

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
VISAKHAPATNAM | THURSDAY | 10 SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER

Max: 35.6°C
Min: 27.2°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: Trace
Forecast: Mist.
Max/Min temp.
35/27°C

COVID-19
COUNT

CASES

DEATHS

(+97,760)

(+1,126)

44,61,603

75,050

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,479)

(+10)

TS: 1,47,642

916

(+10,418)

(+74)

AP: 5,27,512

4,634

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,78,98,860

DEATHS

9,04,710

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

IN BRIEF

France calls India strategic partner

New Delhi: France has described India as its "foremost" Asian strategic partner and said the upcoming visit of its defence minister Florence Parly to the country is aimed at further strengthening the "forward-looking" defence cooperation with New Delhi.

WORLD | 5

UK PM bans large gatherings as Covid cases rise

BUSINESS | 7

India set to exceed borrowing target

SPORTS | 8

Ronaldo second to score 100 intl goals

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NGT tells state to secure green nod for lift projects

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the AP government to get environmental clearance for three lift irrigation projects — Purushottapatnam, Pattiseema and Chinthalapudi — coming up in the East and West Godavari districts. NGT's principal bench, comprising its chairman justice Adarsha Kumar Goel, justice S. P. Wangdi and justice Nagin Nanda, in a hearing held in New Delhi on Wednesday, agreed with opinion of the Union ministry of Jal Shakti and expert committee that these three lift schemes were not part of the Polavaram irrigation project. It observed that as Pattiseema and Chinthalapudi lift schemes were in operation, environmental clearance for them must be obtained immediately, though without stopping their functioning. However, the bench instructed the state government not to go ahead with execution and operation of Purushottapatnam lift scheme.

■ Page 2: NGT orders state to pay fine for violation

State wings rely on outsourcing staff

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 9

In utter disregard to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's vision to eliminate middlemen in recruitment of outsourcing personnel, several state government departments are recruiting outsourced employees through private agencies. Though the government constituted an APCOS governing body with senior IAS officers covering all the line departments, several government departments are ignoring APCOS guidelines.

YSR ASARA LAUNCH ON SEPT. 11

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

YSR Asara, yet another populist welfare scheme as part of YSRC Navaratnalu flagship programmes, meant to help women, will be launched by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday. It is expected to free lakhs of women from their debt-trap.

For decades, lakhs of

majority of government departments are not enrolled with APCOS and continue to maintain their outsourced employees through private agencies. Even a year since the one-of-its-kind Andhra Pradesh Corporation for Outsourced Services (APCOS) had come up a

■ Page 2: CM for verifying private staff, says official

women hailing from poor families have been forced to take loans to cope with the ever escalating costs towards education, health care, elderly care, daily needs, and other emergencies. This has resulted in them getting into a vicious cycle of debts due to their incapability to cope with the exorbitant rates of interest.

■ Full report on Page 2

Indians take over new peaks, situation tense

Chinese lose tactical advantage at north bank of Pangong also

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

In the latest move, the Indian Army reportedly occupied heights on the north bank of Pangong Tso which overlook Chinese positions on the ridgelines in the Finger 4 area. This means that the Indian Army now has tactical advantage on both, north and south banks of the Pangong Tso.

Mountain warfare is all about dominating the heights, and since they have come under the Indian Army's control, there are reports that China has started building up its forces on the north bank of Pangong Tso and is trying to come closer to the Indian position at Finger 4.

The whole Pangong Tso area in the Ladakh sector is on edge with expectation of some kind of action from the Chinese Army to regain lost ground on the south of the lake where India had in a pre-emptive move occupied two dozen strategic heights.

What has added to the tension is the fact that now all the action in the Pangong Tso area is being

Indians deeply entrenched on strategic heights

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC HYDERABAD SEPT. 9

Positioned at a vantage point, well-equipped soldiers of the Indian Army are operating from trenches with overhead protection at heights they took control of more than 10 days ago, with ample time for them to consolidate their positions.

The options before the People's Liberation Army to regain control of those heights are limited — either an air strike or send their infantry up which could come with huge costs. To take on one platoon of the Indian Army sitting pretty on those heights, they would need 10 of their platoons.

■ Full report on Page 4

controlled directly by the commanders in Beijing and it's no longer in the hands of local PLA officers.

To put pressure on India, China had also brought forward its 15-20 tanks near Spanggur Gap, a mountain pass on the LAC, between China and

Jaishankar to tell China good ties are key to peace

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is expected to tell his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sidelines of SCO foreign ministers meeting that peace on the borders is closely linked to the development of bilateral ties between the two Asian giants and that China must de-escalate by disengage its troops to restore the April status quo in the Ladakh sector. Reports from Beijing cited the Chinese foreign ministry as saying there would be a Russia-India-China trilateral foreign ministers' luncheon meeting in Moscow on Thursday.

■ Full report on Page 4

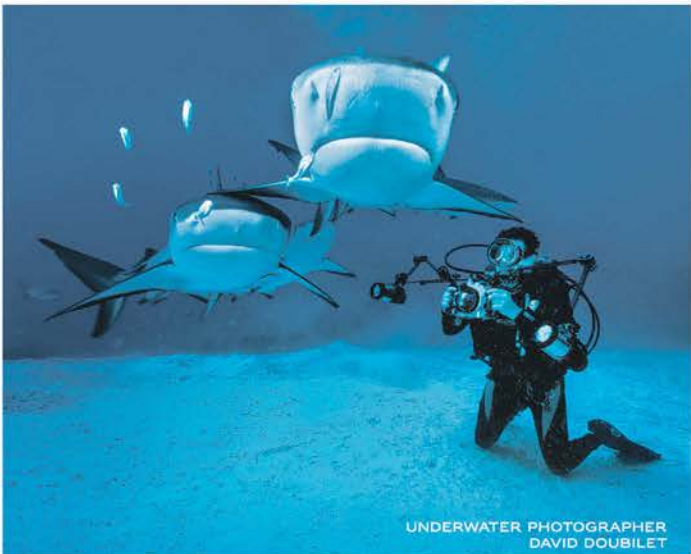
defences and put barbed wire around its positions and has warned Chinese that crossing these wires will attract strong reaction from the Indian Army. In May, the Chinese had crossed the LAC on the north bank of Pangong Tso and occupied eight km between Finger 4 and 8.



UNDERWATER EXPLORATION PIONEER SYLVIA EARLE



SUBMARINER 1000FT/300M WATER RESISTANT



UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID DOUBILET



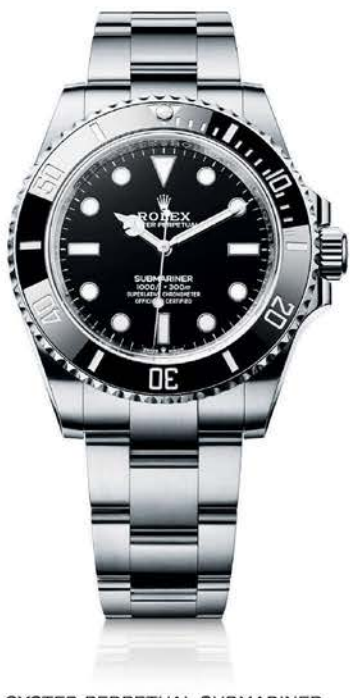
EXPLORER GHISLAIN BARDOUT



ROLEX GLIDELOCK EXTENSION SYSTEM



CALIBRE 3230



OYSTER PERPETUAL SUBMARINER

THE NEW GENERATION SUBMARINER

Built for divers in 1953, the Submariner soon set the standard, making it the ultimate watch for underwater exploration. A symbol of waterproofness and reliability, the iconic design transcended its original purpose. While remaining true to its diving heritage, the Submariner also became the watch of choice on land, and the perfect companion to mark the memorable moments in the lives of its wearers. Now, with a new 41 mm case and a next generation movement, the story of the Submariner continues.

#Perpetual



SHORT TAKES

SHIFT LEGISLATIVE CAPITAL FROM AMARAVATI: NANI

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

Irked by opposition parties' attempts to scuttle the government's efforts to acquire land to distribute house sites among the poor in Amaravati, minister for civil supplies Kodali Venkateswara Rao alias Nani said that he had asked Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy to remove legislature capital from Amaravati. "When there is no chance for poor people to live in that area, there is no point in having Amaravati as legislative capital of the state," he reasoned.

Mr Venkateswara Rao said that the government had proposed to give house sites to 55,000 people in Amaravati, but the opposition Telugu Desam and farmers were creating hurdles. "What is the use of developing Amaravati into a legislature capital when there is no place for all sections of the people," the minister said and added he met the CM and asked him to shift legislature capital from Amaravati.

Bristled up by the minister's statement, pro Amaravati farmers alleged that the YSRC was trying to turn Amaravati into a big slum like Dharavi in Mumbai by allotting house sites to the poor.

AMARAVATI TO HOST LEGISLATIVE CAPITAL: BOTSA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEP. 9

Minister for municipal administration Botsa Satyanarayana affirmed that the government had never said it would shift legislative capital from Amaravati. He clarified that 'capital is an area for all communities and it is not right to deny house titles to the poor in the capital region. He laid the foundation stone for the construction of an RUB with an approach road near Madhuranagar railway station at Vijayawada on Wednesday. He said that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy was committed for the development of Vijayawada city in all aspects.

YSRC MLA UNVEILS NTR STATUE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

Proving that TD founder late N.T.Rama Rao enjoyed support and admiration from leaders regardless of their political affiliations, ruling YSRC Congress MLA Annabattuni Siva Kumar unveiled the state of the former chief minister at Tenali on Wednesday. The statue was restored to its original state recently. Unveiling it, the MLA observed that NTR was a great leader and held in high esteem by people of all sections.

40 YSRC MLAS ARE CORRUPT, SAYS LOKESH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

Telugu Desam MLC Nara Lokesh on Wednesday threatened that they would pay back the ruling YSRC Congress with interest for political harassment and attacks on party leaders. "We have evidence of the involvement of 40 YSRC Congress MLAs in corruption in land acquisition and leveling works for distribution of house sites among the homeless poor. The MLAs and officials who aided them will one day go to jail," he said.

Mr Lokesh, former minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao and Vijayawada East MLA Gadde Rammoan called on former minister Kollu Ravindra at the latter's residence here. Mr Ravindra got bail recently in a murder case.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Lokesh accused the Jagan government of forgetting about its welfare promises in its pursuit of imposing 'fascist Raja Reddy constitution' on the people. He alleged that false cases were being filed against those raising their voice against atrocities and unlawful activities of the ruling party. He further alleged that fabricated cases were filed against Kollu Ravindra, K. Atchannaidu, J.C. Prabhakar Reddy and others.

Over 36 TD leaders including former ministers and MLAs were implicated in false cases.

Jagan to launch flagship progamme Asara tomorrow

It is expected to free lakhs of women from their debt-trap

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

YSR Asara, yet another populist welfare scheme as part of YSRC Navaratnalu flagship programmes, meant to help women, will be launched by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday. It is expected to free lakhs of women from their debt-trap.

For decades now, lakhs of women hailing from poor families have been forced to take loans to cope with the ever escalating costs towards education, health care, elderly care, daily needs, and other emergencies. This has resulted in them getting into a vicious cycle of debts due to their incapability to cope with the exorbitant rates of interest. The Chief Minister observed these pangs of agony during his Praja Sankalpa Yatra.

YSR Asara scheme has been incorporated as one of the schemes in the Government's flagship programme of Navaratnalu as the Chief Minister had promised to

Anganwadis to get facelift under Nadu-Nedu scheme

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

Chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said Anganwadi centers will get major facelift under Nadu-Nedu scheme and directed the officials not to compromise on quality. During a review meeting held here on Wednesday, he directed the education department officials to

study the curriculum in kindergarten schools and ensure the best practices were implemented at Anganwadi centers as well. Facilities like toilets with running water, drinking water, minor/major repairs, kitchen, refrigerator, furniture, green chalkboard, 55 inch TV sets, paintings on the walls and a play zone would be ready in

Anganwadi centres.

Mr Jagan said a mobile app called SAADHANNA was developed to impart the training through online for Anganwadi workers, helpers, Mahila Shakti Kendras supervisors in spoken English. Steps should be taken to open YSR Pre Primary (PP-1 and PP-2) schools in the second week of November, he said.

ensure economic progress of SHG members.

Thumma Vijay Kumar Reddy, Commissioner, I&PR, State-level Task Force Committee, said that the Jagan Mohan Reddy had promised that the government would reimburse all the outstanding loans taken by women members of self-help groups belonging to

the SC, ST, BC, and minority communities as on 11.4.2019 in four installments. Consequently, when the sum of the outstanding loans as on the cut-off date was calculated, the result showed a staggering ₹27,168.83 crore.

In the first phase, the Chief Minister will on Friday release ₹6,792.20

crore, benefiting 8,71,302 self-help groups (SHG) under YSR Asara scheme. The beneficiaries include 21.70% SCs, 3.78% STs, 47.95% BCs, 15.02% and 11.55% others.

The members of SHGs would be invited to their respective Village/Ward Secretariats where a programme would be held in a festive environment and

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● The Government has decided to directly deposit amounts towards loan waiver in the unencumbered bank accounts

the Chief Minister will address the beneficiaries.

The Government has decided to directly deposit amounts towards loan waiver in the unencumbered bank accounts of respective SHGs through SC, ST, BC, EBC, Kapu, Minority and Christian Corporations. The entire ₹27,168.83 crore dues would be directly deposited in a span of four years.

CM FOR VERIFYING PRIVATE STAFF, SAYS OFFICIAL

FROM PAGE 1

However, departments like Endowments, Panchayat Raj and Rural Development, Municipal Administration have not deputed their existing outsourced employees to APCOS. A large number of private outsourced employees are working in various temples of the Endowment Department. Meanwhile, AP Eastern Power Distribution and Southern Power Distribution Companies, AP Transmission Company have directed circle-level authorities to recruit about 1,000 shift operator posts through private agencies.

Recently, APEPDCL has issued directions to superintending engineers for recruitment of about 300 shift operators on a contract basis offering ₹15,000 per month. Some influential people in the government and MLAs are pressuring department heads to continue the private agency system to ensure appointments to their followers.

