


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAHMUNDRY | SATURDAY | 5 SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 33.0°C

Min: 24.0°C

RH: 71%

Rainfall: 4.7mm

Forecast: Humid and Overcast.

Max/Min temp. 33/24 °C

COVID-19 C O U N T

CASES

DEATHS

(+87,953)

(+1,055)

40,14,744

69,614

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,478)

(+10)

TS: 1,35,884

866

(+10,776)

(+76)

AP: 4,76,506

4,276

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,66,43,888

DEATHS

8,76,000

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana

Tithi: Bhadrapada Bahula Tadiya till 4.40 pm

Star: Revati till 2.21 am (Sunday)

Variyam: 12.54 pm to 2.42 pm

Durmuhurtam: 6.06 am to 7.44 am

Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am

HJRI CALENDAR

Muharram 16, 1442 AH

PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.00 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 5.00 pm

Maghrib: 6.35 pm

Isha: 8.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.12 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.49 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 8.55 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 8.55 PM

COUNTER POINT



No classes today, dad... our school website has been hacked by someone!

IN BRIEF

SC to hear case on drug shortage

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday sought responses from the Centre, states and Union Territory (UTs) on a plea alleging non-availability of essential medicines for treatment of mental illness in government run or funded health care centres. A Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde agreed to hear the plea which has sought direction to the authorities to forthwith notify the essential drugs list in their states and Union Territories and provide medicines free of cost to persons suffering from mental illness. "Issue notice," said the bench, also comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian. — PTI

Finmin wants expenses cut
New Delhi: The government on Friday asked all ministries/departments to review appointments of consultants, curtail functions and ban use of imported paper for printing as part of measures to rationalise non-priority expenditure. The finance ministry has issued the instructions on expenditure management with a view to improving the quality of public expenditure, containing non-developmental spending and ensuring availability of adequate resources for critical priority schemes, the department of expenditure said. — PTI

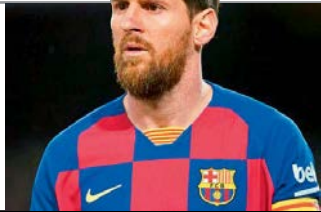


NATION | 4
Sena slams Kangana for her 'PoK' remark



WORLD | 5
Imran's close aide quits on graft charges

SPORTS | 8
Messi decides to stay at Barcelona



UK's deal with 'dubious' AMTZ raises eyebrows

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC HYDERABAD, SEPT. 4

The United Kingdom government entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with the "dubious" Andhra Pradesh Meditech Zone for a manufacturing support programme to fight the Covid-19 pandemic raised many an eyebrow.

A recent British Deputy High Commission press release said the UK government had joined forces with AMTZ to plug the gap between demand and supply of ventilators and other medical equipment. But, it failed to answer queries raised by *Deccan Chronicle* on why the UK government had picked AMTZ as partner when the latter's ventilators had failed clinical trials due to sub-standard quality.

The Centre, after giving an advance of ₹14.5 crore, did not include AMTZ in the list of recommended suppliers post clinical evaluation. The AMTZ also failed to fulfil its commitment to supply 30,000 ventilators to Andhra Pradesh.

What is more intriguing is that the manufacturing support programme, which British Deputy High Commissioner Andrew Fleming described as "exciting", is worth just ₹56 lakh.

"More than the money,

- THE CENTRE, after giving an advance of ₹14.5 crore, did not include AMTZ in the list of recommended suppliers post clinical evaluation.
- THE AMTZ also failed to fulfil its commitment to supply 30,000 ventilators to Andhra Pradesh.
- THE BRITISH high commission evaded questions on why the UK had picked up AMTZ as partner

the tag of the UK government is what AMTZ managing director Dr Jitendra Sharma desires to have," sources pointed out.

Earlier, Dr Sharma sought to involve Niti Ayog CEO Amitabh Kant and K. Vijay Raghavan, principal scientific adviser to the Prime Minister, to project his clout whenever financial frauds or failures were exposed; the latest addition to the list is the British Deputy High Commission.

The High Commission also evaded questions on how the MoU was entered into with Dr Sharma, who has been facing serious allegations of misappropriation of funds allotted to AMTZ and was stripped off the powers to deal with financial matters by the AP government.

■ Page 2: AP established fraud against Dr Sharma

Guard reinfected with Coronavirus

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, SEPT. 4

In a shocking development, a case of recurrence of Covid-19 in a patient, who had recovered has been reported from Piler town in Chittoor district.

According to health officials, a 53-year-old man from Piler, who is said to be a security person in TTD, tested positive for Covid-19 for the second

time in two months. This would probably be a rare case from across the country.

It may be noted that though this is not an isolated case.

It goes against the popular belief that one cannot contract the Covid-19 once antibodies have developed.

■ Page 3: Studies point to reinfection after recovery

BIGG BOSS STAR ARRESTED FOR TONSURING DALIT

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 4

The police arrested Telugu Bigg Boss star N. Nutan Naidu in connection with the tonsuring of a 20-year-old Dalit youth, Parri Srikanth, and allegedly impersonating P.V. Ramesh, retired additional chief secretary to the AP government, to protect his wife N. Priya Madhuri, the prime accused in the case. On August 29, the city police had arrested seven persons, including Madhuri, on charges of assaulting and tonsuring Srikanth the previous day in Naidu's house.

Vizag city police chief Manish Kumar Sinha said that their investigation revealed Naidu made video calls to Madhuri twice from Hyderabad and also threatened and abused Srikanth in casteist terms.

On August 29, a person posing as retired IAS officer P.V. Ramesh called medical officers and asked them to give a medical certificate to six of the seven arrested in the tonsure case.

■ Page 3: Imposter tricked True Caller too

CM for action on hospitals denying Arogyasri services

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 4

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, issued instructions to take strict action against hospitals that refuse to implement the Arogyasri scheme.

Conducting a review meeting on the Covid-19 situation in the state on Tuesday, Jagan asked for helpdesks to be set up in Arogyasri network hospitals and ordered immediate

action on mistakes. He directed officials to conduct a campaign on the importance of tests, diagnosis and treatment for Covid with contact phone numbers of officials.

Directing officials to set up helpdesks with 'Arogya mitras' at every Arogyasri network hospital, Jagan said helpdesks should be available at every empanelled hospital. He said, "Implementation of Arogyasri

scheme in network hospitals should be regularly monitored and severe action taken against any hospital flouting the norms. Arogya mitras should have a clear understanding on protocol and they should monitor whether the Arogya Asara (recuperation allowance) amount is being given to patients treated."

■ Page 3: AP to hire for medical posts in 10 days

TRANSPARENCY | REGIME

People seek accountability after row over protection of jewels, expenditure

Demand to get TTD under RTI gathers pace

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, SEPT. 4

The demand for the implementation of Right to Information (RTI) Act in TTD has picked up pace and has become a topic of discussion among various quarters, particularly after the temple trust board's recent decision — to place a request before the state government to entrust the audit of TTD accounts to

the CAG, came to light. The TTD, which is the official custodian of Lord Venkateswara temple at Tirumala, was established in 1932 and operated by a board of trustees. It has an annual budget of over ₹3,300 crore and a workforce of 23,000 permanent and outsourced staff, with 97 independent divisions.

The TTD is mainly dependent on the offerings made by devotees and the trust board is entrusted to spend

those funds for the sake of devotees, temple development, charitable activities and salaries, among other things. For the past few years, the TTD has been facing criticism regarding protection of temple jewels, archaeological matters and expenditure.

Dr Ramana Deekshitulu, who worked as the chief priest in Tirumala temple for quite some time before he was unceremoniously sacked in 2018, also

alleged that some precious jewels were missing and alleged financial irregularities in TTD.

Prior to this, one B.K.S.R. Ayyangar also filed an RTI application with the PMO in 2017, seeking information on ornaments donated by 16th century ruler Sri Krishnadevaraya. He then approached the Central Information Commission (CIC) in April 2017, as he was unsatisfied with the reply. Subsequently, an

interim order was issued by CIC, recommending TTD to provide information to RTI applicants.

The TTD, however, moved the High Court against the CIC orders and said that it does not come under RTI, since it is not a public organisation.

Meanwhile, the Hyderabad High Court in a 2018 order held that religious institutions that are not funded by the government do not fall within the

purview of the RTI Act. "We welcome the decision taken by the present TTD trust board seeking audit of TTD accounts to CAG. In a similar way, TTD has a moral right to share information as the temple is receiving funds from only the public," said P. Naveen Kumar Reddy, senior Congress leader from Tirupati.

■ Page 2: RTI to bring transparency in TTD

Rajnath, China defmin meet

Discuss ways to resolve stand-off in Ladakh; Rajnath says trust is key for peace

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 4

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Friday met his Chinese counterpart General Wei Fenghe in Moscow in the first high-level political contact between the two countries who are involved in a tense military stand-off in the Ladakh sector for the last four months. The meeting lasted two hours and 20 minutes.

The two sides discussed ways to bring down tensions between the two nuclear-armed countries. The Chinese side requested for the meeting with Singh, who is in Moscow to attend the joint meeting of the defence ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

The meeting started at 9.30 pm IST at Hotel Metropole in Moscow. Defence secretary Ajay Kumar and Indian ambassador to Russia D.B. Venkatesh Varma were part of the Indian delegation.

Speaking at the SCO meeting earlier, Singh said peace and security in the region demand a climate of trust, non-aggres-

Situation tense, deployed more troops: Army chief

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 4

Army chief General M.M. Naravane said on Friday that the situation along the LAC with China is "slightly tense" and the Army has undertaken precautionary deployment in some areas along the LAC for "our own safety and security".

"The troops are prepared for all contingencies that may arise," asserted General Naravane, who was on a two-day visit to forward areas in Ladakh. "We are sure that the

problem can be resolved fully through talks," the Army chief added.

He said that he spent time with the commanders and troops for a first-hand assessment of the situation along the border.

"It was very satisfying to see our soldiers and local commanders in high morale and good health. It gives me confidence that they are well-prepared to safeguard the territorial integrity of our nation. The Indian Army is known for its commitment and resolve. The nation can count on us," said

General Naravane.

The Army chief said that in the past three months, India and China have been engaged in resolving the situation. "Military and diplomatic channels are functioning. Indian side is firmly committed to resolve the current situation along the LAC through engagement," he said.

The Army chief visited forward areas for a first-hand assessment of the situation along the LAC. He urged all ranks to remain vigilant and maintain a high order of operational readiness.

sion, peaceful resolution of differences and respect for international rules.

Singh's comments are being seen as a veiled message to China ahead of his bilateral talks with Wei.

Rajnath Singh referred to the Second World War

and said its memories teach the globe the "foibles of aggression" of one state upon another that brings "destruction" to all.

"Peaceful stable and secure region of SCO member states, which is home to over 40 per cent of the

global population, demands a climate of trust and cooperation, non-aggression, respect for international rules and norms, sensitivity to each other's interest and peaceful resolution of differences," Singh said.

Fire control



The fire on the merchant navy vessel *MT New Diamond* is being doused after a mishap in the Bay of Bengal on Friday. The operation was coordinated by the Indian Navy ship *INS Sahyadri* along with Coast Guard vessels in close liaison with Sri Lankan authorities in the Bay of Bengal.

SPURNED GIRL THROWS ACID ON EX-BOYFRIEND

D.S. REDDI | DC KURNOOL, SEPT. 4

A girl threw acid on her boyfriend on Friday, injuring him severely on the face, head and left hand.

The incident occurred at Peddakottala near Nandyal where both the attacker and the victim stay.

This was the second attack on the man, Nagendra, 24, by Supriya, 20.

Last week, Supriya had thrown acid at him and injured him on the hand.

Police said Supriya and Nagendra had been in a relationship for three years but he had married another woman.

■ Page 3: Boy's parents did not allow marriage

IN BRIEF

THREE OFFICIALS OF RAMESH HOSPITALS GRANTED BAIL

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 4

The AP High Court has granted bail to three officials from Ramesh Hospitals here on Friday.

They are: Dr Kodali Rajagopal Rao, chief operating officer, Dr Kurapati Sudarshan, general manager (administration), and Pallapothu Venkatesh, public relations officer.

The trio were arrested by the police on charges of their alleged involvement in Swarna Palace hotel fire mishap killing 10 patients on August 9 in a case filed against them under sections 304 and 308 read with 34 of IPC.

Earlier, they moved the fifth additional metropolitan sessions judge court for bail and when it was rejected, they moved the High Court for the same and it was granted.

A-G INFORMS HC ON RELEASE OF ADVERTISEMENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 4

Advocate-General S. Sriram informed the High Court that files pertaining to giving advertisements to media agencies are cleared by the commissioner for information and public relations and not by the Chief Minister.

The A-G was responding during the virtual hearing in High Court on Friday on a PIL alleging that a company, owned by the CM's family, was being given unfairly high advertisements and also in party colours. He said that it was the commissioner and Information and Public Relations department who would decide on such files and not the CM.

He said that the petitioner was suppressing the facts of issuing advertisements to two select Telugu dailies between 2014-19 in a highly disproportionate manner favouring the two dailies and opined that the petitioner was perhaps the beneficiary of such exercise and informed the court that petitioner filed his petition to fight for a Telugu daily and for Telugu Desam.

The A-G informed the court that he would file preliminary objections on the maintainability of the PIL before filing the counter on merits. However, the court said that if there were any objections on the maintainability, it would decide and posted the next hearing in the case for two weeks and directed the A-G to file a counter affidavit.

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LAND ON LONG LEASE OFFERED FOR MSMEs FROM TAMIL NADU

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, SEPT. 4

The Industries and IT minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy has offered land on a long lease basis to the Chennai-based MSMEs and assured water supply to the proposed industrial park in Kosalanagaram near Tiruttani in Chittoor district.

It may be recalled that several MSMEs located at Ambattur Industrial Estate in Chennai expressed interest in industrial land close to Chennai a couple of days back.

In this backdrop, the minister interacted with the representatives of Chennai entrepreneurs A.S. Hari Prasad and A. Ramesh during a video conference held on Friday.

The minister said that they are ready to provide land with infrastructure as required by them. The entrepreneurs from Chennai sought developed land with infrastructure at a reduced price for MSMEs while reacting to ₹65 lakh quoted per acre at the Special Economic Zone at Menakuru near Naidupeta.

At this juncture, Mr Goutham Reddy offered land on long lease while pointing to a provision in the new industrial policy.

Mr Reddy said that he asked the industries secretary Karikal Valavan to hold a meeting with the entrepreneurs of Chennai interested in the land in AP to set up MSMEs and explain to them about the new industrial policy which is giving several sops to MSMEs.

Farmers differ on meters

Many trust Jagan on continuing free power to farm sector in AP

DC CORRESPONDENTS
VIJAYAWADA/KAKINADA/
KURNOOL/NELLORE, SEPT. 4

As the state government promises to fix smart or infrared meters to agriculture pump sets from April 1, most farmers are not afraid that the 'free power for agriculture' may be scrapped, even as they raising apprehensions that a cap may be imposed on the number of units to be consumed in Andhra Pradesh, among other fears.

