

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | SUNDAY 6 | SEPTEMBER 2020

## WEATHER



**Max:** 33°C  
**Min:** 27°C  
**Rainfall:** 1 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Aavani 21  
**Tithi:** Chaturthi  
**Star:** Ashwini  
**Rahukalam:**  
4.30 pm to 6 pm  
**Yamagandam:**  
12 noon to 1.30 pm

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 4.46 am  
**Zohar:** 12.14 pm  
**Asar:** 3.21 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.21 pm  
**Isha:** 7.32 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 6.16 PM**

**SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM**

**MOONRISE TODAY 9.07 PM**

**MOONSET TOMORROW 9.46 AM**

## CORONA COUNT

### CASES

(+89,237)  
**41,09,476**

### DEATHS

(+1,038)  
**70,673**

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,870 )  
**TN: 4,57,697** 7,748

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

**2,69,55,343**

### DEATHS

**8,81,456**

**COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES**  
**213**

worldometers.info

## TN allows air-conditioning in restaurants

**Chennai:** The Tamil Nadu government on Saturday issued a government order permitting functioning of restaurants with air conditioning facility. "Following the Standard Operating Procedures already issued by the government, restaurants are permitted to function from 6 am to 8 pm with air conditioning facility by following the guidelines issued by the Government of India for air conditioning and ventilation," the GO said. — *PTI*

## Soldier killed, two hurt in Pak firing along LoC in J&K's Kupwara

**Srinagar:** An Army soldier was killed and two others injured in Pakistani firing along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's frontier Kupwara district on Saturday, a defence spokesman said here. — *PTI*

## COUNTER

## POINT



**What a wonder! There are so many games other than PUBG!**

# Lockdown has villagers turn to Ghat forests for meat

## Country-made bombs, equipment used for poaching seized in raids in villages in Coimbatore forest division

**DC CORRSPONDENT**  
COIMBATORE, SEPT. 5

Forest officials here on Saturday conducted a raid in connection with 'Outtukai' (country-made bomb) business, used for poaching small wild animals like wild boar, and arrested four offenders and seized materials used for poaching.

During lockdown, most of the fish, mutton and chicken

stalls remained closed across the state while many villagers and migrated labourers residing close to the Western Ghats and forest fringe areas in various ranges of Coimbatore forest division, started to poach small animals for meat by installing traps and country-made bombs, locally known as 'Outtukai'. Recently, a cow died near Mettupalayam after biting the crude bomb

● **Recently, a cow died near Mettupalayam after biting the crude bomb installed close to Kallaar river bank, and forest officials arrested three offenders in this connection**

installed close to Kallaar river bank, and forest officials arrested three offenders in this connection. In another incident, a Makna elephant was also severely injured in its mouth, suspected to be caused by 'Outtukai'.

The animal is being continuously monitored and treated by the forest department.

According to divisional forest officer D. Venkatesh, a raid with the help of sniffer dogs was launched based on a tip-off in four ranges

including Periyanaickenpalayam, Madhukkarai and Boluvampatti ranges, particularly Karadimadai, and villages close to Kattanji Malai of Periyanaickenpalayam range, to curb the use of handmade crude fruit — bombs and meat bombs, for poaching small animals like wild boar, lizard and deer.

These bombs are used outside the forest areas to kill small animals for meat, most

particularly, wild boars and to prevent them from raiding crops. The teams led by assistant conservators of forests Dinesh and Senthil were formed including forest range officers, foresters, forest guards and APWs and sniffer dogs from Anamalai tiger reserve and Sathyamangalam tiger reserve, were employed to trace stocks of any explosives in certain suspected houses. ■ **P4**

## Sushant case: NCB arrests late actor's personal staff member

**Mumbai, Sept. 5:** The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Saturday arrested Dipesh Sawant, a member of Sushant Singh Rajput's personal staff, in connection with a drugs probe linked to the actor's death, officials said. With this, the total number of people arrested in this case has risen to six. The officials said Dipesh Sawant, who was being questioned since morning, has been arrested under sec-

tions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

A senior NCB officer had earlier said that Sawant's role was that of a 'witness in the case, they said. The federal anti-narcotics agency had on Friday arrested Showik Chakraborty (24), the brother of main accused in this case Rhea Chakraborty, and Samuel Miranda, Rajput's house manager. — *PTI*



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**Don't discuss NEP with governors, says Stalin**



## WORLD | 7

**Biden confirms Covid-19 test, says he'll be tested regularly**

## SPORT | 8

**Djokovic eases into round 4**



# India, China stick to their stand on border tension

**PAWAN BALI | DC**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5

In the first high-level political contact between the two countries ever since the border tensions between them flared-up in early May, defence minister Rajnath Singh categorically told his Chinese counterpart General Wei Fenghe that there should be no doubt about India's determination to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity and China should not make attempts to unilaterally change status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Mr Singh also said the current situation should be handled responsibly and that neither side should take any action that could either complicate the situation or escalate matters.

Mr Singh met General Wei in Moscow on Friday at the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Moscow for two-and-a-half hours. However, no breakthrough seems to have emerged from the bilateral meeting.

Chinese state media reported that during the meeting Gen. Wei said that India bears full responsibility for current China-India border tensions and that the Chinese military has determination, capability and confidence to safeguard China's territorial integrity. Gen. Wei reportedly also said that "not an inch of China's territory should be lost."

The Chinese statement comes in backdrop of Indian Army's move to preempt PLA and occupy over two dozen strategic peaks on the southern banks of Pangong Tso and Spangur Gap.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during a meeting with Uzbekistan's minister of defence, Major General Kurbanov Bakhodir Nizamovich, in Moscow, on Saturday. — *PTI*

## INDIA-CHINA BORDER ISSUE

# Ready to help ease tension, says Trump

**Washington, Sept. 5:** Describing the situation along the India-China border as "very nasty", US President Donald Trump has said that the Chinese are "going at it much more strongly" than a lot of people understand and he would "love to get involved and help" ease the tension.

Indian and Chinese troops are engaged in a bitter standoff in multiple places in eastern Ladakh for four months.

Tensions flared up again in the region after China unsuccessfully attempted to occupy Indian territory in the southern bank of the Pangong lake six days ago when the two sides were engaged in diplomatic and military talks

to resolve the border row.

"While we're at it, we're talking about China and India are going at it pretty good on the border, as you know. It's been very nasty."

Trump told reporters on Friday at a White House news conference in response to a question on the US-India relationship.

Trump reiterated that he is talking to both India and China about the situation.

"And we stand ready to help with respect to China and India. If we can do anything, we would love to get involved and help. And we are talking to both countries about that," he said. — *PTI*

## PLA ABDUCTED 5 ARUNACHALESE YOUTH, CLAIM KIN

**MANOJ ANAND | DC**  
GUWAHATI, SEPT. 5

Amid escalating border tension with China in Ladakh, a report that five Arunachalee youths serving as porters for the Indian Army (PLA) of China on Thursday has created tension on the eastern frontier though there is no official confirmation of it yet.

Reports claim that the family of the porters came to know about the incident through a wireless message of Indian Army. It said, "Five persons have been abducted by the Chinese Army at the Sera-7 area near McMahon line." The kin of those missing then took to the social media to raise awareness and ensure their safe return. ■ **P5**

# Withdraw circular 'banning' creation of new posts: Cong

**New Delhi, Sept. 5:** The Congress on Saturday demanded that the Centre withdraw its circular calling for a freeze on the creation of new posts, and urged it to create more vacancies while filling the existing ones in the wake of the alleged rise in unemployment.

As part of measures to rationalise non-priority expenditure, the government on Friday asked all ministries and departments to review appointments of consultants, curtail functions among other steps. It said there will be a ban on the creation of new posts, except with the approval of the expenditure department.

However, the ministry of finance clarified on Saturday that there is no restriction or ban on filling up of posts in the Government of India, and the Department of Expenditure circular deals with internal procedure for

● **"Rob the future of the youth and promote friends," Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi and urged the people to speak up**

creation of posts. It does not in anyway affect or curtail recruitment, the ministry tweeted.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi earlier hit out at the Centre over the issue, alleging that the Modi dispensation's thinking is "minimum government, maximum privatisation". The Covid-19 pandemic is just an excuse and the intention is to make government offices 'free' of permanent staff, he alleged on Twitter.

"Rob the future of the youth and promote friends," Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi and urged the people to speak up.

In another tweet, Gandhi also reacted to the railway recruitment board exams,

saying, "They can shut out dislikes, comments, but not your voice. We will keep putting forward your views in front of the world."

At an online media briefing, Congress leader and former Union minister Rajeev Shukla said the government has come out with the circular which has suggested that new jobs cannot be created at all and the vacancies which are already existing should not be filled.

"This is a very alarming situation since the country's economy is already in doldrums. Our GDP has gone down -23.9 per cent. An ILO report suggests that 40 crore people are going to be below the poverty line. "So, in this situation, if the government stops helping people, if the government stops creating new jobs, if the government is not coming forward or stepping up to support the young people, then who is going to support them," he asked. — *PTI*

# Railways to run 40 new pair of trains from September 12

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
WITH AGENCY INPUTS  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5

The railways will run 80 new special trains from September 12, reservations for which will begin from next Thursday, Railway Board chairman V.K. Yadav said on Saturday.

"Eighty new special trains or 40 pair of trains will start operating from September 12. Reservations will begin from September 10. These will run in addition to the 230 trains already in operation," Yadav, who was recently appointed the first chief executive officer of the Railway Board, said.

Mr Yadav indicated that the trains will be made operational depending on the demand. "The railways will monitor all the trains that are currently in operation to determine



V.K. Yadav

which trains have a long waiting list," he said.

"Wherever there is a demand for a particular train, wherever the waiting list is long, we will run a clone train ahead of the actual train, so that passengers can travel."

The key factor in deciding the 80 new trains was the fact that there were many stations from where the migrant workers are going back to their workplace, Mr Yadav said.

"Many of these trains are running in the reverse direction of the Shramik Special trains. So, they

(people) are leaving their homes and going to their workplace. We are monitoring the occupancy of trains and will run more trains as per demand. Among the 230 trains, the occupancy of 12 is very less. We are running them, but will reduce the number of coaches," he said, adding that the average occupancy in the 230 trains is 80-85 per cent.

He said the Railways is coordinating with the state governments while deciding on the introduction of new trains.

The official said the real timeframe for the completion of the bullet train project will be clear in three to six months.

The status of land acquisition, delayed due to Covid-19 pandemic, for the high-speed Mumbai-Ahmedabad rail project will be ascertained within the next three to six months, he said.

# In Metro travel goes fully contactless

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 5

Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), which is all set to resume operations on Monday, has introduced a new travel card reader machine at each station to help avoid queuing in front of customer counters and ticket vending machines (TVMs).

Passengers can top up their smart cards using CMRL mobile app or CMRL website and directly use travel card reader to top-up the recharged amount instead of doing it with the help of TVM. Passengers can also view their travel card details such as balance, available trips, top-up history and travel history.

Minister for industries M.C Sampath, who inaugurated the facility on Saturday, said it was introduced to ensure the safety of the passengers.

CMRL authorities said the transporter has implemented a complete contactless ticketing system that can reduce the risk of spreading of Covid-19. The contactless QR ticketing



A new travel card reader machine introduced by CMRL which is set to resume operations on Monday. — *DC*

solution eliminates human interference and allows seamless passage throughout the journey.

Passengers will be able to book tickets and buy passes of their choice (single journey ticket, round journey ticket, trip passes) in the form of QR codes in the existing CMRL mobile app.

This QR code will be scanned at the QR scanners fitted to a particular gate at every station to enter and exit, making the entire journey completely contactless. Features like rescheduling and cancellation of tickets have also been included for the convenience of the passengers.

# India alone failed to benefit from lockdown, says PC

**New Delhi, Sept. 5:**

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Saturday attacked the government over the rise in the number of coronavirus cases, claiming that the only country that is not reaping the benefit of the lockdown strategy appears to be India.

He also predicted that by September-end, India may have 65 lakh Covid-19 cases.

Chidambaram's attack



on the government came as India's Covid-19 infection tally sprinted past 40 lakh. The recoveries have surged to 31,07,223 on Saturday, according to data collated by the Union

Health Ministry.

"I had predicted that total number of infections will reach 55 lakh by September 30, I am wrong. India will reach that number by September 20. By end September, the number may touch 65 lakh," Chidambaram said.

The only country that is not reaping the benefit of the lockdown strategy appears to be India, the former Union minister alleged. — *PTI*



# Virtual vultures on the rise, will courts crack the whip?

From calling women sl\*\*\* to dishing out unreasonable hate social media has made way for mischief mongers to turn into self-proclaimed guardians of society.



Apsara Reddy

And the point is..

Latching on to the fame of established individuals and those with a huge fan following some gutter-mouths are going all out to build themselves up as opinion shapers.

From morphed videos and photos to heavily edited audio notes, haters are taking all routes possible to scuttle the spirit of those struggling to navigate through life. Very often men place themselves on these social media chat shows and discuss women celebrities at length. Who are they to pass judgement? If neither the father of the brother or the husband has an issue with a woman's choice of partner or clothes or profession, then how can a fame-seeking notorious individual be allowed to concoct malicious stories?

Freedom of speech is a pillar of democracy but society

is quickly crumbling under the extent of damage unleashed by irresponsible social media platforms and individuals.

Social media isn't the place to settle scores or deliver judgment. There are courts and law enforcement agencies for that. When a statement can end marriages, cripple careers and drive people to suicide; then we need to relook at how freedom of speech is being so grossly misunderstood and misused by trouble makers.

These social media avatars and pseudonyms, are covering up cowards, for whom anonymity is power and even inspiration. Behind these IDs and faceless identity hide the most vicious cowards who prey on women. The judiciary must deliver judgments so as to set precedents that instil a sense of respon-

sibility and fear in the minds of those trying to destroy another human being's right to dignity and life.

The reality of social media is that there are virtual vultures waiting to pounce in and join the abuse thread. Cowards who created "armies" for themselves. But the good part is the inhabitants exist only to the extent that we pay attention to them. Without it, they are trees falling noiselessly in a deep dark forest. It is a real crowd in the real world that can cause real concern. A virtual gang has only the voice we give it.