APCOS, with the administrative control of AP General Administration Department, has issued directions to all the secretariat departments, state head of departments, PSUs, aided institutions, organisations, universities, societies, autonomous bodies, semi-autonomous bodies, district-level offices, and others to stop outsourcing private agencies, contractors, and middlemen and to migrate the existing outsourced persons to APCOS.

The APCOS issued a blanket d ban on private agencies, middlemen in future recruitment of outsourced persons.

"Yes, we have noticed several departments have not been following government guidelines. Endowments, Energy, Panchayat Raj, and Rural Development, Municipal Administration, and other such departments are not even consulting us," said an official.

PEDALANDARIKI ILLU IN 2 YEARS, SAYS MINISTER

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

Minister for housing Ch. Sriranganatha Raju said that the government was planning to complete the construction of houses in the next two years under the YSRC government's flagship Pedalandariki Illu housing programme. He conducted a review meeting with the housing officials of the 13 districts here on Wednesday. Addressing the meeting, Mr Raju said that 30 lakh house pattas would be distributed soon in 13 districts.

The minister stated that 25 to 50 model houses would be constructed in every district. He directed the officials to make arrangements for the completion of layouts

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Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy flags off Kisan rail from Anantapur to New Delhi on Wednesday.

Secular PK turns religious savvy

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan, who used to boast about his secular credentials, seems to be trying to invoke religious sentiments after forging an alliance with the BJP. This gains credence from his recent statements.

He raised protest on desecration of idols of Durga Devi, Vinayaka and Saibaba at Pithapuram in East Godavari and burning of chariots of Lord Venkateswara at Konda Bitragunta in Nellore district and also of Lakshmi Narasimha at Antarvedi in East Godavari recently.

He lost his lone MLA Rapaka Vara Prasada Rao elected from Razole Assembly segment in East Godavari. The legislator, who attributed credit to Pawan Kalyan for his election, distanced himself from the party president and supported YSRC Congress claiming that he was impressed by a series of welfare schemes initiated by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

With no much benefit through caste politics and also after sailing with Left, the Jana Sena chief switched to nationalism and joined BJP and now seems to be going along with the communal agenda for his political survival. He took objection to devotees' silence when such mishaps were taking place and said that they were doing so only to protect their secular identity.

On the change of trustee for Vizianagaram-based Maharaja Alak Narayana Society of Arts and Science with a non-Hindu defying established norms, he wondered whether such a practice could be allowed in non-Hindu societies and trusts.

He blamed the government and the previous governments for failing to protect Hindu dharma affecting the religious sentiments of millions of Hindus and demanded a probe with a retired judge into the causes that led to accidents in temples.

Social media abuzz

Meanwhile, Pawan Kalyan's anti-Hindu stance during electioneering has gone viral on social media.

PK said "Muslim leaders talk about India in foreign countries, including in the Gulf but not Hindus. Political leaders mainly from Hindu communities adopt divisive politics. If Hindu Dharma is to be protected in Tirumala, local political leaders and officials can do so. But some political leaders mainly from Hindu community stir up trouble to divide the vote-bank. I have been hearing from my childhood that the fabric of secularism was affected by Hindus only. I know what I say will hurt some big leaders but I don't hesitate to speak the truth."

Pvt doctors accuse AP govt of targeting them

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

Private doctors associated with Indian Medical Association have complained that despite providing treatment to patients affected by Covid-19 in the state, the state government was targeting them on trivial grounds.

Referring to a recent case wherein a private doctor at Eluru was arrested on

charges of flouting Coronavirus norms by overcharging a patient during treatment, they said the arrest was against norms. The district administration did not constitute a medical board to thoroughly inquire into the charges. Action could be taken based on findings of the board. However, nothing of this sort was done. The Eluru doctor was arrested based on a frivolous com-

plaint, produced before a court and sent to judicial remand. The doctor has finally been able to come out on bail.

The private doctors said similar attempts were made by the district administration to arrest another private doctor based in Bhimavaram. However, authorities backed off after doctors resisted such a move. They doctors maintained that such moves will

only demoralise doctors and might force them to discontinue treating patients.

A senior official of IMA, AP Chapter, said, "As the state government insisted, private hospitals started providing health care to Covid-19 patients. Given the high risk involved in treating the infected patients and many doctors backing out, private hospitals paid more wages to

Oppn politicising chariot incident, says minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

Endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao on Wednesday said that though the government acted quickly and ordered probe into the torching of the chariot at Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple in Antarvedi and suspended the officials concerned, the opposition parties were trying to politicise the issue. He accused Chandrababu Naidu, Somu Veeraju of BJP and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan of spreading false propaganda against the state government.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, Mr Srinivas Rao said that the government sanctioned ₹95 lakh for a new ratham which would be ready for Rathotsavam in February 2021.

The police and forensic experts were probing the incident and would bring the facts out soon and take action against those involved.

Mr Srinivas Rao stated that the state government would take suggestions from VHP or Swamijis on how to deal with the Antarvedi incident, but would not tolerate any attempts to whip up public emotions. He affirmed that all the religions were equal for the government and would not allow any kind of attacks on places of worship. He said that the opposition Telugu Desam demolished 40 temples during Krishna Pushkaralu and questioned the silence of BJP leaders then. He stated that it was Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy who issued orders for the reconstruction of those temples.

He alleged that the previous TD government issued a GO secretly to sell TTD lands. But it was the YSRC government which reversed it to safeguard the temple lands. Terming the Antarvedi incident as unfortunate, he said that some temple properties like chariot were kept outside the temple premises.

Naidu demands CBI probe into chariot torching

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

Telugu Desam chief Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday condemned attacks on places of worship of different religions in the state and demanded a CBI inquiry.

He alleged that chariots of temples were burnt, priests were coming under attack and propagation of other religions was being allowed by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams. He also expressed concern over 'illegal' takeover of Simhachalam temple

board. Mr Naidu blamed the attacks on the 'egoistic and tyrannical' attitude of the ruling YSRC and stressed the need for CBI probe to bring culprits to book and protect the sanctity of religious bodies. "AP is progressive and pluralistic with people of different faiths co-existing peacefully. However, under the tyrannical YSRC regime, people are now fearful of a continuous state-sponsored attacks on their faiths. More than 20 such attacks have occurred," he alleged.

BJP men on way to Antarvedi arrested

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 9

A couple of BJP leaders including MLC P.V.N. Madhav and former MLA and floor leader P. Vishnu Kumar Raju were arrested at Tuni in East Godavari and later freed on self bond. They were proceeding to Antarvedi to stage a protest against the burning of the chariot.

The police also arrested Parasarama Raju, Prakash Reddy and two others. They were released after producing a self bond.

Meanwhile MLC Vakati Narayana Reddy expressed concern over regular attacks on Hindu temples, he spoke to media in Nellore on Wednesday.

NGT ORDERS STATE GOVERNMENT TO PAY FINE FOR VIOLATION

FROM PAGE 1

NGT directed that a committee be constituted comprising officials from the Union ministry of environment, collectors of East and West Godavari districts, and officials from both central and AP pollution control boards to fix the fine and compensation for operation and execution of the three lift schemes without environmental clearance. It underlined that the fine and compensation be recovered within six months from the state government.

The tribunal said the action taken report must be submitted in six months and posted the

case for next hearing on April 12.

Former Congress minister Vatti Vasantha Kumar had filed the writ petition in the NGT stating that the three lift schemes would affect the Godavari delta region. Similarly, farmers M. Satyanaryana, M. Ramakrishna, J. Choudhary and J. V. Raju also filed petitions opposing the three lift schemes, as they would affect the interests of other farmers.

Petitioners' counsel Sravan Kumar argued in favour of the farmers while senior advocate Venkata Ramani represented the AP government during the hearing at the NGT.



ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Bhadrpada Bahula
 Ashtami till 3.33 am (Friday)
Star: Rohini till 1.34 pm
Variyam: 4.47 am to 6.32 am;
 7.35 pm to 9.18 pm
Durmuhurtam: 10.11 am to
 11 am; 3.04 pm to 3.53 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Muharram 21, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.50 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 4.45 pm

Maghrib: 6.15 pm

Isha: 8.15 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.04 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.44 AM

MOONRISE TOMORROW 11.33 PM

MOONSET TODAY 00.10 AM

COUNTER POINT



No breaking news?
Go and provoke
Kangana!

IN BRIEF

4 of a family end
lives by suicide

Visakhapatnam: Four persons of family, including two children were found dead in a lodge in Vizag city on Wednesday night.

They were identified as B. Appalaraju, 52, and his wife B. Manasa, 27, and their children B. Satwik, 7, and B. Keerthi, 6. The police are suspecting that Appalaraju poisoned his wife and children to death and later committed suicide by hanging in the room. Three bodies were found lying in the room while one was hanging from the ceiling fan in the room of lodge. The preliminary investigation revealed that Appalaraju was a native of Pendurthi area in Vizag city and was a real estate agent. Appalaraju had been staying in the lodge for past few weeks while his wife and children joined him last week. The police are suspecting that financial difficulties might be the reason for the suicide pact. The police claimed that they recovered a suicide note from the scene in which Appalaraju mentioned that financial crisis was the reason for suicide.

Boy ends life over
phone-chat issue

Visakhapatnam: A 19-year-old ended his life by suicide near Simhachalam area and in front of East Point Golf Club in Vizag city on Wednesday. He did not leave any suicide note but his family members said the teenager took extreme step after his sister warned him not use mobile phone continuously. The police said Pamparaboina Vamsi, came to Visakhapatnam after he was fed up with his step mother in Narsipatnam. He began working in a pharmacy store for a few months and resigned after the lockdown was eased. He remained at home but constantly chatting over his phone. His sister and brother-in-law warned him several times to stop chatting. Recently the handset fell and Vamsi asked his sister for its repair. After she refused to pay, he borrowed money and got it repaired. On Tuesday, his sister seriously warned him. Vamsi left home and ended life.

SEVEN HILLS | DIARY

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, SEPT. 9

While commercial establishments and other businesses across the country have opened up with centre further relaxing its lockdown restrictions, the hill town of Tirumala is still waiting to achieve normalcy in business.

Shops and businesses had closed following the lockdown due to Coronavirus pandemic. Even though Lord Venkateswara's

AP records 74 more
Covid-19 deaths

9,842 patients discharged after recovery from various hospitals

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 9

Andhra Pradesh has registered 10,418 new Covid-19 cases increasing its overall tally to 5,27,512 and with 74 deaths the toll has touched 4,634 in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities released the latest bulletin here on Wednesday reporting that out of 71,692 samples tested, 10,418 individuals have been found positive to coronavirus. Out of 43,08,762 samples tested so far in the state, 4,25,607 patients have been discharged after recovery while 97,271 patients are undergoing treatment in various hospitals.

Among new infections, East Godavari continues to lead the state with 1,399 followed by 1,271 in Prakasam, 1,134 in West Godavari, 949 in Nellore, 887 in Chittoor, 801 in Anantapur, 785 in Kadapa, 707 in Guntur, 660 in Srikakulam, 577 in Vizianagaram, 484 in Kurnool, 414 in Visakhapatnam and 350 in Krishna.

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East Godavari continues to be affected badly with the highest number of cumulative positive cases at 71,085 followed by 49,700 in Kurnool, 47,126 in Anantapur, 46,109 in West Godavari, 45,501 in Chittoor, 42,309 in Guntur, 42,032 in Visakhapatnam, 40,218 Nellore, 33,514 in Kadapa, 32,221 in Prakasam, 29,708 in Srikakulam, 25,680 in Vizianagaram, 19,414 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery has been good in East Godavari with 57,497 followed by 44,530 in Kurnool, 42,176 from West Godavari, 41,344 in Anantapur, 36,039 from Chittoor, 35,592 in Visakhapatnam, 33,994 in Guntur, 33,795 in Nellore, 25,298 in Kadapa, 22,650 in Srikakulam, 17,160 in Prakasam, 16,332 in Vizianagaram, 16,305 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries. Chittoor, Guntur and

West Godavari, five each in Krishna, Kurnool and Srikakulam, three in Vizianagaram and two in East Godavari.

With regard to cumulative cases of deaths, Chittoor recorded the highest number with 495 followed by 444 in Guntur, 437 in East Godavari, 406 in Kurnool, 385 in Anantapur, 371 in West Godavari, 360 in Nellore, 344 in Prakasam, 337 in Visakhapatnam, 323 in Krishna, 275 in Srikakulam, 273 in Kadapa and 184 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 9,842 patients after recovery from various hospitals.

The state has carried out Covid-19 tests on 80,688 samples per one million population and has registered Covid-19 positive rate at 12.24 while Maharashtra has tested 38,370 samples with positive rate at 19.69 and Telangana has tested 46,512 samples with positive rate at 7.94.

West Godavari, five each in Krishna, Kurnool and Srikakulam, three in Vizianagaram and two in East Godavari.

With regard to cumulative cases of deaths, Chittoor recorded the highest number with 495 followed by 444 in Guntur, 437 in East Godavari, 406 in Kurnool, 385 in Anantapur, 371 in West Godavari, 360 in Nellore, 344 in Prakasam, 337 in Visakhapatnam, 323 in Krishna, 275 in Srikakulam, 273 in Kadapa and 184 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 9,842 patients after recovery from various hospitals.

The state has carried out Covid-19 tests on 80,688 samples per one million population and has registered Covid-19 positive rate at 12.24 while Maharashtra has tested 38,370 samples with positive rate at 19.69 and Telangana has tested 46,512 samples with positive rate at 7.94.

Vizag police arrest three
in temple gold scam case

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 9

The Vizag police arrested three persons including the main accused woman in the ₹1.44 crore temple gold scam, here on Wednesday. However, the investigation revealed that the scam was worth only ₹38.2 lakh.

The Gopalapatnam police, who registered and investigated the case identified the accused as Kona Hymavathi, 39, Rambhukta Vasu, 28, and Dekka Nagendra Teja, 19. The police recovered 22 grams of gold, ₹2 lakh in cash, one KTM Duke bike, six mobile phones and some electronic gadgets from them.

