

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 15 | SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 31°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aavani 30
Tithi: Thrayodashi
Star: Aayilyam
Rahukalam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm
Yamagandam:
9 am to 10.30 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.47 am
Zohar: 12.10 pm
Asar: 3.21 pm
Maghrib: 6.11 pm
Isha: 7.22 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.10 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 3.40 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.43 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+78,172)	(+1.026)
49,23,175	80,780

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,752)	
TN: 5,08,511	8,434

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,92,85,028

DEATHS

9,30,007

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 213

worldometers.info

Govt bans export of onions

New Delhi: The government on Monday banned the export of all varieties of onions with immediate effect, a move aimed at increasing availability and checking price of the commodity in the domestic market.

“The export of all varieties of onions... is prohibited with immediate effect,” the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said in a notification. The DGFT, an arm of the commerce ministry, deals with exports and imports-related issues.

PM kisan scam: One arrested in Kanchi dt

Chennai: CB-CID officials on Monday arrested a man from Walajabad in Kanchipuram district, in connection with the PM kisan scam. Kanchipuram district collector P. Ponnai said after a detailed inquiry, officials had identified 2,712 ineligible beneficiary accounts and recovered ₹78 lakh. Initially, an amount of ₹59 lakhs was sent to the PM kisan account.

COUNTER

POINT



We shouldn't have allowed even masks and sanitisers inside the House!

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Gear up for 2021 Assembly polls: Vijayakant



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Suga secures party vote for Japan PM

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Big lesson learnt, says Djokovic



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It's Thiem time in tiebreak shootout at US Open



Dominic Thiem, of Austria, reacts after defeating Alexander Zverev, of Germany, in the men's singles final of the US Open tennis championships in New York on Sunday. Thiem won 2-6, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (6). ■ **Report on P8** — AP

Suriya 'Neet' comment draws mixed responses

J. STALIN | DC CHENNAI, SEPT. 14

Six retired judges of the Madras high court on Monday appealed to Chief Justice A.P.Sahi not to take cognizance of the complaint against actor Suriya and leave the matter as it is.

The actor, moved by the recent suicides of students over Neet, on Sunday, had shared his anguish in a statement and called for people to protest the entrance exam. However, his comment, “courts were delivering justice through video-conferencing due to life-threatening coronavirus fears (but) are ordering students to fearlessly go and write the exams,” did not go down well with Justice S.M. Subramaniam of the Madras high court. Joining issue with the actor, the judge immediately wrote to the Chief Justice, urging him to initiate contempt proceedings against Suriya.

In his letter, Justice Subramaniam said the actor's statement claims, “Hon'ble judges are afraid of their own life and rendering justice through video conferencing. While-so, they have no morale to pass orders directing the students to appear for Neet without fear.”

Responding to this row, six retired judges Justices K.Chandru, K.N.Basha, T.Sudanthiram, D.Hariparanthaman, K.Kannan and G.M.Akbar Ali, sent a letter to the CJ on Monday.

They said they had seen a news item informing that Justice S.M.Subramaniam of the court has written a letter to him drawing



his attention to a press statement of a popular Tamil cine actor (S.Suriya) protesting against the conduct of Neet. The six retired judges said, “We are afraid that such a construction made on the statement of Suriya will be slightly off the mark and it does not require any action as requested by the learned judge. Where four students have committed suicide unable to meet the Neet requirement and in a surcharged atmosphere, an artistic person's over reaction should not be taken seriously and out of context. If the letter is read in its totality and considering the good social work done by him through his trust which had helped hundreds of poor students to complete their higher education and get placements, we should show generosity and magnanimity in leaving the matter without any cognizance. Being former judges and concerned about the prestige and honour of this court, we earnestly make this appeal not to take cognizance of the complaint and leave the matter as it is. It is our duty to make this appeal to your good selves so that the court is rid off any unnecessary controversies”.

Bar Council, Advocates' Assn slam Suriya

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT. 14

Coming down heavily on actor Suriya for his criticizing statement against courts, which is continuously functioning without any hindrance and delivering justice to all in order to maintain dignity, decency and decorum even during this pandemic period, senior advocate S. Prabakaran, president, Tamil Nadu Advocates' Association and co-chairman, Bar Council of India, said the statement of actor Surya is highly condemnable, downgrading the judicial function, defaming the judges cannot be accepted and he should be dealt with appropriately and he should face the contempt proceedings initiated by the honourable justice S.M.Subramaniam after following the due procedures of law.

Prabakaran said the hate speech by the said actor has sent a wrong sign to the citizens of India which led to debate in the media is a contempt of court and he should be dealt in a manner known to law and he should be thought how the court functions even in pandemic and non-pandemic situation. He cannot be just let go of and he should withdraw his statement about the functioning of the judiciary and he has no business to either comment or criticize the functioning as well.

Delhi riots case: Ex-student leader Umar Khalid held

New Delhi, Sept. 14: Former Jawaharlal Nehru University student leader Umar Khalid was arrested late on Sunday night under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act(UAPA) for his alleged role in the northeast Delhi riots, sources said.

He was arrested by the special cell of the Delhi police after 11 hours of interrogation.

He will be produced before a Delhi court on Monday, they said. Khalid was questioned by the Delhi Police Crime Branch for a couple of hours on September 2 in connection with the riots. He was earlier booked under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in another case related to the riots. — PTI

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT 14

A three-day monsoon session of the State Assembly began on Monday with members of the Opposition DMK presenting themselves with masks bearing the slogans ‘Ban NEET’ and ‘Save TN Students’. This was the first time after 10 years the House was meeting at a venue outside the Assembly Hall in Fort St George – at Kalaivanar Arangam. Earlier the Assembly met twice during the tenure of late Chief Minister M Karunanidhi at the ‘Secretariat building’ that he constructed inside the Omadurar Government Estate, which was subsequently converted into a

of the record of both law and of fact”.

Bhushan said that he will be filing a separate petition seeking review of the judgment on Sentence dated August 31, by which the top court had imposed a “nominal fine” of ₹1 on him for contempt of court.

The lawyer was directed by the top court to deposit the fine with the Supreme Court registry by September 15 and failure to comply would entail a three-month jail term and debarment from law practice for three years

DCCORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 14

As the Monsoon Session of Parliament began Monday amid the raging coronavirus pandemic, which seems to have reached another peak in India, as many as 25 members – 17 from the Lok Sabha and eight from the Rajya Sabha — tested positive for the deadly virus. Of the 17 Lok Sabha MPs, 12 are from the BJP, with prominent ones being Meenakshi Lekhi and Parvesh Verma (both from Delhi) and controversial MP Anant Kumar Hegde.

Two YSR Congress MPs were positive, while the Shiv Sena, DMK and RLP have one MP each affected by Covid-19. This worrying development comes as around 200 MPs are above 65, including some in the 85-90 age bracket, most prominent among them being former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who is 87 and a Rajya Sabha member.

Almost 80,000 deaths have been reported in India since the outbreak of the virus in January, while 92,000 positive cases were reported between September 13 and 14 alone.

Incidentally, while briefing the Lok Sabha on the handling of the Covid situation by the Centre, health minister Harsh Vardhan said it had been managed “very well”.

Interestingly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing the media prior to the start of the session, acknowledged it was being held “under special circumstances as there is a corona pandemic on one hand while our obligation towards fulfilling our duties on the other”. He said that several important decisions would be taken during the session, and “the more diverse the discussion is in the House, the more beneficial it is for the country”.

Elaborate arrangements have been made by the Lok Sabha secretariat as the session is being held while

multi-specialty hospital by the late J Jayalalithaa after she took charge as Chief Minister.

The hall in Kalaivanar Arangam was refurbished to look like the Assembly Hall with photographs of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Periyar, Anna, MGR, Jayalalithaa, Thiruvalluvar, Muthramalinga Thevar and so on adorning the walls.

Seats were arranged in such a way that there was a metre's distance between two MLAs. About 15 seats were vacant as the session began with obituary references to former President Pranab Mukherjee, Kanyakumari MP H Vasanthakumar, Chepauk-Thiruvellikeni MLA J



In his review petition, Bhushan said “Conviction and sentencing are separate and independent stages of the criminal process, and were correctly treated as such by this Court by first pronouncing judgment in conviction proceedings,

25 MPs TEST +VE

► Separated by plastic shields installed in front of their benches, members of Lok Sabha attended the first day of the Monsoon session being held amid the Covid-19 pandemic

► It is estimated that 56 persons have tested positive within the entire Parliament House complex, which include MPs, personnel from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha secretariats and also mediapersons

► Lok Sabha was adjourned for an hour on Monday after paying tributes to former President Pranab Mukherjee, a sitting MP and 13 ex-parliamentarians who died in the recent past



NDA nominee Harivansh Narayan Singh was on Monday re-elected deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha

This Parliament, particularly in this session, has one more crucial responsibility... Just like the faith with which they (soldiers) are standing, determined to protect the motherland, Parliament and all its members too will send out a message in a unanimous voice, spirit and resolve that the country stands in support of them. — PM Modi

the pandemic seems to have peaked again across the country.

It is estimated that 56 persons have tested positive within the entire Parliament House complex, which include MPs, personnel from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha secretariats and also mediapersons.

Sources said these people tested positive during the RT-PCR tests which were conducted in the Parliament complex prior to the session's start.

Earlier, at least seven Union ministers and around 25 MPs and MLAs had contracted the disease. Among them is home minister Amit Shah, who after undergoing the mandatory quarantine period last month, had to be admitted again to AIIMS a couple of days ago. He had earlier been admitted there on August 18 for post-corona care but was discharged on August 30-31.

In a first, all MPs marked their attendance through an app called the “Attendance Register” on the first day of the session, Lok Sabha secretariat sources said.



DMK president MK Stalin and his party MLAs wearing face masks with the slogan ‘Ban Neet, save TN students’ arrive to attend Tamil Nadu Assembly session, in Chennai, on Monday. — DC

Anbalagan, 22 former MLAs, victims of the Coronavirus and so on.

A demand by the Leader of the Opposition M K Stalin to

include the names of the students who committed suicide fearing for the Neet in the State was rejected by the Speaker P Dhanapal. ■ **P3**

Adrift at sea for 52 days, 9 TN fishermen traced in Myanmar

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT. 14

A group of nine fishermen from North Chennai, whose boat ran adrift in mid-sea, was traced on the Myanmar waters on Monday morning, 52 days after they had set out to the waters from Kasimedu fishing harbor on July 23 with plans of returning to the coast on August 7. A press note from fisheries

minister D. Jayakumar said the deep sea fishing boat, bearing the registration number IND-TN-02-MM-2029, was found by the Myanmar Navy, whose personnel rescued the nine fishermen on board and took them to the shore, where they had been given proper food.

Arrangements are being made to transport the fishermen back to Chennai soon,

Jayakumar said adding that the external affairs ministry had earlier alerted the Myanmar, Bangladesh and Thailand governments after the fishermen did not return home as planned on August 7.

The fisheries department had also launched a massive search for the fishing boat with the help of the Coast Guard, Navy and the fishing boats in Chennai harbor.

