.

Police search also led to detection of blood stained clothes, a gun etc.

The body was sent for post mortem and a case of murder was registered.

Further investigations led to the arrest of Dhansingh Dalapati, Arjuna Dalapati, Purna Chandra Dalapati, Budu Jhodia, (60,) and others.

The cause of murder has not been revealed by the police as yet.

Eighteen arrested in murder case

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

RAYAGADA, 26 SEPTEMBER:

Police have arrested 18 accused persons in connection with a murder and seized a firearm.

Police said Sukru Jhodia of Kaliajodi under Andrahonch police limits lodged a missing person report mentioning that his son Khageswar Jhodia (30) who had gone out had not returned.

During the search the police got leads to what could be a murder case and final-

ly reached the cemetery where the half burnt body was found.

Police search also led to detection of blood stained clothes, a gun etc.

The body was sent for post mortem and a case of murder was registered.

Further investigations led to the arrest of Dhansingh Dalapati, Arjuna Dalapati, Purna Chandra Dalapati, Budu Jhodia, (60,) and others.

The cause of murder has not been revealed by the police as yet.

One-month-old infant branded with hot iron

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BARIPADA, 26 SEPTEMBER:

In a shocking incident a one-month-old infant girl was branded with hot iron to 'cure her stomach infection'.

girl and she had black spots on her stomach. The superstitious parents and elders in the family branded her with hot iron hoping that the spots will go and the child's stomach ailments will be cured.

Mochiram Murmu, 35, of Tikapada village had a baby

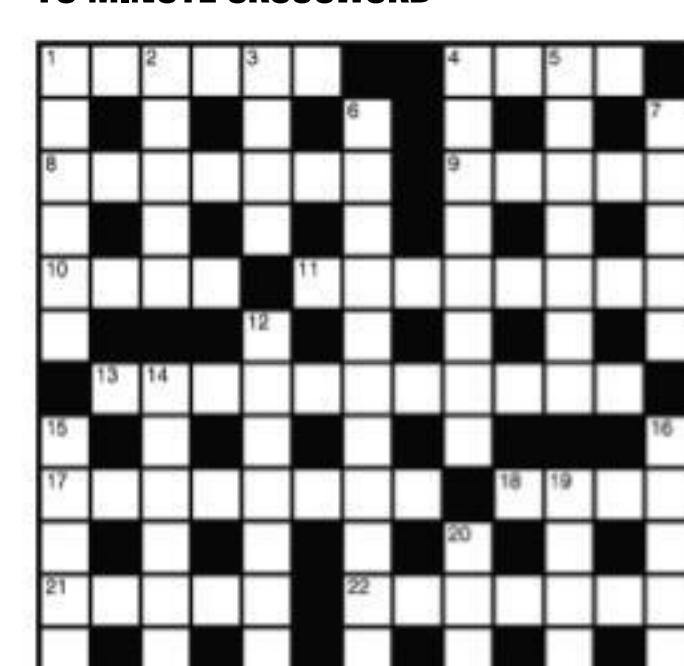
the child to the hospital. Mochiram told the doctor that it was a tradition among the tribal community to brand the child with hot iron within 10 days of birth to cure it from any disease.

Later the doctor of the hospital had forwarded the infant to Pandit Raghunath Murmu Government Medical College and Hospital.

When contacted, in-charge IIC Udalaw Swarnalata Minz said that no allegation or police complaint has been lodged.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1. Crude (6)
4. Rabbit-like animal (4)
8. Injection device (7)
9. Jockey (5)
10. Verbal (4)
11. Entire (8)
13. Unintentional misuse of a word (11)
17. Worked up (8)
18. Roman robe (4)
21. Lavatory (Slang) (5)
22. Make use of (7)
23. Groups (4)
24. Sport (6)

DOWN
1. Habitual practice (6)
2. Main artery (5)
3. Founder (4)
4. Sailor's dance (8)
5. Compensation (7)
6. Ingenious (11)
7. Fleeting (5)
12. Whims (8)
13. Enliven (7)
15. Slightly sticky (5)
16. Identity documents (6)
19. Pungent bulb (5)
20. Quote (4)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1. Stress, 13. Stressed, 16. Stately, 18. Suave, 19. Civil, 20. Fees, 21. Boa.
DOWN
1. Creeper, 12. Species, 14. Amaranth, 15. Gypsy, 17.



If we can do it from space, then I believe folks can do it from the ground, too... I think it's really important for everybody to vote

NASA ASTRONAUT KATE RUBINS

AS SHE PLANS TO CAST HER BALLOT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

THUMBNAILS



An animal rights supporter during a protest against the decision of Dhaka authorities to relocate stray dogs out of the city, in Dhaka on Saturday. ■ AFP

Poland coalition deal: The three parties in Poland's conservative coalition government signed a new coalition agreement on Saturday. However, they gave no details about the agreement and took no questions from journalists, leaving lingering uncertainty about how the Cabinet will look in practice after an expected reshuffle. ■ AP

France stabbing: Seven people were in custody on Saturday after a stabbing outside the former Paris offices of satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, including the suspected assailant, authorities said. The suspect arrived in France three years ago apparently from Pakistan. ■ AP

Reagan's sage, Mitt's binders: Presidential debate highlights

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 26 SEPTEMBER

President Donald Trump and his Democratic challenger, Joe Biden, are set to meet on Tuesday for their first debate, a highly anticipated event in a highly unusual election year.

The campaign has been divisive on a historic scale. Trump was impeached for trying to pressure Ukraine to investigate Biden and his son and has repeatedly tried to cast doubt on Biden's mental acuity, going so far as to say the former vice president doesn't know he's alive.

