

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | THURSDAY 17 | SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 25°C
Rainfall: 4 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Purattasi 1
Tithi: Amavasai
Star: Puram/ Uthiram
Rahukalam:
1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam:
6 am to 7.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.47 am
Zohar: 12.10 pm
Asar: 3.21 pm
Maghrib: 6.11 pm
Isha: 7.22 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.09 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 5.40 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 6.20 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+94,443)	(+1,116)
51,12,480	83,207

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,652)	
TN: 5,19,860	8,559

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,99.28,676

DEATHS

9,42,575

COUNTRIES,
AREAS WITH
CASES

213

worldometers.info

Tirupati MP Balli Durga Prasad Rao dead

Tirupati: Tirupati Lok Sabha MP Balli Durga Prasad Rao, who was battling Covid-19 for over a month, died at a hospital in Chennai on Wednesday, family members and the hospital said. Chennai-based Apollo Hospitals, where the 65-year old YSRCP MP was admitted on August 14, said doctors treated him in the intensive care unit “for severe Covid pneumonia” and his end came at 5.45 pm.

Arts scholar

Kapila Vatsyayan dies

New Delhi: Scholar, author and connoisseur of the arts Kapila Vatsyayan died at her Delhi home on Wednesday. She was 92. “She passed away at 9 am today at her home in Gulmohar Enclave,” Kanwal Ali, secretary of the India International Centre where she was a lifetime trustee, told PTI. Vatsyayan, who was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 2011.

COUNTER POINT



Sorry, I don't need your services any more... I have hired this police officer!

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Over 5L fake beneficiaries in PM Kisan Samman fund



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Trump: Vaccine could be ready in a month

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Economic recovery to be gradual: Das



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TN ASSEMBLY PASSES 18 BILLS

Punishment enhanced for crimes against women, kids

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 16

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami announced stringent punishment for a slew of crimes under various sections of the Indian Penal Code with a view to protecting the rights of women and children and ensuring their safety in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday.

Under the amended act, the punishment for stalking women (Section 254-D) will be increased to seven years from five years.

Similarly a maximum punishment of life imprisonment can be given for trafficking minors, both for those selling the girls and those procuring them for sex work (Section 372). Presently it is 10 years.

The other sections under which offenders will get enhanced jail terms are Dowry death (Section 304-B) — to 10 years from 7 years — and Assault or Criminal Force with the intent to outrage a woman's modesty (Section 354-B) — to 7 years from 5 years.

Making the announcement under Rule 110, Palaniswami listed a series of steps taken by his government for the safety and welfare of women and children. He said a separate Crime Against Women and Children Unit had been functioning since March 6, 2019.

The pioneering project was the first of its kind in

● **Under the amended act, the punishment for stalking women (Section 254-D) will be increased to seven years from five years. Similarly a maximum punishment of life imprisonment can be given for trafficking minors, both for those selling the girls and those procuring them for sex work (Section 372)**

India, he said.

Other measures taken by his government had been the launching of 35 exclusive patrol vehicles in 35 police stations in Chennai to prevent crimes against women and children and create awareness on drug abuse and child marriage and the setting up of Investigative Units for Crime Against Women (IUCAN), Special Juvenile Unit (SJU) and a cell against dowry crimes and children – ACTU.

The Chief Minister also recalled the various schemes launched by late J. Jayalalithaa for the welfare of women and children, which included the formation of all-Women police stations in 1992 to put an end to atrocities against women and the fast track courts to hear cases against women in every district.

HIGHLIGHTS OF BILLS PASSED

▶ The Assembly on Wednesday adopted a Bill to replace an ordinance issued for possession of late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa's residence here and to facilitate vesting of movable properties therein with the government

▶ Another bill seeks to extend the tenure of special officers of urban local bodies by another six months as their elections are due for long

▶ It also enacted a bill to amend The Anna University Act, 1978 and bifurcate the varsity.

▶ The varsity's four campuses in Chennai will be constituted as a 'unitary type' institution and called 'Anna Technological and Research University' while a new affiliating type university called 'Anna University' will be constituted to manage the affairs of the constituent and affiliated colleges

Govt firm on bilingual policy

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 16

But for the redrawing of the syllabus, none of the things proposed in the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been acceptable to the State government, which would anyway take a final decision on it after the two expert committees that are studying the policy gave their recommendations.

This was what the government said at the State Assembly, which saw a lengthy discussion on NEP 2020, initiated through the call attention motions by the Leader of the Opposition M K Stalin and

other MLAs on Tuesday.

Stalin said the NEP sought to impose the three-language system while the State had been following the practice of teaching two languages for more than half a decade. Imposing Hindi was the aim of the policy that gives more importance to Sanskrit than any other Indian language.

The several changes were being sought to be introduced in the examination system, which were unacceptable and the policy's objective was to reintroduce hereditary vocational teaching and also take away the rights of the State, he said. ■ P2

SPUTNIK-V COVID VACCINE

RDIF, Dr Reddy's Labs to cooperate on clinical trials

New Delhi, Sept. 16: The Russian Direct Investment Fund is collaborating with Indian pharma giant Dr Reddy's Laboratories to conduct clinical trials of the Sputnik V vaccine against Covid-19 as well as its distribution, RDIF CEO Kirill Dmitriev said on Wednesday.

The RDIF is in talks with Indian regulators to ensure that all the requirements for clinical trials are being met, he said.

“The RDIF and Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd, a global pharmaceutical company with headquarters in India, have agreed to supply 100 million doses of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine and collaborate on clinical trials and distribution of the vaccine in India,” Dmitriev told PTI in an email interview. The deliveries could begin as early as November 2020 after the registration of the vaccine by regulatory authorities in India if all goes well, the RDIF chief said. This is sub-

● **An RDIF official said Phase 3 trials will be conducted in India and an announcement on this is expected soon**

ject to successful trials and the regulator's approval.