Bhushan pays ₹1 fine, will appeal verdict

New Delhi, Sept. 14: Activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan on Monday moved the Supreme Court seeking review of the order holding him guilty for contempt of court for his two derogatory tweets against the judiciary.

After depositing with the apex court registry rupee one imposed as “nominal fine” as punishment upon him, he filed the petition for review of the August 14 judgement holding him guilty for the contempt of court contending that it “suffers from multiple errors apparent on the face

before setting a separate hearing for sentencing.”

“Thus, the petitioner is entitled to bring separate petitions for the review of each judgement. Nothing in the constitutional or statutory law as it applies to this Court's power of review limits this right,” his review plea said.

The plea filed through advocate Kamini Jaiswal said that in view of the unique nature of the proceedings under Article 129 for criminal contempt a hearing in open court ought to be granted both on the

question of admitting the present petition as well as on its merits.

Bhushan sought review of the August 14 judgement, on the ground that he had written a letter dated July 26 addressed to the Chief Justice of India in which he has sought that pending contempt proceedings against him and the review petition be heard by a bench in which Justice (retd.) Arun Mishra was not a part. Justice Mishra has superannuated from his post as top court judge on September 2. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Eatery fined for not heeding Covid norms

DC CORRESPONDENT
CUDDALORE, SEPT. 14

The district collector has ordered a fine of ₹2,500 on a restaurant for violating the Covid-19 norms in Cuddalore on Monday. During a raid, district collector Chandrasekhar Sakhamuri noticed that staff at a biriyani centre in Semmandalam were not following the Covid-19 guidelines of Central and state governments. He also noticed a large number of people gathered at the restaurant to buy biriyani.

The staff were also not wearing face masks, not maintaining social distance and not offering sanitizer to customers. On the instruction of the collector, the Cuddalore municipal officials slapped a fine of ₹100 each on five staff and ₹2,000 on the eatery for not maintaining social distance.

Power rules tweaked to boost industries

DC CORRESPONDENT
CUDDALORE, SEPT. 14

The Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission has amended the Tamil Nadu Electricity Supply and Distribution codes, which is likely to provide major relief to small and medium-scale industries and promote industrialization by raising the limit of electricity demand in the 'Low Tension' category to 150KW, from the erstwhile limit of 112KW.

In a press release issued on Monday, secretary, Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission, stated that industries and other consumers can under the new system, avail supply in the 'Low Tension' category of supply for demand up to 150 KW. The cost of portion of HT and LT lines or cables to be erected inside the consumer's premises shall be borne by the applicant. Wherever possible, the single pole type distribution transformer structure may be installed to save space and cost.

Now, consumers requiring demand of above 112 KW can avail 'Low Tension' supply up to 150 KW, provided they offer space for erection of a distribution transformer inside their premises, and pay current consumption and demand charges as that of HT tariff. The installation of a distribution transformer at the load-end reduces technical loss to a great extent and improves voltage profile.

Customs makes ₹14.93 cr seizures

■ Lockdown: Gold, drugs, hawala money seized

P. A. JEBARAJ | DC
CHENNAI, SEPT. 14

In the almost six-month-long lockdown period, the Customs in Chennai seized gold, drugs, hawala currencies and red sanders, worth ₹14.93 crore. Since March, there have been 26 seizures, majority being drugs. So far, 33 persons including a woman have been arrested in connection with these seizures.

There has been a huge spurt in demand for ecstasy pills during the lockdown. Between March 23 and August 31, Customs have seized several such consignments sent from abroad. There have been 15 major seizures by the Chennai Customs, amounting to nearly Rs 9.28 crores worth of drugs.

The latest seizure was on

September 8, when a person was arrested by the Customs in connection with the seizure of Pseudoephedrine drugs hidden in lumbosacral belts and trophies, in a courier destined to Australia.

In the last few months, there has been large seizure of pseudoephedrine drugs, LSD stamps, MDMA crystals and ecstasy pills which are popular among the youth and are known as party drugs. The availability of these drugs decreased locally and the addicted people were trying to procure these drugs directly from abroad.

Most of the drugs arrived from European countries through parcel and a few reached from Australia, the US and the UK. The seized drugs were addressed to different

parts of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Gold worth ₹3.39 crores was seized by the Chennai customs in eight instances, smuggled in repatriation flights under the Vande Bharat Mission, mostly from the Middle-East countries. Bra straps, belt buckles, shoe soles, sausages and gold paste are some of the ingenious methods the smugglers have resorted to smuggling gold as its prices skyrocket in the country.

Similarly, ₹1.75-crore and ₹50-lakh hawala money from Singapore and Malaysia were seized during this period. One case of Red Sanders smuggling was reported on May 15. Logs worth ₹50 lakh smuggled in from Malaysia through parcel were seized.

ENNORE CREEK

IIT-M moots straight training walls

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 14

In order to mitigate the flood risk in Chennai, an Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) study team has proposed construction of 'straight training walls' at the mouth of Ennore Creek.

The study was carried out by Prof. K. Murali, Prof. S.A. Sannasiraj, and Prof. V. Sundar, faculty in the department of ocean engineering on behalf of Kamarajar Port (formerly Ennore Port). The study says heavy siltation in the creek mouth and narrow opening in the mouth posed a flood threat to the nearby areas.

According to the study, straight training walls at the creek mouth and regular de-silting of the river will minimise the flood risk in north Chennai. It also said

that curved training walls proposed earlier will increase the flood risk by blocking the free exchange of seawater with the creek.

Prof. V. Sundar said that a straight structure with a sufficient crest height was essential to ensure the tidal prism ingress for flushing. The straight training walls would complement with the present series of groynes which were designed by IIT-M for shore protection, Prof. Sundar added.

Prof. K. Murali said that several attempts had been made to prevent sand bar formation at Cooum mouth by constructing a pair of training walls. But it had not yielded the required result. The major reason is the inclination of the southern training wall with shoreline that hindered flushing of sediments effectively into the sea, he said.

Depressed old man commits suicide in old age home

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 14

An octogenarian allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself at an old-age home in Guduvanchery, near Tambaram, where he was residing, reportedly due to loneliness and depression.

The police identified the deceased as Thanigachalam, 82, a retired state government employee, who resided in Kodungaiyur. He has a son and four daughters. His son admitted him at a private old-age home in Kayarampet in Guduvanchery, near Tambaram, a week ago, against his wish. The elderly man was lonely and depressed there. Police said that he did not talk to anyone, from the day he joined the old-age home.

On Saturday, he locked himself in a room and did not come out for a long time. The attendee knocked on the door and, finding no response, alerted the Guduvanchery police. The police broke into the room to find Thanigachalam hanging dead.

The police carried out a preliminary probe. Thanigachalam's body was sent to the Chengalpet government hospital for post-mortem and later handed over to the family on Sunday.

Deworming drive



Health minister C.Vijayabaskar inaugurates National Deworming Week and gives tablets to students at Government Kasturba Gandhi hospital on Monday. Health secretary Dr J. Radhakrishnan also seen.

— DC

SHRC seeks Kovai SP's report on custodial torture

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 14

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has sought a report from the Superintendent of Police, Coimbatore, on the alleged torture of a worker in police custody to admit to a crime. Based on a report published in *Deccan Chronicle* 'Another police torture case tumbles out' on Monday, SHRC member A. Chittaranjan Mohandoss directed the SP to file a

report in three weeks.

Thenkasi native Kannan (27) is a construction worker residing near Naickenpalayam for the past 13 years. A few months ago, during the lockdown, Kannan had shifted to his brother's house near Kovundampalayam.

A couple of days ago, Perhanaickenpalayam police took Kannan from Kovundampalayam around 11 pm to the police station in the name of a formal enquiry. There

they allegedly verbally abused him and forced him to admit to a murder that had taken place six months ago, near Kovanur.

As Kannan refused to budge, he was allegedly assaulted and brutally tortured with 'lathis'. Kannan suffered a wrist fracture and serious injuries in other parts of the body. He was released the next day by 3 am. Then within seven hours, police again picked him up and tortured him for the next

couple of hours. Police also threatened to lodge a fake complaint against him, if he revealed about the torture to higher police officials.

Kantian got admitted to the Coimbatore Medical College Hospital and is under treatment there. He took up the Issue with district SP. Acting on his input, SP Ara Arularasu ordered the ADSP to conduct an inquiry with the personnel. In Periyanaickenpalayam police station.

DGP defends rejecting plea to transfer Nalini to Puzhal

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 14

Pointing out that S.Nalini, serving life sentence in Vellore prison for her involvement in Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, was never ill-treated by prison staff and her life was never in danger in prison, as contended by her mother, the Director General of Police and IG of Prisons has informed the Madras high court that the request of her mother to transfer Nalini from Special Prison for Women, Vellore to Puzhal Prison was found unreasonable and rejected by the authorities on security and administrative reasons.

Sunil Kumar Singh, DGP/Director General of Prisons and Correctional Services stated this in his counter affidavit filed on behalf of the State Home Secretary and Superintendent of Prison, Special Prison for Women, Vellore, in response to the petition filed by S.Padma, which sought a direction to the authorities to transfer her daughter Nalini, wife of Sriharan alias Murugan from the Special Prison for Women at Vellore to the Special Prison for Women, Puzhal, Chennai.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and P.Velmurugan before whom the counter affidavit was filed, adjourned to next week, further hearing of the case, at the request of the counsel for the petitioner.

In his counter affidavit, Sunil Kumar Singh submitted that the averment of the petitioner that Nalini was ill-treated and not allowed to make video call to her lawyer whereas other prisoners were allowed to talk to their lawyers over WhatsApp video call was nothing but a blatant lie. No prisoner was allowed to make video call to their advocates as contended by the petitioner, he added.

He said prisoner's interview has been temporarily suspended in view of the Covid-19 pandemic in order to protect the prisoners from getting infected of Covid-19 infection from the visitors. However, in lieu of personal interview, prisoners were being permitted to make video call to their relatives and friends within India through Android mobile phones provided to all prisons in addition to the existing regular telephone facilities. The petitioner's daughter Nalini availed these facilities and spoke over video call on 14 occasions from March 31 to June 26, 2020. Hence adequate facilities were made available to Nalini to speak to her mother over video call and to her advocate over voice call, he added.



Cooum being cleared of weeds near Chepauk.

— DC

Parthasarathy Swami sabha to celebrate 60 yrs of MS' concert

B. VIJAYALAKSHMI | DC
CHENNAI, SEPT. 14

Sri Parthasarathy Swami sabha will commemorate the 60th year of Bharat Ratna M.S. Subbulakshmi's special concert on September 11, 1960, by organising an online concert by renowned singer Gayathri Venkataraghavan on Wednesday.

Sixty years ago, on September 11, 1960, the special concert by M. S. Subbulakshmi was a fund raiser and presided over by Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, who gave a historic speech on the occasion.

