

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI MONDAY 12 OCTOBER 2020



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Metro shed at Mumbai Aarey to be shifted, says Uddhav Thackeray

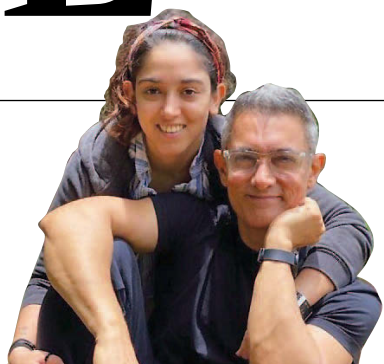


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In rare public appearance, Maryam to address PDM rally in Karachi on Oct. 18

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Aamir Khan's daughter opens up about depression



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WINDOWS



A member of All-Bengal Amitabh Bachchan Fans Association offers cake to a poster of Amitabh Bachchan on his 78th birthday in Kolkata on Sunday. — PTI

No road tax on battery-operated vehicles in Delhi

New Delhi: The Delhi government has exempted road tax on its battery-operated vehicles under its new Electric Vehicle Policy, transport minister Kailash Gahlot said on Sunday. An order to waive the fees will be issued in three days. The transport department in its notification issued on Saturday said the lieutenant-governor of the National Capital Territory of Delhi exempted tax levied on battery-operated vehicles with immediate effect. **Full report on Page 2**

Teen held for threat to MSD's daughter

Ahmedabad: A 16-year-old boy was arrested on Sunday from Mundra in Gujarat for allegedly issuing threats against cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni's minor daughter. He "confessed" to have posted the threatening message on the Instagram account after the IPL match between KKR and CSK. **Full report on Page 3**

GST Council will meet again today

New Delhi: The GST Council will on Monday discuss the way forward on the matter of compensating states for the shortfall in their share of the indirect tax revenue in a meeting, which will be chaired by Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman. **Full report on Page 6**

COUNTERPOINT



They are planning to campaign with film actresses and news anchors!

WEATHER

Max: 35.7°C
Min: 19.8°C
RH: 71%
Rain: NIL

Forecast: Mainly clear sky

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Adhika Ashwayuja Bahula Dasami till 4.31 pm
Star: Ashlesha till 12.24 am (Tuesday)
Varjyam: 1.35 pm to 3.08 pm
Durmuhurtam: 12.26 noon to 1.13 pm; 2.46 pm to 3.33 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
SUNSET TODAY 5.56 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.20 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 1.07 AM
MOONSET TODAY 2.22 PM

HATHRAS CASE

CBI takes over probe, files FIR

Victim's family to record statement in Allahabad HC amid tight security

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/HATHRAS, OCT. 11

The CBI on Sunday took over the investigation into the alleged gangrape and murder of a 19-year-old dalit woman in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district and registered an FIR under the relevant Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections.

The case was earlier registered at Chandpa police station in Hathras on a complaint by the victim's brother.

Talking to reporters, CBI spokesperson, R.K. Gaur, said, "The complainant had alleged that on September 14, the accused tried to strangle his sister in the millet field. The case has been registered by CBI on the request of Uttar Pradesh government and further notification from Government of India".

The 19-year-old woman died of severe assault injuries at Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital on September 29. She was allegedly gang-raped on September 14 by four

► **The 19-year-old rape victim died of severe assault injuries at Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital on September 29**

upper caste men whom she named in her dying declaration.

Victim's family alleged that the police hurriedly conducted her last rites without their presence or permission, while local police officers said the cremation was carried out as per the wishes of the family. The incident sparked furious protests and demonstrations against the police and the Uttar Pradesh government across the country.

The victim's family members will appear before the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court amid tight security on Monday. The court will record the version of the victim's family members in the case.

It had on October 1 asked the woman's parents to come to apprise it of their version of the incident. The hearing is likely to be held in-person.

'Ticket to rapist': UP Cong woman objects, beaten

Deoria (UP), Oct. 11: A Congress worker was roughed up by her colleagues at a party meet in Deoria after she alleged that a "rapist" had been given the ticket for the assembly by-election, prompting the party to order a probe into the incident and expel two members for "indiscipline".

The woman, Tara Yadav, lodged a police complaint against four office-bearers of the party, including the district president, for allegedly beating and molesting her.

As the videos of the ugly scenes at the meeting

held on Saturday went viral sparking outrage, an embarrassed state unit of the Congress termed it as a "political conspiracy" to defame the party.

According to eyewitnesses, Ms Yadav allegedly tried to "manhandle" party secretary Sachin Naik, and also hurled a bouquet towards him during the meeting on Saturday.

Ms Yadav was protesting over the party nominating Mukund Bhaskar Mani for the November 3 by-polls, accusing him of being a rapist, a charge denied by him. — PTI

■ **More on Page 3**

'3 kids die daily due to drowning in Sunderbans'

Kolkata, Oct. 11: Nearly three children in the age group of 1-9 years die from drowning every day in Sunderbans of West Bengal, a survey said.

The survey conducted by the George Institute in collaboration with the Child in Need Institute (CINI) in June-September, 2019 was primarily aimed to determine the drowning mortality rate among children aged 1 to 4 years and 5 to 9 years.

When contacted, state Sunderbans affairs minister Manturam Pakhira said that no such data was in the possession of his department. "We will, however, look into the matter and take necessary steps to address the problem," he said. "The drowning mortality rate among children aged 1-4 years in the region was 243.8 per 1,00,000 children while in the 5-9 years age group it was 38.8 per 1,00,000 children. It was found that 58 per cent of the deaths were among the children aged between 1 to 2 years," the findings revealed. — PTI

■ **More on Page 2**

■ **Attacks Opp., says middlemen powered their politics**

PM rolls out property cards, terms it a 'historical move'

New Delhi, Oct. 11: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched the physical distribution of property cards under the 'SVAMITVA' (ownership) scheme via video conferencing, and asserted that it is a "historic move" that will transform rural India.

"This will pave the way for villagers to use property as a financial asset for taking loans and other financial benefits, and end disputes among villagers over land ownership," he said.

On the occasion, Mr Modi also interacted with several beneficiaries of the Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas (SVAMITVA) scheme and said it is big step for the country towards becoming "aatmanirbhar" (self-reliant).



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the launch of the physical distribution of property cards under the SVAMITVA scheme in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

"Experts across the world have stressed that property ownership rights play a big role in a country's development," he said to highlight the significance of the measure and noted that only one-third population globally has legal record of the properties they own.

The youth living in villages now can avail of bank loans against their properties to start out on their own, he said, asserting it is necessary for a developing country like India to have clear land ownership rights. The beneficiaries are from 763 villages across

This (property cards) will pave the way for villagers to use property as a financial asset for taking loans and other financial benefits, and end disputes among villagers over land ownership

— **Narendra Modi,**
Prime Minister

six states, including 346 from Uttar Pradesh, 221 from Haryana, 100 from Maharashtra, 44 from Madhya Pradesh, 50 from Uttarakhand and two from Karnataka.

Mr Modi said his government will try to give every household similar property cards over the

■ **Turn to Page 4**

Rafa demolishes Djokovic to win 13th French Open



Spain's Rafael Nadal celebrates winning the final match of the French Open tennis tournament against Serbia's Novak Djokovic in three sets, 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris on Sunday. By winning his 13th Roland Garros crown, Nadal has now matched Swiss maestro Roger Federer's career tally of 20 grand slams. — AFP

■ **BIHAR POLLS** Cong, RJD misleading people and indulging in caste, religion politics, says BJP

Nadda kicks off BJP's campaign

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, OCT. 11

BJP chief J.P. Nadda kick-started the NDA's political campaign in Bihar by addressing a public rally in Gaya on Sunday where he lashed out at the Opposition parties, especially the Congress and the RJD, for misleading people and indulging caste and religion-based politics.

"Narendra Modi believes in showing work to the people, but the Congress has been doing politics based on caste and religion for political gains. Remember 'Modi



BJP president J.P. Nadda addresses first election rally at Gandhi Maidan in Gaya on Sunday. — PTI

hai to Mumkin hai' and 'Nitish hai to Pradesh agay badhega' (Modi makes it possible and

under the leadership of Nitish Kumar the state will progress). Future of India is secure in the

hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and it is important that we support Nitish Kumar for the progress of Bihar," he said while addressing the rally at the historic Gandhi Maidan in Gaya.