The farmers are of the opinion that as former chief minister late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy had introduced free power to the farm sector, they believe that his son and the present Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, will continue the same without causing any trouble to them.

A good number of farmers are of the opinion that keeping count of the number of units of power consumed by a farmer is a good practice as it makes him realise how much power he is consuming every month and also how much money the state government is paying to the discoms for his power.

However, farmers have asked the state government to replace old transformers and power lines with the new ones so that they will get quality power and avoid frequent power disruptions due to transformers burning up, snapping of power lines and also burning of fuses. They have complained that as there is only one lineman for one or two villages, they are facing difficulties in availing his services in case of any power disruption to their connection as it is taking more time for him to visit his field and attend to the complaint to restore power supply.

K. Hanumantha Rao, a farmer from Eepareethalapadu in Krishna district, said, "Fixing of meters will help us estimate our power consumption every month and also know about how much the state government is spending for power on each farmer."

Another farmer, Mukkamala Seetha Ramaiah, from Chittela village in Krishna district, said, "We are facing issues of power disruptions due to old electrical equipment like transformers and power lines still being continued. Once they are replaced with new ones, it will help us get uninterrupted quality power."

A farmer from Vaddimukkala village in Guntur district, V. Prasada Rao, said, "The state government should promote solar power pump sets so that it helps save on power bills."

However, farmers raise a series of doubts on implementation of the new plan, asking whether a farmer with multiple power connections in his name, gets only one meter or multiple meters. Some ask about fate of tenant farmers as they get lands on a lease basis and cultivate crops and as power connections are registered in the name of land owners, the money will go to the owners and not to them.

A section of farmers in



A middle-aged man tastes water from an agriculture pump set in Undavalli village of Guntur district in this file photo.

Opposition parties oppose meter fixation, CTS ideas

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 4

The leaders of all opposition parties opposed meters on pump sets and cash transfer schemes (CTS) for the agriculture free power scheme proposed by the government.

The leaders alleged that former Chief Minister, Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, was against installing meters to pump sets but his son, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, was going against the decision of his father, which would harm farmers' interests.

TD leader, Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu, recalled that the YSR never tried to install meters to agri pump sets for the welfare of farmers and lamented that Jagan was doing it. He claimed that the government knows what the bills would be for 18 lakh agri pump sets in 13 districts of the state under the free power scheme, hence the government should directly pay the amount to the electricity department, shunning the meter installation decision.

AP state water users' association federation president, Alla Venkata Gopala Krishna Rao, said that there is no need to intro-

duce the two Godavari districts say that state's move will cause financial and mental stress to them.

A farmer from Buttaigudem in West Godavari, Karatam Suresh, said, "We are enjoying free power now and even 10 per cent of farmers are not in a position to pay power bills. In case, we are asked to pay after imposing a cap on the number of units consumed, we will be in trouble."

A tobacco farmer, Ravindra Garikapaty, from Buttaigudem, said, "Once the meters are fixed and the power bill amount credited into the account of land owner, he may or may not pay back to the tenant farmer and this

● **AP STATE** water users' association federation president, Alla Venkata Gopala Krishna Rao, said that there is no need to introduce CTS for free power and installing meters.

When the government transfers cash into the accounts of the free power beneficiary farmers then bankers will deduct the amounts immediately for agriculture loans and old installments, Mr Rao said, adding that that there was no use in installing meters as this would create a lot of confusion among the farming community. He sought the annulment of the installation of meters decision.

CPM state secretary, P. Madhu, alleged that the BJP was trying to eliminate subsidies to the farmer community and, therefore, proposed the CTS and installing meters for the free power scheme. He said that the YSRC government should have opposed it in support of farmers but it blindly obeyed the proposals which is a betrayal. He sought continuation of present sys-

tem for free power and cancellation of installing meters and CTS.

AP urban citizen federation convener, Ch. Babu Rao, objected to the decision of meter installation and alleged that YSRC government was trying to cancel free power in a phase-wise manner, which is why it proposed meter installation and CTS. He demanded cancellation of the decisions and warned about starting protests with the support of farmers.

CPI state secretary, K. Ramakrishna, lamented that the YSRC government which claims to follow the principles of YSR is now reversing his decisions with the meter installation and CTS decisions. He said that the government is paying the power bills of farmers under a free power scheme without meters and without any problems but now the YSRC government is conspiring to withdraw the free power scheme so it decided on meter installation and CTS.

He demanded that Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy cancel the decisions and warned about a befitting reply to his anti-farmer decision if her persisted.

farmers who suffered crop loss, especially in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram and have also started distribution of fertilisers for farmers to take up 'top dressing' on slightly damaged crops to help them survive.

In Nellore, paddy, groundnut, seas a mum and green gram in 1,709 hectares have been affected in 18 villages, in 10 mandals and in Kadapa, bajra in 25 hectares in two villages in two mandals has been affected.

In total, more than 7,000 farmers suffered crop damage or loss based on preliminary reports and the agricultural authorities have complete enumeration of damage and crop loss in about 6,542 hectares so far.

Agriculture authorities maintain that inundation of crops mainly in Orvakal in Kurnool was more and sound confident that nearly 60 per cent of inundated crops could be saved if the farmers could manage to drain the water

from fields quickly.

They are expecting yield loss in pulses like red gram, green gram and black gram as they are in harvesting stage at present and got submerged in flood water in the fields.

They say that in case the farmers lose paddy and other crops due to inundation of fields, they can rise pulses once the water recedes so that they will not suffer much.

Meanwhile, agricultural authorities are planning for provision of input subsidy on seeds to farmers who suffered crop loss, especially in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram and have also started distribution of fertilisers for farmers to take up 'top dressing' on slightly damaged crops to help them survive.

Based on preliminary crop damage reports from agricultural authorities, in Visakhapatnam district, paddy in 74 hectares, being raised in four mandals covering 23 villages, has been damaged affecting 15 famers.

In Kurnool, cotton, groundnut, red gram, black gram, maize, castor, paddy, korra and bajra, being raised in 15,108 hectares, have been affected in 22 mandals, covering 158 villages in 22 mandals.

In East Godavari, paddy, cotton and maize being raised in 6,014 hectares, in 191 villages, in 21 mandals have been affected.

In West Godavari, paddy, maize, cotton and groundnut in 3,580 hectares have been affected in 76 villages, in 18 mandals.

In Krishna, black gram, cotton, green gram, groundnut, maize, chillies and paddy in 4,003 hectares have been hit in 40 villages,

State suffers crop damage in 30,503 hectares due to rains

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 4

Due to the excessive recent rainfall, agricultural crops like paddy, cotton, maize, groundnut and others have been damaged in about 30,503 hectares, mainly in seven districts in Andhra Pradesh.

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Govt likely to revise wages for prisoners

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 4

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) is likely to change the fate of prisoners who were getting meagre incentives for doing work as inmates as the state Government has decided to revise the old incentives.

Advocate Thandava Yogesh from Prakasam district lamented that the government is paying only ₹30 for unskilled, ₹50 for semi-skilled and ₹70 for skilled persons per day for seven hours of work. He said although the Supreme Court directed payment of equitable wages to prisoners, it was not being implemented.

Yogesh said that responding to his PIL, the government constituted a committee for revision of wages for prisoners and those recommendations were sent to the government. He said that the PIL came up for hearing on Friday and the government submitted that a GO would be issued in 10 days in connection with the revision of wages for prisoners.

He said that no one should be paid less than the statutory minimum wages as it violates Article 23 (1) read with Article 21. He said that the matter was posted for two weeks later.

AP established fraud against Dr Sharma

From page 1

The AP government's investigating agencies prima facie established financial irregularities running into several crores of rupees against Dr Sharma following which the government removed him as MD. Buckling under pressure from a lobby at the Centre, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy reinstated Dr Sharma.

All that a High Commission spokesperson said was "all projects supported by the UK government require the completion of prior due diligence checks and implementation of strict measures to prevent against any misuse of funds, including no advance payments and accurate records of expenditure."

The spokesperson, however, chose to remain silent on how the prior due diligence missed out core factors like lack of expertise of AMTZ to make ventilators, its ventilators failing clinical trials and its head Dr Sharma indulging in financial frauds.

On behalf of the state government, AP food corporation CEO, Sridhar Reddy, fisheries department commissioner, K. Kanna Babu, signed the MoUs for their respective departments. Agriculture minister, K. Kanna Babu, agriculture mission vice chairman MVS Nagi Reddy, agriculture special chief secretary, Poonam Malkondiah were also present.

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In Nellore, paddy, groundnut, seas a mum and green gram in 1,709 hectares have been affected in 18 villages, in 10 mandals and in Kadapa, bajra in 25 hectares in two villages in two mandals has been affected.

In total, more than 7,000 farmers suffered crop damage or loss based on preliminary reports and the agricultural authorities have complete enumeration of damage and crop loss in about 6,542 hectares so far.

Agriculture authorities maintain that inundation of crops mainly in Orvakal in Kurnool was more and sound confident that nearly 60 per cent of inundated crops could be saved if the farmers could manage to drain the water

from fields quickly.

They are expecting yield loss in pulses like red gram, green gram and black gram as they are in harvesting stage at present and got submerged in flood water in the fields.

They say that in case the farmers lose paddy and other crops due to inundation of fields, they can rise pulses once the water recedes so that they will not suffer much.

Meanwhile, agricultural authorities are planning for provision of input subsidy on seeds to farmers who suffered crop loss, especially in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram and have also started distribution of fertilisers for farmers to take up 'top dressing' on slightly damaged crops to help them survive.

Based on preliminary crop damage reports from agricultural authorities, in Visakhapatnam district, paddy in 74 hectares, being raised in four mandals covering 23 villages, has been damaged affecting 15 famers.

In Kurnool, cotton, groundnut, red gram, black gram, maize, castor, paddy, korra and bajra, being raised in 15,108 hectares, have been affected in 22 mandals, covering 158 villages in 22 mandals.

In East Godavari, paddy, cotton and maize being raised in 6,014 hectares, in 191 villages, in 21 mandals have been affected.

In West Godavari, paddy, maize, cotton and groundnut in 3,580 hectares have been affected in 76 villages, in 18 mandals.

In Krishna, black gram, cotton, green gram, groundnut, maize, chillies and paddy in 4,003 hectares have been hit in 40 villages,

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A senior official from the agriculture department said, "Based on preliminary assessment, we have suffered crop damage and loss in nearly 30,503 hectares in several districts and our personnel are taking up enumeration in fields to find out the extent of damage or loss of crops further, so that we can plan for providing input subsidy to the affected farmers in the state soon."

AP SIGNS MOU WITH NETHERLANDS ON FOOD PRODUCTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEP. 4

The Andhra Pradesh government signed MoUs with the Netherlands government and seven major firms for food processing, technology transfer and marketing for agriculture and aquaculture products.

The MoUs were signed at the CM's Camp Office here on Friday in the presence of Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for food processing from agriculture and aquaculture products, including tomato, mango, chini, chilli vegetables and aqua products.

The national centre for banana (NRCB), Tamil Nadu, future tech foods, Pune, big basket online grocery store, ITC, Lawrencecadale agro processing India Pvt Ltd, (Leaf), IFB agro industries Ltd, Empire company and the Netherlands government have signed eight MoUs.

Earlier, Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy held a review meeting on food processing and said that the government is roping in major companies for tie up with in food processing, mainly to make use of the seven to eight crops that have been worrying the farmer in terms of storage, marketing and getting remunerative prices. He stated that the partnership will go a long way and will be helpful to the women entrepreneurs.

Netherlands ambassador, Marten van den Berg, spoke through video conference from New Delhi. The Netherlands government has signed the MoU for developing interior architecture, design, packaging, and containers of food processing.

NRCB will partner in developing new micro-food processing promotion and quality testing laboratories. NRCB representatives, Dr Siva and Dr Suresh Kumar, who signed the MoUs, showed the byproducts of dried bananas and discussed the technology involved in it.

Future tech foods CEO, Ajit Soman, big basket, zonal head, K. Ramachandra Kiran, ITC vice president, G. Krishna Kumar, Leaf representative, Vijay Raghavan, and representatives of IFB and Empire signed the concerned MoUs.

On behalf of the state government, AP food corporation CEO, Sridhar Reddy, fisheries department commissioner, K. Kanna Babu, signed the MoUs for their respective departments. Agriculture minister, K. Kanna Babu, agriculture mission vice chairman MVS Nagi Reddy, agriculture special chief secretary, Poonam Malkondiah were also present.

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CTS to take-off in Srikakulam

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 4

Civil supplies minister Kodali Venkateswara Rao (Nani) has said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is committed to providing free power to farmers on a

long-term basis and the present changes will in no way affect them.

He said that N. Chandrababu Naidu, who has a history of ditching farmers and neglecting the agriculture sector, has no moral right to comment on the power sector, which

he ruined and left behind huge debts and dues.

Speaking to the media here on Friday, Venkateswara Rao said stated that the pilot project will begin in Srikakulam and will cover the entire state by March and the fruits can be reaped for a long time.

Rebala Sivakota Reddy, a farmer from Buchireddypalem, advised the government to fix a meter to agriculture feeders if it wants to know the quantum of power consumption.

Another farmer, J. Chandrasekhar Reddy, from Duvvuri in Sangam, expressed suspicion that the government might be planning to divide small farmers and landlords to collect power charges from the latter in future.

FARMERS' SUICIDES INCREASING UNDER YSRC GOVERNMENT: CHINARAJAPPA

VADREYU SRINIVAS |
DC
KAKAINADA, SEPT. 4

The number of suicides among farmers has increased dramatically after YSRC government has assumed charge. The number may further

increase, if the state government goes ahead with its proposal to install smart meters for agricultural pump sets, said former home minister and Peddapuram MLA Nimmakayala China Rajappa.

against a local YSRC leader for misleading and betraying her.

Mr Naidu said

IN BRIEF AP RE-OPENS TOURISM, MUSEUMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEP. 4

Tourism activities are set to resume in Andhra Pradesh after a gap of five months as the state government on Friday permitted opening up of sites as per Unlock-4 guidelines.

Minister for tourism, Avanthi (Muttamsetti) Srinivas Rao, said all tourist destinations, ropeway operations, boating, adventure sports and tourism-related transport operations were being opened with immediate effect. He said that, similarly, all museums and archaeological sites, including forts and protected monuments, buildings and structures were also being opened to the public, Bhargava told *PTI*.

The government had issued necessary instructions to the AP tourism.

BOY'S PARENTS DID NOT ALLOW MARRIAGE

FROM PAGE 1

According to circle inspector Diwakar Reddy, Nagendra's parents had not allowed him to marry Supriya, a Dalit, over caste issues. Police said Nagendra informed Supriya and married another woman belonging to his caste on August 13 at the Mahanandi temple.

On Friday morning, Supriya went to Nagendra's house and argued with him. Later, when he was going on a motorbike in front of her house, Nagendra slowed at a speed-breaker when Supriya threw acid at him, said the circle inspector.