For his part, Biden has said of Trump, If we were in high school, I'd take him behind the gym and beat the hell out of him. Against that backdrop, the two are set to face off for the first time as presidential nominees in Cleveland in a debate moderated by Chris Wallace of Fox News Channel.

Here are some of the most memorable moments in presidential debate history:

THE FIRST TELEVISED DEBATE: The 1960 presidential election offered the country's first televised debate. It's remembered less for what was said than for what viewers saw.

Democrat John F. Kennedy, the handsome young Massachusetts senator, looked tan and relaxed. Republican Richard Nixon, who had been sick and in the hospital, looked hollow-eyed and had a five o'clock shadow. Kennedy paired his tan with a blue suit, offering a nice contrast on black and white TVs. Nixon was wearing a gray suit, which blended into the gray studio background.

Many considered the debate a turning point in Kennedy's campaign.

'NO SOVIET DOMINATION' - Republican Presi-

Trump to name Barrett for SC

As he aims to put a historic conservative stamp on the US top court just weeks before the election

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 26 SEPTEMBER

President Donald Trump is expected to announce Saturday that he is nominating Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court as he aims to put a historic conservative stamp on the high court just weeks before the election.

Trump said Friday he had made up his mind and it was very exciting, without giving away the name, aiming to maintain some suspense around his personal announcement. But the White House indicated to congressional Republicans and outside allies that the pick was Barrett. Well I haven't said it was her, but she's outstanding, Trump said of the Indiana federal judge.

Conservative groups and congressional allies are laying the groundwork for a swift confirmation process for her, even before Trump makes the selection official in a Rose Garden ceremony Saturday evening.

They like the president, are wasting little time moving to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, organising multimillion-dollar ad campaigns and marshalling supporters both to confirm the pick and to boost Trump to a second term.

The likely shift in the court's makeup from Ginsburg, a liberal icon, to an outspoken conservative would be the sharpest ideological swing

since Clarence Thomas replaced Justice Thurgood Marshall nearly three decades ago. Ever the showman, Trump remained coy about his choice Friday evening as he returned from a campaign swing.

When asked whether lawmakers were being told it was Barrett, Trump responded with a nod on the tarmac at Joint Base Andrews, before replying, Is that what they're telling you? You'll find out tomorrow, he went on to say, flashing a wide smile. Look,

they're all great. It could be any of one them. It could be actually anyone on the list. For Trump, it will provide a much-needed political assist as he tries to fire up his base. For conservatives, it will mark a long-sought payoff for their at-times uncomfortable embrace of Trump. And for Democrats, it will be another moment of reckoning, with their party locked in a bitter battle to retake the White House and the Senate. Senate Republicans are readying for confirmation

hearings in two weeks, with a vote in the full chamber now expected before Election Day. Democrats are essentially powerless to block the votes.

I'm confident he's going to make an outstanding nomination, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told Fox News.

The American people are going to take a look at this nominee and conclude, as we are likely to conclude, that she well deserves to be confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court. They're hell-bent on getting this done as fast as possible, said Democratic Senate whip Dick Durbin.

They think it helps Donald Trump get reelected. Outside conservative groups, who have been preparing for this moment for 40 years, are planning to spend more than \$25 million to support Trump and his nominee. The Judicial Crisis Network has organised a coalition that includes American First Policies, the Susan B Anthony List, the Club for Growth and the group Catholic Vote. One of the things we've learned from the histories of confirmation processes, the intensity of the fight has more to do with the previous occupant of the seat than who the nominee is, said JCN's Carrie Severino.

We expect this to be a very high stakes confirmation. Within hours of Ginsburg's death, Trump made clear his intention to nominate a woman in her stead, after

hearing from the Senate that he would consider for the court. He has challenged Democrat Joe Biden to list possible nominees, too.

Trump had said he was considering five women for Ginsburg's seat, but Barrett was at the White House at least twice this week, including for a Monday meeting with Trump. He is not known to have met with any of the other contenders. The staunch conservative's 2017 appeals court confirmation on a party-line vote included allegations that Democrats were attacking her Catholic faith.

Trump allies see that as a political windfall for them should Democrats attempt to do so once again. Catholic voters in Pennsylvania, in particular, are viewed as a pivotal demographic in the swing state that Democratic nominee Joe Biden, also Catholic, is trying to recapture.

Trump was on a two-day campaign swing that ticked off a long list of boxes, both geographically and with key constituencies.

He unveiled what aides termed a "vision" for health care in North Carolina, where polls show him and Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden effectively tied. He held a rally in Jacksonville, Florida, one of the most hotly contested battleground states.

At "Black Voices for Trump" event in Atlanta, Georgia, Trump's campaign said in second term, he would push for economic development and loan money for Black people and designate Juneteenth as a federal holiday. Juneteenth, which commemorates the end of slavery in the United States, is so named because June 19, 1865 is when slaves were freed in Galveston, Texas.

Trump is on a two-day campaign swing that ticked off a long list of boxes, both geographically and with key constituencies.

Harris as his running mate, worrying some Democrats with his low-key approach.

Trump complained in Atlanta that Biden "never goes out"

and said losing the November 3 election would sting even worse if he lost to a man who never campaigns.

Trump also made rare references to the recent killings of Black men and women at the hands of police. Trump said the nation grieves for the "senseless" deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery.

At the same time, Trump denounced the Black Lives Matter movement, insisting it is hurting the Black community.

US moves to restrict stay of Chinese journalists to 90 days

WASHINGTON, 26 SEPTEMBER

The Trump Administration is seeking to restrict the stay of journalists from China in the US to just 90 days with the provision of another extension for a similar duration, according to a federal notice.

The move came amidst worsening of bilateral ties over a range of issues like the coronavirus pandemic, trade, Beijing's increasing grip on Hong Kong and alleged human rights abuses against minorities in the Xinjiang province.