Listing the work done by the NDA government at the Centre and Nitish Kumar's policies for the development of Bihar, he said, "Nitish Kumar-led state government took care of the people during the Covid-19. Financial assistance was also provided by the state government to those who were stuck outside Bihar".

Biden leads polls, but Dems still worried

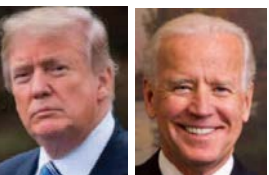
Washington, Oct. 11: Former vice-president Joe Biden is riding high in the polls and, if numbers are to be believed, is well on his way to a significant victory in three weeks to put an end to the most tumultuous American presidency of modern times.

The ABC News/Washington Post poll released on Sunday was the latest to indicate Mr Biden's strength. He holds a 12-percentage-

point advantage over President Donald Trump and leads by a 55 per cent to 43 per cent margin among likely voters.

Sunday's poll was the third high quality national poll published this week that had Mr Biden up by at least 10 points. This is an unprecedented position for a challenger with a mere 23 days to go until Election Day, analysts said.

Though Mr Biden is beating Mr Trump in polls



Donal Trump Joe Biden

on just about every question atop voters' minds, from the coronavirus and health care to "law and order", Democrats remain worried because there is still a "non-negligible

chance" of Mr Trump winning.

The anxiety is largely rooted in voter complacency and the Hillary Clinton disappointment. As was the case in 2016, registered Democrat voters who think Mr Biden has the race in the bag may not turn up to vote. And there's the added fear that the ongoing coronavirus pandemic may impact the reliability of turnout on both sides. — Agencies

Surjewala to head key Cong Bihar poll panel

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 11

The Congress Party will hold a meeting of its central election committee on Monday where the last of the candidates for the 70 seats on which it is contesting in Bihar Assembly polls would be finalised. The party also formed various panels for the upcoming Assembly polls with party general secretary Randee Surjewala being named chairman of the election management and coordination committee.

The 14-member election management and coordination committee includes senior leaders like Meira Kumar, Tariq

Anwar, Shatrughan Sinha, Kirti Azad, Shakeel Ahmed and Sanjay Nirupam, while Mohan Prakash is the convener of the panel.

Early last week, the party had held a meeting of its central election committee and finalised more than half of the 70 candidates. On Monday, it is likely to finalise the names of its last 24 candidates.

Elections to the 243-member Bihar Assembly will be held in three phases from October 28 to November 7. The counting will take place on November 10. The Congress is contesting the polls as part of the

■ **Turn to Page 4**

Sena to contest 50 seats

Mumbai: The Shiv Sena is going to contest around 50 seats in the upcoming Bihar Assembly polls, party MP Anil Desai said on Sunday.

Mr Desai said the Sena does not have an alliance with any party for polls in the eastern state.

"The Shiv Sena is contesting around 50 seats.

We have fielded our candidates in constituencies where we have our cadre involved in public work," the Rajya Sabha member said.

He also said the Shiv Sena's election symbol for Bihar polls will be a "man blowing tura" (trumpet).

■ **More on Page 3**

IN BRIEF

2 die in mishap on Yamuna E-way

Noida: A driver and his helper were killed after their stationary pickup truck was allegedly hit by a speeding vehicle along the Yamuna Expressway in Greater Noida on Sunday morning, police said. The accident took place around 5 am when the driver and the helper were changing a deflated tire of their pickup truck, they said. Six other people, who were in a multi utility vehicle (MUV), which hit the pickup truck, were injured and three of them have been hospitalised in serious condition, according to officials. “The pickup’s driver Mamma (45) and his helper Mania (30) were on the road changing the deflated tire of their vehicle. A speeding Mahindra Marazzo hit them from behind, leaving the duo dead,” a police spokesperson said. The pickup truck was registered in Uttar Pradesh’s Bareilly, while the MUV that hit it was registered in Madhya Pradesh’s Gwalior, according to police. Of the six occupants of the MUV, three have been admitted to a private hospital with severe injuries and their condition is stated to be critical, police said. Further proceedings are being carried out at the local Dankaur police station, they added. — PTI

3 killed in collision between car, tractor

New Delhi: Three persons were killed in an accident between a car and a tractor on early Sunday in west Delhi’s Moti Nagar area, police said. Police said a call was received at Moti Nagar police station regarding the accident in front of Kirti Nagar Metro station around 1.30 am. After reaching the spot, a car, and a tractor with a loaded trolley, were found in accidental condition on the road towards Moti Nagar to Patel Nagar on Shadipur flyover, a senior police officer said. Later, information was received from Acharya Shree Bhikshu Hospital, Moti Nagar that one Rajesh Sharma (32), Tarun Gupta (42) and Charandeep Singh (38), all residents of Pandav Nagar, were declared brought dead while one Parveen Singh (38), a resident of Jhilmil, was under treatment and not fit for statement, the officer said. An FIR has been registered and all the three bodies were shifted to DDU hospital for autopsy. Vehicles have been seized and further investigation is underway, police added.

Woman dies after 16th childbirth

Damoh, MP: A 45-year-old woman gave birth to her 16th child in Madhya Pradesh’s Damoh district, but both of them died soon afterwards, a local health worker said on Sunday. The woman, Sukhrani Ahirwar from Padajhir village in the district, delivered a baby boy at home on Saturday, Kallo Bai Vishwakarma, an accredited social health activist (Asha) under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), said. “However, the condition of the woman and her newborn turned critical and they were rushed to a primary health centre, where both of them were pronounced dead,” she added. According to her, Ahirwar had given birth to 15 children earlier, however, the family had lost seven of them. District chief medical and health officer Dr Sangeeta Trivedi confirmed the incident. — PTI

68-yr-old man held for raping minor

Kota, Rajasthan: A 68-year-old man was arrested for allegedly raping a girl in Rajasthan’s Jhalawar district, police said on Sunday. The incident took place in Jhalrapatan area on Wednesday, after which the family members of the 17-year-old girl, who is mentally challenged, took her to Mahila police station and registered a case of rape against the accused, they said. The man was arrested on Friday night and sent to judicial custody by a court on Saturday, police said. According to the SHO of the Mahila police station, Ramesh Meena, the accused lived in a portion of the girl’s house and ran a shop in the neighbourhood. The parents in the report stated that the girl used to often go to the man’s shop, but on Wednesday noon she was allegedly raped by him, Meena said. — PTI

No road tax on e-vehicles in Delhi

Another crucial step to make city pollution-free: Kejriwal

New Delhi, Oct. 11: The Delhi government has exempted road tax on battery-operated vehicles under its new Electric Vehicle Policy, Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said on Sunday.

People have been asked to give their suggestions on the exemption of the registration fees of electric vehicles, according to a Delhi government statement. It said an order to waive the fees will be issued in three days.

The Transport Department in its notification issued on Saturday said the lieutenant governor of the National

Capital Territory of Delhi exempted tax levied on battery-operated vehicles with immediate effect.

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal termed the decision “another crucial step towards ensuring a pollution-free Delhi”.

“This incentive-based policy will encourage large scale adoption of electric vehicles, and bring us closer to fulfilling our dream of making Delhi the EV capital of India,” he wrote on Twitter. The chief minister had in August announced the Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy 2020, promising to waive

THE TRANSPORT department in its notification issued on Saturday said the lieutenant governor of the National Capital Territory of Delhi exempted tax levied on battery-operated vehicles with immediate effect

road tax and registration fee and to provide an incentive of up to ₹1.5 lakh for new cars.

The policy focused to enhance adoption of electric vehicles in Delhi by incentivising their purchase and use and raising

registration to five lakh by 2024.

The transport minister congratulated Delhiites, saying, “As promised by CM @ArvindKejriwal when announcing landmark EV Policy, Delhi govt has EXEMPTED road tax on Battery Operated Vehicles. With rig vehicle ht incentives & supporting infra, we are determined to ensure Delhi leads the country in rapid transition to Elec Vehicles (sic)”.

“Arvind Kejriwal fulfills his promise to exempt road tax, made while announcing the Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy 2020,” Gahlot tweeted.

The city government, in the notification, asked people to give their opinion on the exemption of registration fee. “The said draft will be taken into consideration after the expiry of a period of three days from the date on which the copies of this notification are published in the Gazette of Delhi and made available to the public. Objections or suggestions in this behalf should be addressed to the Secretary-cum-Commissioner (Transport), Government of National Capital of Delhi, Transport Department,” it said.