The victim is recovering at Nandyal Government Hospital. A case has been registered and investigations are on, CI Diwakar Reddy said.

IMPOSTER TRICKED TRUE CALLER TOO

FROM PAGE 1

He also asked them to refer Madhuri to hospital, citing health issues.

Suspecting that the call was not from the retired IAS officer, Dr Sudhakar called Ramesh and came to know that someone had impersonated him. Dr Sudhakar informed Sinha about the phone call. Sinha said that the imposter set his name in True Caller as 'chief secretary, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's office'.

The police said that Naidu travelled to Bengaluru from Hyderabad and later went to Mangaluru.

He was taken into custody at Udupi railway station with the help of the Karnataka police. The police also recovered four mobile phones from Naidu.

Naidu tried to throw away the mobile phone he used to impersonate Ramesh during the arrest. The phone number matched with the seized mobile phones from Naidu. The police said that Naidu will be brought to the port city.

Sinha said that their preliminary investigation had revealed that Naidu, posing as Ramesh, cheated some people in the past.

STUDIES POINT TO REINFECTION AFTER RECOVERY

FROM PAGE 1

Several studies have found that people can be re-infected with the virus despite their full recovery from coronavirus.

DM & HO Dr M. Penchaliah confirmed the confirmation with *Deccan Chronicle*. He said that the recovered person from Piler has once again been infected with the virus. The case was reported earlier this week.

Officials informed that the security person had tested positive on June 27 and was admitted to the Covid hospital in Tirupati. After receiving treatment for two weeks, he tested negative and was discharged, subsequently.

The patient has now again approached the health authorities when he had a mild fever earlier this week and subsequently tested positive for the virus.

"Samples taken from the man came out positive and he was immediately shifted to Covid Care Centre in Tirupati. He is currently undergoing treatment and his health condition is stable. Doctors have been closely monitoring his health condition," the official said.



People at the queue lines at Kanakadurga temple for darshan of Goddess Kanakadurga atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Friday.

— DC

State registers 10,776 new Covid-19 cases, 76 deaths

1,02,067 patients are still undergoing treatment for the infection

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 4

Andhra Pradesh has registered 10,776 new Covid-19 cases, raising the overall tally to 4,76,506 cases, apart from 76 deaths, taking the death toll to 4,276 in the last 24 hours.

State health authorities have released their Covid-19 bulletin here on Friday reporting that out of 59,919 samples tested, 10,776 individuals have tested Covid-19 positive. Out of 39,65,694 samples tested so far in the state, 3,70,163 patients have been discharged after recovery, while 1,02,067 patients are still undergoing treatment for the infection in various hospitals of the state.

Among new confirmed

Coronavirus infections, East Godavari has registered 1,405 cases, followed by 1,270 in Nellore, 1,256 in Prakasam, 970 in Chittoor, 924 in West Godavari, 750 in Anantapur, 727 in Kadapa, 708 in Guntur, 702 in Kurnool, 588 in Vizianagaram, 560 in Visakhapatnam, 538 in Srikakulam and 378 in Krishna.

East Godavari has been the worst-affected district, registering the highest number of 64,305 total positive cases, followed by 47,573 in Kurnool, 43,998 in Anantapur, 40,699 in West Godavari, 40,696 in Chittoor, 39,449 in Visakhapatnam, 38,791 in Guntur, 34,933 in Nellore, 26,700 in Prakasam, 26,565 in Srikakulam, 22,676 in

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Vizianagaram, 17,688 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery among Coronavirus-infected patients has been good in East Godavari with 47,075 patients being discharged, followed by 40,392 in Kurnool, 37,472 in Anantapur, 37,405 in West Godavari, 32,425 in

Visakhapatnam, 30,969 in Chittoor, 30,582 in Guntur, 27,762 in Nellore, 21,510 in Kadapa, 19,235 in Srikakulam, 14,736 in Krishna, 13,963 in Vizianagaram, 13,742 in Prakasam, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Chittoor and Prakasam have recorded deaths of nine Covid-19 patients each, followed by eight each in Guntur, Kadapa and Nellore, six each in East Godavari, Visakhapatnam and West Godavari, five in Krishna, four in Srikakulam, three in Anantapur, and two each in Kurnool and Vizianagaram.

With this, Chittoor has registered the highest number of 457 Covid-19 deaths, followed by 421 in

East Godavari, 404 in Guntur, 389 in Kurnool, 351 in Anantapur, 340 in West Godavari, 325 in Nellore, 310 in Visakhapatnam, 307 in Prakasam, 300 in Krishna, 259 in Srikakulam, 240 in Kadapa and 173 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities have discharged 12,334 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery on Friday.

AP has conducted Covid-19 tests on 74,264 samples per one million population, registering a Covid-19 positive rate of 12.02, while Maharashtra has tested 35,092 samples, with a positive rate of 19.25 and Telangana has tested 39,262 samples, with a positive rate of 8.65.

3 teachers of AP get best teacher award

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 4

The world-renowned Indo Euro Synchronisation Organization has announced the Applied Robot Control (ARC) Best Teacher Award 2020. Three teachers from Andhra Pradesh have been nominated for the prestigious award. The AP State Skill Development Corporation chairman Challa Madhusudhan Reddy and Electronic Skill Council of India CEO N.K. Mahapatra would present the Best teacher awards on Teachers Day.

The representatives informed that Indo-Euro Synchronisation, headquartered in Germany, is a pioneer in the field of robotics and manufacturing and has already helped thousands of students with the help of the Government of India and Andhra Pradesh

GOVERNOR GREETES AP TEACHERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 4

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan greeted the teaching fraternity in the state on the occasion of Teacher's Day to be observed on September 5.

In a release on Friday, the Governor conveyed his best wishes to the teaching fraternity in Andhra Pradesh to mark Teacher's Day celebrations.

by forming the ARC Lab. Over the past year, in collaboration with the German and the state governments, ARC Labs has bought these highly qualified teachers and provided outstanding teaching

to thousands of students. The award is given to teachers who have shown an outstanding talent for these services. The jury and an advisory board of experts from IIT Delhi, IIM Ahmedabad, Aachen University, Cologne University, Steinbeis University, Foundation for Smart Manufacturing and IGUS Robotics are the best institutions in Germany and India to decide the winners of this award.

Teaching faculties K. Srikanth of Prakasam Engineering college, B. Bangaraju, Vishnu Institute of technology Bhimavaram and Ch. Ramesh Malineni of Perumallu Educational Society's Group of Institutions, Guntur, were selected for the Best Teacher Award 2020 from AP. The awards would be presented to them during a programme on Teachers Day.

Man kills daughter, ends life in hotel

AVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 4

A 31-year-old man hanged his four-year-old daughter and later ended his life in a hotel room in Chittoor city on Friday. The deceased were identified as N. Ganesh and his daughter Kartheeka, hailing from New Prashanthi Nagar in the city.

According to DSP Mr K. Eswar Reddy, Ganesh along with his daughter had checked into a hotel on Thursday night. He hanged his daughter in the bathroom, before hanging himself in the room. Before taking the extreme step, Ganesh recorded a selfie video in which he said that he had a love marriage six years ago but later took divorce due to his wife's extramarital affairs.

"I have no option but to take the extreme step as my wife and her paramour were torturing my daughter. My wife's paramour also sexually harassed my daughter. Though I have approached the court to get custody of my daughter, no justice was

done to me," the deceased said.

Meanwhile, based on the complaint lodged by N. Manjula, Ganesh's mother, the Chittoor II Town Police has registered a case and is further investigating. The complainant in her statement also alleged that Divya had maintained an extra-marital affair with one Prince, when they were in Chennai in 2014.

"When Divya along with her paramour plotted to loot valuables in her mother's house, our two families came to know about the illicit relationship. Later, Divya's mother warned her to change her ways and convinced her to settle down in Chittoor along with her husband. But Divya continued her affairs with others and used to visit Chennai frequently. Because of Divya's mistakes, the couple had divorced a while ago," Ms Manjula noted in her complaint.

₹12.28cr financial assistance proposed to flood victims

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, SEPT. 4

The East Godavari District Collector D. Muralidhar Reddy said that a proposal of ₹12.28 crore had been sent to the government for financial assistance to flood victims during the recent floods in the district. He told the reporters on Friday evening that due to the floods, five people died and two went missing in the floods and also 207 cattle were missing.

He said that 211 houses had been completely damaged and 39 huts partially damaged along with 4,339.2 acres of agriculture crops damage and 10,624 hectares of horticulture crops were damaged. He said that enumeration is still being done. He said that the R&B incurred a loss of Rs 512 crores for 632 kilometres of roads, ₹1 crore loss for RWS, 632 borewells, one boat in fisheries department, ₹1.5 crores losses to electricity department and others. He said that the sanitation

Collector said that 211 houses had been completely damaged and 39 huts partially damaged

process is going on in the flood-hit areas and medical camps are running in it.

To provide services during the Covid-19 pandemic, special officers have been appointed for supervising the services in private hospitals, ICMR standards, fees, organizing help desks, availability of medicines and others. The joint Collectors G. Lakshmisha, Keerthi Chakuri, G. Rajakumari and the Kakinada Municipal Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar are supervising hospitals in Kakinada, Rajahmundry Municipal commissioner Abhishek Kishore, Sub-Collector Anupama Anjali are supervising in Rajahmundry and Amalapuram Sub-Collector Hamanshu Koushik in Amalapuram division.

Irregularities found in 13 petrol bunks

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, SEPT. 4

The police of East and West Godavari districts conducted raids, based on the information given by a man arrested in Telangana. The police detected some irregularities in the sale of petrol and diesel in 13 petrol bunks including two in East Godavari.

The West Godavari District Police led by the Superintendent of Police K. Narayana Nayak seized 11 petrol bunks in West Godavari.

Mr Nayak told the reporters at Eluru on Friday that these bunks played a trick on the consumers by meddling with the chips. It resulted in a loss of 30 ml per litre of oil. He said that the company of the bunk installed one chip in the petrol pumps, but these bunk owners installed another slot and chip and cheated the consumers. About 11 bunks have been

seized, and cases were booked against the bunk owners and the liable persons on the issue. He said that the police were consulting with the metrological department for weights and measures. The petrol bunks at Bhimadole Road No. 2, Vijayarayi, Satrapadu in Eluru, Bhimavaram, Narasapuram, Peravali, Kapavaram and Nallajarla bunks were seized.

Amalapuram DSP Mr Masoom Basha said that the Kothapet police found one bunk that was installing separate chips and cheating the consumers. A case was booked against the bunk manager and the owner. Ramachandrapuram DSP D. Balachandra Reddy said that the police noticed irregularities in a bunk in Ramachandrapuram and seized the pump. He said that after considering the legal issues, cases would be booked against the bunk owner.

Converting ESI into Covid opposed

VADREVV SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, SEPT. 4

The Centre of Workers Federation urged the state government not to convert the ESI hospital at Rajahmundry into a Covid-19 hospital. Union leaders from CITU, AITUC IFTU and INTUC submitted a memorandum to the Rajahmundry Sub-Collector here on Friday.

The CITU District General Secretary S.N. Murthy said that the Rajahmundry ESI hospital has been catering to workers of East and West Godavari Districts, covering 2.30 lakh family members for the past 30 years. He said that the ESI hospital

was having 100 beds, but due to the dilapidated condition of the old buildings, the number of beds has been reduced to 30.

AITUC District Vice-President T. Madhu said that a proposal was made to upgrade the hospital to 200 beds. If the ESI hospital is converted to Covid-19, development works can be interrupted and workers are facing difficulties to get medical treatment given that private hospitals are not admitting patients and treating only corona patients.

INTUC District President N. Srinivasa Rao, IFTU General Secretary Mr Joji and others were present.

GOVT EXEMPTS BOATS PLYING IN RIVERS WHICH HAVE NAVIGATIONAL EQUIPMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 4

The state government issued GO Ms No. 8 here on Friday, giving exemption for boats/vessels carrying more than 12 passengers from having navigational equipment under the norms of Andhra Pradesh Inland Vessel Rules, 2017, men-

tioned that the navigational equipment like Navtex equipment will not function due to lack of area of coverage in river waters and also echo sounder will not function in the mud dry river waters.

As insistence on carrying such equipment in boats plying in rivers, lakes, canals and reservoirs.

HEALTH | MATTERS **State has 138 Covid-19 care hospitals with 37,441 beds**

AP to hire for medical posts in 10 days

FROM PAGE 1

They should take regular feedback on the medical services being provided to Covid-19 patients and submit a report.

The AP government will complete recruitment of the remaining medical posts for Covid-19 within 10 days. Officials informed Jagan that the process for recruitment of 30,887 posts in the health department will be completed in 10 days. So far 21,673 posts were filled on a contract basis and of

the 9,971 regular posts, 4,676 were filled and recruitment is in progress for the remaining 5,295. Jagan directed officials to complete the recruitment process without delay to render services to coronavirus-infected patients.

The government has been spending ₹10.18 crore per day on Covid-19 care, said Jagan, of which ₹4.3 crore is for tests, ₹1.31 crore on food for patients and ₹4.57 crore on medicines. Officials said that the state has 138 Covid-19

The government has been spending ₹10.18 crore per day on Covid-19 care, said Jagan, of which ₹4.3 crore is for tests, ₹1.31 crore on food for patients and ₹4.57 crore on medicines.

care hospitals with 37,441 beds, of which 2,462 general beds, 11,177 oxygen-supported beds and 2,651 ICU beds are still vacant and available as on Friday.

New medical colleges would strengthen the

health system in the state, said Jagan, directing officials to take immediate steps for the construction of medical colleges and also to focus on construction of urban health centres. He told the officials to rate hospitals based on feedback from patients on food, sanitation, infrastructure and services of the doctors. He directed officials that feedback, including on Aarogya Asara, should be taken from Aarogya network hospitals and any discrepancy should be rectified

immediately.

Ordering officials to make mock calls to call centres every day to check their work and record responses, Jagan directed officials to intensify the campaign on what a person should do and whom should s/he call if s/he tests positive for Covid-19.

Deputy chief minister, Alla Nani, chief secretary, Nilam Sawhney and medical and health special chief secretary, Dr. K.S. Jawahar Reddy, were among those at the review meeting.

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED
Regd. Office: 10-152/1, 4th Floor, Sri Sai Towers, Besides SIRIS Company, Bandar Road, Vijayawada-520007.
No. PDS.3/1199/Tapes/Tenders/2020 Dated: 04.09.2020

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Empanelment and appointment of manufacturers Zone-wise for supply of Packaging Tapes as per the specifications indicated in the tender schedule to be utilised for Packing of rice in Jute bags through AP e-Procurement platform.

All the interested Manufacturers may visit www.apsscscl.in & www.approcurement.gov.in to view and download tender documents on free of cost. Interested Tenderers should be registered in website www.approcurement.gov.in and should also obtain Digital Signature Certificates from any Certifying Authority in India to submit bids. The details and procedure for obtaining Digital Signature Certificates are mentioned in the website www.approcurement.gov.in or contact the helpdesk of ap e-procurement portal: 08645-246370/71/72/73/74.