The proposal of the Department of Homeland Security is part of the fixed time limit on visas of students, researchers and foreign journalists in the US.

While the time limit for foreign journalists in general has been restricted to 240 days and another extension of a similar period, those for a journalist from China would be issued a visa by the United States just for 90 days, as per the federal notification issued on Friday.

Stakeholders have 30 days to respond to the federal notification before it can be enforced.

Foreign nationals travelling on a passport issued by China or Hong Kong would be issued a visa - which is the category for a foreign journalist - may be admitted until the activities or assignments consistent with the I classification are completed, not to exceed 90 days, the notification said.

Passport holders from Macau Special Administrative Region have been given exception. ■ PTI

SEEKING JUSTICE

A man carries a cross during a demonstration on Saturday in Louisville, Kentucky. ■ AFP

92 areas in England on Covid watchlist; London Mayor wants stringent curbs

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 26 SEPTEMBER

The UK government's Covid watchlist has been expanded from 58 to 92, including all boroughs of London, as the rate of infection continues to rise across Britain.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan said he has spoken to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and urged him to impose a ban on the UK capital's estimated 9 million residents mixing between households as he criticised the government over a lack of adequate coronavirus testing facilities.

"One of the things that I said to the Prime Minister is: I think we should be following

what's happening around the country and stopping social mixing of households, and I say that with a heavy heart," Khan told The Guardian.

"I'm really angry. It's another example of lessons not being learned. You can explain the delay, incompetence in March. There's no excuse now," he said, in reference to a reported drop in the number of coronavirus tests carried out in London in recent weeks. After four areas were removed, there are now 92 places on the government's watchlist for tougher localised action amid a spike in cases.

According to estimates, this means more than a quarter of the UK population is set

to be under coronavirus lockdown rules as new measures come in force this weekend.

The total number of people across the UK living under stricter rules will stand at 17 million from this weekend.

From Saturday in England, households in Leeds, Wigan, Stockport and Blackpool will be banned from mixing in each other's homes or gardens. In Wales, Llanelli will be subject to new rules, with Cardiff and Swansea following from Sunday. Meeting between households indoors has already been banned in Scotland.

In England, the "rule of six" and a 10pm closing time for pubs and restaurants applies nationally. Besides,

extra restrictions have been imposed in several other areas including large parts of north-east and north-west England, West Yorkshire and the Midlands where the infection rate is higher.

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock said he recognised "the burden and impact these additional measures have on our daily lives but we must act collectively and quickly to bring down infections".

The restrictions come in as the R number -- rate of virus transmission from infected person -- continues to creep upwards. The number needs to remain below 1.0 to keep the pandemic under control but it is now between 1.2 and

1.5, which means that on average every 10 people infected will infect between 12 and 15 others. Meanwhile, the daily number of confirmed Covid cases in the UK has reached a record high of 6,874.

Around 32 universities in the UK have also confirmed coronavirus cases, with students being asked to follow strict quarantine rules. Hundreds at Manchester University have been told to self-isolate after 127 positive coronavirus tests on the campus.

Thousands protest Covid restrictions in London: Thousands gathered Saturday at London's Trafalgar Square to protest lockdowns and social



A protester holds up a placard in Trafalgar Square in London on Saturday, at a 'We Do Not Consent' mass rally against vaccination and government restrictions designed to fight the spread of virus. ■ AFP





I told (Xi) that the stability of Japan-China relations is crucial, not only for the two countries but also for the region and for international society..

AFTER CHINESE PRESIDENT AGREED TO WORK CLOSELY TOGETHER BY HOLDING HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS INCLUDING SUMMITS

THUMBNAILS



A man flashes a V sign as members of the pro-Kurdish Peoples Democratic Party take part in a protest in Istanbul on Saturday. ■ AFP

Ukraine plane crash: Searchers combing the area where a Ukrainian military aircraft crashed found two more bodies on Saturday, bringing the death toll to 26. One person survived. The plane, belonging to the Ukrainian air force, was carrying a crew of seven and 20 cadets of a military aviation school when it crashed into flames on Friday night. ■ PTI

Iraq FM visits Iran: Iraq's foreign minister arrived Saturday in Tehran for bilateral talks with senior Iranian officials, according to the state-run news agency. IRNA reported that Fuad Hussein planned to meet his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif and President Hassan Rouhani, in what marked his first visit to Tehran. ■ PTI

Rajapaksa directs officials: Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has directed public officials to treat his verbal orders issued for the common good of people as circular while trying to give quick solutions to problems, warning them of punishment in case of failure. He has made unannounced visits to offices since his election. ■ PTI

Germany coal protest: Hundreds of anti-coal protesters entered a mine in Germany to protest the continued extraction and use of fossil fuels. Activists are also protesting the planned destruction of several villages to make way for the expansion of the Garzweiler strip mine. ■ AP

'Lanka's ex-Prez should take responsibility for Easter Sunday attack'

COLOMBO, 26 SEPTEMBER

Former Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena should take responsibility for the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings that claimed the lives of over 250 people, ex-police chief Pujith Jayasundara has told a panel probing the attack, according to media reports.

On April 21, 2019, Easter Sunday, nine suicide bombers belonging to the local Islamic extremist group National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) carried out a series of blasts that tore through three churches and as many luxury hotels in the island nation, killing 258 people. Sri Lankan police have arrested over 200 suspects in connection with the bombings. Links between the NTJ and the IS were later established.

Suspected Inspector General of Police Jayasundara testified on Thursday before the presidential inquiry commission probing the attacks, the Daily Mirror Lanka reported. "I provided intelligence to senior DIGs Nandana Munasinghe, Latheef, Priyal Dasanayake and Waruna Jayasundara who had been appointed to cover the entire island. Provincial officers were also informed," the newspaper quoted Jayasundara as saying.