It may be recalled that Simhachalam Devasthanam has filed complaint against four persons in the alleged gold scam with the Gopalapatnam police station on Monday.

Assistant executive officer Y. Srinivasa Rao of Sri Varahalakshmi Narasimha Swamy Devasthanam in the complaint mentioned that

● The Gopalapatnam police identified the accused as Kona Hymavathi, 39, Rambhukta Vasu, 28, and Dekka Nagendra Teja, 19.

Madduri Sravani from sullurpeta (Nellore) had sent mail to the Devasthanam informing that she paid money to one K. Hymavathi to purchase gold from Simhachalam temple in proposed auction and received copies of tax invoice and cash bills. She sent the copies of these along with the mail. Sravani wanted to buy gold bars and ornaments of the temple and claimed that she paid ₹1.44 crore to Hymavathi. Sravani mentioned that she didn't receive gold and Hymavathi didn't return the money.

During the scrutiny it was found that the invoice and cash bill were fake and the signature of the former executive officer of the temple D. Bhraramba was

forged. Though the transactions between Sravani and Hymavathi were personal since the Simhachalam devasthanam name was misused, the officials of the temple approached the Gopalapatnam police after the victim Sravani lodged a complaint with Sullurpeta police.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crimes) V. Suresh Babu said that their investigation has revealed that Hymavathi and her son Nagendra Teja received ₹38.2 lakh from Sravani. Hymavathi cheated Sravani in the guise of selling gold ornaments of Simhachalam temple through auction and created fake documents.

After receiving the amount from Sravani, Hymavathi cleared her loans to the tune of ₹17 lakh, purchased some gold and silver ornaments, a motorcycle and a few electronic gadgets. Rambhukta Vasu helped Hymavathi in creating the fake bills and invoices, the police added.

Tourism Centre of
Excellence in AP soon

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, SEPT. 9

Industries minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy said Indian Tourism Development Corporation has come forward to set up a Tourism Centre of Excellence in Andhra Pradesh and an MoU regarding the same will be signed soon.

The minister met ITDC chairman and managing director Kamalavardhan Rao and asked for cooperation in job opportunities and training in the tourism sector.

The ITDC chairman said they will try to increase job opportunities under the Hunar Se Rozgar Programme. Kamalavardhan Rao has positively responded to create employment opportunities in hotel management and provide special training in cooking.

The Minister has met National Thermal Power Corporation CMD Gurudeep Singh at Lodhi hotel in New Delhi and proposed to set up a centre of excellence related to NTPC at Anakapalli in Vishakhapatnam district to which the CMD has responded positively.

Later, the minister met Steel Authority of India Limited chairman and managing director Anil Kumar Choudhary and proposed to set up a centre of excellence related to steel in YSR Kadapa district and requested to provide financial assistance under corporate social responsibility.

Anil Kumar Choudhary has responded positively and said they would discuss the matter. Anil Kumar Choudhary reportedly promised the minister to provide cooperation in training for the engineering graduates who will be appearing for GATE exam and other apprentice jobs.

The Minister said the state has been planning to set up a centre of excellence in every sector under the leadership of chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

VIZAG TOPS IN AP
IN COVID HOSPITAL
MAINTENANCE

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 9

The Visakhapatnam District has stood in first place in the state in operating and maintaining Covid-19 hospitals.

The district has achieved 100 points in the tested parameters and stood in first place among all the 13 districts.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector V. Vinay Chand congratulated all the medical, para-medical, sanitation staff, other officials and employees and claimed that it is a collective effort of the people and administration.

According to the government assessment, the Visakhapatnam district has achieved number one stand in maintaining ICU and Oxygen beds and also maintained the recovery rate of Covid-19 patients at a massive scale.

Sending daily-wise reports, cleaning of washrooms, and other areas in the Covid hospitals have also recognised for the achievement. Services of doctors, nurses and other staff, and maintenance of help desk have made Vizag as number one in operating Covid-19 hospitals.

Cases cross 1k mark in Agency
Speciality hospital
at Dornala soon

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, SEPT. 9

AP government would build a 30-bedded Super speciality Hospital exclusively for Girijans at Inamukkala village in Dornala mandal of Prakasam district soon.

Prakasam Collector Pola Bhaskar has disclosed this while inspecting 10 acres of land offered by the locals for the hospital at Inamukkala on Wednesday.

He said that they have

● A 30-bedded Super Specialty Hospital exclusively for Girijans would be constructed at Inamukkala village.

already arranged a village health clinic which is attached to the village secretariat.

The Collector informed that the government has been sanctioning primary health centres wherever necessary and also giving a facelift to the old PHC buildings.

Rao Dora said they have written fresh letters to the authorities to restrict the number of tourists visiting the Agency so that the virus could be

contained. "Our prediction came true. The moment the doors were opened, people started contacting the virus," Mr Dora said.

APTF DEMANDS
TRANSFERS,
PROMOTIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 9

Andhra Pradesh Teachers Federation demanded the government for immediate action on the transfers and promotions of the teachers in the state.

According to an official release on Wednesday, president and general secretaries of the APTF, there are no transfers of the teachers for the past three years and a large number of teachers are waiting for the same. Though the government had shuffled the government employees last year, transfers of the teachers were let pending, the APTF said.

The teachers are also demanding promotions.

DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, SEPT. 9

Renovation of old structures in Srisailem is yielding forgotten treasures. Twenty nine copper plates were surfaced when workers were digging Ganta Siddheswara Matham structure.

"It is a treasure trove,"

said Dr Chenna Reddy, dean of Telugu University at Srisailem and a former director of Archeology department.

Srisailem Temple Executive Officer K.S. Rama Rao said the copper plates were found in a wall.

All were stacked together, he said.

PEOPLE SEEK
WALL ALONG
RIVER KUNDU

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC KURNOOL, SEPT. 9

Kundu river in Kurnool district has flooded more than 3,000 acres of crop fields in four constituencies of Nandyal, Panyam, Allagadda and Banagana Palle. This flooding was not an act of God but manmade. As Srisailem reservoir was getting Krishna floods, politicians in Rayalaseema wanted to draw as much water as possible resulting in this flooding agriculture lands, weeps a farmer.

When the carrying capacity of Kundu is just 12,000 cusecs, now it is carrying 23,000 cusecs resulting in floods, said Prabhakar Reddy, a farmer in Nandyal.

Kundu river is being used to fill Somasila and Kandaleru reservoirs in Nellore district. Since water resources minister Anil Kumar was keen on protecting Nellore interests, he brought this disaster upon us, said Veera Reddy, a farmer in Nandyal.

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Fall in pilgrim footfall keeps shops shut

Shopkeepers show no interest in reopening outlets in Tirumala

● Traders are finding it hard to survive, as sales per day are very less and sometimes even zero.

"Traders at Tirumala are solely dependent on pilgrim footfalls for business. But the authorities are allowing only 11,000-13,000 devotees for darshan daily. Traders are finding it hard to survive, as sales per day are very less and sometimes even zero," said Mr Sirigiri J. K. Royal, president, Tirumala Shanikul

Sankshema Sangham (TSSS). Out of total 1,600 shops and over 300 stalls in Tirumala, only 10 per cent are opening for business. There is severe cash crunch. Hundreds of traders, hawkers and workers have been forced to sell away their valuables just to run their families. During the lockdown, many families migrated down to Tirupati in search of livelihood. Even they are unable to return to Tirumala.

Mr Sirigiri said state and central governments, apart from banks and financial institutions, are extending assistance to business communities to revive the economy in the country. But not even a single institution has come to the rescue of traders in Tirumala. "We urge the state government and TTD to waive off rents and power bills not only for the past six months but until the situation turns normal at Tirumala. Only this can save traders of Tirumala," the TSS president remarked.

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SHORT TAKES

BANDED KRAIT
SNAKE RESCUED
IN ODISHAAKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BARIAPADA, SEPT. 9

A huge banded krait (Rana) snake was rescued from a villager's garden in Mayurbhanj district on Wednesday. The snake was more than eight-foot long and estimated to be more than 15 years old. Initially, one Purna Chandra Mohapatra of Badakaranjia village of Mayurbhanj district spotted the banded krait on the wood barricade of his garden.

He informed the forest personnel immediately about the snake.

Later, snake catcher Krushna Chandra Gochhayat reached Purna Chandra's house. He rescued the snake from the garden barricade and released it into Similipal forest.

RHEA MOVES
COURT TO SEEK
BAIL FOR 2ND TIMESHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, SEPT. 9

Actress Rhea Chakraborty, arrested by the NCB in a drugs case linked to her boyfriend and actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death, on Wednesday moved a bail plea before a special NDPS court in Mumbai. This is her second attempt to seek release after a magistrate court on Tuesday refused to grant her bail.

The actress has filed this plea through her lawyer Satish Maneshinde in which she claimed to be "innocent".

It is also claimed that during her custody, she was coerced into making a self-incriminating confession, which she retracted later on September 8.

According to her bail plea, she is entitled for bail because "no drugs or psychotropic substance has been seized from the present applicant and the allegations, if any, would pertain to small quantities" and hence section 27A is not applicable. Therefore, there would be no bar on granting her bail. As a result, the offence, if any, is bailable in nature and "the applicant ought to be enlarged on bail forthwith," read her bail plea.

It also said that perusal of remand applications of all the accused, who have been arrested, makes it evident that there is nothing on record that suggests involvement of the present applicant in any way.

2 STUDENTS
CHARGED WITH
UAPA GET BAILGILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
SEPT. 9

Two students who were arrested for their alleged links with Maoists and charged with Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), were granted conditional bail by a NIA special court in Kochi after 10 months in custody.

Alan Shuhaib and Thaha Fasal are students of journalism and law respectively and former members of CPM's local branch committee. They were arrested from Kozhikode on November 2, for alleged links with Maoists.

The bail has been granted on the personal surety bond of ₹1 lakh each filed by Alan and Thaha's parents. In their bail plea, the duo had contended that no evidence has been produced by investigating agencies yet to prove their connection with Maoists and they have been lodged in the jail for more than 10 months now.

Alan and Taha were arrested for allegedly possessing and distributing brochures favouring Maoists. The two students were expelled from the CPI(M) earlier this year.

The LDF government in Kerala had drawn flak for slapping UAPA against the students. The UAPA sections were charged at a time when the CPM at the Centre had opposed the draconian law within and outside Parliament.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's statement describing the students as Maoists had sparked off a controversy in the state. The use of UAPA had surprised many in the Left circles.

After the LDF came to power in 2016, there was a big debate on UAPA cases registered during the previous Congress led UDF government's tenure. The CPI(M) had made its opinion clear that UAPA should be used only to curb terror activities.

Indian troops leave limited options for
PLA looking for Galwan-type clashes

The PLA is said to have sent in their martial arts specialists to carry out a mass attack

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD SEPT. 9

Positioned at a vantage point, armed and well-equipped soldiers of the Indian Army are operating from trenches with overhead protection at heights they took control of more than 10 days ago, with ample time for the soldiers to consolidate their positions.

The options before the People's Liberation Army to regain control of those heights are limited — either an air strike or send their infantry up which could come with huge costs.

To take on one platoon of the Indian Army sitting pretty on those heights which gives them a natural advantage over the enemy, they would need 10 of their platoons.

Limited options before a frustrated PLA to regain control of the strategic heights on the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso is what led them to line up their soldiers to attempt and carry out another Galwan valley-type clash at Mukhpari, one of the highest peaks in Chushul on Tuesday.

The PLA is said to have sent in their martial arts specialists carrying Guandao (a nearly six-foot long wooden or metal pole atop which a sharp blade is mounted) and other blunt weapons to carry out a mass attack. But with the Indian Army threatening to open fire, the Chinese troops were forced to retreat.

"The group of about 50 PLA soldiers had come with an intention to scare the Indian army and inflict casualties by using blunt weapons, similar to Galwan valley clashes. We captured the heights more than 10 days ago and we used this time to consolidate our positions at the heights. We do not intend to be drawn into close quarter combat with PLA anymore. We are positioned to open fire straightaway, firing warning shots first. A clear message was sent to them yesterday though they were looking for trouble," highly placed sources told *Deccan Chronicle*.

The PLA has limited options before them. One option is pounding the Indian positions, flattening the defence and regaining control of the heights. With a prepared



An IAF fighter jet flies in the Ladakh region amid the prolonged India-China stand off, in Leh on Wednesday.

— PTI

INDIA, RUSSIA DISCUSS BORDER STAND-OFF

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had a bilateral meeting and "excellent talks" with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday evening in which the "international situation" was discussed including possibly the current Sino-Indian military tensions in the

Ladakh sector.

The meeting was held ahead of the eight-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) foreign ministers' meeting and also significantly ahead of EAM Jaishankar's bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Thursday.

The Russian, Indian and Chinese foreign ministers

are also expected to have a luncheon meeting together on Thursday.

Russia is India's time-tested friend and also has close ties with China due to which it has emerged as a key player to nudge both Asian giants towards a solution.

Indian army, that seems unlikely. The other option is to send their infantry who will have to climb up the mountains and launch an attack. But given the huge force required to take

on Indian troops positioned on mountain tops, that seems equally unlikely. Sources said that the Indian troops do not need to engage in close quarter combat.

● **ANOTHER ATTACK** and counter-attack between Indian and Chinese troops appears imminent.

● **LIMITED OPTIONS** before PLA to regain heights as it is exposed and unstable.

● **INDIAN TROOPS** have a natural advantage.

● **PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY** wanted Galwan valley like clashes at Mukhpari, had sent martial art experts.

RIC foreign ministers
meeting likely today

SRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9

At a bilateral meeting on Thursday on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) foreign ministers meeting in Moscow, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is expected to clearly tell his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi that peace on the borders is closely linked to development of bilateral ties between the two Asian giants and that China must de-escalate by disengaging its troops to restore the April status quo in the Ladakh sector.

This comes even as news agency reports from Beijing cited the Chinese Foreign Ministry as saying there would be a Russia-India-China (RIC) trilateral foreign ministers' luncheon meeting in the Russian capital on Thursday which is being seen by observers as an effort by a worried Russia to encourage and persuade both Asian neighbours to reach a compromise and avoid a devastating war in the Ladakh sector.