Last date for registration and completion of formalities for the e-auction shall be up to **15.09.2020 at 5 P.M** and the tentative date of online e-reverse auction through ap e-procurement platform would be **18.09.2020 at 3.00 pm** onwards.

Sd/- VC & MANAGING DIRECTOR

SHORT TAKES

HARASSMENT
PROBE AGAINST
JUDGE STAYED

New Delhi, Sept. 4: The Supreme Court on Friday stayed the disciplinary inquiry against a district judge into the sexual harassment allegations levelled by a woman judicial officer and sought a response from the Registrar General of Madhya Pradesh High Court on his plea. This has become a "practice now" when someone comes under "zone of consideration" for elevation as a judge of superior courts, said a bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde.

The top court stayed the High Court's order that had given a go ahead to the sexual harassment inquiry against the judge, who was in the zone of consideration for elevation as a high court judge.

The Madhya Pradesh High Court on August 14 had dismissed the plea of the district judge and had given the go ahead to the Gender Sensitisation Internal Complaint Committee to proceed with the disciplinary enquiry against him.

A woman judicial officer of the Subordinate Judicial Service had filed a complaint on March 7, 2018 against the district judge alleging sexual harassment at work place.

SC REJECTS PLEA
SEEKING REVIEW
OF HOLDING NEET

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 4

The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea by the ministers of six Opposition ruled states — West Bengal, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Punjab, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh — seeking reconsideration of its order allowing the holding of NEET-UG and JEE (Main) examinations for admission to under-graduate medical and engineering courses respectively.

Rejecting the petition seeking the review of its August 17 order, the top court refused to interfere with the conduct of NEET/JEE exams. A bench comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan, Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice Krishna Murari said, "We have carefully gone through the review petitions and the connected papers. We find no merit in the review petitions and the same are accordingly dismissed."

7 WOMEN DIE IN
TN CRACKER
FACTORY BLAST

A ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, SEPT. 4

In a ghastly incident, seven women have been charred to death and two others sustained serious burn injuries after an explosion gutted a firecracker unit in Kurugudi village near Kattumannarkoil in Cuddalore district on Friday.

According to sources, the unit was owned by Gandhimadhi, 57. The license of the unit had expired in March and they had applied for renewal.

On Friday morning, Gandhimadhi had brought in seven women workers to perform a small puja before commencing work for the Deepawali season.

A fire broke out in the premises. The concrete structure, including the roof and the walls, collapsed and everything was gutted. While five women died on the spot, two others succumbed to burns at the Kattumannarkoil Government Hospital.

MAN HELD FOR
RAPING, KILLING
3-YR-OLD GIRL

Lakhimpur Kheri, Sept. 4: A man accused of raping and killing a three-year-old girl in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri was arrested after an encounter with police on Friday, officials said.

Main accused Lekhrum sustained a bullet injury in his leg during the gunfight near Bamhanpur village in Nighasan area. He was rushed to Nighasan health centre, where he is undergoing treatment.

Deputy SP Nighasan Pradeep Kumar Verma, who was in the native village of the girl, confirmed the arrest.

The girl's body, which bore injury marks on the head, was recovered from the vicinity of her village in Singahi area on Thursday after she went missing on Wednesday, police said.



Tibetan community people greet Indian Army soldiers on their arrival at Panthaghati Chowk en route to Line of Actual Control amid the India-China border tension, in Shimla on Friday. — PTI

Vantage points along LAC converted into 'kill zones'

For the PLA, dealing with kill zones readied by Indian forces will be a first

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 4

Several vantage points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh — particularly the ridge-lines, hilltops and other strategic heights towards the north and south of Pangong Tso, which are in complete control of the Indian Army — are being turned into 'kill zones' to kill or capture the enemy.

Sapper units of the Army are said to have been tasked with creating multiple obstacles for the adversaries, should they resort to any misadventure. Laying anti-personnel mines every few metres is one of the key obstacles.

For the Indian Army, which has been "playing with landmines" along the Line of Control with Pakistan since decades to deter infiltrators and enemy action, the move at the LAC was necessitated to tame the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China, which has turned a habitual offender when it comes to trans-

- THE INDIA-PAKISTAN border is one of the most mined zones in the world
- INDIAN ARMY considers the use of mines as essential
- INDIA AND CHINA are not signatories to Ottawa Convention which calls for complete ban on use of landmines
- MINE-LAYING OPERATIONS is a highly risky affair and has claimed hundreds of lives in the last few decades

gressing into Indian territory. For the PLA, though, dealing with kill zones being readied by Indian forces will be a first as, unlike Pakistan, they are not used to encountering deadly obstacles on the borders with India.

Well-informed sources told *Deccan Chronicle* that with the Army taking full control of many strategic heights around Pangong Tso from where they are keeping a close watch on the movements of the PLA, tactical measures are being taken to thwart the enemy designs. It is here that the vast experience the Indian Army gained over

the decades while dealing with Pakistan along the LoC came in handy. The LoC is one of the most heavily mined zones in the world.

As for the PLA, it has been found that they have planted landmines around their posts, a measure Indian troops were also taking, as a precautionary measure.

"Now with the LAC hotting up like never before, there is a need for creating multiple obstacles, should the need arise," sources said, adding that the only period when PLA soldiers have dealt with kill zones is during training, not on battlefield.

Sources said that non-metallic (NMM-14) plastic anti-personnel mines are most preferred by the Indian forces while plans are afoot for creating more obstacles using claymore mines and anti-tank mines among other explosives to lay traps. "The LAC will remain hot for a long time. Therefore, all preparations are being made to ensure that there are no more incursions," sources said.

The Indian Army had placed the single largest order for landmines last year.

The NMM-14 has a shelf life of 10 years and is difficult to locate as it is made of plastic and contains less than 30 grams of explosive, enough to blow both legs once any one steps on it.

At the moment, around 20 soldiers of Indian Army are manning each post, which has two to three bunkers where more number of soldiers, including the Special Frontier Force personnel have positioned themselves.

INDIA, RUSSIA
BEGIN MARITIME
EXERCISE

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 4

Indian and Russian navies on Friday began their biennial maritime exercise Indra Navy 2020 in the Bay of Bengal.

Initiated in 2003, Indra Navy exercise reflects the long-term strategic relationship between the two navies.

The naval exercise between India and Russia is being conducted at a time when India is engaged in a tense military stand-off with China at Ladakh.

The Indian Navy is being represented by guided missile destroyer Ranvijay, and fleet tanker Shakti, along with their integral helicopters.

The Russian Federation Navy will be represented by destroyer Admiral Vinogradov.

Customs to probe links between Kerala gold scam, B'lore drug case

Kochi, Sept. 4: The Customs department has decided to investigate the alleged links between a key accused in the Kerala gold smuggling case and a prime accused in the Bengaluru drug trafficking, even as a political slugfest erupted between the Congress and CPI(M) over the issue.

Sources said one of the arrested people in the gold smuggling is suspected to have links with a prime accused in the Bengaluru drug trafficking case.

They said the Customs will move an application in Court seeking to further investigate the man, who is currently in judicial remand, in view of his alleged con-

tacts with the key drug trafficking case accused.

"We would like to know the nature of contacts between the arrested persons in the two separate cases," an official said.

Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala demanded an investigation into CPI(M) state secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan's son's alleged link with a key accused in the Bengaluru drug trafficking.

Stepping up his attack against CPI(M) over the issue, Leader of Opposition in the Kerala Assembly, Chennithala, on Friday said it was reported that drug trafficking accused Mohammed

Anoop and gold smuggling accused Ramees had contacted over phone several times. Addressing a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram, he claimed Kerala CPI (M) secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan's son Bineesh Kodiyeri has admitted that he had connection with Anoop.

"It is a serious issue. What is the link between the gold smuggling case and drug trafficking case and how is the drug trafficking case accused connected with Balakrishnan's son? All these things should be investigated," Chennithala said.

Reacting to Chennithala's allegations against his son, Balakrishnan said efforts were on to create a smokescreen on the issue and it would not succeed.

He said Bineesh would not enjoy his protection, if he has any role in any crime.

"Let the central agencies probe everything related to the case. Chennithala should hand over to the investigating agencies if there is any evidence in his possession," Balakrishnan told reporters.

He said if Bineesh is found guilty of any crime, he should be punished. "He should be hanged, if he deserves to be hanged. Nobody is going to protect him if he has done anything unlawful," Balakrishnan said. — PTI

ASSAM GOVT
LIFTS WEEKEND
LOCKDOWN

Guwahati, Sept. 4: The Assam government has lifted weekend lockdown and night curfew though Coronavirus-related restrictions will remain in force in the containment zones till September 30, Chief Secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna said on Friday.

Night curfew and weekend lockdown have been operational across the state and inter-district movements were prohibited since June 28 following a spike in Covid-19 cases.

"Weekend lockdown and night curfew have been lifted. However, please adhere to all the Covid-19 protocols to keep yourself and others around you safe", the Chief Secretary said in a tweet.

— PTI

SSR case: NCB arrests Showik, Miranda

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 4

After the Bandra-based drug peddler's revelation of arranging drugs for Rhea Chakraborty's brother Showik, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) arrested him along with late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's house manager Samuel Miranda after grilling them throughout the day on Friday.

The arrests came close on heels with raids conducted at their residences earlier in the day by the NCB from where the officials seized electronic gadgets and scores of documents.

The officials had summoned Showik and Miranda for questioning after completing searches at their residences. The action came after peddler Abdul Basit Parihar revealed he supplied narcotics substances to Showik. Parihar was earlier arrested and produced before the Esplanade court and sent to NCB custody till September 9 for further investigation. The NCB first arrested Zaid Vilatra, who is also a Bandra-based peddler. Vilatra's links with Rhea and Showik are being probed.

The officials said that his questioning revealed Parihar, whose direct connection with Showik has now come to the fore.

"The data from seized gadgets will be retrieved to dig deeper into the suicide probe. The documents will be scanned to understand if any of them are related with the case," said an officer privy to the probe. Statement of Parihar and Vilatra has revealed some

CCB ARRESTS
SANDALWOOD
ACTRESS RAGINI

VINAY MADHAV | DC
BENGALURU, SEPT. 4

After grilling her for over six hours, the City Crime Branch (CCB) sleuths have arrested Sandalwood leading actress Ragini Dwivedi on Friday evening, in connection with the drug menace that has rocked the Kannada film industry.

The CCB also arrested Rahul, who is friend of another Sandalwood actress Sanjana Gulrani. Rahul was taken to the house of Sanjana for panchanama.

The day-long drama, after the CCB sleuths led by inspector Anjumala Naik had taken Ragini into their custody for questioning ended with her arrest. She is the third person being arrested in connection with Sandalwood drug links and the first Kannada actress to be arrested.

The two lawyers, who had come to her flat in Yalahanka and later to the CCB office had approached the court, seeking anticipatory bail for Ragini. However, by evening, the court dismissed the anticipatory bail. The CCB sleuths decided to arrest her and seek her police custody. Besides, there is no way Ragini can get bail till Monday.

more names and the agency is now probing the larger nexus involving the brother-sister and other celebrities.

Sena slams Kangana for her 'PoK' remark

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, SEPT. 4

A day after Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut compared Mumbai to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, the war of words intensified between Shiva Sena leader Sanjay Raut and the actress on Friday. Mr Raut said that she should not come back to Mumbai if she is afraid of the city police.

"This is an insult of the real Rani of Jhansi, who was a brave daughter of Maharashtra," he said. "Can't I react to the comments criticising Mumbai police and the state of Maharash-

tra? What is PoK? Kangana should tour that place first and the situation prevailing there," Raut said.

In a tweet, Ranaut had recently asked "why is Mumbai feeling like Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir?" and tagged a report where Raut had purportedly said she should not come back to Mumbai if she was afraid of the city police.

"If people who have nothing to do with the city malign it and its police, the state government and the home minister should take action, or else the morale of the police will take a beating," Raut told reporters.

HC seeks NIA's reply on Navlakha's bail plea

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 4

The Bombay high court on Friday issued a notice to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), seeking its response to a bail plea filed by activist Gautam Navlakha, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-alleged Maoist links case. The HC directed the NIA to file its

reply by September 15. A bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Karnik was hearing a plea filed by Navlakha, challenging a special court order of July 12 this year that rejected his plea for statutory bail.

Navlakha had sought statutory or default bail before the special court on the ground that he

had been in custody for over 90 days, but the prosecution had failed to file a chargesheet in the case within this period.

The NIA, however, had argued that his plea was not maintainable. It had also sought an extension for filing of chargesheet and the special court had at the time accepted the NIA's plea seeking extension of 90 to 180 days to

file the chargesheet against Navlakha and his co-accused, activist Dr Anand Teltumbde.

Navlakha, lodged in Navi Mumbai's Talaja jail, had surrendered before the NIA on April 14 this year. Between Aug. 29 and Oct. 1 in 2018, Navlakha had been kept under house arrest.

According to police,

the activists had made inflammatory speeches and provocative statements at the Elgar Parishad meet held in Pune on December 31, 2017, which it said triggered violence the next day at Koregaon Bhima in the district.

The police also alleged that they were active members of banned Maoist groups.

SHORT TAKES

MAHATHIR SEES
NEW ROLE AS
POWER BROKER

Kuala Lumpur, Sept. 4: At 95, former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad isn't yet done with politics. The veteran politician, who had returned to power in 2018 but lasted only 22 months, is not giving up fight against what he said was a return of corrupt practices and a roll-back of reforms under his successor, Muhyiddin Yassin.

In August, Mahathir formed the Pejuang (Fighters) party, months after his reformist government was ousted in a political coup and he was sacked from his own party. He said in an interview on Friday that Malaysia's governing coalition isn't likely to call for early elections due to political infighting and foresees his new ethnic Malay party to be the powerbroker in the next polls.

"We will not form a government by ourselves... we are the third party. We believe that we are not very big but we are big enough to play a middleman role in the country; the two-time prime minister said. Mahathir said he believed that neither Muhyiddin's new coalition nor the opposition led by Anwar Ibrahim can obtain more than 50% of votes. If Pejuang can win just 30 seats, it can be the kingmaker and will then decide which side it will support, he said.

RUSSIA VACCINE
'PASSES EARLY
TRIAL TEST'

London, Sept. 4: Patients involved in early tests of a Russian Coronavirus vaccine developed antibodies with "no serious adverse events", according to research published in The Lancet on Friday, but experts said the trials were too small to prove safety and effectiveness.

Russia announced last month that its vaccine, named "Sputnik V" after the Soviet-era satellite that was the first launched into space in 1957, had already received approval.

This raised concerns among Western scientists over a lack of safety data, with some warning that moving too quickly on a vaccine could be dangerous.

Russia denounced criticism as an attempt to undermine Moscow's research.