"In a bid to remember that special event 60 years ago, we are planning to organise a Facebook live concert on September 16, 2020, which incidentally is also the birth anniversary of M. S. Subbulakshmi. Gayathri's concert will begin at 7.30 pm



(From left) M.S. Subbulakshmi, Gayathri Venkataraghavan and C. P. Ramaswami Iyer

Ninnuvina Namadendu and Hanuman Chalisa. Rasikas may want to sing *Hanuman Chalisa* at their homes to help gain mental strength during this Covid times."

V. Shrinivasan, grandson of M.S. Subbulakshmi, will deliver the keynote address and inaugurate the concert. Glimpses of Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer's speech will also enthrall the online rasikas.

KCT students develop greener e-scooter

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 14

Amid the global battle against the pandemic, the students of Kumaraguru group of institutions have joined the Jugaad bandwagon promoting frugal indigenous innovation by building 'Duo V1.1', a

greener and cleaner electric scooter.

The Students' Research and Exploration Wing and Garage, Product Development – research centre of the automotive sector of Kumaraguru College of Technology (KCT) huddled to design the compact, weightless

"Duo V1.1", that runs at a speed of 30 kilometers per hour.

This vehicle has a simpler chassis design, fewer parts compared to other scooters, optimized parts for weight reduction and 3D printed parts. The team overcame challenges in terms of efficiency,

durability, cost and maintenance.

India's 2040 electric vehicle mission aims to promote production of hybrid vehicles and reduce the petrol- and diesel-powered automotive.

The team behind Duo V1.1 is happy to have contributed to the mission of

transforming KCT into a carbon-neutral campus. After successfully making the basic model, the team is now engaged in their phase II research to improve ergonomics, optimize design and materials, and install smart card access and vehicle tracking system.

Darting of injured tusker delayed

■ Animal goes into deep forest even as foresters keep vigil

ANANTH MATHIVANAN | DC
COIMBATORE, SEPT. 14

The injured wild tusker moved deeper into the forest, complicating tranquilization efforts, even as special teams of forest personnel lie in wait for the animal with support of kumkis, near Nellithurai in Mettupalayam.

It may be recalled that during routine patrolling, anti-poaching watchers witnessed a wild male elephant limping near Sundapatti beat in Mettupalayam range, in the end of March. One of its front legs was injured.

The reason for the injury is not yet confirmed. But, as per instructions of the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (APCCF) I Anwardeen, a special team was formed led by DFO D Venkatesh to monitor the elephant.

Medications were given to the elephant mixed with



Forest staff with kumkis Suyambu and Venkatesh gear up for tranquilizing operation near Nellithurai in Mettupalayam.

— DC

fruits and the animal also responded by showing some improvement. Despite remaining close to the forest boundary, the

elephant did neither enter human habitats nor get involved in any man-animal conflict. While rumors on social media

had it that the elephant suffered a gunshot injury, forest officials doubt the claim. DFO Venkatesh and his team are waiting to

sedate the animal and closely study the nature of wound and provide treatment.

The forest staff special team comprises tranquilizing experts, veterinarians, landscape coordinator and kumki elephant 'Suyambu'.

APCCF Anwardeen suggested engaging one more kumki in the operation.

While the team was looking for favorable terrain to tranquilize the tusker on Monday, with the help of the two kumkis, the wild elephant slowly moved deeper into the woods.

DFO Venkatesh told DC that the animal would be continuously monitored, and based on the assessment of conducive strategic parameters, the veterinary team would dart it. The operation will be undertaken depending on the animal's return to plainer grounds, added the DFO.

SHORT TAKES

De-worming tablets given to kids

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARUR, SEPT 14

Collector T Anbazhagan here inaugurated a two-week-long camp launched to distribute de-worming tablets 'Albendazole' to children in the age group of one year to 19 years, as part of a nationwide programme, at Nathamedu village near here, on Monday.

Anbazhagan said similar camps are being held in other parts of the district and around 3,67,842 children would be benefited by these camps. De-worming tablets will be given to children through anganwadis, health sub-centres and primary health centres till September 26, and the remaining kids would be covered on September 28, he added.

Inaugurating a similar camp at Tiruvavur, Collector T Anand said, there are 2,87,713 children between age group one year and 19 years. They will be given de-worming tablets in 1,260 centres across the district through anganwadis, health sub-centres and primary health centres. Similar camps were also launched in Tiruchy, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai and Nagapattinam districts by the respective Collectors backed by public health authorities.

Plea to divert river water

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, SEPT 14

Villagers of Sithambur and its surrounding villages have appealed to the Tiruchy district administration to construct a new canal and divert the surplus Cauvery river water to the Sithambur lake. A group of villagers led by G Yoganathan, village president, Sithambur village panchayat, met Collector S Sivarasu, and presented a memorandum in this connection at the Collectorate here, on Monday. In their memorandum, they pointed out that Cauvery river surplus water, passing through Cauvery Kodunthurai irrigation canal is submerged with Ayyar river without any use during the rainy season. If that surplus water can be diverted to Sithambur lake, ground water table in and around a distance of 15 kms would increase, and would also be very useful for farming operations in the area. Collector Sivarasu assured them that he would forward their memorandum to PWD officials, for suitable action.

● **Fire service personnel caught a 10-foot-long python at Thuvarangkurichi near Manapparai in the district, on Monday.**

Blame game on Neet continues

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT 14

The DMK and AIADMK traded charges against each other on the Neet issue with Health Minister C Vijayabaskar saying the DMK and Congress had no moral authority to talk against Neet and DMK president M. K. Stalin accusing the government of not putting enough pressure on the Centre to give Tamil Nadu exemption from it.

Both of them lashed out against the other while speaking to the media separately after the conclusion of the first day's proceedings of the Assembly session on Monday.

"Our stand has been consistent in opposing Neet right from the time of former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa till today and we are still fighting it legally," Vijayabaskar said.

Calling the AIADMK's

claim as 'drama', Stalin said though the AIADMK had included the Neet issue in their election manifesto, passed a resolution in their general council meeting and even been part of the unanimous resolution passed in the Assembly, it had done nothing about it.

Vijayabaskar said the policy decision on Neet was taken on December 27, 2010 and it was the late Jayalalithaa who opposed it and then obtained a stay from the Supreme Court on January 18, 2013. Now the tests were being conducted on the orders of a Supreme Court bench, the Minister said.

Stalin said that not even once had the Chief Minister or the Minister concerned had gone to New Delhi and put pressure on the Prime Minister or the Minister concerned to give exemption to Tamil Nadu from Neet.



SFI members protest against Neet in the city on Monday.

— DC

DMK protests in Parliament

● **DMK MPs T.R.Balu, Tiruchi Siva and Kanimozhi wear masks during protest**

in the Neet as they were not able to receive coaching due to the coronavirus pandemic. He claimed that many students have committed suicide in Tamil Nadu due to "fear" of the competitive qualifying exam. The DMK also moved an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha over the "suicide of students due to Neet in Tamil Nadu". The Neet was held on Sunday with almost 90 per cent students appearing for it, according to NTA. —PTI

Some lawyers back Suriya

Chennai, Sept. 14: A section of lawyers, led by noted advocates N. G. R. Prasad and Sudha Ramalingam, wrote to the Chief Justice against contempt proceedings.

"They said: 'whether the courts should function physically or not is for the committee of judges, presided over by the Chief Justice, to decide. However, the actor's state-



ment is only an expression of an opinion and cannot amount to contempt. If a request is made, that too by a high court Judge, for initiation of contempt proceedings,

then nobody can express their opinion. Of late, every criticism of the judiciary is being seen as contemptuous. As practicing lawyers, we feel that if expression of an opinion is treated as contempt, it would amount to stifling freedom of speech and expression. This would have a chilling effect on basic constitutional guarantees." —PTI

DMK seeks extension of session

FROM P1

After passing the obituary resolutions, the House was adjourned. It would meet again tomorrow for the government to move the supplementary budget and demands for grants for various departments.

The DMK has already given notice for 31 call attention motions and it

was for the Speaker to take a decision on that.

Later speaking to the media outside, Stalin said he wanted the names of the students who committed suicide to be included in the obituary reference because the deaths were continuing in the State.

He said the DMK demanded the session to be an extended one as they

had a lot of issues to raise and wanted to pass many resolutions and added that they did not know how many resolutions would be taken up.

Stalin said that he was keen on discussing the issue relating to the students' suicide also in the House. Similarly the DMK wanted to discuss the National Education Policy

2020 and also the Environmental Impact Assessment 2020 and also seek clarifications from the government.

"We want to express our views on those issues," he said.

DMK MLAs had also given notices for discussing problems relating to their constituencies, too, Stalin added.

Revive coffee industry, says Planters Association

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, SEPT 14

The United Planters' Association of South India (UPASI) has requested the Centre to take favorable decisions as desired by the planters to revive the coffee industry in the country.

AL RM Nagappan, president, UPASI, stated that recently Union minister of finance, Nirmala Sitharaman, held a virtual meeting on coffee issues.

In the meeting, Nagappan had flagged the issue of Rule 7B(1) of the IT Rules, 1962. Rule 7B(1) prescribes that any grower who processes (curing) his coffee, is subject to central income tax to the extent of 25 per cent of the income. "The tax col-

lected through 7B(1) is unknown and even RTI's have not been able to provide this information, and in our opinion, tax collected is negligible if not NIL. The administrative cost of collection of tax should be definitely higher than the revenue generated. The farmer is deprived of earning a better remuneration for his produce due to this age-old provision in the Income Tax Rules. This Rule 7B(1) dissuades the grower from going in for value addition which is the need of the hour. This rule needed to be repealed," he pointed.

Nagappan pointed that under the Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS) – export incentive, plantation commodity exports, were availing a

MEIS export incentive of five per cent till 2019 end, which got reduced to three per cent thereafter. Similarly, in the case of instant coffee, the export incentive was reduced to five per cent from seven per cent. The Union government has discontinued MEIS scheme all of a sudden from April 2020, due to which many shipments for which prices were contracted earlier, were affected. The MEIS was allowed again from September 1, this year with certain caps which will have serious implications on plantation commodity exports, noted Nagappan, and requested the Union finance minister to address these issues to revive the inland coffee industry.

PONDY ADDS 414 NEW CASES; TALLY CROSSES 20K

PUDUCHERRY: Puducherry on Monday logged 414 new COVID-19 cases taking the overall tally past the 20,000 mark while nine people including four women succumbed to the virus, a top Health department official said. The nine fatalities pushed the toll in the union territory to 394. Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said in a release. The new cases in the last 24 hours ending 10 am on Monday pushed the coronavirus number to 20,226 (after transfer of nine cases to Tamil Nadu). Mohan Kumar said the 414 fresh infections were identified after examination of 3,742 samples, adding 308 were from the Pudukcherry region and 74 from Karaikal. —PTI



Obituary references being made to former President Pranab Mukherjee, Kanyakumari MP H Vasanthakumar, Chepauk-Thiruvellikeni MLA J. Anbalagan, 22 former MLAs and other victims of the coronavirus in the Assembly on Monday.

No language should be imposed or opposed: VP

New Delhi, Sept. 14: Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Monday called for according equal respect to all languages and emphasised that no language should either be imposed or opposed.