An RDIF official said Phase 3 trials will be conducted in India and an announcement on this is expected soon. The Russian sovereign wealth fund also issued a statement quoting G V Prasad, co-chairperson and managing director of Dr Reddy's Laboratories as saying, “We are pleased to partner with RDIF to bring the vaccine to India. The Phase I and II results have shown promise, and we will be conducting Phase-III trials in India to meet the requirements of the Indian regulators. Sputnik V vaccine, he said, could provide a “credible option” in the fight against Covid-19 in India. —PTI

₹861.90 CR CONTRACT

Tata Projects wins bid to construct new parliament building: Officials

New Delhi: Tata Projects Limited on Wednesday won the bid to construct a new Parliament building at a cost of ₹861.90 crore, officials said. he L&T Ltd had submitted a bid of ₹865 crore, they said. “The Tata Projects Limited has won the contract to build a new Parliament building,” an official said. —PTI

DMK, Congress oppose amendments to banking regulation law

New Delhi, Sept 16: The Congress and DMK were among the Opposition parties that opposed the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, raising concerns that the proposed legislation will infringe upon the rights of states.

The bill, which seeks to bring cooperative banks under the supervision of the

Reserve Bank of India (RBI), will replace an ordinance promulgated in June.

The bill was later passed by Lok Sabha. The Congress, DMK, RSP, AIMIM and IUML, among other Opposition parties opposed the bill.

During the debate on the bill before it was passed, Congress member Manish Tewari urged the government to withdraw the bill

and said that resorting to the ordinance route to make laws “undermines the majesty of Parliament”.

At a point when the country's GDP growth rate has been in a freefall for seven quarters preceding the lockdown and when all economic activity during the lockdown had come to a complete standstill, there was absolutely no rationale

for promulgating the ordinance, especially when the bill was under consideration in this House, he said.

“In a federal polity, this ordinance and the bill which seeks to replace (it) is a frontal assault on the federal structure of the Constitution and this will have long-term implications on the democratic polity of India,” Tewari said. —PTI

Unable to handle stress of online lessons, city student ends life

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 16

A class nine student from Medavakkam died by suicide after failing to cope with the pressure of online lessons. S. Karthik, the deceased student was facing problems in following online lessons from home. He lived in Pushpa Nagar in Medavakkam with his parents.

The 14-year-old was studying class nine in a private school in the city ever since the online class-

es begun, of Karthik told his family he was struggling with the online classes and that it was difficult to understand lessons. He told his parents that he would learn his lessons when the schools reopen. However, he was made to attend his courses via online classes. He was scared that he would be unable to fulfil his parents' dreams of educating him.

Unable to cope with the stress, he decided to hang himself when his parents went for work.

Indian Americans favour Biden over Trump: Survey

San Francisco/ Washington (US), Sept. 16: Sixty-six per cent of Indian Americans currently favour Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden for the 2020 presidential election as compared to only 28 per cent who prefer President Donald Trump, according to a survey released Tuesday.

Indiaspora, a nonprofit member organisation of global Indian diaspora leaders, and Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAP) Data on Tuesday released their joint report on Indian

American voters' attitudes in the upcoming 2020 US presidential election.

“66 per cent of Indian Americans currently favour Vice President Biden, 28 per cent favour President Donald Trump, and 6 per cent were undecided. In the 2016 presidential election, 77 per cent voted for Secretary Hillary Clinton, and 16 per cent voted for President Trump. If the remaining undecided voters broke in the same pattern as those who have made up their mind, Biden would secure 70 per cent of



the vote, when compared to 30 per cent for Trump,” the report read.

Election experts project that Democrats should be worried about Indian American voters attrition

● **66 per cent of Indian Americans currently favour Vice President Biden, 28 per cent favour President Donald Trump, and 6 per cent were undecided,” the report read**

considering the overall percentage number may have dropped down for the Democrats from the 84 per cent that supported Obama in 2012 and the 77 per cent who supported

Hillary Clinton 2016 as compared to the 66 per cent supporting former Vice President Joe Biden.

Meanwhile, President Trump's vote share has gone up from 16 per cent in 2016 to 28 per cent.

“I think Democrats absolutely should be concerned about making sure that they conduct sufficient outreach to Indian Americans that they conduct sufficient outreach to the different groups that comprise bases and Indian Americans because every vote is going to count

especially in those battleground states,” said Raja Krishnamoorthi, a Democrat congressman.

An Indian American himself and a representative from the state of Illinois, Krishnamoorthi further said that the states of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Florida and North Carolina could be a part of the tipping factor this election. “And because of that I think the Biden campaign has to be especially attentive,” Krishnamoorthi further asserted.

—ANI



India Covid no touches 50l mark

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT 16:

The number of people infected by Covid-19 galloped past 50 lakh on Wednesday, just 11 days after it crossed 40 lakh, with 90,123 infections being reported in a day. According to the Union health ministry data, the total coronavirus cases mounted to 50,20,359, while the death toll climbed to 82,066 with a record 1,290 people succumbing to the disease in a span of 24 hours.

India took 110 days for Covid-19 cases to reach one

lakh while it had taken 59 days more to go past the 10-lakh. The Covid tally, however, moved faster later and the cases jumped from 10 lakh to 20 lakh in 21 days, while the next 10 lakh milestones were covered in 16 and 13 days, respectively. **AP tally nears 6 lakh:** Andhra Pradesh will shortly touch the six-lakh mark of cumulative Covid-19 positive cases, which reached 5,92,760 with addition of 8,835 new cases during the last 24 hours. **2,273 new cases in TS:** Covid-19 deaths in Telangana neared the 1,000

mark with the toll reaching 996 with 12 deaths on Wednesday. The state also reported 2,273 new positive cases, taking the total tally to 1,62,844.