The RIC is an already-existing trilateral format and the luncheon meeting will obviously be hosted by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov which will give the Indian and Chinese foreign ministers another opportunity to interact apart from their own bilateral meeting.

Jaishankar had made it clear last week that "what happens at the border will impact the (Sino-Indian) relationship".

Blaming China for the situation of the last four months in the Ladakh sector that was a "direct result" of the Chinese side trying to unilaterally change the status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), India had also last week clearly said the "way

● **EAM S. JAISHANKAR** had made it clear last week that 'what happens at the border will impact the (Sino-Indian) relationship'.

ahead" was "negotiations" through both military and diplomatic channels. New Delhi added it is "firmly committed" to "peaceful dialogue" and called on China to "sincerely engage" India in order to restore peace and tranquillity at the LAC.

New Delhi also made it clear that Beijing "should not take any provocative action or escalate matters", which comes after the latest round of Chinese military provocations at Pangong Tso lake in Ladakh both on the night of August 29 and on August 31.

The EAM, meanwhile, began his bilateral meetings on Wednesday in the Russian Capital by holding talks with his Kyrgyz and later Tajik counterparts.

The SCO is an eight-member predominantly Central Asian Grouping that comprises China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.

Both India and Pakistan became SCO members in 2017.

Jaishankar tweeted, "A fruitful meeting with FM Chingiz Aidiarbekov of Kyrgyz Republic on SCO sidelines. Thanked him for the support in facilitating return of Indian nationals. Discussed issues of bilateral and regional interest. Agreed to further enhance our Strategic Partnership in all spheres."

He added, "A warm meeting with Tajik FM Sirojiddin Muhriddin. Pleased with our growing bilateral and regional cooperation. Highly value this strategic partnership."

Omar Abdullah

ABDULLAH TO
VACATE GOVT
BUNGALOW

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 9

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah has gone on house hunting after he decided to voluntarily vacate the government accommodation provided to him about 18 years ago. This comes against the backdrop of the change in rules of entitlement in the Union Territory.

Sources close to Abdullah said that he is looking for an abode which will suit his budget and, more importantly, is located in an area in Srinagar where his security and privacy concerns are satisfied.

Abdullah, 50, who is vice president of National Conference (NC), J&K's main opposition party, on Wednesday released a letter on his Twitter handle that he had written on July 31 to the administrative secretary of J&K's estates department saying that he would be vacating his government accommodation in Srinagar in eight to ten weeks time.

"The point to note is that contrary to stories planted in the media last year, I received no notice to vacate and have chosen to do so of my own accord," Abdullah said in a tweet.

He said that he would be vacating his government accommodation in Srinagar before the end of October.

The letter says that after the renovation of an adjacent house, the premises in entirety were used by Abdullah as chief minister's official residence from October 2010 onwards but he continued to stay there even after demitting the office of chief minister in January 2015 "as the rules allowed me to retain an accommodation in Srinagar or Jammu (twin capitals of J&K) and I chose to retain an accommodation in Srinagar."

The letter further says that there has been a change in the entitlement of former chief ministers of J&K some months ago, "I now find myself in unauthorised occupation of this accommodation, as no attempt has been made to regularise the allotment to me on security or other grounds."

Abdullah says that this was a situation which was unacceptable to him as "I have never held on to any government property I was not entitled to and I have no intention to start now."

He informed the officer that he has begun the search for a "suitable alternate accommodation" but the process is taking longer because of the "constraints caused by Covid-19."

● **ABDULLAH RELEASED** a letter on his Twitter handle that he had written on July 31 to the administrative secretary of J&K's estates department saying that he would vacate his government accommodation in Srinagar in 8-10 weeks time.

Drug addicts kill
14-yr-old for ₹100

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 9

Drug addicts in Odisha capital Bhubaneswar allegedly killed a 14-year-old boy for meagre ₹100 that he was carrying to buy grocery and vegetables.

The boy was attacked by the accused on September 2 evening after refused to give them the money. He succumbed to his injuries on Tuesday night.

The deceased was identified as Ashwini Padhi, a native of Bharatpur under Khandagiri police limits. The Khandagiri police took four of the attackers into custody on Wednesday after the locals took to streets protesting against the ghastly incident.

According to the par-

ents of the deceased, who eke out their living by selling *gupchups* in the local market, they had sent the boy to a nearby grocery shop to buy some essential items.

However, the accused forcibly took away the boy from the shop to a desolate place and asked him to give them the money. As the boy did not concede to their demand, they attacked him with an axe, causing serious bleeding.

"Having been informed about the incident, we went to the spot and rescued him in a critical condition. He had sustained grievous injuries all over his body. He died last night. We demand strong action against the accused," said the wailing parents of the deceased.

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 9

The arrest of a local editor by Leh police over a third party Facebook comment against a BJP leader has caused outrage among journalists and civil society activists in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Tsewang Rigzin, the editor of *State Times* newspaper was arrested by the police on a complaint lodged with it by local BJP MP Tsering Namgyal last week. The police complaint was lodged following an unidentified member of a Facebook page called Ladakh in Media run by Rigzin posted a comment against BJP leader Vikram Singh Randhawa on September 3. The police arrested Rigzin on September 5, as he was the administrator

of the group, but he was immediately granted bail, a report from Leh said.

However, many journalists in J&K and beyond took to social media platforms soon to condemn Rigzin's arrest. Some political parties also criticised the Ladakh police and the BJP MP for allegedly trying to muzzle the freedom of expression.

In Delhi, the Indian Journalists Union in a statement while condemning the arrest of Rigzin said that it was a "blatant attack on freedom of expression".

Rigzin is the general secretary of the Ladakh Journalists Union, an

affiliate of the Indian Journalists Union.

In May last year, the Leh's Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) had while acting on an application filed by the Press Club Leh permitted the police to investigate the complaint filed against Randhawa and BJP's J&K unit chief Ravinder Raina after they allegedly tried to bribe local reporters for favourable coverage during the Lok Sabha elections.

Separately, Congress candidate for Ladakh Lok Sabha seat Rigzin Spalbar had also moved the court with a complaint that the BJP has violated the Model Code of

Conduct (MCC).

Subsequently, the police registered an FIR at the police station concerned and took up investigation into the matter.

According to the complaint that was lodged with the police by the Press Club Leh, the BJP leaders including its J&K state president Ravinder Raina and its in-charge for Ladakh constituency Randhawa, "tried to bribe media persons" on May 2 after a press conference held in Ladakh's main town "to use their platform to influence the outcome of the election".

The BJP had denied the charge and threatened to sue the journalists for defamation. It had claimed that the envelopes contained the invitations to media persons to cover the party rally.

HAPPY | MOMENT

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, SEPT. 9

A street vendor from Madhya Pradesh, who is a beneficiary of welfare scheme launched by the Centre, was thrilled to get the an opportunity to speak to Prime Minister Narendra Modi 'directly' on Wednesday.

Chaganlal Verma, who

MP street vendor interacted with the PM on the sidelines of launch of PM Svanidhi Yojana
Welfare scheme beneficiary talks to PM online, feels thrilled

eked out a living by selling broomsticks on the streets in Sambre of Indore district, interacted with the Prime Minister online on the sidelines of the launch of "PM Svanidhi Yojana".

"I can't describe my feelings in words. I had never imagined even in my wildest dream that I will speak to the PM directly one day. I was quite nervous initially. But, I felt

comfortable talking to the PM as our interaction progressed", 56-year-old Verma said while narrating his experience.

Verma was one of many street vendors of MP who had interacted with the PM on the occasion of the launch of the programme, aimed at reviving the economy of street vendors whose business suffered due to the Coronavirus

outbreak in March this year, with provision of loans of ₹10,000 to each.

According to him, government officers had been in touch with him since the last five days to prepare him for the programme.

"I was amazed to see so many government officers moving around me. I had never interacted with a government officer till

then in my life", he recounted.

Verma said he was pleased to get a tip from the PM on how to increase income by recycling used goods.

"PM suggested to me to collect the pipes used as handles of the brooms, once they were discarded by consumers, to use them in new brooms to bring down the cost of produc-

tion", Verma recounted.

He said the pandemic has shattered his economy and the money given under the scheme was very helpful in putting his business back on track.

Madhya Pradesh has identified more than 4.5 lakh beneficiaries under the scheme and completed the process to give loans to over one lakh street vendors in the last two

months.

Meanwhile, Congress veteran and former chief minister Kamal Nath smelt politics at the launch of the welfare scheme at a time when crucial by-elections to 27 Assembly constituencies in the state are round the corner. He accused the centre of trying to influence the voters by launching the scheme.

IN BRIEF

Another Belarus activist detained

Kyiv: Belarusian authorities on Wednesday detained one of the last leading members of an opposition council who remained free, moving methodically to end a month of protests against authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko. Lawyer Maxim Znakh, a member of the Coordination Council created by the opposition to facilitate talks with the country's leader of 26 years on a transition of power, was taken out of the council's office by unidentified people in ski masks, his associate Gleb German said. He said Znakh only had time to text message "masks" before they took the phone away from him.

Israel, UAE to ink deal next week

Washington: Israel and the United Arab Emirates will sign their historic deal normalising relations at a White House ceremony on Sept. 15, officials said. Senior delegations from the two countries will be led by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the brother of Abu Dhabi's powerful crown prince. US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the ceremony would either be on the South Lawn, the Rose Garden or inside depending on weather. Late Tuesday, Netanyahu tweeted he "was proud to leave for Washington next week at the invitation of President Trump and to participate in the historic ceremony at the to sign the deal with the UAE."

Pak mine collapse toll rises to 22

Peshawar: At least 22 people have been killed and dozens were battling for their lives after six units of the famed marble mines in Pakistan's Ziarat Ghar mountain collapsed, causing large boulders to fall on them. The mines collapsed on Monday night, instantly killing 12 miners, the *Geo News* reported. The death toll rose after 10 more succumbed to injuries at the District Mohmand Hospital. Majority of the deceased include labourers and few others who had gathered at the foothill in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Saffi town near the Afghanistan border, about 85 km from provincial capital Peshawar. Mohmand District Police Officer Mohmand Tariq Habib told *Geo News* that people are still buried under the rubble.

NAWAZ IS PO, ZARDARI INDICTED

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 9
Former Pakistan president Asif Ali Zardari was indicted in the Toshakhana reference on Wednesday, while former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was declared a proclaimed offender. An Islamabad accountability court heard the Toshakhana reference on Wednesday. Former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani was also indicted. Mr Zardari and Mr Gilani have denied the charges. The judge, Asghar Ali of court number three, ordered a copy of the indictment to be given to the suspects. Taking to the rostrum, Mr Gilani said these kinds of matters should go to the Public Accounts Committee, not the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The cabinet division had sent the summary to give the cars from the Toshakhana, he argued. "The summary landed on my desk after a whole process but the bureaucrats who sent it to me haven't been declared suspects."

Kabul bomb targets VP, kills 10 civilians

10 shops were smoldering after the explosion, windows of dozens of homes shattered

Kabul, Sept. 9: A bombing in the Afghan capital on Wednesday targeted the convoy of the country's first vice president, killing 10 people and wounding at least 31, including several of the vice president's bodyguards, the Interior Ministry said. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack and the Taliban quickly denied they were behind the bombing. First Vice President Amrullah Saleh suffered minor burns in the blast.

The bomb was hidden in a cart by the roadside and detonated as his convoy passed by. Saleh, who is also Afghanistan's former intelligence chief, said in his first television appearance immediately after the attack that he was fine and had sustained only slight burns. He appeared in the TV footage with bandages on one hand. "Me and my younger son who was also with me are fine," Saleh said. "I have slight burns on my face and hand from the wave of the blast. I don't have exact details right now, but I apologise to those who suffered casualties and those who lost their property in the attack."

His spokesman, Razwan Murad, called the attack a "vicious terrorist attempt" on Saleh's life. The roads in the vicinity of the bombing were closed off. The blast ignited a fire that set ablaze a number of the shops. The explosion left behind a scene of destruction — at least 10 shops were smoldering in the aftermath of the explosion that had also shattered windows of dozens of nearby homes, some with doors hanging off their hinges. —AP

10 people killed and at least 31, including several of the vice president's bodyguards, injured
31 wounded were taken to different hospitals for treatment.
No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack and the Taliban quickly denied they were behind the bombing
The bomb was hidden in a cart by the roadside and detonated as convoy of First Vice President Amrullah Saleh passed by



Afghan security personnel and municipality workers clean the site of an explosion in Kabul, on Wednesday. Spokesman for Afghanistan's Interior Ministry said the bombing that targeted the convoy of the country's first vice president on Wednesday morning killed several people and wounded more than a dozen others, including several of the vice president's bodyguards.