Addressing an online event organised to mark 'Hindi Divas-2020', he said all Indian languages have rich history and people should be proud of the country's language diversity and cultural heritage.

Noting that Mahatma Gandhi had founded the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha in 1918, the vice president emphasised that Hindi and other Indian languages should be seen as complementary to each other. Naidu suggested that students from non-Hindi speaking states should learn the language and those from Hindi speaking states should learn one more Indian language such as Tamil, Telugu or Kannada so as

to increase goodwill, love and affection among the citizens. Expressing happiness over the importance given to mother tongue in the New Education Policy-2020, the vice president called for providing education in mother tongue for inclusive learning. "This helps the children in learning and understanding the subject better and they are able to express themselves better", he said.

—PTI

Gear up for 2021 Assembly polls: Vijayakant

Chennai Sept 14: DMDK founder Vijayakant on Monday urged his party members to gear up for the Assembly election scheduled next year and ensure a great victory.

Maintaining that the DMDK, launched on September 14, 2005 in Madurai, has carved a niche for itself in Tamil Nadu politics, Vijayakant said the cadres should strive to deliver the best results.

"The DMDK should gear up for the coming Assembly elections in 2021 and ensure a great victory and serve the people. We have to be ready for that," Vijayakant, who hoisted his party flag during the founding day celebrations here, said. As his party stepped into its 16th year, the DMDK founder asked party workers to reach out to the have notes.

He hoisted the party flag in the presence of his wife and treasurer



DMDK cadres get sweets from their party leader in the city on Monday.

— DC

Premalatha, and cadres at the party office in Koyambedu.

Ahead of the celebrations, he had said in a statement that the people of Tamil

Nadu have been suffering due to the coronavirus pandemic, which has claimed several lives, for the last six months.

The DMDK members

should continue to provide various kinds of assistance to the poor and needy, as they have been doing all these months, and also strive for the development of

Tamil Nadu, he said.

The party had unsuccessfully contested all the 234 seats in the state in the 2006 Assembly polls, but only Vijayakant managed to win from Vridhachalam constituency.

In 2011, DMDK won 29 seats in the then assembly election in alliance with the AIADMK and Vijayakant became the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly.

The party lost dismally in the 2016 polls as a constituent of the People's Welfare Front (PWF), the others being MDMK and the two Left parties.

Vijayakant was projected as PWF's Chief Ministerial candidate.

The party joined the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) last year to fight the Lok Sabha polls but lost all the four seats it contested.

— PTI

NIT-T, URAM join hands for tech innovation

R VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, SEPT 14

The National Institute of Technology Tiruchirappalli (NIT-T), on Monday announced that it would join the University Research Alliance of Micron (URAM). URAM is a network of academic institutions and state-of-the-art government-established centers and facilities will focus on fostering technology innovation and advancing memory design.

URAM's efforts will be

guided by Micron's rich history of industry-defining innovations.

NIT-T students will benefit from a wide range of resources to advance research and development, including access to Micron labs, international internships and engaging mentorship from experts.

"The Micron University Research Alliance would help students bridge the gap between academic training and industrial requirements to produce an industry-

ready workforce," said Dr Mini Shaji Thomas, Director, NIT-T.

"Additionally, Micron's commitment aligns with NIT-T's mission to promote innovation and forge global collaborations in cutting-edge research."

"Micron's University Research Alliance is a testament to our long-term investment and commitment to India," said managing director, Micron India, Anand Ramamoorthy. "We see tremendous potential in

India's engineering talent pool, and aim to employ approximately 5,000 team members over the next four to five years, to strengthen and accelerate critical engineering capabilities, tasks, data analytics, machine learning and smart manufacturing."

Micron's university alliance contributes to the 'Make in India' initiative by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to facilitate investment, foster innovation, and enhance manufacturing and

engineering skills in India.

URAM will align and enhance efforts with the National Institution for Transforming India Aayog, Telangana Academy for Skill and Knowledge and T-Hub initiatives. In addition, URAM adheres to standards established by the National Association of Software and Service Companies and Hyderabad Software Enterprises Association, to build talent and advance skills, an official release said.

Bengaluru, Sept 14: The Karnataka government on Monday said it is committed to the proposed Mekedatu project across the Cauvery river, which Tamil Nadu is opposed to, and would hold meetings with union ministers concerned later this week to expedite it. "...I have held meetings three to four times on this."

On Wednesday or Thursday we will seek time from Union Minister for Environment Prakash Javadekar and Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

Mostly Chief Minister may also come (to the meeting in Delhi)...we will put pressure regarding the construction of the dam,"Karnataka Water Resources Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi said.

Speaking to reporters after inspecting the proposed dam site, he said the state would convince the Tamil Nadu government (of the need to build the project). "Also there is an application before the court against it. We will try to get it cleared through our advocates at the earliest. With the cen-

tre's approval and notification, we want to start the work soon," he said. The Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir and Drinking Water Project involves construction of a balancing reservoir across river the Cauvery river near Mekedatu.

Estimated to cost Rs 9,000 crore, the project aims to provide drinking water facilities to Bengaluru Metropolitan region and its surrounding areas (4.75 TMC) and generate 400 MW of power as an additional benefit.

Tamil Nadu has been vehemently opposing the project, raising apprehensions that the state will be affected if the project takes shape.

Noting that the reservoir will have a capacity of about 67.16 tmcft, Jarkiholi said the project will in no way affect the Cauvery Water Dispute Tribunal's award or the Supreme Court's direction to release of 177.25 tmcft water to Tamil Nadu. He pointed out that the state suffers enormous water loss when it is released to Tamil Nadu and the proposed dam would check it.

Also, the Mettur reservoir in Tamil Nadu is about 90 km from here, he said.

To a question on Tamil Nadu's opposition to the project, Jarkiholi said, "we will have to convince them at all levels of the government...also because of the election there next year, they may cause hindrance...it is normal."

We will make things clear from our side to the Centre and court that this is only a balancing reservoir," he said.

The minister said a revised proposal would be sent to the forest department for clearance as it had been over six months since the earlier one had been sent and it would have lapsed.

"We will expedite things now," he said.

He did not commit to any time frame for completion of the project and merely said "as soon as possible."

About five villages and surrounding areas would be submerged due to the project and the people there would be rehabilitated, he added. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

VETERAN CONGRESS LEADER DIES OF COVID-19

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, SEPT. 14

Veteran tribal leader of Congress and former minister Chanesh Ram Rathiya on Monday died of Covid-19 in a hospital in Raigarh in Chhattisgarh.

Rathiya, 78, served as minister in the Digvijay Singh as well as Ajit Jogi governments in undivided Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh respectively. He had been suffering from age-related ailments.

He had tested positive for Coronavirus last fortnight and was admitted to a Covid-19 hospital in Raigarh. He breathed last on Monday morning, official reports said.

He is survived by his wife, two sons and three daughters.

He was first elected to undivided Madhya Pradesh Assembly in 1977 from Dharamjaigarh in Raigarh district and won the seat five times in a row in successive elections. His son Lalji Singh Rathiya currently represents the constituency in Chhattisgarh Assembly.

Chhattisgarh has witnessed a sudden surge in Coronavirus positive cases and deaths in the last three months. The cases have crossed 64,000 on Monday, while the tally of toll mounted to 555.

The state has reported 49,500 Coronavirus cases and 261 deaths in the last one month alone. As many as 31,931 Covid-19 patients in the state have so far recovered.

KOLKATA METRO RESUMES SERVICES AFTER 5 MONTHS

Kolkata, Sept. 14: Metro rail services in Kolkata resumed on Monday after a gap of more than five months, a senior official said. The regular services were suspended on March 23 due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Special trains, however, were run for NEEET aspirants and their guardians on Sunday.

"Services have resumed at 8 am and around 3,000 people have commuted in the first two hours," Kolkata Metro Railway General Manager Manoj Joshi said.

"The last trains from the originating stations on both sides will commence their journey at 7 pm and complete it by 8 pm," he said.

Joshi said all safety protocols including social distancing are being followed.

A train is halting at a station for 30 seconds instead of the previous duration of 20 seconds to avoid rush during boarding and disembarking, a Metro Railway spokesperson said. A total of 110 services are being run on the Noapara-Kavi Subhash line at an interval of 10 minutes during peak hours, she said.

The services will remain suspended on Sundays for the sanitisation of rakes and stations, the spokesperson said.

Commuters can book their tickets online and download the e-passes or use smart cards, she said. The e-passes mention the departure and destination points along with time slots.

PM 'BUSY WITH PEACOCKS', SAYS RAHUL GANDHI

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 14

As the Monsoon session of Parliament began amid rising number of Covid-19 cases, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying the government had asked people to become "aatmanirbhar" (self-dependent) which means they should save their lives themselves as the Prime Minister was "busy with peacocks".

Gandhi tweeted that the Coronavirus cases will cross 50-lakh this week and active cases hit the 10-lakh mark.

"Unplanned lockdown is the product of one person's ego and because of it Coronavirus has spread throughout the country," he said.

The Wayanad MP further said that the "Modi government said become 'aatmanirbhar' (self-sufficient) which means save your life yourself because the PM is busy with peacocks". He was referring to a recent video showing the Prime Minister feeding peacocks at his residence.

Notably, Gandhi who is accompanying his mother Sonia Gandhi during her travel to the US for a routine medical check-up, would not be attending the current Parliament session.



The three villages, located at an altitude of over 10,000 feet, have been hit hard economically due to the Covid-19.

Nepal offers ₹2 cr, house to villagers in Uttarakhand

Villagers told to hoist Nepal's flags atop their houses in return

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC HYDERABAD SEPT. 14

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

1 Kuti, Nabhi and Gunji villages are located a few kilometres away from Kalapani in Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand

1 A house in Kathmandu is also being promised along with funding education of children in the families

1 People from Gunji, Nabhi and Kuti villages to write to Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat pledging their support to India

1 They would also highlight their plight

1 Due to poverty and unemployment, some villages may consider Nepal's offer which will hurt India

beti' relationship with people of Darchula in Nepal.

Besides, the Nepal government is also promising to fund the education of children and grant families Nepali citizenship.

The otherwise hardworking and peace loving people of the three villages, located at an altitude of over 10,000 feet, have been

hit hard economically due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The ongoing standoff with China, which led to massive build-up of forces along the Line of Actual Control, not far away from these villages, brought them some hope of getting jobs, at least temporarily.

"We have always stood

by the Army and ITBP, be it the 1962 war or now. But this time around, they have got porters and helpers from outside and have been completely ignoring us. When people are struggling to make ends meet, why will people hesitate to join hands with Nepal which is offering huge money and houses?" wondered a local, Yogesh Garbyal, who nevertheless added that 'by and large' all villagers have decided 'not to sell themselves' to Nepal and embarrass India.

Villagers will write to the Indian government pledging their full support in the wake of offers from Nepal. "While pledging our support, we will highlight our problems and put them before the administration," said Dinesh Gunjyal, Vice President of the Bharat-Cheen Seema Vyapar Sangh.