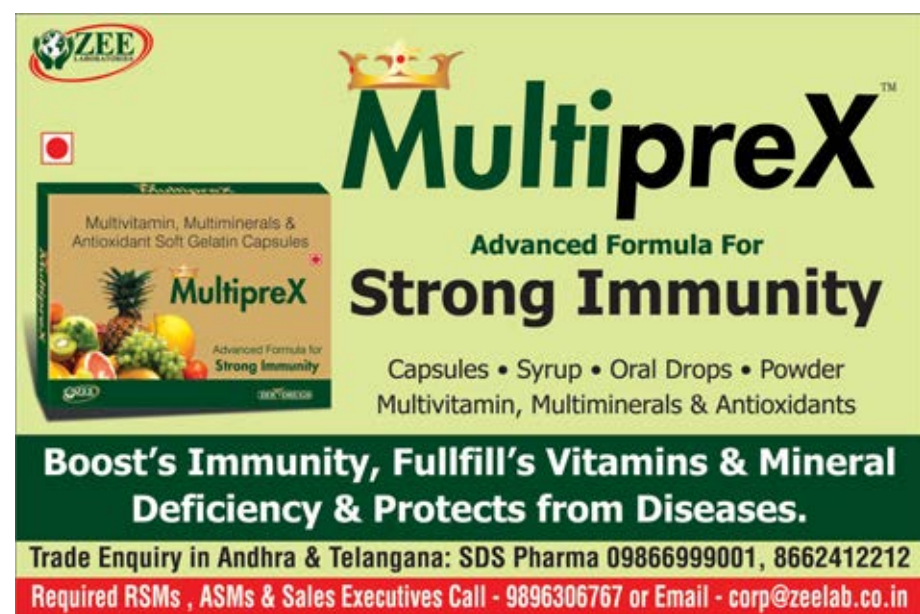
Kerala records highest ever spike: Kerala recorded the highest single day spike of 3,830 Covid cases. The day also saw 14 deaths. **Karnataka has 9,725 new cases:** Karnataka on Wednesday reported 9,725 new Covid-19 cases and 70 deaths, taking the total infections to 4.84 lakh and the toll to 7,536. The day also saw 6,583 patients getting discharged.

SERUM INSTITUTE GETS DCGI PERMISSION TO RESUME TRIAL OF OXFORD VACCINE

New Delhi, Sept. 16: Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) Dr V.G. Somani on Tuesday gave permission to Serum Institute of India to resume clinical trial of the Oxford Covid-19 vaccine candidate in the country while revoking its earlier order of suspending any new recruitment for phase two and three trial.

The DCGI, however, put certain conditions like tak-

ing extra care during screening, providing additional information in informed consent and close monitoring for adverse events during follow-up of the study which have to be "scrupulously" followed by Serum Institute of India (SII). SII has also been asked to submit to the DCGI details of medication used in accordance with the protocol for management of adverse events. **PTI**



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Not once, shots were fired three times on India-China border

PAWAN BALI IDC
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 16:

There have been atleast three incidents of firing at the line of actual control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh where Indian and Chinese troops are engaged in a four month long military standoff.

Sources also said that

despite an in-principle agreement for the military dialogue, Chinese army has still not confirmed a date for Corps Commander-level talks.

Out of these firing incidents, two happened at the Southern banks of Pangong Tso and one in the finger area on its northern banks. Indian Army has officially

acknowledged only one firing incident which took place on September 7 at Mukhpari in the Chushul sector.

However, sources said that the first firing incident took place earlier, between August 29-31 when Indian Army in a pre-emptive move occupied strategic heights on the Kailash

range which overlook entry points of the Spanggur gap in the Chushul sector.

The third and bigger firing incident happened on September 8-9 when Indian Army occupied higher positions overlooking Chinese posts on the ridgelines of Finger 4. Chinese troops were also trying to come near Indian positions and

both sides fired more than 100 rounds.

All these incidents involved warning shots being fired in the air and not directly at each other. But, it remains a fact that for the first time in 45 years fire are being shot at the LAC by both sides.

Indian Army changed the rule of engagement at LAC

after the Galwan Valley clash on June 15 where Chinese had used improvised weapons including iron rods studded with nails to attack Indian soldiers breaching the agreements between the two countries. Now Indian Army's local commanders are free to use any weapon under their command when threatened

by Chinese troops. Sources said the situation in the Eastern Ladakh remains tense with Indian army and Air Force at a high alert.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Wednesday that it is imperative for India to immediately correct its wrong practices, disengage on the ground as soon as

possible and take concrete actions to ease the tension along border. He said China is not responsible for the recent border situation and it was India that first violated bilateral agreements, illegally crossing the border line for provocation and unilaterally changing the status quo of the border area.

WORLD

Trump: Vaccine could be ready in a month

Philadelphia, Sept. 16: US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that a Coronavirus vaccine may be available within a month — an acceleration of even his own optimistic predictions — but added that the pandemic could go away by itself.

"We're very close to having a vaccine," he told a town hall question-and-answer session with voters in Pennsylvania aired on *ABC News*.

"We're within weeks of getting it you know — could be three weeks, four weeks," he said.

Only hours earlier, speaking to *Fox News*, Trump had said a vaccine could come in "four weeks, it could be eight weeks". Democrats have expressed concern that Trump is putting political pressure on government health regulators and scien-

tists to approve a rushed vaccine in time to help turn around his uphill bid for reelection against challenger Joe Biden on November 3.

Experts, including top US government infectious diseases doctor Anthony Fauci, say vaccine approval is more likely toward the end of the year.

At the ABC town hall Trump was asked why he'd downplayed the gravity of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has now killed close to 200,000 people in the US.