MAN CHARGED WITH MURDER OVER STABBINGS

London, Sept. 9: A 27-year-old man appeared in a UK court via video-link on Wednesday charged with murder in connection with stabbings that took place in Birmingham city centre in the early hours of Sunday. Zephaniah McLeod has been charged with the murder of Jacob Billington, who was one of eight people stabbed. McLeod is also accused of the attempted murder of the seven other victims of the knife attacks and was remanded in custody by Birmingham Magistrates' Court to appear at Birmingham Crown Court on Thursday, again via video-link. He spoke only to confirm his personal details during an appearance before two magistrates and was not asked for any pleas. There was no application for bail, West Midlands Police said. The victims of the attempted murder charges were Dimitar Bachvarov, Migle Dolobauskaite, Thomas Glassey, Michael Callaghan, Shane Rowley, Rhys Cummings and Ryan Bowers, the court was told. Billington, 23, died after being attacked in Irving Street while enjoying a night out with school friends from Liverpool visiting one of their group who is studying in Birmingham. A post-mortem concluded he died as a result of a stab wound to the neck. A 23-year-old man, who was injured, remains in hospital. —PTI

10 dead in Chicago weekend gunfire

Chicago (US), Sept. 9: An eight-year-old girl shot in the back was among 10 people killed in gunfire over the Labour Day weekend in Chicago, police said on Tuesday, marking the latest deadly holiday weekend in the nation's third-largest city. More than 50 people were shot from Friday until just before Tuesday midnight during a year where vio-

lent crime has soared in Chicago and other big US cities. But the holiday weekend's shooting death and injury counts weren't as high as recent holiday weekends and police noted a preceding two-month decline. "We're going to continue, obviously, looking at addressing violence crime," Police Superintendent David Brown told reporters. "We are seeing... ten-

uous progress. It's fragile, obviously. But we're seeing tenuous progress." From July to August, murders dropped 45 per cent while shooting incidents dropped 15 per cent in the same time frame, police said. The department attributed the drop to tactics started in July, namely adding more officers to higher crime areas. The department has previ-

ously made similar deployments to crime hotspots, which experts say can temporarily lower crime but can be too aggressive. Brown has said this time officers are also involved more in community-relations events such as food drives, an effort he hopes can work long term. The July Fourth weekend was particularly bloody with 17 people killed and at last

70 wounded in gun violence. A seven-year-old girl and 14-year-old boy were among those fatally shot. Killed over the Labour Day weekend was an eight-year-old girl identified by the Cook County medical examiner's office as Dajore Wilson. The child was in the car with two adults on the city's South Side when they stopped at a red light. —AP

UK PM plans law banning large gatherings

London, Sept. 9: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is planning tougher new restrictions on social gatherings of more than six people in England starting next Monday, following a significant rise in the coronavirus cases. A law change to be introduced will ban larger groups of friends and family meeting anywhere socially indoors or outdoors, to be enforced through a £100 fine if people fail to comply and doubling on each offence up to a maximum of £3,200. The rule will not apply to schools, workplaces or Covid-secure weddings, funerals and organised team sports, Downing Street said on Wednesday. "We need to act now to stop the virus spreading. So we are simplifying and strengthening the rules on

Las Vegas Covid +ve children contract inflammatory disease

Las Vegas (US), Sept. 9: Health officials said Tuesday that eight Las Vegas-area children under age 14 who tested positive for Covid-19 since March were also diagnosed with a rare inflammatory condition linked with the coronavirus. The Southern Nevada Health District said all the children were hospitalised and released, and the district has begun adding

daily tallies of confirmed cases of the illness to its daily online Coronavirus response report. Not all children exhibit the same symptoms, and the district said that while there isn't a known cause, many children with the illness had Covid-19 or had close contact with someone who did. Researchers say the illness can cause inflammation of the multiple internal organs.

The Health District reported 61,543 cases of Covid-19 in and around Las Vegas, an increase of 67 cases since Monday, and a total of 1,206 deaths since March. Officials say new case rates have decreased in the past two weeks. State health officials reported no new deaths and 137 new confirmed cases of Covid-19 statewide on Tuesday. —AP

social contact — making them easier to understand and for the police to enforce," said Johnson. "It is absolutely critical that

people now abide by these rules and remember the basics — washing your hands, covering your face, keeping space from others,

and getting a test if you have symptoms," he said. Previously, guidance in England allowed gatherings of up to six people

from different households outdoors — or two households of any size, indoors or outdoors. But until now the police have had no powers to stop them unless gatherings exceeded 30 people. Under the new law, any group of seven or more people gathering anywhere risks being dispersed by police or fined for non-compliance. The change applies to people in England of all ages, and to gatherings indoors and outdoors, in private homes, public outdoor spaces, and venues such as pubs and restaurants. The devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland set their own Coronavirus restrictions but largely follow similar patterns as set out for England. —PTI

Trump nominated for Peace Nobel

Copenhagen, Sept. 9: A far-right Norwegian lawmaker said Wednesday that he has nominated US President Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in the Middle East. Christian Tybring-Gjedde, a member of the Norwegian Parliament for the far-right Progress Party, said Trump should be considered because of his work "for a peace agreement between the United Arab Emirates and Israel which opens up for possible peace in the Middle East." "No matter how Trump acts at home and what he

says at press conferences, he has absolutely a chance at getting the Nobel Peace Prize," Tybring-Gjedde, told *The Associated Press*. He said he nominated Trump on Wednesday, adding that "Donald Trump meets the criteria" for the Nobel Peace Prize. Tybring-Gjedde was also one of two Norwegian lawmakers who nominated Trump for the peace prize in 2018 for his efforts to bring reconciliation between North and South Korea. Any national lawmaker can nominate someone. —AP

US reporter not detained: China

Beijing, Sept. 9: Local authorities in China's Inner Mongolia region have denied they used force or detained an American reporter when she was questioned at a police station last week. The *Los Angeles Times* said Thursday that one of its reporters was grabbed by the throat and pushed into a cell and held for more than four hours before being forced to leave the area in northern China. "There's no instance of the police using both hands to pinch the neck or being detained in a police cell, nor was there any instance of being detained or expelled," the press office for Hohhot, the provincial capital, said in a written response to questions from *The Associated Press*. The statement, dated Tuesday, said the reporter was interviewing a pedestrian and accused her of filming or photographing the person without the interviewee's permission. It said the reporter chose to go back to Beijing voluntarily. The newspaper's Beijing bureau chief, Alice Su, who is the journalist in question, declined to comment. She was covering protests and class boycotts that had broken out in Inner Mongolia over a move to increase the use of Chinese in schools where

HOMES OF CHINESE REPORTERS RAIDED BY OZ: BEIJING

Beijing, Sept. 9: Australian agents in June raided the homes of four journalists working for Chinese state media and seized their electronics, citing possible violations of Australia's anti-foreign interference law, China's foreign ministry said Wednesday. There have been no previous reports about the alleged Australian actions. The accusation by ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian came one day after the last two Australian journalists left China for fear of detention and the Chinese foreign ministry announced Australian citizen Cheng Lei, a Chinese state media journalist, had been detained. —AP

US to withdraw troops from Iraq, Afghanistan

Baghdad, Sept. 9: US President Donald Trump was expected to announce further troop withdrawals Wednesday from Afghanistan and from Iraq, where several thousand US troops hunting down jihadist sleeper cells have faced increasing attacks blamed on pro-Iran factions. The deadly bomb and rocket attacks have put additional pressure on Iraqi Prime Minister

Mustafa al-Kadhemi, who has pledged to rein in rogue groups pledged to fight the US military presence. Kadhemi travelled to Washington last month for strategic talks, including on the future of the US-led coalition deployed in Iraq since 2014 to fight the Islamic State group. At the time, Trump told Kadhemi US forces would leave Iraq but gave no timetable or cap for troop levels. A senior US official

told reporters the president would make an announcement Wednesday but offered no details. There was no immediate response from the US-led coalition to a request for comment from AFP. The US has already been steadily downsizing its troop levels in Iraq in recent months as Iraqis take over combat and training roles. "These withdrawals are part of the agreed transition of the US-led coalition's role in Iraq," an Iraqi official said.

US and other coalition troops stayed on after IS's defeat in 2017 to support Iraqi forces with air strikes, drone surveillance and training to prevent a jihadist resurgence. By late 2018, there were an estimated 5,200 American troops still stationed in Iraq, making up the bulk of the 7,500 coalition forces there, according to US officials. Over the past

year, dozens of rocket attacks have targeted those forces, the US embassy and logistics convoys heading to Iraqi bases, killing at least six military personnel — three Americans, one Briton and two Iraqis. US officials have blamed the violence on hardline factions close to Tehran, which as Washington's longtime foe has repeatedly demanded US troops leave the Middle East. —AFP

In 3 big states, Biden looks to rebuild Dems' Blue Wall

Lansing (US), Sept. 9: In 2016, Donald Trump tore down Democrats' "blue wall", winning the White House with surprise victories in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. This year, Joe Biden is trying to rebuild. The Democratic presidential nominee's first pandemic-era campaign trips beyond his home in Delaware are taking him to all three states, an indication of how closely Biden's electoral prospects are tied to his ability to flip those political battlegrounds. Last week, Biden trav-

eled to Wisconsin and was followed quickly by running mate Kamala Harris, who held her own events there on Labour Day. On Wednesday, Biden heads to Michigan to tout a plan for boosting US manufacturing. He also has two stops scheduled this week in Pennsylvania. Though the Biden campaign often emphasises that it sees multiple ways to secure the 270 Electoral College votes they need to win in November, the quickest path runs through Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

JUNE PRIMARY ELECTION: GEORGIA INVESTIGATING 1,000 CASES OF 'POTENTIAL DOUBLE VOTING'

Atlanta (US), Sept. 9: Georgia's top elections official said Tuesday that his office has identified about 1,000 cases of "potential double voting" in the June primary election — a felony he's determined to see prosecuted. These voters submitted absentee ballots but also voted in person, a

problem that happened across 100 Georgia counties, and election officials didn't catch them in time to keep the second votes from being tallied, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger said. "No one gets to vote twice. Everyone gets one vote," Raffensperger said. It wasn't immediately clear whether the outcome of any races may have been affected. It follows a suggestion last week by President Donald Trump that people who vote early by mail should show up at their local polling places on Election Day and vote again if their ballots haven't been counted. —AP

ly any two, with some of the other states that are in play — it's pretty impossible for Trump

to win the Electoral College," said veteran Democratic strategist Joe Trippi. "It makes tremendous sense to make those three states the base foundation of any strategy to win. If Biden wins all three, it's over." Biden's aides believe his focus on the economy and Trump's handling of the coronavirus pandemic will resonate among key voters nationwide but particularly in states like Michigan, which took one of the sharpest hits nationally from the pandemic. The unemployment

rate in the state spiked at 24 per cent in April, according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics. The statewide rate has since recovered to 8.7 per cent, but Michigan has nearly 414,500 fewer jobs than it did when Trump was inaugurated. Trump supporters say that he has fulfilled his promise of creating jobs and was temporarily sidetracked by the pandemic. But the jobs numbers show that hiring at factories across the Midwest began to stall and then decline in the summer of 2019. —AP

Mongolian has been the main language of instruction. Authorities, who have detained more than 20 people, are trying to clamp down on information about the protests, according to a protester and a US-based activist group that advocates for the rights of ethnic Mongolians. —AP

DECCAN Chronicle

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India, China leaders must defuse Ladakh row swiftly

The escalation of the already tense stand-off at the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh by Chinese troops earlier this week, with the People's Liberation Army trying hard, unsuccessfully, to dislodge Indian soldiers from the commanding heights at Mukhpari (at over 18,000 ft), on the ridgeline north of Rezang La, led to the first shots fired at the LAC in 45 years. While there are claims and counter-claims on who fired the first shot, it seems clear that Chinese forces — armed with machetes, spears, clubs and automatic weapons — tried to intimidate the Indians into retreating with a show of force and firing in the air, but backed off when the Indian Army didn't budge, using loudspeakers and floodlights and firing in the air to stop the Chinese advancing. No clash took place, and there were no casualties, but if more such encounters occur, the two sides may end up shooting at each other, and from that it's just one step to a full-fledged war. While senior officers of the two armies are talking to each other, the two governments must actively step in now. External affairs minister Subrahmanyan Jaishankar is in Moscow to attend a foreign ministers' meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and he will meet China's foreign minister Wang Yi in a face-to-face encounter, the first between since the stand-off began in early May. Mr Wang Yi is not only foreign minister, but also a state councillor (which ranks higher in Beijing's hierarchy) and special representative on the boundary issue and is well versed in its nuts and bolts. He is also due to talk to India's special representative, NSA Ajit Doval, in the coming days.

There is a long history, over decades, of the Chinese side intruding across the LAC, but after a brief period the PLA troops usually withdraw. The current stand-off is unusual, even in contrast to Doklam in 2017, in its duration (now in its fifth month) and because the Chinese are showing no sign of withdrawing from the areas they occupied, such as from Finger 4 to Finger 8 and in Chusul (where Monday night's firing took place) and go back to their pre-April 2020 positions. This is what India has been consistently demanding. The Indian Army's pre-emptive move to occupy two dozen strategic heights on Pangong Tso's southern banks late last month — giving Indian soldiers the tactical advantage as they can keep a close watch on PLA movements — is said to have rattled the Chinese, and some of their renewed aggressiveness is attributed to this. With winter just two months away, India could use its control of these heights to negotiate with China from a position of strength and push for a swift return to the status quo.

While the Ladakh situation is critical, it's not the only place China is intruding into Indian territory. Transgressions by the PLA are reported across the 4,056-km LAC, in Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, which the Chinese call "Southern Tibet". China's aim is clearly to keep the Indian Army on edge across the long frontier.

Unless there is a swift breakthrough at Mr Jaishankar's Moscow talks, it may be time to involve the top leadership. China has consistently held, as has India, that bilateral negotiations are the only way forward. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping should start talking before it is too late.

A bizarre potboiler

The bizarre events that followed the tragic death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput have reached a curious point with the arrest of his friend Rhea Chakraborty by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on charges of "procuring drugs for him and for managing finance for drug procurement with him". The charge is based on the discovery of 59 grams of curated marijuana from the possession of two drug peddlers whom the agency alleges have links to Sushant Singh. It has admitted it found no "drug" on Rhea. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), as ordered by the Supreme Court, has started investigation into the death, which the victim's father himself had said was a suicide. The agency has in the past proved deaths, marked as suicides, to be murders after investigation, but this would perhaps be the first case in which it would be investigating a suicide. One cannot lose sight of the incredible amount of energy being spent on and the hard politicking being involved in the case. Three Central government agencies — the CBI, the Enforcement Directorate and the NCB — have their attention focused on the case. Remember, the Bihar government had lost no time demanding a CBI investigation saying the actor hailed from Bihar. Now the state, which goes to polls in a couple of months, reverberates with the slogan "Justice for Sushant" as if it has no other issues to grapple with.

All this happens at a time when the world has started taking a liberal view of drugs such as marijuana; some countries have either legalised or been contemplating legalising its use and instead chase more harmful synthetic drugs that permanently damage lives. One may only hope that the central agencies have set professional targets in this case and are not playing a role in a drama to divert public attention from real problems the country is faced with and to which the government seems to have no solution.

