



‘FARM BILLS UNDERMINE
FOOD SECURITY
SYSTEM’

P5



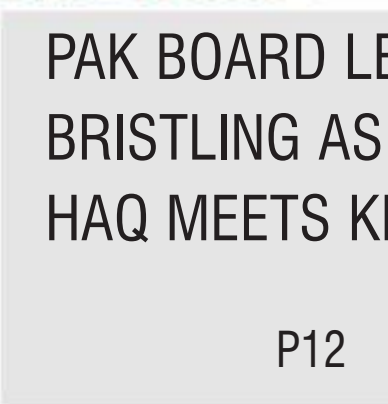
‘SAVING A BUSINESS
MORE IMPORTANT
THAN RECOVERY’

P8



ICONIC US SC JUSTICE,
WOMAN’S RIGHTS
CHAMPION NO MORE

P10



PAK BOARD LEFT
BRISTLING AS
HAQ MEETS KHAN

P12



WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 37 and 27 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 86% Min: 47%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 37.3°C (+3) Min: 28.0°C (+3)

SUN RISES

06:09 hrs

SUN SETS

18:20 hrs

MOON RISES

10:11 hrs

MOON SETS

20:38 hrs

THUMBNAILS



President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurates the Visitors’ Conference on Implementation of National Education Policy 2020 in higher education, virtually. In the Capital on Saturday. P18

RS passes amendments to insolvency law: Rajya Sabha on Saturday passed amendments to the insolvency law for suspension of fresh insolvency proceedings for at least six months starting 25 March amidst the coronavirus pandemic, with Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman saying a decision on extending the suspension of relevant provisions will be taken next week. In the wake of the Covid-19 situation, the government decided to suspend the provisions starting from 25 March for six months by promulgating an ordinance in June.

₹1350 crore package for J&K: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha announced a Rs 1,350-crore economic package for the Union Territory on Saturday to give a boost to tourism and other sectors hit by the economic slowdown caused due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the security scenario. As a part of the package, the government has also decided to provide 50 per cent waiver of fixed charges for one year with respect to electricity and water which would cost Rs 105 crore. P4

Rising Covid threat to cut short Parl session

Final decision will be taken by Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

The ongoing monsoon session of Parliament is likely to be curtailed and may end by the middle of next week in view of the threat of the Covid-19 spread among parliamentarians, official sources said on Saturday.

At a meeting of the business advisory committee of Lok Sabha, which has floor leaders of all parties besides the government representatives and is chaired by the Speaker, most political parties favoured curtailment of the session, which started on 14 September and was scheduled to conclude on 1 October. A final decision will be taken by the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs.

The Lok Sabha has so far passed three Bills to replace agriculture sector related ordinances. Also, both the Houses have cleared a Bill to replace an ordinance for cutting by 30 per cent the salaries of MPs to ramp up funds in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

After some Members of Parliament, including Union ministers Nitin Gadkari and Prahlad Patel, tested positive for Covid-19 during the session, some Opposition parties had conveyed to the government that conducting the full 18-day session could be a risky affair, sources said. The government then started thinking in that direction, the sources said.

Several MPs had also tested positive for Covid-19 around the time the session began and they were



Govt, Opposition trade fire on PM CARES Fund in LS

NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Opposition parties like the Congress, DMK and the TMC on Saturday opposed in Lok Sabha the setting up of the PM CARES Fund, saying it lacked transparency, a charge rejected by the government with Union Minister Anurag Thakur hitting back at Congress over alleged donations from government departments to trusts run by the Gandhi family members when the party was in power.

They were participating in the debate on a bill to give effect to various compliance relief measures for taxpayers, including extending time limits for filing returns, in the wake of the coronavirus crisis and tax benefits for donations to PM CARES Fund.

The opposition members targeted the government on the issue of Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emer-

Situations (PM CARES) Fund, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March so that people can contribute and help in the government’s fight against the coronavirus. “I can’t understand the logic to have a separate fund. What is the difference between the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund and the PM CARES Fund,” said N K Premachandran (RSP), who initiated the debate on The Taxation and Other Laws (Relaxation and Amendment of Certain Provisions) Bill, 2020.

He alleged the PM CARES Fund “lacks transparency as it is not audited by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). Further RTI is also not applicable”.

“The question of transparency and accountability is the main issue I want to highlight,” he said. PTI

advised not to attend proceedings. In order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus within the parlia-

ment complex, reporters and parliamentary staff entering the premises now have to undergo the rapid

RS passes Bill to punish those attacking healthcare workers: The Rajya Sabha on Saturday passed a legislation that provides for up to seven years in jail for those attacking doctors and healthcare workers fighting the Covid-19 outbreak or during any situation akin to the current pandemic.

The Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020, was introduced by Health minister Harsh Vardhan in the Upper House on Saturday.

The Bill was supported by the members across party lines, however, some suggested to add in its purview hospital sanitary staff, ASHA (accredited social health activist) workers and Corona warriors’ in emergency services such as police and personnel from other departments. PTI

antigen test mandatorily on a daily basis, according to a new protocol put in place.

Besides, members of both Houses are undergoing RT-PCR tests on regular intervals on a voluntary basis, said a senior Parliament official.

A member of Parliament can undergo the RT-PCR test as many times he or she likes.

Journalists covering the monsoon session from Press galleries of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha also have the option to undergo the RT-PCR test, which is valid for 72 hours.

The Budget Session was short-terminated in March after the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Single-day recoveries exceed fresh cases as record 95.8K cured

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

The number of single-day recoveries from Covid-19 in the country outstripped the number of new infections as nearly 96,000 people recuperated from the novel coronavirus, even as the total caseload went past 53 lakh, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Saturday.

The figures released at 8 a.m. showed that while 95,880 people recovered from Covid-19 in a span of 24 hours, 93,337 new infections were recorded during the period.

With the latest inclusions, the total number of cases mounted to 53,08,014 and the recoveries to 42,08,431, pushing the recovery rate to 79.28 per cent.

The death toll, meanwhile, climbed to 85,619 with the virus claiming 1,247 lives in a span of 24 hours, the updated data

showed. The Covid-19 case fatality rate has further dropped at 1.61 per cent, the data showed.

There are 10,13,964 active cases of Covid-19 in the country, which constitute 19.10 per cent of the total caseload, the data showed.

The country’s Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on 7 August, the 30-lakh mark on 23 August, 40 lakh on 5 September, and it went past 50 lakh on September 16. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, a cumulative 6,24,54,254 Covid-19 samples have been tested up to 18 September - 8,81,911 of them on Friday.

The Cabinet secretary, meanwhile, expressed concern over Covid-19 fatality rates in some states being higher than the national average, and urged 12 states and UTs to analyse mortalities district and hospital-wise to identify critical areas



of intervention.

“About 80 per cent of the Covid-19 caseload in the country is concentrated in these states and Union Territories,” a Union health ministry statement said.

'Downward trend in Delhi's Covid positivity rate'

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain today said that there has been a downward trend in Covid-19 positivity rate in the national capital and that it will lead to good results by next week.

“The positivity rate was 6.76 per cent on Friday. It has remained below 7 per cent in the

last two-three days. Last week, it was around 8 per cent,” Jain said.

The cumulative positivity rate has also dropped below 10 per cent for the first time, he said.

The minister said Delhi has been witnessing a “downward trend” in the Covid positivity rate over the last few days. “It should lead to good results by next week,” he said.

Jain said more than 500 ICU beds have been made available for Covid patients in private hospitals in the city over the last few days.

“More beds will be made available in private and government hospitals in the next two to three days,” he said.

Meanwhile, Delhi today recorded 4,071 fresh Covid cases, which took its coronavirus tally to 2,42,899. (SEE PAGE 2)

Oxford vaccine phase-III trials to start next week

PUNE, 19 SEPTEMBER

The phase-III human clinical trial of the Covid-19 vaccine developed by Oxford University and being manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) will begin at the Sassoon General Hospital in Pune next week, Dean of the state-run Sassoon General Hospital Dr Muralidhar Tambe said on Saturday.

“The phase-III trial of ‘Covishield’ vaccine likely to start on Monday. Some volunteers have already come forward for the trial. Around 150 to 200 volunteers will be administered the vaccine candidate dose,” he said.

The SII has partnered with British-Swedish pharma company AstraZeneca for manufacturing the Covid-19 vaccine candidate, developed by the University of Oxford. Earlier this month, the SII had paused the clinical trials of the vaccine candidate in the country. PTI

‘Arrested scribe was passing intel to China’

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Delhi Police today claimed that the arrested freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma was allegedly passing sensitive information about India’s border strategy and Army’s deployment and procurement, and foreign policy to the Chinese intelligence agencies.

At a press conference here, the Delhi Police special cell’s DCP Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said that the cops were investigating what information Sharma had allegedly passed on to Chinese intelligence officers through his social media and email accounts.

Based on the Delhi-based journalist Sharma’s statement during interrogation, a Chinese woman and her Nepalese associate were also arrested this morning, police said. “Both the Chinese woman and her associate were directors of shell com-

panies in Delhi’s Mahipalpur area and they would export medicines to China and in return, would get huge money which they gave to their agents here,” Yadav said.

Sharma was allegedly contacted by Chinese intelligence officer Michael in 2016 and the scribe allegedly shared sensitive information with him till 2018, the DCP charged. Sharma came in contact with Michael through a social media platform and later visited China where “lucrative offers” were made, the police officer claimed, adding that the scribe allegedly started giving sensitive defence information to the Chinese intelligence.

Michael had also borne all expenses on Sharma’s visit to China, police said. “In 2019, Sharma came in contact with another Chinese intelligence officer George and he was continuing to share Indian defence-related information,” Yadav claimed. (SEE PAGE 2)

NIA arrests nine Al-Qaida terrorists from Bengal, Kerala after night raids

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA/THIRUPURAM
19 SEPTEMBER

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested nine persons it said were recruits of the Al Qaida terror group in overnight raids in Kerala and West Bengal.

Six Al Qaida terrorists were nabbed in raids conducted by the NIA in Bengal’s Murshidabad early on Saturday morning. Three others were arrested by the NIA after raids in Kerala’s Ernakulam district.

NIA sources identified the six arrested from Murshidabad as Najmus Sakib, Abu Sufiyan, Mainul Mondal, Leu Yean Ahmed, Al Mamun Kamal and Atitir Rehman.

The three arrested from Kerala are Murshid Hasan, Yakub Biswas and Mosaraf Hosse. Hasan was leading

TERROR-NET

► Six Al Qaida terrorists were nabbed in raids conducted by the NIA in Bengal’s Murshidabad early on Saturday morning. Three others were arrested by the NIA after raids in Kerala’s Ernakulam district

► The three arrested from Kerala are originally residents of West Bengal, an NIA spokesperson said

► The arrested men are said to have been planning to launch attacks in Delhi, Kochi, Bengaluru and Mumbai around Diwali

the gang and those arrested from Kerala are originally residents of West Bengal, an NIA spokesperson said in New Delhi.

While Yakub Biswas and Mosaraf Hosse were arrested from Perumbavoor, Murshid Hasan was taken into custody from Puthalam near Kalamassery in Ernakulam district. The NIA took them into custody in raids conducted at their residences with the help of Kerala police’s Anti-Terrorism Squad.

It has been reported that all three are originally residents of West Bengal.

The trio was working at various institutions and also went for manual work in the Perumbavoor area in Ernakulam district. The NIA is verifying their nationalities to check whether they are illegal migrants from Bangladesh.

The arrest of three Al-Qaida terrorists from Kerala came days after the Central government acknowledged the presence of

terrorists in Kerala and other southern states. The arrested Al-Qaida men were reportedly planning to launch attacks in Delhi, Kochi, Bengaluru and Mumbai during Diwali season.

Sources hinted that the terrorists had planned to attack the Navy headquarters and the shipyard, in Kochi. The NIA officials have seized digital devices, documents, jihadi literature, sharp weapons, country-made firearms, locally fabricated body armour and literature used for making home-made explosive from their possession.

The module was also trying to set up an al-Qaida network in many regions, including the northeast and Jammu and Kashmir, on the instructions of their Pakistan-based handlers.

MORE ON PAGE 5

‘Floating town’ Viraat sets sail on final voyage, to be dismantled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Indian Navy’s decommissioned aircraft carrier *Viraat* on Saturday set sail for the last time, on way to Alang in Gujarat, where it will be broken down and sold as scrap.

For Navy veterans who watched the huge vessel being towed away by a tug boat, it was an emotional moment as they stood near the Gateway of India, waving at the once ‘floating town’, aboard which they spent the best years of their career.

As *Viraat* began its final journey from the Naval Dockyard, a Navy helicopter circling overhead provided a majes-

tic backdrop to the vessel’s last voyage.

A Defence spokesperson said *Viraat* was to leave for Alang on Friday, but its departure was delayed by a day.

The aircraft carrier served the Indian Navy for 29 years before being decommissioned in March 2017.

It had served in the UK’s Royal Navy as *HMS Hermes* and was named *INS Viraat* after being inducted in the Indian Navy on 12 May 1987 at Plymouth in the United Kingdom.

There were attempts to convert *Viraat* into a museum or a restaurant, but none of the plans fructified.

Alang-based Shree Ram group bought it for Rs 38.54



Indian Navy’s aircraft carrier *INS Viraat* (now decommissioned) starts on its swansong voyage to Alang port in Gujarat, from Mumbai on Saturday. ■ IANS

crore at an auction. *Viraat* will be dismantled at the Alang ship breaking yard, said company chairman Mukesh Patel. “The vessel will likely reach Alang by 21 September if weather

conditions remain favourable,” he added.

The ship will be scrapped in 9 to 12 months, he said.

Under the Indian flag, *Viraat* played a crucial role in

military operations such as Operation Jupiter, Operation Parakram and Operation Vijay.

For the Indian Navy, Operation Jupiter in July 1989 was *Viraat*’s first major opera-

tion, as part of the Indian Peace Keeping operations in Sri Lanka in the wake of the breakdown of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord of 1986.

Viraat also saw action during Operation Parakram in 2001-2002, post the terror attack on Parliament.

The last operational deployment of the ship was the participation in International Fleet Review at Vishakhapatnam on February 2016.

The ship also participated in various international joint exercises like Malabar (with US Navy), Varuna (with French Navy), Naseem-Al-Bahr (with Oman Navy) and was an integral element of annual Thater Level Operational Exer-

cise (TROPEX).

Viraat is the second aircraft carrier to be broken down in India. In 2014, *Vikrant* was broken down in Mumbai.

Four officers who served on board *Viraat* when it was operational, went on to become Indian Navy chiefs. Nicknamed the Grand Old Lady, *Viraat* could carry a contingent of over 1,500 crew and officers.

“She was like a floating city, a piece of our country wherever we went,” a former Navy officer said.

Viraat was at sea for a whopping 2,258 days, covering 5,90,000 nautical miles, and 22,622 hours of flying operations, a Defence official said.

As an earlier draft bill circulated by the labour ministry for discussion had also proposed the criteria that companies having not less than 300 employees can hire and fire without the government’s permission. However, this provision faced stiff opposition from trade unions and was not included in the 2019 bill. Earlier this year, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour. This bill was withdrawn on Saturday.

An earlier draft bill circulated by the labour ministry for discussion had also proposed the criteria that companies having not less than 300 employees can hire and fire without the government’s permission. However, this provision faced stiff opposition from trade unions and was not included in the 2019 bill. Earlier this year, the Parliamentary committee also made a case of allowing companies having less than 300 workers to go for retrenchment of staff or closure without government permission.

States like Rajasthan have already increased the threshold to 300 workers. PTI



At present, Kerala has 37,488 active cases, whereas 92,951 patients have been cured. In all, 47,452 more samples were sent for testing in the past 24 hours

PINARAYI VIJAYAN
KERALA CHIEF MINISTER

'Arrested scribe was passing sensitive info to Chinese intel'

Delhi Police also arrests a Chinese woman & her Nepalese associate; claims the arrested freelance journalist was passing info about India's border strategy & Army to Chinese intelligence agencies

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Delhi Police today claimed that the arrested freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma was allegedly passing sensitive information about India's border strategy and Army's deployment and procurement, and foreign policy to the Chinese intelligence agencies.

At a press conference here, the Delhi Police special cell's DCP (deputy commissioner of police) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said that the cops were investigating what information Sharma had allegedly passed on to Chinese intelligence officers through his social media and email accounts.

Based on the Delhi-based journalist Sharma's statement during interrogation, a Chinese woman and her Nepalese associate were also arrested this morning, police said.

"Both the Chinese woman and her associate were directors of shell companies in Delhi's Mahipalpur area and they would export medicines to China and in return, would get huge money which they gave to their agents here," Yadav said.

Sharma was allegedly contacted by Chinese intelligence officer Michael in 2016 and the scribe allegedly shared sensitive information with him till 2018, the DCP charged.

Sharma came in contact with Michael through a social media platform and later visited China where "lucrative offers" were made, the police officer claimed, adding that the scribe allegedly started giving sensitive defence infor-



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

mation to the Chinese intelligence.

Michael had also borne all expenses on Sharma's visit to China, police said.

"In 2019, Sharma came in contact with another Chinese intelligence officer George and he was continuing to share

Indian defence-related information," Yadav claimed.

According to the DCP, Sharma has been in journalism for 40 years and since 2010 he had been working as a freelance journalist. He received Rs 40-45 lakh in around one-and-a-half years and was getting

USD 1,000 for each information, police charged.

Sharma was writing for China's Global Times newspaper and some Indian media organisations, Yadav said, adding that he had previously worked with the United News of India, The Tribune,

Hindustan Times and The Times of India.

The city police also told the press conference that since Sharma had a Press Information Bureau (PIB) accreditation card, he had easy access to ministries.

"Sharma was continuous-

ly giving information to Chinese intelligence about India-China border dispute, current border problem with China, Army's deployment and procurement, and Indian government's border strategy," Yadav claimed.

Asked what "secret information" Sharma shared with the Chinese, the DCP said, "We are accessing his social media accounts and email ID through other agencies to find what information he has shared with Chinese intelligence."

On being asked whether any officer of any ministry is involved, Yadav said that after accessing his social media accounts and email ID, it could be ascertained from where secrets documents have been leaked.

"When Sharma was arrested on September 14 by the Special Cell based on Indian intelligence inputs, police seized some defence classified documents from (his) house," the DCP claimed.

Police also said that forensic analysis of seized mobile phones and laptops was being conducted to "unearth the entire network and conspiracy" in this case. "Some confidential documents related to Indian defence department and some other incriminating documents have also been recovered and seized from Rajeev," police said.

The identities and roles of other foreign nationals involved in the conspiracy were also being ascertained and further investigation was in progress, police added.

An FIR under Sections 3/4/5 of the Official Secrets Act has been registered by the special cell against Sharma.

Police action against freelance journalist high-handed: PCI



PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

The Press Club of India (PCI) on Saturday called the arrest of freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma by Delhi Police "high-handed" and alleged that it "may be inspired by obscure or questionable considerations".

The Delhi Police on Saturday said Sharma was allegedly passing sensitive information about India's border strategy and Army deployment and procurement to Chinese intelligence agencies. Sharma was arrested on September 14.

In a statement, the PCI demanded that in all cases of arrests of journalists anywhere in the country, "the police must be required to inform the Press Council of India as well as the self-regulatory body of the broadcast media on an immediate basis".

It also said that the police should provide pertinent details "so that a defence may be possible to construct".

The PCI said it is "astounded to hear of the arrest of Rajeev Sharma, a well-known independent journalist of long standing and a member of the club".

"This is on account of the dubious track record of the Special Cell. More generally also, the record of Delhi Police is hardly a shining one," it said.

"On the basis of the statement of the police released to the media, we have no hesitation in saying that the police action is high-handed, and may be inspired by obscure or questionable considerations," the PCI alleged.

The PCI also cited the instance of Iftikhar Gilani, a senior journalist with Kashmir Times, who was arrested in 2002 "on the trumped up charge of tracking the Army's movements in Kashmir and keeping his so-called pay masters informed".

Subsequently, a Delhi journalist, who wrote for Iran's official news agency, was also arrested for playing in the hands of the Iranian secret service, the PCI said.

"His family also was made to run from pillar to post -- all to no avail. Eventually it became clear that the whole case was bogus and the journalist was freed," it said.

The PCI statement also said that the arrests of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Jamia Millia Islamia scholars such as Kanhaiya Kumar, Umar Khalid and others were done "acting on a political bias".

"Of late, Delhi Police, including its Special Cell, have made preposterous arrests under the lawless law called UAPA (Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act) in which the word of the government is enough to keep an innocent person behind bars for long periods. These have happened in matters relating to anti-CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) protests and the carefully designed communal killings in the so-called February 2020 riots in northeast Delhi," the PCI said.

The statement said Sharma wrote on strategic affairs and "may well have accessed routinely over-classified information on the Internet that is in the public domain".

JOBS & CLASSIFIEDS QUEST

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I SANDEEP Lakhnapal, s/o Late Sh. G.C Sharma, r/o Flat No. 2702 tower No. 7, Tota Priamanti Apartments, Sector-72, Gurugram-122101, Haryana, have changed my daughter name from Ishanvi Lakhnapal to Ishaanvi Lakhnapal for all future purposes.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be known to all that my clients named Smt. Laxmi, w/o Sh. Lalit Kumar Badgujar, s/o Sh. Chandram Badgujar, both r/o H. No. B-216, Jawahar Park, Devli Road, New Delhi-110062, have disowned their son namely Hemant and daughter in law namely Smt. Ritu, from their all movable and immovable properties including property No. B-216,

Jawahar Park, Devli Road, New Delhi-110062, and Shop No. 72, J. J. Slum, G-Block, J. J. Colony, Siddharth Market, Dakshinipuri, Dr. Ambedkar Nagar, New Delhi-110062 and further they have disconnected their all relations with them and my clients shall not responsible for any act and deeds caused by them.
A. K. Singh
Advocate
Enrolment No. D-574/95
Ch. No. 778, 7th Floor,
Lawyer's Block, Saket Court Complex, New Delhi-110017.
Mob.: 9811689661

Bike-borne phone snatchers held after encounter with Noida cops

PTI
NOIDA (UP), 19 SEPTEMBER

Two alleged mobile phone snatchers were arrested in Uttar Pradesh's Noida following an encounter with police on Saturday, officials said.

The two bike-borne men were fleeing after snatching a man's mobile phone near D Park and were chased down by the local police in the morning. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police, Noida, Ranvijay Singh said.

"The accused had done a similar act on Friday evening in Sector 58 police station area also after which an FIR was lodged for mobile snatching and

the police teams were asked to be alert. This morning they targeted another man but police patrol teams were alert and the miscreants were chased down," Singh said.

"When the accused found themselves being surrounded by policemen, they opened fire in a bid to escape but got injured in retaliatory firing. They were held and taken to a hospital for treatment," he added.

The accused have been identified as Ajay and Vivek, both residents of Kalyanpuri in Delhi, police said, adding that the duo is suspected behind multiple robberies and snatchings, especially in the border areas of the national capital.