— PTI



BJP workers participate in a tractor rally in support of the recent farm reform bills at Karala Village in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

Delhi to get 3 ‘rapid response’ teams for injured wild animals

New Delhi, Oct. 11: Delhi will soon have three “rapid response” teams to rescue injured wild animals, including leopards and jackals, and those which inadvertently venture into human habitations, according to forest and wildlife department officials. Until now, the department took the help of experts from wildlife NGOs and the Delhi zoo to rescue stranded or injured wild animals.

“These are coordinated exercises. When we receive any information about an injured or stranded wild animal, our officials go to the location and identify it. Thereafter, experts’ help is sought,” a senior forest department

official said. “We are trying to evolve as a department and take more responsibility. We are making efforts to acquire the special skills needed for handling wild animals such as jackals, nilgai and even snakes,” he said.

The department has been working to create three teams of five members each under the South, West and North forest divisions. These will be deployed to rescue mongoose, monkeys, snakes, jackals, nilgai, leopards among others.

Injured animals will be treated at the wild animal rescue centre, which will come up at Rajokri near the Gurgaon border. — PTI

Man arrested for flashing minor girl

New Delhi, Oct. 11: A 32-year-old man was arrested for allegedly flashing at a minor girl in south Delhi’s Malviya Nagar area, police said on Sunday.

Police said they received information on Saturday around 4.30 pm that a man from BSES had come to install an electric meter at the girl’s house.

“Police reached the spot with a woman officer. The complainant stated that her six-year-old daughter was standing near a door at their house where a man from BSES had allegedly flashed at her,” Deputy Commissioner of Police (south) Atul Kumar Thakur said.

On her statement, a case under section 354A of the Indian Penal Code and section 12 of POCSO Act was registered and the accused, a resident of Hauz Rani area in south Delhi, has been arrested, police said. — PTI

3 children drown daily in Sundarbans: Survey

Kolkata, Oct. 11: Nearly three children in the age group of 1-9 years die from drowning every day in the Sundarbans of West Bengal, a survey said.

The community-based joint survey conducted by the George Institute in collaboration with the Child in Need Institute (CINI) in June-September, 2019, was primarily aimed to determine the drowning mortality rate among children aged 1 to 4 years and 5 to 9 years.

When contacted, state Sundarbans affairs minister Manturam Pakhira said that no such data was in the possession of his department.

“We will, however, look into the matter and take necessary steps to address the problem,” Mr Pakhira told a news agency on Sunday.

“The drowning mortality rate among children aged 1-4 years in the region was 243.8 per 1,00,000 children while in the 5-9 years age group it was 38.8 per 1,00,000 children. It was found that 58 per cent of the deaths were among children aged between 1 and 2 years,” the findings revealed.

There was no difference in drowning rates

▶ Most children drowned in ponds within 50 metres of their homes. For the survey, a unique community knowledge approach was used and meetings were held with residents and key informants to identify drowning deaths.

▶ Identified deaths were verified by the child’s family through a structured survey inquiring on the circumstances around the drowning death, said the study titled Determining Child Mortality in the Sundarbans.

between boys and girls, the study, conducted over a period of four months, said.

Most children drowned in ponds within 50 metres of their homes. Children were usually unaccompanied with their primary caretaker engaged in household work. A minority of children were treated by formal health providers, said the study titled Determining Child Mortality in the Sundarbans India: Applying the Community Knowledge Approach.

For the survey, a unique community knowledge approach was used and meetings were held with residents and key informants to identify drowning deaths in the population.

Identified deaths were verified by the child’s fam-

ily through a structured survey inquiring on the circumstances around the drowning death,” it said.

The Sundarban delta — a UNESCO world heritage site—is spread across North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas districts of the state.

World Health Organisation (WHO) data had said that out of the 3,60,000 people, who fatally drowned globally in 2016, more than 50 per cent were children aged under 15 years.

More than 90 per cent of fatal drowning take place in low to middle income countries and India contributes to 19 per cent of the global drowning burden with estimated 60,000 deaths every year, the WHO had said.

— PTI

BJP to rope in ‘Ragini’ singers for campaign on farm laws: Yadav

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 11

Involved in hectic campaign to drum up support for farming sector reform laws of Modi government, Delhi BJP will now reach out to rural parts of the national capital holding a series of famous Haryanvi folk song ‘Ragini’ programmes in coming week. “Several well known Ragini singers have been booked to perform at the programmes to be held in Najafgarh, Mehrauli, North West and outer Delhi areas where farmers have a significant presence,” said Delhi BJP vice president Sunil Yadav.

According to Mr Yadav, newly appointed vice president of Delhi BJP, special “Ragini” songs describing benefits of the Farm Bills of Modi government passed by the Parliament and how the Opposition parties are misleading farmers on it, will be sung in these programmes. Mr Yadav is coordinating cul-



Sunil Yadav

tural programmes in different parts of the city,” he said. He said that necessary permissions were sought for the programmes and arrangements were also planned to ensure proper social distancing and other precautions to be taken during the programmes to safeguard against Covid-19.

President Ram Nath Kovind last month gave assent to three contentious farm bills passed by the Parliament that have triggered protests in some states specially Punjab and Haryana.

Delhi BJP leaders including city unit president Adesh Gupta, participated in a big tractor rally at Karala village on Sunday.

Mr Yadav said that the Ragini songs are quite popular in Delhi’s rural areas and it can help the party to combat opposition “propaganda” over the new farm laws.

“We have roped in some artistes like Preeti Chaudhary and Kanauj Baisla to aware people about how the new laws will benefit farmers. The plan has been readied to

hold nearly 15 such cultural programmes in different parts of the city,” he said.

He said that necessary permissions were sought for the programmes and arrangements were also planned to ensure proper social distancing and other precautions to be taken during the programmes to safeguard against Covid-19.

President Ram Nath Kovind last month gave assent to three contentious farm bills passed by the Parliament that have triggered protests in some states specially Punjab and Haryana.

According to a gazette notification, the President gave assent to three bills: 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.

SC to work with full strength from today

New Delhi, Oct. 11: The Supreme Court will work with its pre-pandemic strength from Monday as its 12 benches with about 30 judges would assemble through video conferencing daily.

Five benches of two to three judges in different combinations had been sitting on working days to hear around 20 cases daily since the outbreak of Covid-19 in March.

According to the apex court’s website, 10 benches of two to three judges and two single judge benches will sit daily from October 12 to hear cases.

The increased strength will double the output of the Supreme Court, which has decided not to start physical hearings yet due to the Covid-19 situation in the country.

The top court has been hearing matters through video conferencing since March 23, two days before a nationwide lockdown was imposed to contain the spread of Covid-19.

As per the cause list for

Monday, eight benches will have three judges each and two other benches with two judges each to hear cases.

There will be two single-judges benches to hear and decide transfer petitions.

After the pandemic hit the country, the apex court’s registry has been functioning with a reduced number of staffers due to various reasons, including lack of adequate public transport facilities.

Delhi recorded as many as 2,780 fresh coronavirus cases. With this, the tally of coronavirus cases in the state has mounted to over 3.09 lakh on Sunday, while the death toll mounted to 5,769. Twenty-nine fatalities have been recorded in the last 24 hours, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department. According to a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government, 48,753 Covid-19 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours.

Monday, eight benches will have three judges each and two other benches with two judges each to hear cases.

Restaurants facing harassment due to ‘licence raj’: Kejri

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 11

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday claimed restaurants in the city face harassment due to ‘licence raj’ and hoped the municipal corporations will soon comply with the FSSAI directive to discontinue issuing food licences. This comes days after the Delhi government announced the abolition of police licences and health trade licences, issued by the BJP-ruled municipal corporations, for restaurants. It set a 10-day deadline for the abolishment of health trade licences.

The corporations have alleged that the decision is a “ploy” to weaken the civic bodies and said they will seek legal opinion to “counter” the move. “Restaurants contribute to Delhi economy and taxes in a big way. They face harassment due to licence raj. All governments should work together to remove harassment. Centre (central) government body FSSAI has directed MCDs to stop issuing food licenses. I hope MCDs will comply soon with Centre’s directions,” Kejriwal said in a tweet on Sunday.

The Delhi government’s decision to abolish licences for restaurants was taken at a meeting chaired by Kejriwal. It was attended by restaur-

Restaurants contribute to Delhi economy and taxes in a big way. They face harassment due to licence raj.

— Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM



rant owners. In the meeting, the restaurateurs had said the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) already issues food safety and hygiene licences. Issuing of health trade licences by local bodies duplicated the task and was irrelevant.

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash had said he has sought legal opinion to counter the government’s move. South Delhi Mayor Anamika alleged that the AAP government is doing politics over the issuing of health trade licences.

“They are misleading people by saying no licence should be there to run restaurants. The licences are issued by the corporations under the DMC Act 1957 to ensure the safety and comfort of people by ensuring adherence to various parameters,” she said. The health trade licence is issued online for ease of doing business and there is no interference by any officer. The entire process is transparent, she added.

2 killed as heavy rains lash T’gana

More rains likely in south India

New Delhi, Oct. 11: Several parts of Telangana received heavy rainfall on Sunday as two women were killed and five others injured in a house collapse due to the rains. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), a depression in the Bay of Bengal is likely to intensify further and cross the north Andhra Pradesh coast on Monday and heavy rains have been forecast in isolated places over coastal parts of the state, Telangana and north interior Karnataka.

Extremely heavy rainfall (20 cm per day) is likely at isolated places over north coastal Andhra Pradesh and also over north Kerala and adjoining coastal Karnataka on Monday, it said in a bulletin.

The MeT department said under the influence of the weather system, light to moderate rain with thunderstorms were likely to occur at a few places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal on Sunday and Monday. The IMD also advised fishermen not to venture into west central, northwest and southwest Bay of Bengal and along and off Odisha-Andhra Pradesh-Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coasts on October 11 and 12.

Meanwhile, the weatherman said the southwest monsoon is unlikely to withdraw from the rest of the country until next week, thus further extending the rainfall season.

— PTI

Teenager arrested for issuing threats against Dhoni’s daughter

Ahmedabad, Oct. 11: A 16-year-old boy was nabbed on Sunday from Mundra in Gujarat for allegedly issuing threats against cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni’s minor daughter, police said.

“The class 12 student was detained for questioning in connection with a disgusting threat message that was posted on the Instagram account of Dhoni’s wife Sakshi

Dhoni a few days back,” said Kutch (West) superintendent of police Saurabh Singh.

The teenager accepted that he had posted the threat message on the Instagram account after the IPL 2020 match between KKR and CSK, police said.

Ranchi police had shared information regarding the boy with the Kutch (West) police and asked them to con-

firm if he was the one who had posted the threat message, Singh said.

“We detained him for questioning after Ranchi police informed us that the accused hails from Mundra in Kutch district. We have confirmed that the boy is the same who posted the message. He will be handed over to Ranchi police,” the SP added.

— PTI

5 more summoned in TRP scam case

SAURABH JOSHI
MUMBAI, OCT. 11

The Mumbai crime branch on Sunday issued summons to five more people in connection with the TRP manipulation case. Those summoned include Republic TV Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Vikar Khanchandani and two Chief Operating Officers (COOs). The media house has also approached the Supreme Court in connection with the ongoing probe and the petition is likely to be heard in a week, the officials have been told.

A team of the police recorded the statement of Ghanashyam Singh, distribution head of the channel. The statement was recorded in Daman.

Those summoned by the crime branch have been asked to come for recording their statement next week.

The Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) of the crime branch earlier summoned the CFO of Republic TV, for questioning. However, he did not turn up stating the media house had approached the apex court seeking relief. The CFO also informed the police that since the Supreme

Court (SC) could hear the matter in a week, the process of recording his statement should be held up until then.

Apart from Singh, the crime branch recorded the statement of Sam Balsara of Madison World & Madison Communication’s. The probe into the alleged TRP manipulation began after the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) approached the police and filed a complaint with them.

The Mumbai crime branch is probing into the alleged manipulation in the TRPs by soliciting and

paying certain viewers for watching the said news channels round the clock. The police stated Republic TV, Fakt Marathi and Box Cinema were found to be manipulating the TRPs.

The police made four arrests in the case till date, which include the owners of Fakta Marathi and Box Cinema on Thursday and have secured their custody for further investigation in the case. The police have filed a case as per the provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act and further probe is underway.

SHORT TAKES

BJP ANNOUNCES ODISHA BYPOLLS CANDIDATES

Bhubaneswar: The BJP on Sunday announced its candidates for Balasore Sadar and Tirtol assembly constituencies which will go to by-polls on November 3 following the death of the incumbent lawmakers. Manas Kumar Dutta will contest from Balasore while Rajkishore Behera will try his luck from Tirtol constituency in Jagatsinghpur district. Manas is the son of Madan Mohan Dutta, the incumbent MLA who passed away a couple on July 17, 2020. Rajkishore Behera is a Congress turncoat who joined the saffron brigade two weeks ago. Odisha's ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the Congress are yet to announce their nominees. "We have fielded two strong candidates who have the strength to emerge victorious convincingly. Voters are fed up with the BJD while the Congress has lost its ground in Odisha," said Bhruagu Buxipatra, BJP spokesperson. Confusion reigns supreme in the BJD camp as numerous aspirants put pressure on the party president and chief minister Naveen Patnaik for tickets. Some of the rebels have even threatened to quit the party if they are denied tickets. The fissures in the party came to the fore recently when supporters of two different BJD ticket aspirants fought a pitched battle at Tirtol. Tirtol by-poll was necessitated as the incumbent BJD MLA Bishnu Charan Sethi died on July 6, 2020. Senior Congress leader Suresh Kumar Routray said the party has selected its candidates and sent it for the approval of AICC.

Surjewala to head key Congress Bihar poll panel

■ **Continued from Page 1** Grand Alliance with the Rashtriya Janata Dal. Under a seat-sharing formula, the Congress will contest 70 seats. On Sunday, Congress president Sonia Gandhi also approved the setting up of the publicity committee, media coordination committee, public meeting and logistics committee, legal committee and office management committee for the Bihar elections, a party statement said. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara will head the media coordination committee of which Prem Chand Mishra and Rajesh Rathor have been appointed convenor and co-convenor respectively. Subodh Kumar has been appointed the convenor of the publicity committee, and Jaeya Mishra was named the co-convenor of the panel. Brijesh Kumar Munan has been appointed convenor of the public meeting and logistics committee, while Varun Chopra has been named the chairman of the legal committee. The party's office management committee includes the likes of Ashok Kumar and Kaukab Quadri.

Property cards scheme 'historical move', says PM

■ **Continued from Page 1** next three-four years. During his address, Mr Modi played those opposing the new farm laws, saying their politics was powered by brokers and middlemen, and accused them of using "foul language" and spreading "lies" in attacking the Centre. Farmers are not going with those who have opposed the "historic" reforms enacted by his government, he said in a reference to the three contentious agriculture laws, which have been opposed by the Congress and other parties, and asserted the country will not waver from this path. Without naming the Opposition, he said it is upset not for farmers but for itself as it was for long strengthened by the power of middlemen, brokers and commission agents. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has said the launch of property cards will enable around one lakh property holders to download their property cards through an SMS link sent on their mobile phones, and this would be followed by the physical distribution of property cards by respective state governments. The Prime Minister spoke against the backdrop of the pictures of socialist icon Jayaprakash Narayan and RSS' Nanaji Deshmukh, both of whom have their birth anniversary on Sunday, and recalled their ideals of village empowerment. —PTI

Woman worker roughed up in UP Cong meet

Deoria, Oct. 11: A Congress worker was roughed up by her colleagues at a party meet in Deoria after she alleged that a "rapist" had been given the ticket for the Assembly by-election, prompting the party to order a probe into the incident and expel two members for "indiscipline". National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Rekha Sharma said she has written to Uttar Pradesh director general of police seeking strict action against the accused.

The woman, Tara Yadav, lodged a police complaint against four office-bearers of the party, including the district president, for allegedly beating and molesting her.

As the videos of the ugly scenes at the meeting held on Saturday went viral sparking outrage, the state unit of the Congress termed it as a "political conspiracy" to defame the party.

According to eyewitnesses, Yadav allegedly tried to "manhandle" party secretary Sachin Naik, and also hurled a bouquet towards him during the meeting on Saturday.

Yadav was protesting over the party nominating Mukund Bhaskar Mani for the November 3 by-polls, accusing him of being a rapist, a charge denied by him. As she hurled a bouquet towards Sachin Naik, angry workers allegedly roughed up Yadav and whisked her out of the meeting venue, the eyewitnesses claimed. "A police complaint has been received. The matter is being probed. However, no case has been registered so far," SHO Kotwali Chandrabhan Singh said.