He said Sirisena's brother had ensured the intelligence that he provided was deleted from telecom records, who at the time was the president of Mobitel Telecom, reported the Colombo Page.

Jayasundara told the commission that Sirisena had asked him to take responsibility for the attack and indirectly offered inducements - high government post, appointment as an Ambassador. ■ PTI

Progress against virus brings complacency in parts of Africa

ASSOCIATED PRESS
HARARE, 26 SEPTEMBER

With Zimbabwe's coronavirus infections on the decline, schools are reopening, along with churches, bars, restaurants, airports and tourist attractions. Strict lockdowns designed to curb the disease are being replaced by a return to relatively normal life.

The threat has eased so much that many people see no need to be cautious. With his face mask stuffed into his pocket, Omega Chibanda said he's not worried about COVID-19. "We used to fear coronavirus, not anymore," the 16-year-old

Africa's surge has been leveling off, with its 1.4 million confirmed cases increasing relatively slowly.

said in the crowded Chitungwiza town on the outskirts of the capital, Harare.

"That's why I'm not even wearing a mask. As the global death toll from Covid approaches 1 million, Zimbabwe and several other African countries have not experienced the widespread surges and many deaths that were predicted."

That has invited complacency. It's all relaxed now, Chibanda said.

Earlier this month, Zimbabwe went a week without recording any deaths from coronavirus, and new infections and deaths have declined, as in South Africa and Kenya.

Africa's surge has been leveling off, with its 1.4 million confirmed cases increasing relatively slowly. Antibody testing is expected to show many more infections, but most cases are asymptomatic. Just over 34,000 deaths have been confirmed on the continent of 1.3 billion people.

But the improving figures and the start of the searing heat of the Southern Hemisphere's summer could undermine efforts to beat back the virus even further, said community health worker Rosemary Rambire.

She leaves home early in the morning and returns in the evening after going door to door calling the gospel is here and gathering families for quick awareness sessions.

"Our job is now harder to do because people are no longer afraid," Rambire said.

Some even tell us that it has not killed anyone they know. Most of them say the sun

kills Covid so they have no reason to worry. Some think they are immune once they eat garlic, ginger and onions, she said. In her 14 years on the job and through multiple disease outbreaks, Covid has been the most difficult to get people to take preventive measures, she said. It's different from before, when we did campaigns on cholera (and) HIV. We could tell that people were afraid. They tried to follow preventive measures," she said.

With Covid, they are not afraid. Many people look at the infection and death figures in Zimbabwe, compare

them with other countries and conclude that it only affects other countries and not Zimbabwe, Rambire added.

In Chitungwiza, a sprawling working-class center on the southern edge of Harare, people no longer wear masks at markets, funerals or other public events. Masks are now the exception in many of Harare's poor residential

areas. "The dire projections that 'Africa, you are going to be toast,' perhaps actually helped us. We tightened up, she said. Continued vigilance should accompany Africa's apparent success story, said Mervyn Joullie, deputy regional director for Africa at Mercy Corps, which operates in 16 of Africa's 54 countries.

S Korea calls for North to further investigate shooting

Seoul could also possibly call for a joint investigation into Tuesday's shooting

SEOUL, 26 SEPTEMBER

South Korea said Saturday it will request North Korea to further investigate the killing of a South Korean government official who was shot by North Korean troops after being found adrift near the rivals' disputed sea boundary while apparently trying to defect.

Seoul could also possibly call for a joint investigation into Tuesday's shooting, which sparked outrage in the South and drew a rare apology from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Kim was quoted as saying he was very sorry over what he described as an unexpected, unfortunate incident" in a message sent by Pyongyang's United Front Department, a North Korean government agency in charge of inter-Korean relations.

However, the North Korean message, which was announced by the office of South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Friday, largely passed the blame for the shooting to the South Korean official, claiming that he refused to answer questions and attempted to flee before North Korean troops fired at him.

South Korean officials during a presidential National Security Council meeting concluded that further investigation was needed because the North's account of the incident was different from what was gathered by South Korean intelligence, Moon's office said.

We have decided to request the North to conduct an additional investigation and also request a joint investigation with the North if needed, the Blue House said in a statement. It said the South will also swiftly take measures to further strengthen surveillance posture in waters off the country's western coast to prevent similar incidents.

South Korea's coast guard was deploying dozens of vessels and hundreds of officers to search waters near the western sea border Saturday for the official's remains.

The North's state media have yet to report on the incident or Kim's apology.

South Korea earlier accused the North of shooting the man, who was likely trying to defect, and burning his body after finding him on a floating object in North Korean waters. South Korean officials condemned what they called an atrocious act and pressed North to punish those responsible. ■ AP

Lebanese PM-designate resigns

According to Lebanon's sectarian-based power sharing system the prime minister has to be a Sunni Muslim

AGENCIES
BEIRUT, 26 SEPTEMBER

Lebanon's prime minister-designate resigned Saturday amid a political impasse over government formation, dealing a blow to French President Emmanuel Macron's efforts to break a dangerous stalemate in the crisis-hit country.

The announcement by Moustapha Adib nearly a month after he was appointed to the job further delays the prospect of getting the foreign economic assistance needed to rescue the country from collapse.

Adib told reporters he was stepping down after it became clear that the kind of Cabinet he wished to form was bound to fail. The French leader has been pressing Lebanese politicians to form a Cabinet made up of non-partisan specialists that can work on enacting urgent reforms to extract

Lebanon from a devastating economic and financial crisis worsened by the 4 August explosion at Beirut port.

A source close to Macron said the situation that led to Adib's resignation amounted to "collective betrayal" by political parties but said France, the former colonial power, would not abandon Lebanon.