As online followers we must stop paying them any attention. They crave it and on which they thrive. Most disheartening of all is that we pay most attention to the loudest and ugliest of them, giving a boost to more of their kind. The legal fraternity and police officials must look at this as a serious crime or else social media bullying has become an extortion racket where many innocent victims are falling prey to cold calculated murder of their reputations and with it their souls.

Of course, we must make a

distinction between harmless humour and savage slander. It's necessary and important to raise the issue of stalking and bullying as many have anointed themselves as cleansers of society. Using this self-titled designation they go about wrecking havoc through hate hashtags.

In the meantime, for us as citizens, the plausible answer to online abuse is to muster up the willpower to ignore the vile vindictive commentary that seems to terrorise the victims. I feel for the victims of online hate. For some the reflexive response to an abusive post is to lash out. But that is to engage the abuser on their terms. Reaction is their vindication. Ignore.

To ignore trolls does not signify defeat or fear. We should cold-shoulder them altogether. It's the form of fight-back they are unable to digest. It's what they fear most, irrelevance.



## Teacher challenges GO denying monthly pension to retired staff

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT 5



A school teacher, who retired under voluntary retirement scheme, has approached the Madras high court, to quash a GO in so far as it directs the accumulation of the employee's contribution along with the government's contribution to the contributory pension scheme, to the employees retired, resigned, died or otherwise terminated after getting an undertaking from those concerned that they would not make any further claims under the contributory pension scheme introduced in 2003 and thereby denies payment of monthly pension to those who joined service after introduction of the scheme.

Justice V. Parthiban before whom the petition filed by R.Renukadevi came up for hearing ordered notice to the state government and posted to October 8, further hearing of the case.

Petitioner's counsel S. Ayyathurai submitted that the petitioner joined an aided school in the city on October 6, 2005, as a junior PG assistant (Tamil). Thereafter she was brought under regular scale of pay and after completion of more than 11 years of service; she retired from service under VRS on January 31, 2017. When she approached various authorities for payment of her retirement benefits including pension, she did not receive any proper reply. When she consulted her advocate, he informed her that as per a GO dated February 22, 2016, she will not get any pension and she will get only the accumulation of the amount of her contribution and government contribution along with interest on giving an undertaking that she would not make any further demand for any monetary benefits on the government. Therefore, she filed the present petition challenging the GO, he added.

Ayyathurai contended that the impugned order in so far as it does not provide for monthly pension and compels the employees to accept the entire accumulation of the contribution of the employee and the government was arbitrary, unreasonable, unfair, and hence illegal. Right to pension was a legal right and continued to be so by virtue of recognition as such by the courts over more than a century and it has now crystallized into a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution because of the judgment of the Supreme Court that the

● As per GO dated February 22, 2016, petitioner will not get any pension and she will only get the accumulation of the amount of her contribution

pension was a deferred compensation for the services rendered. The government cannot deprive retired employees, who joined service after April 1, 2003, of their right to pension by an administrative order without backed by appropriate legislation, he added.

He said as per the contributory pension scheme being operated in quasi-government organizations, after disbursing the contribution of the employee's contribution in a lump sum payment, the retired employees were paid pension every month by the Pension Fund Authority by utilizing the management's contribution. The same procedures can be adopted and followed by the government for the employees including those who joined service after April 1, 2003, and retired from service either on reaching the age of superannuation or on voluntary retirement. If the employees who joined service after April 1, 2003, in the public sector undertakings can be paid monthly pension by the public sector undertakings concerned there was no reason why the government employees or the employees of the aided educational institutions cannot be paid pension by government by utilizing the government's contribution, he added.

Ayyathurai said the impugned order does not provide for payment of gratuity to the employees who joined service after April 1, 2003 under the new pension scheme. The Central government has extended the benefits of payment of gratuity to its employees who joined service after April 1, 2003. It was unfortunate that the Government of Tamil Nadu should remain quiet over payment of gratuity to those who joined service after April 1, 2003, he added.

## BREATHING LIFE INTO STONE



Mamallapuram, an hour's drive away from Chennai, holds a unique place in Indian history. An ancient seaport with a history of maritime trade, Mamallapuram is now an important site for pilgrims, tourists and history buffs. The place is most popular for Tiger's Cave, Arjuna's penance, Krishna's Butterball, the light house and the world famous Shore Temple - a Shiva Temple. For generations, Mamallapuram has been home to master sculptors. The work of these sculptors is nothing but poetry. These artisans, who chisel life-like sculptures out of granite rock, were hit hard during the lockdown due to absence of tourists. Now post lockdown, work has resumed for these talented people who have adapted to latest trends in technology while creating masterpieces in stone.

Photos: E. K. Sanjay



# A cinematic rescue with some court help



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

It had all the elements of a celluloid potboiler. A young couple in love. Caste comes in the way of their union. Angry parents separate them, locking up the girl and tormenting her. Boy gets an SOS message and goes in search of her. Boy spots girl and girl waves at him. The couple walks hand-in-hand into the sunset. But this real-life romantic saga assumed an extra sparkle for two reasons.

One, the way in which modern technology was harnessed in expediting the case and also in tracing the girl. And two, the judiciary's proactive role that saw the lawyers and judges dealing the case with patience and humanism, thus setting a precedent in the process. For, a case of that nature might have been thrown out in normal times.

Even this one was almost thrown out when the court registry refused to number the Writ of Habeas Corpus

filed by the young man from Chennai demanding the production of his girlfriend, who, he claimed, was being held illegally by her parents in their home in another town.

But lawyer Sudha Ramalingam saw to it that the case was taken up by the Madras High Court division bench of Justice R Kirubakaran and Justice V M Velumani, thus setting in motion the process of locating the girl and ascertaining if her boyfriend's allegations against her parents were true.

'They have unlawfully detained her against her will and are refusing to let her leave the house. She is facing abuse at the hands of her parents and her grandparents,' he had alleged in his affidavit. He said he intended to marry the girl but her parents would not approve of their relationship because of caste differences and were trying to force the girl to marry

someone of their choice.

The girl, who has been 'overpowered', had sent messages to her boyfriend and also to her other friends and colleagues about her father threatening to hit her with slippers and her mother calling her a prostitute, among other things, which prompted the boyfriend and other friends to file online complaints with the Superintendent of Police of the district in which she was held. But no action was taken by the police, he said in the affidavit.

Earlier, the girl's father had made the boy sign an undertaking that he would not claim any of the girl's or her family's property. Once he had the undertaking in hand, he went to the Chennai Commissioner of Police with a complaint. The father had alleged that the boy was 'looking to cheat the girl sexually' though the two of them were in a 'consensual relationship' for over a year.

The boy was called for an enquiry by a joint commissioner of police, to whom he explained that he hailed from a decent, law-abiding and educated family and was keen to marry the girl. He also told the joint commissioner that the girl's family found his inter-caste parentage - Mudaliar father

and Brahmin mother - to be a problem as they were Brahmins.

Now that the SP and the Police Inspector of the station, under whose jurisdiction the girl's parents live, were apathetic to the problems of the girl, despite being informed about the illegal detention, the boy has no other alternative other than approaching the court with the petition, he claimed.

So, even as the petition was being filed on Thursday, Ramalingam alerted the judges and the public prosecutor about the need for urgency in hearing the case since the boy had called to inform her that the parents of the girl were planning to marry her off to someone else. The judges then ordered the police to produce the girl through video conference the next day.

In the meantime, the court registry people had doubts. How can parents hold their daughter in illegal custody? What locus standi does a 'boyfriend' have to seek production of a girl? Which meant the case was not registered and the papers were not presented before the judges the next day.

Ramalingam, however, presented herself before the judges even as the boy trav-

elled to the girl's town. When the judges asked for the case papers, they were told that the petition filed was not in order. When they informed that to the lawyer, she flared up asking them how a petition filed by her could be not in order, impelling the bench to start the proceedings.

Just then, the police in the girl's town threw cold water by sending a picture of the locked house, claiming that there was no one there. It was then that the boy, who roamed the street in true cinematic style and spotted the girl in a house two doors away. She too waved at him. So, he informed the lawyer who told the court about it, adding pace to the case.

The court, in which the proceedings were on through video conference, let the boy join in and he logged in using his mobile phone from the road opposite to the house where the girl was found. He showed the court the visuals of the house and the judges spotted policemen standing there. So the judges asked the police men to talk to them, which the policemen declined. So the Public Prosecutor intervened.

The mention of the world Public Prosecutor did the magic and the policeman took the phone to the sub-

inspector who responded, agreeing that the girl was in the house. The phone was taken to her. The judges asked her to remove her mask and answer her questions. She was clear in her reply. Her parents were tormenting her and she wanted to go with her boyfriend.

The parents, when called to address the court, wept and created a scene. How could they send their daughter with the man who would not marry her but live with her? They had a litany of such parental woes. But they were told that the girl was old enough to take decisions concerning her life. The court asked the boy if he was prepared to marry her and he said 'yes.' So the girl was allowed to go with her boyfriend and the lawyer was directed to produce them as a married couple on Tuesday.

Such a quick resolution of the case would not have been possible prior to the Coronavirus induced lockdown, said Ramalingam, marveling at the wonder

technology had done to legal proceedings. Apart from her, the two judges, the bench clerk and the public prosecutor were all at their own homes during the entire proceedings, while the boy, the girl and her parents responded to them from the far away town.

In normal times, if the boy had traced the girl after the police had informed the

court that the house was locked, it would have taken a week's time to inform the court itself. Then every move would have taken its own time. Here, everything happened in a jiffy and justice rendered on time.





## IN BRIEF

## Emergency services in Covid-19 times

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 5

Emergency medical services continued even during the times of coronavirus crisis and 2,41,615 cases were treated at the various centres operating under the Tamil Nadu Accident and Emergency Care Initiative (TAEI) from March to now, health minister C. Vijayabaskar said on Saturday.

In a statement, he said along with the efforts to prevent the spread of Covid-19, the government also carried out its other medical services uninterrupted and government hospitals and government medical college hospitals together treated 1,52,118 accident victims, 63,633 of them requiring life-saving surgeries.

Others who were treated in the TAEI centres were those who consumed poison or harmed themselves (59,849), snake bit cases (19,947), children needing emergency attention (4,494), those who suffered heart attacks (4,432) and strokes (7,775).

KE brothers have been associated with liquor business through a chain of syndicates for over five decades in Kurnool and surrounding districts.

## Pondy logs 408 corona cases; tally touches 16,566

Puducherry, Sept. 5: Puducherry continued to witness an upward trend of Covid-19 infections as 408 fresh cases and 18 related deaths were added on Saturday, raising the overall tally to 16,566 in the union territory.

Director of Health and Family Welfare S. Mohan Kumar said in a release that 18 more people including five women succumbed to the viral infection during the last 24 hours ending 10 a.m. on Saturday. He said 433 patients recovered and were discharged from hospitals.

Of the total 16,566 COVID-19 cases reported in the Union Territory there were 5,161 active cases, 11,107 patients were treated and discharged and the toll stood at 298.

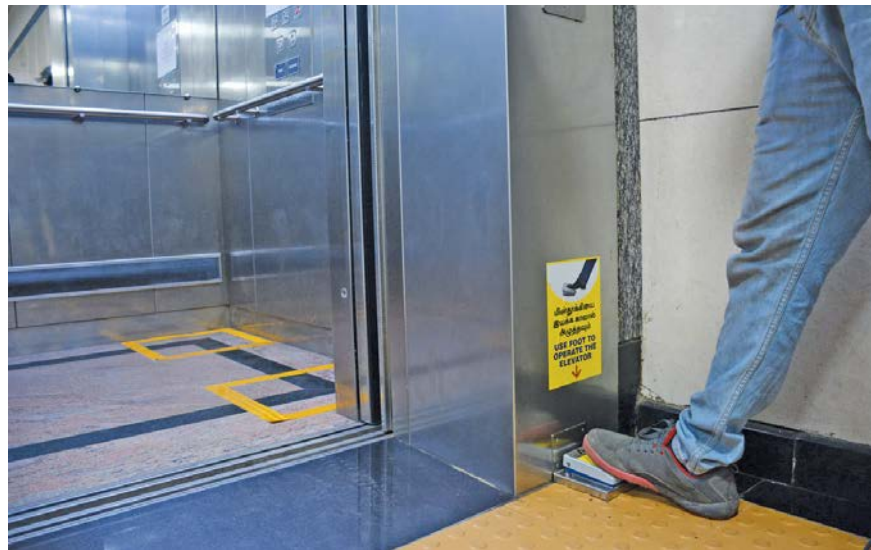
The Director said the fatality rate was 1.8 percent while recovery rate was 67.05 percent. The Department of Health has so far tested 81,695 samples and 63,545 out of them were found to be negative.

Results of examination of remaining samples were awaited, the Director said.

Of the total 408 new cases, which were identified after examination of 1,437 samples, the Puducherry region accounted for 343 followed by 32 in Yanam, 25 in Karaikal and 8 in Mahe region.

The Puducherry government on Saturday launched door to door testing of COVID-19 samples in a bid to check the spike in fresh infections in the Union Territory. "Puducherry is witnessing an increase in number of cases of coronavirus infection. We will zero in more positive cases through door to door testing of samples. Such a system of testing would help identify the actual number of pandemic stricken patients, particularly in areas which were reporting highest number of positive cases," Health Minister Malladi Krishna Rao said.

The Union Territory on Saturday reported 408 fresh cases and 18 deaths, taking the tally to 16,566 and the toll to 298. The minister, addressing a virtual meet after inaugurating such tests in neighbouring Kurunj Nagar and Lawspet blocks, said about 1,500 samples were being tested daily.



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## CMRL READY TO RESUME SERVICES

Minister for industries M.C. Sampath takes the Saidapet metro rail after inspecting the arrangements at Saidapet and Alandur metro stations. CMRL is gearing up to resume operations from Monday. —DC

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## IMD predicts heavy rain in a few TN districts

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 5

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall over isolated areas of Tamil Nadu on Saturday and Sunday.

According to a weather bulletin issued by the Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai of the IMD, in the next 24 hours, isolated areas in Theni, Dindigul, Madurai, Virudhunagar, Coimbatore, Nilgiris, Namakkal, Salem, Karur and Trichy districts will receive heavy to very heavy rainfall with thunderstorms.

The intensity of the rainfall will be heavy on Sunday in the above-mentioned districts, as per the bulletin.