Yadav, who claimed to be associated with the party for four years, said she was only questioning the choice of candidate and never expected that the party members would react in such a manner. "You have given the ticket to a rapist, and this has tarnished the image of Congress. You could have given the ticket to someone else. As I said this, I was pushed by someone from behind. Can I not even put forth my point of view. These people want to destroy the Congress and end it," Yadav said.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the UP Congress said, "In the context of by-polls to the Deoria Assembly constituency, a meeting was held at the party office in Deoria on October 10. In this meeting, Deendayal Yadav and Ajay Kumar Sainthwar indulged in indiscipline, and have been expelled from the party with immediate effect."

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—PTI



Nitish Kumar to launch virtual poll rallies today

Patna, Oct. 11: Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar will hit the campaign trail from Monday, when he will address people of several Assembly segments, spread across half a dozen districts that go to polls in the first phase of elections, a top leader of the ruling party said.

Sanjay Kumar Jha, JD(U) national general secretary and a key aide of the Chief Minister, said he will be addressing people in a total of 35 Assembly constituencies over the next couple of days.

"The campaign will be through virtual mode on October 12 and 13. From October 14, he is likely to fly to different parts to address election meetings while remaining physically present," Jha said.

He said the virtual campaign will commence on Monday evening, connecting the CM to 11 Assembly segments of six districts. This will be followed by addresses to 11 Assembly segments of five districts on Tuesday morning and another 13 constituencies of four districts in the evening.



Kanwariyas carry metal pots filled with holy water after taking a dip in the Ganges during Manmash month in Prayagraj on Sunday.

—PTI

'Don't give tickets to offenders against women'

New Delhi, Oct. 11: The Nirbhaya Jyoti Trust, established by the family of the 2012 Delhi gangrape victim, has appealed to political parties to not give tickets for the Bihar polls to those who have committed crimes against women.

The Trust said political parties without indulging in vote bank politics should choose candidates with clean backgrounds for the elections due next month in the eastern state.

"We request that no one having a background of committing crime against women must be given a ticket. If political parties keep that in mind then not only those candidates with a clean background will reach state assembly but also respect towards women will increase," they said.

—PTI

Bihar polls: Sena settles for trumpet as symbol

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, OCT. 11

The Shiv Sena will contest the upcoming Bihar assembly polls with trumpet as its election symbol.

The party has decided to contest around 50 seats and does not have an alliance with any party for polls.

"Shiv Sena's election symbol for Bihar polls will be a 'man blowing tura' (trumpet)," said party's Rajya Sabha MP Anil Desai. The Election Commission had earlier disallowed the Shiv Sena from using its party symbol 'bow and arrow' in the Bihar Assembly polls over similarity with the 'arrow' symbol of the JD(U).

Sena has named party president and Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray as

■ **THE ELECTION Commission** had earlier disallowed the Shiv Sena from using its party symbol 'bow and arrow' in the Bihar Assembly polls over similarity with the 'arrow' symbol of the JD(U)

its star campaigner in Bihar. The party will be sending several of its top leaders to campaign in the northern state. It has also released a list of 20 leaders who will campaign in Bihar.

Along with Uddhav, his son and Maharashtra tourism minister Aaditya Thackeray will also be one of Sena's prime campaigners in Bihar. Other party leaders, who would campaign, include

Maharashtra industries minister Subhash Desai, MPs Sanjay Raut, Anil Desai, Vinayak Raut, Arvind Sawant, Rahul Shewale and Priyanka Chaturvedi.

To strike a chord with the local voters, the party has also named north Indian leaders like Yograj Sharma, Kaushalendra Sharma, Vinay Shukla, Gulabchand Dubey, Akhilesh Tiwari and Ashok Tiwari to campaign in Bihar.

According to Sena leaders, the party had contested the 2015 assembly polls too, in which it had polled more than two lakh votes.

Bihar with 243 assembly seats will go to polls in three phases: October 28, November 3 and November 7. The results will be declared on November 10.

800 acres of Mumbai's Aarey declared forest, Metro car shed to be shifted

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, OCT. 11

In a major decision, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has announced that the metro car shed project at Aarey Colony has been shifted to Kanjurmarg in Mumbai.

"I had opposed the metro car shed at Aarey. The project will now be relocated to Kanjurmarg. The plot belongs to the government and it will be available at zero cost. No cost will be incurred for the purpose," said Mr Thackeray in a webcast on Sunday. Despite the stiff opposition from the Shiv Sena and environmentalists, the earlier Devendra Fadnis-led government had decided to build a metro car shed at Aarey Colony, which is called the green lungs of Mumbai city. The citizens and green activists had protested the project citing the felling of trees and perceived damage to the environment in Aarey due to the project.

Spread over 2000 acres, the Aarey Colony is one of the few green spaces left in Mumbai. The Maharashtra government, on September 3, had declared 600 acre of Aarey land as a reserve forest. "The government has now revised the forest area to 800 acre. Biodiversity in Aarey needs to be to be conserved. Nowhere is there an 800-acre jungle in an urban set up. Mumbai has a natural forest cover. There will be no infringement on rights of tribals in the Aarey forest," said the CM. Mr Thackeray earlier had also directed the state Home department to withdraw cases registered against the protestors last year for opposing the felling of trees at Aarey Colony.

The Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited had chopped more than 2,600 trees at Aarey colony on October 25 last year to construct a car shed for the ₹32,000 crore underground Colaba-Bandra-Seez Metro corridor. Several activists, who had gathered at the spot to protest, were detained by the police.



People throng a market at New Market area in Kolkata on Sunday for shopping ahead of the upcoming Durga Puja festival amid the Coronavirus pandemic.

—PTI

Centre wary as winter, festivals approach

SANJAY KAW NEW DELHI, OCT. 11

Union health minister Harsh Vardhan urged people to stay away from large congregations and diligently follow Covid-19 guidelines during the upcoming festive season, saying no religion or God asks people to celebrate ostentatiously.

Requesting people to celebrate the approaching festivals at home with their loved ones instead of going out to fairs and pan-

dals, he said fighting against Covid-19 is everyone's foremost dharma and as the health minister it is his dharma to mitigate the virus and prevent deaths at any cost.

"Extraordinary circumstances must draw extraordinary responses. No religion or God says that you have to celebrate in an ostentatious way, that you have to visit pandals and temples and mosques to pray," Vardhan underlined.

During the fifth episode

of 'Sunday Samvaad', the health minister's virtual interaction with people on social media, Vardhan discussed the possibility of increased Coronavirus transmission during the coming winter season as transmission of respiratory viruses is known to increase during the colder weather.

"These viruses are known to thrive better in the cold weather and low humidity conditions. In view of these, it would not be wrong to assume that

the winter season may see increased rates of transmission of the Coronavirus in the Indian context too," he noted.

He stressed that if people congregate in large numbers to to celebrate festivals, "we may be heading for big trouble".

Meanwhile, the number of Coronavirus cases in India increased to 7,053,806 on Sunday after the country recorded 74,383 infections in the last 24 hours. The death toll due to the deadly virus

reached 1,08,334 with 918 fresh fatalities being reported in the said period.

India is expected to become the pandemic's worst-hit country in the coming weeks, surpassing the United States, where more than 77 lakh infections have been reported.

As of now, India is the second worst-hit nation in terms of Covid-19 cases after the US and at the third spot in terms of fatalities globally after the US and Brazil.

HATHRAS | CASE

Visited the family on humanitarian ground, says forensic science prof.

Doc served notice for staying with victim's family

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, OCT. 11

An assistant professor of a government medical college in Madhya Pradesh has landed in a soup for staying with family of the alleged gang rape victim of Hathras in Uttar Pradesh recently by purportedly identifying her as their kin, with the authorities concerned serving a show cause notice to her for her conduct.

Dr Rajkumari Bansal, assistant professor of forensic science department in Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose medical college in Jabalpur, has been served a notice seeking an explanation for her conduct by the college authorities, according to dean of the college Dr P K Kasar.

It was not desirable for a public servant to take part in such movements and the matter was taken seriously by the authorities,

he added. Dr Bansal was seen among the family members of the 19-year-old victim, who died in hospital on September 29 during treatment, and replying to the visiting media persons on behalf of the family.

The special investigation team (SIT) constituted by Uttar Pradesh police to probe the incident has revealed her identity.