Delhi Police commissioner S N Shrivastava holding a meeting of the city police personnel through video conferencing to review the crime as well as the Covid pandemic situation in the Capital, on Saturday.

SNS

Delhi now seeing downward trend in Covid positivity rate, says Jain

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain today said that there has been a downward trend in Covid-19 positivity rate in the national capital and that it will lead to good results by next week.

"The positivity rate was 6.76 per cent on Friday. It has remained below 7 per cent in the last two-three days. Last week, it was around 8 per cent," Jain said.

The cumulative positivity rate has also dropped below 10 per cent for the first time, he said.

The minister said Delhi has been witnessing a "downward trend" in the Covid positivity rate over the last few days. "It should lead to good results by next week," he said.

On a lighter note, the minister said the word "community spread is stuck in technical terms".

"When people are getting infected in Delhi and all parts of the country in such large numbers, it should



Health workers taking swab samples from residents of the Capital for Covid testing on Saturday.

DEEPAK

have been accepted as community spread. Only the Centre and Indian Council of Medical Research can tell whether it is community spread or not," Jain said.

Asked if there was community spread in Delhi, he said, "It doesn't matter what I believe... I am not technically competent to say so."

Jain said more than 500 ICU beds have been made available for Covid patients in private hospitals in the city over the last few days.

"More beds will be made available in private and government hospitals in the next two to three days," he said.

Asked if banquet halls

and hotels will be roped in again to increase bed capacity considering the spike in new cases, the minister said around 7,000 hospital beds were

occupied and more than 8,000 were empty in Delhi. "We have been keeping a strict watch on the number of beds. We will ramp up

bed capacity if need arises," he said.

There were around 14,000 hospital beds available for Covid patients in Delhi a month ago. The number has been increased to 15,000, Jain added.

He said the Delhi government will review its strategy for containment zones with experts.

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal had yesterday issued directions to the government for drafting a fresh policy for containment zones to reduce positivity rate and mortality rate.

On the Delhi High Court's directions to increase RT-PCR tests in the city, Jain said the number of RT-PCR and rapid-antigen tests (RAT) did not seem equivalent because the government has increased testing manifold.

He said that RT-PCR tests were being conducted on those having symptoms and that others were undergoing RAT tests.

"If you want to do bulk testing for say 500 people and

no one is symptomatic, how can you conduct RT-PCR testing then?" he asked.

Meanwhile, Delhi today recorded 4,071 fresh Covid cases, which took its coronavirus tally to 2,42,899.

According to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin, 61,973 tests were conducted for identification of coronavirus cases in the city.

Thirty-eight new fatalities due to Covid were recorded in the national capital today, which pushed the city's coronavirus death toll to 4,945, the health bulletin said.

The cumulative number of recovered Covid patients in Delhi was 2,05,890, including 4,249 recoveries recorded today. The recovery rate rose to 84.76 per cent.

The city had 32,064 active Covid cases as on date, the bulletin added.

Delhi had reported 4,127 new Covid cases and 30 deaths yesterday, when as many as 61,037 tests were conducted.

The Sunday Statesman

KOLKATA

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Only on declaring faith in Lord Venkateshwara will a person from another faith be allowed inside. Even late President A.P.J Abdul Kalam had made use of this opportunity, including Congress chief Sonia Gandhi.

N. CHANDRABABU NAIDU
TELUGU DESAM PARTY CHIEF

Badal hails Harsimrat's move against Centre's farm Bills

Justifying Harsimrat's resignation from the Modi ministry, the Akali patriarch says the Centre's agri sector legislations need wider consultations with key stakeholders like farmers and their representatives

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 19 SEPTEMBER

With Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigning from the Union Cabinet in protest against the Centre's three controversial farm Bills, the Akali patriarch and five-time Chief Minister of Punjab, Parkash Singh Badal, on Saturday expressed "immense satisfaction and pride" over the stand taken by the SAD "to save the beleaguered peasantry in Punjab and the rest of the country".

Badal described the party's decision to pull out of the BJP-led NDA government to fight alongside the agitating farmers as "a proud and landmark moment in the party's long history of standing up for principles and of always being on the side of the people whenever a line is drawn".

One of the oldest allies of the BJP, the SAD however continues to be part of the NDA. The Akali patriarch said that the farmers' plight is already



"extremely pathetic".

"The Punjab farmers always came to the country's rescue when it needed to be saved from the ignominy of famines and dependence on other nations. And they did so by sacrificing their only natural resources - water levels and soil fertility. Today, it is the country's turn to stand by the farmers," he said. Badal pointed out that the farmers' issue is relat-

ed to the overall national interest. "Agriculture is the backbone of our economy. If farmers and agricultural economy suffers, the whole economy, including trade and industry, will suffer too," he asserted. The ex-CM said that the Akalis have a long history of "rejecting lure of office and standing up for principles". "Lure of office means nothing to an Akali. Countless



times, as during the Emergency, we turned down outright offers of power as a price for silence against injustice.

But we always spurned such offers and preferred to stand by the country and principles, and filled jails for that. That tradition will always live on," he claimed.

Badal said that with the resignation of its sole representative in the Narendra Modi

Cabinet, Harsimrat, the SAD demonstrated again that nothing was dearer to it than its principles as well as the interests of the people, especially of the farmers, the farm labour and other poor classes who have been toiling for their rights. He felicitated Harsimrat for "speaking out boldly for the farmers and for promising to stand by them as their sister and daughter".

The Akali patriarch said the Centre's legislation on the marketing of the farmers' produce needed wider consultations, especially with the stakeholders, the farmers, as well as with the parties like SAD that have always been the voice of farmers.

He said that he was satisfied that as a mature representative of the people, the SAD tried to convey the sentiments of the farmers to the Union government and tried its best to persuade it to refer the legislation to an all-party Select Committee of Members of Parliament for wider consultations with the farmers.

Badal's arch Congress rival and Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh has dismissed Harsimrat's resignation as a Union minister as a "gimmick", saying that if the SAD had taken a stand and supported his government against the Centre's farm Ordinances earlier, it could have blocked the Modi government's bid to push these "anti-farmer" and "anti-federal" Bills through Parliament.

Why is SAD still with NDA, asks Capt Amarinder

PTI
CHANDIGARH, 19 SEPTEMBER

Questioning the Akalis alliance with the NDA, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Saturday asked the SAD to list "one pro-farmer initiative" persuaded by it with the BJP-led Centre in the past six years.

Hitting out at Badals for "perpetuating lies" in the past few days on agriculture bills, he said they had "openly and shamelessly supported" these since the Ordinances were brought in. The chief minister, in a statement here, said SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal and former Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal had been fabricating lies on farm bills, which have been completely exposed. Did either of you even once call the ordinances anti-farmer till they were presented in the Lok Sabha? the chief minister asked Badals.

Did Harsimrat even once, till her resignation, tell farmers that she was trying to persuade the Central government to address their concerns something she is now claiming? he further asked.

Questioning the Akalis alliance with the NDA, the chief minister further asked, Why is SAD still part of the NDA given that, by Harsimrat's own admission, the BJP-led government failed to address the farmers' concerns she put

before them?"

Amarinder Singh also asked Harsimrat Kaur and Sukhbir Badal if they can cite even one pro-farmer initiative that they might have undertaken in over past six years to persuade the BJP-led government at the Centre to act on it.

The chief minister said the people of Punjab, especially the farmers, will not forgive them.

The ordinances, which you had been shamefacedly supporting all through till you decided to back off under political compulsions of the fear of losing your farmers' vote-bank, were never discussed or even mentioned at the high-powered meetings a fact on which your coalition partners either deliberately kept you in dark or which you consciously chose to ignore in your own petty interest, he told the Badals.

Unlike the SAD, the Congress had maintained a consistent stand against the ordinances which the Centre introduced on the sly amid the pandemic and then pushed through the Lok Sabha by the sheer brute majority, Amarinder said.

The Badals should stop lying on such a critical issue, and instead, come out in the open fight against the NDA coalition by withdrawing from the alliance, said the chief minister.

Noida records 174 new Covid cases

PTI
NOIDA, 19 SEPTEMBER

Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar on Saturday recorded 174 new COVID-19 cases that pushed the district's infection tally to 11,217, official data showed.

The number of active cases, however, came down to 1,840 from 1,868 on Friday and 2,004 on Thursday, according to the data released by the UP health department. As many as 202 more patients were discharged and the total number of recoveries in the district reached 9,329, the data showed.

The district, adjoining Delhi, has so far recorded 48 deaths linked to the pan-

The number of active cases, however, came down to 1,840 from 1,868 on Friday and 2,004 on Thursday, according to the data released by the UP health department.

demic and has one of the lowest mortality rates in the state at 0.42 per cent, it showed.

The state's average fatality rate due to COVID-19 is 1.42 per cent, according to government officials.

The recovery rate of patients, which saw a steady rise over the week, stood at

83.16 per cent on Saturday. This is higher than the state's average recovery rate of 79.39 per cent, the data showed.

The district's recovery rate was 82.64 per cent on Friday, 82.18 per cent Thursday and Wednesday, 81.14 per cent on Tuesday, 80.38 per cent on Monday and 79.82 per cent on Sunday, it showed.

Gautam Buddh Nagar now ranks ninth among UP's 75 districts in terms of active cases, seventh in recoveries and 29th in death toll, according to the official figures.

The number of active COVID-19 cases in UP stood at 66,874 on Saturday. So far, 2,76,690 patients have recovered and 4,953 have died in the state, the data showed.

Farm fencing turns fallow fields fertile in Kangra

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 19 SEPTEMBER

With wild animals damaging the crops, which had forced farmers to abandon farming, the farm fencing scheme (Mukhyamantri Khet Sansarakshan Yojna) seems to be proving boon to farmers, encouraging them to take up farming once again in Himachal Pradesh, especially in Kangra district.

Kangra Deputy Commissioner Rakesh Prajapati said the state government is promoting the latest agricultural technology to increase the production and quality of crops.

"With a view to diversify agriculture, new incentive schemes have been started for farmers

and orchardists. But in the last few years, nuisance created by stray and wild animals has compelled the farmers to give up farming at many places which had turned farming into a loss deal in the district.

However, the state government's Mukhyamantri Khet Sansarakshan Yojna (MKSY), started to protect their crops from stray and wild animals, is now encouraging farmers to take up farming again.

Under the scheme, fencing, driven by solar energy, is done around the farmers' fields under the scheme and as soon as an animal comes in contact with the wire, it gets electric shock that forces wild animals to run away from the fields," he said.

He said this technique prevents crops from getting damaged by wild animals and besides, a person does not suffer any harm even when comes in direct contact due to light current in the fence.

Prajapati said under the MKSY, in the year 2019-20, a sum of Rs 10.31 crore was spent on 1,26,843 meters solar fencing on the land of 784 farmers across the district.

The scheme provides a subsidy of 50 per cent on barbed wire and chain-link fencing, 70 per cent on composite fencing and 85 per cent on solar fencing, he added.

Rajendra Kumar, Panchayat Pradhan, who lives at Kuthama near Gaggal Airport in Kangra

districts said his land had become barren in the last 10 years due to stray and wild animals including pigs, monkeys.

"These animals destroyed my crops every year and I was fed up with it, I gave up farming. But when I heard about the MKSY, being run by the Agriculture Department, I decided to fence my fields," he said.

He said no doubt that this was a unique and innovative scheme in which farmers and gardeners can re-cultivate their vacant land as the fencing keeps away wild animals.

Rajendra said he had done solar fencing in an area of 320 meters on about 10 kanals of land. Out of a total cost of Rs 358,543, he gave Rs 107,562 as

his share and received a subsidy of Rs 250,980 from the state Agriculture department.

Another beneficiary of the scheme, Mithila Sharma of Siholpur village under Shahpur Panchayat, said earlier nilgai, pigs and monkeys used to destroy crops on her fields but it turmeric or any traditional crops.

After Sharma came to know about the scheme, her land on an area of 310 meters was fenced for which a subsidy of Rs 2.35 lakh was provided to her, out of the total cost of Rs 3.36 lakh.

She expressed gratitude to the state government and it helped her reclaim unused land.

Task force on curbing NCR air pollution holds meeting

PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Aiming to curb air pollution in the National Capital Region, a high-level task force led by P K Mishra, the principal secretary to the prime minister, met to review action taken by various agencies and to firm up plans, the PMO said in a statement on Saturday.

In the meeting held on Friday, Mishra told all members that the objective of holding meeting early is to ensure timely action on

While assessing the overall situation, it was noted that crop burning incidents in neighbouring states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh were still high last year, the statement said, adding Mishra issued a number of directions to intensify the planned actions to ensure that stubble burning is discontinued.

stubble burning and other interventions to reduce pollution.

"A review of the main sources of air pollution, measures taken and the progress made by state governments and various min-

istries was carried out. It was noted that the incidence of stubble burning has reduced by more than 50% in last two years and the number of good AQI days has gone up," it said.

While assessing the over-

all situation, it was noted that crop burning incidents in neighbouring states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh were still high last year, the statement said, adding Mishra issued a number of directions to intensify the planned actions to ensure that stubble burning is discontinued.

Chief secretaries of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and secretaries of different departments and ministries were among those present in the meeting.

To control stubble burning, it was stressed that adequate number of teams should be deployed and they should ensure that no stubble burning takes place, especially in Punjab, Haryana and UP, the statement said.

These states need to put extra efforts and appropriate incentives especially in the relevant districts, it added.

The Delhi government was asked to ensure measures to control local sources of pollution.

No regular classes in Himachal schools, colleges till 30 Sept

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 19 SEPTEMBER

The Himachal Pradesh government on Saturday announced that all schools, colleges and coaching institutions will remain closed for regular class activity till 30 September in areas outside the containment zones across the state. A state government spokesperson said online/distance learning shall continue to be permitted and shall be

encouraged. "50 percent of teaching and non-teaching staff of educational institutions will be called to the school at a time for online teaching/tele-counselling and related work in areas outside the containment zones only with effect from 21st September.

For this, Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Director of General of Health Services on 8th September should be fol-

lowed strictly," he added. The spokesperson said students of classes 9th to 12th may be permitted to visit their schools in areas outside the containment zones only, on voluntary basis, for taking guidance from their teachers. "This will be subject to written consent of their parents/guardians and will be permitted w.e.f. 21st September as per SOPs issued by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on 8th September," he added.

HP to amend rules to make adventure sports safer

SHIMLA, 19 SEPTEMBER

The Himachal Pradesh government is mulling to bring in changes and amend existing rules to make adventure sports as river rafting, trekking and paragliding safer in the state.

After a meeting of the Tourism and Civil Aviation department, State Education, Language, Art and Culture Minister Govind Singh Thakur said that the state government was making all possible efforts to strengthen tourism activities in the state. "Different norms and rules were being drafted in order to make these adventure activities safer in the state. GPS tracking system should be used while conducting paragliding, trekking and other adventure activities," he headed. He stressed upon the use of GPS tracking bands for the safety of tourists and guides in tough trekking terrain so that if any emergency occurs relief and rescue work could be done immediately. Govind Singh Thakur said that the Tourism department was running various training programs for the people associated with adventure activities in the state and strict safety measures had also been adopted

After a meeting of the Tourism and Civil Aviation department, State Education, Language, Art and Culture Minister Govind Singh Thakur said that the state government was making all possible efforts to strengthen tourism activities in the state.

for organising these activities. He said that the Tourism department would soon start an online registration facility for conducting adventure activities. With the aim of promoting adventure activities in the state, coordination between tourism, Forest, Police and Health department would be established, he added. Detail discussion was also held on mitigating risk in tourism activities and steps that are to be taken to make this area more organized. Tourism and Civil Aviation Director Yunus, trainers from various organizations associated with adventure sports were also present in the meeting.

SNS

U'khand to relax Covid curbs for tourists

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 19 SEPTEMBER

Uttarakhand is all set to ease norms for visitors, who would tour the hill state for a shorter duration, in the next couple of days. Uttarakhand is expecting higher inflow of tourists from next week.

Among other tourism activities, even river rafting is likely to resume in Rishikesh. Currently, only tourists with Covid-19 negative reports are allowed to tour the hill state.

But, the Uttarakhand government is planning to exempt the mandatory Covid-19 test for tourists coming for short trips.

Hinting this Uttarakhand Chief Secretary Om Prakash said, "Some relaxation will be provided, on the state border from Monday, to people coming into the state.

After one month, the festive season will kick off, which will increase the inflow rapidly."

He was saying this while addressing a high level meeting with all the District Magistrates and Health Department officials, through video conference, for effective control of Covid-19, in Dehradun on Saturday.



Rafting on the river Ganga in Rishikesh.

FILE PHOTO

Uttarakhand tourism industry is looking at the coming weeks with high hopes.

The Char Dham Yatra to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri is moving with slow and steady pace as presently only local peo-

ple are allowed to tour the four Hindu pilgrimage centres. If some relaxation is provided on mandatory norms like Covid-19 test then even the flow of tourists will increase in the hills.

The Uttarakhand Tourism Department is making prepa-

ration to restart rafting in Ganga by next week.

The department has asked the technical committee consisting of the ITBP, irrigation, rafting association and forest department to submit a feasibility report on starting rafting on Ganga.

#MeToo: Scribe seeks acquittal in Akbar's defamation complaint

PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Journalist Priya Ramani on Saturday sought acquittal in a criminal defamation complaint filed against her by former Union minister MJ Akbar, saying freedom of speech and expression is intrinsic to a democratic society and her accusations of sexual harassment against him were her truth.

In the wake of the #MeToo campaign, Ramani in 2018 accused Akbar of sexual misconduct with her around 20 years ago, when he was a journalist. Akbar resigned as a Union minister on October 17, 2018.

Ramani, who concluded her arguments on Saturday in the complaint filed against her by Akbar, told the court through her lawyer that the #MeToo campaign was started to correct the structural wrong, which was continuing for long.

"The #MeToo movement gave a platform to thousands of women all across the world to come forward and share their stories of sexual harassment. The #MeToo movement was started to correct the structural wrong.

"Freedom of speech and

expression is critical and intrinsic to democracy. Ramani was a small part of a large movement. Hundreds and thousands of women participated in the #MeToo movement. I (Ramani) have proved my case and I deserve to be acquitted," senior advocate Rebecca John, appearing for Ramani, told Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Vishal Pahuja.

What Ramani had said against Akbar was "her truth, said in public good", the lawyer said. In response to the complainant's argument as to "why did Ramani not raise her voice before", John said there was a "culture of silence" when the incident took place.

"She could not speak up as there was a culture of silence. Ghazala Wahab (a journalist and a witness in the case, who too have accused Akbar of sexual misconduct while she was working under him) pointed out that there was no mechanism for sexual harassment at the workplace.

"The Vishakh guidelines (to prevent sexual harassment at workplace) did not exist in 1993. Even after the guidelines came into place, the judiciary and the media took a long time to implement those," she said.



Understanding between CM Palaniswami, Dy CM Panneerselvam is like what was seen between Lord Rama, Lakshmana

TAMIL NADU REVENUE MINISTER R B UDHAYAKUMAR
REFUTING CLAIMS OF DIFFERENCES ON SOME ISSUES BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS

THUMBNAILS



A man rescues a pigeon entangled in a kite's string on an electric wire in Amritsar on Saturday. ■ AFP

Gas filled balloons explode: A huge bunch of balloons burst into a ball of fire after sparks from firecrackers punctured them just before release during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's weeklong birthday celebrations here injuring a number of people, police said. The incident occurred when BJP members, all set to release the balloons, burst firecrackers while garlanding a Farmers wing office-bearer, Muthuraman at Padi on Friday. BJP members planned to release 100 hydrogen filled balloons in the air ■ PTI

AIADMK, DMK gear up for 2021 Assembly elections

AIADMK's executive committee meeting is scheduled on 28 September

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Political parleys continue in Tamil Nadu amid pandemic as 2021 Assembly election approaches. Both the ruling AIADMK and Opposition DMK held official meeting on Friday to prepare the cadres for the upcoming election.

DMK, which is out of power for a decade, the 2021 Assembly elections seems to be a 'do-or-die' battle. MK Stalin is tutoring district level leaders for a grass root level campaign, focusing on neutral or undecided voters.

Meanwhile, the ruling AIADMK, which faces clashes within the party is trying hard to weed it out by calling a meeting at the party headquarters on Friday which was attended by chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami and his deputy O Panneerselvam.

With V K Sasikala, the closest aid of former party supremo J Jayalalithaa is expected to be released from jail in January next year, the party is in a hurry to bury the hatchet if differences erupt inside the party.

After the meeting on Friday, Palaniswami and Panneerselvam announced that the AIADMK's executive committee meeting has been scheduled here for 28 September.

The AIADMK is apparently facing crucial issues as the 11 member steering committee to guide the party, which was proposed to be constituted when the faction led by O Panneerselvam merged with the one led by chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami three years ago, is unlikely to materialise for some more time. But both the leaders have decided to visit the party headquarters twice a week to meet the func-

tionaries and the cadre.

When Panneerselvam arrived at the AIADMK headquarters, cadre raised slogans hailing him as permanent chief minister and Jayalalithaa's political heir. Similarly when Palaniswami arrived, the cadre also hailed him as the permanent CM, champion of farmers' cause and 'Chanakya', who points out the real state of party affairs.

After the meeting, Palaniswami and Panneerselvam sat for about 20 minutes separately. Sources from the party said that while Panneerselvam insisted a 11 member steering committee to be formed, EPS resisted it pointing out that the formation of such committee at this juncture may trigger unnecessary political tug of war among the aspirants.

As per sources, there were intense discussions on certain issues, both the leaders

insisted that the functionaries and cadre should stand united in preventing the DMK from coming to power.

Meanwhile, the DMK workers are collecting village-level data about the welfare schemes which the party had created during its stints in power. This data will then be shared with the party's IT wing for wide dissemination.

As part of the effort, the party's district secretaries have conducted meeting s with cadres at village level and instructed them on micro-level election works as per the strategies shared by party chief MK Stalin during a recent video-conference.

The workers are being instructed to carry out door-to-door voter verification and get details of committed voters and neutral or undecided voters and introduce them on welfare measures decided by DMK to woo them based on it.

ROLE PLAY



A homeless woman plays carrom with her children on a footpath in Hyderabad on Saturday. ■ AFP

Chopper scam: Tyagi's cousins accused of laundering ₹5 crore kickback cash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Two cousins of former Indian Air Force Chief SP Tyagi used shell companies and banking routes to launder Rs 5 crore of bribe money received in the VVIP chopper deal, the CBI has alleged in its supplementary charge sheet which has also named as accused Giacomino Saponaro, the then Managing Director of AgustaWestland International Ltd.

The CBI has named 15 entities (individuals and companies) in its supplementary charge sheet, filed in a special court, which primarily focuses on the money trail of the bribe paid to swing the Rs 3,600-crore deal for 12 helicopter in favour of AgustaWestland which was not in the primary race because of 6,000 metres operational ceiling set for the helicopters to be used to ferry VVIPs including the Prime Minister, the President, the Vice President and the Defence Minister.