There could also be moderate spells at many places in the interior and northern districts like Sivagangai, Pudukottai, Dindigul, Tirupur, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Kallakurichi and Tiruvannamalai.

It also said that the skies over Chennai will be generally cloudy. Thunderstorm with light rain is likely to occur in some areas of Chennai.

Maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be around 35°C and 26°C in the city for the next 48 hours.

Blogger Pradeep John, also called the 'Tamil Nadu weatherman', tweeted:

"Chennai with easterlies in, mornings will be filled lots if caulis and short spells here and there."

## 33 TN women groups warn of 'if we do not rise'

SINDHYA SAMUEL | DC  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 5

Over 33 women's groups, human rights and LGBTQIA rights organisations, from across the state, have come together as a single platform under the name 'All Women Federation' and launched a massive online campaign 'If we do not rise' on Saturday to mark the third anniversary of the assassination of activist-journalist Gauri Lankesh.

The 'TN campaign' is in support of the nationwide campaign which is being organized by more 600 women's groups, LGBTQIA, human rights organisations, trade unions and farmers' organisations from 26 states, aimed at raising voices against targeted and planned attacks on the constitutionally-guaranteed rights of citizens.

Individuals from the groups participated in online as well as offline activities locally to show their support for the campaign.

Kavitha Gajendran, the TN co-ordinator of the

campaign, also a member of All-India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), said that thousands of individuals from 33 organisations across Tamil Nadu had come together to launch a 'Day of Resistance' on September 5, the third assassination anniversary of Gauri Lankesh, who was an extraordinary journalist and activist who fearlessly fought against what she considered to be growing fascism in politics and public life that was destroying the very spirit and soul of this nation. Inspired by her courage of conviction and fearless spirit, this campaign is aimed at uniting voices against targeted attacks on the constitutional rights of the people of India.

As a part of the campaign, the All-Women Federation released fact-sheets on various issues such as violence against women, LGBTQIA, migrant workers, domestic workers, Muslim women, sex workers, Dalit and Adivasi women, child-trafficking, child labour,

which has impacted women and the LGBTQIA communities disproportionately. The front also released a state charter of various demands which have been submitted to the Chief Minister, focusing on issues that could be addressed by the government.

The campaign also includes cultural expressions including songs and folk dances and video clips of women, including farmers, weavers, sex workers, sharing their stories of struggle through Facebook live.

The campaign is seen as a protest against amendments to and dilution of existing laws including Right to Information Act, Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2020, and abrogation of Article 370 among others and the 'steady deterioration in the rule of law with alarming cases of police excesses, including custodial deaths.'

The last few years have witnessed frontal attacks on the freedom of expression guaranteed by the Constitution - the right to dress, speak, write, eat and choose one's religion-

which has impacted women and the LGBTQIA communities disproportionately.

Voices of dissent have been systematically silenced and labelled anti-national. Activists, journalists and academics engaged in various movements are languishing in jails, without access to the legal provision of bail; and a woman like Gauri Lankesh has had to pay with her life for exercising the fundamental right to speech and expression. This cannot happen in a democratic country like India. "If we do not rise now, we can never rise," said the organisers from Tamil Nadu.

Some of the organisations that are participating from Tamil Nadu are AIDWA, NFIW, Manidhi, Women's Collective Forum, Tamil Nadu Women Journalist Forum among others. P. Suganthi from AIDWA, Manuja from NFIW, Selvi from Manidhi, Sheelu from Women's Collective Tamil Nadu, among others, organised the movement in Tamil Nadu.

## Police get tough on encroachments

T. SUDHEESH | DC  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 5

## DC IMPACT

Following a report carried by Deccan Chronicle on the traffic snarls on Thiruvalluvar Salai near Dr DC Kothari Nagar, the Ramapuram police have started taking steps to clear the platforms illegally occupied by shop-owners.

Thomsan Xavier, inspector, Ramapuram, told DC that he had given a two-week ultimatum to the

shop-owners to clear things kept on the platforms. "I have discussed the matter with the local traffic officials and the zonal officer a day after the DC report appeared. Encroachment upon the platform is the main reason for traffic congestion in the area. We have clearly marked the platform with yellow and red colours. If shop-owners don't remove things from

the marked area in the stipulated time, they will be penalized," he said.

According to the inspector, a concerted effort from all departments including highways, traffic, revenue and the corporation is needed to chalk out a better plan to dismantle the illegal structures. "What we have found is that only a couple of shops have proper parking facilities in the area. This poor planning has resulted in congestion.

Now we are planning to bring in some regulations restricting parking of vehicles by the customers as well as shop-owners on the roadside during busy hours, that is till 11 am and after 3 pm," he said.

It was on September 2 DC published the report titled 'Wayside encroachments bring back traffic snarls'. "The solution for the problem is simple: stop issuing licences to shop-owners who don't have parking facilities.

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 5

The police have arrested a man from Villupuram for allegedly cheating a girl here on the pretext of marriage and extorting around ₹2 lakh from her.

The accused, Nandhagopal, 35, a native of Gingee in Villupuram district was apprehended by the Anaicut police from Chengalpet on September 4 and produced before a court here which sent him to judicial remand.

The accused introduced himself as a software engineer and befriended a 20-year-old college-going girl through a social network platform and cellphone after which he allegedly promised to marry her.

He allegedly demanded money from the victim after blackmailing her, saying he would make their morphed pictures and videos public. Fearing that, the girl pawned her jewels and deposited ₹2 lakhs in his

bank account two months back.

The police said that Nandhagopal began harassing the complainant for more money and threatened to commit suicide, after which her family lodged a complaint at the police station.

The Anaicut police registered a case and formed a special team to arrest the accused.

On Friday, the team arrested Nandhagopal from his house in Gingee. The investigation revealed that the accused was a jobless married man. He has a seven-year-old son out of the wedlock. He was booked under sections 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), 406 (punishment for criminal breach of trust) of the Indian Penal Code.

The police seized two mobile phones, SIM cards and a bank passbook from the accused. He was produced in court and lodged at the Madurantakam sub-jail.

## TN FISHERMEN ATTACKED BY SL PIRATES

R VALAYAPATHY | DC  
VEDHARANYAM, SEPT 5

A six-member pirate gang of Sri Lanka, attacked four Indian fishermen and snatched away their fishing net, diesel and other valuables like mobile phone etc., offshore south-east of Arkattuthurai near Vedharanyam, Nagapattinam district, on Friday.

Coastal security police sources said Gopi (45), Velavan (45), Sugumar (42) and Kalidas (20) hailed from Arkattuthurai fishermen hamlet, ventured into the sea on Friday noon, and were fishing offshore Arkattuthurai, when the pirates who came in two boats attacked them with iron rods and made away with Rs 5 lakh worth fishing net and other valuables.

The injured Indian fishermen managed to reach shore early on Saturday after getting diesel from another Indian fishermen boat. All the four were shifted to the government hospital, Vedharanyam, for treatment.

The victims filed a complaint with the coastal security police and the fisheries department, about the incident.

## Deferred examinations: Scales tilted against law students



Sanjay Pinto

It's not just advocates who have had to contend with a hole in their pockets during the ongoing Covid pandemic. Law students are in no better position. While online examinations and assignments have helped the final year students to graduate this year, those in other years of study, are on tenterhooks. A Bar Council of India directive dated June 9, 2020, allows the conduct of end semester examinations only "after reopening of the colleges/universities". There is ambiguity over whether "reopening" may be interpreted as the start of

online classes or physical resumption of lectures.

As there is no word yet on when it would be safe to reopen educational institutions, the end semester examinations will be a festering backlog. The decision to "promote" all students, except those in their final year, on the basis of internal assessment marks or the previous year's performance, is meaningless. The concept of promotion or detention does not exist in higher education. Those who fail in particular papers automatically go to the next year but with arrears to be cleared. Dangling "promotion" as a Covid carrot is superfluous to bunnies that jump on their own!

For colleges that follow the semester pattern, examinations not conducted for the previous semester will be

## JUSTICE FOR ALL

like accumulation of 'arrears'. For instance, for those who have now gone to the final year of the 3 year course, their fourth semester exams were due in April. The fifth semester classes were to have started by June, with fifth semester examinations due around December. So if God willing, physical classes are to finally commence by this year-end or early next year, these students will end up having to write back to back fourth and fifth semester examinations, even as they grapple with the sixth semester syllabus. Imagine having to write 12 papers at one go, a short break notwithstanding. Or worse, if the situation does not improve by the first quarter of next year, the prospect of 18 papers

together for the fourth, fifth and sixth semesters! Law is a complex subject and cramming sections, principles, clauses and case laws for 12 to 18 different branches will be more than onerous.

So were the final year graduating students who had online examinations and project reports just plain lucky? Where does it leave the Right to Equality and against Discrimination under Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of the other students? Are they to be deprived of a legitimate concession during a public health emergency because of the year of their birth? Two categories of citizens?

With all due respect, I was disappointed that the Supreme Court in a similar matter in *Praneeth Vs University Grants Commission* (2020) had

rejected the argument that there is "hostile discrimination" between the terminal semester and other students, holding that there is a "rational" and "intelligible differential". The Court had held that the "differentiation has nexus with the object to be achieved."

The object to be achieved here is three-fold. The safety of students and teachers, prevention of the loss of an academic year and avoiding a traumatic and unreasonable examination backlog. All this during a pandemic whose trajectory no one knows, just yet.

A simple solution is to extend the same concession of online examinations or project reports for all students till the pandemic dissipates or an effective vaccine is ready. The conduct of online classes may be con-

strued as "reopening" of the college or university. If the Supreme Court and High Courts can hear cases through video conferencing, why not online law classes? Frankly, with the sheer glut of webinars conducted by domain experts, including a galaxy of erudite judges, that itself is readymade learning material. If the All India Bar Exam can be held online, why can't semester law examinations also be on the net with the option of project reports for those who have no access to computers?

The legal profession has a big gestation period. Should it be prolonged, when we can help students? Budding lawyers deserve justice, tempered with mercy. And practicality.

(The writer is an advocate at the Madras high court, columnist & author)



## SHORT TAKES

## Door to door campaigns to avoid using crude bombs

From P1

Door to door requests and awareness campaigns were also held in villages by forest teams on Saturday to encourage people to avoid using crude bombs. Two sub-inspectors and four police personnel also joined the forest teams.

During the raid, officials seized four deer horns and a snare from a house belong to a farmer Selvan (75) in Moongil Madai Kuttai area in Madhukkarai range, while another team picked Rengasamy (30) from Karadimadai village, and seized a country-made bomb, nets, four snares, an air gun, a huge knife and two spotted deer horns.

Two persons identified as Chinnaasamy (45) and Durai Samy (45), were arrested from Viraliyur - Vellerkampakalayam of Devarayapuram, and a few snares, spears, nets, explosive materials used to make 'avuttukai' and three deer horns were seized. Investigations are on.

## Corona: Med college dean in hospital

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, SEPT. 5

The medical and paramedical staff of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial government hospital (MGMGH) here were in for a shock as Dr Vanitha, dean, Dr KAP Viswanatham government Medical College, Tiruchy, was confirmed Corona positive on Saturday, and subsequently was admitted to the MGMGH, which falls under her jurisdiction.

Official sources said, Dr Vanitha, who had all along been treating corona patients in the special ward along with her colleagues for the last six months, was suffering from cough and fever for the past few days. Her swab blood sample was sent for clinical analysis and a PCR test done on Thursday, but the results came negative.

Despite that, she continued coughing and the fever continued. Following this, a CT scan was taken which confirmed that her lungs were Corona infected. Sourcers said she was admitted to the MGMGH here on Saturday morning, and doing well.

It might be recalled that 35 medical and para-medical staff of the MGMGH were already infected and admitted to the MGMGH. Most of them had recovered while some of them are still undergoing treatment, sources added.

## 2 men held for threatening girl

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT. 5

The Tambaram all-women police have arrested two men for allegedly threatening a girl to release an obscene video of her online.

Police said that the accused, Subin Babu, 25 of Erukkancheri befriended the 16-year-old girl from Tambaram on Facebook in the year 2016. They were together since then and Subin Babu allegedly took vulgar videos of her in the last four years.

## Giant tree falls across road



A huge 100-year-old peepal tree lies uprooted on Mandi street in Vellore on Saturday. A labourer was injured and admitted to the hospital. Two cars and a bike were also damaged. The road dug for stormwater drain and overnight rains may have caused the tree to fall, say locals.

— K. Senthil Nathan

## Consumers still wary of malls

T. SUDHEESH | DC CHENNAI, SEPT. 5

Despite almost a week since the malls in the city were reopened with high-tech safety systems to contain the spread of coronavirus, customers show little enthusiasm to shop from their dream shops.

The malls have deployed computerised thermal scanning systems for contactless screening, wet mat sanitiser for footwear and artificial intelligence-based technology.

Phoenix Marketcity, a popular mall in the city, has even deployed an employee to physically check the customers' Arogya Sethu app. A system is in place to restrict customers who have high temperature from enter-

ing the mall. A newly-installed AI has helped the customers to understand the count of visiting customers inside and premises.

Meanwhile, consumer organisations cautioned the consumers on the risk of thronging the malls since there is a high possibility of virus spread. Manikandan Shah, president, Federation of

Consumer Organisations in Tamil Nadu, said consumers would throng malls in the coming days in large numbers as mall-owners are targeting the festive season to bring back crowds into malls. But, consumers are scared at this point of time of getting infected. That is why malls are witnessing low turnout even days after reopening, he said.

However, Manoj Mukund, a techie who lost his job due to the pandemic, says that people, especially the salaried class who used to go to malls for weekend shopping, have lost purchasing capacity due to lay-offs and salary cuts. "I think it will take months to get back the purchasing capacity of consumers," he said.

## CS asks dt collectors to step up vigil as cases likely to spike in October

Chennai Sept. 5: With industrial units, commercial establishments, public transport and temples among others resuming activities in Tamil Nadu in Unlock 4, the state government has asked the district collectors to step up vigil. The collectors should also increase information, education and communication (IEC) campaign, as coronavirus cases are expected to spike in October, chief secretary K. Shanmugam said. Calling upon the district administration to mount IEC campaign to create public awareness and educate public on the self-imposed discipline

and accountability in Covid control, Shanmugam said cases are expected to spike next month "if no proper discipline is enforced or observed by public in using face mask, maintaining social distancing in public places or failing to observe personal hygiene." In a letter to the collectors following his video conference interaction with the bureaucrats earlier in the day, the chief secretary complimented them and heads of health, police, revenue and local administration and other frontline departments for their role in controlling the pandemic.