In the Lancet study, Russian researchers reported on two small trials, each involving 38 healthy adults aged between 18 and 60, who were given a two-part immunisation. Each participant was given a dose of the first part of the vaccine and then given a booster with the second part 21 days later.

They were monitored over 42 days and all developed antibodies within the first three weeks.

The report said the vaccine was "safe, well tolerated, and does not cause serious adverse events in healthy adult volunteers".

HK SECURITY LAW
BREACHES CITY'S
FREEDOMS: UN

Geneva, Sept. 4: China's national security law for Hong Kong poses a serious risk to the city's freedoms and breaches international legal obligations, UN special rapporteurs on human rights have warned.

Beijing has faced a barrage of criticism over the law, which was imposed in late June after pro-democracy protests rocked the semi-autonomous city last year.

The law, which criminalises secession, subversion, terrorism and colluding with foreign forces, carries a maximum life sentence and has intimidated many protesters into silence.

In a letter made public on Friday, the UN advisers warned parts of the legislation "appear to criminalise freedom of expression or any form of criticism" of China.

"The National Security Law... poses a serious risk that those fundamental freedoms and due process protections may be infringed upon," the rapporteurs said.

The letter warned the legislation may "impinge impermissibly on the rights to freedom of opinion, expression and of peaceful assembly." The rapporteurs urged China's "reconsideration" of the legislation and for a fully independent reviewer to be appointed to ensure it complies with China's international human rights obligations.

They also expressed concern over one of the most controversial points of the law — which allows cases can be transferred from the jurisdiction of Hong Kong to mainland China — and warned it could undermine the right to a fair trial.

Ships, boats try to
douse tanker fire
off Lanka, 1 dead

Colombo, Sept. 4: A Panamanian-registered oil tanker burned out of control for a second day off Sri Lanka on Friday as authorities confirmed a Filipino crew member was killed in an explosion in the Indian Ocean.

Sri Lankan navy and Indian coastguard vessels fired water cannon at the blaze on the *New Diamond*, which issued a distress call on Thursday after its engine room exploded.

The fire had not spread to the 2,70,000 tonnes of crude and 1,700 tonnes of diesel the tanker is carrying, Sri Lanka's navy said. "Preliminary information from the ship's crew confirmed that a Filipino seaman on board had died in a boiler explosion," the navy said in a statement. All but one of the 23-member crew — 18 Filipinos and five Greek nationals — were rescued. The tanker was about 60 km from Sri Lanka's east coast when it sounded the alert and during the night drifted

10 km closer. Sri Lanka on Friday thanked India for its support. "We are receiving support from India and thankful to them," Sri Lanka's Army chief Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva told reporters.

Rear Admiral Nandana Jayaratne, the Director General, Operations, of Sri Lankan Navy, said there was no threat of an oil spill. "The Indian Coast Guard saw a crack right under the superstructure of the ship, but that does not mean the ship is falling apart and there will be an oil spill," Jayaratne said. "We will need international support in the event of a spill," Jayaratne said.

He said, "the worst case scenario now would be that intense heat of the fire cannot be controlled, in 5, 6 to 7 days, the hull cracks, ship snaps and starts tilting, you then have to do what is called boom laying to stop the spill, we will need international support to clean in that case." —*AFP, PTI*

NEW ZEALAND RECORDS FIRST
COVID-19 DEATH IN OVER 3 MONTHS

Wellington, Sept. 4: New Zealand recorded its first Covid-19 death in more than three months on Friday when a man in his 50s succumbed to the virus.

Health officials said the man was part of a second-wave cluster of infections that emerged in Auckland last month, ending a spell of 102 days free of community transmission in the South Pacific nation.

The death at Auckland's Middlemore Hospital on Friday afternoon takes New Zealand's death toll from the virus to 23, with the most recent previous fatality on May 24.

"I acknowledge the anxiety New Zealanders may be feeling about today's news, both in the wider community and also for the family and whanau (relatives) grieving over

this death," health chief Ashley Bloomfield said in a statement.

"Our thoughts are with his family and community at this time of loss and grief." The man was reportedly the youngest to die from Covid-19 in New Zealand.

Health authorities did not say whether he had a pre-existing medical condition. The Auckland cluster emerged in a family of four and has since grown to 152, including three new cases recorded on Friday.

It has proved difficult to eliminate despite a two-and-a-half week lockdown in Auckland that ended on Sunday night.

"We have always recognised that further deaths linked to Covid-19 were possible," Bloomfield said. —*AFP*

Fallen US Marines
are 'losers': Trump

Washington, Sept. 4: US President Donald Trump referred to US Marines buried in a WWI cemetery in France as "losers" and "suckers" for getting killed in action, according to a report Thursday in the Atlantic magazine.

The report, penned by the magazine's editor-in-chief Jeffrey Goldberg, said Trump had refused to visit the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery near Paris in 2018 because "he feared his hair would become disheveled in the rain," although the official explanation offered by aides was that the helicopter due to take him there could not fly due to weather.

"In a conversation with senior staff members on the morning of the scheduled visit, Trump said, 'Why should I go to that cemetery? It's filled with losers,'" the article said.

"In a separate conversation on the same trip, Trump referred to the more than 1,800 marines who lost their lives at

Belleau Wood as 'suckers' for getting killed," the Atlantic added, citing four unnamed people it said had firsthand knowledge of the discussions.

Trump slammed the report late Thursday, after his aides earlier called the allegations "disgusting, grotesque, reprehensible lies."

"Somebody makes up this horrible story that I didn't want to go," he told reporters after returning from a campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

"If they really exist, if people really exist that would have said that, they're low lifes and they're liars. And I would be willing to swear on anything that I never said that about our fallen heroes," he said. "No animal, nobody, what animal would say such a thing?"

However, some critics pointed to Trump's denigrating comments about late senator John McCain, who was captured in Vietnam and was widely regarded as a war hero. —*AFP*



Police officers detain a Black Lives Matter protester outside the Penumbra Kelly Building, in Portland, Oregon. On Saturday, protesters will mark their 100th consecutive day of demonstrations following the killing of George Floyd. —*AP*

Biden vows that US will
address racism, slavery

Prez candidate met Blake's family ahead of his Wisconsin trip

Kenosha (US), Sept. 4: Joe Biden told residents of Kenosha, Wisconsin, that recent turmoil following the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a person of colour, could help Americans confront centuries of systemic racism, drawing a sharp contrast with President Donald Trump amid a reckoning that has galvanised the nation.

"We're finally now getting to the point where we're going to be addressing the original sin of this country, 400 years old... slavery and all the vestiges of it," Biden said at Grace Lutheran Church, where he met with community leaders after a private session with Blake and his family.

The visit marked the former vice president's first trip to the battleground state of Wisconsin as the Democratic presidential nominee and was a vivid illustration of the contrast he offers to Trump. While Biden spent more than an hour with the Blake family, Trump didn't mention Blake during his own trip

to Kenosha on Tuesday. Where Biden traced problems in the criminal justice system back to slavery, Trump refused to acknowledge systemic racism and offered his unwavering support to law enforcement, blaming the recent violence on "domestic terror."

A regional task force was watching the apartment of a "homicide suspect", who left the building and approached a vehicle "as officers attempted to apprehend him", Lieutenant Ray Brady said.

The man appeared to be armed and officers fired several shots into the vehicle before the man fled, Brady added. Several more shots were then fired. The presence of a

Seattle, said on Friday.

A regional task force was watching the apartment of a "homicide suspect", who left the building and approached a vehicle "as officers attempted to apprehend him", Lieutenant Ray Brady said.

The man appeared to be armed and officers fired several shots into the vehicle before the man fled, Brady added. Several more shots were then fired.

The presence of a

weapon has not been confirmed, Brady said.

The US Marshals Service confirmed officers fired at Reinoehl, who was pronounced dead at the scene, according to the Washington Post.

The Oregon city of Portland has seen more than three months of rolling protests against police brutality and racism that were sparked by the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May. —*AP*

"I can't say if tomorrow God made me president, I can't guarantee you everything gets solved in four years," Biden said. But "it would be a whole better, we'd get a whole lot further down the road" if Trump isn't re-elected. "There's certain things worth losing over," he con-

cluded, "and this is something worth losing over if you have to — but we're not going to lose." Blake remains hospitalised after being shot in the back seven times by a white Kenosha police officer while authorities were trying to arrest him on August 23. —*PTI*

clated, "and this is something worth losing over if you have to — but we're not going to lose." Blake remains hospitalised after being shot in the back seven times by a white Kenosha police officer while authorities were trying to arrest him on August 23. —*PTI*

Macron defends blasphemy,
slams 'Islamic separatism'

Paris, Sept. 4: French President Emmanuel Macron criticised on Friday what he called "Islamic separatism" in his country and those who seek French citizenship without accepting France's "right to commit blasphemy."

Macron defended satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, which published caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad that helped inspire two French-born Islamic extremists to mount a deadly January 2015 attack on the paper's newsroom.

The weekly republished the images this week as the trial began of 14 people over the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and on a kosher supermarket.

Speaking at a ceremony on Friday celebrating France's democratic history and naturalising new citizens, the French president said, "You don't choose one part of France. You choose France... The Republic will never allow any sepa-



Emmanuel Macron

ratist adventure."

Freedom in France, Macron said, includes "the freedom to believe or not to believe. But this is inseparable from the freedom of expression up to the right to blasphemy." Noting the trial that opened on Wednesday he said, "To be French is to defend the right to make people laugh, to criticize, to mock, to caricature." The 2015 attacks killed 17 people and marked the beginning of a wave of violence by the Islamic State group in Europe. —*PTI*

IRAN: REISSUE OF
PROPHET CARTOONS
IS 'PROVOCATION'

Tehran, Sept. 4: Iran has condemned as a "provocation" French magazine Charlie Hebdo's republication of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed to mark the opening of the trial into a 2015 attack on its offices by Islamist extremists.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the foreign ministry said the reissue of the cartoons, first published by a Danish newspaper in 2005, was an "insult" to more than one billion Muslims around the world.

"The offensive act by the French publication... is a provocation," the ministry said. "Any insult or disrespect towards Islam's holy prophet... or the other prophets of God is absolutely unacceptable," it added. —*AFP*



Rescue workers dig through the rubble of a badly damaged building in Lebanon's capital Beirut, in search of possible survivors from a mega-blast at the adjacent port one month ago, after scanners detected a pulse, on Friday. —*AFP*

PULSE SPARKS HUNT FOR SURVIVORS
ONE MONTH AFTER BEIRUT BLAST

Beirut, Sept. 4: Rescuers resumed a search on Friday for possible survivors under rubble in Beirut, buoyed by faint hopes of a miracle a month after a monster blast ripped through the city's port.

The cataclysmic August 4 explosion killed 191 people, making it Lebanon's deadliest peacetime disaster. One month on, seven people are still missing.

Hopes emerged on Thursday that one of them could be found alive after a specialist sensor device detected a heart beat under the debris of a

collapsed building. "I was not aware I needed a miracle that much. Please God, give Beirut this miracle it deserves," said Selim Mourad, a 32-year-old filmmaker.

Chilean and Lebanese rescuers on Friday lifted chunks of rubble from the site between the hard-hit districts of Gemmayzeh and Mar Mikhael, an *AFP* photographer said.

"We have excavated rubble but we haven't reached a conclusion yet," said George Abou Moussa of Lebanon's civil defence. —*AFP*



Alain Cocq, suffering from an orphan disease of the blood, rests on his medical bed in his flat in Dijon, north-eastern France. —*AFP*

LIVING | HELL | 57-yr-old draws attention to situation of terminally ill patients after euthanasia plea rejected

Frenchman to livestream his death in right-to-die case

Dijon, Sept. 4: A Frenchman who is suffering from an incurable condition said on Friday he plans to livestream his death on social media as he refuses to take food, drink or medicine after President Emmanuel Macron turned down his request for euthanasia.

Alain Cocq, who suffers from a rare condition where the walls of the arteries stick together, said he believed he had less than a week to live and would livestream his death on Facebook from Saturday morning.

He had written to Macron asking to be given a substance that would allow him to die in peace but the president wrote back to him explaining this was not allowed under French law.

Cocq, 57, has used his plight to draw attention to the situation of terminally-ill patients in France who are unable to be allowed to die in line with their wishes.

"Because I am not above the law, I am not able to comply with your request," Macron said in a letter to Cocq, which the

patient published on his Facebook page.

"I cannot ask anyone to go beyond our current legal framework... Your wish is to request active assistance in dying which is not currently permitted in our country," said Macron.

In order to show France the "agony" caused by the law in its current state, Cocq said he would broadcast the end of his life on his Facebook page which he believed would come in "four to five days".

He said he hoped his struggle would be remem-

bered and "go down in the long term" as a step forwards in changing the law. He would halt all feeding, drinking and treatment from Friday night.

Macron said in his letter that "with emotion, I respect your action." And the president added a handwritten postscript, saying: "With all my personal support and profound respect."

An Elysee official said that Macron wanted to hail Cocq's commitment to the rights of the handicapped.

Right-to-die cases have

long been an emotive issue in France.

Most polarising was the case of Vincent Lambert who was left in a vegetative state after a traffic accident in 2008 and died in July last year after doctors removed life support following a long legal battle.

The case divided the country as well as Lambert's own family, with his parents using every legal avenue to keep him alive but his wife and nephew insisting he must be allowed to die. —*AFP*

DECCAN Chronicle

5 SEPTEMBER 2020

Ladakh flare-up: Only way out is diplomacy

The fresh Chinese provocations in eastern Ladakh made a region already tense over the past four months even more volatile, as troops of the People's Liberation Army attempted fresh incursions on the southern banks of Pangong Tso but had to retreat as the Indian Army put up stiff resistance. The Army occupied most of the area's hilltops and dominant heights to deter future misadventure by the Chinese forces, that have moved in thousands of additional troops in the Chusul sector, which Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane visited on Thursday as part of his tour of forward areas. With both armies having deployed thousands of troops, tanks and armoured vehicles, Ladakh is more of a tinderbox than ever, and cooler heads are needed to ensure it doesn't erupt again. Despite a lot of talk about the Army being given a "free hand" and of the "military option not being ruled out", the realisation seems to be dawning on both governments that a political or diplomatic solution may be the only way out. With defence minister Rajnath Singh in Moscow for a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting, his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe has sought a one-to-one discussion on the sidelines, which might take place late on Friday. New Delhi hopes such a meeting, which would be the highest-level physical encounter between the two countries since the crisis erupted, might pave the way for a faster de-escalation process on the ground.