The supplementary charge sheet was filed on Friday night, nearly three years after the first charge sheet by the SIT under the then Special Director Rakesh Asthana, naming former IAF Chief SP Tyagi as accused in the scam.

The court will hear the matter on Monday.



According to the CBI probe into the money trail of the bribe, SP Tyagi's cousins - Sandeep and Sanjeev Tyagi - through their New Delhi based company Neel Madhav Consultants Pvt. Ltd had acquired a Kolkata-based company Mainak Agency Pvt. Ltd. in 2009 to launder Rs 5 crore in kickbacks received through banking channels using shell companies and fake bank accounts to camouflage the transactions.

The Tyagi brothers allegedly acted in collusion with other accused - Narendra Kumar Jain and Rajesh Kumar Jain of Kolkata - who created the shell companies, and Sunil Kothari, then Managing Director of Om Metals Infotech Pvt Ltd who allegedly opened fake accounts in different banks. The agency has alleged that the Tyagis gave the Jains and Kothari Rs 5 crore in black which was routed back to

them as clean money through purported business transactions. The CBI has alleged that it has intercepted conversations between middlemen Guido Ralph Haschke and Carlo Gerosa to establish the allegations that AgustaWestland had paid bribes to Sandeep Tyagi.

The conversation allegedly paints a picture of Sandeep Tyagi as a reliable man having deep contacts in New Delhi, officials said.

Giacomino Saponaro, the then Managing Director of AgustaWestland International Ltd, has also been named as an accused. The CBI has charged the accused under Indian Penal Code sections of criminal conspiracy (120B), destruction of evidence (201), cheating (420) and forgery (471) among others and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

J&K Governor announces ₹1,350 crore economic relief package for business, tourism

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 19 SEPTEMBER

Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday announced a Rs 1,350 crore economic relief package for the business and tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir that was ailing due to the long stretched Covid-19 lockdown and restrictions following scrapping of the Article 370 in August last year.

Sinha told media persons in Srinagar that the package includes a discount of 50 per cent on electricity and water bills on the fixed demand charges for industrial and commercial consumers for one year.

Sinha said: "I have met almost 35 delegations from various sectors after which a committee headed by my advisor KK Sharma was set up to look into the problems of the business and industrial sectors. The committee submitted its report on time and on the recommendations of the committee, the package has been announced. This is for the first time here in so many years that a committee has submitted the report in the given time frame which was 12 days."

Sinha said that the stamp duty has been exempted till March 2021 for all borrowers.



The package is apart from the Rs 1,400 crore announced for Jammu & Kashmir under the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

A separate package will be announced for transporters, taxi-drivers, autorickshaw drivers, houseboat and shikara owners who have faced problems.

A new industrial policy will be announced soon to revive the industrial sector, which has suffered huge losses, he said. "We have decided to give 5 per cent interest subvention to every borrower from the business community, without any conditions, for six months in the current financial year."

PM Modi to lay foundation of nine highway projects in Bihar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SILIGURI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone of nine highway projects in Bihar through video conference on Monday and also inaugurate optical fibre internet services through which the state's all 45,945 villages will be connected, the PMO said on Saturday.

These nine highway projects involve a road length of about 350 kilometres at a cost of Rs 14,258 crore.

Modi has recently inaugurated a number of development projects, including those related to railways, infrastructure, bridges, drinking water and sanitation, in the state which is set to go to the assembly polls in October-November.

The PMO said in a statement that the proposed highways will pave the way for the state's development as they will enhance better connectivity, convenience and economic growth in and around it. Movement of people and goods will also improve substantially, especially with the neighbouring states of Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, it added. ■ PTI

Sikkim inter-state movement to resume 1 October

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SILIGURI, 19 SEPTEMBER

In a welcome respite for tourists and tour operators in the region, the government in the neighbouring state of Sikkim has finally decided to allow inter-state movement of people without any requirement of registration with effect from 1 October.

The government there has also decided to permit hotels, homestays and other tourism-related services to operate from 10 October, according to a notice issued by the Principal Secretary of the Home Department of the Sikkim government, R Telang.

According to the order, there will, however, be complete lockdown in the Gangtok Municipal Corporation from 21 to 27 September.

According to the order, stakeholders of the tourism industry will be able to start bookings from 27 September.

"Prior to that (opening of the tourism sector), it is considered expedient to take special measures to contain the spread of Covid-19 within Gangtok Municipal Corporation area," the notice states.

The government has decided that the state tourism department, in consultation with the health department, will ready the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for tourists and to revive



the tourism industry.

The order states that the health department will issue Covid-19 protocols for free inter-state movement of people with effect from 1 October. "Even inner line permit for foreign tourists having valid visas shall be issued from 10 October," it says.

Notably, helicopter services in the Himalayan state will also resume from 1 October, while odd-even restrictions for movement of taxis and passenger vehicles will also be lifted from 10 October, the notice says. It, however, adds that the odd-even rule for private vehicles will continue.

It may be mentioned here that the West Bengal Government has already decided to resume tourism-related services, including hotels and restaurants, to open in Darjeeling and Kalimpong Hills. The Himalayan Hospitality & Tourism Development Network (HHTDN) in north Bengal had earlier requested Sikkim Chief Minister PS Golay to re-open the state for tourists.

TENDER

H. P. P.W.D. TENDER

Sealed item rate tenders on the form 68& are invited by the Executive Engineer Kotla Behar Division HPPWD, Kotla Behar on behalf of the Governor of HP for the following works from the approved and eligible contractors (C&D Class) enlisted in HPPWD.

TENDER SCHEDULE:

1. Date and time of receipt of application for tender form: 08.10.2020 up to 4.00 PM
2. Date and time of issue of tender form: 09.10.2020 up to 5.00 PM
3. Date and time of receipt of tenders: 12.10.2020 up to 10.30 AM
4. Date and time of opening of tenders: 12.10.2020 at 11.00 AM

The tender forms will be issued against cash payment (non refundable). The earnest money in the shape of NSC/FDR/Deposit at call of any of Post Office/ Scheduled Bank in H.P duly pledged in the name of the Executive Engineer, Kotla Behar Division HPPWD Kotla Behar must accompany with each tender.

Job No.	Name of work	Estimated cost	Earnest money	Time limit	Cost of form	Eligible Class
1	Construction of Saletri to Bhindia Road km 0/0 to 2/820 (SH;- C/O R/wall at Rd 2/615 to 2/630) Under SCSF	209120	4200	Two Months	Rs.350/-	C&D
2	Construction of link road to village Lakhaira (SH;- C/O Vented causeway at Rd 0/300 (deposit work)	426761	8600	Four Months	Rs.350/-	C&D
3	C/O Shantia Budhar Road to Village Sai Road Km 0/0 to 0/500 (SH;- Providing and laying cement concrete interlocking paver block from Rd 0/0 to 0/125 & Edge wall from Rd 0/350 to 0/377) Under MMSY	294862	5900	Two Months	Rs.350/-	C&D
4	Restoration of Rain Damages on Bhawrain to Gural Road km 0/0 to 3/520 (SH;- C/O V Shape drain from Rd 0/327 to 0/540) RHS	149659	3000	Two Months	Rs.350/-	C&D
5	Improvement of Road from Sansarpur terrace to Riri Kuthera Km 0/0 to 3/0 Under Industrial Corridor (Bhawrain Chintpurni Kandrori Damtal Road portion 29/560 to 32/560 (SH;- C/O Breast wall at Rd 0/365 to -0/378 and 1/030 to 1/045	163929	3300	Two Months	Rs.350/-	C&D
6	Improvement of road from Jandour to Kotla km 4/500 to 13/00 under Industrial Corridor (Bhawrain Chintpurni Kandrori Damtal Road Portion 19/560 to 28/060 (SH;- C/O R/wall at Rd 7/380 to 7/395 and 1/030 to 1/045)	292906	5900	Two Months	Rs.350/-	C&D
7	C/O Balance work of 30.00 Meter Prestressed Concrete Box Girder bridge over Kotla Khad (SH;- C/O R/wall at Various Rds on approached road)	499892	10000	Three Months	Rs.350/-	C&D
8	Restoration of Rain damage on Seul Khad to Dukka Road Km 0/0 to 2/600 (SH;- C/O R/wall at Rd 1/478 to 1/503	493858	9900	Two Months	Rs.350/-	C&D
9	C/O Various building under kotla behar Division HPPWD Kotla Behar (SH;- Geological investigation of soil /strata	480000	9600	Two Months	Rs.350/-	C&D
10	Restoration of Rain Dams on Pucca Tiala Mehra Road Km 0/0 to 11/150 (SH;- C/O R/wall at Rd 0/730 to 0/745 , 0/240 to 0/260 , 0/972 to 0/980 .80 & 2/060 to 2/064	278670	56000	Two Months	Rs.350/-	C&D

1. The contractors/firms should possess the following documents(Photocopy to be attached):
(i) Latest renewal of enlistment.
(ii) PAN (Permanent Account No.)
(iii) Registration under HP General Sale Tax Act, 1968 (TIN No.)
(iv) EPF(Employee Provident Fund Account No.)

2. Ambiguous/telegraphic/conditional tenders or tender by Fax/E-mail shall not be entertained /considered in any case.
3. The Executive Engineer reserves the right to reject/cancel any or all the tenders without assigning any reason(s).
4. The offer of the tender shall remain valid up to 120 days after the opening.

For terms and conditions kindly refer to website of the department.

Executive Engineer,
Kotla Behar Division,
H.P.P.W.D, Kotla Behar
(For and on behalf of Governor of (H.P)

31172020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK

Kerala CM slams Cong, IUML for dragging Quran into row



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
19 SEPTEMBER

Under attack over the gold smuggling case, Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday slammed the Congress-led UDF for dragging the Holy Quran into a controversy and alleged the Opposition was toeing the BJP-RSS line on the issue and they need to introspect.

It was the RSS and the BJP which had first made the allegation that gold had been smuggled in the guise of importing Quran from the UAE. This was later picked up by the UDF's Congress and Muslim League leaders, Vijayan told reporters here.

After the Holy book was brought to the UAE consulate, the consulate general had sought help from Jaleel for distributing it as sakkath (charity) during Ramzan and the minister had obliged, Vijayan said.

AIIMS Raipur races past medical giants in treating Covid-19 patients



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
RAIPUR, 19 SEPTEMBER

Raipur based All India Institute of Medical Sciences, has become the second AIIMS in the country after NCI Jhajjar, which has provided treatment to the highest number of Covid-19 patients. It has provided almost three times more medical care to the patients to grab the top slot among newly established AIIMS hospitals in the country. It has registered no death in the Covid-19 ward till date.

A comparative analysis among all newly established AIIMS around the country shows that AIIMS Raipur has treated 3,305 Covid-19 patients as on 16 September.

AIIMS Delhi and JPNATC treated 2,310 each and NCI, Jhajjar to its credit so far cured 4,155 Covid-19 patients in

their Covid-19 ward, Director and CEO of AIIMS Raipur Prof. (Dr.) Nitin M Nagarkar said.

Both the prestigious institutions are based in Delhi-NCR with plenty of resources. AIIMS Raipur is way ahead of PGI, Chandigarh (1006), and JIPMER, Puducherry (2551) in treating Covid-19 treatment. Both of the decades-old institutes are held as the center of excellence in the Medical fraternity in India, he stated.

Other newly established AIIMS in other parts of India such as in Jodhpur, Patna, and Rishikesh could provide almost half or one-third treatment to Covid-19 patients in comparison to AIIMS Raipur.

Prof. Nagarkar said that no death has been recorded so far in the Covid-19 ward till date in AIIMS Raipur

and AIIMS Jodhpur records the lowest death rate in ICU. We are much ahead in Covid-19 treatment in the country. No death in the ward shows that we are providing continuous care to the patients in the ward and whenever he or she develops severe symptoms, immediately shifting them in the ICU or HDU, the Director further claimed.

The lowest mortality rate in the ICU also shows that we have the best medical facilities in the ICUs. We will continue to provide one of the best health care facilities till we defeat Covid-19, he said.

Currently, AIIMS Raipur has 70 ICU beds with 40 dedicated ICU beds for the Covid-19 ward and 15 ICU beds each at the Emergency and Trauma department and Pulmonary Medicine Department.



The BJP govt in UP should be in the role of providing jobs, but it is working to obstruct appointments

CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA
ACCUSING THE YOGI GOVT OF OBSTRUCTING APPOINTMENT OF OVER 4,000 URDU TEACHERS

'Farm Bills undermine food security system'

Chidambaram says the BJP-led Central govt has surrendered to corporates, BJP has maliciously twisted Cong manifesto

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

The farm bills brought by the government undermine the food security system, the Congress claimed on Saturday and urged Opposition parties to collectively oppose the Bills so that they do not become law in their present form.

Congress leader and former Union finance minister P Chidambaram said that the Congress's 2019 poll manifesto was based on foundational principles of minimum support price (MSP), public procurement and public distribution system (PDS) to ensure food security. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi and spokespersons of the BJP have "deliberately and maliciously distorted" the Congress manifesto, he alleged.

On Friday, the BJP had alleged that the Congress in its 2019 manifesto had promised to abolish the Agricultural

Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act.

Chidambaram said it is clear in the manifesto that the Congress had promised to help farmers. However, this government has "surrendered" to corporates and traders, he claimed in a statement.

"Every political party has to take a stand is it with the farmers or is it with the BJP threatening the livelihood of farmers," Chidambaram said.

The Lok Sabha has passed three Bills related to the farm sector and these are the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, which seek to promote barrier-free interstate and intra-state trade in agricultural produce. These will now be tabled in the Rajya Sabha. Seeking to counter the ruling BJP's charge that it was

TRS to oppose agriculture Bills in RS

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 19 SEPTEMBER

TRS will vote against the Farm Bills in Rajya Sabha after party president and Telangana chief minister K Chandrababhan Rao directed his MPs to oppose the Bills in the Upper House and fight "tooth and nail" as these were detrimental to the interests of the farm community and benefit the corporates alone.

TRS has seven MPs in Rajya Sabha and the chief minister instructed TRS Parliamentary Party leader and veteran politician K Keshav

Rao to oppose the Bills at all cost. Terming the Bills as "sugar coated pills" Rao pointed out that it was stated in the bills that farmers can sell their produce anywhere in the country but wondered, "Is it possible for farmers to take their small produce across long distances, bearing transportation cost and sell it at good price?" Hewent on to add that the Bills will benefit the corporate lobby which will spread to every corner of the country and pave the way for private trade.

"Since the Bills will cause

huge losses to the agriculture sector and are against the interests of the farmers in the country they should be opposed and voted against in the Rajya Sabha," said the chief minister.

In the past TRS has often offered support to the NDA government on various issues but recently the party has criticised the central government on the issue of GST compensation as well as on electricity reforms. According to Rao both the proposed power Bill and the Farm Bills will have adverse impact on the agricultural sector.

markets, he said.

The party had also assured establishing farmers' markets with adequate infrastructure and support in large villages and small towns to enable a farmer to bring produce and freely market the same, the former finance minister said.

"Farmers need multiple accessible markets and choice. The Congress' proposals would have given them that. Once that is accomplished, the Congress manifesto promise on repealing the APMC Act and making trade in agricultural produce free would be a natural sequel in course of time," he said. "While our promise is clear, the Modi government has surrendered to the corporates and traders," the Congress leader alleged.

Chidambaram also said that in case a dispute arises between the farmer and the private purchaser, the machinery under the bills is so bureaucratic and convoluted.

TMC blames BJP for Galsi boy's murder

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BURDWAN, 19 SEPTEMBER

The recovery of the body of a nine-year-old son of an elected member of TMC governed Panchayat triggered speculations about political vengeance, the police dismissed any such motive.

Sandip, son of Budhhadev Dolui, a marginal wage labourer and member of the local Sanko Panchayat, was abducted on Wednesday evening and the family received ransom calls. The body with hands and legs fastened with a cord was fished out of the irrigation canal yesterday.

TMC's block leader and the Sabhapati of Galsi - II Panchayat Samiti, Basudeb Chowdhury alleged, "It was a planned murder and the conspiracy was hatched by the BJP".

The Pradhan of the TMC run Sanko Panchayat, Mohammed Ali Mollah alleged, "The father couldn't have

TMC's block leader and the Sabhapati of Galsi - II Panchayat Samiti, Basudeb Chowdhury alleged, "It was a planned murder and the conspiracy was hatched by the BJP."

arranged even Rs 5,000 and yet why did the abductors, hailing from the same locality demand Rs 7 lakh?"

The three accused - Jayanta Bag, Subrata Majhi and Mongoldip Dolui - arrested by the police, incidentally were BJP cadres and Jayanta was the booth agent for the party candidate in 2019 Lok Sabha Election. The BJP denied the charges of any political motive.

Bhaskar Mukherjee, SP, Burdwan (East) said: "They confessed that they had a false estimation about Budhhadev's 'hidden' wealth and so they kidnapped his son for money."

'If talks can happen with China, why not with other neighbour'

NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Speaking in Parliament for the first time since his release from detention, the National Conference president and MP Farooq Abdullah on Saturday advocated talks with Pakistan, saying if India can talk to China to defuse their border row, it can also speak to its other neighbour to deal with the situation at Jammu and Kashmir borders.

"Border skirmishes have been rising and people are dying... A way has to be found to deal with this. Except for talks... As you are talking to China to attempt that it withdraws from Ladakh border", we should also talk to our (other) neighbour to find a way to get out of this situation," he said in Lok Sabha during the Zero Hour amid protests from treasury benches.

The Srinagar MP also expressed his happiness at the findings of an Army inquiry into the killings of three men in Shopian in an encounter. "I am happy that the Army has admitted that three Shopian men were killed mistakenly. I hope the government gives a hefty compensation," he said. Officials had said on Friday the Army has found "prima facie" evidence that its troops "exceeded" powers under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act during the encounter in July.

Lok Sabha passes taxation Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Lok Sabha on Saturday passed a taxation Bill that seeks to provide various reliefs in terms of compliance requirements for taxpayers amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The reliefs include extending deadlines for filing returns and for linking PAN and Aadhaar. The Taxation and Other Laws (Relaxation and Amendment of Certain Provisions) Bill, 2020, will replace the Taxation and other Laws (Relaxation of Certain Provisions) Ordinance, 2020, promulgated in March.

Among others, the Bill seeks to give tax exemption for contributions made to PM-CARES Fund, which was set up in March in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Replying to the debate on the Bill, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the ordinance was necessary to defer various compliance deadlines under GST and Income Tax (I-T) Act during the Covid-19 times.

Further, the Bill seeks to make faceless assessment applicable to at least eight processes under the I-T Act, including for collection and recovery of tax and gathering of information.

"To ensure there is transparency in tax administration, that is why we are putting it (faceless scheme) in law," Sitharaman said.

West Bengal: Political blame game over arrest of terrorists

Ruling TMC said that the arrests cannot be construed as a failure on part of state administration which is committed to flushing out terrorists

SNS& PTI
KOLKATA, 19 SEPTEMBER

The arrest of nine terrorists, including six from West Bengal, and busting of an al-Qaeda module on Saturday has triggered a political blame game in the state with opposition BJP and Congress alleging that intelligence failure and appeasement politics of the Mamata Banerjee government have led to such a pass.

The ruling Trinamool Congress on the other hand said the arrests can not be construed as a failure on the part of the state administration which is committed to flush out terrorists. The opposition is politicising an issue involving national security, the TMC said.

Leader of Congress party in Lok Sabha, Adhir Choudhury said the arrest of six alleged al-Qaeda operatives from Murshidabad district shows "total intelligence fail-

ure on the part of state police who are only busy running errands for Trinamool Congress leaders." "It throws up the question of whether the state administration is competent enough to tackle the spurt in terrorist activities in the state. Earlier, we had heard about numerous cases of Jamat activists arrested. Now it is al-Qaeda, the most dreaded terrorist outfit in the world.

"This brings bad name to Murshidabad district which has borders with Bangladesh, to entire West Bengal," Chowdhury, the WBPCC President said. He alleged that these incidents send out the message of "communalisation of politics which does not augur well for the state."

Playing the TMC government, senior BJP leader Rahul Sinha said the state should shun 'appeasement politics, dirty communal politics and take strong measures against terror modules setting up

Bengal has become home to illegal bomb-making: Dhankhar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 19 SEPTEMBER

West Bengal has become "home to illegal bomb-making" and the state administration cannot escape its accountability for the "alarming decline" in law and order, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Saturday.

The governor's comments came after the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested nine terrorists associated

with a Pakistan-sponsored module of the al-Qaeda from several locations in West Bengal's Murshidabad and Kerala's Ernakulam early on Saturday.

"State has become home to illegal bomb making that has the potential to un settle democracy. Police @MamataOfficial busy in carrying out political errands and taking on the opposition. Those at helm @WBPOLICE cannot escape their account-

ability for this alarming decline in law and order," Dhankhar tweeted.

The governor alleged the state director general of police is distanced far from reality and his "ostrich stance" is "very disturbing".

"How far distanced is DGP @WBPOLICE from reality is cause of worry. His 'Ostrich Stance' is very disturbing.

Appreciate the role of policemen in general - they are

their bases in the state."

Sinha blamed the TMC of practising vote-bank politics "which prevents the administration from taking any affirmative steps against terrorists."

"Remember the RDX blast at Bowbazar over two decades

back. The entire state is now sitting on a powder keg. If the administration doesn't sit up and take note, Bengal will be in flames," Sinha said.

Countering the allegations, TMC MP Sougata Roy said the arrests should not lead to any question about the state gov-

ernment's resolve to flush out and crush terrorists.

Roy said the terrorists cross over to this side of the border which is manned by central forces. "The border forces could have been more vigilant," he said adding there should be better coordination between

the state and BSF.

He said there should be more vigil by the border guards so that infiltration can be thwarted and those coming to this side are tracked. About the opposition charges, the veteran TMC leader said: "They are doing politics over

an issue of national security".

In early morning raids at Ernakulam in Kerala and Murshidabad in West Bengal, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday busted an inter-state module of al-Qaeda operatives and arrested nine persons. The agency arrested six terrorists from West Bengal and three from Kerala.

Murshid Hasan, Iyakub Biswas, Mosaraf Hossen from Ernakulam and Najmus Sakib, Abu Sufiyan, Mainul Mondal, Leu Yean Ahmed, Al Mamun Kamal and Atitir Rehman from Murshidabad were arrested by the premier investigation agency.

A preliminary probe revealed that the arrested men were radicalised by Pakistan-based al-Qaeda terrorists on social media platforms and were motivated to launch attacks at multiple locations, including in the National Capital Region.

Civic bodies gear up to quell dengue menace



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 19 SEPTEMBER

The state Urban Development and Municipal Affairs (UDMA) department has directed all municipalities in the state, including the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), to carry out special dengue drives, fortnightly, on 'pulse mode'.

The UDMA minister and KMC board chairman, Mr Firhad Hakim, has said, as a result of all the recent borough administrative review meetings, a letter has been issued to all mayors/chairmen/chairpersons to organise a fortnightly vector control programme in 'pulse mode' throughout the state, starting tomorrow.