Under the French roadmap, the new government would take swift steps to tackle corruption and implement reforms needed to trigger billions of dollars of international aid to fix an economy that has been crushed by a mountain of debt. The country is in desperate need of financial assistance but France and other international powers have refused to provide aid before serious reforms are made.

The crisis is largely blamed on decades of systematic corruption and mismanagement

But efforts by the French-supported Adib have hit multiple snags, after the country's main Shiite groups, Hezbollah and Amal, insisted on retaining hold of the key Finance Ministry.

Their insistence emerged after the U.S. administration slapped sanctions on two senior politicians close to Hezbollah, including the finance minister. The two groups also insisted on naming the Shiite ministers in the new Cabinet and objected to the manner in which Adib was forming the government, without consulting with them. After a

short meeting with Aoun on Saturday, Adib said he was stepping down after his efforts hit a dead end.

I have apologized about

continuing the mission of forming a government after it became clear that a Cabinet according to the characteristics I had set for it would be bound to fail," he told reporters.

The Lebanese pound dropped against the dollar following his resignation, trading at more than 8,100 Lebanese pounds on the black market Saturday.

Lebanon, a former French protectorate, is mired in the country's worst economic and financial crisis in its modern history. It defaulted on paying back its debt for the first time ever in March, and the local currency has lost nearly 80 percent of its value amid hyperinflation, soaring poverty, and unemployment. Talks with the International Mon-

etary Fund on a bailout package have stalled.

Adib, who was ambassador to Germany before he took the job on 31 August, emerged as a candidate for the post of prime minister after he won the support of former Prime Minister Saad Hariri and three other ex-premiers.

According to Lebanon's sectarian-based power sharing system the prime minister has to be a Sunni Muslim.

The Shiite groups have accused Hariri of directing Adib in his Cabinet formation efforts and said they refuse to be sidelined. Hariri stepped down last year in response to mass demonstrations demanding the departure of the entire sectarian-based leadership over entrenched corruption, incompetence and mismanagement.

French President Macron has described his initiative including a road map and a timetable for reforms, as the last chance for this system.

Polls open in Malaysian Sabah state in key test for embattled PM Yassin

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KUALA LUMPUR, 26 SEPTEMBER

Polls opened Saturday in Malaysia's eastern Sabah state in a vote seen as a referendum for embattled Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's 7-month-old unelected government. The leader of the opposition-ruled state dissolved the assembly July 30 to seek early elections and thwart attempts by Muhyiddin's ruling alliance to take over Sabah through lawmakers' defections.

The stakes are high for Muhyiddin after Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim declared he has secured majority support in national Parliament to oust Muhyiddin and form a new government.

This is the first state-wide election since the creation of Muhyiddin's government in March. In a way, it is an indirect referendum on whether the people are happy with the formation of the backdoor (unelected) government," said James Chin, professor of Asian studies at Australia's University of Tasmania.

Sabah and neighbouring Sarawak on Borneo island hold about a quarter of Parliament seats and are seen as crucial for political leverage.

The two states are rich in oil and timber but among the poorest in Malaysia. They have a greater level of autonomy in administration, immigration and judiciary.

The attempted takeover of Sabah was reminiscent of how Muhyiddin took power in March after defecting from the reformist government to

a new Malay-centric administration. Muhyiddin's alliance has since taken control of many states after lawmakers defected. The opposition now controls only Sabah and two of the country's richest states, Selangor and Penang. But Muhyiddin has been struggling to maintain support amid infighting in his coalition that has just a slim two-seat majority.

His leadership is now in further doubt after Anwar claimed to have won majority support, including from lawmakers in Muhyiddin's camp. Anwar has not revealed details as he is waiting to meet Malaysia's king, who is in a hospital for treatment.

The king has power to appoint a new prime minister or dissolve Parliament for early general elections. Muhyiddin has said Anwar's declaration was a mere allegation until he provides evidence. Muhyiddin has campaigned heavily in Sabah, particularly in the state of Tawau.

Billboards of his smiling face dubbed Abah, or father, are prominent in many constituencies. In contrast, former Sabah leader Shafie Apdal urged the state's multiple indigenous groups to reject Muhyiddin's Muslim government.

Anwar's win will strengthen his grip on power, said Oh Ei Sun, a senior fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs.

The Sabah election is heavily contested with 447 candidates vying for 73 state seats.

AP

No Kabul, Taliban contact group meetings since 2 days

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
KABUL/DOHA, 26 SEPTEMBER

The contact group meetings aimed at reaching an agreement about the procedural rules intended for the formal talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, have been stalled for two days over a number of disputed points, a media report said on Friday night.

One of the major disputed point is the militant group demanding the recognition of the US-Taliban agreement as the 'mother deal' underlying the Afghan peace negotiations, the TOLO News report said on Friday night.

government team has recommended four options to the US-Taliban agreement.

In the first option, the government has said that the terms of the US-Taliban agreement could be accepted as underlying the talks, while nei-

ther the deal nor the declarations of Kabul with Washington and the NATO will be recognized as having any authority.

It added that the negotiations will move forward based on the decisions of the consultative Loya Jirga and its declarations. However, there were no confirmations about when the two sides will resume their discussions on the disputed points.

"If they (Taliban) are not able to come up with a convincing agenda in the intra-Afghan meeting, then they create a gap in order to seek new views from their backers about the agenda of the talks," TOLO News quoted MP Sayed Zahir Masroor as saying.

Assadullah Saadati, the deputy head of High Council of National Reconciliation for Political Affairs, warned that divisive statements by the negotiating parties can be perilous for the country. The two sides teams formed the "contact groups" on the opening day of the Intra-Afghan talks on September 12. The contact groups have held five meetings so far to discuss rules and regulations as well as the agenda of the negotiations.

The regulations for the talks initially had 23 articles and were later reduced to 20 which might still change in due course of time.