While the external affairs ministry's spokesman on Thursday squarely blamed Beijing for the current stand-off, saying it was a "direct result" of China trying to "unilaterally change the status quo" at the LAC, foreign minister S. Jaishankar categorically said the "way out" of the current "difficult" situation is "through diplomacy". Acknowledging while India and China had a long history which was "very good in some parts, very indifferent in some parts and very difficult in some ways", he added that "this was not the easiest of times in the relationship", given the "seriousness of the current situation or the actual challenges of the boundary question". Perhaps responding to China's overtures to keep trade and commerce on track, after India's intensified ban on Chinese-linked apps and entities, Mr Jaishankar emphasised that "the reality is that whatever happens on the border will impact the relationship, you cannot separate it". He will have a chance to take the process further as he meets Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi in Moscow next week when the two attend a SCO meeting. In a signal to Beijing to stick to the path of dialogue, Mr Jaishankar said at the launch of his book *The India Way* on Thursday: "Both sides must understand that it's in their own interest to reach an accommodation." With Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat, among others, emphasising a bigger role for the Quadrilateral, which includes the US, China hit back over US deputy secretary of state Stephen Beigum's reference to Beijing's "outsized" claims in the Galwan Valley, and said: "China and India have the ability to resolve their border disputes bilaterally. We don't accept countries outside the region pointing fingers." If it is really serious, New Delhi and Beijing should be able to move forward.

Facebook's clean-up act

Under fire for promoting hate speech, Facebook has baffled the government and the Opposition locked in a two week long battle by its swift damage control with twin deft manoeuvres — a confident, if anodyne, statement proclaiming its non-partisan ethic and a quick ban on T. Raja Singh, the Telangana MLA and *gau rakshak* who is a known offender — he has followers numbering in lakhs and has opined Muslims are "traitors" and Rohingya immigrants "should be shot" while threatening to destroy mosques. Hailed as a win by secular citizens, this apparent U-turn by Facebook goes against its own earlier line trotted out by its executive Ankhi Das who said this action risked losing users and would damage business prospects. Facebook has backed Das' freedom of opinion following revelations that she shared anti-Muslim content even if she later apologised for it post the exposé. That had led to the Congress accusing Facebook of interfering in India's democratic process and going soft on ruling party members. By not iterating a policy change while sidestepping specific accountability, Facebook leaves the door open for future violations even as it turns a blind eye to countless ongoing ones — even as this controversy raged, in West Bengal, Murshidabad MP Arjun Singh was claiming on the same platform that a Kali temple deity had been burnt by "members of a particular community" though the priests asserted that the fire was an accident. It is fortunate that the MP has been named and shamed.

Parliament thus lost the chance to make Mark Zuckerberg answer to its people as the US Congress did post the 2018 Cambridge Analytica data mining scandal that resulted in Facebook paying a US \$5 billion fine following a year long investigation. Facebook banned Cambridge Analytica. Most recently, it has committed to restricting political advertisements in the week preceding the US presidential elections and will remove misinformation related to voting. It is even going to pay users to deactivate their accounts ahead of the polls. New Delhi surely missed that bus.

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ADITYA SINHA
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
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DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax : 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234

Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285

Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208

Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904

Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433

Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennamudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580

Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/ 48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Feet Road, Koramangala, Bengaluru-560 095 Ph: 080-43460500; Fax: 080-22960552.

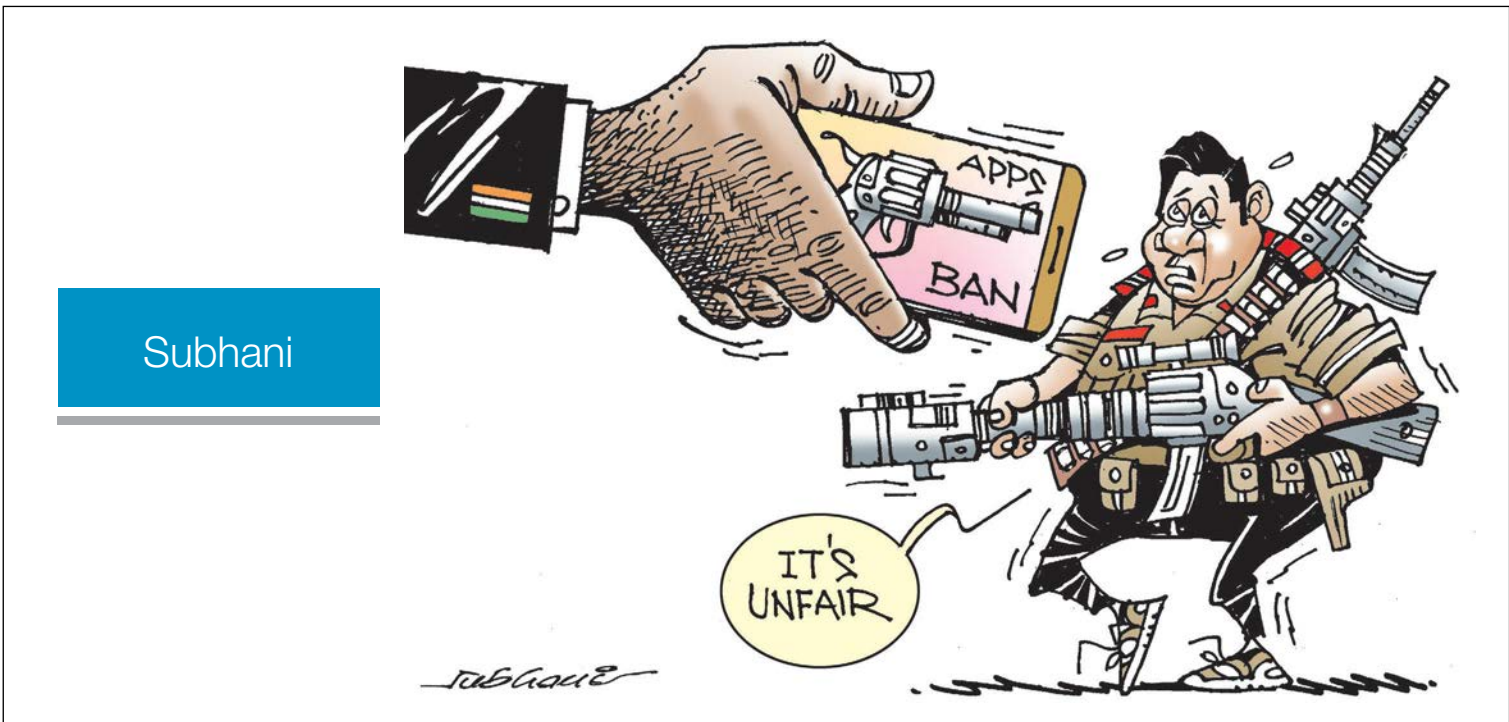
Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph : 0422 2231255

Kochi: No.3-B, 3rd Floor of DD TRADE TOWER, Kallor-Kadavanthara Road, Emakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408

Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph's Press, TC 15/1040, Cotton Hill, Thycud (PO), Thiruvananthapuram 695 014

Kozhikode: Door No 6/1002 E, First Floor of City Mall, Opp. YMCA, Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001, Fax : 0495 4019 018

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Subhani

Chana Kisney Khaaya.. Rasode Mein Kaun Tha?



Shobhaa De

I am in my most aggro Kokilaben mood. Rewind to a highly successful 2010 TV soap titled *Saath Nibhana Saathiya*, which featured a ma-in-law from hell — Kokilaben. Along came Yashraj Mukhate, an engineer and music producer from Aurangabad, who picked up a line from the serial and turned it into a Kokilaben rap that attracted 2.8 million views on Instagram. Voila — *Rasode mein kaun tha?* went viral. And I watched it over and over again to distract myself from the blah during Mumbai's most loved Ganesh Festival, which was a total washout this year, because of the Covid-19 restrictions. This is the aftereffect of the GDP debacle, which has set India back by a staggering 24 per cent. Oooooops! I find myself oscillating between Kokilaben screaming "*Mein thi? Tu thi?*" to mouthing the demented rantings of a television anchor, "*Mujhe drugs do, drugs do, charas do, ganja do...*" These are the two unchallenged champions of last week's meme fest. I am not the only citizen under unbearable stress right now. Going by the disastrous state of affairs in India right now, citizens across the board are in urgent need of mind-numbing drugs — bring them on! How much more can they cope with, while also coping with Covid *ka bhayanak* crisis?

I am looking for some soothing peacock therapy. You know what that means, right? If Prime Minister Narendra Modi can seek solace in the company of a beautiful peacock and a couple of geese, hey... maybe that's the solution to

India's myriad and insurmountable problems. In the concrete jungle called Mumbai, finding the elusive national bird poses a challenge. Most of us, cooped up in cramped spaces, do not have the luxury of pampering hungry peacocks strolling across our vast lawns. Our beloved Prime Minister lives the grand life worthy of his grand position, in a grand mansion where stunning peacocks and well-fed geese roam. A few kilometres away, there may be undernourished children of jobless parents wondering where their next meal is coming from. There is nobody to feed their open mouths or care about their emaciated frames. Different strokes for different folks.

Our trendsetting PM has already unveiled his many masks. The Covid masks, I mean. He prefers to cover his mouth and nose with colour coded, handwoven *angavastrams*, that change daily. It's possible that they have been commissioned and sourced from master weavers across India. The same weavers who are staring at their silent looms, with no orders to keep them from starvation. Their livelihoods have been doubly hit, now that our wise and wonderful PM has disbanded the Indian handicrafts and handloom boards, which so far had been doing a stellar job of providing steady incomes and finding markets for our weavers. Without those committed office-bearers to manage the weaving communities spread across our 28 states, one wonders what the future holds for these gifted people? I guess, there is no cause for worry. Our

stylista PM can keep countless weavers in business just by himself, going by his frequent costume changes while feeding birds on his property. The elaborately staged photo shoots have enchanted his fans across continents who cannot get enough of his sartorial statements. The professionalism invested in getting the camera angles and lighting are being admired as well. When I first saw the pics, I assumed it was a fashion shoot for the leading men's lifestyle/fashion magazine *GQ* — the theme being, "Where peacocks gather..." But no! These shots were from our dynamic PM's personal album, to be generously shared with his fawning followers. An apt comparison between this shoot and the one which was widely shared by Haile Selassie, the Ethiopian Emperor, feeding lions while his country faced famine. This comparison was pointed out in a brilliant critique ("Compliant and Complicit" by Sankarshan Thakur, which was published in *The Telegraph*. The wonderfully written essay made me sigh with longing for those days when journalists and political commentators did what they are supposed to do — write ferociously. And make readers think.

At a dinner for eight (with Covid protocols in place) this week, I found myself sharing a table with some *bhaktis*, who kept saying they were not *bhaktis* but genuine admirers of our fabulous Prime Minister. These are successful Gujarati businesspeople, living in tony neighbourhoods. It emerged during the course of the conversa-

tion that they read nothing! Knew little about history. And were culturally illiterate to boot. But did they have opinions! All it needed was a few pointed questions about the tattered state of our economy, to get them to start frothing at the mouth. I figured — why waste my precious breath... and switched to a topic they were eager to pounce on — the sensational Sushant Singh Rajput investigation. One of the men present did not know what "ED" stood for! So even that topic was a dead loss. When I mentioned an article in an American scientific publication which stated baldly that India "was in denial about the Covid-19 crisis...", these folks changed the topic and spoke about how expertly and ably our Prime Minister was steering India towards new goals, new horizons. It's great to stay optimistic during a crisis — but for that to be termed "optimism" one has to first admit there is a crisis! The same people had sons and daughters in America (their high dollar salaries were disclosed in awestruck terms by proud parents), who had declared their intention of never coming back to the country of their birth! If our future was this amazing, why were their children turning their backs on India? *Jawab hai?*

The reason why that silly dialogue *Rasode Mein Kaun Tha* went viral is simple. At a time when citizens are struggling to come to terms with India's desolate and arid financial landscape, and no salve has been offered by the Prime Minister after the minus 24 per cent GDP drop, all that we have is humour. Black humour! But jokes and memes and birds and masks cannot fight the biggest battle confronting us — a harsh, unforgiving winter of our discontent.

Readers can send feedback to www.shobhaade.blogspot.com

LETTERS

ENGLISH MEDIUM

Medium of instruction, shall as far as practicable, be in the child's mother tongue. If this has to be interpreted in favour of the petitioner, then all private schools also should be directed to impart education in the mother tongue and not English. No doubt, the petitioner has filed the case on behalf of the private/corporate schools which will be most affected. The courts must look into the positive side of the intentions of the state government, instead of the "business" aspect of it all.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

BANNING APPS

After due process, the government has banned 118 and 59 Chinese apps earlier as one of the several measures to show our angst. When our army is engaged with the enemy, it is unethical to use Chinese apps, even though banning it may achieve little. We are aware of its clout and influence with our neighbours, but we have to show China its place.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

The ban on PUBG is a wise decision. These addictive video games are affecting children's studies and mental health. Further, proscription of online gambling by the state government is also appreciated. It is cheerful news for parents and educationists.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

Foreign-made India maps viewed seriously

NEW DELHI, Sept. 4 The Lok Sabha took serious note of the wrong depiction of Indian territory in maps published by several foreign countries and recommended "to ban all such maps where Indian territory is shown as either disputed or in China or Pakistan."

After debating a motion by Mr Lal Gupta, **50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle** Kanwar

which disapproved the action of the Government in "not sending protest note in writing to the USSR Government for showing large chunks of Indian territory as part of China in Russian encyclopedia," the House rejected it and in its place accepted a substitute motion moved by Mr. S. M. Banerjee.

S.B. Shashank



Early childhood education is hit the worst during pandemic times

The Covid-19 pandemic, unprecedented in its spatial extent, has hit every aspect of human life across the world. Political and geographic boundaries have lost their meaning, and even the remoteness of islands have not deterred it from marching ahead. As long as the fury of the calamity lasts, unabated and unchallenged, its effect will keep rattling all mankind. While the divide based on income differentials will continue to determine the gravity of its impact on individuals, however temporary that impact may be in some cases, young children all over are turning out to be the worst sufferers, as recent reports suggest.

According to a Unicef report released in June, there are 28 million children who otherwise could have gone to *anganwadis* but for their closure due to the pandemic health risk and have been at home for the past six months. These children, in general, belong to the economically disadvantaged sections of society, but it's also true that those enrolled in private institutions, mostly in urban and semi-urban areas, such as nursery or KG schools, are not better off

either. What early childhood education intends to impart is to develop social and emotional skills of compatibility and conflict, which won't happen except in the company of other children. Instead of technology-leveraged remote learning, it requires a physical environment which grows listening, speaking and interacting for the healthy mental growth of a child. Digital accessibility and affordability, to some extent, can compensate for proficiency in literacy and numeracy but the overall growth of a child happens best in the company of peers. Why early childhood learning is so important in the growth of children and its effect on lifestyles has been documented in various studies and reports that show that it is directly linked to a child's seamless and confident migration to primary school and further transition to secondary education, a reduced probability of being school dropouts and attaining life skills and higher education. That's the reason why deprivation of early childhood development carries a risk on the lives and future of children cutting across the economic divide or digital divide. On the

extent of deprivation of early childhood care and education, another Unicef report says that worldwide nearly 40 million children, of which 22 million are from South Asia alone, have missed out on learning in the critical pre-primary school year as Covid-19 has shuttered all early education facilities.