Trump replied by saying: "I didn't downplay it. I actually, in many ways, I up-played it in terms of action." But Trump himself told journalist Bob Woodward during taped interviews for the new book "Rage" published Tuesday — that he had deliberately decided to "play it down" to avoid alarming Americans. — **AFP**

Sally pummels Alabama with heavy rain, outages



Water floods a road as the outer bands of Hurricane Sally come ashore in the Gulf Shores, Alabama. The storm is bringing heavy rain, high winds and a dangerous storm surge from Louisiana to Florida. — **AFP**

Pensacola (US), Sept. 16: Hurricane Sally made landfall Wednesday near Gulf Shores, Alabama, as a Category 2 storm, pushing a surge of ocean water onto the coast and dumping torrential rain that forecasters said would cause dangerous flooding from the Florida Panhandle to Mississippi and well inland in the days ahead.

Moving at an agonisingly slow 3 mph, Sally finally came ashore at 4:45 a.m. local time with top winds of 105 mph (165 kmh), the National Hurricane Center said. Sally's northern eyewall had raked the Gulf Coast with hurricane-force winds and rain from Pensacola Beach, Florida, westward to Dauphin Island, Alabama, for hours before its centre finally hit land.

Some 150,000 homes and businesses had lost electricity by early Wednesday, according to the poweroutage.us site. A curfew was called in the coastal Alabama city of Gulf Shores due to life-threatening conditions.

In the Panhandle's Escambia

● **SOME 150,000 homes and businesses had lost electricity by early Wednesday, according to the poweroutage.us site. A curfew was called in the coastal Alabama city of Gulf Shores due to life-threatening conditions.**

County Chief Sheriff's Deputy Chip Simmons vowed to keep deputies out with residents as long as physically possible.

The county includes Pensacola, one of the largest cities on the Gulf Coast. "The sheriff's office will be there until we can no longer safely be out there, and then and only then will we pull our deputies in," Simmons said at a storm briefing late Tuesday. This for a storm that, during the week-end, appeared to be headed for New Orleans. "Obviously this shows what we've known for a long time with storms — they are unpredictable," Pensacola Mayor Grover Robinson IV said. — **AP**



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The Power to Surprise

DECCAN Chronicle

17 SEPTEMBER 2020

Rajnath disappoints: A lot left unanswered

Defence minister Rajnath Singh's much-awaited statement in both Houses of Parliament on Tuesday on the situation in eastern Ladakh was disappointing on several counts, as the country sought clarity from the highest quarters on one of its biggest crises. The minister, however, told us very little we didn't already know, and though he put the current confrontation between the two sides in the historical context of the fractured India-China relationship, beyond acknowledging the obvious fact that this standoff was qualitatively different from earlier ones, in the scale of the troops involved and the number of friction points, and that India was "facing a challenge", we were none the wiser. He told us due to the two sides' differing perceptions of the Line of Actual Control, India and China needed a common perception of the LAC to avoid emergence of new friction points, a process China has been stalling since 2003 as it sees advantage in the continuing ambiguity. All this is well known. There were expressions of hope. If the Moscow agreement between external affairs minister S. Jaishankar and Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi was "sincerely implemented" by the Chinese, peace would return! Did we not know that already? Mr Singh offered a timeline of the border standoff since early May but left out one crucial bit: the September 7 incident in which shots were fired at the LAC for the first time in 45 years.

Unlike many of his Cabinet colleagues, Mr Singh enjoys a well-deserved reputation for plain speaking, of telling it like it is, as he demonstrated earlier during this crisis while visiting the troops in Ladakh. Therefore, while speaking at Parliament's first meeting after the crisis broke, more was expected of him: that he would share with the country the real story of what was happening, of what had gone wrong. No one expected him to share operational details of ongoing or future Army operations. Despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's truly puzzling declaration at the virtual all-party meeting on June 19 — days after the Galwan incident in which 20 Indian soldiers, including a commanding officer, and an unknown number of Chinese troops were killed — that no Chinese forces were on Indian soil, the Indian Army and others have acknowledged, before and afterwards, that all-out efforts were on to ensure that the People's Liberation Army goes back to its side of the de facto border. Mr Singh could have shed more light on this. His statement made no mention of the 20-km-deep intrusion by the PLA in the Depsang Plains at all. Many such questions, on which the country was hoping for clarity, remain unanswered.

Mr Singh urged MPs to pass a resolution expressing confidence in the armed forces in these difficult times. There is no doubt that all sections of the nation are united on that issue. But in not responding to questions raised by the Congress and others, the government may inadvertently have missed a great opportunity. It has often been said that the India-China competition will define our "Asian century". Here was a chance to show the huge difference between democratic India and the Communist Party oligarchy that runs the People's Republic. An endorsement by a legislature that asks searching, critical questions of the executive would have sent out a message to the world that Xi Jinping's rubber-stamp National People's Congress simply cannot.

A welcome ruling

The Supreme Court order on Wednesday prohibiting Sudarshan TV from telecasting the future episodes of a TV show portraying the entry of Muslims into the civil service as an attempt to infiltrate it is welcome for more than one reason. First, the apex court thought it fit that an early intervention to stop the programme which it found "insidious" was warranted and waiting for the statutory authorities to consider the complaints against it would make "irreversible damage". Second, it showed there are existing legal ways to confront such programmes that make use of the fundamental right to speech and expression and create animosity among sections of society. Third, the existing constitutional institutions are still able to assert their independence and decide the fine line between the use and abuse of the right to free speech, thereby obviating the creation of another government mechanism to regulate the media.