The attempted takeover of Sabah was reminiscent of how Muhyiddin took power in March after defecting from the reformist government to

a new Malay-centric administration. Muhyiddin's alliance has since taken control of many states after lawmakers defected. The opposition now controls only Sabah and two of the country's richest states, Selangor and Penang. But Muhyiddin has been struggling to maintain support amid infighting in his coalition that has just a slim two-seat majority.

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The king has power to appoint a new prime minister or dissolve Parliament for early general elections. Muhyiddin has said Anwar's declaration was a mere allegation until he provides evidence. Muhyiddin has campaigned heavily in Sabah, particularly in the state of Tawau.

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The Sabah election is heavily contested with 447 candidates vying for 73 state seats.

the aggravated levels of violence against journalists and other information practitioners, including murders and attacks'.

This official disregard to violence against the media and its practitioners is a direct contributor to the high levels of impunity that attackers and intimidators enjoy in Pakistan, putting the country in the list of top 10 most dangerous places in the world to practice journalism, the media watchdog said.

He urged Prime Minister Khan to "urgently materialise his promise" to table a special law on safety of journalists and information practitioners.

The press statement mentioned that the bill has been drafted by the government but has been pending for a long time now.

The watchdog recalled

For more updates www.thestatesman.com**THE STOIC**

Gareth Bale (in photo, left) insists he has "no regrets" about leaving Real Madrid to return to Tottenham. The winger joined Spurs last week on a season-long loan, having left the Premier League club for Real in 2013 for a then world-record fee. "No I don't have any regrets, no," Bale told Sky Sports.

THUMBNAILS

Cap-holding duo: Hard-hitting batsman Faf du Plessis of Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals speedster Kagiso Rabada hold the Orange and Purple Caps, respectively, at the end of Friday's Indian Premier League match between the two teams in Dubai, it is said.

Formal clothing: Sri Lanka Cricket signed a three-year agreement with a company, choosing it as the official formal clothing sponsor of different categories of national teams. The agreement was signed and exchanged Mohan de Silva, secretary, representing SLC.

Match forfeited: Officialdom has confirmed that Leyton Orient have forfeited their Carabao Cup tie against Tottenham. The match, scheduled for 22 September, was called off after "a number of first-team players" at Orient tested positive for the coronavirus.

Game scuppered: Chelsea's League Two fixture against Grimsby has been called off after a Mariners player tested positive for the coronavirus. Grimsby players and staff have been forced to self-isolate, telling the league they will not be able to carry on safely.

Jesus out: Brazil's Gabriel Jesus will be sidelined for next month's World Cup qualifiers after being injured in Manchester City's Premier League match at Wolverhampton. Jesus would be replaced by Matheus Cunha for the matches against Bolivia and Peru.

No slips: Swedish pole-vaulter Armand Duplantis completed a perfect season when he beat world champion Sam Kendricks at the Doha Diamond League meeting on Friday. The 20-year-old won all 16 of his meetings in 2020 besides twice breaking the world record.

New role: Neetu David, one of India's finest woman cricketers in the late '90s and early 2000s, has been appointed chairman of the women's selection committee replacing Hemalata Kala, the BCCI announced on Saturday.

'Utmost excitement': The captain of Kings XI Punjab (KXIP) KL Rahul, in a tete-a-tete with InsideSport's "Amstrad Face 2 Face Cricket Series", opened up about his time in the lockdown and the return of cricket. KL Rahul started the discussion expressing his exuberance on the fact that cricket has resumed. He said, "We are very excited and happy that we are getting to do what we love."

Good work: The work continued inside the Repsol Honda Team box, Alex Marquez taking 18th in Qualifying with Stefan Bradl a few tenths behind. Despite the cold temperatures, Alex Marquez was one of the first riders to improve his time in FP3 as he worked to remain in the top ten. Improving to a 1'40.283, good enough for 12th on the MotoGP grid here last year, the MotoGP rookie missed a Q2 spot by just 0.4s.

Positive test

KOLKATA, 26 SEPTEMBER

A Mohammedan Sporting Club footballer was today said to have tested positive for Covid-19 though the squad had been in a bio-secure bubble at Kalyani ahead of their second division 1-League matches. A source in the club named Tirthankar Sarkar as the victim. In another development, Mohun Bagan today left for Goa, where they would go into mandatory isolation for the Indian Super League, the schedule of which was yet to be announced. SNS

Buttler back in Royals XI for Kings XI Punjab showdown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SHARJAH, 26 SEPTEMBER

Sanjay Samson will like to continue his dream form while the presence of Jos Buttler (in photo, right) puts Rajasthan Royals on even keel with Kings XI Punjab in an IPL game which promises to be yet another six-hitting contest.

Coming into the match after morale-boosting victories, both KXIP and the Royals would look to build a winning momentum after starting the tournament as underdogs.

Buttler, who missed the first match due to quarantine rules as he reached the UAE separately with his family, is expected to open alongside Yashashvi Jaiswal while Steve Smith will take David Miller's position in the batting order. Tom Curran and Jofra Archer will again complete the four-player overseas quota.

"I am really excited to play my first game, it was great to be back in training with the boys, there's a great vibe around the team so I'm really looking forward to taking the field," Buttler said on the eve of the match.

"The atmosphere and energy around the squad is fantastic, obviously lots of confidence after that first game. The training has been very energetic, guys are lively and enjoying each other's company. So expecting a really tough match against Kings XI," Buttler said after a net session at Sharjah ground.

KL Rahul, touted as a future India captaincy material, plumped for a Andrew McDonald decided to try out rookie Kartik Tyagi or seasoned Varun Aaron in Unadkat's place keeping his lack of pace and short boundaries in mind.

RR vs Kings XI: Match begins at 7.30 pm IST.