The new National Education Policy document that was released last month, amid the pandemic crisis, undoubtedly emphasises the government's resolve to give renewed focus to this critical aspect of child development. Though the report candidly admits that crores of children, and more so those belonging to socio-economically disadvantaged sections, are deprived of quality early childhood care, it provides a roadmap on curriculum design, infrastructure development, technology use and capacity infusion. But these are long-term solutions with primary focus on achieving sustainable development goal SDG 4.2, which is about a commitment to ensure that by 2030 all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood education so that they are ready for Class 1 as a stepping stone for primary education.

Every species survives because it cares for its offspring. This is true for human beings as well. A solution to the obstruction posed by the current pandemic is not easy to find. The strategy, therefore, must be on mitigating the effects of this obstruction. On the education front, countries across the globe are grappling with back-to-school plans. Many in Western countries are seriously considering it as a viable choice as they are worried about the loss to society due to missing childhood. In a vast country like India, one solution may not fit all. There will be different solutions for rural areas, urban areas and metropolises for the purpose of restoring early childhood learning. In rural areas, where open spaces are available, active community support will help in organising small groups of neighbourhood children to keep them engaged with day-to-day activities like listening, speaking and learning while maintaining a safe distance. Home-based technology tools such as smartphones, radio, television and cable networks can be used, depending upon digital accessibility and affordability. In urban and metro setups where open

spaces are hard to find, the neighbourhood grooming of one or two children by an older person can be adopted for this purpose. Though group activities may be difficult to perform, such grooming will keep children engaged and save them from neglect due to the closure of pre-schools.

Like all other pandemics in the past, Covid-19 will also become history one day, thanks to human ingenuity. But young children who have lost their formative years of learning should not become victims. This needs to be pre-empted by early action. Anything done too late will be too little. The lack of finance should not be allowed to come in the way. A study by James Heckman, a Nobel laureate in Economics and an expert in the economics of human development, shows that investment in early childhood yields better returns and offers a cost-effective strategy even during a budget deficit.

The writer, a serving IAS officer, is director in the department of women and child development of the Delhi government. The views expressed here are personal.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,357.18	-1.63
Nifty 50	11,333.85	-1.68
S&P 500*	3,410.34	-1.29
Dollar (₹)	73.14	0.48
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.22	0.46
Euro (₹)	86.62	0.27
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,770.56	0.10
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	42.59	-1.48
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.930	0.034
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.666	0.044

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Paytm FY20 loss narrows by 40% to ₹2,597 crore

Financial service platform Paytm cut its losses by 40 per cent to Rs 2,597 crore in FY20 from Rs 4,150 crore in the previous fiscal by optimising expenses. Paytm grew its revenues by 1.36 per cent to Rs 3,629 crore in FY20 compared with Rs 3,579 crore in FY19. Overall transactions grew by over 50 per cent in volume terms. The company expects to become profitable by 2022, president Madhur Deora said.

GoAir to add over 100 flights, starting today



GoAir announced the addition of over 100 new flights in its domestic network, including from its base Mumbai besides other cities such as Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai, starting September 5. The airline, in a release, also said it expects the capacity to reach 45 per cent of the pre-Covid-19 level by September 21 and by October 15 to 60 per cent of what it was operating prior to the pandemic.

Srei receives 10 mn euros from KfW IPEX-Bank

Srei Equipment Finance Ltd (SEFL) has received 10-million euro (about Rs 86 crore) funding from Germany's KfW IPEX-Bank. The deal allows SEFL to import construction machinery like asphalt machines, road pavers and rollers to India. "We at Srei have always believed in creating an equipment life-cycle solution for our customers and in that endeavour, manufacturer partnerships become crucial," said Devendra Kumar Vyas, MD.

Wipro comes out with Hygienix brand products

Leading FMCG player Wipro Consumer care has launched a new range of germ killer products under the brand Hygienix. As the country faces one of the worst health pandemics ever, Hygienix offers complete protection to consumers, the firm said. Its sanitizer, hand wash and soap are proven to provide 99.9 per cent protection from germs. Hygienix products have formulations that keep skin soft and smooth, Wipro said.



■ ₹1,350-cr buyout routed via MTR Foods

Norway's Orkla to take over Eastern

Mumbai/Bengaluru, Sept 4: The Meeran family that runs leading spices maker Eastern Condiments has agreed to sell its majority stake to Norwegian packaged food major Orkla for over Rs 1,350 crore, the family said in a statement. The Kochi-based Eastern Condiments sells a variety of spices, pickles and veg and non-veg ready-to-eat items under the brand name of Eastern and is the largest exporter of spices from the country.

Under the agreement, the Meeran brothers—Firoz and Navas Meeran—who now own 74 per cent in the company, will sell 41.8 per cent to Orkla, which owns MTR Foods. The acquisition will be done through MTR, and the Norwegian company will also buy out the McCormick Ingredients SE Asia, the foreign investor in Eastern that owns 26 per cent. It will take the ownership in the first step of the transaction to 67.8 per cent for Rs 1,356 crore, valuing Eastern at Rs 2,000 crore.

Later, when Eastern is merged with MTR, the Meerans will exit Eastern by selling their remaining 32.2 per cent and in return will get 9.99 per cent of the merged entity, the statement said.

The deal completion or merger is expected to be over in 15 months.

The domestic spices industry is around Rs 22,000 crore and has been



annually clipping at 13 per cent over the past eight years ended March 2020.

After the deal, Eastern will be merged with MTR, and Orkla hopes to double its sales in India with the Eastern deal. MTR, under Orkla, has grown five-times since 2007.

"Following the completion of these transactions, a merger application will be filed with the intention of merging Eastern into MTR," the statement said. It added that "the merged company will be jointly owned by Orkla and the two brothers Firoz and Navas Meeran and will own 90.01 per cent and 9.99 per cent, respectively."

Eastern has seven production facilities in four states and employs close to 3,000 people.

Orkla is a leading supplier of branded consumer goods and concept solutions to the consumer, out-of-home and bakery markets in the Nordics, Baltics and selected mar-

kets in central Europe and India.

Listed on the Oslo Stock Exchange, Orkla employs 18,350.

The acquisition expands Orkla's already strong presence in the country's food and spices segment through MTR Foods, which it had acquired in 2007 and is a fully owned subsidiary now. With this move, Orkla hopes to double its sales in the country.

Navas Meeran, chairman of Eastern, said, "Orkla is known for its strong, local brands and holds leadership positions across multiple FMCG categories in several markets. Together with MTR, and as part of Orkla, we will have a stronger platform for our successful operations."

Anshul Agarwal, executive director at Avendus Capital, said Eastern and MTR combined have significant synergy potential in terms of product portfolio and geography.

Auto industry needs govt support: Maruti's Ayukawa

New Delhi, Sept. 4: The Indian auto industry is facing one of the toughest times in history and needs government support through reduction of GST and incentive-based scrap-purchase policy, Maruti Suzuki India managing director and CEO Kenichi Ayukawa said on Friday.

Ayukawa, who is the president-elect of auto industry body SIAM, said the sector has been "set back by many years" by a combination of the coronavirus pandemic and the slowdown that has been going on since last fiscal.

As the global health crisis broke out, he said, the auto industry in India also played its part by getting into manufacturing of ventilators, personal protective equipment (PPEs) and importing testing kits from abroad to fight the virus although sales have been hit hard.

"In August we can say we just came back on our feet to achieve performance comparable to last year. Also last year is not a good comparison as the industry saw negative growth of 15-25 per cent. This negative growth has set back the industry by many



Kenichi Ayukawa

years," Ayukawa said at the 60th annual convention of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) conducted online.

Reiterating the long pending demand of the auto industry to reduce goods and services tax on automobiles by 10 per cent, Ayukawa said, "we are facing one of the toughest times in history. The industry needs your support".

"We are eagerly waiting for GST reduction and scrap-purchase incentive scheme. We believe that taxes on the increasing turnover will be more than the government expenditure on the scrap-purchase scheme and GST reduction," he said.—PTI

Voda Idea to raise ₹25,000 cr

New Delhi, Sept. 4: Beleaguered telecom operator Vodafone Idea on Friday approved plan to raise up to Rs 25,000 crore through a combination of equity and debt instruments to keep the company afloat.

The decision came days after the Supreme Court directed telecom operators to pay 10 per cent of total adjusted gross revenue (AGR)-related dues this year, and rest of the payments in 10 instalments, starting next fiscal year.

The fund-raising will throw a lifeline to cash-strapped VIL, which has suffered massive losses, as it has been losing subscribers and average revenue per user and faces outstanding AGR dues of about Rs 50,000 crore.

In a filing on Friday, Vodafone Idea said its board has approved raising of funds through a combination of equity and debt instruments and that the total fund-raising will not exceed Rs 25,000 crore. The company will consider fund-raising

through global depository receipt-pts, American depository receipt-pts, foreign currency convertible bonds, convertible debentures or warrants.

The fund-raising plans are subject to shareholders' nod and other statutory approvals. The proposals will be taken up at the company's annual general meeting on September 30.

The filing mentioned, "issuance of unsecured and / or secured, non-convertible debentures up to an aggregate amount of Rs 15,000 crore, by way of

public offering or private placement basis or otherwise, in one or more tranches".

Recent reports had suggested that Verizon and Amazon may invest over \$4 billion into the company, but Vodafone Idea had on Thursday clarified that there is no such proposal currently before the board at yet.

Vodafone Idea's overall AGR dues stood at over Rs 58,000 crore, of which the company has paid Rs 7,854 crore to the Department of Telecom so far —PTI

Startups come under priority lending

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, SEPT. 4

In a bid to incentivise credit flow to specific segments like clean energy, weaker sections, health infrastructure and credit deficient geographies, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday included them as fresh categories eligible for finance under priority sector lending (PSL) guidelines.

"Bank finance to start-ups up to Rs 50 crore, loans to farmers for installation of solar power plants for solarisation of grid connected agriculture pumps and loans for setting up compressed bio gas plants have been included as fresh categories eligible for finance under priority sector," the RBI said in a release.

The priority sector guidelines have been comprehensively reviewed and revised to align it with emerging national priorities and bring sharper focus on inclusive develop-



ment, after having wide ranging discussions with all stakeholders.

Priority sector loans refer to loans that banks need to mandatorily lend to economically weaker sections of the society. With the change in definition in 2015, the performance of banks in achieving PSL targets has significantly improved. In FY20, all the bank-groups (public, private and foreign banks) have been able to achieve the overall target of 40 per cent lending (public 41.05 per cent, private banks 40.32 per cent and foreign banks 40.81

per cent).

The revised PSL guidelines will enable better credit penetration to credit deficient areas; increase the lending to small and marginal farmers and weaker sections; boost credit to renewable energy, and health infrastructure. The revised guidelines also seek to address regional disparities in the flow of priority sector credit. As a result, higher weightage have been assigned to incremental priority sector credit in 'identified districts' where priority sector credit flow is low.

The targets prescribed for "small and marginal farmers" and "weaker sections" are being increased in a phased manner, said the apex bank adding that higher credit limit has been specified for farmer producer organisations (FPOs)/ farmers producers companies (FPCs) undertaking farming with assured marketing of their produce at a pre-determined price.

"The inclusion of start-ups in PSL will reduce their cost of capital by allowing them better access to bank credit. Going forward, equity infusion will not be the only route to follow when start-ups need funds for working capital requirements, and this will greatly ease the risk of ordinary shareholders being wiped out due to 'down-rounds'.

However, to boost lending to start-ups it is also imperative to set in place an institutional mechanism.

Retail loses over ₹20 L cr business

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, SEPT. 4

Unorganised retail has lost Rs 19 lakh crore of business in the past five months of lockdown restrictions. Organised retail too has lost almost Rs 1.3 lakh crore during the period.

The retail trade has been going through a rough path in the past five months. Two months of lockdown was followed by unlock restrictions. Further, lower appetite for non-essential purchases amidst economic uncertainty, minimal footfalls and customer preference

of online channel has led to a loss of Rs 19 lakh crore for the unorganised trade.

According to the Confederation of All India Traders, the unorganised retailers lost about 5 lakh crore of business and Rs 4.5 lakh crore in the lockdown months of April and May. Unlock-1 from the month of June did not bring any respite as the loss still stood around Rs 4 lakh crore. By July it was Rs 3 lakh crore and in the month of August it came down to Rs 2.5 lakh crore. Cait had conducted a survey of retailers in 20 cities.

Similarly, organised retail has met with a loss of around Rs 1.3 lakh crore in the past five months as 55 per cent of the business has been lost. These are largely non-essential items, which hardly have any takers in the post-Covid times, said Kumar Rajagopalan CEO, Retailers Association of India. Closure of malls too has hit the business of organized retailers.

Praveen Khandelwal, secretary general of Cait, said, "Many shops have already closed and we expect at least 20 per cent or 1.4 crore retailers may end up winding up."

Acreage of major kharif crops		
Rice ▲8.27%		365.921 396.18
Pulses ▲4.67%		130.68 136.79
Coarse Cereals ▲1.77%		176.25 179.36
Oilseeds ▲11.93%		174.0 194.75
Sugarcane ▲1.30%		51.71 52.38
Jute & Mesta ▲1.68%		6.86 6.97
Cotton ▲3.24%		124.90 128.95
Total sown area in lakh hectare		Source:Ministry of Agriculture/KBK Infogratics

AI job searches double in a year

FC BUREAU CHENNAI, SEPT. 4

Artificial Intelligence job searches have doubled in the past one year and have been rising in the Covid-hit months as well, finds job search portal Indeed.

Job searches in AI have risen 106 per cent in the past year between June 2019 and June 2020. Despite Covid-19 hindering business operations across sectors and leading to massive job losses, searches for AI-related jobs have seen a 20 per cent increase in the last 6 months from March 2020 to July 2020.

In the wake of the global pandemic, industries across the board are witnessing an accelerated adoption of AI-led technologies in order to ensure business continuity during the changed circumstances. Further, an increasing number of functions is being automated. This has boosted the creation of jobs in the space.

During the one year period between June 2016 and June 2017, AI-related job searches had grown by 53 per cent. In 2017-18, it went up by 82 per cent, 80 per cent in 2018-19 and 106 per cent in 2019-20.

Denial of health cover still rampant

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, SEPT. 4

Amit Kumar (27), a corporate executive from Bengaluru, says that when his father got hospitalised three years ago, he had to pay a hospital bill of Rs 150,000. The health insurer reimbursed the money later but after a deduction of Rs 40,000, citing pre-existing disease (PED).

Many, like Kumar, face similar problems across the country, despite the regulator framing clear guidelines on risk coverage with waiting period or exclusions.

As per the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of



India (Irdai) norms, a pre-existing disease means any condition that is/are diagnosed by a physician within 48 months prior to the effective date of the policy issued/reinstated by the insurer, or for which medical advice is recommended by a physician within 48 months prior to the effective date of the policy or its reinstatement.

However, insurers are

reluctant to provide health cover for those suffering from PEDs. They rather advise subscribers to enroll for a health insurance policy early in life, as health issues develop as one ages.