The bench while hearing the petition read out Clause 6 (c) of the programme code the ministry of information and broadcasting framed under the Cable TV Network (Regulation) Act, 1994, which prohibited the transmission of programmes that contain attack on religions or communities or visuals or words contemptuous of religious groups or which promote communal attitudes. This clause makes it incumbent on the part of the government to act and ensure that peace and harmony prevailed in the country and people with vested interests are stopped in their course before weakening the nation's social fabric through such TV programmes. It is curious that the Union government was seen in the court fighting for media freedom. The court's insistence that "no freedom is absolute, not even journalistic freedom" was met with a comment by the solicitor-general that the freedom of a journalist is supreme and any regulation of the same would need extensive debates. Debates are fine, the government must remember, but insidious programmes are not.

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:
Chennai: SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748
Coimbatore: 77 Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore 641009. Phone: (0422) 2231255, 2231256
Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 27803930-4. Fax: (040) 27805256.
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Visakhapatnam: Survey No. 1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334. Fax: (0891) 2755285
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Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618
Anantapur: Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904
Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/ 82, Telefax: (0861) 2348580
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Subhani



Freedom and bias: How Facebook comes of age



Shashidhar Nanjundaiah

What a year it is turning out to be for Facebook!

Its sway over voters has made incumbent governments in several countries seek to exact their pound of flesh. As a self-proclaimed proponent of free speech with limited control over content, the social media company now finds itself stuck in both legal and moral conflicts in many countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, Australia and elsewhere.

The ongoing deposition before India's parliamentary standing committee on information technology was always going to be a perfunctory but important attempt to raise questions of Facebook's influence over societies and their behaviour. The committee is multi-partisan, but the original agenda — whether Facebook has systematically favoured the BJP — was so politically divisive that such a panel could have never found a consensus unless the agenda was broadened to a generalisation.

Potentially, the deadlock in the deposition heralds some independence for Facebook. The Congress Party and the Trinamul Congress say Facebook has displayed a pro-BJP stance, while the government claims the contrary, even accusing Facebook's employees of abusing the Prime Minister. In the end, Facebook can claim that since both sides are claiming bias, they cancel each other out and that there is no real bias. That is why it was important that the parliamentary committee work pragmatically towards a united, non-partisan and achievable public goal — helping to independently curb hate.

WHO IS 'WE'?

Economic and political power makes great nego-

tiators. But for Facebook, this is a battle of identity. Three recent episodes are of relevance:

1. Facebook will soon add additional text to its terms of use to consolidate its position. In effect, Facebook has emerged from the shadows to stake its claim as a private company with full authority to tweak its rules, not as the public service that it can be mistaken for.

2. Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad shot off a strategically timed letter — coinciding with the parliamentary committee deposition — accusing Facebook's staff in India of colluding to discredit the government.

3. Following Facebook India MD Ajit Mohan's deposition, its global leaders Neil Potts and Mark Zuckerberg have issued statements that assure the world that Facebook is a neutral carrier and that hate speech will not be tolerated on it.

On September 1, Facebook forewarned its users of an impending addition of a self-protective clause to its section (3.2): "We also can remove or restrict access to your content, services or information if we determine that doing so is reasonably necessary to avoid or mitigate adverse legal or regulatory impacts to Facebook." As many digital business experts point out, this is an overdue survival clause. But it underlines the arrival of a more proactive approach to censorship — with larger implications on who gets to influence it.

On the face of it, the additional clause should provide comfort to those who may view it as a sort of social media garbage disposal. But if there is one word that's ambiguous in the otherwise crystal-clear message, it is "we". As much as its use in legalese is well-understood, who is this unseen

This year, and not 2016, when Facebook was first accused of gerrymandering, marks its growth from innocence to experience

hand in digital practice that restricts access, service, information or content? It could be the content desk, fact check desk, and standards-and-practices desk. However, given that algorithms are partly in control, is Facebook telling us that it will take more responsibility to rein them in?

Communicating on social sites like Facebook is both public and permanent. In the absence of proper (self-)regulation, it is at once a personally empowering and socially debilitating tool. Unlike edited content on the mainstream media, the free-flowing content on social media had accepted little accountability. That may be changing.

To prove the point, on the heels of the first day of the deposition, Facebook barred a known hatemonger, BJP's T. Raja Singh. If that is supposed to be exemplary somehow, it does not make the cut. Many people in our circles have abandoned the platform to avoid the mentally draining intensity and abuse. Removing the hundreds and thousands of trolls and others who indulge in hate speech alone can bring back public confidence in social media and in humanity in general.

ACCOUNTABILITY GAME

Facebook has turned its attention over the past two years to issues pertaining to privacy and complications arising from its business-to-government deals. While governments seek a piece of the content action, is Facebook's government business jeopardising its founding principles?

It is clear that many, even quasi-democratic, governments want more control over social media content and content in general. In Thailand, a constitutional monarchy, the government asked

that access to a group of voices against the government be blocked, and Facebook is suing the government to dispute such a restriction. Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte's supporters are known to have peddled fake news on the platform. The country's largest news network had to shut shop recently, thanks to governmental machinations. In Australia, the battle is to make social media accountable for borrowed content. Facebook has threatened to block news from Australian newspapers in retaliation over an impending pay-per-use law that seeks to shield its news media and requires Facebook to share revenues for news items taken from the newspapers.

Platforms such as Facebook face the consequences of not having thought through risks and challenges and pay the price of democratising processes. As a free marketplace of relationships and ideas — "the digital equivalent of a town square", as co-founder Mark Zuckerberg wrote in 2019 — Facebook needs better control over credibility. A growing number of people with Facebook accounts have chosen to stay away because they are dismayed at what they see in that ecosystem. Facebook can help by making its users media literate. As the social media grows and as we become more social media literate, the distinction between satire and fake news, between claims and opinions, and between facts and myths grows on us. Organically, media literacy is a longitudinal process. But intervention can accelerate the education.

This year, and not 2016, when Facebook was first accused of gerrymandering, marks its growth from innocence to experience. How the company pivots this experience will determine its future.