We need to come back with clearer picture: Dhoni

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Two consecutive defeats have left Chennai Super Kings reeling and skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni (in photo) is contemplating re-jigging the combination, saying they are lacking steam and need to come back with a clearer picture for the next IPL games. CSK, one of the most dominant teams in the history of IPL, have lost two of the three games they have played with the latest being a 44-run thrashing at the hands of Delhi Capitals.

"I don't think it was a good game for us. There was no dew, but the wicket did slow down. We are lacking a bit of steam in the batting and that hurts. The run rate keeps on mounting after such slow starts and



adds pressure, we need to figure that out," Dhoni said after the match against Capitals on Friday night.

"We need to come back with a clearer picture, looking at the combination. Maybe, the team balance will get better once (Ambati) Rayudu comes back in the next game."

Rayudu, who struck a brilliant 48-ball 71 in CSK's five-

wicket win over MI in the tournament-opener, missed the next two games due to a hamstring injury.

The CSK captain expressed hope that Rayudu will be available in their next game.

"That will give us the room to experiment with an extra bowler perhaps. There are quite a few things we can think about. We are one batter extra to start off, so the players need to step up."

Dhoni also asked his bowlers to pull up their socks after two ordinary outings.

"We need to get better with our lengths, lines and pace. I think the spinners have not come to the party yet. We are bowling good deliveries, but we are giving away the boundary deliveries bit too often," he said.

After US Open, Thiem hopes for a 'bonus'

AGENCIES
PARIS, 26 SEPTEMBER

It took Dominic Thiem (in photo) 26 attempts to win his first Grand Slam title and now with the US Open crown in his collection, he admits what follows next will be "abulous." The 27-year-old Austrian will be hoping to make it back-to-back major triumphs at Roland Garros which gets under way tomorrow.

Should world number one, and 2016 champion, Novak Djokovic, or 12-time winner Rafael Nadal unexpectedly falter, it is Thiem who is most likely to benefit. "I felt great coming here because I've achieved such a big goal. I mean, at one point whatever comes now is somehow a bonus," the world number three said. "On the other hand, I want to do the best I can in every single tournament I play. Especially here in Roland Garros, I had four crazy years with two semi-finals, two finals. I love the conditions here. I love the whole tournament."

Thiem has lost the last two

finals in Paris to Nadal as well as the 2017 semi-final against the Spaniard. He also fell at the last-four stage to Djokovic in 2016. Thiem missed the Italian Open in Rome in the immediate aftermath of his victory in New York. That left him without a claycourt tennis since a quarter-final run in Rio back in February before the coronavirus brought the season to a halt. Like Nadal, Thiem has also expressed reservations over the new Wilson ball being used at Roland Garros this year.

Nadal complained they are too heavy and could cause physical damage. "I practised two days at home with the

ball. Now, of course, here. I'm little bit sad because the Babolat at Roland Garros, it was my favourite ball, it was perfect," explained Thiem. Former champion Simona Halep arrives at the rescheduled French Open as the player to beat in a women's draw missing title holder Ashleigh Barty and US Open champion Naomi Osaka.

Two of the world's top three women's tennis players will not be in Paris, while world No. 7 Bianca Andreescu and 10th-ranked Belinda Bencic will also be giving the Grand Slam a miss.

That makes Halep the heavy favourite to add a second French Open title to her Grand Slam cabinet when the tournament starts tomorrow. The world No. 2 is brimming with confidence on the back of a 14-match winning streak and fighting fit, having skipped the US hard-court swing due to Covid-19 fears. She has spent the past few weeks honing her game on clay and recent titles in Prague and Rome appear to vindicate her decision not to play at Flushing Meadows.

Disciplined KKR attack restrict SRH to 142/4

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ABU DHABI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Kolkata Knight Riders put up a disciplined effort with Pat Cummins brilliantly spearheading the attack to restrict Sunrisers Hyderabad to a modest 142 for four in their IPL fixture here on Saturday.

Having drawn flak for bowling short against Mumbai Indians, the IPL's most expensive overseas buy returned tidy figures of 1/19, while spinner Varun Chakravarthy (1/25) outfoxed the dangerous David Warner to derail SRH early on.

Manish Pandey (in photo) returned to form at No. 3 with a 38-ball 51 and along with Wriddhiman Saha (30 off 31 balls), tried to repair the damage but the duo were dismissed at the death and SRH lacked the finishing touch to settle for a seemingly below-par total.

Unlike their last match against Mumbai Indians, KKR looked more intent and aggressive with their approach, having brought in Sunil Narine

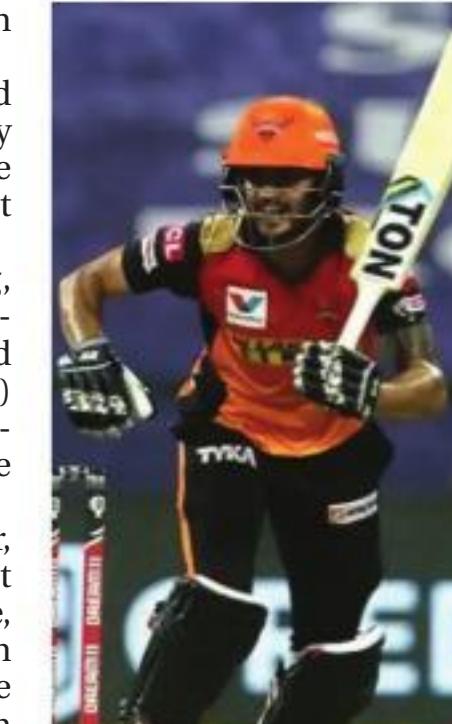
and Cummins up front with the new ball.