"As we are still in the critical stage of the battle against Covid-19, you are instructed not to let down the guard and there should not be any complacency at any level," he said.

Under the changing circumstances, the collectors should be more vigilant on Covid control due to several relaxations issued from September 1 for opening up more economic activities. "All of you should be aware that the worst time in pandemic management is yet to come," Shanmugam said in the letter; a copy of which was made available to the media.

— PTI

## AIADMK-BJP ties remain under strain in state

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT. 5

Fisheries minister D. Jayakumar's statement on Saturday that no one has the right to command the AIADMK on the alliance question was an indicator to the continuation of the strain in the relationship between the two parties that were allies in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Responding to a question from the media after paying tributes to freedom fighter V. O. Chidambaram in Rajaji Salai, Jayakumar said the AIADMK never violated 'coalition dharma' and expected the allies also to show the

same restraint in expressing their views.

Though allies should be free to criticize the partners, they should ensure that it was a healthy criticism that did not lead to controversies, he said.

When asked about BJP leader H. Raja's statement that AIADMK ministers should not talk about the alliance as it would be finalised by Delhi, Jayakumar said that no one was empowered to command the AIADMK.

Raja's statement was a response to AIADMK ministers saying that the AIADMK was the head of the alliance in the state,

which in turn was a retort to BJP leaders talking about leading the alliance in the next elections and having the capability to win 60 seats and so on.

Some present leaders in the BJP, which settled for just five seats in the Lok Sabha elections in 2019, have now become more ambitious and want to contest the 2021 Assembly elections in more number of seats. It is in view of such a plan that they had been putting pressure on the AIADMK now that the elections are coming closer.

However, AIADMK leaders have been taking a

firm stand in dealing with the State BJP leaders without letting them off the hook when they make provocative statements like 'we will lead the alliance' or 'no government can be formed without the BJP's support'.

According to sources, a section of the AIADMK leaders is not keen on continuing the alliance with the BJP.

Similarly even a section of BJP wants to part ways with the AIADMK and form a third alliance in the State for the next elections with some ragtag parties to put up a fight against both the AIADMK and also the DMK.

## Don't discuss NEP with governors, says Stalin

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT. 5

DMK president M. K. Stalin urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to give up on his plans to convene a Governors' conference and discuss the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 along with the President Ram Nath Kovind and the Union education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'.

Since the Lok Sabha would soon discuss the policy, holding the discussion with the Centre's



representatives in the States would blunt democracy, Stalin said in a statement on Saturday.

When the Centre did not discuss the NEP, prior to its release, with the Central Advisory Board of Education, in which State Ministers would be a part, discussing it with

governors would amount to denigrating the States and weaken the powers of the Lok Sabha, he said.

Pointing out that the committee constituted by the State government under the Principal Secretary for Education was an eyeshew as it comprised two former Vice-chancellors and four present Vice-chancellors, Stalin called up the government to include representatives of parents and students, besides educationalists and activists who had been shining the light on the dark side of NEP.

## Floral tributes



Senior ministers pay floral tributes to the portrait of V. O. Chidambaram on the occasion of his 149th birth anniversary on Saturday.

— DC

## Vulture breeding centre in MTR proposed

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, SEPT. 5

While the world observed 'International Vulture Awareness Day' on Saturday, as a reminder to people to orient their minds in vulture conservation, here in the Nilgiris, a proposal is being mooted to established a 'Vulture Rescue, Rehabilitation and Captive Breeding centre' in Segur reserve forest limits in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) buffer zone, as the Moyar valley locale in the Segur jungles is the hub of the small, yet viable breeding population of vulture, a critically endangered avian species.

Though the Indian sky was full of vultures of different species in the past, its population has now dwindled to very low levels due to eco-toxicological and other related issues. The Moyar valley jungles in the MTR have long been the home to four species of vultures. Their population is estimated to be a little over 200 now.

Deputy director, MTR (buffer zone), L C S Srikanth, said that a proposal has been submitted to the government under the Tamil Nadu Innovations



Dr. B. Ramakrishnan

Initiatives (TANII) scheme of the state planning commission to set up a Vulture Rescue, Rehabilitation and Captive Breeding Centre in the MTR buffer zone.

"Native trees like Terminalia Arjuna, riverine micro-environs inside the jungles that are found to be conducive for vulture breeding is available in the Moyar Valley jungles. To focus more on vulture con-

servation, the need for a Vulture Rescue, Rehabilitation and Captive Breeding centre was felt, and that's why the proposal has been sent under the TANII scheme. If the proposal gets approved, then this is going to be the first of its kind in South India. In Moyar Valley woods, Long-billed Vulture and White-rumped vulture population is relatively more. The pro-

tected environs of Moyar valley jungles and good food availability (vultures feed on decaying and putrefying carcass), would continue to support the vulture species, which by nature, is a slow breeder. It is also proposed to have the captive breeding centre for vultures in Sokkanalli limits in Segur jungles," he explained.

## Tiger presence in MTR boon for vulture breeding: Expert

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, SEPT. 5

Dr B Ramakrishnan, assistant professor, Zoology and Wildlife Biology, Government Arts College here, a well-etched name in vulture studies, who is also principal investigator on a long-term project on vulture biology in Moyar valley in the MTR, said that food availability and climate factors determine the reproduction of vultures.

"The vulture needs good food, mainly carcasses of wild animals, as it is a known jungle scavenger helping in keeping the forest environs clean and free from spread of germs by feeding on the carcasses. Along with good food, it also needs favorable climate for breeding. Normally, the vulture is a slow to breed species, which lays a single egg at its nests on tree tops."

"My findings over the past one decade show that the reason for good thriving and breeding of vultures in Moyar valley is the rise of tiger popu-

lation in the MTR. Usually, leopards and wild dogs are the other major predators in the woods. They try to hide their kill and do not give chance for vultures to prey on the carcass of their prey. But, the tiger does not hide the carcass of its kill, and leaves it in the open ground. This helps vultures to prey extensively on the carcasses of wild animals which fall prey to tigers. Since there is a good increase in tiger population in MTR over the past decade, it directly correlates with the increase in the vulture population too, as tigers help vultures get their food," he added.

"Usually, vultures prefer Terminalia arjuna tree (Marutha maram in Tamil) along the jungle streams as nesting site. Of late, vultures in Moyar valley are found to build their nests in two more wild tree species. Apart from 'Jagalikadavu' and 'Siriyoor' limits in Moyar valley, vultures have begun to colonize the 'Ebbanad slopes' and 'Gudalpati' limits in recent

times, which is a positive sign," he noted.

"A rescue and rehabilitation centre for vultures in the MTR is the need of the hour. In times of stress and whenever they happen to feed on poisoned carcasses in the jungles, vultures need to be treated in a well-equipped rehabilitation centre. This apart, vulture chicks which may accidentally fall from tree tops also need to be rescued and rehabilitated. Four species of vultures, namely, White-rumped vulture, Long-billed vulture, Red-headed vulture which is commonly called King vulture and the Egyptian vulture, are found in different parts of South India. But, Moyar valley in MTR is the only place where all these four vulture species are found to thrive. This is the healthiest southern-most vulture hub in the country. So, a well-planned action must be initiated for captive breeding of vultures in the MTR, to help this critically endangered species to steadily increase its population," added Dr Ramakrishnan.

## Bedi causing disrepute to govt by her autocratic decisions: CM

Puducherry, Sept. 5: Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy on Saturday charged Lt Governor Kiran Bedi with causing disrepute to the government through her "autocratic decisions."

These included rejecting files sent for approval to sanction grants to State government undertakings and also to government aided private schools, he said.

Addressing a virtual press conference, he said teachers of privately managed and government aided schools have been holding agitations as they were not paid salaries for nearly nine months. It was unfortunate that Lt Governor had been rejecting the government decisions to sanction grants without break to private schools so that the teachers would not be left in the cold, he said. "The Lt Governor is citing an untenable reason for refusing to sanction the grants," he said. — PTI



**SHORT TAKES**  
**PLA ABDUCTED 5 ARUNACHALESE YOUTH, CLAIM KIN**

From Page 1

The Upper Subansiri district administration said that they have received no complaint or information in this regard, but have taken note of social media reports and asked police to go to the frontier areas where the incident is reported to have taken place. Deputy commissioner of Upper Subansiri Kento Danggen told this newspaper, "We have not received any complaint or even information about such an incident so far. Following the hype created on social media we have asked police to rush officers to the areas where these incidents are reported to have taken place. We are also trying to reach out to the Indian Army." Mr Danggen said they are also in the process of reaching out to the villages and villagers who reported this incident in social media posts.

Congress MLA from Arunachal Pradesh, Ninong Ering, however, claimed that five people have been abducted by the PLA. Mr Ering said that they had gone fishing when they were abducted. "The Chinese have again started creating a nuisance. Just like in Ladakh and Doklam, they (Chinese Army) have started incursions in Arunachal Pradesh," he said, claiming this is the second time that the Chinese Army has abducted people from India.

Security sources in the intelligence wing, engaged in international border management, said that Indian Army headquarters have also been establishing contact with the patrolling teams operating in remote areas along the MacMohan line to verify the villagers' claim. The incident came to light through WhatsApp messages.

**MOSQUE WILL BE OF SAME SIZE AS BABRI MASJID**

**Lucknow, Sept. 5:** A mosque that will come up in Ayodhya pursuant to the Supreme Court verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi case will be of the same size as Babri Masjid, said an office-bearer of the trust formed for its construction.

The five-acre complex in Ayodhya's Dhamnipur village will also house a hospital, a library and a museum among others, the office-bearer said, adding that retired professor and noted food critic Pushpesh Pant will be consultant curator of the museum.

"The complex of the mosque, which will be built in Dhamnipur, will also have facilities like a hospital, a museum at the Indo-Islamic Research Centre. The mosque will be on 15,000 square feet, while the rest of the land will have these facilities," Athar Hussain, the secretary and spokesperson of Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation said on Saturday. "Noted food critic Pushpesh Pant gave his consent to curate the museum on Friday," Hussain said.

The Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board has formed the Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF), a trust, for the construction of the mosque on the five-acre plot.

**ACTRESS WIFE SLAPS DV CASE AGAINST BJD MP**

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 5**

Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Lok Sabha member from Kendrapara, Anubhav Mohanty, on Saturday landed in trouble as his wife and noted Odia film actress Barsha Priyadarshini filed a case of domestic violence against him.

The case was filed under Section 12 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act against the MP for allegedly assaulting and harassing Barsha.

In her petition filed before the Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate Court, Cuttack, Barsha appealed to the court seeking monthly maintenance from Anubhav, besides an indemnity of ₹15 crore.

Barsha in her petition said that Anubhav is a habitual drunkard and he often drinks with his friends at home. The MP also assaulted and harassed her mentally, she alleged.

"He invites his friends to our bedroom and drinks with them. If I resist, he would beat me up severely. He often asked me to leave his home," the actress said.

# Take nation into confidence, says Cong

Congress says people want to know about the outcomes of the repeated conversations with China

**New Delhi, Sept. 5:** The Congress on Saturday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to take the nation into confidence on talks with China on the border row in Ladakh, saying people want to know about the outcomes of the repeated conversations with the Chinese side.

The Opposition party's demand comes a day after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Chinese counterpart Gen. Wei Fenghe held an over two-hour-long meeting in Moscow with a focus on easing escalating border tension in eastern Ladakh.

Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said it was "Rajdharm" of the prime minister and the defence minister to take the nation into confidence on the important issue.

Listing the various levels of talks held with the Chinese from the foreign ministers level and corps commanders level to the defence ministers' discussions, Surjewala asked what is the outcome of these talks.

"What is the conversation about, what is happening. Will Prime Minister Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh take the country into confidence?" he asked.

Surjewala also referred to Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla's remarks that it was an "unprecedented" situation at the India-China border and "we've never had this sort of a situation since 1962", to underline the seriousness of the issue.

"The important part is what is the outcome of the repeated conversations with the Chinese counterparts by our government.... How will we ensure that Chinese transgressions are defeated," Surjewala said in a

● **CONGRESS' CHIEF** spokesperson Surjewala also referred to Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla's remarks that it was an "unprecedented" situation at the India-China border and "we've never had this sort of a situation since 1962", to underline the seriousness of the issue.

● **CONGRESS LEADER** Rajeev Shukla said they hoped that the issue can be resolved through talks, but he added conflicting statements coming from the government on the border stand-off are a matter of worry.

video posted on his Twitter account.

He said people want answers to questions such as how the Chinese will be repulsed to "reclaim our motherland".

"We hope Prime Minister Modi and the defence minister will come forward and take the nation into confidence. That is the true Rajdharm. We will await an answer," he said.

Later, at an online briefing, Congress leader Rajeev Shukla said, "We hope that the issue can be resolved through talks."

He, however, demanded that the government should give a clear picture of the situation.

"Conflicting statements coming from the government is a matter of worry for us," he added.

The tension between the two sides had escalated manifold after the violent clashes in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on June 15 in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed. The Chinese side also suffered casualties but it is yet to give out the details. According to an American intelligence report, the number of casualties on the Chinese side was 35.

-PTI



China's Minister of National Defence Wei Fenghe, left, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, center, and Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, right, pose for a photo with their colleagues at a Joint Meeting of Defence Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Commonwealth of Independent States and Collective Security Treaty Organization Member States in Moscow.

- PTI

## Army helps out stranded Chinese citizens

**New Delhi, Sept. 5:** At a time it is engaged in a fierce standoff with China's PLA in eastern Ladakh, the Indian Army on Wednesday provided food, warm clothes and medical assistance to three Chinese citizens who had lost their way in sub-zero temperatures at an altitude of 17,500 feet in a border area in North Sikkim, officials said.

The Army personnel deployed in the area also guided the Chinese citizens, including a woman, to return to the Chinese side and reach their destination.

The humanitarian ges-

● **THE HUMANITARIAN** gesture by the Army came when it is dealing with an aggressive behaviour by the Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh.