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Sanju Verma



Worst over, healthy auto sales signal bounceback

India's GDP decline of 23.9 per cent for the June 2020 quarter has generated heated debate. A stringent lockdown necessitated by the worst global pandemic in 102 years was enforced with the idea of saving lives. Thanks to the lockdown, India's track record turned out superior to other nations', with a fatality rate below two per cent. In fact, every major global economy contracted sharply in the June quarter.

While the United States reported a staggering 32.9 per cent annualised crash in GDP growth, the comparable fall was 42.9 per cent for Singapore, a decline of 38.7 per cent for Canada, a 12.1 per cent fall for Eurozone, a 10.1 per cent drop for Germany, a steep contraction of 20.4 per cent for the United Kingdom and a massive plunge of 27.8 per cent in the case of Japan. In India's case, we had a bright spot, with the agriculture sector growing by a healthy 3.4 per cent in that quarter.

Another fact that deserves attention is the GDP data pertaining to the March 2020 quarter. Much before the global pandemic struck, while India's GDP grew at only 3.1 per cent, we were the only large economy to report posi-

tive growth in the March quarter, with agriculture growing by a solid 5.9 per cent. Other economies like the US contracted by 4.8 per cent, Germany by 2.2 per cent, Eurozone by 3.8 per cent and China actually saw a steep GDP fall of 6.8 per cent in March quarter. Global rating giant S&P says India will have a V-shaped recovery, with a projected GDP growth of 8.5 per cent for 2021-22, far higher than its international peers.

Thanks to stellar reforms in the last six years by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India became the fifth largest economy in the world, after surpassing the United Kingdom in February 2020, after becoming the sixth largest overtaking France in 2019. The media has been screaming itself hoarse about India's biggest GDP drop in 40 years but it failed to inform its audience that, on the positive side, India's policy repo rate at four per cent is the lowest in 58 years. The coal sector was denationalised and coal mining was privatised for the first time in 2019-2020 after 47 years. Banking consolidation by merging 10 public sector banks into four, starting April 2020, has happened for the first time in 51 years.

The country's foreign exchange

reserves swelled to a record high of \$538.191 billion. The best part is short-term trade credit at just 18.2 per cent of overall external debt. Again, over 66 per cent of the aforesaid accretion in forex reserves in the past one year is accounted for by stable and high quality FDI and not fickle FII flows.

Is the worst over? The answer is a decisive "yes". Take the GST revenues for August, for instance, which stood at ₹86,449 crore. Despite the lockdown, this was 88 per cent of the GST collected in the same month last year. Overall, 48.3 million e-way bills were generated in July, almost back to pre-Covid levels of 55.3 million bills, in January 2020.

Again, Indian Railways' Freight loading for August 2020, at 94.33 million tonnes, was 3.31 million tonnes higher compared to August 2019. CBDT has, so far, issued refunds of over ₹88,652 crore to more than 24.64 lakh taxpayers from April 1, 2020, onwards. The Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 52 in August, up from 46 in July. Amounts sanctioned under the emergency credit line guarantee scheme (ECLGS) by public sector banks increased to ₹76,044.44 crores, as of August 18, 2020. Similarly, private

banks sanctioned loans to the tune of ₹74,715.02 crores, under ECLGS, pointing at a swift uptick in the economy.

More importantly, let Modi naysayers not forget that 20 billion dollars is what India attracted in investments and pledges from 15 companies in just three months from April to July 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. This US \$20bn is a massive vote of confidence for Modinomics, by some of the world's largest and richest corporations like Google, Facebook, Walmart, Samsung, Apple, Saudi Arabia's PIF, SGS, Axtria, and so on. Taiwanese company, Pegatron, is the fourth Apple supplier to decide to set up a base in India, after Foxconn, Wistron and Compal Electronics, have pledged billions.

Suffice to say that India is not alone in this misfortune. Every global behemoth has been adversely impacted by Covid. But unlike others, India has a vibrant rural economy, accounting for over 50 per cent of our workforce. News has it that Australia is facing its worst recession in 30 years. China's food shops are running out of supplies and the US might end the year with a 4.2 per cent drop in consumption. In sharp contrast, India is doing a far better job

in dealing with the Wuhan virus.

At his US-India Strategic Partnership Forum address, Mr Modi said, "We are future-proofing India in every way, enabling New India to take off." Well, Mr Modi's words have found resonance. India's Hero Motocorp, the world's largest two-wheeler company that derives over 65 per cent sales from rural areas, for example, reported a healthy 7.6 per cent year on year growth in overall sales, selling 5.8 lakh units in August 2020. Ditto for M&M that derives over 50 per cent sales from rural India. It saw a robust 28 per cent YoY rise in overall tractor sales in July 2020. Maruti Suzuki saw a 21.3 per cent growth in car sales in August, while Tata Motors saw a splendid 154 per cent growth in auto sales. Indeed, since auto sales are a lead indicator, India's September quarter GDP should see a sharp bounceback, aided by government spending, which is moving ahead in full throttle, undeterred by the pandemic.

The writer is an economist, chief spokesperson for BJP Mumbai and bestselling author of Truth & Dare — The Modi Dynamic



Subhani

NEP: Ambitious targets set for education sector



Amitabha Bhattacharya

The National Education Policy 2020 in 65 pages, distilled from its 500-page draft version and modified via extensive feedback and comments from all stakeholders, including schools, colleges, universities, state governments and the public, has aroused a great deal of interest. While a few commentators criticised it for inadequacies and some politicians went vocal over the language issues, the document has broadly been accepted as timely and progressive. It is a continuation of earlier policies, especially NEP (1986/1992), but also marks some significant departures from the past.

To appreciate NEP 2020's defining characteristics, one must remember it primarily reflects the nation's intent to shape the contours of this sector in the medium-to-long term, the implementation of which, based on carefully designed action plans, will depend upon mobilisation of the needed resources and the political will at all levels. Besides, this extremely condensed document that combines modern thinking with the views of visionaries like John Henry Newman, John Dewey, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi in some form or another will be better understood if the more elaborate 2019 draft NEP is referred to. The draft, put together by sharp minds like K. Kasturirangan, Manjul Bhargava and others, provided the detailed logical underpinnings behind most of the crystallised ideas found in the final document.

A document like this should be valued for the way continuation of validated ideas is seamlessly integrated with bold new ones. While earlier policies and recommendations of various commissions had indeed stressed upon inclusion and equitable access to education, need for flexibility in devising the cur-

riculum, reduction of academic load for schoolchildren, moving away from rote learning, putting teachers at the heart of the education system, universalisation of basic education, integration of vocational education, enhancement of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at every level, increasing public expenditure on education to six per cent of our GDP and the like, NEP 2020 should be characterised by the following factors.

First, it stresses on numeracy as much on literacy, urging the attainment of universal foundational literacy and numeracy of all children on a mission mode. In today's world, mathematical skills are as important as linguistic and other skills. Despite many attempts made so far, why a substantial number of our children have still been performing poorly, as measured by their learning outcome, remains a moot question. This and the remedial measures needed are addressed squarely in this document.

Second, based on the evidence of neuroscience that 85 per cent of a child's cumulative brain development occurs before the age of six years, pre-school education or school-preparedness for three years under Early Childhood Care and Education, facilitated by "play and discovery-based learning", has been proposed. In addition to the current coverage of 6-14 years under the existing law, three years of pre-school and four years of secondary education, making integrated schooling from 3-18 years, will be the new norm. Achieving a GER of 100 per cent for this entire spectrum by 2030, and a GER of 50 per cent for higher (including vocational) education by 2035, has been targeted. Ambitious, but not unachievable.

Thirdly, NEP seeks to restore the importance of the arts, humanities and social sciences in our edu-

cation system. In our engagement with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as these areas offer higher employment opportunities, we have accorded lesser value and importance to non-STEM disciplines. Institutions focusing only on engineering, medicine or legal studies have inherent limitations, and this model often militates against the idea of a university. Introducing flexibility in course design, allowing much greater choice to students for selecting subjects as per their aptitude and preferences, offering different entry and exit options, and stressing on the crucial need for multi-disciplinary in education are among the measures suggested.

Fourth, the quality of research in most of our universities, especially in science, has been declining. NEP addresses this question and suggests how conditions conducive to high quality research in universities and colleges can be created. The idea to set up a National Research Foundation with adequate resources is a major step in this direction.

Fifth, recognising the power of the languages, a major emphasis has been laid on language learning. Children between 2-8 years are known to pick up languages swiftly, and the advantage of multi-lingualism in their cognitive development cannot be exaggerated. Equally important is the need to ensure that children are encouraged, in the initial years, to learn subjects through their mother tongue. To see this move as anti-English or pro-Hindi shows a clear bias and shows an inadequate understanding of the purport of the new policy.

Finally, a slew of structural changes has been suggested without which the envisaged reforms can-

not be carried out. Establishing four verticals for standard setting, accreditation, funding, and framing "graduate attributes", under the umbrella Higher Education Commission of India, would form the basic architecture. Education being a concurrent subject, evidently a great deal of coordination between various departments and also between states and the Centre will be imperative. If members are chosen carefully and transparently, HECI and the four bodies under it will facilitate this participative process.

Many important issues like expanding the role of the private sector in this area, granting of autonomy to unwilling or unprepared public institutions, recognising the role of parents in the education of children, imposing conditions for inviting reputed foreign universities "on our own terms", and substantially raising public expenditure on education must be grappled with. However, though the NEP promotes the idea of "credit transfer" in higher education institutions, it does not specifically address the problems of school students migrating from one state to another. NEP 2020 has broadly articulated all the problems that were plaguing the educational sphere as a whole, and based on the collective experience so far, sought to suggest ways for a bright new future. As we know, policies rarely fail, it's the more complex process of implementation that often does.

The first priority now will be to set up the bodies and set in motion the missions proposed in the next three months. The key to success lies in taking along the states, which must bear most of the extra expenditure involved. As such, this NEP will make a difference if only the Prime Minister leads the process. How seriously the Union government wants this transformative policy to revolutionise India's education sector will be evident in the next few years.

The writer is a retired IAS officer from the Andhra Pradesh cadre, who has also worked with UNDP and with the private sector

LETTERS

FIRING AT LAC

The shots fired in the air at Pangong Tso lake is worrisome (*First LAC firing in 45 years, DC, Sept. 9*). The talks between the two countries at the political, diplomatic and military levels seem to be futile due to the mistrust widening these days. Both countries are reeling under economic and health crisis. They cannot afford any additional burden in the form of confrontation with neighbours. They should maintain status quo ante and observe restraint from provocative remarks.

Dr D.V.G.Sankararao
Vizianagaram

Obviously China is diverting attention of people from the Coronavirus it had "created" and "spread" the world over wreaking havoc with the economies of majority of the countries. On the contrary the Indian side too could be stage-managing things to divert the attention of Indian populace reeling under the impact of Covid-19. Otherwise, there was no need to indulge in mutual acrimony. Slogan mongering won't work.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

OXIMETER SALE

At a time when the Coronavirus is unrelenting in AP, the sale of pulse oximeters at an exorbitant price is egregious (*Oximeters price sets a new record, DC, Sept. 9*). Authorities concerned need to step in and control the price escalation.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

Email your letters to info@deccanmail.com, editor@deccanmail.com. You can also send them to Editor, Deccan Chronicle, 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad-500 003.

52 Indians aboard hijacked plane

BOMBAY, Sept. 9 Fifty two Indians were among the 101 passengers on board the London-bound BOAC VC-10 jet airliner when it left here this morning and hijacked while on flight from Bahrain to Beirut.

According to Santa Cruz air-traffic sources, 50 of the passengers were bound for Dubai, 26 for Bahrain — the two scheduled stops made by the airliner 11 for Beirut and the remaining 14 for London. There was also a Bombay-based Indian stewardess among the crew of 10, commanded by Captain Cyril Goulborn, of Worcester, Surrey.

quick BITES

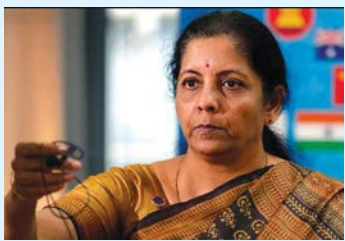
INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,193.92	-0.45
Nifty 50	11,278.00	-0.35
S&P 500*	3,412.69	0.03
Dollar (₹)	73.54	0.48
Pound Sterling (₹)	95.28	1.35
Euro (₹)	86.61	0.41
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,149.251	0.48
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	41.10	1.32
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.989	-0.067
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.693	0.009

* As of 9:30 PM IST

I-T Dept issues refunds worth ₹1.01 L cr in FY21

The Income Tax Department said it has issued refunds of over Rs 1.01 lakh crore to 27.55 lakh taxpayers between April 1 and September 8. This includes personal income tax (PIT) refunds amounting to Rs 30,768 crore issued to 25.83 lakh taxpayers and corporate tax refunds amounting to Rs 70,540 crore issued to over 1.71 lakh taxpayers during this period. The government has also been emphasising on refunds.

Banks catalysts of economic revival: FM



Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said banks are going to be the catalysts for economic revival. "At this stage, the catalysts for economic revival, the catalysts who have the pulse of every one of our customers, are banks," the FM said. The minister said banks have to introspect on their core business and also focus on welfare. She also said all bank staffers should know the details of government schemes.

State Bank raises ₹4,000 cr in AT1 bonds

State Bank of India said it has raised Rs 4,000 crore through the issuance of Basel III compliant debt instruments. The Committee of Directors for Capital Raising at its meeting accorded approval to allot 40,000 Basel III compliant additional tier-bonds (AT1) aggregating to Rs 4,000 crore to bond subscribers on Sept. 9, SBI said in a filing. The bonds bear a coupon rate of 7.74 per cent, the lowest ever, it said.

Investigation into import of PVC resin from Japan

India has initiated a probe into an alleged increase in imports of a certain type of PVC resin, used in various sectors including construction and medical devices, from Japan following complaints by domestic firms. A notification from the Directorate General of Trade Remedies said an application was filed by DCW, DCM Shri-ram and Chemplast Cuddalore Vinyls for initiation of a probe into imports of 'PVC suspension grade resin' from Japan.