RAJNATH MAY SPEAK ON BORDER STAND-OFF TODAY

New Delhi, Sept. 14: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is likely to make a statement in Parliament on Tuesday on the continuing standoff between Indian and Chinese troops along the LAC in eastern Ladakh, sources said.

The statement would assume significance in the backdrop of demands made by the Opposition for a debate on the issue.

Singh had met his Chinese counterpart Gen Wei Fenghe in Moscow recently. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi had also met in Moscow a few days ago. —PTI

TELANGANA BILL TO GET BUILDING PERMISSIONS EASILY CLEARED

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, SEPT. 14

The Telangana Assembly on Monday passed the Telangana State Building Permission Approval and Self Certification System (TS-bPASS) bill, introduced by the TRS government to put an end to the decades of woes of people seeking building permissions in the state.

Introducing the bill, municipal administration and urban development minister K. T. Ramarao said "TS-bPASS is aimed to reduce human interference and bring transparency in issuing building permissions as well as to make citizens more responsible. Self-certification and deemed approvals make it a landmark legislation in municipal reforms."

He further stated that "It is a first of its kind and is a fully automated, completely transparent and citizen friendly system. Under the system, permissions will be issued in a time bound manner without any delay."

Mr Ramarao told the house that people constructing a building within 75 square yards land need not obtain any permission from the municipal offices but have to register with the urban local body using TS-bPASS. He said that citizens constructing houses in above 75 square yards to 600 square yards space can seek instant permission for constructions through self-certification under the new law and start their construction.

He said TS-bPASS chasing cell will be established at district, state levels and zonal levels within GHMC to ensure that all the proposals are disposed within the time frame of 21 days.

Covid-19 number crosses 48 lakhs, fatality rate drops to 1.64 per cent

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 14

India on Monday crossed another milestone in the coronavirus spread as the total number of infected crossed 48 lakh with 92,071 new infections being reported in a day, while over 37.8 lakh people have recuperated taking the national recovery rate to 78 per cent on Monday, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 48,46,427, while the death toll climbed to 79,722 with 1,136 more people succumbing to the infection in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The Covid-19 case fatality rate due to the coronavirus infection has fur-

ther dropped to 1.64 per cent. There are 9,86,598 active cases in the country, while 37,80,107 people have recovered, the data stated.

Covid numbers show minor dip in AP

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh on Monday witnessed a downward trend of fresh Covid-19 cases registered daily, giving the much awaited relief to the state government as only 7,956 new cases have been registered unlike 9,000-10,000 cases registered in the last few days in the state. With this, the number of people who have been tested Covid-19 positive is 5,75,079.

The death toll has neared the 5,000-mark with 60 more people succumbing to the infection, in addition

to the 4,972 patients who already died.

TS tests come down, numbers too

Hyderabad: Telangana has seen a dip in new Covid-19 cases, thanks to the drop in number of tests performed during the weekend, which is becoming a more or less regular feature in the testing pattern of the state.

According to Health Department Covid-19 bulletin released on Monday, 34,427 tests have been conducted between Saturday and Sunday of which 1,417 samples have been tested positive. Thirteen more people lost their lives to the disease during this period. With this, the state so far has reported total 1,58,513 Covid-19 cases.

Kerala reports 2,540 more cases, 15 deaths

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala on Monday recorded 2540 cases of Covid-19 even as 2110 persons got cured from infection. The active cases in the state stands at 30,486. 64 health workers got infected. The state recorded 15 deaths on Monday.

8,244 new cases, 119 deaths in Karnataka

Bengaluru: Karnataka on Monday reported 8,244 new cases of Covid-19 and 119 related fatalities, taking the total number of infections to 4,67,689 and deaths to 7,384, the health department said. The day also saw 8,865 patients getting discharged after recovery.

Leaders, activists rally behind Umar Khalid

Kolkata, Sept. 14: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday reacting to the arrest of Umar Khalid, JNU alumnus and rights activist in connection with the Delhi riots said those involved in movements against the Centre's citizenship policies are being "targeted".

Banerjee, who is also the Trinamool Congress supremo, said action should be taken only if there is evidence of wrongdoing.

Apparently hitting out at the BJP-led government at the Centre, Banerjee, who has been one of its most stringent critics, said, "Those involved in movements against NPR, NRC have been targeted".

"I have seen it (the news of Khalid's arrest) in newspapers. First they (the Centre) had named Sitaram Yechury in the chargesheet and now they have removed it. But they have put the names of Yogendra Yadav and others (in the chargesheet). This is not right in democracy. If someone has done something wrong and you have evidence of it then action should be taken as per law," Banerjee told reporters at the state secretariat.

Khalid was arrested by the special cell of Delhi Police late on Sunday night after 11 hours of interrogation for his alleged involvement in the February Delhi riots.

He has been charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Meanwhile, a section of academicians, politicians and social activists on Monday expressed solidarity with former JNU student leader Umar Khalid. Dr S.Q.R Ilyas, national president of Welfare Party of India, and Khalid's father, tweeted, "My son Umar Khalid has been arrested by Special Cell, Delhi Police under UAPA. Police was questioning him since 1:00 pm. He has been implicated in Delhi Riots. #StandWithUmarKhalid."

According to a statement by his party, Ilyas strongly condemned the arrest of his son and said that police are "falsely implicating him in Delhi Riots".

Soon after his arrest, #StandWithUmarKhalid started trending on Twitter.

Using the hashtag "Stand With Umar Khalid", senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor tweeted, "PM says he welcomes criticism, but forgets to mention the cost of criticism to be paid by those who who speak out." "Swaraj India chief Yogendra Yadav said Khalid is among the leaders that India deserves. Lawyer Prashant Bhushan said Khalid's arrest exposes the "malafide nature of its investigation into Delhi riots". —PTI

Pinarayi sees plot to derail projects

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPT. 14

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday lashed out at the Opposition parties and a section of media for unleashing a propaganda to derail the LDF government's Life Mission project under which 2.26 lakh homeless and landless families have been provided homes.

The Chief Minister's outburst against the Opposition and section of media came in the wake of state wide agitation launched by Congress-led UDF and BJP demanding the resignation of two ministers in Pinarayi Cabinet.

The Life Mission project came under the scanner recently after one of the key accused in the gold smuggling case Swapna Suresh claimed that ₹1 crore found in her bank locker was part of the commission that she received for a housing project being implemented in Wadakkancherry in Thrissur district.

The ₹20 cr housing scheme is funded by UAE-based charity organisation Red Crescent for 140 families who lost their houses in floods.

'MIN TRIED TO UPSET PROBE IN GOLD CASE'

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPT. 14

The ruling CPM in Kerala on Monday demanded the resignation of senior BJP leader and Union minister of state for external affairs V. Muraleedharan for allegedly attempting to derail the probe into gold smuggling case.

The CPM said the reply given by finance ministry in Parliament clearly stated that the gold smuggling in Thiruvananthapuram airport happened through diplomatic baggage. However, Mr Muraleedharan had earlier categorically stated that the smuggled gold was not found in diplomatic baggage.

"The National Investigation Agency, Customs and now finance ministry have said it was diplomatic baggage but the minister continues to contradict them publicly," the CPM said.

TREASURE | TROVE

Sotheby's sells 19th century Quran for ₹1.30cr

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, SEPT. 14

Sotheby's, the New York-based British-founded American multinational corporation, has sold a copy of the 19th century Quran handwritten by Kashmiri artists for ₹137,500 (approximately ₹1.30 crore).

"This Quran is one of the finest manuscripts produced in Kashmir in the first half of the 19th century," a note from the world's largest brokers of fine and decorative art, jewelry, real estate and collectibles had said before putting the manuscript for auction at Christie's London some time ago, a report appearing in a local news portal said.

Giving the description of the sold manuscript, the Sotheby's says on its official

website that it is Quran copied by Muhammad Hasan with a marginal commentary copied by Muhammad Isma'il in Kashmir and dates back to 1246 AH (the Hijri year of the Islamic lunar calendar) corresponding with 1831 AD.

"Arabic manuscript on paper, 544 leaves plus 3 fly-leaves, 24 lines to the page, written in naskh in black ink within clouds against a gold ground, the Persian interlinear in red nasta'liq, ruled in blue and gold, verses separated by gold roundels, surah headings in blue thuluth against a gold ground within a cartouche, the margins dense with commentaries in nasta'liq within clouds against a gold ground, f.1b and f.2a with an illuminated frontispiece, several illuminat-

ed pages throughout, in lacquer binding decorated with flowers and signed 'Abd al-Aziz Mugul,'" reads the website.

According to it, though there are stains and rubbing, some losses to the illumination and the gold, minor tears, some crackle-leure and scratches to the binding, as viewed, the manuscript was in good condition when put to auction.

"This Quran is one of the finest manuscripts produced in Kashmir in the first half of the nineteenth century. Not only does it bear the names of two scribes who have been involved in copying it, but also the names of the binder and the patron. Dated Qurans from Kashmir are rare, especially if decorated with such lavish illumination," it said.



The cover of the Quran

Hasan signs as the copyist of the Quran and Muhammad Isma'il as the copyist of the tafsir in the margins. "Each lacquer plate of the binding is finely decorated with a

central panel with interlacing flower scrolls and plants, among which there is the signature of Aziz Mughul. The name of the patron as well as the date 1246 AH/1831 AD are written in black along the outer border. It is interesting to note that along with his name, Muhammad Isma'il, the patron is named tajir al-Isfahani (a merchant from Isfahan)".

Muhammad M. Saleem Beg, Convenor of the J&K chapter of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage said, "I'm happy it got an attractive price at the auction. Someone who knew the value of, as we learn from the Sotheby's, a rare and beautifully handwritten Quran, bought it and I'm sure it must have gone into safe hands."

Victor Jacquemont, a French traveller who was

in Kashmir the same year this Quran was copied (1831) records that the Himalayan region was a big centre for the production of the manuscripts and there were between 700-800 copyists in the Valley. While Kashmiri Qurans are usually not signed and can be quite formulaic in their layout and decoration, this copy is extensively and finely illuminated, and must have been a commission by a Persian merchant who was resident in Kashmir in 1831, the Sotheby's said.

"Kashmir Life' portal quotes Hakim Sameer Hamadani, who has done his doctorate on Islamic architecture, as saying the copying seemingly has been commissioned by the Iranian merchant Muhammad Ismail.

In Loving Remembrance



Sri Tikkavarapu Chandrasekhar Reddy

July 13, 1932 - September 15, 1993

*"He whose Mind is not shaken by adversity,
Who does not hanker after pleasures,
Who is free from Attachment, Fear and Anger,
He is the Sage of Steady Wisdom."*

-Bhagavad Gita

It's his guiding spirit that has been and
will always be the source of inspiration for us

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15 SEPTEMBER 2020

Mathematician who found formula to help rural poor

The life and work of former Union minister for rural development and leader of the Rashtriya Janata Dal Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, who passed away on Sunday in New Delhi due to Covid-19 related ailments, reflect how a visionary, grassroots level leader can impact the lives of millions of people, and still remain behind the curtain. One of the chief architects of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which ensured sustenance of millions of rural poor across the country for more than a decade, Dr Singh was the real champion of the cause of rural India.