However, she was not yet contacted by the SIT so far for investigation into the

matter. Dr Bansal however denied that she had ever given her identity as sister-in-law of the victim as was being reported in a section of the media.

"I have never given my identity as the victim's kin. It was the media which described me as the victim's sister-in-law. I had never concealed my identity before the media", she told reporters on Sunday.

Dr Bansal said she was moved by the incident and

decided to visit the victim's family on humanitarian grounds. She met the victim's family on October 4 and stayed with them till October 6 following their request. She chose to reply to questions by the media persons since the victim's family requested her to talk to them on their behalf.

She said she has donated her one month's salary to the victim's family. Meanwhile, Congress MP and AICC legal cell

chairman Vivek Tankha issued a veiled warning to the Madhya Pradesh government not to harass her to appease the Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath.

"I appeal to the MP government not to harass Dr Rajkumari Bansal to appease the UP chief minister. There are many people like her in the society who get emotionally involved in incidents such as Hathras", Mr Tankha tweeted.

THE ASIAN AGE

12 OCTOBER 2020

Recovery contingent on curbing Covid-19

After a six-month-long flow of negative news, the Reserve Bank of India's economic forecast has offered a glimmer of hope. While the annual economic growth rate would continue to be in the negative territory with an expected contraction of 9.5 per cent, RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said that the Indian economy will post a positive growth of 0.5 per cent in January-March quarter, unless the country witnesses a second wave of Covid-19 cases.

Though a half percentage growth is negligible, it shows that the economy has passed its worst phase. This optimism was also reflected in the manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) for September 2020, which rose to 56.8 — its highest mark since January 2012 — supported by acceleration in new orders and production. The services PMI too has almost reached the positive territory in September with 49.8, which is shy of 0.2 points. Since PMI records business expectation, it needs to be seen as to which sector would contribute to this growth.

Public investment, therefore, remains the only way to kick-start the economy. However, the subdued tax collections would make it difficult to shoulder this responsibility. According to the RBI, there has been a 23.7 per cent contraction in gross tax collections.

continue to remain low in the near future. A subdued demand would make businessmen hesitant in expanding their operations.

Exports, another key component of the Indian economy, are also languishing at low levels. Given the global economic outlook, Indian exports may not see a major revival unless the country can attract some of companies de-risking their operations from Chinese dependence. This, however, may not happen in the short term, as infrastructure in India remains woefully inadequate.

Public investment, therefore, remains the only way to kick-start the economy. However, the subdued tax collections would make it difficult to shoulder this responsibility. According to the RBI, there has been a 23.7 per cent contraction in gross tax collections and a 14.7 per cent plunge in transfer of taxes to states and Union Territories.

A full recovery in the economy, therefore, would be incumbent on how fast the world defeats the coronavirus. Until then, the economic activity will not reach the pre-pandemic levels and the bullishness of stock markets would not reflect the real state of the economy.

Don't buy into US rhetoric

Just days before US deputy secretary of state Stephen Biegun commences a visit to New Delhi on Monday, America's national security adviser Robert O'Brien has observed, "The time has come to accept that dialogue and agreements will not persuade and compel China to change." The remark is in the context of the "CCP's (Chinese Communist Party's) territorial aggression" and China's "attempt(ed) to seize control of the Line of Actual Control by force".

Many may agree with the general drift of the US NSA's comment. It will become clearer after Mr Biegun's talks here if, officially, India at this stage would go so far as to withhold any further discussions and consultations — at the military and diplomatic levels — with China in order to make it move back its troops in Ladakh.

The Chinese aggression was evidently a key issue in the meeting of the Quad (US, Japan, Australia, India) foreign ministers in Tokyo earlier this month. The Quad, which began its journey as an informal grouping of liberal democracies of the Indo-Pacific region in 2007 in order to counterbalance China and act as a moderating influence on it, has been active of late. This arises from China's ongoing marked aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific littoral — aimed at territorial expansion — taking on a continental dimension in Ladakh.

The tenor of the US criticism of Xi's China has of late taken on a sharp political and ideological dimension. But India and other Quad members have been more calibrated, calling for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" or FOIP. The situation in Ladakh is likely to loom large at the meeting of "2+2" — the defence and foreign ministers of India and the US — in New Delhi later this month. While being prepared for any military eventuality, it might be prudent not to cancel further talks with the Chinese unless it seems this would make Beijing reverse its militarist stance in Ladakh.

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Kishwar Desai
London Diary



Ill, Boris had a harder time; virus blow to James Bond

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has said that new restrictions appear to be inevitable, which seems to indicate that things are going to get worse before we finally see the New Year. And so it is going to be corona carols for all of us! We can only hope that Santa comes along to stuff the Covid vaccine into our Christmas stockings.

If things were not gloomy enough already, the weather has turned wet and windy. There has been an odd day of sunshine now and then but otherwise we are in a standard English autumn. The political climate is no warmer except a lot of people are angry and fed up. The second coming of Covid has seen thousands of new cases every week. Everyone had thought the lockdown was over in August and we would be back to our usual round of pubs and parties. But now pubs are to be shut again as will restaurants. Nothing is certain and the rules keep changing.

The scientists are definitely quarrelling and they have been fighting for some time. Those advising Boris Johnson want dire lockdowns but others are complaining that we need herd immunity and freedom to mingle. London has escaped the worst so far but there are local lockdowns in the North. In Scotland, as of this week-end, all pubs, restaurants and cafes are shut. But cafes not serving alcohol are allowed to be open. So can a pub stay open serving coffee but not Irish coffee? No clarity yet!

The only constant is that like the scientists, the government is also at a loss. They are now not very sure about how they can calculate the precise numbers of those who got the virus. The latest is that the test and trace programme missed out on 50,000 cases because the computer was old as was the Excel spreadsheet and the last few rows were left out. So there are 50,000 people out there who tested positive but cannot be traced because the computer was dysfunctional. The test

and trace programme, according to the Prime Minister Boris Johnson was going to be a "Moonshot".

But let us face it, Boris has had a tougher time than other heads of state when he got Covid-19. Look at how luxuriously Donald Trump gets treated when he catches the virus — his own four-room suite in Walter Reed hospital with a personal chef and doctors and secret service staff. You have to feel sorry for the British Prime Minister. In 10 Downing Street there are no doctors or staff to look after the Prime Minister. When he had Covid last March, he was alone in a flat at the top of No.11. He was being supplied food pushed through the door, because his then pregnant girlfriend had to isolate elsewhere to be safe. Finally Boris had to check into hospital — but only because he was, by then, seriously unwell. We do not pamper our Prime Minister. If he wants a posh meal at home, he cooks it himself or orders a takeaway. Things are better at

Chequers but there are no chefs or housemaids in 10 Downing Street. The family has to cook, wash the dishes and do their own laundry. Now, I wonder how things are back in India?

James Bond normally comes to the rescue of the British people in distress. But this time he has struck a hard blow. The release of the latest Bond film *No Time to Die* was postponed for six months. We had even heard that cinemas were supposed to open with a bang and Bond. Now Cineworld, a cinema chain which owns 127 theatres, has decided to close them all down. Others may follow suit. It seems as though the great film industry in the UK is going to be badly impacted. How will one survive without eating popcorn and watching action on the big screen?

But some cheering up has been done by the Queen as usual. She has buoyed sinking spirits by honouring the many wonderful doctors and nurses and other "warriors"

who were at the frontline of fighting Covid. Every year she bestows honours on people in June, which is her official birthday month. Due to Covid the date was put back to October. Normally there is intense competition and lobbying by the top people to grab a gong. One is told that there are even agencies you can hire to secure you an honour, though that sounds a bit odd. (What do they do — sidele up to the Queen, and whisper in her ear?) But this time, it is the many ordinary people — NHS nurses, volunteers who donated their time to prepare free meals or encouraged people to exercise daily online — 414 of them have been honoured, out of a total of 1,495. This spirit of helping others is a unique thing about the local culture. It is wonderful that this is being recognised.

Kishwar Desai is an award-winning author. Her latest book, *The Longest Kiss: The Life and Times of Devika Rani*, will be out by November.

Subhani



How farm laws might hurt national security



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

On the 27th of September, 2020, the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, gave assent to the three farm bills, namely, 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, thereby paving the way for their notification as law.