Policy-makers to meet after Sept. 15
Govt set to exceed borrowing target

SIDDHARTHA SINGH
SEPT. 9

India is set to exceed its annual borrowing target after the world's biggest lockdown decimated the government's revenue collection goals, people with knowledge of the matter said.

Officials from the finance ministry and the Reserve Bank of India will meet later this month to decide on the amount of borrowings needed beyond the targeted Rs 12 lakh crore (\$163 billion) in the year ending March 31, the people said, asking not to be identified as the discussions were private. Policy makers will also deliberate on options to raise funds, including selling debt directly to the central bank, the people said.

The meeting will be scheduled after September 15 because the government will have a clearer visibility of its financial position after advance taxes start flowing in, they added. All these proposals are being discussed and no final decision has been taken. A finance ministry spokesman was not immediately available for a comment.

The government isn't keen on slashing spending at a time when the country's economic outlook is grim. The economy contracted 23.9 per cent in the quarter ended June, the worst on record, after an extended lockdown to control the spread of the virus wiped out activity



STATES HAVE TO CUT CAPEX BY ₹3.4 L CR

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

Despite the two options for additional borrowing put forth by the Centre, states will have to curtail FY21 capital spending by Rs 1 lakh crore to Rs 3.4 lakh crore, taking into account shortfalls in GST compensation and central tax devolution (CTD), finds Icra.

While offering two borrowing options, the Centre had pegged the GST compensation requirement of states at Rs 3 lakh crore for FY21 and the expected GST cess collections at Rs 65,000 crore, implying a gap of Rs 2.35 lakh crore. However, Icra has projected this gap to be Rs 2.9 lakh crore.

It estimates that in the current fiscal year, state governments would see fiscal deficit of a mini-

mum 4.25 per cent and maximum 5.52 per cent of GSDP.

Further, central tax devolution to the states will be Rs 5 lakh crore, Rs 2.8 lakh crore lower than the Rs 7.8 lakh crore budgeted by the Centre for FY21, partly on account of the adverse impact of the pandemic on consumption and the tax revenues of the Centre and the adjustment for excess devolution made in FY20.

Hence, there will be a shortfall of Rs 3.4 lakh crore. The additional maximum borrowing of 2.52 per cent of GSDP under Option I, if the states meet all the prescribed reforms within the set timeline, would be inadequate to cover the shortfalls in GST compensation of Rs 2.9 lakh crore and in CTD of Rs 2.8 lakh crore by Rs 1 lakh crore.

and dried up tax collections.

The government also wants to accelerate investments in port, roads and other infrastructure to

stimulate the world's fifth largest economy in the remaining part of the financial year, the people said.

—Bloomberg

Happiest Minds IPO subscribed 151 times



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, SEPT. 9

In a major boost to the primary equity market, public issues of Happiest Minds Technologies and Route Mobile received huge interest from all categories of investors. Both public issues have been fully subscribed.

Happiest Minds' Rs 702 crore initial public offering has been subscribed 150.98 times on the closing day, as per updated stock exchange.

Leading brokerages had given a subscribe, and subscribe for long term, call on Happiest Minds offer, leading to a huge rush from the retail investors category.

As per the latest data provided by the managers of the issue, Happiest Minds received over 22 lakh applications. Retail individual category portion was subscribed 70.94 times while high networth investors category was subscribed 351.46 times and institutional category was subscribed 77.43 times.

Route Mobile's Rs 600-crore IPO has been fully subscribed on the very first day of the bids opening, as per the subscription data updated by the stock exchanges.

PF board okays 8.5% rate

EPFO to credit 8.15% interest now and 0.35% after December

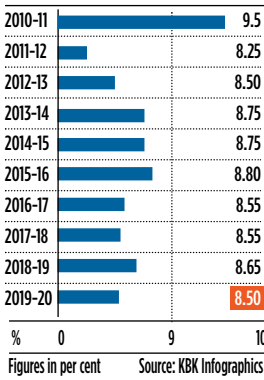
New Delhi, Sept. 9: Retirement fund body EPFO on Wednesday decided to provide 8.5 per cent rate of interest on employees' provident fund (EPF) for 2019-20 as committed earlier.

In March this year, Employees' Provident Fund Organisation's apex decision making body Central Board of Trustees headed by labour minister Santosh Gangwar had approved 8.5 per cent interest rate on EPF for last fiscal.

In a virtual CBT meeting on Wednesday, the EPFO has decided to provide 8.5 per cent rate of interest, a labour ministry statement said.

"In view of exceptional circumstances arising out of Covid-19, the agenda regarding interest rate was reviewed by the

Employees' Provident Fund interest rate



Central Board and it recommended the same rate of 8.50 per cent to the Central Government.

"It (8.5 per cent interest) would comprise 8.15 per cent from debt income and balance 0.35 per cent

(capital gain) from the sale of ETFs (exchange traded funds) subject to their redemption by 31st December, 2020," the statement said.

The board has recommended accounting such capital gains (from sale of ETFs) in the income of the financial year 2019-20 as being an exceptional case.

According to a source, the EPFO will provide 8.15 per cent interest on EPF soon and the remaining 0.35 per cent rate would be credited into the subscribers' account by December 31, after liquidation of ETFs.

The CBT also decided to hike the maximum sum assured payable under Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme 1976 to Rs 7 lakh from existing Rs 6 lakh.

—PTI

Biden for tax penalties on offshore profits

JENNIFER EPSTEIN
SEPT. 9

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden is proposing a 10 per cent tax penalty on companies that move operations overseas and a 10 per cent tax credit for companies that create jobs in the US in a policy rollout Wednesday.

Biden, who is launching a renewed focus on economic issues with a speech in Michigan, also will promise to reverse Trump administration policies that his campaign said amount to "loopholes" that allow offshoring to take place. The former vice president will also pledge

to take executive action during his first week in office to direct the federal government to buy American goods and support American supply chains in their procurement processes, his campaign said.

Biden's proposals echo President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign push to focus on reviving manufacturing in the US and creating more US jobs.

Biden will also say that Trump has broken his promises to bring jobs and profits back to the US.

"Offshoring, outsourcing, Buy American. These are areas where Donald Trump's record has not

been remotely matched by the reality," senior policy adviser Jake Sullivan said.

Biden will propose a 28 per cent corporate tax rate plus a 10 per cent penalty surtax on the profits from any production by a US company overseas for sale on American soil, making the overall tax rate on those profits 30.8 per cent. The penalty will also apply to call centres and services that a US company locates overseas but serve the US.

He also plans to implement what his campaign described as "strong anti-inversion regulations and penalties," though it did not detail those plans.

—Bloomberg

Reliance Retail gets ₹7,500 crore

New Delhi, Sept. 9: US private equity firm Silver Lake Partners will buy 1.75 per cent stake in Reliance Industries Ltd's retail arm for Rs 7,500 crore.

Silver Lake will invest Rs 7,500 crore in Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd, a subsidiary of RIL, for a 1.75 per cent stake, the Indian firm said in a statement.

"This investment values RRVL at a pre-money equity value of Rs 4.21

lakh crore," it said.

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

The world's largest tech investor picking up a stake in Reliance Retail cements belief that the firm is set to lead a disruptive, technology-led transformation of the Indian retail sector particularly relevant in post-pandemic India.

ularly relevant in post-pandemic India.

Reliance Retail Limited, a subsidiary of RRVL, operates India's largest, fastest-growing and most profitable retail business spanning supermarkets, consumer electronics chain stores, cash and carry wholesale business, fast-fashion outlets, and online grocery store JioMart. It operates almost 12,000 stores in nearly 7,000 towns. —PTI

Equity MFs see ₹4,000 cr outflow

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, SEPT. 9

The majority of equity and hybrid mutual fund schemes witnessed outflows in August, a trend which started in July. Retail investors booked profit after a sharp recovery in the equity market has led to many funds showing good gains in their net asset value post the March-April fall.

The August month data released by Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed out flows of



Rs 4,000 crore (Rs 2,480 crore outflow in July 2020) from the equity funds category and Rs 4,819 crore (Rs 7,301 crore outflow in July 2020) from the hybrid schemes.

In the fixed income cate-

gory, liquid funds witnessed outflow of Rs 15,814.01 while overnight fund saw outflow of Rs 10,298.03 crore while healthy inflows were recorded in money market funds (Rs 7,911.53 crore), ultrashort duration funds (Rs 5,428 crore) and low duration funds (Rs 5,368 crore). Overall, the fixed income category witnessed outflows of Rs 3,907.53 crore.

The MF industry's total asset under management in August stood slightly up at Rs 27.49 lakh crore.

AstraZeneca vaccine trial paused over adverse effect

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, SEPT. 9

The human trials of one of the most promising Covid-19 vaccine candidates, being developed by the University of Oxford and simultaneously undergoing trial in India, has been put on hold after a UK participant had an adverse reaction to it.

AstraZeneca, the biopharmaceutical giant in tie-up with the university to produce the vaccine, described the pause as a "routine" one following what was an unexplained illness.

The trials had moved into phase III after successful phase I and II testing had raised worldwide hopes of it being ready by early next year as results showed that it produced a positive immune response.

The vaccine moved to phase III testing in recent weeks, involving around 30,000 participants in the US as well as in the UK, Brazil and South Africa.

As part of the ongoing randomised, controlled global trials of the Oxford coronavirus vaccine, our



BUT SERUM INST. SAYS INDIA TRIALS CONTINUING

Sept. 9: Serum Institute of India said on Wednesday that trials of AstraZeneca Plc's Covid-19 vaccine candidate in the country is ongoing and has not faced any issues. "We can't comment much on the UK trials," Serum Institute said in a statement, adding "as far as Indian trials are concerned, it is continuing and we have faced no issues at all."

—Reuters

standard review process was triggered and we vol-

untarily paused vaccination to allow a review of safety data by an independent committee, said a spokesperson for AstraZeneca on Tuesday evening.

This is a routine action which has to happen whenever there is a potentially unexplained illness in one of the trials, while it is investigated, ensuring we maintain the integrity of the trials. In large trials illnesses will happen by chance but must be independently reviewed to check this carefully, the spokesperson said.

Stressing that the adverse reaction involved only a single patient, the spokesperson added that the team is working to expedite the review of the single event to minimise any potential impact on the trial timeline.

We are committed to the safety of our participants and the highest standards of conduct in our trials, the spokesperson said.

Phase III trials in vaccines often involve thousands of participants and can last several years.

—PTI

CAR RETAIL SALES FALL 7% IN AUG.

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, SEPT. 9

The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (Fada) on Wednesday said passenger vehicle retail sales in August declined 7.12 per cent to 1,78,513 units compared to the same month last year.

But retail sales had improved from last month due to the festive season kicking in.

Two-wheeler sales also fell 28.71 per cent to 8,98,775 units last month compared with 12,60,722 units in August 2019.

Commercial vehicle sales, the barometer of economic activity, declined 57.39 per cent to 26,536 units against 62,270 units in August 2019.

Total sales across categories declined 26.81 per cent to 11,88,087 units last month as against 16,23,218 units a year ago.



SUV—the Volkswagen Taigun to be launched in 2021," he said.

The mid-size SUV was imported and offered in a single top-specific variant.

Only 1,000 units of the Volkswagen T-Roc were allocated for India for 2020.

According to the new rules, an automaker can import 2,500 units of a vehicle or different models in a year without needing to homologate it in India.

This ensures that the manufacturer can test waters in India.

Volkswagen T-Roc sold out for 2020

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, SEPT. 9

Despite Covid-19-induced slowdown, Volkswagen, Europe's largest car maker, has sold out the first batch of its T-Roc SUV which was launched on March 18 before the lockdown priced at Rs 19.99 lakh at pan India showroom.

Bookings have now been closed for the time being. Volkswagen T-Roc compete against the Jeep Compass, Skoda Karoq, and the facelifted Hyundai Tucson in the country.

"We are thrilled with the response received for our carlines—T-Roc and Tiguan Allspace," Steffen Knapp, director at Volkswagen Passenger Cars India, said. "Keeping this momentum, we are excited as we prepare for our next big

Bela Bajarria is Netflix's global television head

LUCAS SHAW
SEPT. 9

Netflix Inc named Bela Bajarria as the head of a new global television division, giving one-executive oversight over all shows at the world's largest TV network.

Bajarria, the former local-language series chief who joined Netflix in 2016, was promoted over veteran Cindy Holland, who will be leaving next month. Bajarria will now be in charge of English and local-language original series, both scripted and unscripted. Scott Stuber has a similar job overseeing movies all over the world.

Co-CEO Ted Sarandos is reconfiguring leadership at the company's enter-



Bela Bajarria

tainment operations following his own promotion in July to sharing the top spot with co-CEO Reed Hastings. As the company looks beyond the US for most of its new customers, Sarandos elevated Bajarria to the new spot instead of long-time Holland, who was more focused on the US.

"Since becoming co-CEO, I've wanted to simplify the way our content teams operate—with one global film team led by Scott Stuber and one for TV, which will now be led by Bela Bajarria," Sarandos said.

Holland played a critical role in the firm's transition from licensing other companies' shows to making its own, including House of Cards, Orange Is the New Black, Stranger Things and many more.

Bajarria, 49, who was crowned Miss India USA in 1991, moved to the US from London with her family when she was 8. She lives in Los Angeles with her writer husband Doug Prochilo and their three children.

—Bloomberg/Agencies

Collections rising for NBFCs in key retail verticals



SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, SEPT. 9

NBFCs have witnessed 15 to 20 per cent improvement in their collections across different segments of retail lending in the last two months.

Increased optimism has led to overall collection efficiency in segments like micro loans, vehicle finance, affordable housing, according to Motilal Oswal Research.

Micro-finance collections have improved to 70-75 per cent by the end of the second phase of moratorium, though disbursements are still muted. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka have posted strong collection performances, while Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha and Maharashtra have witnessed lower collections due to either prolonged lockdowns or political interference.

Sa-Dhan too had observed that overall collection rate has been improving from 35-40 per cent in April, to 45-50 per cent in May, 65-70 per cent in July. Sa-Dhan has been anticipating collection rates to move up to 80-85 per cent by September.