Dr Singh, a PhD in mathematics and a former professor, had his political baptism in the Jayaprakash movement against the Congress government and the Emergency in the seventies and grew up along with Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar. Dr Singh was always part and parcel of the social-bloc even as it went through several splits and metamorphosis until he sent a resignation letter two days before his death from his party, the RJD.

Dr Singh, who was a five-term Lok Sabha member and a minister in Bihar and Union governments several times, was the face of rural India in the corridors of power. He never left his rustic characteristics despite his professional and academic standing and being part of the power structure for most part of his political life. He steadfastly worked for the uplift of the rural poor, whose living conditions were very familiar to him. It took his persuasive skills as well as first hand deep knowledge of the ground situation to get the MGNREGA through, even though it was part of the election manifesto of the first edition of the UPA as many had felt it would put an unnecessary hole in the exchequer without offering commensurate returns. Today, the scheme is the lifeline of rural India; it has been one of the most efficient routes to reach the people during the pandemic Covid-19. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the National Democratic Alliance were skeptical about it before they came to power. However, to their credit, they realised its merit and steadily increased budgetary allocations to strengthen it.

Dr Singh also represents the section of leaders with calibre and character who were catapulted to the political leadership while being part of democratic restoration movements. Oppression by the powers-that-be could recoil into mass movements as was seen in the seventies across India. Such movements would also attract people who would have otherwise gone their way of professional or occupational route. As Karl Marx said, "philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it." Dr Singh belongs to the group of people who made a heroic attempt to change the course of history.

Struggles for restoration of democratic rights are bound to repeat themselves. The sterling legacy Dr Singh leaves behind will no doubt inspire many bright and brilliant boys and girls to follow in his path. That will be the best tribute to him.

Champions in all respects

In triggering positive societal changes as in non-discriminatory treatment of minorities like African Americans, sport may have gone way beyond just mirroring society. The US Open tennis not only presents equal opportunity but equal pay too, but a young champion, who won her second crown at Flushing Meadows, may have dared to take sport even further by being an agent of change. The flaws in American society may be obvious but sporting icons, with their greater public presence, must take a stand in pointing them out.

Naomi Osaka's bold statement for racial justice in wearing seven different masks naming seven prominent Black victims of trigger-happy police brutality in the USA invests her powerful tennis of booming serves and hard strokes from the baseline with an even greater aura. Born to a Haitian father and a Japanese mother who came to Florida at age three, Osaka's empathy for people being trampled upon is natural. She had hardly savoured the moment the first time when she won a battle of generations in downing a testy Serena Williams in 2018 as the crowd had booed her. In 2020, Naomi confirmed that she has come on much more in beating Victoria Azarenka of Belarus, who also should know a thing or two about the tumultuous politics of modern life.

Naomi is a champion in all respects. Joining her as the men's winner after a ding-dong, error-strewn battle, Dominic Thiem of Austria may have served notice that the young brigade is capable of challenging the monopoly of the above-30 Grand Slam champions Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic. Only the Serb was on court at the first non-spectators Grand Slam of the Covid-19 era but exited by default for poor behaviour. As Thiem hugged close friend Alexander Zverev of Germany, whom he had beaten in the first-ever fifth set tie-breaker at the US Open, it spoke eloquently of bonds that tough social distancing norms too could not break. In 2020, more than ever, it appeared tennis had won in turning the spotlight on two deserving winners.

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Aakar Patel

Jaishankar's prescriptions are simplistic, just excuses

India's foreign minister comes from a family of scholars. His father K. Subrahmanyam was the founder of the famous IDS think tank in New Delhi and had advised Indira Gandhi. On the weaponising of India's nuclear programme and the military intervention in Bangladesh, Subrahmanyam had a hand.

Subrahmanyam's son Sanjay, Jaishankar's brother, is one of the world's most famous scholars of medieval India. He has written books on commerce in Surat (my hometown) and South India as well as on Vasco Da Gama.

My point is that Dr S. Jaishankar has a background which is not the same as our other ministers. Jaishankar has recent a book released a few days ago which said three things had negatively affected India's foreign policy. The first was Partition, which reduced the size of India and made China even more important than it was. The second was the delay in the economic reforms of 1991: if done earlier, they would have made India a wealthier nation earlier than it will become. And third, the delay in choosing to

Mere liberalisation does not mean economic growth. What Jaishankar says in his three points is reductive and simplistic.

make atomic weapons. He called them the three burdens.

What should we make of what he is saying? We need to examine two separate things, first to see to what extent what he says is true.

India's Partition did reduce the size of the country and if India had not been partitioned, the undivided nation would be larger geographically, stretching from Myanmar to Iran, and with a population of 1.7 billion people. It would not be particularly different in terms of its economy, per capita income, productivity or any other way. South Asia has developed together, none of the three countries which were once part of British India has either become a developed country and none on the other hand has not succeeded in developing at least a little. A visit to Pakistan and Bangladesh reveals them to be no different than most

parts of India.

The second issue is the delay in economic reforms. This is not Jaishankar's subject because he is not an economist. We must therefore be cautious when we accept what he says as true. The Indian economy of Jawaharlal Nehru's time had little capacity. State capital was needed as an element, especially in heavy industry. And without the State, the institutions we take for granted, for example in higher education, would not have come at all. Whatever bhajans we may sing to privatisation, there is no private equivalent of IIT or IIM even today in India. This is not to say that the licence raj of Indira Gandhi was a good thing. It was not. The best we can offer Jaishankar's statement on the delay in reforms is a qualified yes, not a full endorsement.

The third is the exercise of the nuclear option, which happened in May 1974. India makes a big deal of having an atom bomb. It is not such a big deal. Many nations in South America, Europe, Asia and Africa had the capacity to make one but chose not to. The other thing is that India violated its foreign commit-

ments to make the bomb. The reactors producing the material used in our bombs came from Canada, whom we had promised that we would only use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes (this is why Indira Gandhi made the claim that the 1974 test was a "peaceful explosion").

We have held these weapons for 45 years now. How have they helped us? We cannot use them against Pakistan, which for 30 years we have accused of terrorism. We cannot use them against China, which is today inside our borders. It is debatable that the early weaponising of our programme could have helped us in any way.

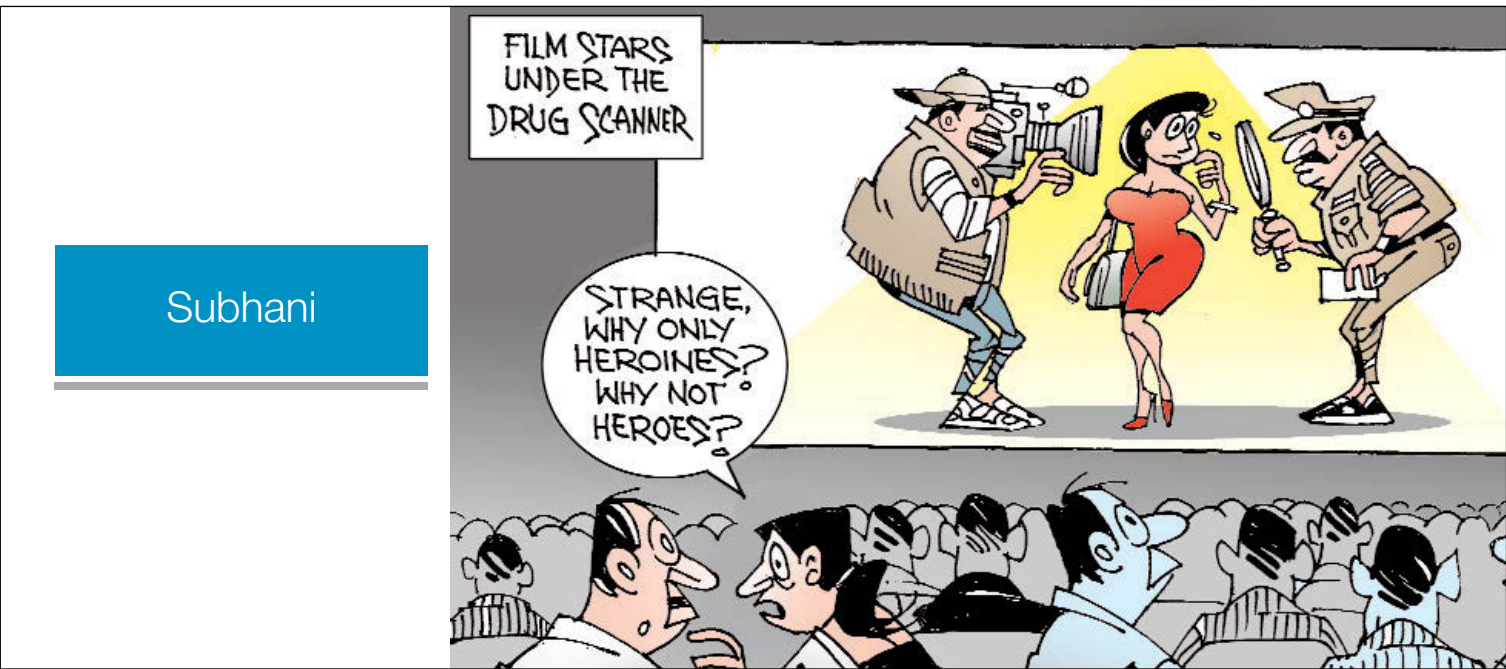
Jaishankar calls these three things "burdens" and he lays them at the Congress' door. Let us see what his party has done and is doing. India may have been partitioned, but Pakistan and Bangladesh are still next to us. They have not been relocated to Africa. What stops India from unifying the subcontinent through trade or travel? It is our nationalism. We have free movement (without visas) with Nepal, but not with Bangladesh. Why? We

could unify South Asia with visa-free travel and trade if we chose to. The BJP does not want it.

The assumption Jaishankar makes about liberalisation automatically producing economic growth is false. Under the BJP, India's economic growth has been declining since January 2018, according to its own figures. That is two and a half straight years of decline in six years of government. This did not happen during socialism or the licence raj.

This year we will see a contraction of the economy. Mere liberalisation does not mean economic growth. What Jaishankar says in his three points is reductive and simplistic. The past does not matter that much. If we think that it does, it is because we are not good enough at running the nation competently today and are searching for excuses why. If Jaishankar's diagnosis is correct, what stops him from correcting it today? His book does not say that. Perhaps that will come in a future book.

Aakar Patel is a senior journalist and columnist



Subhani

Mediation vital on LAC, Ladakh disengagement



Mohan Guruswamy

The joint announcement by external affairs minister S. Jaishankar and Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi in Moscow (no doubt helped along by Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov) is being clutched at like straws by desperate drowning men hoping for an end to the crisis. In case we have forgotten, the RIC (Russia India China) was a geopolitical group that was formed to balance growing American and Nato unilateralism. The operative part of the joint statement is that the military commander-level talks will continue. The audible sigh of relief in some circles may be premature, for talking doesn't mean a solution. For now, it only means a postponement of the armed conflict.