He said all KMC wards will organise such intensive vector control drives with special focus on targeted approach towards the removal of "environmental risk sites". This special programme will be undertaken

for three consecutive months, starting this month, in all wards of the civic body.

The UDMA minister added, the name of the initiative is 'Dengue Bijoy Abhiyan' and the first set of activities will begin on 20 September throughout Kolkata.

It is learnt that all borough and ward coordinators have been asked to involve all relevant departments in the programme in every ward to prevent the spread of vector-borne diseases, particularly dengue, in the city of Kolkata.

A KMC official said the vector control teams today carried out a drive to control the population of Culex mosquitoes at Churial canal in ward 143. Workers went down to the canal in boats to carry out the operation. Sanitisation is being carried out with mist blowers. We are conducting dengue awareness campaigns in all wards, assured the official.

Suburban train services: Rlys may seek help of Bengal police



NISHAT NIZAMI
KOLKATA, 19 SEPTEMBER

After the Kolkata Metro, the Eastern and South-Eastern Railways may take help of the state police for crowd management on the resumption of suburban train services.

The zonal railways are likely to seek deployment of local police from the state government for handling of passengers at and outside station premises.

According to a railway official, unlike the city metro, controlling the movement of passengers is a difficult task as the station boundaries, particularly in several suburban areas, are porous. Social distancing will be a bigger issue in local trains as compared to the metros where access by commuters can be controlled.

The Eastern and South Eastern Railway authorities, before finalising their own modalities to operate local and other regular passenger trains, were waiting for the effica-

According to a railway official, unlike the city metro, controlling the movement of passengers is a difficult task as the station boundaries, particularly in several suburban areas, are porous. Social distancing will be a bigger issue in local trains as compared to the metros where access by commuters can be controlled.

cy of the metro-introduced system on the resumption of commercial services.

Now when Kolkata Metro emerged successful with the operation during Covid times, the zonal railways are considering taking help from the state police to handle the crowd of passengers.

Even though the digital passes proved to be a suc-

cessful mechanism in commuter handling, the Government Railway Police (GRPs) along with the city police are playing a crucial role in the metro's success story.

"In Kolkata Metro, the GRP and city police are controlling the crowd at stations," claimed a railway official.

"For railways also, we will demand deployment of the state police for crowd control. While the GRP would manage the crowd inside the station, the state police would handle the visitors outside and at entry points," he added.

The final decision on who will control the crowd at which level though will be taken in the meeting which is expected to take place between the officials of the two zonal railways and the state government.

Having requested a meeting, the zonal railway authorities are awaiting a call from the state government.

Army board for granting permanent commission to women officers kicks off

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

The selection board for the grant of permanent commission to women officers in the Indian Army has commenced its proceedings.

The specially-constituted board, which is headed by a senior general officer and includes a woman officer of the rank of Brigadier, started the screening process at the Army Headquarters on 14 September, the Defence Ministry said today.

"In order to make the proceedings transparent, women officers have been permitted to witness the proceedings as observers," it added. Those women officers who qualify in the screening process will be granted permanent commission. This, however, will be subject to them clearing the medical requirements. Earlier in July this year, the government had issued a formal sanction letter for grant of Permanent commission to women officers in the Indian Army. This had paved the way for women officers to get big-

ger responsibilities in the organisation. The order specified the grant of permanent commission to Short Service Commissioned (SSC) women officers in all ten streams of the Indian Army.

According to the order, the ten streams include — Signals, and Intelligence Corps, Army Air Defence (AAD), Engineers, Army Service Corps (ASC), Army Ordnance Corps (AOC), Army Aviation, Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME). These are in addition to the existing streams of Judge and Advocate General (JAG) and Army Educational Corps (AEC).

In a significant judgement, the Supreme Court had ruled that women officers in the Indian Army should be given the permanent commission. It had also stated that the permanent commission should be considered on a case-to-case basis for the command assignments. Based on the Court ruling, the centre was given three months to set up the special board. However, this was delayed due to the global pandemic Covid-19 lockdown.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that this Male
Name: Mangal, **S/o:** Ghisa, **R/o:** Vegabond P.K. Road Footpath, New Delhi, **Age:** About 55 Years, **Sex:** Male, **Height:** 5'6", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** White Shirt & Grey Pant, Admitted by Staff Workers of LHMC in Lady Harding Hospital, New Delhi on 13.08.2020. During Treatment Doctor Declared him Dead on 17.09.2020. In this regard a DD No. 27A, dated 17.09.2020 has been registered at P.S. Mandir Marg, New Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this male but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this male may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S. Mandir Marg, Delhi
Ph.: 23364100, 23366730

DP/119/NDD/2020

The Sunday Statesman
With which is incorporated
The Englishman ~ Founded 1821

Fact and Fiction

Nityanand Rai, Minister of State in the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, has informed the Lok Sabha that the Government of India successfully blunted the spread of Covid-19 by imposing country-wide lockdown. Any mass movement of people would have spread the disease very fast in all parts of the country. The lockdown period helped the government create much required additional health infrastructure. During this time, dedicated isolation beds recorded a 22-fold increase and dedicated ICU beds increased 14 times. Similarly, laboratory capacity for testing Covid increased 10 times. The limited indigenous manufacturing capacity for masks, personal protective equipment and ventilators was enhanced to attain self-reliance. By slowing down the spread of the pandemic, India has prevented an estimated 14 to 29 lakh cases and 37 to 78 thousand deaths, Rai said while replying to a question put by Manish Tewari of the Congress. Replying to a question by Mala Roy, he said the exodus of large numbers of migrant workers was triggered by panic created by fake news regarding the duration of the lockdown and because migrant labourers were worried about adequate supply of basic necessities like food, drinking water, health services and shelter. The Union government was, however, fully conscious of this and took all necessary measures to ensure that during the lockdown period no citizen would be deprived of basic amenities.

Six retired bureaucrats ~ KP Fabian, MG Devasahayam, Meena Gupta, Somasundar Burra, Amit Bhaduri and Madhu Bhaduri ~ have approached the Supreme Court of India with a plea conveying their concern over the Union government's management of the Covid-19 pandemic and the deleterious impact it has had on the fundamental rights of citizens. They have sought an independent inquiry by a Commission appointed under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952, into the government's "gross mismanagement" of Covid-19 in India. The importance of the inquiry resides in the fact that the government has stalled an inquiry by the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee into its response to the pandemic. The plea states an inquiry is essential as multiple lapses have been committed on behalf of the government such as its failure to undertake timely and effective measures for containing the transmission of the disease within India despite being notified by WHO in January itself, and failure to adhere to "statutory obligations" under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, including drawing up a National Plan under Section 11 or issuing guidelines for providing minimum standards of relief to vulnerable sections of society under Section 12. The petitioners allege the government failed to consult the National Task Force appointed by it on 18 March, which consisted of experts in the fields of epidemiology and public health, before imposing a nationwide lockdown that spawned a humanitarian and economic crisis of gigantic proportions. Only an independent Commission to be headed by a retired Judge of the Supreme Court would bring out complete and provide valuable lessons for dealing with future pandemics of this nature.

Historical Renaming

The detoxification of history has been accorded a quirky spin by UP's Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath. Quite obviously on instructions from the ascetic from Gorakhpur, the name of the museum close to Taj Mahal is set to be changed in the manner that is concordant with the Hindutva ideology, which in a sense is personified by Adityanath. It thus comes about that the "Mughal Museum", being constructed near Taj Mahal, will be renamed as "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Museum". Without any empirical evidence to justify the change of name, the authorities are said to have initiated a desperate effort to establish a link between Shivaji and Agra. More basically, the controversy is embedded in the conflict between what was once known as Hindu Padpadshsahi and the rule of Shah Jehan the Mughal. The name-change is bound to fly in the face of historical data despite the Chief Minister's feeble defence. Announcing the name-change, he is reported to have said that "in the new Uttar Pradesh there is no place for symbols of the mindset of slavery". The discipline of history lends no scope for subjective reflection. The raging controversy is also likely to delay the project, that has already been severely impeded by dearth of funds and increasing costs. It bears recall that the plan to set up a Mughal Museum was initiated by former Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav in January 2016. Situated 1.5 km from the east gate of Taj Mahal, it was intended to showcase cultural artefacts and paintings of the Mughal era as well as cuisine. Barely 70 per cent of the Rs 141-crore project has thus far been completed. Costs have consistently ballooned as all concrete material for the project had to be transported from Noida. Construction of such material is barred in the Taj Trapezium Zone. The additional funds sought are yet to be sanctioned by the finance department in Lucknow. The name-change ~ from the Mughals to Shivaji ~ has intensified the uncertainty. The official effort to draw a parallel between Shivaji and Agra is contrived ~ "Shivaji was kept in captivity at Agra Fort during the rule of Aurangzeb, and he bravely escaped." Historians from Bhimrao Ambedkar University in Agra are expected to justify the move. Far from it. A historian of Ambedkar University has already sounded a discordant note ~ "After Shivaji lost all his forts, he was called here by Aurangzeb and lodged at Ram Singh Kothi. However, so far neither the Archaeological Survey of India, still less the country's front-ranking historians, are certain where Ram Singh Kothi is situated. The brigade in Lucknow ought to realise that a change of name cannot alter the facts of history.



Capitalism with Ethics

Once the crisis wanes, we are likely to hear ever louder calls for a new social contract, for ushering in a world where happiness, joy and harmony, climate, environment and Nature will be reckoned as more fulfilling objectives of life as well as of business, much more than products, profits, possessions and wealth



Before Adam Smith, the world believed that the wealth of a nation was limited by its resources. *Wealth of Nations* fundamentally altered the way people thought about the economy and relations between the state, society and the individual. It proclaimed that a nation's wealth can be increased without any limit based on three simple tenets: pursuit of self-interest, division of labour and free trade. Underlying all three is the use of capital which is nothing but surplus profits from any economic activity that needs to be recycled back into it to increase its scale to generate more profits, and so on in an increasing spiral, creating limitless wealth for a nation.

The logic of limitless collective wealth thus lies in the basic human instinct for furthering self-interest in the form of profit ~ call it greed if you would ~ but this greed is the primary driver of all economic activities. Higher greed begets higher profits and greater wealth for everyone. Capital is the ebb and flow of wealth and the yearning for more profit is not a vice but a benevolent force for society. The "invisible hand" of a free market in which competition is free and fair is capable of solving most problems in a capitalist society.

The downsides of capitalism are too well known today to allow the market a free reign. The market does not provide protection against exploitation, it has no ethics or soul. The prospect of endless profit to satisfy capitalist greed has killed millions with cold indifference across the world. But capitalism works and has survived many crises, emerging stronger from each with remarkable resilience. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Francis Fukuyama triumphantly proclaimed that with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, humanity has reached the end of history in "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." Unfortunately, that utopia had turned into a cannibalizing dystopia of unfettered greed and spiraling inequality plunging the world repeatedly into crisis after crises.

After the Great Depression of the 1930s highlighted the failure of laissez faire capitalism, welfareism, guided by Keynesian ideas, emerged as a major instrument of state policy and the welfare state became the accepted norm everywhere. Even though Keynes strongly emphasised social democratic principles of regulating the market through macroeconomic means, he accepted the capitalist market as

the only reliable agency for generating wealth.

Following his ideas, the West European nations experienced prolonged periods of economic growth between 1945 and 1970, leading to continuous improvements in people's living standards, and institutionalised 'a cradle to grave' welfare system for citizens to be sustained by taxes. However, during the 1970s, the situation changed radically due to various factors. The rich OECD countries started experiencing negative growth, high unemployment and stagflation, and Keynesian prescriptions of cutting taxes and boosting government spending were no longer working. As austerity measures and privatisation became the buzzwords for neo-liberal policies, a morally bankrupt capitalism was left in a mess of declining growth, stagflation, shoddy nationalisation and ascendance of unscrupulous global financial intermediaries. By the 1980s, most countries were embracing globalisation by shifting the focus from unsustainable state

welfareism to deregulation, accompanied by disruptive economic reforms. As this new philosophy, the *Neue Mitte* (New Middle), restrained the Government's role to only a facilitator rather than an actor in economic activities, capitalism got further entrenched, piggybacking on technological revolution and internationalisation of the markets while relinquishing control of production back to the private sector by the progressive withdrawal of the state. But the integration of global financial markets driven by unending greed would meet its nemesis in the economic meltdown of 2007-09, again pointing to the inherent flaw of capitalism sans ethics.

Capitalism thrives on profit without responsibility, the sole purpose of a firm being to make profits, as Milton Friedman famously said. In *The Future of Capitalism: Facing the New Anxieties*, the British economist Paul Collier argued for a balance between freedom, profit and responsibility, and the replacement of 'economic man' by 'social man' for restoring the core values of a just society. "Capitalism needs to be managed, not defeated", he said, by integrating it with an 'ethical state', 'ethical firm', 'ethical family' in an 'ethical world'. The 'bottom-line ~ profit ~ being the sole

focus of companies, they have neglected their duties towards society and even their employees. This is what has earned universal contempt for capitalism as a synonym for greed, selfishness and corruption. Perhaps it is about time companies learn that their long-term interests lie in turning their focus away from the 'bottom-line'.

The corrosive force of the market has progressively undermined the family, the firm and the state ~ "the organising structures of collective life" ~ which have lost their moral compass. Collier does not believe that the State should "with away" stateless societies tend to be disorganised, chaotic and extremely impoverished. As he says, "We

need an active state, but we need one that accepts a more modest role; we need the market, but harnessed by a sense of purpose securely grounded in ethics." The active state must support those who fall victim to capitalism's intrinsic process of creative destruction, 'the very process that gives capitalism its astonishing dynamic'.

A just society must be based on "reciprocal obligations" between members of the family, the larger society, between firms and their employees and also between nations, by forging reciprocal obligations via supra-national bodies. Society must restore its ethical foundations so that it does not get corroded from inside. Capitalism today is making people lead "anxious lives" in divided societies, yet it is "the only economic system that has proved to be capable of generating mass prosperity." The Covid-19 crisis has given the state an overarching, almost dictatorial authority over individuals' lives and liberties. Governments needed that power to deal with such extraordinary situations, but are unlikely to give up these powers once the crisis is over. The state needs to be restrained and both the state and capitalism need to reset their goals to usher in a happier society based on mutual obligations, ethics and morality. In such a society, profit is not the objective but a constraint to be satisfied in order to make it achieve the larger goals, in which the ethical bounds of the state will be dictated by the ethical bounds of society, which in turn will be determined by the alignment of our personal needs to societal needs. The world probably need-



GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

The writer is a commentator. The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

One language, one competition

SIR, The theme of Dilip Kumar Sarkar's article, 'English, Please' (14 September) should have been published 30/35 years back when the then Government allowed the use of regional languages in All India Public Service Commission examinations.

It was supported by most political parties as they wanted all regional languages should be the medium of instruction right up to the post-graduate level so that higher education is not restricted to a few students who are familiar with English. Most of the states followed the instructions and regional languages were used at the graduate level and in Hindi-speak-



ing states, up to the post-graduate level. As Hindi was promoted as a second Official Language (Rashtra Bhasha), all facilities for using Hindi in all-India competitive exams were initiated by the central

government. Thus the Hindi-speaking students got the facilities for using their mother tongue in the examinations. While non-Hindi speaking students studied through their mother tongue, they had to

write their papers only in English.

The fallout of such undue advantage to Hindi speaking students can be verified by comparing the percentage of IAS / IPS and other Central Services recruited every year for the last 20 / 25 years. Hindi may be the working language throughout the country for easy communications, courtesy Bollywood pictures, FM Radio, TV channels. But for recruitment of officers in All India Services, the examination has to be conducted in one language in a multi-lingual country, i.e., English to ensure the quality of officers and uniformity throughout the country. It is a matter of justice.

Yours, etc., Amal Biswas, Kolkata, 17 September.



Menace in the pattern

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana stunned legislators last week with the disclosure that, after some initial hesitation, he had signed the agreement that would allow Dito Telecommunity Corp. to put up key telecommunications facilities in a number of military camps run by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Dito Telecommunity is 40-percent owned by China Telecom, a company controlled by the Chinese government, while 60 percent is owned by Udenna Corp. and Chelsea Logistics headed by Dennis Uy, one of the top campaign funders of President Duterte. Lorenzana said he signed the deal "recently," and sought to downplay concerns first raised last year that the agreement posed grave national security issues. The deal only concerned military camps that already host facilities of Dito rivals Globe Telecom and Smart Communications, said Lorenzana. What is wrong with that argument? Lorenzana grossly fudges the issue by equating China Telecom with Globe and Smart, both of which are privately-run companies. China Telecom, on the other hand, is under the control of the Beijing government, which over the past years has grabbed Philippine territory in the West Philippine Sea, militarized the region, harassed Filipino fishermen, and unrelentingly undermined Philippine interests even as it has professed friendship and support toward a deferential Duterte administration. Lorenzana, as defense chief, should be the first to argue that China is not a disinterested, neutral party when it comes to the Philippines. It is to Beijing's advantage to exploit the country's weaknesses and vulnerabilities, among which, alas, is the shoddy state of telecommunications and

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
information technology across the archipelago. So why even consider, let alone put one's signature to, a deal that would practically roll out the welcome mat for China's technology and usher it right into the heart of the Philippine military structure?

According to the Dito deal, China Telecom will be responsible not only for building mobile phone towers and related facilities inside the military camps, but will also recompense the military by helping it "design, develop, and upgrade" its IT infrastructure, which would allow the state-owned Chinese company to access the AFP's classified communications systems. What would stop the Chinese company, then, from installing spyware and deploying IT "experts" that would peer into sensitive AFP communications and keep tabs on the very workings of the Philippine government? Beijing's military brass must be smacking their lips at the incredible luck they've had with this deal ~ a major adversary in the simmering South China Sea dispute (which had already won its case in a landmark ruling by the arbitral tribunal in The Hague) willingly subverting itself by turning over its military infrastructure for "upgrading" to a company owned and operated by Beijing. Note that under Article 7 of the Chinese National Intelligence Law, that company is obliged to support intelligence-gathering efforts by the Chinese government ("any organization or citizen shall support, assist, and cooperate with the state intelligence work in accordance with the law") ~ a deal-breaking factor Lorenzana must have also known from the outset. What kind of self-respecting government would enter into such an arrangement, given the precarious implications to national defense and security? The AFP, however, stoutly says there is "no cause for concern," as 'appropriate safeguards' have been put in place that Dito will not use the facilities it will put up in the military camps to secure classified information (as if such a guarantee amounts to anything).

FARMERS ON A TREADMILL

SIR, This is with reference to Devendra Sakse-na's incisive article, 'Agricultural Revolution?' (15 September). Indian farmers are indeed on a treadmill in which downward pressure on the prices they receive for their produce and /or the upward pressure on the inputs needed for production, forces them to adopt new technologies to enhance the scale of production in an attempt to stay in the farming profession. The "treadmill can aptly be described by an old New England perception, 'We grow more corn, to feed more cows, to make more milk, to buy more land, to grow more corn.' Only big farmers with huge resources can survive.

Moreover, Indian agriculture has an image problem. There is declining interest among educated rural youth to enter agriculture related professions owing to the persistent perception of agriculture as an outdated occupation with minimal financial returns. Technology and a good marketing system could make agriculture attractive to the younger generation. Yours, etc., Jaydev Jana, Kolkata, 16 September.



During the winter of 2010, people residing near American shale gas extraction sites complained that their domestic supply of water was “catching fire”. Subsequent scientific investigations revealed that the water was contaminated with a highly flammable gas -- methane, a major component of shale gas. This revelation fuelled a debate over the costs and benefits of extracting shale (natural) gas via ‘hydraulic fracturing’ or ‘fracking’. Currently, more than a dozen countries have banned fracking (including some states in the US). However, in 2020, India exempted industries from obtaining an environmental clearance before exploring natural gases through any method, including fracking.

Conventionally, natural gas is extracted from porous rocks that allow movement of gases. However, much natural gas remains trapped in the rocks that are too dense to allow their movement. Industries apply external force on these rocks to crack their surface and release the natural gas. In fracking, this external force is created through pressurised water. Usually, industries begin fracking by drilling the earth’s surface and making wells in the non-permeable sedimentary rocks. The industry then injects a mixture of pressurised water, sand, and chemicals, known as shale fluid, into the shale rock through the wells. The shale fluid creates cracks through which the shale gas escapes into collection wells.

A single fracking activity may require 9 million litres of water (5 to 10 times more than conventional drilling). A part of the injected water flows back upward along with the methane-rich shale gas. This methane-rich flowback water (or the methane gas directly) can migrate to groundwater (GW) sources like aquifers, located near the shale gas fracking wells. These are often the primary source of drinking water and irrigation. Disposing of the ‘flow-back water’ is one of the most daunting challenges in fracking. India does not yet have a regulatory guideline specific to ‘flow-back water’ disposal or ‘methane migration’ during shale gas extraction.

If India could scale up its shale gas extraction process, it would be able to fill the current gap between natural gas demand and supply. In 2017, India spent \$120 billion in importing energy sources, including natural gas – a large burden on the economy.

In 2013, India announced a “Policy Guideline for Exploration and Exploitation of Shale Oil &

Why fracking in India must be regulated



Gas...” This draft policy allowed state-owned companies to start exploring shale gas reserves in their existing conventional oil and gas blocks.

India’s would-be frackers believe that, over the next five years, India could commercially recover 63 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of shale gas reserves in 4 of its 26 sedimentary basins. In 2017, the Union government invited private players to explore and exploit their hydrocarbon resources, including shale gas, under its new policy, “Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP)”.

HELP removed the regulatory difference between unconventional and conventional oil and gas resources. Industries are no longer required to obtain separate clearances for exploring and exploiting unconventional hydrocarbon. Further, in August 2018, the cabinet passed a policy allowing shale gas exploration and production in areas that were primarily designated for exploring conventional hydrocar-

bon resources. To remove the legislative distinction between conventional and unconventional hydrocarbon, the parliament, in 2018, amended the definition of ‘petroleum’ to include ‘shale gas.’ This allowed industries to extract shale gas reserves within the regulatory framework that applied to conventional drilling.

This uniformity leaves a vast regulatory gap since shale gas extraction, through fracking, poses a unique threat to India’s water resources. The Indian hydrocarbon regulatory authority (Directorate General of Hydrocarbon - DGH), in its guideline for ‘Environmental Management During Shale Gas/Oil Exploration and Production’ highlighted these regulatory gaps. It indicated that fracking may permanently change India’s water dynamics primarily due to (1) the rate of water consumption throughout the process, and (2) contamination of groundwater due to insufficient fracking well construction and design. The same guideline, howev-

er, refrained from proposing a sector-specific environmental clearance process for fracking or a comprehensive risk assessment of the fracking sites in India.