Vehicle finance has seen collections improving to 80-90 per cent, according to Motilal. Vehicle financiers operating in rural and semi-urban locations have seen a faster-than-expected recovery. This is attributable to the focus on partial collections, even from customers under moratorium. Two-wheelers and tractors are the key products to have shown strong traction, with collection efficiency reaching almost pre-Covid levels. Small Commercial Vehicles have also shown improvement.

SHORT TAKES

Tokyo governor firm on Games

Tokyo: The postponed Olympics must be held next year “by all means”, Tokyo’s governor said on Wednesday, becoming the latest official to insist the event is feasible despite the coronavirus pandemic.

Yuriko Koike’s remarks, at an event hosted by Kyodo news agency, come after International Olympic Committee vice-president John Coates told AFP that the Games would go ahead in 2021 “with or without Covid”.

“Athletes are going through much hardship due to the one-year delay given that their physical condition and motivation were targeted at this summer,” Koike said, according to an English translation of her remarks published by Kyodo. “We have to go forward with the Games next summer by all means,” she added, at the corporate event for the news agency’s subscribers.

The city will “implement every possible measure” to ensure the safety of the event, Koike said. — AFP

Roy makes it to One-Day squad

Manchester: Jason Roy was added to England’s squad on Wednesday for the upcoming One-Day international series against Australia after recovering from a side strain.

The explosive opener missed the recent T20 series against Pakistan and Australia with the injury he sustained in training. Dawid Malan was promoted to the reserve list on the day he rose to No.1 on the Twenty20 player international rankings after scoring 66, 44 and 21 against Australia in the series England won 2-1. That took his career average to 48.71 and his overall strike-rate to 146.66. The ODI series against Australia starts Friday in Manchester. They are the first ODI matches between the countries since England won the Cricket World Cup on home soil last year. — AP

De Bruyne is Eng footballer of year

London: Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne was voted English football’s player of the year, denying Liverpool a third straight winner of the prestigious award.

De Bruyne became the first City player to capture the Professional Footballers’ Association award after scoring 13 goals and making a record-tying 20 assists last season. The Belgian credited manager Pep Guardiola for giving him the freedom to be creative. “Most of the time he just lets me be me,” De Bruyne said of Guardiola.

“We speak often about the team but in a lot of senses he knows when he gives the orders of what the team has to do that I will listen. But then on the other side, he gives me a lot of freedom; I don’t know why, that’s just the way it goes between us. He knows in one way I will always put the team first and then obviously if I can help myself I’m going to do that,” he said. — AP

Vikas gets the nod to train in US

New Delhi: Olympic-bound boxer Vikas Krishan has got the Sports Authority of India’s (SAI) approval to train in the USA, where he also plans to resume his career in the professional circuit.

SAI has approved his training in the US till November 30 and also sanctioned ₹17.5 lakh for the stint. Vikas, who competes in 69kg category currently, is an Asian and Commonwealth Games gold-medallist. He will be travelling to the US along with his American coach Ron Simms Jr and they will train at the Alexandria Boxing Club in Virginia till November 30. — PTI

Live on TV

CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Final: Trinbago Knight Riders vs St Lucia Zouks from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

US OPEN TENNIS

Matches from 9.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 2, HD

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Cristiano’s century

Ronaldo second player to score 100 international goals

Stockholm, Sept. 9: Add 100 international goals to the extraordinary list of milestones achieved by soccer superstar Cristiano Ronaldo.

Ronaldo became just the second male player to reach a century of goals for a national team when he curled a free kick into the top corner from 25 metres for the first of his two strikes in Portugal’s 2-0 away win against Sweden in the Nations League on Tuesday.

Scoring one of the best goals of his international career was a fitting way to enter the “100 Club,” where he joins former Iran striker Ali Daei, and he wheeled away in delight in an empty Friends Arena in Stockholm before performing his trademark celebration the mid-air pirouette.

Ronaldo, who was playing in his 165th game for Portugal, then added a second goal another curler into the top corner and needs nine more to surpass the international record of 109 scored by Daei from 1993-2006.

Ronaldo already holds the record for goals in the Champions League with 131, 16 more than nearest rival Lionel Messi. Portugal has won its two opening group games after beating Croatia 4-1 on Saturday, when Ronaldo was absent because of a toe infection.

Belgium and France also have maximum points. The top-ranked Belgians beat Iceland 5-1 and France defeated Croatia 4-2 the same scoreline as the 2018 World Cup final.

England drew 0-0 at Denmark in Copenhagen.

GIROUD NEARS RECORD

Oliver Giroud moved to within one goal of Michel Platini’s national record for France by converting a penalty to complete the victory over Croatia at the Stade de France.

The striker was handed the opportunity to move onto 40 international goals by Antoine Griezmann, who gave away penalty duties having missed his last three for France. Giroud made no mistake in the 77th minute.

A well-taken individual goal by center back Dejan Lovren put Croatia ahead, but Anthony Martial set up Griezmann for the equalizer before sliding in for a shot that hit the post, struck goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic on the back of the head, and rebounded into the net. — AP

GANGULY IN DUBAI TO TAKE STOCK OF IPL

New Delhi, Sept. 9: BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Wednesday left for Dubai to oversee preparations for a bio-secure IPL beginning on September 19.

Defending champions Mumbai Indians will face Chennai Super Kings in the opening match of the T20 event, which has been moved to the UAE due to the rising Covid-19 cases in India.

“My first flight in 6 months to Dubai for IPL...crazy life changes,” Ganguly posted on his Instagram handle with a picture in which he is wearing a mask and face shield, part of the Standard Operating Procedure while flying amid the pandemic.

The BCCI was able to create a window for the IPL following the postponement of the T20 World Cup in Australia, scheduled for October-November.

The Board would have faced a revenue loss of ₹4000 crore if the tournament, which usually takes place in April-May, had not got the go ahead.

IPL chairman Brijesh Patel is among the other key officials who are already in Dubai.

The tournament, despite its strict health safety measures, has already endured instances of contingent members testing positive for Covid-19.—PTI



Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates scoring the opening goal, his 100th goal for Portugal, during the UEFA Nations League football match against Sweden in Solna, Sweden, on Tuesday. Portugal won 2-0.

— AFP

Covid +ve Mbappe ruled out

Paris, Sept. 9: Kylian Mbappe has been ruled out of France’s Nations League game against World Cup runners-up Croatia on Tuesday after testing positive for Covid-19, national team management said Monday.

Mbappe, who took part in Monday evening’s training session before learning the result of his test, is the seventh Paris Saint-Germain player to contract the virus. Neymar was among the first to test positive last week.

“He was set aside from the group after receiving the results at the end of training before returning to his home in the evening,” French team management said.

“Like the rest of the squad, Mbappe had undergone a test prior to meeting up. The result was negative like the one on Wednesday” requested by UEFA ahead of the Sweden fixture on Saturday in Solna, management said.

Mbappe scored the winner for the world champions in a 1-0 victory over Sweden in their opening Nations League encounter. However, he was expected to be rested for the game at the Stade de France against Croatia, with PSG’s opening match

MESSI BACK TO TRAINING WITH BARCELONA SQUAD

Barcelona, Sept. 9: Lionel Messi rejoined the rest of his Barcelona teammates at practice on Wednesday. Messi had been practicing separately from the group since returning to the club on Monday. He had not been with the squad since announcing he wanted to leave and then deciding to stay to avoid a legal dispute with Barcelona.

He needed to pass two Coronavirus tests before he could practice with the rest of the squad under incoming coach Ronald Koeman.

Also back with the group was Philippe Coutinho, who also had been practicing separately. Players who had been with their national teams for Nations League matches also returned, including Frenkie de Jong, Ansu Fati and Sergio Busquets.

Barcelona said that defender Samuel Umtiti has been cleared by doctors after recovering from Covid-19. Luis Suarez and Arturo Vidal, who like Umtiti are not in Koeman’s plans for the season, also have been practicing normally.

The club has scheduled a friendly against third-division club Nastic for Saturday. — AP

ons in a 1-0 victory over Sweden in their opening Nations League encounter. However, he was expected to be rested for the game at the Stade de France against Croatia, with PSG’s opening match

of the French league season scheduled for Thursday away to Lens.

Mbappe is the fourth player to be withdrawn from the France squad following a positive Covid-19 test. — AFP

CANADA QUINN COMES OUT AS TRANSGENDER

Los Angeles, Sept. 9: Canada and OL Reign midfielder Rebecca Quinn came out publicly as transgender in an Instagram post on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old player, who won Olympic bronze with the Canadian women’s team in 2016 and played for Canada at the 2019 Women’s World Cup, said the post was aimed at helping “queer folk” feel safe on social media.

“As I’ve lived as an openly trans person with the people I love most for many years, I did always wonder when I’d come out publicly,” Quinn wrote in an Instagram post.

Quinn is one of the most prominent North American team sports athletes to come out as transgender. — AFP

KNIGHT RIDERS TO MEET ZOUKS IN CPL FINAL

Tarouba (Trinidad and Tobago), Sept. 9: Trinbago Knight Riders and St. Lucia Zouks registered dominant wins in their respective semifinals to qualify for the Hero Caribbean Premier League final here.

The Knight Riders are now in a position to complete the first perfect season in CPL history, as they have won all 10 league matches plus the semifinal.

The Trinbago Knight Riders restricted Jamaica Tallawahs to 107 for seven and then chased down the target with nine wickets and five overs to spare to give them a chance to win a fourth CPL title.

In the other semifinal, St. Lucia Zouks were even more ruthless as they bowled out Guyana Amazon Warriors for 55 in 13.4 overs and got to the target in 4.3 overs without losing a wicket.

Sent in to bat, the Tallawahs struggled as each of the first three overs yielded a wicket.

Akeal Hosein accounted for Jermaine Blackwood and Mujeeb Ur Rehman, while Khary Pierre sent back Glen Phillips as Tallawahs were reeling at 10 for three in 2.4 overs.

The Powerplay period ended with Tallawahs at 28 for four and it included a Pierre over with five wides. — PTI

Awesome Osaka cruises into semis

New York, Sept. 9: Japan’s Naomi Osaka sailed into the semifinals of the US Open on Tuesday as Alexander Zverev of Germany booked his spot in the last four of the men’s draw.

Osaka, the tournament’s fourth seed, swept aside unseeded Shelby Rogers in straight sets to set up a match with Jennifer Brady for a place in Saturday’s final.

The 22-year-old Osaka required just 1hr 20 min inside an empty Arthur Ashe Stadium to defeat the 27-year-old Rogers 6-3, 6-4.

Osaka, the world number 9, said her victory was pay-back for three previous defeats to the 93rd-ranked Rogers.

They included a 2017 loss on clay in Charleston that Osaka said had left “a really bad aftertaste in my mouth.”

“Honestly, I just felt like she had the upper hand because I’ve never beaten her,” Osaka said.

Osaka’s dominant service game contributed to a comfortable runout for the 2018 US Open champion.

She won 83 per cent of points on her first serve and 70 per cent on her second.

In contrast, Rogers managed only 66 per cent and 33 per cent respectively. Rogers hit 29 unforced errors compared to just eight committed by Osaka. Brady conquered some serious nerves to defeat Kazakhstan’s Yulia Putintseva and reach the semifinals of a Grand Slam for the first time.

The American 28th seed needed just 1hr 9 min to blow away her 23rd-seeded opponent 6-3, 6-2.

Brady is yet to drop a set and has lost only 24 games during her march to the semis, the fewest of anyone left in the draw.

Osaka said Brady would be a formidable opponent.

ZVEREV EASES PAST CORIC, IN SEMIS

Zverev bounced back from a shocking start to oust 27th-seeded Croatian Borna Coric in four sets.

The 23-year-old German prevailed 1-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/1), 6-3 in 3hr 25min.

He began playing more aggressively after finding himself a set down, and 4-2 behind in the second set.

The German will play Spain’s 20th seed Pablo Carreno Busta for a place in Sunday’s final.

The Spaniard defeated 12th-seeded Canadian Denis Shapovalov 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4), 0-6, 6-3 in an epic five-setter that ended in the early hours of Wednesday.

On Wednesday, second seed Dominic Thiem faces Australian Alex de Minaur and third seed Daniil Medvedev plays compatriot Andrey Rublev for the other semifinal spot.— AFP



Jennifer Brady of the United States reacts after defeating Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan during the quarterfinals of the US Open tennis championships in New York on Tuesday. Brady won 6-3, 6-2.

— AP

YUVRAJ UP FOR COMEBACK

New Delhi, Sept. 9: World Cup-winning former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh has decided to come out of retirement, giving in to a request from the Punjab Cricket Association more than a year after he called it quits.

The Player of the Tournament at the 2011 World Cup, Yuvraj had announced his retirement from all forms of cricket last June. PCA secretary Puneet Bali was the first person to approach the Yuvraj with an offer to come out of retirement for the benefit of Punjab cricket. He has agreed to resume for the state at least in the T20 format.

“Initially, I wasn’t sure that I wanted to take up the offer. I was done with domestic cricket, though I did want to continue to play in other domestic franchise-based leagues worldwide if I got permission from the BCCI,” Yuvi was quoted as saying by Cricbuzz. — PTI

Butler shines as Miami pip Bucks

Miami, Sept. 9: The Miami Heat punched their ticket to the NBA Eastern Conference finals Tuesday, beating top-seeded Milwaukee 103-94 as injured Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo watched from the bench.

Jimmy Butler and Goran Dragic finished with 17 points apiece as six Heat players scored in double figures and Miami completed a 4-1 series victory in a bruising encounter against the league’s top defensive team.

Khris Middleton led the Bucks with 23 points.

Antetokounmpo — tipped to scoop a second straight NBA Most Valuable Player award this season — aggra-

vated his sprained right ankle in the first half of the Bucks’ game-four overtime victory over the Heat. The Bucks declared him inactive less than an hour before tipoff on Tuesday.

The loss of Antetokounmpo, who averaged career highs of 29.5 points and 13.6 rebounds per game this season, was a huge blow for the Bucks, as they tried to do what no NBA team has done before: come back from an 0-3 deficit to win a seven-game playoff series.

It’s the second straight campaign that the Bucks built the best regular-season record only to come up short in the playoffs. — AFP