We have two outstanding issues between India and China. The larger one is about large tracts of territory in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh. These two territorial disputes aren't going to be resolved in the foreseeable long term. Hence, Deng Xiaoping had sagaciously suggested to Rajiv Gandhi at their 1988 Beijing meeting that it is best left to history.

The pressing dispute on hand are the two overlapping Lines of Actual Control. The term LAC was first used by Zhou Enlai in November 1959 when he wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru defining it as "the so-called McMahon Line in the east and the line up to which each side exercises actual control in the west". The problem is that India and China never agreed on where the LAC was, as the perceptions of what each side "controlled" varied, by a few meters to tens of kilometers. For instance, in Sikkim where they vary at a few places, the actual overlap often is a few meters. This varia-

tion is because both sides are vying for better tactical positions to locate their bunkers and sangars (small built-up structures) on higher ground to observe the other side. In the Depsang Plains overlooking DBO, it is by as much as 20-30 km.

The DBO overlooks the Chip Chap river as it curls southward to its rendezvous with the Shyok. The entire Chip Chap river was accepted by China as Indian territory even in 1956, but by 1960 China advanced its LAC to about 4 km of DBO and built a garrison at Tianwendian, about 24 km away. The PLA launches patrols from here into the contested Depsang. They have done the same in Galwan valley. In 1962 the Indian post was at the source of the Galwan river at Samzungling and the LAC is now about 2 km upstream of the confluence of Galwan and Shyok rivers.

Despite having two often widely overlapping LACs, Indian and Chinese forces had arrived at a unique modus vivendi since 1962 which enabled each side to patrol up to its perception of the LAC without confrontation. The desire for peace made both sides cobble up agreements from time to time. The 1993 agreement made it incumbent for both sides to caution each other whenever their perceived LACs were crossed. Though the agreement stipulated that any dispute both sides would jointly check this and decide upon an alignment, it never happened. Then in 1996 both sides agreed to "exercise restraint when the patrols come face to face". This agreement also stipulated that both sides would not use firearms or explosives 2 km from their perceived LACs. Both sides

We have two outstanding issues between India and China: Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh. These two territorial disputes aren't going to be

adhered to this, but now the patrols, while not confronting each other, began tailing each other maintaining a distance between them. This agreement also obliged both sides not to construct anything of a permanent nature in the LAC overlaps.

This worked till 2013, when the PLA objected to the Indo-Tibetan Border Police leaving behind reusable shelters at a place called Chumar. In May that year a tailed PLA patrol decided to dig in midway between the two LACs in Depsang at a place called Rakhi Nula. This forced an Indian Army unit to dig in nearby. This crisis was resolved by a meeting between the local military commanders, with the Indian side agreeing to dismantle the Chumar structures and the PLA pulling out. This led to the more complex 2013 agreement, once again aimed at conflict prevention and conflict resolution, but not fixing the cause of conflict.

This is where we were when the PLA, taking advantage of Indian Army tardiness in not mirroring the annual PLA exercises in the area, dug in positions in Galwan Valley, Hot Springs, Ghogra and between Fingers 4 and 8 on Pangong Tso's northern bank. In Galwan the new PLA position is now less than 2 km from the upgraded 230-km-long road from Darbuk to DBO. The Indian Army has now positioned itself threateningly on the Chushul heights.

The timing of the crisis couldn't be worse. India was in the midst of a major economic meltdown brought about by the spread of the Covid-19 virus from Wuhan. The electronic media, no doubt prodded by the

Narendra Modi government, went into a fury over the "Chinese perfidy" and both Mr Modi and defence minister Rajnath Singh made fire and brimstone speeches ostensibly to the troops in Ladakh. The Indian military buildup was under the full glare of the embedded media and newly acquired military hardware were displayed. Like angry Bharatanatyam dancers, both sides are now semaphoring intentions to each other.

Simultaneously, Indian Army and PLA commanders have been in talks from June 16 seeking a disengagement. The question is who withdraws and to where? This requires the determination of a single LAC. This is beyond the ken of the military commanders of both sides. Military men are usually reluctant to withdraw to tactically disadvantageous positions. But the need now is to give and take. This therefore calls for mediation between the two militaries, and that is best done by a trusted third country's military. A neutral military mediator can understand the tactical security concerns of either side and can help in determining the optimal under the circumstances.

The three countries have invested big in the RIC and it is now time to make it pay. The stakes are big. Even a limited Sino-Indian war will mean the end of the Russia-India-China (RIC) and its promise of a multipolar world.

Russia is uniquely placed to play the role of a neutral mediator to help the two countries find an agreement on a single Line of Actual Control. It enjoys a good measure of trust in both countries. One hopes that both countries will find the good sense to accept mediation.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, has held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

While an ordinance is a temporary law made by the President, it will become a permanent Act on being approved by Parliament within six weeks of its reassembly. But, under the present BJP-led government, ordinance becomes the norm rather than an exception. It had promulgated 11 ordinances since the country went into lockdown mode and the truncated monsoon session of Parliament sans question hour will now be leveraged to get the approval of Parliament without any discussion and scrutiny. Law making is one of the key functions of Parliament. The passage of law by the Parliament involves the process of wide- discussion, deliberations and debate among its members. Any attempt to pass the laws by bulldozing the scrutiny of Parliament and without discussion and debate will only sound the death knell of parliamentary democracy.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

STORMY SESSION

THE 18-DAY session will take place under strict Covid-19 safety protocols, including the Houses working in shifts instead of simultaneously. The session is expected to be stormy, with issues such as the state of the economy and the situation at the LAC up for debate. Some of the Bills coming up to replace Ordinances are also divisive, particularly three that relate to agriculture. The Opposition has enough fodder for debate considering the recent numbers that suggest the economy is in a situation unprecedented in the history of independent India. The turmoil among migrant labourers triggered by the Covid-19 lockdown is another issue the Opposition will look to capitalise on. The Opposition will also be hoping to catch the government on the backfoot on the border as well.

C.K. Subramaniam, Chennai

ALI KHAN IN IPL

IT IS astonishing to read of an American fast bowler named Ali Khan has got a berth in the upcoming IPL. He can take pride in being the first American to venture into cricket if his application is accepted. His nomination has proved the dictum that 'Sports stand above all racial and insular discrimination', as it needs participation and not one's nationality. One only hopes that many of his countrymen would emulate him and make America join the bandwagon of cricket playing nations.

E.S. Chandrasekaran, Chennai

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,756.63	-0.25
Nifty 50	11,440.05	-0.21
S&P 500*	3,396.93	1.67
Dollar (₹)	73.47	0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.34	-0.03
Euro (₹)	87.14	0.08
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,465	24 0.04
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	39.57	-0.26
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.031	-0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.654	-0.013

Indian economy to contract 9% in FY21, says S&P



S&P Global Ratings slashed its FY21 growth forecast for India to (-) 9 per cent, from (-) 5 per cent estimated earlier, saying that rising Covid-19 cases would keep private spending and investment lower for longer. "One factor holding back private economic activity is the continued escalation of the Covid-19," S&P Global Ratings Asia-Pacific economist Vishrut Rana said. For fiscal 2021-22, it expects growth at 10 per cent.

Govt seeks additional spend of ₹2.35 L cr PSBs to get ₹20K cr more to soak NPAs

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, SEPT. 14

In a bid to help banks mitigate the surge of bad loans during the Covid-19 pandemic, the government on Monday sought Parliament's approval to infuse Rs 20,000 crore in public sector banks (PSBs) through recapitalisation bonds, according to supplementary demand for grants tabled by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who sought the legislator's nod for gross additional expenditure of Rs 2.35 lakh crore.

The Rs 20,000-core fund infusion is expected to support state-owned lenders, which are under severe pressure due to increasing threats of higher non-performing assets (NPAs) during the pandemic.

As per a report by the central bank, the Covid-19 impact is likely to push up the ratio of gross NPAs in the Indian banking system to at least 12.5 per cent by March 2021 from 8.5 per cent in March 2020.

Since the Narendra Modi government came to power in 2014, the Centre has pumped over Rs 3.5 lakh crore into PSBs for their rescue. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had also favoured the government's capital infusion move to help banks deal with the rising bad loans.

In July RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had said, "Going forward, there are certain stress points in the financial system,



Nirmala Sitharaman

which would require constant regulatory and policy attention to mitigate the risks. The economic impact of the pandemic...may result in higher non-performing assets and capital erosion of banks. A recap plan for PSBs and private banks has, therefore, become necessary."

Sitharaman tabled supplementary demand for grants in Parliament in the first day of the monsoon session, seeking approval for additional expenditure, involving net cash outgo of Rs 1.67 lakh crore and gross additional expenditure of Rs 2.35 lakh crore. This additional amount of money aims at primarily meeting the expenses for combating the pandemic.

Of the total cash outgo, Rs 40,000 crore has been sought towards enhanced expenditure under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, Rs 20,000 crore towards capital infusion in public sector banks and Rs 33,771.48 crore for direct

benefit transfer under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana and National Social Assistance Programme.

As part of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, Rs 33,771.48 crore has been transferred to beneficiaries of both women Jan Dhan Account holders and Old Age Pension holders, as grants-in-aid for direct benefit transfer to Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna Women accounts holders (Rs 30,956.98 crore) and Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension (Rs 2,814.50 crore) under the scheme National Social Assistance Programme.

The government has also sought Rs 46,602.43 crore towards providing additional allocation under Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant to states as per recommendations of the Fifteenth Finance Commission.

The first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2020-21 includes 54 grants and 1 appropriation.

UBS explores merger with Credit Suisse

CATHERINE BOSLEY SEPT. 14

The chairmen of UBS Group AG and Credit Suisse Group AG are exploring a potential merger to create one of Europe's largest banks. Inside Paradeplatz reported, citing unidentified people inside the two lenders.

The project, nicknamed Signal, is driven by UBS chairman Axel Weber, who is working on it with his counterpart at Credit Suisse, Urs Rohner, the blog said. Weber has discussed the idea with Swiss finance minister Ueli Maurer and an agreement could happen by early next year, according to the report.

Spokesmen for the banks refused to comment.

Europe's banking industry is under pressure to consolidate as the coronavirus pandemic adds to headwinds from negative interest rates. Spain's CaixaBank SA and Bankia SA are exploring a merger to form the largest lender in the country and kickstart consolidation in one of the hardest-hit European economies during the pandemic.

Weber would probably stay on as chairman of the combined company, making it likely that the CEO would come from Credit Suisse, according to the report. Banking regulator Finma has been informed of the deliberations, Inside Paradeplatz said.

— Bloomberg

Mid- & small-caps rally on hopes of MFs buying

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 14



The new Sebi rule for multi-cap mutual fund schemes, mandating minimum 25 per cent allocation each to small-cap and mid-cap stocks to rein in their bias towards large-cap stocks led to big gains in select mid-cap and small-cap stocks and their indices.

"This rule change would essentially cap investments of such (multi-cap) funds in large-cap stocks at 50 per cent," said Bank of America Merrill Lynch, adding, the move is aimed at diversifying the funds' underlying investments and help them to be true to the 'label'."