India, in 2020, further relaxed the oil and gas regulations by allowing hydrocarbon industries to begin drilling and other exploration activities, including fracking, without conducting environmental impact assessments (EIAs) or public consultations. Moreover, beginning in June 2020, industries can monetize their explored hydrocarbon resources without waiting for their contractual commercial period to begin. The time between the exploration and commercial phase was critical to analyse the environmental impact of the extraction activities. These policy reforms have made shale gas fracking a practical choice for oil and gas companies in India.

To sustain its fracking projects, India must address fracking-specific water issues. To begin with, the central and state authorities must work

together with environmental regulators to identify and assess the structure of aquifers close to proposed shale gas sites and ensure proper casing of shale wells. Due to its amount and composition, flow-back water cannot effectively be disposed of through standard wastewater regulations. India must formulate a water regulation policy on fracking. Corporations must disclose water data. Extractors of groundwater should use digital smart meters, as the National Green Tribunal noted in its July 2020 order. India’s chemical regulation policy is still under deliberation. “Methane” as a chemical is underregulated. Before scaling up fracking projects to a commercial level, India must regulate methane migration.

Regulating fracking may leave serious regulatory gaps, inviting another tragedy similar to the Baghjan oil well blow-out. Unregulated fracking may have long term impacts such as water depletion (India, at present, has the world’s highest groundwater depletion rate), poisoning of water (India falls at 120th rank, out of 122 countries, on water quality index), and collapsing environmental justice (over 212 environmental activists were killed in India last year for seeking environment data).

Escalation of fracking operations at commercial level in India could mend the demand and supply energy gaps; however, authorities must identify and regulate the fracking-specific water issues in India. India should reconsider its decision allowing industries to start exploratory fracking without any environmental clearance. Assessing exploratory fracking can reveal several scientific uncertainties concerning sustainability of fracking in India, eventually helping regulators to identify and fix fracking-water issues before scaling up the operations. Lastly, India must establish dynamic water data system with digital smart meters and replenishment mandates to help state and non-state actors track the utilisation of groundwater resources.

The writers are, respectively, founding professor and dean at Jindal Global School of Environment and Sustainability, Jindal Global University, Sonapat, and an energy policy researcher affiliated with Central European University, Vienna.

NOW AND AGAIN

The buzz of a lockdown

SHOVANLAL CHAKRABORTY

They say ‘distance makes the heart grow fonder’. Though I feel my wife and I may have been better off living on separate planets, I am willing to wave a peace flag during these endearing times of staying at home.

But for the moment I have planted my flag in the living room, while the bedroom is her territory. Ergonomically, that’s the farthest we can be from each other and I say that with a glint in my eye. I am kidding, of course, we love each other despite having only one television at home.

I recently learned that the word quarantine comes from 16th-century Italian ‘quaranta giorni’ literally meaning ‘40 days’ and refers to the period a ship suspected of carrying disease is kept in isolation. The introverts are living it up. This is their moment. Vilified all along, they can now hold their heads high as they virtually pioneered social distancing.

It is incredible the things we learn when we spend more time at home. My wife now understands that a game of football lasts 90 minutes. And importantly why men should not be interrupted between one. My daughter has figured out that a mouse can also mean a piece of computer equipment. She calls mine ‘Minnie’.

Every moment is truly a miracle in itself. There is joy in every mundane occurrence. For example, growing facial hair is as natural as birth to a baby - though arguably they may vary in effort. While I am genetically indisposed to experiencing the latter, I can speak confidently on the former. For the uninitiated, it must be noted that growing a beard is much like having a baby, in fact like having many follicular babies - caring and nurturing each of them, allowing them to grow and shape their future.

And that brings me to Jake. He regaled us with his visits around meal times. Very jovial, he always had a buzz about him. But then, with advancing age, he seemed to get weaker and slower - we felt that time was running out for him. He did enjoy the attention my daughter gave him. She even started a ‘Save Jake’ movement, contributed to by her friends and myself, and thus created a fund for his care.

Some days ago, despite the valiant efforts of my daughter and I, he passed away - apparently murdered in cold blood. Jake is a housefly. Was a housefly. Houseflies are carriers of disease, my wife says. We now believe she may have a hand in Jake’s sordid end. No, I am not arguing with her for the moment, and will keep my distance. May the heart grow fonder, right?

100 YEARS AGO

SERAIKELLA AND KHARSWAN

To The Editor Of The Statesman
SIR, - The two States of Seraikella and Kharwan, containing 457 and 149 square miles, were part of Porahat Raj but have been separately recognised by the British Government in 1820. Since 1837 Singbhum formed a separate District and the affairs of the two States were under the direct supervision of the Deputy Commissioner of Singbhum as Assistant Political Agent under the Commissioner of Chota Nagpore as Political Agent, and this was much to the advantage and convenience of the Chief as well as the people, as the headquarters at Chaibasa were only 13 and 16 miles from the respective headquarters of the police court. The appeals from decisions and orders of the Chief and his sons and grandsons were heard and disposed of by the Deputy Commissioner of Singbhum in his capacity as Assistant Political Agent after full hearing from the parties. In this way the people used to get speedy and impartial justice at their doors at a minimum expense.

MAHESWAR SINGH DEO.

Seraikella.

REGISTRATION OF SERVANTS

To The Editor Of The Statesman
SIR, - With reference to your correspondent’s letter I quite agree that some drastic steps should be taken to prevent so many thefts taking place in private dwelling-houses by servants. I have also suffered considerable loss owing to the dishonesty of my servants and can therefore sympathise with Badly Bitten. My experiences were, in January, 1919, we left our house at 5-30 P.M. one evening and on our return at 7-30 P.M. we found that one of our almirahs had been forced open and a jewel case containing jewelry and cash to the value of Rs 6,000 had been carried away, but neither articles nor culprits were traced. I quite agree with Badly Bitten that servants should be registered. In South Africa every servant must have a registration ticket bearing his name and country address and name and address of employer. If the system was introduced in Calcutta I feel certain there would be fewer badmashes in the city than at present.

VICTIMISED.

Calcutta.

AMERICAN PRESIDENCY

To The Editor Of The Statesman
SIR, - In reference to the nomination of Senator Harding as Republican candidate for the American Presidency, two points may be of interest to some of your readers. It will be remembered that President Wilson was a “compromise candidate” in the 1912 elections. The two big nominees who could not get the requisite majority and whose claims were compromised to let him in were Senator Champ Clark and Mr. William Jennings Bryan. Should President Wilson seek re-election, whether successful or not, he would be the first on record to ask the country to return him thrice in succession. Washington refused a third nomination for very good reasons and since then all Presidents have done the same, this being practically an unwritten law. I should say that President Wilson would not seek re-election this year, but if he did he would alienate much of the sympathy of his friends.

C.J.
Calcutta.

POLITICAL DIARY | KALYANI SHANKAR

Another NDA ally feels the strain

The resignation of the lone Shiromani Akali Dal minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal from the Modi cabinet on Thursday opposing the three controversial farm bills was not a surprise. The Akali Dal was pushed to the decision because of pressure from its core constituency of farmers and pressure from the Congress chief minister Captain Amerinder Singh. He has been taunting the SAD for not protecting the interests of farmers though Harsimrat was sitting in the cabinet when the ordinances were okayed. The Punjab Legislative Assembly also passed a resolution against the ordinances on August 28.

Farmers’ protests against the bills are catching up not only in Punjab but in other states also. The three offending bills are the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill 2020; The Farmers’ (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 2020, which were passed by Parliament this week. Amid widespread protests, the SAD has latched on to the issue in the state.

The SAD has chosen an emotive issue as it might come in handy at the time of the next Assembly polls scheduled for 2022. Party chief



Sukhbir Singh Badal said in the Lok Sabha on Thursday the proposed laws will “destroy” the 50 years of hard work put in by successive Punjab governments and farmers to build the agriculture sector, and recalled Punjab’s contribution to the Green Revolution.

Though Harsimrat Badal has resigned, the SAD has not yet decided whether to pull out of the NDA. The party has only two M.Ps. - Harsimrat and Sukhbir Badal - besides

three members in the Rajya Sabha.

This is not the first time there has been friction between the BJP and other NDA constituents. The party had differences on several issues earlier also but it never ended up in this manner. If the SAD decides to part company, it will be the second oldest ally to sever connections with the BJP.

The ruling party’s oldest ally, Shiv Sena, had parted company after the 2019 Assembly polls. BJP

tried to expand in Maharashtra as the fight between the two was for political space. The same thing is happening in Punjab too.

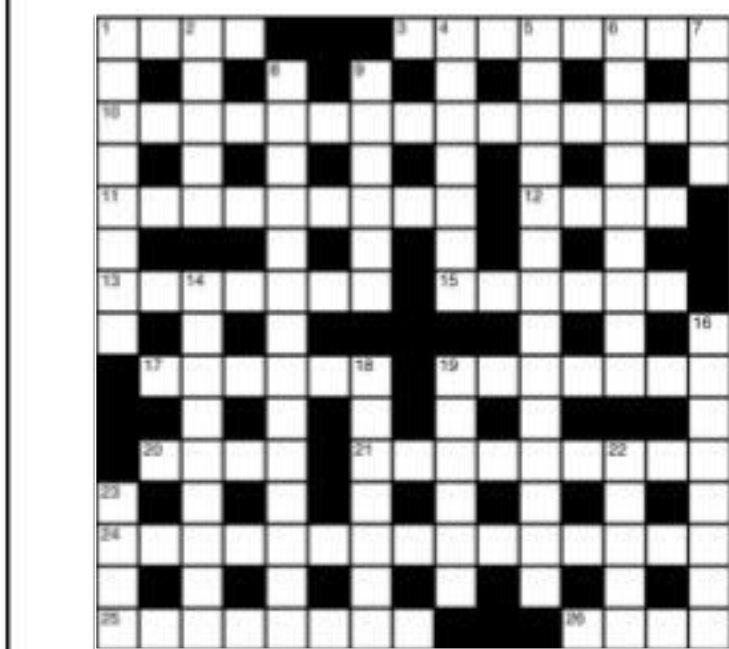
BJP’s message to the SAD now is “go if you want”. The BJP and SAD are natural allies. The two had complimented each other for long. The Akali base is the Sikhs and rural voters while the BJP depended upon the urban and Hindu votes. That is how their consolidation began - the rural Sikh and the urban Hindu.

There is a churning in the SAD. Both the BJP and SAD have changed from the earlier days. Prakash Singh Badal is more than 90 and he has left control of the party to his son, Sukhbir. There is a view in the party that the SAD has become the family fiefdom. The BJP is trying to tap the anger within the Akalis.

The strain between the two developed gradually. When the BJP started giving tickets to Sikhs and the SAD to Hindus in 2017, the cat was out of the bag. However, the arrival of the Aam Admi Party in 2017 gave jitters to the established parties like the Congress, Akalis, and the BJP. Behind the scenes, they had come to an understanding to check the AAP. Their public position was of adversaries but in practical terms, they did not work against each other. But all of them worked against the AAP.

CROSSWORD

NO 28079



SOLUTION FOR 13 SEPTEMBER



ACROSS

- Small, pale bird (4)
- Axeman might use this initially entering copse, trying resolutely to cut tree (8)
- Below par when Arthur teed off – gripping end to game (5,3,7)
- Add seasoning to fish – European, posh restaurant might insist on this (5,4)
- Son – stir flipping drink! (4)
- Well-behaved soldier (7)
- ‘Labour with vigour’ – a new catchphrase (6)
- Adult who’s lost east of American city, carelessly (6)
- Gold record-player with no ordinary

remote (7)

- Food sent back – some chocolate fudge (4)
- Cue, holding a rest (9)
- Angry talk to confuse what you’re doing? (9,6)
- Bare bottoms in England are very overdue (8)
- Unimportant fish in loch? On the contrary (4)

DOWN

- Queen wearing blue right next to group of soldiers (8)
- Confuse movement of a duck with taking off (5)
- Unruly large women getting in beer on ship (7)

- Aware of standing close to terrific girl, awake (5-9)
- Concerned about heat and dry? Frantically do this (9)
- Basic in some respects (4)
- Don tries to break actual drill (5,9)
- Conservative welcoming the man’s idea (6)
- Treacherous rogues and rebels (9)
- Rescue from deep river, swimming out of depth (8)
- Come off train (4,3)
- Group of military vessels are made at docks – every stern (6)
- Father adopting type of Buddhism, almost bewildered (5)
- Ill-natured American police department (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)



This is a typical birth of a bull market where you have a changing country, you have a deep fall in growth and everybody is perplexed by the rise

RAKESH JHUNJHUNWALA
BILLIONAIRE INVESTOR

THUMBNAILS

BMW Motorrad enters cruiser segment: BMW Motorrad, the two-wheeler arm of German luxury carmaker BMW, on Saturday said it has entered cruiser bike segment in India with the launch of all-new R18 model. The BMW R18 comes in two variants, priced at Rs 18.9 lakh and Rs 21.9 lakh, respectively (ex-show-room). The model can be ordered as a completely built-up unit (CBU) from Saturday onwards through BMW Motorrad dealer network, the company said in a statement. **PTI**

Hyundai rolls out services: Hyundai Motor India on Saturday said it has launched exclusive services for new customers of its premium SUV Tucson and sedan Elantra through its premium assurance programme. As part of the premium assurance programme, the company has rolled out various initiatives like five-year warranty, three-year roadside assistance and connectivity features, among others for the two models. **PTI**

Niti Aayog, ISPP join hands: Niti Aayog and the Indian School of Public Policy (ISPP) have joined hands for training, mentoring and capacity building of government officials as well as public policy scholars, a statement said. The Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO) of the Aayog has signed a statement of intent with the ISPP to build collaboration for faster intermediation of knowledge and use within the public system, the statement said. **PTI**

NB tea garden workers: Workers of 168 tea gardens in north Bengal will get a bonus of 20 per cent for the last fiscal as compared to 18.5 per cent in 2018-19, an official of Indian Tea Association (ITA) said. However, the bonus payout of the workers of the Darjeeling tea industry is yet to be decided. **PTI**

'Saving a business more important than recovery'

Insolvency proceedings against corporate debtors, personal guarantors can go together: FM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said law provides for carrying out insolvency and bankruptcy proceedings against corporate debtors as well as personal guarantors together.

She was replying to a debate on the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2020, in the Rajya Sabha which passed the proposed legislation to replace an ordinance in this regard with a voice vote.

"The corporate debtor often has guarantors. So for comprehensive corporate insolvency resolution and liquidation we felt it was necessary that the insolvency of the corporate, debtor, as well as its guarantors, are considered together to whatever extent it is possible," Sitharaman said in response to some members raising the issue.

In June, an ordinance was promulgated to amend the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) whereby fresh

insolvency proceedings will not be initiated for at least six months starting from March 25 amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Default on repayments from March 25, the day when the nationwide lockdown began to curb coronavirus infections, would not be considered for initiating insolvency proceedings for at least six months.

The minister also clarified that insolvency proceedings against corporates defaulting on loans prior to March 25 will continue and the amendment will not stall those cases.

On members' queries about the urgency to bring the ordinance in the first place, Sitharaman said that "between sessions, if there is a need for the ordinance because the ground situation demands it, I would think a responsive government's duty is to at least use the ordinance to show that we are there with the people of India."

"So to that extent I am sure the House will appreciate that as and when the gov-



ernment decides for ordinance it is because of that, and whenever the next session happens we come back," she said.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the minister said, businesses faced trouble.

So it was decided "that it was better to ssection sections 7, 9 and 10 of IBC so that we can prevent corporate persons, which are experiencing distress on account of the unprecedented situation, being pushed into insolvency proceedings".

Sections 7, 9 and 10 deal with the initiation of corporate insolvency resolution

process by a financial creditor, operational creditor and corporate debtor, respectively.

The minister further said the IBC is a critical part of business now and cited data to show how the code had performed. Citing data for NPAs of commercial banks during 2018-19, she informed the House that Lok Adalats recovered 5.3 per cent, Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs) recovered 3.5 per cent and SARFAESI recovered 14.5 per cent. On the other hand, IBC ensured 42.5 per cent of recovery.

Sitharaman further said that most of the resolutions

are happening to make the company to be a going concern only. "Priority is to keep the company to be a going concern rather than to liquidate them at the earliest," she said adding that 258 companies were saved from going bankrupt through the IBC process, while 965 firms went for liquidation. "...258 companies were rescued which means employment is back again with them. Companies which have been liquidated in total, three-fourths of them were defunct and were also given liquidation solution and therefore at least loss of employment was reduced," she said.

According to her, 258 companies rescued had assets of Rs 96,000 crore and the 965 companies sent for liquidation had assets of Rs 38,000 crore.

So in value terms, the assets rescued were about two and a half times of the assets which went to liquidation, Sitharaman said.

The IBC, which came into force in December 2016, has been amended five times.

Covid effect: No buyers for AI may delay divestment

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Air India is not finding any takers and the privatisation may be put off by three years, delivering a blow to the efforts to divest the national carrier.

It seems that due to the turbulence caused in the aviation sector by the COVID 19 pandemic, airlines are already struggling and in that scenario, there are no buyers for Air India. Tatas were supposedly frontrunners for the divestiture, but for some reason have backed out of the race for the moment after completing the due diligence process. The question is therefore whether the books revealed a bigger financial mess than what was anticipated.

The government has already postponed the last date for inviting bids after having said that the date would not be advanced. Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri has remarked that the options on the table are either to sell the airlines or close it down. October 30th was the latest deadline for finalizing the sale of Air India, but Govt

will be forced to extend that as well. The deadlines of Air India sale have been extended quite a few times in the last couple of years. If the privatisation is put off by three years then the government will have to find a plan to keep the national carrier running for that period.

Reports suggest that the huge debt of Air India is a major reason for buyers not being extended. The government is examining how the debt exposure of the potential buyer can be reduced.

Out of Rs 60,074 crore debt of Air India, the government had already announced a reduced debt exposure of Rs 23,286 crore for the buyer.

This means that instead of Rs 60,074 crore debt, the new buyer will be needed to repay only Rs 23,286 crore of debt. The rest of the debt will be transferred to a special purpose vehicle called Air India Assets Holding Ltd.

Discussions are on to evolve a formula where the buyers can put in a bid based on the enterprise value and bids will be evaluated based on that.

Diesel prices down 19-21 paise across metros



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Diesel prices declined in the range of 19-21 paise across the four metropolitan cities on Saturday. In the national capital, diesel was sold at Rs 71.82, lower from Rs 72.02 per litre on Friday. Similarly, in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, the fuel was priced at Rs 78.27, Rs 77.21 and Rs 75.32 a litre, respectively, down 21 paise, 19 paise and

20 paise, respectively from the previous levels. The recent fall in transport fuel prices comes in the wake of softening of global oil prices as an extended run of Covid-19 has depressed demand and created a glut in the market.

Prices of petrol, however, remained unchanged on Saturday at Rs 81.14, Rs 87.82, Rs 84.21 and Rs 82.67 per litre across Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, respectively

Stabilising oil prices: OPEC+ meet may be called in October

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

A bigger global effort to stabilise oil prices involving all major oil producers including Russia is again on the cards to see that the current crisis does not escalate further putting several oil producers closer to bankruptcies.

Sources said that an emergency meeting of OPEC+ including Russia could be scheduled next month if oil markets weaken further and crude prices crash below \$40 a barrel again. Been at crude extended their gains to trade up 3% on the news, above \$43 per barrel.

Reportedly, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman spoke of better compliance with oil output cuts by OPEC and its allies as oil markets remained uncer-

tain and the COVID-19 spread continued to dampen any prospect of an economic recovery. The 22nd Meeting of the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) of OPEC that took place on Thursday via videoconference under the Chairmanship of Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Salman, also reiterated the critical importance of adhering to full conformity (on production cuts) and compensating overproduced volumes as soon as possible.

The JMMC supported, and recommended, to the OPEC and Non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting, the request of several underperforming participating countries such as Iraq, Nigeria and the United Arab Emirates to extend the compensation period till the end of December 2020 from

present September 2020 after pledging that they will fully compensate for their overproduction by strictly adhering to production cuts over the next three months.

This is vital for the ongoing rebalancing efforts and helping deliver long-term oil market stability. What this means is that the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed oil producers to extend production cuts beyond September till December to see that suppressed demand did not create a glut situation where oil goes for a free fall again. The expected OPEC meeting next month could take a call whether OPEC+ also need to further extend production cuts beyond 7.7 million barrels per day (bpd), or around 8% of global demand, till December. Though the

OPEC+ has not so far recommended any changes to their current output reduction target of 7.7 million barrels per day (bpd), it could be a possibility if an oil price crash starts again. OPEC+ has been reducing production since January 2017 to help to support prices and reduce global oil stockpiles. They increased their cuts to a record 9.7 million bpd from May to July after demand plunged due to the coronavirus crisis. Both Brent and WTI crude are hovering over \$41 a barrel but the expectation is that prices may come under pressure again as global economic recovery still looks distant with continuing coronavirus infections.

So, extending production cuts and enhancing the levels may be on the agenda again to stabilise the market.

Surcharge on dividend income for FPIs may be capped at 15%



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER

In a major relief for foreign portfolio investors, the Union Government has proposed to cap the surcharge on dividend income from FPIs with a trust structure at 15 per cent. Currently, FPIs that operate as trusts have to pay a surcharge as high as 37 per cent if their dividend income is over Rs 5 crore and 25 per cent in case of a dividend income of Rs 2 crore and Rs 5 crore, following measures in the 2019-20 budget. The government was at the receiving end of criticism from several quarters due to the existing surcharge structure put in place in the FY20 budget. "The Finance Act, 2020 is also proposed to be amended to clarify regarding capping of the surcharge at 15 per cent on dividend income of the Foreign Portfolio Investor," said the Taxation and Other Laws (Relaxation and Amendment of Certain Provisions) Bill, 2020 tabled in the Parliament.

The government has also proposed tax exemption on the income of category-III Alternate Investment Funds in the International Financial Services Centre from masala bonds, derivatives or overseas investments. The Taxation and Other Laws (Relaxation and Amendment of Certain Provisions) Bill, 2020 provides for the extension of various time limits for completion or compliance of actions under the specified Acts and reduction in interest, waiver of penalty and prosecution for the delay in payment of certain taxes or levies during the specified period.

Apple stock plunges 22%, \$500bn eroded in market cap: Report

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
SAN FRANCISCO, 19 SEPTEMBER

A broad sell-off in the overall tech sector amid an 'underwhelming product launch event this week has resulted in Apple stock plunging nearly 22 per cent from its intraday record high of \$137.98 on September 2, losing around \$532 billion in market value.

According to a CNBC report, it took just 12 trading sessions for Apple to plunge more than 20 percent from its all-time high, giving up more than half a trillion in market capitalisation.

The iPhone maker last month scripted history by becoming the first American company to touch \$2 trillion in valuation. Earlier this month, the market cap of Apple touched \$2.3 trillion, surpassing the entire value of all



the companies in the Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 Index, also called the FTSE 100 which is the UK's top share index.

While Apple's market value was around \$2.3 trillion (1.7 trillion pounds), all the companies in the FTSE 100 had a combined value of 1.5 trillion pounds.