These acts unconstitutionally passed by the Rajya Sabha have created great trepidation among the agrarian communities, especially in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Western Uttar Pradesh, as also in various other parts of the country. The first two bills are especially troublesome because they have been perceived as the first act in dismantling both the public procurement and the Minimum Support Price regimes. What gives further credence to these concerns is the fact that the debt burden of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) in the current fiscal has already crossed 3.15 lakh crores and the government has no plans of defraying the debt. The FCI has barely any independent means of servicing this debt and if things continue as such FCI may just fold up. It would be pertinent to underscore that FCI is the principal instrumentality of the Union government for public procurement of agricultural produce in the country.

However, far more disconcerting than the economic imperative are the national security implications that have totally been ignored. It has the potential of destabilising the entire western border and creating conditions for the return of militancy to Punjab. However, to understand this properly, we must peep into the past.

The saga of Punjab has

since times immemorial been impregnated with the creed of resisting of aggression and persecution. For 800 long years, from the 11th to 18th century, Punjab saw at least 70 invasions that left the frontier ethos of Indian subcontinent heavily militarised with a culture of resisting exploitation and aggression becoming the dominant social strain. It was better to die honorably than live in ignominy.

However, it was in the nineteenth century especially on the 10 of May 1857 that the 11th and 20th Bengal Native Infantry Regiments in conjunction with the 3rd Light Cavalry rose up against the British Raj. They murdered their European officers and moved towards Delhi that was captured by the sepoys of Meerut within 24 hours and Bahadur Shah Zafar II was proclaimed as the Emperor of Hindustan. This kickstarted the First War of Independence. After the British succeeded in putting down the uprising the British plan to demilitarise Punjab that was supposed to be implemented in the wake of the Anglo-Sikh Wars never really came to fruition.

In fact, they had to re-militarise it based upon the martial race theory that they conceived. The martial race theory categorised the Dogras, Garhwalis, Gujjars, Gorkhas, Jats, Kumaonis, Pathans, Rajputs, Sikhs, Janjuas, Mahars, Kodavas, Gakhars, Ghumman, Khokhar and Yadavs as martial races. As a consequence, very heavy recruitment into the British Indian Army started taking place from undivided Punjab and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) now in Pakistan from around the 1870.

Throughout World War 1, the British recruited heavily from Punjab. About half a million men were recruited from the province. According to certain historians, 50 per cent of these recruits were Punjabi Muslims, 36 per cent

Hindus, 12 per cent Sikhs and one to two per cent Christians. However Sikhs were more in proportion than Punjabi Muslims when it came to people being recruited once they attained military age both at the cusp and again during the war. Moreover, during World War I, 75,000 acres of land on the Lower Bari Doab Canal alone was granted on peasant conditions to those who had distinguished themselves in the various battles of the Great War.

This process of recruitment exacerbated during the Second World War with the numbers from Punjab crossing a million. When the Second World War ended in 1945 most of the recruits were demobilised and came back to their respective villages. The Partition of India followed in 1947. The worst affected provinces were the Punjab and Bengal. More than a million innocents were slaughtered between July and September of 1947 in the Punjab alone. This was the direct consequence of dismembering a heavily militarised region without thinking through its implications.

Post 1947 agriculture, Armed Forces and immigration continued to be the main occupations of the people of Indian Punjab. Over a period of time due to the institution of the Recruitable Male Population policy in 1966 the share of Punjab in the Armed Forces started dropping and as barriers to immigration became higher agriculture soon became the mainstay for the people of the state.

Incidentally even today Haryana, which has only 2.2 per cent of India's population, contributes 7.82 per cent to the Armed Forces. Punjab with 2.4 per cent of the National population still contributes 16.6 per cent to the Armed Forces even though these num-

SYL provided the trigger to a festering yet nascent militant movement that soon evolved into full-fledged terrorism consuming the lives of thousands of innocent citizens

bers are a far cry from the pre-1966 days when both these states were a part of Joint Punjab formed post the merger of Patiala and the East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) and erstwhile British Punjab in 1956.

After the 1965 war the Minimum Support Price regime and public procurement were introduced in 1966-67 for wheat and later expanded to other commodities. This gave the Punjabi farmer an assured return on his produce. He could plan the future of his children assured of a safety net. The NDA/BJP government now wants to dismantle this social security architecture.

After the Green Revolution in 1974 the paddy and wheat cycle with public procurement and MSP as its two pillars brought prosperity to the Punjabi farmer. In 1982 when the Satluj Yamuna link canal (SYL) was sought to be constructed it had a very negative impact on the state for canal water is the mainstay of the agricultural economy. It provided the trigger to a festering yet nascent militant movement that soon evolved into full-fledged terrorism consuming the lives of thousands of innocent citizens while allowing Pakistan to destabilise this sensitive border state for over a decade and a half. Those were the bloodiest years for the state post-Independence. Even today Pakistan is hell bent on reviving militancy in Punjab. Weapon drops via drones and arrests of Pakistan-trained terrorists are regular occurrences.

Given this background how wise would it be from the national security perspective to dismantle both the public procurement and MSP regimes through these recent legislative enactments is a question that Prime Minister Modi must ask himself. Contrary to whatever the government may claim these laws have stoked the innermost fears of the people. The genie is out of the bottle. The NDA government has gone where angels fear to tread.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

CURIOUS SILENCE

The brother-sister duo of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra protested the Hathras rape, but their curious silence on the burning alive of a poor Hindu priest in Karauli (Rajasthan) is sufficient to prove that the Congress is ultimately trying to survive on a questionable politics of caste and faith. Even the area MLA from Congress failed in his duty of consoling the bereaved family. Fortunately, the dying declaration of the priest naming the main accused was recorded, otherwise the area SHO had termed it self-immolation.

Subhash Agrawal
New Delhi

RAIL STIR SUCCESS

DUE TO THE "RAIL ROKO" agitation by farmers, no trains of Northern Railways are currently going beyond Ambala to Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Amritsar. The appeal of the Punjab government is reasonable. Urea, DAP, seeds, etc., will be made available later to agriculturists in Punjab. On the other hand, train passengers are facing hardship. Northern Railways, too, is running losses as tickets are being cancelled through the IRCTC site. The Narendra Modi government should try to resolve this problem with immediate effect.

Yugal Kishore Sharma
Faridabad

UNTRUTH ON JOBS

WEST BENGAL CHIEF minister Mamata Banerjee's claim that her government has been successful in reducing unemployment by 40% at a time when it is at all time high nationally is decidedly at odds with reality since several research scholars, postgraduates and engineering students have applied to the post of forest assistants, the qualification required for which is Class VII pass. When will the Trinamul Congress government stop peddling falsehoods and insulting the intelligence of the people of the state? Granted, it has been unable to create jobs and the fact that it has governed poorly, that's still no excuse for the CM to engage in deception.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to R. Narayanan (Oct. 7). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

IN BRIEF

Thailand bus-train collision: 17 dead

Bangkok: At least 17 people died early Sunday when a train collided with a bus in central Thailand, officials said. The tour bus was travelling with 65 passengers on board when it crossed the railway track during rain in Chacheongsao, 80 kilometres east of Bangkok, where a train smashed into the vehicle. Prathueng Yookasem, the district chief officer, told Thailand's *PBS TV* that at least 17 people died and 30 were injured. "It was raining, perhaps, the driver did not see the train," he said. All of the injured were brought to two hospitals. Police say they are investigating. The bus passengers were travelling from Samut Prakan province to a Buddhist temple in Chacheongsao for a merit-making ceremony.

Mexico asks Pope for abuse apology

Mexico City: Mexico's president published an open letter to Pope Francis calling on the Roman Catholic Church to apologise for abuses of Indigenous peoples during the conquest of Mexico in the 1500s. In the letter published Saturday, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador also asks the pope to lend Mexico ancient pre-Hispanic Mexican or colonial-era documents.

"The Catholic Church, the Spanish monarchy and the Mexican government should make a public apology for the offensive atrocities that Indigenous people suffered," the letter states. Lopez Obrador asked the Pope to make a statement in favour of Miguel Hidalgo, Mexico's 19th-century independence leader who was believed to have been excommunicated by the church for his involvement in the uprising.