Of late, the equity market is getting more and more polarised, with mutual fund investments moving mostly into large-cap stocks, and in some sectors, the themes of "big becoming bigger" and "winner takes it all" hold true, analysts said.

"High divergence of valuations between large caps and mid/small caps emerged over the past two years in sectors such as consumer, IT, cement, and financials, which might normalise to an extent, helped by this catalyst and high retail investor interest," said HDFC Securities.

"We also see this as a potential catalyst for re-rating of ignored stocks in the economy-facing sectors such as infra/industrials, hotels, auto ancillaries, financials and real estate, if there is a confluence of

strong balance sheets and attractive valuations," HDFC Securities said.

Existing multi-cap funds are required to ensure compliance by February.

However, Sebi later issued a clarification on September 13 saying that funds have many options available other than simple rebalancing, to meet the requirements of the circular based on preference of unit-holders and could allow unit-holders to switch to other

schemes; merge multi-cap scheme with large cap schemes; convert to other scheme category.

The Sebi is also likely to examine any other proposals from the industry participants in this regard, said Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

However, market reacted to Sebi's new rule led to many small-cap stocks gaining over 10 per cent—VIP Industries (14.42 per cent), Century Textiles (11.51 per cent), Avanti Feeds (13.62 per cent), Century Plyboards (12.28 per cent) and Birla Corp. (12.42 per cent).

"Sebi circular on allocation by multi-cap schemes spurred buying in a lot of small and midcaps in anticipation of fund buying that could emerge later," said Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities.

IT STOCKS SOAR AFTER HCL TECH LIFTS GUIDANCE

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 14

HCL Technologies raised second quarter financial performance guidance in a mid-quarter update for the September quarter, triggering a big rally in IT sector stocks.

HCL Tech itself gained 10.24 per cent on the BSE, closing at Rs 794.90, after hitting a fresh 52-week high of Rs 807.80.

The other top IT sector stocks TCS (Rs 2492.30 up 5 per cent), Infosys (Rs 977.95 up 3.44 per cent) and Wipro (Rs 307.15 up

4.81 per cent) also hit fresh 52-week highs.

The BSE IT index gained a massive 4.76 per cent when Sensex and Nifty closed in the red.

Mid and small cap IT stocks performed better than their large-cap counterparts. Persistent Systems (14.73 per cent), Mphasis (8.9 per cent), Cyient (7.26 per cent) and L&T Infotech (6.0 per cent) were amongst the biggest gainers in the mid & small-cap IT space,said Jyoti Roy—deputy VP & equity strategist, Angel Broking.

WORLD

Israel to renew curbs, daily cases see spurt

Jerusalem, Sept. 14: Israel said it will reimpose a national lockdown to battle a coronavirus surge, as the number of daily infections around the world reached a record high.

Britain, France, Austria and the Czech Republic also reported spikes, as global cases rapidly approached 29 million with more than 921,000 Covid-19 deaths, according to an AFP tally.

The Israel lockdown will last three weeks starting Friday, keeping people to within 500 metres (yards) of their homes. It is the first developed economy to take such drastic steps to contain a second wave of infections. "I know these measures will exact a heavy price from all of us," said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The World Health Organization reported 307,930 new cases worldwide on Sunday, the highest daily figure in its database since the beginning of the pandemic.

The surge has sparked concern in Europe, where Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz warned that his country was facing "the beginning of the second wave". The Czech Republic has also faced a surge, with one epidemiologist saying over the weekend that at the current rate, cases could overwhelm hospitals.

New restrictions are set to come into force across

UK trials antibody cocktail treatment

London, Sept. 14: The UK on Monday began human trials of a new antibody treatment for patients hospitalised with Covid-19. As part of the government-backed Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 thERapY (RECOVERY) Trials, monoclonal antibodies, or potent laboratory-made antibodies, will be given to about 2,000 patients in the coming weeks to see if they are effective against Coronavirus.

The Phase 3 open-label trial in patients hospitalised with Covid-19 will compare the effects of adding REGN-COV2 to the

usual standard-of-care versus standard-of-care on its own. "REGN-COV2 was specifically designed by Regeneron scientists to target the virus that causes Covid-19. RECOVERY will be the fourth late-stage randomised clinical trial evaluating REGN-COV2 and will add to our knowledge about how this novel antibody cocktail may help hospitalised patients in need," said George D. Yancopoulos, President and Chief Scientific Officer of Regeneron, the biotech firm collaborating on the project.

— PTI

England on Monday, with social gatherings limited to no more than six people. Other parts of the world are still battling their first Coronavirus waves, including some populous nations such as Indonesia, where new restrictions came into effect on Monday.

— AFP

Europe to see more deaths in Oct, Nov: WHO

Copenhagen, Sept. 14: The World Health Organisation expects Europe to see a rise in the daily number of Covid-19 deaths in October and November,

the head of the body's European branch said.

"It's going to get tougher. In October, November, we are going to see more mortality," WHO Europe director Hans Kluge said, as the continent currently experiences a surge of cases though the number of deaths has remained relatively stable.

The resurgence is however expected to lead to an increase in daily deaths, the WHO said. "It's a moment where countries don't want to hear this bad news, and I understand," Kluge said.

— AFP

10 dead in Chicago weekend violence

Chicago, Sept. 14: Gun violence in Chicago left 10 people dead over the weekend and 43 others injured. It came amid a surge in violence this year in the nation's third-largest city. Statistics released by the Chicago Police Department bring the number

of shooting victims for the year thus far to 2,897 and the number of homicides to 542. Last year at this time, according to police statistics, there were 1,862 shooting victims and 364 homicides.

The violence follows the longer Labour Day week-

end that ended with the same number of homicides and roughly the same number of shooting victims.

— AP

3 dead, 3 injured in Tennessee rampage

Nashville (US), Sept. 14: A gunman killed two people and wounded three

others in a series of shootings and carjackings that ended with a high-speed chase as he fled police. He ultimately wrecked the car he stole and killed himself, while his remaining hostage survived, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation said.

— AP

SUGA SECURES PARTY VOTE FOR JAPAN PM

Tokyo, Sept. 14: Yoshihide Suga was elected as the new head of Japan's ruling party on Monday, virtually guaranteeing him parliamentary election as the country's next prime minister. Suga received 377 votes in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party election to pick a successor to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who announced last month that he would resign due to health problems. The other two contenders received a combined 157 votes — former Foreign minister Fumio Kishida got 89 and former Defence Minister Shigeru Ishiba had 68.

The expected victory in the party vote by Suga, currently the chief Cabinet secretary of Abe's government, all but guarantees his election in a parliamentary vote Wednesday because of the majority held by the Liberal Democrats' ruling coalition. Suga gained the support of party heavyweights and their wing members early in the campaign on expectations that he would continue Abe policies.

That his victory appeared to be a done deal has raised criticism from inside and outside the party that the process is undemocratic and murky.

The closed-door politics also apparently led lawmakers to support Suga in hopes of getting favourable party and Cabinet posts in the new administration. Suga has said his top priorities are fighting the Coronavirus and turning around an economy battered by the pandemic. He is known for his iron-fist approach to getting jobs done as a policy coordinator and influencing bureaucrats by using the centralised power of the PM's office.

— AP



British MPs resume feuding over Brexit

Johnson's disputed plan that will break EU divorce treaty faces rebellion, resignations

London, Sept. 14: Britain's parliament on Monday finds itself in familiar territory — arguing about Brexit — with threats of rebellion and resignations over Prime Minister Boris Johnson's controversial plan for a new law that will break his EU divorce treaty.

The House of Commons holds its first debate and vote over the bombshell new bill from late afternoon, despite a call from Brussels for it to be withdrawn by the end of the month.

The contentious legislation, unveiled last week, would override the divorce deal the UK struck with the EU last year in several key areas related to Northern Ireland.

It would see London unilaterally regulate UK trade and state aid within the British province, ignoring the EU treaty which gives Brussels a continuing say over Northern Ireland's trading relationship.

If the law passes in the coming weeks, Brussels has warned it could scupper ongoing trade deal talks and threatened court action, leaving the prospects of an orderly Brexit in tatters.

Even some Brexiteer lawmakers were agast that Britain would wilfully

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trash an international treaty, threatening the country's reputation and potentially endangering Northern Ireland's fragile peace.

Former prime ministers John Major and Tony Blair this weekend openly criticised the action, while David Cameron said Monday he had "misgivings" about the approach.

Johnson's pro-Brexit former attorney general Geoffrey Cox said it would be "unconscionable" to override an international treaty. "I think it is wrong that the British government or our parliament should renege on an agreement on which we gave our solemn word," he told Times Radio.

The latest row revives the bitter wrangling over how to implement British voters' shock decision in 2016 to quit the bloc, which led to parliamentary deadlock and repeat

BORIS DEFENDS LAW, SAYS EU 'UNREASONABLE'

London, Sept 14: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson says his plan to unilaterally rewrite Britain's divorce deal with the European Union is an insurance policy against the bloc's unreasonable behaviour, comments that came as his former attorney general joined a growing number of once-loyal lawmakers condemning the contentious move.

Johnson said Monday that a planned law designed to override portions of the Brexit withdrawal agreement was needed because the European Union might "go to extreme and unreasonable lengths" in its treatment of former member Britain.

— AP

ed postponements.

The impasse was broken after Johnson sealed a divorce deal with Brussels and used it to win a thumping victory in a December general election which gave his Conservatives an 80-seat majority in the House of Commons.

— AFP

Georgia Dy punching PoC fired

Clayton (US), Sept. 14: A sheriff's deputy in Georgia has been fired after being captured on video repeatedly punching a Black man during a traffic stop, authorities said Sunday.

The deputy was being let go for "excessive use of force", the Clayton County Sheriff's Office said in a statement. It did not identify

the deputy, but said a criminal investigation has been turned over to the district attorney's office.

Roderick Walker, 26, was arrested and beaten after Clayton County sheriff's deputies pulled over the vehicle he was riding in Friday with his girlfriend, their 5-month-old child and his stepson for an alleged

broken taillight, his attorney, Shean Williams of The Cochran Firm in Atlanta said Sunday.

The deputies asked for Walker's identification and got upset and demanded he get out of the vehicle when he questioned why they needed it since he wasn't driving, Williams said.

The subsequent arrest,

captured on video by a bystander and shared widely, shows two deputies on top of Walker, one of whom repeatedly punches him. Walker's girlfriend screams and tells the deputies Walker said he can't breathe.

A child in the vehicle yells, "Daddy".

— AP

Chennaiyin FC have signed up left-back Lalchhuanmawia Fanai and right-back Reagan Singh for the 2020-21 season. 31-year-old Fanai who hails from Mizoram and is better known as 'Chhuantea', along with 29-year-old Reagan from Manipur, join the two-time ISL champions on free transfers.

"Chhuantea (Fanai) and Reagan (Singh) are important additions to our squad in the key full-back positions. They bring valuable experience of playing in the ISL and will have a vital role to play in our efforts to push for success in the upcoming season. I welcome both of them to the Chennaiyin family, and look forward to working with them," said CFC Head Coach Csaba László.