The writer has led reputed institutes of higher education and is the founder of "Being Responsible", which does media literacy programmes for schools

LETTERS

RESERVATION FOR NEET

The decision of the Tamil Nadu government to provide 7.5 per cent reservation in the under graduate medical admissions for students who pass out from government schools should have come as a shot in the arm for students studying in government schools. But one thing is perplexing. The Centre, on the one hand, talks more about privatisation of the economy including the education sector. Tamil Nadu government on the other wants to develop its schools. Also, one wants to know why Neet is given so much importance.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

REOPENING SCHOOLS

THE REOPENING of schools needs to be reviewed with even greater concern than that of the economy. The privileged few in private schools have their online education, those in government schools manage with a hybrid system but it is the rural and semi urban children who stand to be cut off for a year or more. This is calamitous for an entire generation of under privileged section of our society. A long gap in rural schooling will set us back years in national education. This is the time that every NGO is encouraged to work in the villages and effect the last mile delivery of whatever inputs we can provide till normalcy is expedited. If we delay, it will be a huge effort to bring the students back to classes. Sadly this government treats NGOs as anathema in its pet socio-political considerations.

R. Narayanan, Chennai

SURIYA'S NEET COMMENT

THE SPARK that Anitha first lit against Neet has taken the lives of 13 students so far. Instead of condemning the student suicides against Neet, actor Suriya takes up cudgels against the judiciary that ordered in-person examination for Neet candidates with the best intention of saving their one academic year (*Suriya 'Neet' comment draus mixed responses*, Sept. 15). The actor's comparison between judges adjudicating cases online to protect their own life during the pandemic and students made to appear physically for the examination is odious and ill-advised. What is more distressing is that political parties vie with each other in distributing largesse to the families of the deceased or garlanding the portrait of the deceased. As to the ruling party, it goes a step further to announce a government job for many of the families of the deceased. Indeed the glorification of student suicides by the political class and their fulminations against Neet could trigger more student suicides in future.

Kangayam R. Narasimhan, Chennai

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



PM Modi plugs 'Karmayogi' in pep talk to IPS probationers

A total of 131 IPS probationers, including 28 women, who completed 42 weeks of basic course phase-1 training at the prestigious Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy in Hyderabad had a rare opportunity to interact with Prime Minister Narendra Modi through a video conference. He is known to do this infrequently, but it thrills those who chance into one.

During the basic course training at SVP NPA over two segments, probationers are imparted training in various indoor and outdoor subjects like law, investigation, forensics, leadership and management, criminology, public order and internal security, ethics & human rights, modern Indian policing, fieldcraft and tactics, weapons training and firing. This was their final training before field postings in their respective state cadres.

In his address to the 2018-batch of IPS probationers, the Prime

Minister urged them to excel in their careers. He also used the opportunity to plug the government's new theme "Mission Karmayogi", a scheme for capacity building of civil servants, a task which the National Police Academy has been performing quite ably since its inception back in 1948. The theme immediately got national attention, way beyond police lines, as expected. The academy director, Atul Karwal, a 1988-batch IPS officer from Gujarat cadre, presided over the Dikshant (convocation) Parade and addressed the probationers.

MESSAGE TO J&K BASUS

The message is loud and clear from the Modi sarkar that no anti-national rhetoric, especially by government employees shall be tolerated at any cost. One year after the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has constituted a six-member committee, headed by

J&K chief secretary B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, to look into cases related to government officials allegedly indulging in anti-national activities.

The high-level committee has been empowered to scrutinise cases and recommend action against those officials involved in anti-national activities under Article 311(2)(c). Apart from the J&K chief secretary, the others members of the high-level committee include administrative secretary of the Home department, J&K DGP, administrative secretary of the general administration department, additional DGP, CID and administrative secretary of the department of law, justice.

Experts say any government official, including IAS and IPS officers if found guilty by the committee for "anti-national" activity can be dismissed from service without an inquiry.

According to sources, it is rumoured that many government

officers are under the scanner in Jammu and Kashmir for their involvement in 'anti-national' activities.

MEDIA AND MUMBAI POLICE

What made seven former DGPs and a police commissioner approach the Bombay high court in the Sushant Singh Rajput case?

The media's obsession with the Sushant Singh Rajput death case has overridden the raging corona pandemic, our stalled economy and the Chinese threat on the border. After the CBI, Enforcement Directorate and sundry agencies have been brought in by the Centre, the Mumbai Police has been forced into a corner. It has been accused of political bias and for botching up the investigation, though in the freestyle mud wrestling that the nation has seen, it is hard to determine who is cleaner.

Now, the former IPS officers have urged the court to put an end to the

"media trial" and the "unfair, malicious and false media campaign" against the Mumbai police in the case. The petitioners include former Maharashtra DGPs M.N. Singh, P.S. Pasricha, D.K. Sivanandan, Sanjiv Dayal, Satish Mathur, K. Subramanyam and former additional DGP K.P. Raghuvanshi, and former Mumbai police commissioner D.N. Jadhav. According to the petition, the adverse media campaign "appears to have been designed with sinister motives to tarnish the fair image of the Mumbai police".

Significantly, the petition urges courts to frame rules or guidelines which would help media cover investigations that are sub-judice. But, for now, it is a no-holds-barred approach as far as some sections of the media are concerned.

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quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,302.85	0.66
Nifty 50	11,604.55	0.72
S&P 500*	3,413.64	0.37
Dollar (₹)	73.52	0.18
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.85	0.13
Euro (₹)	87.26	0.300
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,030▼137	0.25
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	42.18	1.65
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.992	-0.037
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.667	-0.012

* As of 9:30 PM IST

DP World, Israeli company to bid for Haifa port

Dubai-based port operator DP World said it would partner with an Israeli firm in a bid to take over the country's Haifa port, the largest shipping hub for the emirate. DP World said it signed MoU with DoverTower, a company owned by Shlomi Fogel, the co-owner of Israel Shipyards and the Port of Eilat. The two firms also will explore creating a direct shipping route from Dubai's massive Jebel Ali port to Eilat, the statement said.