● **THE ARMY** said the three Chinese citizens lost their way in the Plateau area of North Sikkim.

ture by the Army came when it is dealing with an aggressive behaviour by the Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh.

The Army, in a statement, said the three Chinese citizens lost their way in the Plateau area of

North Sikkim. "Realising danger to the lives of the Chinese citizens in sub-zero temperatures, the soldiers of Indian Army immediately reached out and provided medical assistance including oxygen, food and warm clothes to protect them from the vagaries of extreme altitude and harsh climatic conditions," the Army said.

It said the Indian troops also gave them appropriate guidance to reach their destination after which they returned.

"The Chinese citizens expressed their gratitude to India and the Indian

Army for their prompt assistance," the Army said. The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in a bitter border row in eastern Ladakh for the last four months. The tensions had escalated manifold after 20 Indian Army personnel were killed in a fierce clash between the two sides in Galwan Valley on June 15. The Chinese military is yet to reveal the casualties it suffered in the clash.

Tensions flared up again in the region after China unsuccessfully attempted to occupy Indian territory on the southern bank of Pangong lake around a

week back.

Following the attempts, India occupied a number of strategic heights on the southern bank of Pangong lake and strengthened its presence in Finger 2 and Finger 3 areas in the region to thwart any Chinese actions. China has strongly objected to India's move.

India has also rushed in additional troops and weapons to the sensitive region following China's transgression attempts.

Defence ministers of the two countries met on the sidelines of a multilateral meet in Moscow on Friday.

- PTI

## Cops gangrape minor in Odisha

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 5**

A minor girl was allegedly gangraped by police personnel at gunpoint in the state capital during lockdown around two months ago. The matter came to light on Saturday after the girl's mother lodged a complaint with the Mahila Police Station here.

As per the complaint, the minor, a resident of Infocity police station area here, was raped by eight persons, including police personnel deployed on Covid-19 lockdown duty here around two months ago. Finding the girl alone, they took turns to rape her at gunpoint in an isolated area here. They had also threatened her to kill her if she disclosed the matter to anyone.

As per the victim's family, the girl was under depression after the incident and did not share her plight before due to fear. After she disclosed it recently, her father went

to Infocity police station to lodge a complaint five days ago. However, cops there referred him to Mahila Police Station.

As per preliminary investigation, the cops are not from the Commissionerate Police and had come from other district on Covid-19 lockdown duty.

"A woman lodged a complaint with Mahila police alleging that her daughter was gang raped between March and April. A case has been registered under various sections of IPC and POCSO Act. She had mentioned involvement of two personnel of an electronic media house and two security personnel," said DCP Umashankar Dash.

He added, "During investigation, the statement of the victim was recorded. She alleged involvement of two police personnel and their two colleagues. We have formed a special team for investigation and handed it over to Investigating Integrative Units for Crime Against Women."

## NO CBI PROBE IN TO HONEY TRAP SCANDAL

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, SEPT. 5**

The Indore bench of Madhya Pradesh high court on Saturday rejected a petition seeking a probe by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the honey-trapping and blackmailing scandal that surfaced in the state last year.

The scandal came to the fore when the MP police busted a racket involved in honey trapping and then blackmailing several bureaucrats and politicians in November last year.

However, several petitions were filed in the Indore bench seeking a CBI probe into the issue arguing that SIT would not be able to unearth the truth considering the high profile nature of the scandal. A division bench of the high court dismissed the petitions saying that it was satisfied with the progress of the probe by SIT into the matter and there was no need for a CBI probe into it.

## Seat sharing is a thorny issue for RJD-led alliance

**NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, SEPT. 5**

Seat sharing among Grand Alliance partners has turned into a thorny affair as most of the political parties including smaller partners have been demanding sizable seat share for the ensuing Assembly elections.

Political analysts believe that Tejashwi Yadav, the political heir of RJD Chief Lalu Yadav will have to leave his rigidity to end brewing resentment among Grand Alliance partners over the issue of seat adjustments in Bihar.

RLSP leaders in Patna recently met RJD state president Jagdanand Singh and submitted a list of seats it wanted to contest.

Sources in the grand alliance said that the negotiations among partners were in the final stages and likely to get sorted out by mid-September.

RLSP insiders told this newspaper that the party has staked claims on 48

● **THE GRAND** alliance in Bihar comprises RJD, Congress, Upendra Kushwaha's RLSP, Mukesh Sahani's VIP and three Left parties (CPI, CPM and CPI-ML).

seats which include 23 seats it contested in 2015 besides 25 other constituencies where the party claims to have a vote base.

Besides, three Left parties the CPI, the CPM and the CPI-ML have also submitted their lists and have urged the RJD to finalize the seat-sharing deal without delay.

Another smaller partner Mukesh Sahani of the Vikasheel Insan Party (VIP) has also sent a list of its candidates demanding "sizeable seat share" for the party.

With Jitan Ram Manjhi in NDA fold and no clarity yet on Sharad Yadav's Loktantrik Janata Dal (LJD), the grand alliance in Bihar comprises RJD, Congress, Upendra Kushwaha's RLSP,

Mukesh Sahani's VIP and three Left parties (CPI, CPM and CPI-ML).

Upendra Kushwaha with around 10 per cent voter base of his Koeri community is considered a strong player in the grand alliance. Mukesh Sahani's Nishad community accounts for 14 per cent of the state population and the RJD's M-Y combination forms about 30 per cent vote share (Muslims 16 and Yadav 14 per cent).

Sources said both RJD and Congress will take a call on the number of seats that would be distributed to alliance partners RLSP, VIP and left parties. The date of their meeting is yet to be finalized but "things these things will be sorted out soon. There is no trouble regarding seat-sharing among the grand alliance partners", a senior RJD leader said.

He further said that the formula will need final approval from RJD chief Lalu Yadav who is serving a jail term in fodder scam case.

## AP REPORTS 10K NEW CASES, TOTAL TO TOUCH FIVE LAKH SOON

**SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 5**

Andhra Pradesh has neared five-lakh mark of Covid-19 positive cases by registering total 4,87,331 cases with addition of 10,825 new Coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours. The state also recorded 76 deaths, taking the death toll to 4,347. As many as 1,00,880 patients are undergoing treatment in various hospitals

**TS has 2,511 new cases, 11 deaths**

**Hyderabad:** With 2,511 new Covid-19 cases, the total Coronavirus infections in the state rose to 1,38,395 while the number of fatalities climbed to 877 with the health authorities reporting 11 more deaths.

As many as 2,579 Covid-19 patients were declared as recovered, taking the total recovered cases to 1,04,603.

**Highest spike of 2,655 cases in Kerala**

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Kerala on Saturday recorded the highest single day spike with 2655 new cases of Covid - 19 even as 2111 persons recovered from the infection. Kerala has reported 84,759 Covid - 19 cases so far of which 62,559 persons have recovered. The active cases in the state are 21800.

**Karnataka has 9,746 cases, 128 deaths**

**Bengaluru:** Karnataka on Saturday reported 9,746 new Covid-19 cases and 128 related fatalities, taking the total number of infections to 3,89,232 and death toll to 6,298. The day also saw a record 9,102 patients getting discharged after recovery. As many as 9,746 fresh cases, 3,093 cases were from Bengaluru Urban alone.

**SSR | SUICIDE** The NCB on Saturday has also arrested Sushant's house help Dipesh Sawant

## NCB summons Rhea, to be grilled with Showik

**DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, SEPT. 5**

A day after the arrest of actress Rhea Chakraborty's brother Showik and late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's former house manager Samuel Miranda, the NCB arrested house help Dipesh Sawant on Saturday.

Showik and Miranda have been remanded to the NCB custody till September 11 in connection with the narcotics angle pertaining to the actor's suicide probe.

The central agency sent summons to Rhea for questioning next week after Showik claimed to be acting at her behest and

procuring drugs. The officials are also probing the mode of payment used for obtaining the narcotics substances.

The investigators said that the probe in the case has revealed debit and credit card transactions. The details of the debit and credit cards are being investigated to ascertain whom did they belong to and how many such transactions were done in the past. The officials said that they would grill Showik and he would be confronted with Rhea in a joint questioning session of the NCB.

The revelation has also hinted towards the possibility of her passing on the contraband to others,

including celebrities, identities of whom are yet to be established.

"NCB is a national probe agency and we wouldn't shirk the responsibility. We are discussing evidence with the public prosecutor and all those found involved will be picked," said Mutha Ashok Jain, deputy DG of NCB.

On Friday, the NCB raided Rhea Chakraborty's and house manager Samuel Miranda's residences in connection with the ongoing case. They seized their laptops, mobile phones and several documents. The agency also took custody of Abdul Basit Parihar, who was allegedly in direct contact with Rhea's brother

**SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, SEPT. 5**

The Shiv Sena on Saturday appeared to have softened its stand on the controversy involving Kangana Ranaut, who had likened Mumbai to PoK (Pakistan occupied Kashmir).

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut said he does not have any personal issue with the actress and added that he raised his voice because

Showik and has claimed that he would peddle drugs as per Showik's requirement.

The searches began at

she spoke against Maharashtra.

Meanwhile, RPI chief and Union minister for state Ramdas Athawale said his party would take care of Ranaut's security in Mumbai.

Mr Raut said that those who are insulting Maharashtra, should remember that Maharashtra is because of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb

Thackeray.

"I don't have any personal issue with Kangana Ranaut. But insulting Mumbai and Maharashtra will not be tolerated," the Shiv Sena leader said, adding that linking Mumbai with PoK is a very serious offence.

The Shiv Sena and Congress have been alleging that BJP IT cell is behind Kangana Ranaut's tweets.

angles surrounding Rajput's death are being probed by the CBI, Enforcement Directorate and NCB.



## DECCAN Chronicle

6 SEPTEMBER 2020



Krishna Shastri  
Devulapalli

Off the beaten track

## Blame it all on those vile Mughals

Apparently, our glorious land was ruled at various times by, among others, the Mauryas for 550 years, the Chalukyas for 600 years, the Satavahanas for 500 years, the Cholas for 1,000 years, the Pandyas for 600 years and the Kapoors for 100 years (okay, the last one I made up). But all we hear about, Facebook and WhatsApp tell me of late, is the wretched Mughals who ruled for a measly 300 years. And that this injustice should be corrected at once on a war footing as we scream *Jai Hind*.

As a baby step, I don't know, perhaps we could ban biryani, a diabolical Mughal invention that has enslaved us for several centuries. And make Chole Bhature, an all-time favourite of Raja Raja Chola's, the most ordered dish on Swiggy for the next one year and show those arrogant, if dead, Mughals a thing or two. And be declared the most patriotic nation in the universe by Nasa. And have that underwritten by Unesco.

Jokes apart, why is it important that we read up on these kings? With immediate effect? As opposed to those other terrible kings about whom far too much has been written?

Well, could it be because, unlike those dastardly Mughal invaders, these were all good, benevolent, tolerant kings, who didn't bump off their own family members to ascend the throne, had no blood on their hands, whose armies didn't rape, pillage or plunder, didn't hanker after power, were uniformly kind to their subjects, didn't ever impose taxes, planted shady trees, built wide roads and never ate biryani? And that Kangana Ranaut and Arnab Goswami have in their possession UHD videos from centuries ago as incontrovertible proof of their munificence?

Indulge me as I relate a tiny tale with a happy ending.

A man was travelling with his family along a long and winding road. It had been quite a journey. There was no denying the path had been bumpy and unpredictable, and his car rattled and wheezed a bit from the strain. But there was also no denying he had made progress. Mainly because he had kept his eyes open. And on the road ahead.

Suddenly a man waving a bright red flag jumped in his path and stopped the car.

"You know what a horrible, dangerous, pot-hole filled road you have been driving on so far?" he said. "Don't you see the injustice of it? Shouldn't you be taking all those responsible for building such an evil, un navigable road to task, make them pay? And keep looking out for how dangerous and harmful the road behind you is?"

"Yes, you are absolutely right, sir," the driver said gratefully. "From now on, I won't take my eyes off the rear-view mirror when I drive. I'll keep a keen eye on how bad the road behind me is. Thanks for the invaluable tip."

The driver restarted his car, and proceeded, his eyes firmly on the rear-view mirror. And promptly drove off a cliff at the next bend, family and all. And they all lived happily ever after.

Not a believable story? Why then are so many of us obsessed with the road that we have already negotiated? Good, bad and ugly, though it might have been. Like any long road. At the expense of looking at the road ahead?

Understanding history and its older sibling, mythology, is okay. Good even, up to a point. But isn't it obvious that we have gone way past that? Obsessively looking at the past — real and mythical — is merely not wanting to look at the present; an inability to deal with reality. And an unwillingness to take responsibility.

How about we put history aside for a bit, and mythology, too, and brush up on reason, scientific thinking and logic instead. Even get ourselves a (slim) book on compassion, perhaps. Maybe it's time to forget yesterday for a minute and figure out what we need to do today so that we actually have a tomorrow. Not be diverted by people who don't want us to see the here and now.

See what we've allowed to happen because we've been told to stare at the rear-view mirror.

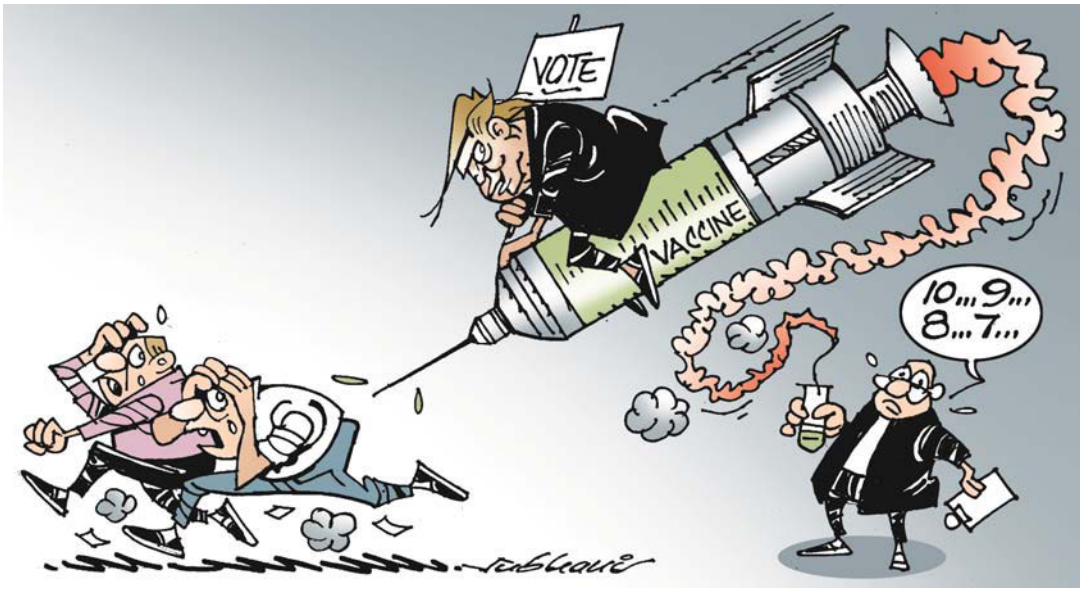
And, yes, let's thank god for biryani.