Cummins smartly altered his length and bowled Jonny Bairstow with an absolute ripper to give KKR the first breakthrough.

In his second coming, architect-turned mystery spinner Chakravarthy dismissed a well-set Warner (36 off 30) in a soft manner for his maiden IPL wicket, giving KKR the big breakthrough.

The Australian left-hander, who got out cheaply against Royal Challengers Bangalore, looked to make a mark with some clean hits, but a lapse in concentration did him in and he spooned a simple catch to Chakravarthy.

The two wickets meant that SRH could not step up the



Sunrisers Hyderabad innings:	
Warner (c) and b	Chakravarthy 36
Jonny Bairstow (wk) b Cummins	5
Pandey c and b Russell	51
Saha run out	30
Nabi not out	11
Sharma not out	2
Extras: 7 (b, 2, lb 2, w 3, nb 0, p, 0)	
Total:	142 (4 wkt, 20 Ov)
Bowling:	Narine 4-0-31-0, Cummins 4-0-19-1, Mavi 2-0-15-0, Yadav 2-0-15-0, Chakravarthy 4-0-25-1, Negarkoti 2-0-17-0, Russell 2-0-16-1

momentum and at the halfway mark, at 61 for two, the run-rate was just above six.

SCOREBOARD

Although the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games has been negotiating with the International Olympic Committee over the simplification of the Games since April - when it was decided the events would be postponed - their discussions revealed the difficulty inherent in the attempt. Of about 200 proposals made by both sides, only 52 were found effective in terms of cost cutting.

During the negotiations, the organising committee tried also to decide on venues and dates after the postponement of the Games, the first such instance in history. By the end of last year, costs for the Tokyo Games had been cut by about ¥470 billion (\$4.45 billion) by promoting the use of existing venues in line with the IOC's policy of cutting costs.

Cutting costs further was like

wringing out a dry rag," according to a senior member of the organising committee. However, for the latest review, reducing the level of services provided for those involved in the Games, including IOC members, reducing decorations at venues, and other cost-cutting measures that were thought to be difficult for the Games in the past were on the agenda.

Drastic cost-cutting plans were not easy to adopt. There was also talk of holding the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics and Paralympics together, in addition to shortening the time for the cere-

monies, but these proposals failed to gain the support of the IOC and the broadcasting rights-holders.

For the torch relay, delaying the start in order to allow more time to take measures against the coronavirus and shortening the schedule were also on the agenda. However, the number of days (121 days), the route and the number of runners (more than 10,000) will be kept as initially scheduled in consideration of the wishes of prefectures, which worked for a long time to arrange the event.

"It's inappropriate to simply scrap the plan," said Toshiro Muto (in photo), chief executive officer of the organising committee. However, the organising committee plans to continue its efforts to simplify the Games until its opening as some costs could be reduced by avoiding extravagant displays in the opening and closing ceremonies and through other measures.

F1: Hamilton takes pole

SOCHI, 26 SEPTEMBER

Lewis Hamilton took a step closer to equaling the Formula One win record on Saturday by clinching pole position at the Russian Grand Prix, after narrowly avoiding early elimination when Sebastian Vettel crashed. Hamilton charged to a track-record time of 1 minute, 31.304 seconds, beating the Red Bull of Max Verstappen by .563 for his fifth straight pole position. Hamilton can achieve his 91st career win in the race on Sunday, matching the record held by Michael Schumacher. Hamilton's Mercedes teammate, Valtteri Bottas, was beaten into third by Verstappen's fast run at the end of the session and was .652 off Hamilton's time. The long run from the grid to the first significant turn means Bottas could yet threaten to overtake Hamilton at the start Sunday using the slipstream from his teammate's car.

AGENCIES

Maidan giants dwarfed in new age of cash crunch

PULKESH MUKHOPADHYAY

If and when Mohammedan Sporting Club tell us whomsoever will sponsor or invest in them for whatever length of time, Kolkata football will perhaps have completed a cycle of newly-forged partnerships, what with Mohun Bagan having latched on to an upstart Johnny-come-lately and East Bengal deciding to ride piggyback on a cement-making company.

This is said to be taken progress in an "increasingly professional" world, ignoring which portends death.

"Look at the way others are going about it" is the aggressive riposte when anyone wonders aloud about the traditional giants of the Maidan getting reduced to pygmies, beholden to money given quite obviously with strings attached.

It was the right way for

ward, as we are being told, the destination is a piece of classified information. Do they really have one? Is it the I-League or the Indian Super League? Is it the limit of their ambitions? Does anyone even consider the Asian circuit as a target?

Or, is it actually about club officials not being able to raise enough cash any more and trying to unburden themselves by passing the financial buck to a corporate entity kind enough to part with cash for its own reasons? The fact that the directorial boards that form after the flavour-of-the-season mergers put the club representation down to a mere two or three about indicates a question of sheer survival inherent in the change, in more senses than one.

the alliances seldom suggest any long-term future. Those who come in, get out in due course with the revolving door keeping rolling. And that is the history book.

The world's biggest clubs

carry on today because they had their own think-tanks doing their work yesterday. The Kolkata big duo never really understood the failure of their financial templates until after the crash, having always been deaf to warnings.

And the money that will

come through now will never suffice as they actually need much more than they can come by. The clubs have no stadiums, no youth development infrastructure, after all. Football is all about Europe, rich and resourceful, now and South America has superstars who are for all practical purposes performers on the European stage. These are complexities that are hardly allowed to tax Maidan minds.

The financial side of the game is so overwhelmingly favourable to those who can put a lot more in than a lot others put together that Kolkata is once again permitting itself the mistake that when one Bangalore-based company took over both the big clubs.

When something like that is taking place, you read low thinking into it. Just getting by, and not trying to hit the big time. It is not really progress. Nor is it professional.

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