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■ RBI remains 'battle-ready' to back economy

Economic recovery to be gradual: Das

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, SEPT. 16

The country's economic recovery is likely to be gradual as efforts towards reopening the economy are confronted with rising Covid-19 infections, Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das said on Wednesday. He said the economic recovery is not fully entrenched and that the GDP data for the first quarter (Q1) was a telling reflection of how Covid-19 has affected the economy.

The economy contracted by a record 23.9 per cent in the April-June quarter as the pandemic outbreak and the subsequent lockdown brought economic activity to a complete halt. For the full year, the economy is expected to contract by 8-14 per cent.

"The end-August press release of the National Statistics Office (NSO) was a telling reflection of the ravages of Covid-19. Nevertheless, high frequency indicators of agricultural activity, the purchasing managers index (PMI) for manufacturing, and private estimates for unemployment point to some stabilisation of economic activity in Q2, while contractions in several sectors are also easing. The recovery is, however, not yet fully entrenched and moreover, in some sectors, upticks in June and July appear to be levelling off. By all indications, the recovery is likely to be gradual as efforts towards reopening of the economy

ISING INFECTIONS POSE A CHALLENGE



► Recovery is not yet fully entrenched and in some sectors, upticks in June and July appear to be levelling off

► Immediate policy response to Covid has been to prioritise stabilisation of the economy

are confronted with rising infections," said Das while addressing the Ficci national executive committee meeting.

The central bank chief said the policies for durable and sustainable high growth in the medium-run after the crisis are equally important and listed five critical areas, which according to him, would determine the ability to step up and sustain India's growth in the medium-run: (i) human capital, in particular education and health; (ii) productivity; (iii) exports, which is linked to raising India's role in the global value chain; (iv) tourism; and (v) food processing and associated productivity gains.

"While dealing with the immediate crisis management challenges, we need to strategically prepare for our combined overriding goal—the pursuit of strong and sustainable growth. The private business sector has a critical role in each of the five areas I covered today. The enabling policy environment would

evolve around the initiatives taken by India's businesses to seize these opportunities and actualise the potential of the Indian economy as a rising economic power of the 21st century. Covid-19 has changed our lives and it is increasingly clear that life will never be the same again. We should look upon these fundamental changes as opportunities rather than threats, converting them into game changing new vistas of progress," said Das.

The governor said the RBI remains 'battle-ready' to take measures to support the economy as and when needed and that the immediate policy response to Covid in India has been to prioritise stabilisation of the economy and support a quick recovery.

Das said that despite a large government borrowing programme, the steps taken by the RBI to ensure ample liquidity has ensured that bond yields remain low and are currently the lowest in the past 10 years due to surplus liquidity.

Frustrated ONGC exits Sudan over pending dues

New Delhi, Sept. 16: Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) has exited from Sudan oilfields after the African nation refused to pay for oil it lifted from the fields.

ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL), the overseas investment arm of the state-owned firm, as also its Chinese partner CNPC and Malaysia's Petronas have withdrawn from the block, a company official said.

OVL had a 25 per cent stake in Block 2A&4 in Sudan while CNCP had 40 per cent and Petronet 30 per cent. Sudan's Sudapet had 5 per cent interest.

Sudan had since 2011 not paid OVL and partners for oil the country bought from the block. Sudan's dues towards OVL totalled \$430.69 million, the official said.

OVL initiated arbitration proceedings against the Government of Sudan to recover the dues and has terminated the exploration and production sharing agreement, he said.

OVL had also not been paid about \$99 million for the 741-km pipeline it built from Khartoum to Port Sudan.

The project cost and rental of \$254 million was to be paid by Sudan in 18 half-yearly equated instalments of \$14.135 million each starting from December 30, 2005. OVL got 11 instalments (\$155.48 million) till December 2010 and none after that.

—PTI

Prepaid meters must for new power connections: Draft rules

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, SEPT. 16

Every new electricity connection will come with a smart prepayment meter or a prepayment meter, as per the Draft Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020.

According to the new rules circulated by the power ministry for comments, no connection will come without a smart prepayment meter or a prepayment meter. Any exception to this should be approved by the State Electricity Regulatory Commission.

Smart prepayment meters should be read remotely once in every month and in case of other prepayment meters, they should be read by a representative of the distribution licensee once in three months. Consumers with smart prepayment meters will be given access to check their consumption on a real time basis.



sumption on a real time basis.

The draft also recognises consumer as a prosumer if he generates renewable energy (RE). "While the prosumer shall maintain his consumer status and have the same rights as consumer, he will also have the right to set up renewable energy generation units, including roof-top solar PV systems, either by himself or through a service provider," the draft bill says.

The total generation capacity of the RE units should not exceed the

limit prescribed by the commission.

Based on the application received from the prosumer, a technical feasibility study should be completed within 20 days. He would be compensated automatically for those parameters that can be monitored remotely. The distribution licensee will create an online facility on which the prosumer can register and claim compensation amount.

The draft rules also calls for setting up a call centre for consumer services by the commission and a grievance redressal mechanism. The grievance redressal forum will be headed by an officer of the licensee and have two to three members as representatives of consumers and prosumers.

The power ministry has sought suggestions on the draft rules till September 30.

ICICI launches home loan for informal workers

FC BANKING BUREAU
MUMBAI, SEPT. 16

ICICI Home Finance on Wednesday said it has launched a new loan scheme 'Apna Ghar Dreamz', with credit amount in the range of Rs 2 lakh to 50 lakh, for skilled workers employed in the informal sector in Delhi.