*Krishna Shastri Devulapalli is a humour writer, novelist, columnist and screenwriter*



As a baby step, I don't know, perhaps we could ban biryani, a diabolical Mughal invention that has enslaved us for several centuries. And make Chole Bhature, an all-time favourite of Raja Raja Chola's, the most ordered dish on Swiggy for the next one year and show those arrogant, if dead, Mughals a thing or two.

Subhani



## For democracy's sake, don't scrap Q-Hour



Pavan K. Varna

Chanakya's View

Frankly, to have a Parliament session without question hour is like visiting a forest without trees. The BJP's decision to scrap question hour in the forthcoming parliamentary session is both worrisome and opportunistic. The BJP may be in power right now, but surely it must remember its days in the Opposition, and not lose sight of the fact that it could be there again. In democracy — and in life — nothing ever remains unchanged. Ghalib's immortal line comes to mind: *Har bulundi ke naseebon mein hai pasti ek din*: it is the in the destiny of every pinnacle to hit the dust sometime.

If the BJP would have been in the Opposition today, would it welcome a parliamentary session without the opportunity to put the government on the mat? Especially if there were burning issues to discuss like there are today: the economic crisis, the handling of the Corona pandemic, and Chinese aggression on the border. The reasons being touted against holding the question hour are hardly convincing. Democratic governments function on the basis of accountability. Within the hallowed precincts of Parliament, the nation's highest democratic forum, question hour is the one institution where government ministers can be directly questioned. Nothing else substitutes for this interrogatory interaction, and compels the government to explain and defend its

actions and policies.

Let us examine the arguments against question hour being put by the ruling dispensation. Firstly, it is said that even in the absence of question hour, written answers can be provided to questions provided in advance. My experience of being in Parliament compels me to unhesitatingly throw this argument out of the window. There are two categories of questions that can be asked in Parliament, unstarred and starred. The first merit only written replies. This incorporates the art of drafting a reply, that mostly says as little as possible, while fulfilling the perfunctory requirement of answering the question. As a diplomat-bureaucrat before joining politics, I have been on the other side of the fence of drafting replies to unstarred questions. The achievement lay in hiding the full truth, and revealing only what is unavoidably necessary, playing on words, and using the loopholes in the question itself — many of which are badly drafted — to get off the hook. The answers are circulated in Parliament, and mostly forgotten, except as a written record of what little the government had to say when asked a straightforward question.

Starred questions, on the other hand, come up in question hour. The concerned minister, and sometimes the Prime Minister himself, has to physically answer the question. Moreover, each question allows for a minimum of three sup-

**The argument that question hour can be substituted by zero hour or by special leave mentions, is fallacious. Both are usually about urgent but localised issues, and do not allow for the range of interrogation that a question hour does.**

plementary questions related to the original question. This requires the minister to prepare himself fully, and gives the Opposition a much needed opportunity to hold the government accountable in a much more direct way than the anonymity of a written reply. If the minister prevaricates, or seeks to evade the questions asked, the Chair of the House can pull him up, and if she does not have the answers it becomes an embarrassment for the government. In other words, if Parliament's principal purpose is to provide a democratic forum for holding the government accountable, this is the hour when it happens best.

The argument that starred questions require the minister to be accompanied by a number of officials from the ministry concerned since, depending on the question asked, they can quickly send across from the officials' gallery briefing notes or facts to the minister, is fallacious. If even MPs will now be able to enter Parliament only with a negative certificate on Corona, why can't each ministry identify a few selected officials required to be present on question day, to do the same?

The argument that question hour can be substituted by zero hour or by special leave mentions, is fallacious too. Both are usually about

urgent but localised issues, and do not allow for the range of interrogation that a question hour does. Short duration discussions on specific subjects, or call attention motions, are difficult to schedule, and do not allow the exercise of accountability to be exercised on a daily basis as happens during question hour. The fact that some state Assemblies have dispensed with question hour, should be no reason why Parliament, the apex legislature where national issues need to be discussed, has to do the same. Similarly, for the BJP to argue that because question hour has frequently been disrupted by the Opposition, question hour itself can be dispensed with, is hardly tenable. Unfortunately, disruptions do take place in Parliament. But, the BJP when in Opposition perfected the art of such disruptions. Would it have then agreed that as a result of its behaviour question hour should be scrapped?

It is true that these are not normal times. The Corona pandemic has led to modifications in the working of institutions. It is for this reason that the session of Parliament is taking place after a prolonged hiatus, and for a truncated period. Parliament cannot only be a mechanical institution for a ruling party with a brute majority in the Lok Sabha, and a usually managed majority in the Rajya Sabha, to pass legislation. A government has to be held accountable. It is hoped that the BJP's own professed commitment to democracy will prompt it to rescind its decision to do away with question hour.

*The writer, an author and former diplomat, is in politics*

## LETTERS

### BE DISCIPLINED

The Tamil Nadu government's decision to hike the fines/penalties (for instance, ₹200 for not sporting face masks) for not adhering to safety norms is welcome. The government has allowed free mobility across the state. People can utilise this relaxation to maximise their economic welfare without affecting their health and that of others too. Since the virus is spreading fast, it is imperative that people do not throw to the winds the minimum safety prescribed by the government. Let us endeavour to be responsible citizens.

**S. Ramakrishnasayee**  
Chennai

### FAIR ASSESSMENT

ENHANCING THE compensation awarded to an accident victim (a homemaker) from ₹8.5 lakh to ₹14 lakh, the Madras high court has ruled that a homemaker's job is the toughest one as she works without any time limit unlike the earning members of a family. The court deserves to be complimented for correctly assessing the importance of a homemaker. In fact, the family would be completely shattered in the absence of a homemaker whose contribution towards all-round happiness is immeasurable.

**P.G. Menon, Chennai**

### TN BYPOLLS

THE DECISION of the Election Commission to hold elections to the three TN Assembly constituencies, which fell vacant following the death of the respective candidates, needs reconsideration in the light of the fact that State itself will witness Assembly elections sometime in May 2021, which is not far off from now. Conducting elections now and again during May 2021 when the polls will be held in the State would amount to incurring additional expenditure. When the represented constituencies do not witness any development even during the full term, what if they remain unrepresented for a few months? Further, following the outbreak of Covid, the State's economy is in tatters and conducting elections at this time will further strain the finances of the State. The EC should put off the bypolls in the larger interest of the State.

**V.S. Jayaraman, Chennai**

### DEALING WITH CHINA

WITH CHINA, we need to a 10-15 year plan to attain parity on the economic and military fronts. Ladakh should be the fulcrum of our military might pressing China to end its illegal occupation of Aksai Chin. On the economic front, we should fiercely compete on the global canvas and build bonds with neighbours around. Parallely, for strength in numbers, we should leverage QUAD, the joint forum with US, Japan and Australia, for long term economic and defence architecture encircling China. No strategy can be better than keeping channels of communication open, 24/7. Bilateral dialogues should be leveraged for an engineered calm as we add muscle to our long term objectives.

**R. Narayanan, Chennai**

## Post Shah illness, now stars don't seem aligned for BJP rejigs

### Scindia kept waiting

The expansion of both the BJP national executive and the Union Cabinet is unlikely before the Parliament session. It has been nine months since J.P. Nadda took over as party president but there is no sign of a new team. The BJP office bearers were supposed to be appointed in August but home minister Amit Shah's illness is said to have delayed it. Now the stars have turned hostile. BJP insiders now claim that an "inauspicious" Shraadh fortnight has come in the way of a BJP executive and Cabinet expansion. Jyotiraditya Scindia will be disappointed if he fails to join Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Cabinet before the Madhya Pradesh Assembly bypolls. Mr Scindia thinks he can influence voters in 27 constituencies if he is given a Cabinet rank.

### Mukul must pay

The Congress Party's Mukul Wasnik is finding himself on a sticky wicket following his move to align with the 23 dissenters. Mukul is AICC general secretary in charge of Madhya Pradesh where crucial

Assembly by-elections are to be held. But Mr Wasnik is unable to visit on account of his 'rebel' stance. There are four AICC secretaries under him who in private are giving him an earful for allegedly 'compromising' their integrity and loyalty to the party. In principle, AICC secretaries are supposed to take direction and guidance from the general secretary but in Mukul's case, neither side is speaking to one another. Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath fears this deadlock would cost the party dearly.

### Thirty minutes only

Criticised for cancelling 'Question Hour', the Narendra Modi government will allow a 30-minute question hour in the upcoming Parliament session scheduled to be held from September 14 to October 1. So far, India and Russia had been two democracies dithering on convening their Parliaments in the wake of Covid-19. On the other hand, as many as 105 parliaments worldwide have been meeting and discussing issues amid the pandemic. In the British Parliament, Prime Minister Boris



By WAQYANAWIS

Johnson has been fielding questions after spending a considerable time in the hospital

ICU after getting infected by the coronavirus.

### A piece of Mukherjee

With former President Pranab Mukherjee gone, attempts to usurp his legacy are underway by non-Congress parties, particularly by the BJP and the Trinamul Congress. PM Modi had a picture of him touching Pranab's feet while Rahul Gandhi's rather 'perfunctory' tweet was subject to social media criticism.

### Pranab's diaries

Mukherjee's daughter Sharmistha, currently the Congress spokesperson and the Delhi Mahila Congress unit head, is said to be in possession of her father's diaries. These entries, written at the end of each day as his habit, are more than a goldmine. Sharmistha's brother Abhijit is also in the Congress, having served two terms in the Lok Sabha. Pranab's diaries are being eyed by the Congress, the BJP, the Trinamul and several publishing houses.

### Sonia calls Sharmistha

When Pranab was battling for his life at the Army's Research and Referral (RR) hospital in Delhi, Sonia Gandhi reportedly called up Sharmistha enquiring not just about Pranab but her as well. When she learnt that Sharmistha was alone, Sonia reportedly got restless and worried over the young Mukherjee, who had to calm and assure her that she was fine.

### Priyanka's new abode

Priyanka Gandhi has a new address in New Delhi. She has a duplex in Sujan Singh Park, facing the Ambassador Hotel and in the close vicinity of Khan Market. It is one of the most sought-after addresses in the capital. Built by Khushwant Singh's father, Sujan Singh Park is one of the first residential apartments of Delhi, where stories of the residents are as interesting as its architecture. Sujan Singh was Khushwant's grandfather. Priyanka, reliably learnt, is staying there as a tenant.

*The writer is a keen observer of the goings-on in backrooms of power*



## SHORT TAKES

AFGHAN FORCES  
KILL 46 TALIBAN  
TERRORISTS

Kabul, Sept. 5: The Afghan forces have killed 46 Taliban terrorists and injured 37 others during an operation in the northern Faryab province.

Several Taliban units attacked the Qaisar district of the Faryab province but were pushed back by the military, Mohammad Hanif Rezai, a spokesman for the 209th corps of the Afghan National Army, also known as the Shaheen Corps, told Sputnik on Saturday.

The spokesman added that the district was under the control of the Afghan forces.

At the same time, Rezai said the military operation was still underway, while the Afghan armed forces were clearing the area from the Taliban terrorists.

Meanwhile, the provincial government said several high-ranking members of the Taliban were injured during the operation.

The movement has not yet commented on the incident.

16 KILLED IN  
BANGLA MOSQUE  
GAS EXPLOSION

Dhaka, Sept. 5: A suspected gas explosion tore through a Bangladesh mosque killing at least 16 people while dozens suffered life-threatening burns, police said on Saturday.

Worshippers were at Friday evening prayers when the blast sent a ball of flames through the mosque in the central district of Narayanganj, emergency services said.

Investigators suspected a spark from an air conditioner — which came on after a power cut — set off the gas.

“Leaked gas entered the mosque,” Narayanganj fire chief Abdullah Al Arefin said.

“When they shut the windows and doors and switched on the air conditioners there was an electricity spark that led to the explosion inside the mosque.” The 16 who died were among 37 taken to a specialist burns hospital in Dhaka, said hospital spokesman Samanta Lal Sen.

He added that the condition of the remaining 21 patients was “very critical” and all had suffered 70 to 80 percent burns.

Police said at least 45 were injured by the blast and that people had spoken of smelling a gas leak.

SUDAN DECLARES  
EMERGENCY OVER  
DEADLY FLOODS

Khartoum, Sept. 5: Sudan on Saturday declared a three-month national state of emergency after record-breaking torrential floods that cost 99 lives.

“A nationwide three-month state of emergency has been announced as Sudan is considered a natural disaster zone,” the interior ministry said on social media.

Floods caused by more than a month of heavy rains have killed 99 people, injured 46 and left 1,00,000 damaged properties in their wake, one of the worst natural disasters in decades, according to state news agency SUNA.

North Darfur in the country's west and Sennar state in the south were among the hardest hit areas. Heavy rains usually fall in Sudan from June to October, and the country faces severe flooding every year.

“The Blue Nile has reached an all-time high since records began more than a century ago,” said the irrigation and water ministry last week.

The latest report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan said on Thursday that over 3,80,000 people had already been “affected” by this year's floods.

Postal voting marks start  
of US Presidential election

North Carolina was to begin mailing out more than 6 lakh ballots

Washington, Sept. 5: The US election is officially open: North Carolina on Friday launched vote-by-mail operations for the November 3 contest between President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden, which is getting uglier by the hour.

With two months until Election Day, Trump is seizing on fears over violent protests in US cities and questioning the integrity of voting by mail, while challenger Biden intensified his criticism of a “deplorable” leader who he said is not fit for office.