Demand for Apple's shares reportedly boosted by the company's decision to divide

its shares to make it easier for individuals to invest in the company. Apple's board of directors had approved a four-for-one stock split, effective from August 31.

But things dramatically changed afterwards.

The company this week announced new hardware and updated software, including the Apple Watch Series 6, the iPad Air, a fitness service and service bundles called

Apple One. However, Apple did not announce any new iPhones. Toni Sacconaghi, senior research analyst at Bernstein, called the event "relatively underwhelming."

"We believe it could be difficult to move users from competitive music, video or gaming services, where they are often entrenched," Sacconaghi said in a note.

"We continue to believe that Apple should look to more creatively bundle its hardware + services into integrated subscription bundles."

Gene Munster from Loup Venture, however, was quoted as saying that the key takeaway from the Apple event is how the company is "masterfully upselling its consumers."

The iPhone maker passed the \$1 trillion mark for the first time nearly two years ago.

GSTN unveils creative contest to bring taxpayers closer to tax system

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 19 SEPTEMBER



In yet another attempt to bring taxpayers and tax authorities closer to each other by way of better understanding of the tax systems, the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) has launched a creative contest namely "GST-n-You" that will allow people to come up with their own videos and graphics on various recent initiatives and reforms on GST. The creative materials will not only stand a chance to win cash rewards but selected entries would also be used for public education and awareness campaigns of the government.

The initiative is in line with a GST lottery introduced earlier that also looked to build linkages between taxpayers, authorities and the new tax system by making every bill under GST a price-

winning lottery ticket providing a chance to win between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore. The GST-n-You initiative has invited creative entries in form of videos (animation, tutorials, short-films) of 30-120 seconds or static graphics on GST choosing any topic from GST - one nation, one tax, one market to GST and reduced taxes on MSMEs, GST and reduction of monthly household budget and fact file giving how's and when of the indirect tax system. The Finance ministry has kept the new contest open to all the Indian citizen who can send multiple entries and also use some of their existing creating material hosted on social networking platforms such as

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The contest is open now and entries can be sent till October 15 via email to gstnmedia@gstn.org.in. To make the contest get real creative content it has been emphasised that only original work of the participant will be considered and in this regard a declaration would need to be given about the originality. GSTN has decided to reward the best entry with a prize money of Rs 1 lakh while four second best entries would get Rs 50,000 each and 20 third best entries Rs 10,000 each. A tax official said that the contest will help bring taxpayers closer to the tax system and also help in removing several misgivings that people may have on GST. "It is the most pragmatic and user friendly tax system and this word should come across strongly," the official added.

PGCIL's inefficiency put extra burden on consumers: CAG

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, 17 SEPTEMBER

In a scathing attack on inefficient operations of state transmission utility Power Grid Corporation of India, the official auditor Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has put the blame of higher electricity tariff on PSUs inability to recover Rs 6,853.43 crore from customers for relinquishing long-term access (LTA) to transmission network.

According to the CAG report on planning and implementation of transmission projects executed by PGCIL in the 12th Plan (2012-2017) presented in Parliament on Friday, a total 26,836 MW of LTA were surrendered by the cus-

tomers from September 2010 to March 2018 but no relinquishment charges had been collected from the customers till date.

"As a result, an amount of Rs 6,853.43 crore is yet to be recovered from the relinquished customers. Hence, due to non-collection of compensation charges by PGCIL for stranded capacity, consumers are being put under extra financial burden," the report said.

As per CERC Regulations, a long-term customer may relinquish the long-term access rights fully or partly before the expiry of the full term of LTA but not before making payment of compensation for stranded capacity.

The CAG also found flaws

in company's project management capabilities that delayed projects and resulted in PGCIL losing the opportunity of earning Rs 112.51 crore towards additional Return on Equity as part of tariff. The CAG found out that out of 18 projects selected for audit, only two projects were completed within scheduled time and 13 projects were completed with delays ranging from 4 to 71 months. Remaining three projects were under execution with anticipated delays ranging from 6 to 109 months in completion.

The main reasons for delay in projects were delay in submission of proposals for forest clearance, delay in providing front/ site by PGCIL, delay in



supply/ issue of material/ quantity clearance by PGCIL and delay in finalising amendment in LOA / approval of Bill of Material, which could have been controlled by better project management, the auditor report said.

The CAG report on PGCIL also found that the transmission utility did not adhere to the regulations where a transmission project associated with a generation unit precedes the date of commercial operation of the generating station

at least by six months. However, audit observed that out of 8 generation linked transmission projects selected in audit that were completed till July 2018 there was delay in commissioning of six transmission systems associated

with generation projects in the States of Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Odisha due to which there was congestion in evacuation of power. Also, interim arrangements had to be made for 21 to 56 months to evacuate the power produce

d by five generating stations. "Insufficient focus on upgradation of existing lines in planning process. In the absence of network plan, PGCIL had not prepared any separate plan for upgradation of the existing system. Further, PGCIL did not have system to assess the need for upgradation before laying new line, this data was not captured in their records.

Therefore, structured system of considering the possibility of upgradation of existing lines and considering re-optimisation of the system was not available. During 2012-17, while PGCIL commissioned 233 new lines, upgradation was carried out to only eight lines," the report said.



Despite dreaded Al Qaida operatives made den in Bengal police and intelligence had no clue... Why?

BJP'S NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA
SLAMMING THE STATE GOVERNMENT AFTER THE ARREST OF SIX AL QAIDA OPERATIVES FROM BENGAL

The Sunday Statesman
NEW DELHI, 20 SEPTEMBER 2020

Six districts account for 50% of Covid infections in Odisha

40 per cent virus growth in September

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 SEPTEMBER:

Six districts in Odisha account for 50 per cent of the total cases even as the state's COVID-19 tally today rose to 1,75,550 reporting yet another steep single day spike of 4,209 new cases.

Nine fresh fatalities were reported today pushing the coronavirus death toll to 691.

Of the six districts Ganjam is on a rapid decline as far as COVID cases are concerned while Khurda (including Bhubaneswar, the state capital), Cuttack , Puri, Jajpur and Rayagada continue to be hotspots.

Khurda, Cuttack and Puri in particular are witnessing day-on-day rise.

The redeeming features of otherwise fast-deteriorating pandemic health crises are the high rate of recovery and

Odisha: Covid fatalities grew by 30 per cent in September

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 SEPTEMBER:

Odisha's fatality rate has grown by almost 30 per cent in the current month as the death toll today inched closer to 700-mark to reach at 691 with nine patients dying of the virus infection.

As many as 201 COVID 19 patients have succumbed in September indicating 29.08 per cent growth rate of the

low ratio of fatality of COVID patients in the state.

As of now, 1,37,567 coronavirus patients are cured of the disease at an impressive 78.36 per cent rate while the fatality rate stands at 0.39 per cent.

fatality during the past 19 days. Around 11 patients are dying on an average daily in the current month.

September has emerged as the worst phase of Odisha's tryst with the pandemic with infection growing by 60 per cent.

The novel coronavirus caseload stood at 1,06,561 on 1 September, surged to 1,75,550- marking rise of 39 per cent.

The current month has witnessed a 40 per cent spike in infections.

A total of 2,441 new cases were detected in quarantine centres, while 1,768 people tested positive for the infection during contact tracing in

Despite the recent spurt in the death toll, the state continues to stay amongst the bottom spots of the country's fatality graph. The case fatality rate in the country currently stands at 1.6 per cent as against Odisha's rate of 0.39%.

Better clinical management and timely treatment besides the plasma therapy have contributed to the high recovery rate in the state which stands at 78.36%.

the last 24 hours.

Khurda district that includes the capital city of Bhubaneswar on Saturday reported the highest number of new cases at 663, followed by 491 in Cuttack and 326 in Puri.

There are now 37,239 active COVID-19 cases in Odisha.

Meanwhile the COVID count in Bhubaneswar breached 18,000-mark on Saturday to reach 18,267 with 342 fresh positive cases. The number of active cases have shot up to 4,133. In the current month, on an average 415 people are getting infected with COVID-19.

Apart from the steep spike of infection, the detection of 70 per cent cases from local contacts was the disturbing feature of the day. Of the fresh infections, 238 were local contact infections while the remaining 104 cases were sourced from quarantine centres. 68 patients from the city have succumbed to the virus .

Bhubaneswar has reported a recovery rate of 77 per cent with 421 patients getting cured of the disease on Saturday.

11 Odisha ITIs in Top 100 rankings

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 SEPTEMBER:

Eleven ITIs of Odisha (seven government and four private) are ranked among the top 100 ITIs in the country with the one at Berhampur ranked 11th and the one at Badbil as a 'model' for the entire country said Sanjay Kumar Singh, IAS, secretary skill development and technical education.

The rankings by the central government is another recognition to the Skilled in Odisha brand, he noted.

Outlining the present state of the employability of the pass outs from ITIs and Polytechnics, Secretary Singh said "There is cent percent campus placement of the pass outs from Badbil and Jajpur Polytechnics. Modernization of the ITI, Badbil, Mining Engi-

neering Keonjhar, ITI Rorkela, UGIE Rourkela with furnishing of IT labs, life skill classes, workshops, modern classrooms, residential facilities etc have been completed".

The Government of India recognized ITI Badbil as a model ITI in the country. The employability of students from other ITIs were also very high in last years, he added.

At a meeting held today, Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy asked the department to develop such institutions in OMBADC area (mining regions) for expanding avenues of employment and introduce New Age trades in drone piloting, solar technology, smart horticulture etc.

It was decided to run the new skill classes in collaboration with industry partners as per their manpower requirement.

Singh said presently, industry collaborative centres are being run in ITI, Cuttack, Pattamundai and Balasore, The leading industrial houses like Maruti Suzuki, IPSC and HSIL and Schneider Electric are in partnership with these ITIs.

Proposals for development of centres in Automation Technology at ITI Jajpur, Advanced Welding at Polytechnic Jajpur, Baripada, Mini Tool Room at ITI Takatpur were approved at the meeting.

Twelve new ITIs were also approved.

Director, Technical Education Reghu G., Chief Executive Officer Odisha Skill Development Authority Ms Rashmita Panda and others were present at the meeting.

Opera owner fined ₹50,000

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BALASORE, 19 SEPTEMBER:

The local administration at Bhograi imposed and collected a fine of Rs 50,000 from Sudam Das, owner of an opera party which had staged a play on the eve of Vishwakarma and Manasa Devi puja.

The penalty was levelled for having violated COVID 19 guidelines.

According to reports , on Thursday night hundreds of villagers of Nimatpur and neighbouring areas had congregated in Nimatpur village to witness the jatra.

Video footage of the gathering went viral on social media and an inquiry was conducted by the additional tehsildar Santosh Panigrahi.

Panigrahi slapped a fine of Rs 50,000 on the owner of the jatra party but spared the organizers.

It is pertinent to note that Jayrampur panchayat which borders Nimatpur is under containment zone till 27 September after 37 people were detected COVID 19 positive.

Bhograi block has a case load of 530 patients.

Woman cop lodges FIR against husband

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
ROURKELA, 19 SEPTEMBER:

A lady police officer has sought police protection after lodging a complaint against her husband.

The IIC of Biramitrapur police station Snigdha Rani Suna has lodged a police complaint against her husband, who is a lecturer at the

Government Autonomous College Rourkela.

The lady officer, who is married for the last 13 years, alleged severe physical and mental torture. The complaint has been lodged at the Raghunathpalli police station, under the jurisdiction of Rourkela Police.

The husband is absconding, said the police.



Penalty on vendors violating Covid guidelines in Bhubaneswar. SNS

AICC flounders in Odisha, downslide continues

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 SEPTEMBER:

Congress leaders here are disillusioned by the recent reshuffle at the AICC level as they feel Odisha remains 'out of the radar' of the high command .

While positioning of the signatories to the controversial letter dogged the limelight and discourse, the impact on Odisha Congress was with regards to the change of guard of general secretary in charge of the state and veteran Bhakta Charan Das given charge of Mizoram and Manipur.

A Chellakumar of Tamil Nadu has replaced the high profile heavyweight Jitendra Singh as in-charge of Odisha.

Several Congress leaders here feel that Singh's profile and stature plus his proximity to Rahul Gandhi carried a certain degree of importance

and respect while Chellakumar is less known.

The skeptics feel that it goes to show the lack of understanding of Odisha politics at the highest level.

It is suspected that AICC high command continues to be obsessed with the obnoxious ST/SC/OBC cards that have repeatedly failed in Odisha. Be it Giridhar Goman-go, Hemananda Biswal , Jayadev Jena, Bhakta Charan Das (made working president earlier and provided the Kalahandi ticket on innumerable occasions despite successive defeats) has not worked at all .

The AICC had been on a suicidal track before the 2019 general elections when it imposed , what was purportedly Rahul Gandhi's idea, working presidents without allowing the then newly appointed OPCC chief Niranjana Patnaik a free



hand to pick his team.

It sustained a body blow when one of AICC's hand-picked working president Naba Das quit the party before polls to join the BJD and another working president Pradip Majhi did a repeat performance of losing . Bhakta Charan Das , another AICC favorite lost the election for the umpteenth time, noted disgruntled Congress leaders here.

" We banged our heads at

the AICC doors pleading to nominate a OPCC president and gave him or her a free hand in selecting his team and ticket distribution. But they did not pay heed and went on imposing their fixed ideas and misplaced notions", said a senior Congress MLA.

Sitting at Delhi and being a 'regular' at the AICC office , irrespective of repeated failures and absence following at the state level, holds the key to secure posts, he remarked on conditions of anonymity.

Another former OPCC chief alleged that someone like Pradip Majhi (hand-picked by Rahul Gandhi as working president in 2019) criticized Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi during the recent Rajasthani crisis. Now he has started harboring hopes of becoming the OPCC president with the backing of

Bhakta Charan Das.

The Congress, for the first time in the history of Odisha politics , was dislodged from being the principal opposition party a space that has been occupied by the BJP since 2019 elections.

OPCC president Niranjana Patnaik hemmed in with working presidents and having to run to Delhi for meetings to finalize candidates till the very last minute failed to deliver the goods. Earlier, the Congress had surrendered the panchayat polls without giving a fight and grassroot level party workers shifted to the BJP.

The downhill trend continues . The latest is that the most prospective candidate of the Congress Rajkishore Behera for the Tirtol assembly by-poll (he had secured over 50,000 votes in the last elections) joined the BJP yesterday.

Pitfalls in Odisha's narrative of Covid hospitals & preparedness exposed

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 SEPTEMBER:

The sharp rise of COVID 19 cases in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack in Odisha has drawn attention to shortage of ICU beds and ventilators.

The narrative of lockdown, shutdown periods being fully utilized in building required infrastructure is being questioned.

The entire focus in Odisha is now on its capital city Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

Complaints of patients having to wait for beds in major hospitals in these two cities were going the rounds.

One of the shocking stories doing the rounds is that a senior bureaucrat had tried

his best to get a bed for a patient from Ganjam but before he could finally arrange it , the patient died.

With the state averaging over 4000 new cases every day and around 1200 new cases in the twin cities, the shortage of beds, ICUs and ventilators was imminent.

Shortage stares at Bhubaneswar COVID managers as tally breaches 18,000-mark.

Signs are apparently ominous in Bhubaneswar given the fact that the city bearing additional load of critical patients from across the state , confided an official of Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC).

The city's COVID health infrastructure facilities are

equipped to offer treatment to 4,419 patients. While COVID hospitals have 3,807 beds, there are 442 numbers of ICUs and 170 ventilators.

As of now, the city accounts for 4,133 active cases under hospitalization. About 300 more patients could be taken care of in the coming days. Then there will be a crisis of hospital beds in Bhubaneswar. Increased recovery rate bails us out, said the officer on conditions of anonymity.

In fact, 95% of patients detected in the past five days have been home-isolated to create space for critical patients, he confided.

To add to the miseries of patients and their relatives is the

complaints against 'nodal officers' who determine, dictate and direct as to which COVID patient has to be sent to which hospital. Allegations fly thick and fast on the role of nodal officers and their connection with specific hospitals.

An advisory of the government to districts allegedly asking them to desist from referring COVID cases to the hospitals in the twin cities outraged people. Opposition political parties were quick to pounce on the government.

They have failed to create adequate infrastructure and are promoting home isolation to get over the crisis and now they have asked district authorities not to send patients to

Bhubaneswar or Cuttack, charged the Opposition Congress and BJP.

Sensing trouble, the government promptly clarified that there is no restriction on shifting of patients from districts to the two cities. The advisory was aimed at asking concerned officers in the district to ensure proper care while shifting patients, stated the additional chief secretary P K Mahapatra as well as chief secretary Asit Tripathy.

It goes without saying that several states across the country including Delhi and Mumbai faced acute shortage of hospital beds when the virus peaked.

Odisha, however, had staked

claim of being better prepared by setting up stand alone COVID Hospitals, Covid Care Centres, temporary medical centres in a decentralized manner right up to the panchayat level.

The model was lauded. But as the virus peaked, the pitfalls came to fore. Several of the newly created health infrastructure were found wanting in terms of manpower as well as equipment and ICUs. Hence , cases were referred to Cuttack and Bhubaneswar.

Veteran leader and former minister Bijay Mahapatra was the first to raise searching questions on the COVID management in the twin cities.

Mahapatra alleged no protocol is followed in monitoring

the health of the person in home isolation. People bang their heads dialing the helpline numbers to seek medical advice , he charged.

(Several patients on home isolation vouch for this).

Even in states like Assam , the government provides medicine and even oximeters to those in home isolation. Odisha has not given oximeters.

People are made to wait for two to three days to get their test reports and they undergo a lot of stress, he said.

The RT PCR tests in Odisha is barely 9000 per day while the bulk – over 40,000 are rapid antigen tests in which is not fool-proof, he said.

Congress leader Manas

Choudhury circulated a video clip of medical waste piled up in a hospital corridor, dead body lying for hours in the same corridor at Cuttack. (The hospital has ordered an inquiry into it).

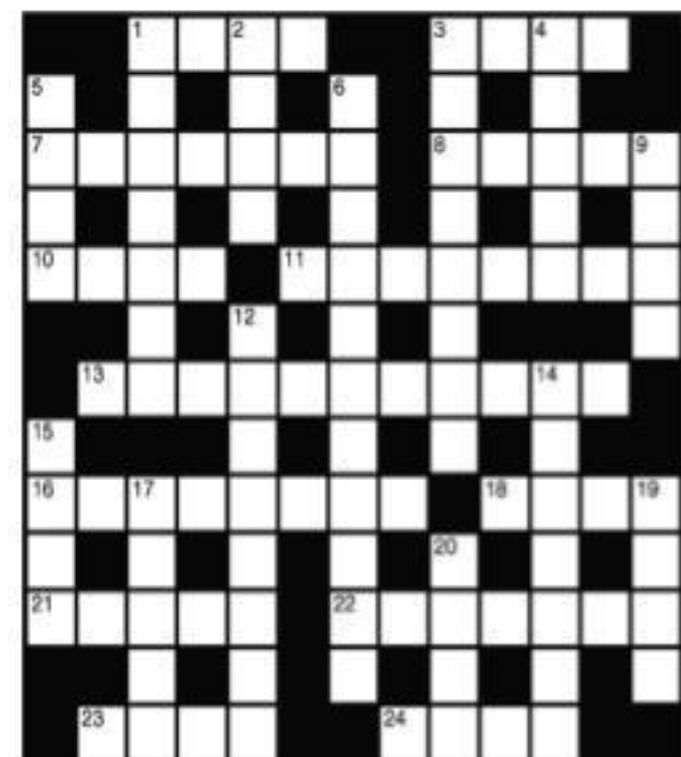
OPCC president Niranjana Patnaik lambasted the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation as callous and pathetic in its COVID management.

BMC officials are inaccessible to the common man, those manning helpline numbers are helpless, there is too much dependence on rapid antigen tests, test reports are delayed for days, he said.

For one ICU bed being vacated 3/5 patients are waiting, he alleged.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD

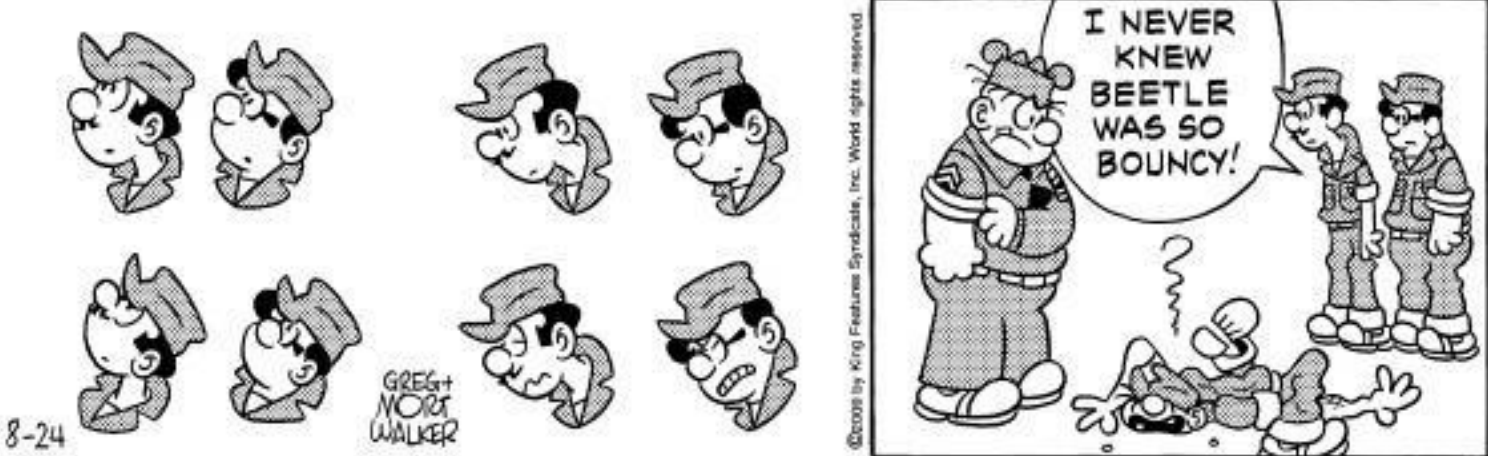


- ACROSS**
- Long coarse hair (4)
 - Retail transaction (4)
 - Waterfall (7)
 - Make void (5)
 - Precipitation (4)
 - Rebound adversely (8)
 - Similarity (11)
 - Hindrance (8)
 - Deficit (4)
 - Well done! (5)
 - Windpipe (7)
 - Shared cultural item (4)
 - Animal's feet (4)
- DOWN**
- Enormous (7)
 - Undiluted (4)
 - Cafe (5,3)
 - Indian loincloth (5)
 - Mark left by a wound (4)
 - Walk about (11)
 - Welsh emblem (4)
 - Not to mention (3,5)
 - Articles of dress (7)
 - Explosive device (4)
 - Apportion (5)
 - Influence (4)
 - Information (4)

- SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD**
- ACROSS**
- Camp,
 - Annular (Campanula),
 - Biceps,
 - Caricature,
 - Pardon,
 - Chisel,
 - Evicerate,
 - Adroit,
 - Outlay,
 - Speed up,
 - Aunt.
- DOWN**
- Aura,
 - Po-faced,
 - Assurance,
 - Nib,
 - Uclet,
 - Reporter,
 - Cock-a-
 - hoop,
 - Calvados,
 - Inertia,
 - Stole,
 - Dawn,
 - Ted.