The scheme is meant for skilled workers such as carpenters, plumbers, electricians, tailors, painters, welders, auto mechanics, manufactur-

ing machine operators, computer mechanics, water machine repair technicians, small and medium business owners and grocery store owners in the city, the company said in a release.

The loan scheme is targeted at the informal segment of the population who wish to purchase their own home, but may not have all documents that a formal financial institution would require, ICICI Home Finance said. Customers seeking to

avail the special 20-year tenure loan would need to provide documents such as PAN and Aadhaar details, and bank statement of past six months.

The customers should have a minimum account balance of Rs 1,500 for loan up to 5 lakh and Rs 3,000 for loan above 5 lakh.

Customers can also avail of benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, a credit-linked subsidy scheme for LIG/EWS and MIG I & II homes, the company said.

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Ruturaj unlikely for IPL opener

Dubai: Chennai Super Kings batsman Ruturaj Gaikwad, who tested positive for COVID-19 last month, remains in isolation and is unlikely to be available for the team's IPL opener against Mumbai Indians on September 19 in Abu Dhabi. CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan said the India A batsman is doing "absolutely fine" but has not yet got the BCCI's clearance to join the team's bio-bubble. "Ruturaj has still not been cleared by the BCCI medical team and is in isolation. He is unlikely to be available for the first match. We are expecting him back in the (bubble) in the next couple of days and he is doing absolutely fine," Viswanathan said. Gaikwad is seen as Raina's replacement in the team after the latter pulled out of the tournament and flew back home due to personal reasons. Senior spinner Harbhajan Singh has also withdrawn due to personal reasons. — PTI

Djoker behaves better, in 3rd round

Rome: Novak Djokovic behaved better Wednesday in his first match since being defaulted from the US Open. The top-ranked Serb was mostly courteous with the chair umpire and had no interaction with the line judges during a 6-3, 6-2 win over local wild-card entry Salvatore Caruso in his opening match at the Italian Open. The performance came in sharp contrast to the scene in New York 10 days ago, when Djokovic was disqualified. — AFP

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BEAT THE HEAT

Adapting to UAE climate biggest challenge, says ABD

Dubai, Sept. 16: South African star AB de Villiers believes the biggest challenge for all teams in the upcoming Indian Premier League will be adjusting to the prevailing hot and humid conditions in the UAE.

Most games will be played in the night but the conditions would still be challenging.

"I am not really used to these kind of conditions to be honest. It's very hot, it reminds me of a Test match we played in July in Chennai once where Viru (Virender Sehwag) scored 300. It was one the hottest weather conditions I have experienced in my life," he said in an interview posted on RCB's Twitter handle.

"The humidity is similar to that, even at 10 at night. When I arrived here I checked the weather conditions of a few months and it seems to be getting better. It is definitely going to play a part and you have to make sure you have the energy for the backend of the innings or last 5 overs of your bowling spell," he added.

De Villiers said he would also miss playing in front of packed crowds in India with the event to be played behind closed doors in UAE due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

De Villiers said young Australian wicketkeeper batsman Joshua Philippe is an exciting cricketer and he would love share his knowledge with the Australian opener in RCB dressing room.

The 36-year-old dashing cricketer, said not just him, every player is just happy to be back on the field after international cricket came to a halt in mid-March because of the pandemic.

— PTI



Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni in action in this file photo.

Waiting for Dhoni delight: Viru

Mumbai, Sept. 16: Virender Sehwag expects this year's IPL to be "extra special" and a major reason for that is Mahendra Singh Dhoni getting back on the pitch after announcing his international retirement follow-

ing a year-long sabbatical from the game.

"I think this tournament will be extra special for everyone — the players as well as the audience... watching Dhoni back on the pitch is sure to be a delight. There's so much

in store, need I say more?" Sehwag said.

Meanwhile, former Australian cricketer Dean Jones reckons Suresh Raina's absence from the IPL would be a major concern for CSK.

"Raina's absence is a

major concern this time and he is in the top 5 run getters in IPL. He is a left hander and plays spin very well and the weakness for CSK could be that majority of their players are right handed," Jones said.

— PTI

BCCI set to use Fraud Detection Services

New Delhi, Sept. 16: The BCCI has tied up with UK-based company Sportradar, which will offer its "integrity services" to prevent betting and other corrupt practices during the upcoming IPL through its Fraud Detection Services (FDS).

With the 13th Indian Premier League being held behind closed doors, the challenge for the Board's Ajit Singh-led Anti-Corruption Unit is very different as there has been a surge in betting-related frauds and it's expected to increase manifold during the lucrative event.

"BCCI has inked a deal with Sportradar for this year's IPL. They will be working closely with the ACU and offer their integrity services," an IPL source confirmed.

According to Sportradar, Fraud Detection System (FDS) "is a unique service that identifies betting-related manipulation in sport. This is possible due to the FDS's sophisticated algorithms and constantly maintained database of odds which are leveraged for the purpose of detecting match-fixing."

— PTI

BALE SET FOR HIS RETURN TO TOTTENHAM

London, Sept. 16: Gareth Bale is "close" to a sealing a sensational move back to Tottenham but the deal is "complicated". Bale's agent Jonathan Barnett said.

The Wales international has been frozen out by Real manager Zinedine Zidane and he said earlier this month he was open to returning to the Premier League.

Manchester United have also expressed an interest in Bale but they see him as more of a back-up option behind other targets, including Borussia Dortmund's Jadon Sancho.

That has left Spurs in pole position to sign Bale, who left the club for a then world-record fee of 85 million in 2013.

When asked about Tottenham's move for Bale, Barnett said: "It's close but not done. It's a complicated deal."

Bale has two years left on a contract that pays him around 30 million euros a year at Real Madrid. The Spanish giants Madrid are pushing for a permanent transfer.

— AFP

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