Worries about the unabated spread of Coronavirus are expected to prompt a surge in the number of ballots cast by mail, as millions seek to avoid polling stations.

In a country on edge over the health crisis and a national reckoning about race, the next 60 days will test the ability of the world's largest economy to organise its election while

profoundly changed by a pandemic that has killed 1,87,000 Americans.

North Carolina was to begin mailing out more than 6,00,000 ballots, in response to a major spike in demand. Other key battleground states such as Wisconsin — which both candidates visited in recent days — will follow in the coming weeks. How Americans vote has become another flashpoint in an increasingly divisive political landscape.

A recent poll by USA Today and Suffolk University showed that 56 percent of Republican voters surveyed said they would go in person to vote, while only 26 percent of Democrats plan to do the same.

One out of every four Biden voters said that if the Democratic former vice president loses on November 3, they would not be ready to accept a Trump victory as “fairly won.” About one in five Trump voters said a simi-

lar thing. As he seeks a second four-year term, Trump has for months sowed doubt among his base about the legitimacy of an election with a significant number of mail-in votes.

Trump — who himself votes by mail in his adopted home state of Florida — has repeatedly, and without evidence, said mail-in voting could lead to widespread fraud.

He even has suggested to his supporters that they try to vote twice to test the system — earning him scorn on social media and from Democrats.

The tense campaign battle heated on Thursday when *The Atlantic magazine* reported — citing four anonymous sources who said they had firsthand knowledge of the discussions — that Trump had referred to US Marines buried in a World War I cemetery in France as “losers” and “suckers” for getting killed in action. — *AFP*

Don team pushes SM  
limits as polls loom

Washington, Sept. 5: A message saying you “won’t be safe” in Joe Biden’s America. The former vice president shown “sleeping” during a television interview. Biden “hiding” — alone — in his basement. All three videos featured in social media of President Donald Trump and his team as recently as the past week as he sought to close the gap on his Democratic rival. And each was labeled as false or manipulated content by social media giants and fact checkers.

While negative campaigning has long been a fixture of American politics, the open use of digitally-altered images by Trump and other candidates in 2020 has tech giants worried.

Twitter has cracked down by removing or labeling several of the president’s tweets. Facebook, citing the risk of civil unrest, announced on Thursday that it would not allow new political ads on its platform in the last week of the November 3 race.

There remain questions whether such messages — almost impossible to stop once they become viral — are working on voters but a line has already been crossed.

“There’s a long tradition in politics of competing politicians presenting their opponents’ words or beliefs in edited ways, right? That’s part of politics,” Ethan Porter, assistant professor of media and public affairs at George Washington University, said. — *AFP*

FB FORBIDS  
LIVESTREAMED  
DEATH

Dijon, Sept. 5: Facebook said on Saturday it would block the livestream of a Frenchman suffering from an incurable condition who wanted to broadcast his death on the social media platform.

Earlier, Alain Cocq announced that he was now refusing all food, drink and medicine after President Emmanuel Macron turned down his request for euthanasia.

Cocq, 57, who suffers from a rare condition which causes the walls of his arteries to stick together, said he believed he had less than a week to live and would broadcast his death from Saturday morning.

“Although we respect (Cocq’s) decision to want to draw attention to this complex question, following expert advice we have taken measures to prevent the live broadcast on Alain’s account,” a Facebook spokesman said. — *AFP*

UK CLIMATE  
ACTIVISTS TARGET  
NEWSPAPERS

London, Sept. 5: Climate change protesters in Britain blockaded two printing presses on Saturday, disrupting the distribution of numerous national newspapers as they step up 10 days of protests demanding action on environmental issues.

Activist group Extinction Rebellion (XR) targeted both the plants, just north of London and near Liverpool in north-west England, causing delays to deliveries of papers including *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Sun*.

Dozens of activists blocked roads outside the sites using vehicles and by attaching themselves to other obstacles, “to expose the failure of these corporations to accurately report on the climate and ecological emergency.” — *AP*

## Tanker fire under control



Tug boats and ships battle the fire on MT New Diamond in the Indian Ocean, on Saturday. The fire on the large oil tanker off Sri Lankas coast has been brought under control but is still not extinguished, the navy said on Saturday. The tanker, carrying nearly 2 million barrels of crude oil, was drifting about 20 nautical miles (37 kilometers) from Sri Lankas eastern coast and on Friday evening a tug boat towed it to the deep sea away from land, said navy spokesman Capt. Indika de Silva.

— *AP*

Biden confirms Covid-19 test,  
says he’ll be tested regularly

Wilmington, Sept. 5 : Joe Biden has said that he’s been tested at least once for the Covid-19 virus and promised he will be tested regularly during his general election campaign against US President Donald Trump.

The Democratic presidential nominee on Friday told reporters of his testing protocol during a wide-ranging news conference in which he blasted Trump for downplaying the Coronavirus and thus ensuring that it will continue to kill Americans and ravage the economy.

For much of the summer, Biden’s advisers deflected questions about whether the former vice president was being tested himself as he anchored his campaign almost exclusively from his Delaware home, travelling sparingly as a precaution.

“They’re going to do it on a regular basis,” Biden said of the testing. He noted that the Secret Service agents assigned to protect him and “everyone” else who comes into his home is tested already. Biden said he didn’t know specifically when his next test would be. “I just, ‘yes, sir,’ show up and put my head back,” Biden said.

“I imagine it’ll be sometime this week, but it will be a regular basis,” Biden and Trump offer voters a sharp contrast on the pandemic and its economic fallout.

In the Oval Office on Friday, Trump hailed a new jobs report and repeated his optimism that a Covid-19 vaccine could be available even before the November 3 election.

Hours later, during a fundraiser, Biden said, “I

hope like hell they have a vaccine,” but questioned Trump’s timeline and ability to distribute it. “We’ve got to make sure they’re not just hyping... that they actually finish all the testing,” Biden said, adding that Trump’s public questioning of scientists and medical experts will reduce confidence in a vaccine whenever it comes online.

“People don’t trust a damn thing he says,” Biden quipped. Further, the former vice president questioned how well the administration is planning for distribution, given the White House’s rocky distribution of Covid-19 tests and protective equipment. “Discovery of a safe vaccine isn’t enough,” Biden said. “The road from approval to injection is a long road.” — *AP*

BIDEN SLAMS DON  
FOR MOCKING  
U.S. MARINES

Washington, Sept. 5: Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden declared President Donald Trump “unfit” for the presidency on Friday, delivering an impassioned reaction to a report that Trump — who never served in uniform — allegedly mocked American war dead.

The allegations, sourced anonymously, describe multiple offensive comments by the president toward fallen and captured US service members, including calling World War I dead at an American military cemetery in France “losers” and “suckers” in 2018. — *AP*

Russia defiant  
over Navalny

Moscow, Sept. 5: Russia defied threats of new sanctions over the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, as US President Donald Trump said on Friday he had not yet seen proof that the Kremlin critic was a victim of Moscow’s Novichok programme.

A new crisis in ties between Russia and the West broke out after Germany said this week there was “unequivocal evidence” that President Vladimir Putin’s top foe had been poisoned using the Soviet-era nerve agent.

Western leaders and many Russians have expressed horror at what Navalny’s allies say is the first known use of chemical weapons against a high-profile opposition leader on Russian soil.

The 44-year-old lawyer fell ill on a Siberian flight last month and was evacuated to Germany for treatment. He has been in an artificially induced coma for the past two weeks.

The Kremlin again denied responsibility for the attack on Friday.

● **WESTERN LEADERS** and many Russians have expressed horror at what Navalny’s allies say is the first known use of chemical weapons against a high-profile opposition leader on Russian soil.

“A whole number of theories including poisoning were considered from the very first days,” Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. “According to our doctors, this theory has not been proved.”

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Germany’s justice ministry had so far failed to share any findings with Moscow’s prosecutors, adding that Russian authorities had “nothing to hide”.

Trump said on Friday he had yet to see proof from Berlin that Navalny had been poisoned.

“I don’t know exactly what happened. I think it’s tragic, it’s terrible, it shouldn’t happen,” the president told a press conference. — *AFP*

Taliban say team  
in Qatar for  
Afghan peace talks

Kabul, Sept. 5: The Taliban’s negotiating team has arrived in Qatar, a spokesman said on Saturday, in a sign that long-delayed peace talks with the Afghan government are inching closer to starting.

A date for the talks, to be hosted in Doha, has not been set but the warring sides have this week made signals that negotiations could launch soon, including efforts to wrap up a drawn out prisoner exchange.

“All members of our negotiating team have arrived in Doha. The talks will begin once some small technical issues are resolved,” Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said.

The Taliban team had recently been in Pakistan discussing the peace process with the government in Islamabad.

Qatar authorities have been imposing a seven day quarantine period on

all arrivals to the country, but have made exemptions for some delegations who undergo regular testing.

The Afghan government’s negotiating team remained in Kabul on Saturday, but a logistics team landed in Doha earlier this week.

Faraidoun Khawzoon, a spokesman for the Afghan government’s reconciliation council, said its negotiating team was ready for talks.

“The release of the prisoners is completed and there is no excuse for delaying the talks,” he tweeted.

“But the Taliban don’t seem to be ready for the talks. We expect the Taliban to get ready and start the negotiations.” The talks were initially due to begin in March as set out in a deal between the United States and the Taliban in February, from which Kabul was excluded. — *PTI*



Waves batter the coastline as Typhoon Haishen approaches in Makurazaki, Kagoshima Prefecture on Saturday.

— *AFP*

Violent typhoon  
heads for Japan

Kagoshima, Sept. 5: An extremely powerful typhoon was barreling towards southwestern Japan on Saturday as authorities issued evacuation advisories to thousands of residents, warning of unprecedented violent winds, heavy rain and high waves.

Haishen churned near Okinawa in southern Japan on Saturday afternoon and was expected to approach Kyushu late Sunday or early Monday, the meteorological agency said.

The storm is expected to affect Japan from late Saturday, with winds of up to 290 kilometres per hour (180 miles per hour), making it a “violent” storm — the top level on the country’s classification scale.

“There is a danger of record winds, heavy rain, high waves and storm surge,” Yoshihisa Nak-

amoto, an agency official, told a news conference, calling for an early evacuation and “maximum caution.” Yuhei Takamura, a government official, said, “A disaster will occur. There is almost no doubt about it.” About 4,600 people in Tarumizu, Kagoshima, were urged to evacuate swiftly, while authorities in other areas of Kyushu were warning their residents to prepare.

Satoshi Sugimoto, another agency official, said the latest typhoon could generate high waves as powerful as a tsunami.

“It’s going to be the last chance to flee” when the agency formally issues the nation’s highest storm warning, Sugimoto told reporters.

Authorities on Minami-daitojima instructed about 1,300 residents to evacuate as the storm was expected to hit the remote island, east of Okinawa. — *AFP*

## NEW | LIFE

Pak court had approved the relocation of an elephant to Cambodia after a campaign

## ‘World’s loneliest elephant’ okayed to quit zoo

Islamabad, Sept. 5: An elephant who has become a cause celebre for animal rights activists around the world will be allowed to leave his Pakistani zoo and transferred to better conditions, the animal welfare group helping with the case said on Saturday.

Dubbed the ‘world’s loneliest elephant’ by his supporters, Kaavan has languished at a zoo in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad for more than 35 years.

Martin Bauer, a spokesman for Four Paws, said the elephant has been finally given medical approval to travel, most likely to Cambodia, where he will find companionship and better conditions.

The overweight elephant Kaavan underwent a full medical examination at the zoo on Friday, said Bauer.

In May, Pakistan’s High Court ordered the Marghazar Zoo closed because of its abysmal conditions

blamed on systemic negligence. Rescuing Kaavan from the zoo’s dire conditions attracted the attention of animal activists around the world, and celebrities including US singer Cher, who lobbied for his relocation.

“Unfortunately, the rescue comes too late for two lions that died during an attempted transfer at the end of July after local animal handlers set a fire in their enclosure to

force them into their transport crates,” Bauer said in a statement released on Saturday.

He said Four Paws was invited by the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board to safely transfer the remaining animals in the zoo.

Kaavan has until now been forced to live a solitary life in a small enclosure.

Friday’s medical examination showed the elephant was over-

weight, even as he showed signs of malnutrition. His nails were cracked and overgrown apparently from years of living in an improper enclosure with flooring that damaged his feet.

“Following the checks, which confirmed Kaavan is strong enough, steps will now be taken to finalize his relocation to an animal sanctuary potentially in Cambodia,” Bauer said. — *AP*



A team of veterinarians from the international animal welfare organization Four Paws briefs media prior to examining an elephant Kaavan at Maragzar Zoo in Islamabad, Pakistan.

— *AP*



## SHORT TAKES

## Hami takes pole with record lap

**Monza, Italy:** Lewis Hamilton claimed pole position with a new lap record at Monza for Sunday's Italian Grand Prix with Valtteri Bottas taking second in Saturday qualifying for another Mercedes front row lock-out. McLaren's Carlos Sainz posted the third fastest time and is joined on the second row by Sergio Perez for Racing Point. The session proved another humbling experience for out-of-sorts Ferrari with Sebastian Vettel going out in Q1 and Charles Leclerc, who won at the circuit last year, in Q2. This means no Ferrari inside the top 10 at Monza for the first time since 1984. The championship leader and six-time champion clocked a fastest lap in one minute and 18.887 seconds to beat the Finn by 0.069 seconds. In pure speed, Hamilton's track lap record performance produced an unconfirmed fastest lap in F1 history. — *AFP*

## Messi misses Barca training

**Barcelona:** Lionel Messi was a no-show at training with Barcelona on Saturday morning despite his decision to stay at the club under sufferance, AFP reporters at the training ground said.