By arrangement with The Independent Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovalcski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur

22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- Haryana Roadways 23861262
- Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320

- Punjab Roadways 23867842, 23860626
- Rajasthan Roadways 25671579, 18001803838
- JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111
- ENRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 3373377

FLIGHT INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383838, Reservation 18001803838, Indigo Airlines Air-

- port 011-25671580; Terminal I-B 25671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838
- JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111
- ENRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 3373377
- Air Canada Flight Inquiry 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181
- Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)
- Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

SCRABBLE® BRAND

BR E H E U M L I
R K H E E C C
V H N E S T E
U U S C O D I

PAR SCORE 140-150 by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

Instructions: Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 2 letter words get 50 point bonus. "Blanks" have no point value. All Judd's word value. In the Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (Merriam-Webster and OGDW Official Scrabble Words Chambers), Judd's solution tomorrow. 10-25-12

Yesterday's Solution by Judd: W A L K E R S

RACK 1: 16
RACK 2: 72
RACK 3: 69
RACK 4: 63
PAR SCORE 140-150 JUDD'S TOTAL: 220

SUDOKU Conceptis SudoKu By Dave Green

Difficulty Level ★★

	1	4			2	
		2		8		7
6			5		9	
1	6		2			
	3			9		
		3			7	4
9			4			5
5	8			6		
	2			7	1	

Answer to previous puzzle

2	1	7	3	8	9	6
3	9	5	1	4	6	7
6	7	8	2	5	1	9
1	3	6	2	9	4	8
9	2	4	8	7	1	5
8	7	4	6	3	2	1
7	5	9	6	4	8	1
6	2	5	1	7	3	9
4	1	8	3	6	2	7

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, no column and no 3x3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.



They even had Gandhi. All Gandhi wanted was one thing, peace. Right? I think they're just a bunch of thugs.....

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP
SLAMMING PROTESTERS WHO WENT VIOLENT IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	29° C	25° C
HONG KONG	26° C	20° C
TOKYO	18° C	12° C
LONDON	17° C	09° C
DUBAI	30° C	25° C
SAN FRANCISCO	13° C	04° C
NEW YORK	10° C	07° C
MOSCOW	16° C	09° C
S= sunny, CL= clear, H=hazy, R= rainy...		

THUMBNAILED



People walk in the Salle des fetes during a visit of the Elysee Presidential palace as part of the Heritage days in Paris on Saturday.

2 dead in Greece storm: Two people have died and one is reported missing in central Greece region of Thessaly after a storm pounded parts of the country and caused flooding. Authorities identified the two victims as an elderly woman found dead in her flooded home and a 63-year-old shepherd who was swept by flood waters.

Covid's 2nd wave in UK: Another lockdown in London looks increasingly likely amid fears that the UK is heading towards a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. After a meeting with local council leaders, London Mayor Sadiq Khan said that there was concern that the infection was spreading across the UK capital at an accelerating speed.

German schools upgrade: German Chancellor Angela Merkel says the pandemic has highlighted the need for massive upgrades of school technology around the country. The Chancellor says the government is committing \$ 7.1 billion to support the development of digital learning and infrastructure in schools.

Bodyguard leaves gun on plane: A bodyguard who was travelling with Britain's foreign secretary has been suspended from duties after he reportedly left a loaded gun on a plane. British media reported that the police protection officer travelling with Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab on a visit to the US left the pistol on a plane at Heathrow Airport.

Walmart, Amazon among donors to QAnon-promoting lawmaker

NEW YORK, 19 SEPTEMBER

Walmart, Amazon and other corporate giants donated money to a Tennessee state lawmaker's reelection campaign after she used social media to amplify and promote the QAnon conspiracy theory, according to an Associated Press review of campaign finance records and the candidate's posts. The corporate support for a QAnon-promoting politician is another example of how the conspiracy theory has penetrated mainstream politics, spreading beyond its origins on internet message boards popular with right-wing extremists. Dozens of QAnon-promoting candidates have run for federal or state offices during this election cycle. Collectively, they have raised millions of dollars from thousands of donors. Individually, however, most of them have run poorly financed campaigns with little or no corporate or party backing. Unlike state Rep. Susan Lynn, who chairs the Tennessee House finance committee, few are incumbents who can attract corporate PAC money.

US SC Justice, women's rights champion, dies

Ruth Bader Ginsburg (87) who became the court's second female justice, died of pancreatic cancer on Friday at her home in Washington

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 19 SEPTEMBER

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a diminutive yet towering women's rights champion who became the court's second female justice, died Friday at her home in Washington. She was 87.

Ginsburg died of complications from metastatic pancreatic cancer, the court said. Her death just over six weeks before Election Day is likely to set off a heated battle over whether President Donald Trump should nominate, and the Republican-led Senate should confirm, her replacement, or if the seat should remain vacant until the outcome of his race against Democrat Joe Biden is known.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said late Friday that the Senate will vote on Trump's pick to replace Ginsburg, even though it's an election year.

Trump, who called Ginsburg an amazing woman, urged the Republican-run Senate to consider without delay his upcoming nomination to fill the Supreme Court seat just six weeks before the election.

Chief Justice John Roberts mourned Ginsburg's passing. "Our Nation has lost a jurist of historic stature. We at the Supreme Court have lost a cherished colleague. Today we mourn, but with confidence that future generations will remember Ruth Bader Ginsburg as we knew her, a tireless and resolute

No 2020!!! No! No! Not now! Not this WOMAN!!! Please work your supreme magic, brilliant mind, and courage from Heaven!! Help us down here! Thank you for your service Queen!! Rest in glorious peace

VIOLA DAVIS
AMERICAN ACTRESS



Justice Ginsburg's profound impact on the country's justice system is unparalleled as a leader who shined light and hope when we needed it most. It is now our turn to carry her fight. Rest In Power, RBG

REESE WITHERSPOON
AMERICAN ACTRESS



Your impact and contribution will never be forgotten. Thank you, RBG. Your legacy lives on. Rest in Peace.

PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS
ACTRESS



champion of justice, Roberts said in a statement. Ginsburg announced in July that she was undergoing chemotherapy treatment for lesions on her liver, the latest of her several battles with cancer.

Ginsburg spent her final years on the bench as the unquestioned leader of the court's liberal wing and became something of a rock star to her admirers. Young women especially seemed to embrace the court's Jewish grandmother, affectionately calling her the Notorious RBG, for her defense of the rights of women and minorities, and the strength and resilience she displayed in the face of personal loss and health crises.

Those health issues included five bouts with cancer beginning in 1999, falls that resulted in broken ribs, insertion of a stent to clear a blocked artery and assorted other hospitalizations after she turned 75. She resisted calls by liberals to retire during

Barack Obama's presidency at a time when Democrats held the Senate and a replacement with similar views could have been confirmed.

Instead, Trump will almost certainly try to push Ginsburg's successor through the Republican-controlled Senate and move the conservative court even more to the right. Ginsburg antagonised Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign in a series of media interviews, including calling him a faker. She soon apologised.

Her appointment by President Bill Clinton in 1993 was the first by a Democrat in 26 years. She initially found a comfortable ideological home somewhere left of center on a conservative court dominated by Republican appointees. Her liberal voice grew stronger the longer she served. Ginsburg was a mother of two, an opera lover and an intellectual who watched arguments behind oversized glasses for many years, though

she ditched them for more fashionable frames in her later years.

At argument sessions in the ornate courtroom, she was known for digging deep into case records and for being a stickler for following the rules.

She argued six key cases before the court in the 1970s when she was an architect of the women's rights movement. She won five.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg does not need a seat on the Supreme Court to earn her place in the American history books, Clinton said at the time of her appointment. She has already done that. On the court, where she was known as a facile writer, her most significant majority opinions were the 1996 ruling that ordered the Virginia Military Institute to accept women or give up its state funding, and the 2015 decision that upheld independent commissions some states use to draw congressional districts.

Hundreds gather at SC to mourn Ginsburg's death

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 19 SEPTEMBER

Hundreds of people gathered Friday night outside the Supreme Court, singing in a candlelight vigil and weeping together as they mourned the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

The large group of mourners packed the high court's steps and the street across from the U.S. Capitol in a nighttime memorial. Dozens of people sat on the steps quietly reflecting on Ginsburg's legacy.

Scores of memorial candles



flickered in the wind along the front steps of the court as people knelt to leave bouquets of flowers, small American flags and handwritten condolence

messages for Ginsburg, who died Friday of metastatic pancreatic cancer at age 87 after 27 years on the court. Prayer candles with Ginsburg's photo

on them were also left on the steps. Several times, dozens in the crowd broke out into song, singing Amazing Grace and This Land is Your Land as others embraced one another and wiped tears from their eyes. At one point, the crowd broke into a thunderous applause lasting for about a minute for Ginsburg.

Thank you RBG, one sign read. On the sidewalk, RBG was drawn inside a pink chalk heart. Jennifer Berger, said she felt compelled to join the large crowd that gathered to pay tribute to Ginsburg's life.

Rochester, NY party shootout: 2 dead, 14 wounded

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROCHESTER, 19 SEPTEMBER

Gunfire at a backyard party killed two people and wounded 14 others early Saturday in Rochester, New York, a city that has been roiled in recent weeks by outrage over the suffocation death of Daniel Prude. As many as 100 people were at the gathering when the shooting started just before 12:30 a.m., Acting Police Chief Mark Simmons told reporters.

Police were still trying to piece together who opened fire and why. Simmons said it was too early to say whether more than one person was shooting or whom the intended targets may have been.

A man and woman, estimated to be in their late teens or early 20s, were killed, Simmons said.

Their names weren't immediately released. The 14 wounded by gunfire were not believed to have life-threatening injuries. The acting chief said no suspects were in custody. This is truly a tragedy of epic proportions, Simmons said in a news conference held near the home. I mean 16 victims is unheard of, and for our community, who's right now going through so much, to have to be dealt with this tragedy, needlessly, for people who decide to act in a violent manner is unfortunate and shameful.

The shooting comes as the city in Western New York has been rocked by protests over Prude's death, caused when Rochester police officers put a hood over his head to stop him from spitting, then pushed his face into the pavement and held him down until he stopped breathing. The details of Prude's death only emerged this month, leading to allegations of a coverup and calls for the

Police were still trying to piece together who opened fire and why. As many as 100 people were at the gathering when the shooting started just before 12:30 a.m.

arrests of the officers involved.

On Monday, the city's mayor fired Police Chief La'Ron Singletary, who she said initially misled her about the circumstances of the March death. Other senior police officials announced they would retire or leave top command positions.

The acting police chief, Simmons, expressed frustration that someone had held a large, late-night party amid that tumult, apparently in defiance of a state ban on large gatherings because of the coronavirus pandemic.

This is yet another tragedy where individuals are having these illegal, unsanctioned house parties taking place in these properties, which number one is not safe because of Covid, because of the conditions," Simmons said.

Officers responding to calls of shots fired found approximately 100 people running from the scene, Simmons said. Before the call, police were not aware of the party and had received no complaints about noise, he said.

The wounded were being treated at local hospitals. Two more people were hurt while fleeing, the Major Crimes Unit said in a tweet.

Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren issued a statement asking for prayers and support for all involved. I'm begging everyone to remain calm and exercise deep restraint as RPD investigates what happened here and seeks those responsible," she said.

WORSHIP MODE



A woman places flowers in front of Buddha statues during the Pchum Ben festival at a pagoda in Phnom Penh on Saturday.

Navalny says he's now more than 'technically alive'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOSCOW, 19 SEPTEMBER

Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny said he is recovering his verbal and physical abilities at the German hospital where he is being treated for suspected nerve agent poisoning but that he at first felt despair over his condition.

Navalny fell ill on a domestic flight to Moscow on 20 August and was transferred to Germany for treatment two days later.

A German military lab later determined that the Russian politician was poisoned with Novichok.

He said in a Saturday post on Instagram that once he was brought out of the coma, he was confused and couldn't find the words to respond to a doctor's questions. Although I understood in general what the doctor wanted, I did not understand where to get the



This handout picture posted on Friday on the Instagram account of @navalny shows Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Berlin's Charite hospital.

words. In what part of the head do they appear in?" Navalny wrote in the post, which

accompanied a photo of him on a staircase. I also did not know how to express my despair and, therefore, simply kept silent.

Now I'm a guy whose legs are shaking when he walks up the stairs, but he thinks: 'Oh, this is a staircase! They go up it. Perhaps we should look for an elevator,' Navalny said. And before, I would have just stood there and stared." The doctors treating him at Berlin's Charite hospital turned me from a 'technically alive person' into someone who has every chance to become the Highest Form of Being in Modern Society again a person who can quickly scroll through Instagram and without hesitation understands where to put likes, he wrote.

The Kremlin has repeatedly said that before Navalny's transfer to Berlin, Russian labs and a hospital in the Siberian city of Omsk found no sign of a poisoning.

Moscow has called for Germany to provide its evidence and bristled at the urging of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other Western leaders to answer questions about what happened to the politician.

There is too much absurdity in this case to take anyone at their word, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday.

Peskov also accused Navalny's colleagues of hampering a Russian investigation by taking items from his hotel room out of the country, including a water bottle they claimed had traces of the nerve agent.

Navalny's colleagues said that they removed the bottle and other items from the hotel room in the Siberian city of Tomsk Siberia and brought them to Germany as potential evidence, because they didn't trust Russian authorities to conduct a proper probe.

How Ginsburg's death could reshape the presidential campaign

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK, 19 SEPTEMBER

A presidential campaign that was already tugging at the nation's most searing divides has been jolted by the death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, potentially reshaping the election at a moment when some Americans were beginning to cast ballots.

For months, the contest has largely centred on President Donald Trump's handling of the coronavirus, the biggest public health crisis in a century that has badly damaged his prospects for reelection as the U.S. death toll nears 200,000 people.

But in a flash, Ginsburg's death on Friday added new weight to the election, with the potential that Trump or his Democratic challenger, Joe Biden, could pick a successor who could decide abortion access, environmental regulations and the power of the presidency for a generation.

With early voting underway in five states and Election Day just over six weeks away, Democrats and Republicans were largely unified late Friday in praising Ginsburg as a leading legal thinker and advocate for women's rights. But strategists in both parties also seized on the moment to find an advantage.

Facing the prospect of losing both the White House and the Senate, some Republicans viewed the Supreme Court vacancy as one of the few avenues remaining for Trump to galvanise supporters beyond his most loyal core of supporters, particularly suburban women who have abandoned the GOP in recent years.

It's hard to see how this doesn't help Trump politically, said veteran Republican strategist Alex Conant. Biden wants this election to be a referendum on Trump. Now it's going to be a referendum on whoever he nominates to the Supreme Court. Multiple Republicans close to the White House



A portrait of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is displayed at a storefront on Saturday in New York, New York.

believe that Trump will likely nominate a woman, who could serve as a counterweight of sorts to Biden's choice of running mate Kamala Harris, who would be the first woman to serve as vice president.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., pledged to quickly bring to a vote whomever Trump nominates. But he faces potential division within his own ranks, including from Sens. Mitt Romney of Utah, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine and Cory Gardner of Colorado. Collins and Gardner are in particularly tight races for reelection this fall. That's fueling optimism among Democrats that the vacancy could drive home the significance of the election to their base. The implications for Senate races could be profound, said Democratic strategist Bill Burton.

The presidential race will see some immediate chum as activists on both sides will be newly energized, he continued. The persistent question will be whether huge protests around the Capitol and the country will inflame such vigorous energy that it leads to awful clashes.

Biden, who has already pledged to appoint the first Black woman to the Supreme Court, told reporters late Friday that voters should pick the president and the president should pick the justice to consider. Democrats are enraged by McConnell's pledge to move forward, especially after he blocked President Barack Obama from appointing a justice to replace Antonin Scalia nine months before the 2016 election.

That decision cast a long

Over a long career on both sides of the bench - as a relentless litigator and an incisive jurist ~ Justice Ginsburg helped us see that discrimination on the basis of sex isn't about an abstract ideal of equality; that it doesn't only harm women; that it has real consequences for all of us. It's about who we are - and who we can be



BARACK OBAMA

She practiced the highest American ideals as a justice. Equality and justice under the law and Ruth Bader Ginsburg stood for all of us, as I said, a beloved figure



JOE BIDEN

political shadow, prompting Pete Buttigieg, the former South Bend, Indiana, mayor who mounted a spirited bid for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, to make expansion of the Supreme Court a centerpiece of his campaign.

Biden rejected the idea. Some Democrats privately concede that the SC vacancy could shift attention away from the virus, which has been a central element of Biden's campaign.

Biden would push for less US reliance on nukes for defence

WASHINGTON, 19 SEPTEMBER

Democrat Joe Biden leaves little doubt that if elected he would try to scale back President Donald Trump's buildup in nuclear weapons spending. And although the former vice president has not fully detailed his nuclear priorities, he says he would make the U.S. less reliant on the world's deadliest weapons.

The two candidates' views on nuclear weapons policy and strategy carry unusual significance in this election because the United States is at a turning point in deciding the future of its weapons arsenal and because of growing debate about the threat posed by Chinese and Russian nuclear advances.

China, whose relatively small nuclear force is growing in sophistication, is cited by the Pentagon's top nuclear commander as a leading reason why the United States should go all out on nuclear modernization. We are going into a very different world, Adm. Charles Richard, the head of U.S. Strategic Command, said 14 September. We are on a trajectory, for the first time in our nation's history, to face two peer nuclear-capable competitors.

He was referring to Russia, which has long been a nuclear peer, and China, whose leaders Richard says have put a strategic nuclear buildup next on their to-do list. Days later, Richard said China could become a peer by the end of the decade, if not sooner. But other estimates suggest a slower pace. The Pentagon recently said Beijing may double its nuclear stockpile over the next 10 years, which would still leave it far behind the U.S. Biden embraces the notion that nuclear weapons should play a smaller role in defense strategy and that the ultimate goal should be a nuclear-free world.





Too many people die in parts of the world...I repeat, it would be sad if in distributing the vaccine, priority was given to the wealthiest

POPE FRANCIS
WHILE MEETING MEMBERS OF AN ITALIAN AID GROUP THAT COLLECTS DONATED MEDICINES

The Sunday Statesman
NEW DELHI, 20 SEPTEMBER 2020

THUMBNAILS



A demonstrator wearing a mask representing Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv to protest the government's decision to close beaches during lockdown, on Saturday. AFP

Abe visits Tokyo shrine: Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe says he has visited a shrine viewed by China and both Koreas as a symbol of wartime aggression. Abe's visit Saturday, which he announced in a tweet, comes days after his resignation. It is his first visit in nearly seven years. AP

Protest in Morocco: Despite a government ban on large gatherings, scores of demonstrators protested outside the Moroccan Parliament to denounce Arab countries agreeing to normalise ties with Israel. The protesters also burned a mock Israeli flag. AP

Ethiopia Opposition: Ethiopia's most prominent opposition figure, Jawar Mohammed, and 23 other people have been charged with terrorism-related offenses, telecom fraud and other criminal activities, the attorney general's office announced. AP

Pompeo visits Guyana to shore up support on Venezuela

GEORGETOWN, 19 SEPTEMBER

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited the small nation of Guyana on Friday looking to shore up support for Trump administration efforts to oust Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and build ties with the booming oil producer.

During the brief visit, Pompeo and President Irfaan Ali signed agreements to strengthen U.S. investment and cooperation on energy and infrastructure while vowing to deepen cooperation on maritime security and drug trafficking interdiction.

Pompeo praised Ali's support for the Lima Group, a regional body of U.S.-aligned nations that have pushed for a diplomatic solution to Venezuela's political crisis.

Guyana's new president made some of his strongest remarks yet in regard to Venezuela. We support the need for free and fair elections in our hemisphere, Ali said. With urgency, we believe that democratic values and principles should be respected in Venezuela as well.

The visit is the first by such a high-ranking U.S. official and highlights Guyana's increasing strategic importance. The country shares a border with Venezuela and is a now major oil producer, making it an attractive ally for expanding U.S. political and economic influence in the region. AP

US sends additional troops, armoured vehicles to Syria to counter Russia

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 19 SEPTEMBER

The U.S. has deployed additional troops and armoured vehicles into eastern Syria after a number of clashes with Russian forces, including a recent vehicle collision that injured four American service members.

Navy Capt. Bill Urban, spokesman for U.S. Central Command, said the U.S. has also sent in radar systems and increased fighter jet patrols over the region to better protect American and coalition forces. "The United States does

not seek conflict with any other nation in Syria, but will defend Coalition forces if necessary, said Urban.

A senior U.S. official said a half-dozen Bradley fighting vehicles and fewer than 100 additional troops were sent in to eastern Syria.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details of the military move, said the reinforcements are meant to be a clear signal to Russia to avoid any more unsafe and provocative actions against the U.S. and its allies there. There have been a number of escalating



A US military vehicle patrols near the Rumaylan oil fields in Syria's Kurdish-controlled province, on Saturday. AFP

incidents this year between U.S. and Russian forces who patrol in eastern Syria. The most serious was last month, when officials said Russian vehicles sideswiped an light-

armoured U.S. military vehicle, injuring four Americans.

A U.S. official said at the time that two Russian helicopters also flew above the Americans, and one of the aircraft was within about 70 feet (20 meters) of the vehicle.

The deployment of the armoured vehicles was first reported by NBC News.

Russia, which backs the Syrian government, has long opposed American presence in the country. The Russian Defense Ministry blamed the U.S. for the vehicle collision.

The ministry said Russia had notified the U.S.-led coalition

about the Russian military police convoy's route and said the U.S. tried to block the Russian patrol.

The four American service members injured in the crash received concussions. U.S. troops are usually accompanied by members of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces on the patrols, and they have stayed in the region to root out remaining Islamic State insurgents. The crash last month took place near Dayrlik, in northeast Syria, where Russian troops should generally not be present. National Security Council

spokesman John Ullyot said the U.S. patrol left the area to deescalate the situation.

While there have been several other recent incidents between the American and Russian troops in eastern Syria, officials have described the August crash as the most concerning.

This is the second time that Bradleys have been sent into Syria. They were used last October in operations with U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces in missions to defeat the remnants of the Islamic State group and protect oil fields in that area.

Sharif plans political comeback after a year

Sharif, PML-N supremo, has been living in London since 2019 for treatment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, 19 SEPTEMBER

Pakistan's deposed premier Nawaz Sharif is set to make a comeback in active politics following a year-long absence after PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari invited him to virtually attend the Opposition-led multiparty conference aimed at launching a protest movement against the Imran Khan-led government on Sunday.

Sharif, 70, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supremo, has been living in London since November last year after the Lahore High Court granted him permission to go abroad for four weeks for treatment.