"Health insurance proposals are underwritten based on the health parameters and the health status of individuals. Proposals with highly adverse health status or serious health

conditions are commonly not accepted due to underlying high risk. As per the Irdai guidelines, the PED definition is standardised. However, underwriting guidelines are decided by the respective insurance company within the framework of health regulations," said Dr Rashmi Nandargi, head-health retail underwriting, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance.

"In many countries, health insurance is provided by the government and private insurance is opted over and above the mandatory insurance provided by the government. However, wherever private insurance is prevalent, underwriting guidelines are decided by the insurer," Nandargi pointed out.

In fact, the condition on

PEDs is another grey area where people have to face difficulties while buying a policy or at the time of claim settlement. Insurers are putting the lives of sick and disabled at risk even during the Covid19 pandemic through claim denials and obfuscations. There are many instances where policy-holders' grievances are either ignored or not even being heard by the regulator.

Abishek Muthian, a start-up coach from Coimbatore, says the Irdai's grievances cell is biased towards insurers and doesn't really do anything when it comes to policy rejections. He was denied a top-up on his basic policy when he needed it most, despite knocking at Irdai's doors.

SHORT TAKES

Hami dominates second practice

Monza, Italy: Championship leader Lewis Hamilton topped the times ahead of team-mate Valtteri Bottas as Mercedes continued their emphatic domination in Friday afternoon's second practice for this weekend's Italian Grand Prix.

The six-time champion responded to the Finn's quickest lap in opening practice in the morning by clocking a best lap in one minute and 20.192 to outpace him by 0.262 seconds. Lando Norris grabbed third place for McLaren with a late flying lap that was nearly nine-tenths adrift of the leading pace, ahead of Pierre Gasly, who was fourth for Alpha Tauri, both men having overcome reliability issues during the session. Behind the top four, Max Verstappen was fifth for Red Bull ahead of Carlos Sainz in the second McLaren and Daniil Kvyat, in the second Alpha Tauri. — *AFP*

Anunoby rescues champs Raptors

Miami: OG Anunoby drained a buzzer-beating three-pointer as the Toronto Raptors resuscitated their NBA title defence Thursday with a 104-103 victory over the Boston Celtics. Kyle Lowry, tasked with inbound the ball with half a second on the clock and the Raptors down 103-101, lofted a perfect arcing pass over Boston's towering Tacko Fall to Anunoby on the opposite sideline.

Anunoby set his feet and fired, and the Raptors narrowed the deficit in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference semi-final series to 2-1. "I expected to make it. I don't shoot trying to miss ... I wasn't surprised," said Anunoby, who was mobbed by his teammates. — *AFP*

Babar says no to alcohol brand logo

Karachi: Pakistan's white-ball cricket captain, Babar Azam has told his English county, Somerset that he would not display the logo of any alcohol beverage company on his shirt during the ongoing T20 Blast event in England. Babar, who joined Somerset after Pakistan's tour ended on Tuesday, was seen wearing a shirt which had the logo of an alcohol company on his back. Not surprisingly, it led to some backlash in the social media but a source close to the Pakistan captain confirmed he had made it clear in his contract with Somerset he would not promote any alcohol company logo. "Apparently the logo was on the back of Babar's shirt by mistake and the county has assured him it will be removed for the next match," the source said. — *PTI*

England set for Iceland match

London: Iceland will forever bear a scar for English football after an embarrassing exit at Euro 2016 to a country with a population of less than one percent than the pool on offer to the Three Lions. Four years on, the nations meet on Saturday in the Nations League for the first time since that fateful night in Nice with the visitors in Reykjavik much changed in personnel and mentality. Only six of the squad from Euro 2016 remain. Among them captain Harry Kane, 27, and Raheem Sterling, 25, are now the senior figures in a squad filled with youth, flair and far less fear than the side that were wracked by self-doubt after falling 2-1 behind just 18 minutes into that famous defeat to Iceland. — *AFP*

Live on TV

FORMULA ONE

Italian Grand Prix
Third Practice from 3.25 pm;
Qualifying from 6.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Trinbago Knight Riders vs St Lucia Zouks from 7.30 pm; Jamaica Tallawahs vs Barbados Tridents from 11.45 pm on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

US OPEN

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

UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

North Macedonia vs Armenia from 6.30 pm; Iceland vs England from 9.30 pm; Portugal vs Croatia from 12.15 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD; Denmark vs Belgium from 12.15 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 1, HD; Sweden vs France from 12.15 am (Sunday) on Sony Six, HD

UFC FIGHT NIGHT

Alistair Overeem vs Augusto Sakai and other bouts from 5.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

MUM'S THE WORD

Serena among three mothers in US Open third round

New York, Sept. 4: Serena Williams, Victoria Azarenka and Tsvetana Pironkova made up a 'Band of Mothers' who marched into the third round of the US Open on Thursday.

Williams, Azarenka and Pironkova were part of a cluster of nine mums who started this week's women's singles tournament here.

Six of the nine — Kim Clijsters, Vera Zvonareva, Tatjana Maria, Katerina Bondarenko, Patricia Maria Tig and Olga Govortsova — have been eliminated.

But unranked Bulgarian Pironkova — playing her first tournament in three years after a break to have her first child — prolonged her participation with a 7-5, 6-3 upset of Spanish 10th Garbine Muguruza.

Former world No. 1 Williams also advanced later Thursday with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Russia's Margarita Gasparyan.

Williams and Pironkova were later joined by Azarenka, another former world number one who beat Belarussian compatriot and fifth seed Aryna Sabalenka 6-1, 6-3. Pironkova, who gave birth to her son Alexander in April 2018, says motherhood has given her a new perspective on her tennis career.

Only three women — Belgium's Clijsters and Australians Evonne Goolagong and Margaret Court — have won Grand Slam singles titles in the Open era after having children. — *AFP*



Serena Williams of the United States en route to her 6-2, 6-4 win over Russia's Margarita Gasparyan in their US Open third round match in New York on Thursday. — *AP*

NAGAL LOSES TO BIRTHDAY BOY THIEM

New York, Sept. 4: Sumit Nagal's trademark fighting spirit was on display throughout but it was not enough to get past world number three Dominic Thiem, who notched up a straight-set victory over the Indian in the US Open men's singles second round here.

Nagal lost 3-6, 3-6, 2-6 to the second-seeded Austrian, who celebrated his 27th birthday with a commanding performance at the Arthur Ashe Stadium here on Thursday.

Thiem, this year's Australian Open finalist, had said that he has seen videos of Nagal's game and knew that he has a ripping forehand. Well prepared, he came out with a clear strategy of not giving many balls on the forehand side of the Indian.

"Thank you 2020 US Open. Lots to learn. Going to keep working hard! Thanks for all the support everyone," Nagal later tweeted.

Nagal came into the contest after giving India a rare singles main draw match win at a Grand Slam but it was always going to be a daunting task for him to challenge someone who has made two French Open finals.

Slow off the blocks, Nagal was broken early but the slogger that he is, he kept Thiem under pressure, creating as many as five chances to break back in the fifth game that lasted 10 minutes. — *PTI*

SELECTED RESULTS

Men's singles second round (number in brackets denotes seeding): Matteo Berrettini (ITA x6) bt Ugo Humbert (FRA) 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (8/6); Andrey Rublev (RUS x10) bt Gregoire Barrere (FRA) 6-2, 6-4, 7-6 (7/4); Marton Fucsovics (HUN) bt Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x14) 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/4), 3-6, 6-4, 6-1; Daniil Medvedev (RUS x3) bt Christopher O'Connell (AUS) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4; Roberto Bautista (ESP x8) bt Milomir Kecmanovic (SRB) 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4; Vasek Pospisil (CAN) bt Milos Raonic (CAN x25) 6-7 (1/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3; Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x15) bt Andy Murray (GBR) 6-2, 6-3, 6-4; Marin Cilic (CRO x31) bt Norbert Gombos (SVK) 6-3, 1-6, 7-6 (7/2), 7-5; Dominic Thiem (AUT x2) bt Sumit Nagal (IND) 6-3, 6-3, 6-2.

Women's singles second round (number in brackets denotes seeding): Madison Keys (USA x7) bt Aliona Bolsova (ESP) 6-2, 6-1; Donna Vekic (CRO x18) bt Patricia Tig (ROU) 6-2, 6-1; Tsvetana Pironkova (BUL) bt Garbine Muguruza (ESP x10) 7-5, 6-3; Maria Sakkari (GRE x15) bt Bernarda Pera (USA) 2-6, 6-3, 6-2; Amanda Anisimova (USA x22) bt Katrina Scott (USA) 4-6, 6-4, 6-1; Serena Williams (USA x3) bt Margarita Gasparyan (RUS) 6-2, 6-4; Victoria Azarenka (BLR) bt Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x5) 6-1, 6-3; Karolina Muchova (CZE x20) bt Anna Kalinskaya (RUS) 6-3, 7-6 (7/4); Sorana Cirstea (ROM) bt Johanna Konta (GBR x9) 2-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4; 6-0; Sofia Kenin (USA x2) bt Leylah Fernandez (CAN) 6-4, 6-3.

Murray makes early exit

New York, Sept. 4: Andy Murray said he would keep trying to win Grand Slams after crashing out of the US Open second round in straight sets to 15th seed Felix Auger-Aliassime on Thursday.

The former world number one was demolished by the 20-year-old Canadian 6-2, 6-3, 6-4 inside Arthur Ashe Stadium in 2hr 8min.

But Murray said he was pleased with how his metal hip coped in his first Grand Slam outing since the 2019 Australian Open, when there was talk of him retiring.

"I'm more positive about what I can do in Grand

Slams before I came over here," said Murray, who rallied to a win thrilling five-set match against Japan's 49th-ranked Yoshihito Nishioka in the first round on Tuesday.

The Scotsman is trying to rebuild his career after an injury-ravaged three years, and currently sits 115th in the world rankings.

"I feel like I'm back at square one having not played Slams for a few years," Murray, a three-time Grand Slam winner, said.

"I need to build up my body and my physical conditioning so that, you know, I have the ability to back up

five-set matches. That takes a bit of time, unfortunately."

DIMITROV TUMBLES OUT

Fourteenth seed Grigor Dimitrov tumbled out of the US Open at the second-round stage on Thursday.

The 29-year-old Bulgarian fell to 66th-ranked Hungarian Marton Fucsovics in five sets.

Fucsovics downed Dimitrov 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/4), 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 in 4hr 50min.

Dimitrov became the second-highest men's seed to exit the tournament after Chile's Cristian Garin, seeded 13th, lost in five sets on Wednesday. — *AFP*

TITLE HOLDERS TRIDENTS BOW OUT OF CPL

Tarouba, Sept. 4: Defending champions Barbados Tridents crashed out after suffering a six-wicket loss to Guyana Amazon Warriors, while St. Kitts & Nevis Patriots too exited the Caribbean Premier League even before finishing their quota of ten leagues matches here.

While the Warriors secured their semi-final berth outplaying Tridents, the match between Patriots and Jamaica Tallawahs was washed out after just five overs on Thursday. With three teams yet to play two games each and two of them with one match each in hand, the four semi-finalists have been finalised.

Trinbago Knight Riders, Guyana Amazon Warriors, St. Lucia Zouks and Jamaica Tallawahs are assured of a last four berth with final positions dependant on the games left.

Tridents' poor run continued as they failed to get to three figures once again, posting a paltry 89/9 after being asked to take first strike. Tridents were never allowed to settle down once Romario Shepherd (3/22) came on as the first change following the first two overs by Chris Green (1/17) and Kevin Sinclair (1/23). — *PTI*

Messi to stay at Barcelona

Barcelona, Sept. 4: Lionel Messi ended speculation about his future at Barcelona by announcing on Friday that he would reluctantly stay for another season rather than tackle his career-long club in court.

A week after saying he wanted to leave the Liga side, and with a contract row still raging, the 33-year-old six-time player of the year gave the news Barca fans were hoping for.

In doing so, however, the Argentine forward took a big swipe at the club's hierarchy.

"I wasn't happy and I wanted to leave. I have not been allowed this in any way and I will STAY at the club so as not to get into a legal dispute," he was quoted as saying by Goal.Com.

"The management of the club led by (president Josep Maria) Bartomeu is a disaster.

"I told the club, the president in particular, that I wanted to leave. They knew this since the start of the past season. I told them during all (of the) last 12 months. But I will stay here because I don't want to start a legal war."

By remaining at the Catalan club for the fourth and final year of his contract Messi is in line for a

63 million pounds (\$83.38 million) loyalty bonus and will be able to leave without a transfer fee.

Earlier on Friday, Messi's father and representative Jorge had insisted in a letter to La Liga that a 700 million euros (\$828.03 million) release clause in the player's contract was not valid and his son could leave for free.

However, despite the standoff between the Messi camp and Barcelona and La Liga, the player has ended the impasse and will see out his contract with the club with whom he has won more than 30 major trophies and scored over 600 goals.

CLUBS DISAPPOINTED

The news that Messi will be staying at the Nou Camp, albeit reluctantly, will disappoint the clubs who were hoping to sign the iconic forward, including Premier League Manchester City, managed by his former Barca boss Pep Guardiola.

Argentine pay TV station TYC Sports, which has close links with Messi, had reported earlier on Friday that Messi was poised to stay with the Catalan club he joined as a teenager.

— *Reuters*



Spain's Jose Luis Gaya Pena (left) is congratulated by Mikel Merino after he scored against Germany in their Nations League football match in Stuttgart, southern Germany, on Thursday. — *AFP*

Enrique's boys deny Germany

Paris, Sept. 4: Jose Luis Gaya's late goal gave Spain a 1-1 draw away in Germany on Thursday as the start of the UEFA Nations League marked the return of international football in Europe following a hiatus of 10 months due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Valencia defender Gaya was on hand to score from close range in the sixth minute of added time in Stuttgart after Rodrigo Moreno had nodded down a Ferran Torres cross, in a dramatic ending to the League A, Group Four encounter.

Earlier, new Chelsea striker Timo Werner had

given Germany the lead just after half-time in an entertaining contest between two of the last three World Cup winners.

It was Luis Enrique's first game of his second spell as Spain coach, despite being re-appointed in November 2019 just after their last game in Euro 2020 qualifying.

"This team is full of faith and hunger. We didn't deserve to lose and we kept fighting to the end," said Spain captain Sergio Ramos.

These two teams will hope to feature prominently in the European Championship.

— *AFP*

RONALDO DOUBTFUL AS PORTUGAL FACE CROATIA

Lisbon, Sept. 4: Cristiano Ronaldo is a doubt as Portugal start the defence of their Nations League title against Croatia on Saturday in Porto and Sweden on Tuesday in Solna. Ronaldo is with the Portugal squad but has a toe infection and did not train on Wednesday or Thursday. He was instead doing "gym work", the Portuguese football federation (FPF) said.

Ronaldo has 99 goals in 164 international matches but the FPF, which has closed its training camp to the press citing health protocols, gave no indication whether he will be fit for either game.

Ronaldo has not played since early August when Juventus was knocked out of the Champions League by Lyon. — *AFP*

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