The Argentine superstar announced on Friday he had been forced to remain at Barcelona, claiming after club president Josep Maria Bartomeu broke his word to let him leave. It came after 10 days of tension since his bombshell fax telling Barcelona he wanted out. But while other players including Jordi Alba and Philippe Coutinho arrived for the session, Messi failed to appear at the Joan Gamper training complex for the session which began at 0730 GMT. — *AFP*

## Dutch go past Poland; Italy held

**London:** Steven Bergwijn ensured the Netherlands did not feel the absence of recently departed coach Ronald Koeman to beat Poland 1-0 in the Nations League, while Italy were held 1-1 by Bosnia and Herzegovina on Friday. Koeman left to take charge of Barcelona last month, less than a year before he was due to lead his country to a major international tournament for the first time. A rejuvenated Netherlands reached the final of the inaugural Nations League under Koeman last year after missing out on the 2018 World Cup. Also in Group 1, Italy extended their two-year unbeaten run but had to settle for a point against Bosnia in Florence. — *AFP*

## Heat push Bucks to brink with win

**Miami:** Jimmy Butler powered the Miami Heat to a 115-100 victory over Milwaukee on Friday that pushed the top-seeded Bucks to the brink of elimination in the NBA playoffs. Butler scored 17 of his 30 points in the Heat's scorching fourth quarter, Miami out-scoring the Bucks 40-13 in the final period to seize a 3-0 lead.

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

England vs Australia 2nd T20 from 6.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

## FORMULA ONE

Italian Grand Prix  
Main Race from 6.35 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

## CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

St Kitts & Nevis Patriots vs Trinbago Knight Riders from 7.30 pm; St Lucia Zouks vs Jamaica Tallawahs from 11.30 pm on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

## US OPEN TENNIS

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

## UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

Wales vs Bulgaria from 6.30 pm; Ireland vs Finland from 9.30 pm; Spain vs Ukraine from 12.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD; Switzerland vs Germany from 12.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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## DJOKER ON A ROLL

## Novak eases into Rd 4; Corona scare delays a match

**New York, Sept. 5:** Novak Djokovic sailed into the last 16 of the US Open on Friday as off-court intrigue forced the delay of a men's singles match over issues linked to coronavirus.

Djokovic outclassed Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff 6-3, 6-3, 6-1 in a routine victory for the world number one, who is chasing an 18th Grand Slam singles title.

Far from routine was a last-minute attempt by New York health officials to prevent France's Adrian Mannarino from playing his last-32 encounter against German fifth seed Alexander Zverev.

The intervention led to a back and forth between tournament organisers and the state government and resulted in the match, which Zverev won in four sets, starting over three hours late.

"It was a weird situation for me," said Mannarino, one of 11 players put under enhanced safety protocols earlier this week after compatriot Benoit Paire was withdrawn from the tournament after testing positive for coronavirus.

"I was just laying on the sofa still trying to be focused just in case I would go on court," he said, following

Zverev's 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 victory. Zverev will now play unseeded Spaniard Alejandro Davidovich Fokina in the last 16 while Djokovic will play Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta for a place in the quarter-finals.

## TSITSIPAS STUNNED

In the men's draw, Croatia's 27th seed Borna Coric staged a remarkable Houdini act to stun fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas in a 4hr 36min late-night thriller.

Coric appeared to be heading for certain defeat after Tsitsipas, leading by two sets to one, opened up a 5-1 lead in the fourth.

But Coric rallied superbly, saving six match points and fighting back to take the set 7-5 to force a decider.

Tsitsipas went a break up once more in the fifth but couldn't press home the advantage as Coric forced a tie break before clinching a 6-7 (2/7), 6-4, 4-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7/4) win.

Twelfth seed Denis Shapovalov recovered from 5-2 down in the fourth set to pip American number 19 seed Taylor Fritz 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2.

Fritz, 22 was within two points of victory before the 21-year-old Shapovalov completed a remarkable come-back. — *AFP*

## THE RESULTS

**Men's singles third round (number in brackets denotes seeding):** Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) bt Jan-Lennard Struff (GER x28) 6-3, 6-3, 6-1; Denis Shapovalov (CAN x12) bt Taylor Fritz (USA x19) 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2; Pablo Carreno-Busta (ESP x20) bt Ricardas Berankis (LTU) 6-4, 6-3, 6-2; David Goffin (BEL x7) bt Filip Krajinovic (SRB x26) 6-1, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4; Jordan Thompson (AUS) bt Mikhail Kukushkin (KAZ) 7-5, 6-4, 6-1; Alejandro Davidovich (ESP) bt Cameron Norrie (GBR) 7-6 (7/2), 4-6, 6-2, 6-1; Alexander Zverev (GER x5) bt Adrian Mannarino (FRA x32) 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-2, 6-2; Borna Coric (CRO x27) bt Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x4) 6-7 (2/7), 6-4, 4-6, 7-5, 7-6

(7/4); Corentin Moutet (FRA) bt Daniel Evans (GBR x23) 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/1)

**Women's singles third round:** Jennifer Brady (USA x28) bt Caroline Garcia (FRA) 6-3, 6-3; Angelique Kerber (GER x17) bt Ann Li (USA) 6-3, 6-4; Yulia Putintseva (KAZ x23) bt Aliaksandra Sasnovich (BLR) 3-6, 6-2, 6-1; Petra Martic (CRO x8) bt Varvara Gracheva (RUS) 6-3, 6-3; Naomi Osaka (JPN x4) bt Marta Kostyuk (UKR) 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-2; Anett Kontaveit (EST x14) bt Magda Linette (POL x24) 6-3, 6-2; Shelby Rogers (USA) bt Madison Brengle (USA) 6-2, 6-4; Petra Kvitova (CZE x6) bt Jessica Pegula (USA) 6-4, 6-3.



Germany's Alexander Zverev returns to Adrian Mannarino of France in their US Open third round match in New York on Friday. Zverev won 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-2, 6-2. — *AP*

## Osaka battles into Last 16

**New York, Sept. 5:** Two-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka battled into the last 16 of the US Open on Friday, requiring three sets to defeat 18-year-old Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk.

Osaka, the 2018 US Open champion, needed 2hr 33min to beat the unseeded world number 137 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-2 inside an empty Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"She was very good. I'm kind of scared of how she is going to be in the future," Osaka said of her vanquished opponent.

Frustration got the better of the Japanese fourth seed in the second set. After recovering from 5-3 to force a tie-break she threw her racquet when Kostyuk tied the match 1-



Japan's Naomi Osaka wears a protective facemask with the name Ahmaud Arbery stenciled on it after winning her third round match against Marta Kostyuk of the Ukraine on Friday. — *AFP*

1. "I just felt like I had so many points that I didn't capitalise on. I think when I went up, I became

a bit passive and then she came in because she has no fear," Osaka said. But Osaka's experience

came through in the deciding set as she held her serve and broke Kostyuk twice for a place in the quarter-finals.

Osaka walked onto the court wearing a facemask emblazoned with the name of Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed black man who was shot dead in broad daylight while jogging in the town of Brunswick, in southern Georgia, in February.

Elsewhere, sixth seed Petra Kvitova breezed past American Jessica Pegula 6-4, 6-3 to set up a last-16 encounter with Shelby Rogers, also of the United States.

Eighth seed Petra Martic of Croatia swept aside unseeded Russian Varvara Gracheva 6-3, 6-3. — *AFP*

## BOPANNA IN MEN'S DOUBLES SECOND ROUND

**New York, Sept. 5:** Experienced Indian Rohan Bopanna and his Canadian partner Denis Shapovalov advanced to the second round of the US Open men's doubles event here. Bopanna and Shapovalov hardly broke a sweat to get past their American rivals Ernesto Escobedo and Noah Rubin 6-2, 6-4 in their tournament opener that lasted one hour and 22 minutes on Friday.

The Indo-Canadian pair will next play sixth seeds Kevin Krawietz and Andreas Mies. Bopanna is the lone surviving Indian in the tournament after the exits of Sumit Nagal and Divij Sharan. — *PTI*

## INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

## Watson relieved after 1st session

**Dubai, Sept. 5:** Former Australian all-rounder Shane Watson on Saturday said it won't take long to regain touch despite a bit of rustiness as he hit the nets with his Chennai Super Kings teammates ahead of the 13th IPL beginning on September 19.

Rocked by a series of Covid-19 cases, Chennai Super Kings led by Mahendra Singh Dhoni could finally start training on Friday after clearing a third round of testing for the virus.

"How exciting it was to be back with all of my @ChennaiIPLmates for our first training session!!! It was so much fun. There was a little rust that will not take long to go," Watson wrote on his twitter handle.

The 39-year-old, who was bought by CSK ahead of the 2018 IPL, has scored 953 runs in 32 matches for the franchise in the last two years, besides capturing six wickets.

His highest score was 117 not out in the finals of the 2018 edition against SunRisers Hyderabad.

Watson is an important member of the CSK team which has been left depleted after the pull out of senior players Suresh Raina



Shane Watson

● **The 39-year-old, who was bought by CSK ahead of the 2018 IPL, has scored 953 runs in 32 matches for the franchise in the last two years, besides capturing six wickets.**

and Harbhajan Singh. CSK was forced to delay its training plan after completing the six-day quarantine after Deepak Chahar and Ruturaj Gaikwad tested positive last week along with 11 members of the the contingent.

The 13th IPL is scheduled to be held from September 19 to November 10 across three venues — Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah. — *PTI*

## GOALKEEPER KARANJIT TO CONTINUE AT CHENNAIYIN

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 5

Chennaiyin FC on Saturday announced goalkeeper Karanjit Singh's contract extension by one year till the end of the 2020-21 season of Indian Super League.

The 34-year old is set for his sixth consecutive campaign for the team, having won the ISL twice with the club in 2015 and 2017-18, starring especially in the second triumph.

Having donned the dual role of goalie-cum-goalkeeping coach last season, Karanjit will continue in a playing capacity in the upcoming campaign as new head coach Csaba Laszlo is expected to bring in a goalkeeping coach as part of his backroom staff.

Karanjit said he was looking forward to contributing his best to CFC in the coming season.



Karanjit Singh

"Chennaiyin FC is my home. I didn't have to think twice before taking the decision to continue with my adopted family and represent our loving fans and the city of Chennai for one more season," the veteran custodian said.

Coach Laszlo said Karanjit's presence will benefit the team.

## England pip Aussies in final-ball thriller

**Southampton, Sept. 5:** Tom Curran held his nerve as England beat Australia by two runs in a final-ball thriller to win the first Twenty20 international at Southampton on Friday and go 1-0 up in a three-match series.

Australia, in their first competitive match for nearly six months because of the coronavirus, were making light work of a target of 163 while captain Aaron Finch (46) and David Warner (58) were putting on 98 for the first wicket.

But star batsman Steve Smith's exit for just 18 sparked a collapse that saw

**FIRST | TWENTY20**

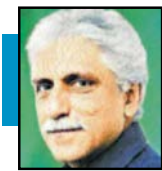
Australia lose four wickets for nine runs in 14 balls.

A target of 15 off six balls became five off one.

But Marcus Stoinis, having hit a six off Curran earlier in the over, couldn't hit another six needed for a win or the four that would have tied the scores and taken the match into a Super Over. — *AFP*

**Brief scores: England 162/7 in 20 overs (D. Malan 66,J. Buttler 44; Richardson 2/13, Maxwell 2/14) bt Australia 160/6 in 20 overs (D. Warner 58, A. Finch 46; Archer 2/33, Rashid 2/29).**

## Are sudden IPL pullouts signs of an emergency?



Ayaz Memon  
Over The Top

The past few days haven't been kind to Chennai Super Kings. Two players (from 13 in all, including support staff and management) tested positive for Covid with barely a fortnight for the IPL to start, raising doubts whether the franchise would be ready to play in the opening tie on September as scheduled.

While the two players, Deepak Chahar and Ruturaj Gaikwad, have tested negative since, CSK suffered other serious setbacks. Within days of each

other, senior pros Suresh Raina and Harbhajan Singh have pulled out of the tournament for 'personal reasons'.

This leaves the three-times champions beleaguered, however CSK is not the only team to feel distress. Mumbai Indians veteran Lasith Malinga, the highest wicket-taker in IPL history, and still a force to reckon with despite his advancing years, has also pulled out for personal reasons.

Malinga's decision has not invited as much media scrutiny as Raina's and

Harbhajan's because he is not an Indian star. But overall, the timing of these pull-outs as well as lack of clarity in why they have done so has left diehard IPL followers flummoxed.

The timing of the pull-outs by these players, as well as lack of clarity in why they have done so has fueled speculation and set tongues wagging about whether there is more than meets the eye about what the real reason for their belated withdrawal.

There is nothing that can, or should, prevent a player to withdraw from an event or tournament. As free agents, players have the absolute right to ply their skills — or not — within contractual limits.

'Personal reasons' is ordinarily a valid enough ground for a player's absence, but extremely

● **There is nothing that can, or should, prevent a player to withdraw from an event or tournament. As free agents, players have the absolute right to ply their skills - or not - within contractual limits.**

wide in its ambit to find complete acceptance in these trying times where the usual yardsticks don't apply and it is incumbent on players, teams, federations to be upfront on such matters to prevent misapprehensions.

The issue with Raina, Harbhajan and Malinga is not of the kind that Leo Messi, who wants to leave Barcelona Football Club

after spending a lifetime with them because of a tussle with the team's management. But it could be argued Messi also wants to leave Barca for 'personal reasons', That Messi has since backtracked because of a complex contract that could cost him dear is another story altogether. Seen in a wider perspective, how much better that the real issue in the Messi story was in the public domain. This prevented misplaced conjecture and needless conspiracy theories.

Transparency is all the more important in these extraordinary times, when the fear of Covid is all pervasive. It redounds to the credit of Rafael Nadal that he took a decision early and candidly on not participating in this year's US

Open because of the coronavirus factor.

In the case of the three cricketers under discussion, their sudden pull-out from the IPL bespoke of an emergency. But in the present circumstances, it is imperative to know what this urgency was about? Is it family related, Covid-linked or some other?

I don't know much about Malinga's recent situation, but Raina has had a terror assault on his family which may have brought him back. (Though why he went to UAE then remains unanswered). Harbhajan's mother has been ailing for a while, and he may have stretched the waiting period to take a final call.

These are strong reasons for not playing a tournament. And if so, why can't these be publicly disclosed? In Raina's case, the

flip-flop statements by the owner of CSK N. Srinivasan and the player himself added more grist to the rumour mill.

Within the IPL fraternity itself, lack of clarity leads to rise in conjecture and paranoia. I've received class from people associated with different franchises, wanting to know what's happening.

The issue goes beyond salacious gossip about dissonance within teams. Given the present environment, these people may be more worried about Covid infection, and whether they are being told the truth about the scale of problem, and how safe it is to be playing the tournament.

That's a dangerous route, which is why full disclosure in such matters is imperative.