The three-time premier, his daughter Maryam and son-in-law Muhammad Safdar were convicted in the Avenfield properties case on July 6,



held on Sunday. The APC will evolve a strategy to counter the government led by Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) which, they said, has failed to address issues like price hike and poverty. Quoting sources, The Express Tribune reported that the meeting will decide to go for a street movement. He said that every party wanted to send the government led by Prime Minister Khan packing, adding that approaches might be different but this is exactly what all parties are attending the APC for -- to agree on a unified approach.

Just spoke to Mian Mohammad Nawaz Sharif. Enquired about his health. Also invited him to virtually attend opposition APC, hosted by PPP, on 20th September, Bilawal said in a tweet.

Maryam, who is Sharif's political heir, tweeted back to thank the PPP leader.

However, the PML-N has not officially confirmed his participation but party Senator Musadik Malik told Samaa TV that Sharif would attend virtually and also address the APC.

Maryam Nawaz will also attend, he said. Dawn newspaper also reported that the former prime minister would attend the conference.

Sharif's participation in the high-profile political conference, to be attended by all the top leaders of the opposition parties, would help to reinvigorate his party as well as fuel up anti-government struggle by the Opposition.

Sharif's decision to become active in politics coincided with the issuance of a non-bailable arrest warrant by the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

Foreign Office spokesman has said that the warrant was sent to Pakistan's High Commission in London for compliance.

GAME ON



A flyboarder performs in central Moscow on Saturday during the Moscow Water Area festival. AFP

Iran vows hit on all behind Soleimani's killing

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEHRAN, 19 SEPTEMBER

The chief of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard threatened on Saturday to go after everyone who had a role in a top general's January killing during a US drone strike in Iraq. The guard's website quoted Gen. Hossein Salami as saying, "Mr. Trump! Our revenge for martyrdom of our great general is obvious, serious and real."

US President Donald Trump warned this week that Washington would harshly respond to any Iranian attempts to take revenge for the death of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, tweeting that if they hit us in any way, any form, written instructions already done we're going to hit them 1000 times harder.

The president's warning came in response to a report that Iran was plotting to assassinate the US ambassador to South Africa in retaliation for Soleimani's killing at Baghdad's airport at the beginning of the year. "We took out the

world's number one terrorist and the mass murderer of American troops and many, many troops and many people all over the world, Trump said. Qasem Soleimani is dead. He's dead. Bad guy. Bad guy. Very bad guy.

Salami rejected the report of an Iranian plot to assassinate Ambassador Lana Marks, but made clear that Iran intends to avenge the general's death. "Do you think we hit a female ambassador in return to our martyred brother?" the general said. We will

hit those who had direct and indirect roles. You should know that everybody who had role in the event will be hit, and this is a serious message. We do prove everything in practice.

In January, Iran launched a ballistic missile attack targeting US soldiers in Iraq in response to the fatal drone strike. Trump has stepped up economic pressure on Iran with sanctions since he pulled the United States out of Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018.

Thai protesters hold rally for democratic reforms

BANGKOK, 19 SEPTEMBER

Protesters gathered Saturday in Bangkok for the most ambitious rally so far in a pro-democracy campaign that has shaken up the government and Thailand's conservative establishment.

Organisers predicted that as many as 50,000 will march over two days in an area of the capital historically associated with political protests. But the early turnout was modest Saturday as a steady light rain fell.

Demonstrators wore face masks, but ignored a plea from Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha to cancel the event, which he said risked spreading the virus and derailing recovery of Thailand's battered economy. AP

Peru Prez survives impeachment vote amid virus turmoil

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LIMA, 19 SEPTEMBER

Peruvian President Martin Vizcarra survived an impeachment vote Friday night after opposition lawmakers failed to garner enough support to oust the leader as the country copes with one of the world's worst coronavirus outbreaks.

The decision came after long hours of debate in which legislators blasted Vizcarra, but also questioned whether a rushed impeachment process would only create more turmoil in the middle of a health and economic crisis.

Lawmakers appeared to be far short of the two-thirds majority vote required to remove Vizcarra from office, but even if he dodged the impeachment attempt, analysts warned that he would not escape the ordeal entirely unscathed. It remained unclear Friday night when a vote would be held.

Vizcarra's ability to carry forward the anti-corruption agenda he has sought to make the hallmark of his short administration could be further jeopardised if Vizcarra is perceived as having engaged in influence peddling himself.

His credibility in carrying through that agenda is already problematic, said Jo-Marie Burt, a senior fellow with the Washington Office on Latin America. This really hangs in the balance.

The political turmoil rocking Peru has briefly distracted attention from one of the world's worst coronavirus outbreaks and involves a cast

Opposition lawmakers failed to garner enough support to oust the leader as the country copes with one of the world's worst virus outbreaks.

of characters that could easily fit into a soap opera.

At the center of the ordeal is Vizcarra's relationship with a little-known musician known as Richard Swing and nearly \$50,000 in questionable contracts that he was given by the Ministry of Culture for activities like motivational speaking. A covert audio recording shared by Edgar Alarcon, a lawmaker himself charged with embezzlement appears to show Vizcarra coordinating a defense strategy with two aides, trying to get their stories straight on how many times the musician had visited him.

In remarks before Congress Friday, Vizcarra asked for forgiveness for the upheaval the audios have generated but insisted he has committed no crime. He called for a proper investigation and urged lawmakers not to aggravate the nation's already precarious situation by rushing through an impeachment proceeding. Let's not generate a new crisis, unnecessarily, that would primarily affect the most vulnerable, he said.

During a long day of debate, many lawmakers expressed frustration with Vizcarra, blasting his apology as a weak attempt to make amends and demanding a thorough probe.

China protests US ban on TikTok, WeChat, warns of counter measures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, 19 SEPTEMBER

China on Saturday said it was resolutely opposed to the US' move of blocking downloads of WeChat and TikTok apps and warned counter measures to protect the interest of Chinese companies.

The US on Friday issued orders to ban popular Chinese social media apps TikTok and WeChat from Sunday to safeguard national security, weeks after India banned them, saying they were prejudicial to sovereignty, integrity and security of the country.

Last month, US President Donald Trump signed an executive order to ban TikTok and WeChat by September 15

unless the ownership of the two Chinese companies changed to American.

Reacting to orders issued by the Trump administration to ban TikTok and WeChat from Sunday, China's Ministry of Commerce (MOC) said it was resolutely opposed to the US' move to block downloads of these apps.

In the absence of any evidence, the US has repeatedly used state power to suppress the two enterprises for unwarranted reasons, which seriously disrupted their normal business activities, undermined the confidence of international investors in the US investment environment and damaged the normal global economic and trade order, the MOC said in

a statement. It said Washington should immediately stop bullying and safeguard international rules and order.

"If the US is bent on having its own way, China will take necessary measures to resolutely protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies," the ministry said, without giving details.

Though the ministry did not specify any retaliatory action, it issued rules for a widely anticipated unreliable entity list mechanism on Saturday that could severely punish foreign entities and individuals who undermine China's national interests.

The move is believed to counter the US' relentless crackdown campaign against

Chinese businesses, state-run Global Times said.

The list would include foreign entities or individuals who undermine China's sovereignty, security and development interests and those who violate market principles by cutting off normal transactions with Chinese firms, organizations or individuals, the MOC said.

The Ministry did not release specific foreign entities or individuals that will be put on the list.

TikTok and WeChat were first banned by India on June 29 along with 59 Chinese apps, saying they were prejudicial to sovereignty, integrity and security of the country. The ban was expanded to

224 Chinese apps later. The ban was imposed in the background of a tense standoff along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh with Chinese troops.

President Trump had also cited India's action against the Chinese apps while announcing his plan to ban them last month. The latest US move followed intensified moves by Trump administration to crack down on high tech Chinese firms starting with telecom giant Huawei whose products are banned in the US. Chinese analysts say US actions point to the intensifying US-China battle for technological supremacy.

On September 15, China's telecom giant Huawei was

cut off from essential supplies of semiconductors, without which it cannot make its smartphones or 5G equipment, Wang Xiangwei, a Beijing-based columnist wrote in South China Morning Post on Saturday.

The US move made Huawei's future uncertain as it expects to run out of chips kept in reserve before the end of next year, he said.

Adding to the woes of Huawei and other Chinese tech companies was the announcement last Sunday that Nvidia, a US technology company known for specialised graphics chips for gamers and servers, would pay USD 40 billion for the British chip designer Arm, he said.

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

LAUGH OUT LOUD

Fifa president Gianni Infantino (*in photo, left*) on Friday spoke of his fight "against corruption" in football in spite of being under criminal investigation himself in Switzerland since the end of July. Infantino said at the opening session of the 70th Fifa Congress that he believed he had restored the integrity of the body after a wave of scandals.

THUMBNAILS

Meet cancelled: World volleyball governing body FIVB announced the cancellation of its club championships this year on Thursday. The FIVB spoke of the Covid pandemic and the subsequent uncertainty about travel and fan attendance to explain the move.

Big victory: Treble-winners Bayern Munich crushed Schalke 04 8-0 with a hat-trick from Serge Gnabry and a superb debut by Leroy Sane on Friday as they made a sensational start to the new Bundesliga season and sent an ominous warning to potential challengers.

Major move: Liverpool have finalised the £25 million signing of Thiago Alcantara from Bayern Munich in a move to strengthen their designs on retaining the Premier League title. The pedigreed midfielder passed a medical on Friday before penning a four-year deal.



Bale deal: Gareth Bale was in London on Friday to complete a one-year loan move from Real Madrid to his former club Tottenham Hotspur in one of the biggest transfers of the summer. He has enjoyed huge success in Madrid, winning four Champions League titles.

Football setback: The South Asian Football Federation has cancelled all its age-group tournaments this year after member-associations expressed their inability to participate in them owing to the coronavirus pandemic. Earlier, it deferred the SAFF Championship.

Italian Open: World No 1 Novak Djokovic won a battle with Fellow Serb Filip Krajinovic to advance to the quarter-finals of the Italian Open on Friday, coming through 7-6 (9/7), 6-3 to reach the last eight on clay at the Foro Italico in Rome for the 14th consecutive year.

Azarenka ahead: Victoria Azarenka moved into the quarter-finals of the Italian Open in Rome on Friday when her opponent Daria Kasatkina injured her ankle and retired, but not before the Belarusian comforted her and offered words of encouragement.

Fans welcomed: Novak Djokovic on Friday welcomed the Italian government's decision to allow up to 1,000 spectators for the final two days of the Italian Open. Sport events in Italy have been played without fans since March owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

New role: Suresh Raina is all set to tutor cricketers from Jammu and Kashmir. Raina, who called on Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday, has agreed to set up five academies each in the Kashmir and Jammu divisions to train aspiring cricketers, particularly youngsters.

New mark: Swedish pole vault star Armand Duplantis eclipsed Sergey Bubka's 26-year mark, setting an outdoor world record of 6.15m at the Diamond League meet at Stadio Olimpico in Rome on Thursday night. Duplantis holds the world indoor record of 6.18m.

BFI postpones elections: The COVID-19 pandemic on Saturday forced a postponement of the upcoming Boxing Federation of India (BFI) elections, resulting in a three-month tenure extension for president Ajay Singh and his executive committee. During its Special General Meeting (SGM), the BFI also unanimously amended its constitution to "comply with" the requirements of the National Sports Code 2011.

Spin-heavy DC face KXIP

AGENCIES

DUBAI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Two greats will pit their wits against each other in the background as their captains, with an ability to achieve greatness, lead their power-hitters out for an IPL match between Delhi Capitals and Kings XI Punjab here on Sunday.

Ricky Ponting and Anil Kumble are arguably two of the biggest names in cricket and the dazzling array of talent in both the teams would seek to draw inspiration from their respective heavyweight coaches in their tournament opener. Man-to-man, Delhi Capitals seem to have a slight edge, more so in the spin department, with the trio of R Ashwin, Amit Mishra and Axar Patel streets ahead of their counterparts from the Mohali-based side.

Spin is expected to play a big role on the UAE pitches.

The match, at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, will also be a face-off between skipper KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer, both seen as future India captaincy material.

On the batting front, the Capitals have one of the best assortments of India internationals, comprising Prithvi Shaw, Iyer, Rishabh Pant, Shikhar Dhawan, besides West Indian Shimron Hetmyer. In this scenario, India Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane (strike-rate below 120), who was



bought from Rajathan Royals, may be left out. The KXIP also boast of some of the finest clean hitters in the form of Chris Gayle, Glenn Maxwell and Rahul himself.

Maxwell's confidence must be sky high after his ODI series-winning century (108) against England in Manchester. He also had a memorable run the last time the IPL was held in UAE, albeit partially, in 2014 when he hammered 552 runs in 16 games. The KXIP have a dangerous opening pairing in Gayle and Rahul with Mayank Agarwal to follow. But it remains to be seen whether the 40-year-old Gayle will continue to be a regular feature at the top of the order this time around.

The Capitals may come up with a surprise by picking Big Bash League's highest wicket-taker Daniel Sams along with Kagiso Rabada,

leaving out senior India pacer Ishant Sharma, who has had an underwhelming IPL over the years. For KXIP, India strike bowler Mohammad Shami will spearhead the pace department.

It is in the slow-bowling department that the KXIP could face problems. They don't have any big names following the departure of Ashwin. Mujeeb Zadran is the sole established name. Ashwin, on the other hand, would like to leave behind all the talk about 'Mankading' and focus on the job at hand alongside Mishra, who is the IPL's second highest wicket-taker with 157 scalps. History, though, favours KXIP who have won four out of the last five matches but it was the Capitals who emerged victorious in the last match between the two sides in the 2019 season. *Match starts at 7.30 IST.*

There is 'competition' for middle-order slots: Ponting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DUBAI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting believes that senior batsman Ajinkya Rahane's inclusion adds "more depth" to the side but there will be a healthy competition for middle-order slots during this IPL season.

The Capitals, which finished third last year, will start their campaign against Kings XI Punjab on Sunday and both Ponting and skipper Shreyas Iyer agreed that R Ashwin and Rahane have been great additions to the youngsters with their experience they brought in.

While the coach didn't give away much but there is a possibility that India's Test vice-captain may have to wait for his chance in the playing XI considering the explosive top five (Shikhar Dhawan, Prithvi Shaw, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant, Shimron Hetmyer) that DC possesses. There is in-form Alex Carey also in the mix.

"We really have a balanced side. There is a lot of competition for middle-order slots. Rahane gives us more depth to our batting," the Australian legend said on Saturday during his team's pre-season virtual media conference sitting, alongside skipper Iyer.

"Shikhar had as good a last



season as anybody. Prithvi has been training very well. Shreyas has had his best 12 months for the Indian team. We have Pant, Hetmyer and Alex Carey (both left-handers), which gives us a good mix of left-right combination. We have our bases covered," Ponting said, giving a subtle hint about Rahane's immediate future.

Iyer, on his part, said that Ashwin and Rahane have mixed well within the group and never gave a sense that they are senior players.

"They give that extra sense of confidence. You don't feel that they are seniors and are willing to help every individual," said Iyer, who believes that Ashwin will be beneficial for the team, given his idea of the KXIP core team (Chris Gayle, KL Rahul and Mayank Agarwal) and the slowish nature of the Dubai track.



BCCI, Emirates board sign hosting agreement MoU

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DUBAI, 19 SEPTEMBER

The BCCI and Emirates Cricket Board on Saturday signed a Memorandum of Understanding and hosting agreement to boost cricketing ties between the two countries, which could make UAE a second option for India's home series if the surge in COVID-19 cases continues. BCCI secretary Jay Shah tweeted about the same.

"I along with Vice Chairman of Emirates Cricket Board, Khalid Al Zarooni signed an MoU & Hosting agreement between @BCCI and @EmiratesCricket to boost the cricketing ties between our countries," Shah wrote on his twitter handle. Shah was joined by BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and treasurer Arun Dharmal.

While there was no official confirmation, but the agreement could mean that the IPL 2021, which is supposed to be held in next six months, could be again hosted

in the UAE if the situation doesn't improve in India. "There are two major events.

England home series for which having it in India is still the first option. "However, if the COVID caseload during January remains same, I guess it's only fair that BCCI keeps an option B ready which could be UAE. Also the next big issue is IPL 2021 which starts late March, early April," a senior BCCI source told PTI on condition of anonymity.

Moved out of India due to a surge in COVID-19 cases, the 13th edition of the IPL will be held in the three venues of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah in the UAE. Starting Saturday with a clash between defending champions Mumbai Indians and runners-up Chennai Super Kings, the IPL will conclude on November 10. Dubai will play host to 24 games, 20 matches will be hosted by Abu Dhabi while Sharjah will hold 12 games. The dates and venues for the playoff stages will be released later.

Haq and Ali to be put in their place for calling on Imran Khan

DAWN/ANN
LAHORE, 19 SEPTEMBER

mad Hafeez, who was in the Pakistan team on their recent tour of England, was the third member of a trio that met the Prime Minister, his explanation would not be sought because he was not on the central contract list of the PCB.

Cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan has been a vocal supporter of regional cricket, as opposed to departmental cricket, and after becoming Prime Minister in 2018, it was on his categorical instructions that the PCB abolished departmental cricket, rendering thousands of cricketers jobless.

As a nationwide debate on abolishing departmental cricket is really heating up, hundreds of former and current players are beginning to voice their concerns. This was what persuaded the trio to convey its opinion to the prime minister but the triad came to be snubbed by him at the very brief meeting.

However, it appears that the PCB may not issue any show-cause notice to the players as it will just be a meeting at which the PCB would convey its reservations over the trio's decision on acting in defiance of the administrative chain of command despite being employees of the board. It is also being felt by cricketing circles that while Haq, Ali and Hafeez went to the Prime Minister with "a genuine cause," no one in the PCB had the guts or the authority to say even a single word about the abolition of departmental cricket though everyone knows it is not a wise move.

CSK beat MI by five wickets in IPL opener



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ABU DHABI, 19 SEPTEMBER

Ambati Rayudu smashed a 48-ball 71 to guide Chennai Super Kings to a comprehensive five-wicket win over defending champions Mumbai Indians in the opening match of the 13th IPL here on Saturday.

Chasing 163 to win, Rayudu blasted six fours and three sixes in his blistering innings, while Faf du Plessis cracked 58 off 44 balls as CSK romped home with four balls to spare.

Earlier, Mumbai Indians posted a challenging 162 for nine after Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni won the toss and elected to bowl. The highlight of Mumbai's innings was Saurabh Tiwary's 42 off 31 balls and Quinton de Kock's 20-ball 33 at the top.

For CSK, Lungi Ngidi (3/38) was the most successful bowler while Ravindra Jadeja (2/42) and Deepak Chahar (2/32) captured two wickets apiece and Sam Curran (1/28) and Piyush Chawla (4/21) picked one each.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's astute captaincy backed by some brilliant bowling at the back end saw Chennai Super Kings restrict Mumbai Indians to 162 for 9 despite some good start by their star-studded batting line-up in the opening IPL game here on Saturday. CSK's new recruits leg-spinner Piyush Chawla (1/21 in 4 overs) and left-arm seamer Sam Curran (1/28 in 4 overs) made fantastic first impression while Lungi Ngidi (3/38 in 4 overs) and Deepak Chahar (2/32 in 4 overs) came back brilliantly during death overs. For Mumbai Indians, Quinton de Kock (33 off 20 balls, 5x4) and Saurabh Tiwary (42 off 31 balls, 3x4, 1x6) played well but couldn't convert their starts as the defending champions got only 76 runs in their back-10. De Kock started in a blazing fashion as he launched straight into Chahar and Ngidi as 45 came off the first four overs.

The shrewd Dhoni then introduced Chawla into the attack and he right away dismissed Rohit Sharma (12) who always have had a problem with wrist spinners. It was a straight delivery that Rohit trying to hit inside out couldn't get past Curran stationed at the mid-off circle.

The seamer then was back in action as he got rid of De Kock with a well dosed disguised off-cutter which he straight hit to Shane Watson at mid-wicket. Suryakumar Yadav (17) and the giant Saurabh Tiwary (42 off 31 balls, 3x4, 1x6) added 44 to steady the ship but some good outfielding in the back-10 from the likes of Curran and Faf du Plessis had MI slump to 124 for 5 from 92 for two.

Tiwary as an anchor proved to be a decent choice as he hit the first six off this year's IPL off Ravindra Jadeja. **Brief Score:** Mumbai Indians: 162 for 9 in 20 overs (Saurabh Tiwary 42; Lungi Ngidi 3/38, Ravindra Jadeja 2/42). Chennai Super Kings: 166 in 19.2 overs (Ambati Rayudu 71; Faf du Plessis 58; Trent Boult 1/23).

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Made-for-television event to be prime-time show in India

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, 19 SEPTEMBER

In the original concept, it was a made-for-television event.

And that will prove to be a good thing for the Indian Premier League, the lucrative Twenty20 cricket competition that has been delayed several months. It's now to be played away from home in the United Arab Emirates because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

With no spectators allowed to start with, it will be a major TV-viewing experience for India's cricket-loving population and fans across the world.

This global festival of cricket's biggest stars playing in a snack-size version of the game was set to get underway Saturday with defending champion Mumbai Indians going up against Chennai Super Kings in Abu Dhabi.

India captain Virat Kohli (*in photo*), who plays for Royal Challengers Bangalore, and most of India's top players have been in the Emirates since late last month.

They've been in quarantine and slowly getting into match shape for the first time since a tour to New Zealand finished in a Test series loss in early March. A series in South Africa was cancelled when international sport was shuttered at the start of the coronavirus outbreak. Some players have already warmed up in the Caribbean Premier League, which ended with the Trinbago Knight Riders winning the title undefeated in 12 matches. An influx of stars from Australia and England arrived late. The likes of Australians Pat Cummins, David Warner, Steve Smith and Glenn Maxwell finished limited-overs tour of England with a win in the One-Day International series against the defending World Cup champions on Wednesday.



Eoin Morgan and Jofra Archer are among the England players who have been in the so-called bio-secure bubbles at times since international cricket resumed and who will also have to isolate again before joining the IPL. Mumbai Indians spinner Jayant Yadav said the bio-secure bubbles and quarantines were the "new normal." "With time, you just get used to it," he said of his first days preparing for the IPL in the UAE. "As sport people you're used to having a rush, of training or going to the field. More than the skill part, I miss that camaraderie of coming to a dressing room, or a team bus, or talking to everyone about cricket." He noted some of the changes to touring, such as the regular testing for Covid-19, the temperature checks and faces masks, but said the protocols were imposed for the safety of everyone involved.

"It's our responsibility and prerogative as players to adhere to all of the things that our management demands of us so that we can have a good, happy and safe IPL," Yadav said.

India had to take the world's richest domestic tournament offshore again - the second edition was staged in South Africa in 2009 - because of the surging impact of the virus on the world's second-most populous country and the travel restrictions that it had caused. India's health ministry has confirmed the nation's total cases have risen above 5.1 million since the pandemic began.