France aircraft collision kills 5

Paris: An ultra-light airplane has collided with another small plane, killing five people as the two aircraft fell into gardens around a town southeast of France's capital. The collision occurred on Saturday in the skies above Loches, about 50 kilometres from Tours, southeast of Paris, according to the mayor, Marc Angenault, who was quoted by the France Bleu radio station. According to Nadia Seghier, head of the prefecture, the state authority of the Indre-et-Loire region, the ultra-light plane fell around a home near the town's centre without injuring people on the ground. The tourism aircraft, reportedly a four-seat single engine plane, fell into an uninhabited sector. Two of the dead were in the ultra-light plane and the three others in the other small aircraft. There were no reports of survivors. About 50 firefighters and 30 gendarmes rushed to the area of the crash, as well as aviation specialists, the radio station said.

N. KOREAN NEW MISSILE NAGS SOUTH

Seoul, Oct. 11: South Korea on Sunday urged North Korea to commit to its past disarmament pledges while expressing concerns over the North's unveiling of a suspected new long-range missile during a military parade. During celebrations marking the 75th birthday of its ruling party in Pyongyang on Saturday, North Korea paraded a variety of weapons systems, including two missiles that were disclosed for the first time to a foreign audience. One is what appeared to be an inter-continental ballistic missile that is larger than any of the North's known ICBMs, and the other would likely be an upgraded version of a missile that can be fired from submarines.

While some experts say they could be mock-ups of missiles under development, their disclosures suggest North Korea has been continuously pushing to boost its weapons capability amid a stalemate in nuclear diplomacy with the United States. South Korea's Defence Ministry said Sunday it was expressing concerns about the fact that "North Korea unveiled weapons including what was suspected to be a new long-range ballistic missile".

A ministry statement demanded North Korea abide by 2018 inter-Korean deals aimed at lowering animosities. South Korea's Foreign Ministry issued a separate statement urging North Korea to return to talks to produce progress in its past commitment to achieving denuclearisation and peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Anti-TB vaccine trials in UK

Trump no longer considered transmission risk to others

London, Oct. 11: Scientists in the UK will begin recruiting frontline healthcare workers to test if an old vaccine used to combat tuberculosis (TB), the *Bacillus Calmette-Guerin* or BCG jab, can be repurposed to help boost immunity against the Coronavirus as well. The University of Exeter in south-west England said on Sunday that it is leading the UK arm of the worldwide research called the BCG vaccination to Reduce the impact of Covid-19 in healthcare workers (BRACE) trial. Participants will be given either the BCG vaccine, currently given to more than 100 million babies worldwide each year, including in India, to protect against TB, or a placebo injection.

The BCG vaccine boosts immunity by "training" the immune system to respond to other subsequent infections with greater intensity. Researchers hope this improved "innate immunity" will buy crucial time to develop an effective and safe vaccine against Covid-19. "Covid-19 has killed more than a million people globally, with well over 33 million people acquiring the disease, sometimes in its severest forms. BCG has been shown to boost immunity in a generalised way, which may offer some protection against COVID-19," said Professor John

Campbell from Exeter University, who is the UK lead for the BRACE study.

"We're excited to be contributing to the large-scale, international BRACE study where we are seeking to establish whether the BCG vaccine could help protect people who are at risk of Covid-19. If it does, we could save lives by administering or topping up this readily available and cost-effective vaccination," he said. In the UK, routine BCG vaccination — which dates as far back as the 1920s — was stopped in 2005 because of low rates of TB in the general population.

Previous studies suggest that the BCG vaccine could reduce susceptibility to a range of infections caused by viruses including those similar to the novel coronavirus causing Covid-19. Examining the mechanism by which this may work is part of the trial being conducted by BRACE researchers.

The UK arm of trial is initially recruiting care home and healthcare workers in the south-west of England, who can attend clinics in Exeter. It is targeting these professionals because they work in fields with high exposure to Covid-19. — *PTI*

Adviser: UK running into Covid-19 headwind

London, Oct. 11: One of the UK's senior-most gov-

Trump no longer considered transmission risk to others

Washington, Oct. 11: US President Donald Trump is no longer considered a transmission risk to others, the White House physician has said, as the president held an in-person event on the White House lawn for the first time since contracting the Covid-19 disease. White House physician Dr Sean Conley said on Saturday, "This evening I am happy to report that in addition to the President meeting CDC criteria for the safe discontinuation of isolation, this morning's Covid PCR sample demonstration, by currently recognised standards, he is no

longer considered a transmission risk to others."

In a White House memorandum, Dr Conley said now at day 10 from symptom onset, fever-free for well over 24 hours and all symptoms improved, the assortment of advances diagnostics test obtained reveal there is no longer evidence of actively replicating virus.

"In addition, sequential testing throughout his illness has demonstrated decreasing viral loads that correlate with increasing cycle threshold times, as well as decreasing and now undetectable subgenomic mRNA," he said.

Trump, 74, and First Lady Melania tested positive for Covid-19 last week. The president was taken to a military hospital for treatment, which the White House said was taken as a "matter of abundance caution". After spending four days, he came back to the White House on Monday. White House physician Dr Sean Conley said on Thursday that the president was "safe" to return to public life on Saturday. In his first public address from the Blue Room Balcony of the White House, Trump said that he was feeling great.

— *PTI*

INDIAN ENVOY SELF ISOLATES AFTER MEETING VIRUS +VE NEPAL MINISTER

Kathmandu, Oct. 11: India's Ambassador to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra has been staying in self isolation after he met Nepal's Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister Yogesh Bhattarai, who tested positive for the Coronavirus on Saturday, an Indian official said on Sunday.

Ambassador Kwatra has

quarantined himself as he had met with Bhattarai, Indian Embassy spokesperson Abhisekh Dubey said. However, his health is good and he has not developed any symptoms of infection, he added. The duo had discussed ways to promote tourism in both countries.

— *PTI*

Protest against Netanyahu



Israeli security officers detain protesters during a demonstration against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv, on Saturday.

— *AFP*

Joe may end cap on Green card: Indians

Washington, Oct. 11: Distressed that professionals from India on H-1B visas have to wait for decades to get their Green Card, Indian-origin law-

makers have expressed hope that a Biden administration would come to their rescue by removing the country cap on the legal permanent residency. A Green Card, officially known as a Permanent Resident Card, is a document issued to the immigrants in the US as evidence that the bearer has been granted the privilege of residing permanently. It allows a non-US citizen to live and work permanently in America.

Indian IT professionals, most of whom are highly skilled and come to the US mainly on the H-1B work visas, are the worst sufferers of the current

immigration system which imposes a seven per cent per country quota on allotment of the coveted Green Card or permanent legal residency.

One of the original co-sponsors of the Fairness for High Skilled Immigrants Act, Democratic Congressman from Illinois Raja Krishnamoorthi said on Saturday that removing per country cap from employment-based Green Cards would remove the Green Card backlog for Indian IT professionals, who are being brought here often to fill the shortages in the IT industry. "I'm hopeful that under a Joe Biden administration, we're finally going to be able to get this legislation through the Senate, and then signed into law," Krishnamoorthi said.

— *PTI*

Joe 'shipped' jobs to China: Trump

Washington, Oct. 11: US President Donald Trump has alleged that Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden in his previous capacities as Senator and vice president was busy shipping jobs to China, prompting the latter to hit back.

Biden said Trump will be the first president in modern American history to "leave office with fewer jobs than when it began". Making his first public address from Blue Room Balcony of the White House after being discharged from hospital where he was treated for Covid-19 infection, Trump charged Biden and his campaign of taking the country on the path of socialism, which he vowed would not let him do.

"The Democrats' is a socialist programme and

● **JOE BIDEN** is set to make his first general election campaign visit Monday to Ohio, signalling the former vice president's hopes of winning the state Democrats lost by a significant margin four years ago.

platform — and it really is more than socialist. It's not just socialist; it's beyond socialism," he said. As one member from the audience screamed "communist", Trump said, "Communist. That's about right."

Biden, who was campaigning in Erie city in the battleground state of Pennsylvania, alleged that Trump was only protecting the interests of the rich and billionaires.

— *PTI*

Shelling dashes Karabakh truce

Stepanakert, Azerbaijan, Oct. 11: Hopes that a Russian-brokered ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan might hold were further eroded Sunday, with both sides accusing the other of intensive shelling of civilian areas and escalating two weeks of fierce clashes.

Azerbaijan's foreign ministry said that overnight shelling by Armenian forces on the country's second largest city, Ganja, had left at least seven people dead and 33 wounded including children, less than 24 hours after the halt to fighting was supposed to take effect.

Rescuers in red helmets dug through piles of debris with their bare hands in search of signs of survivors, an AFP journalist in the city reported.

They retrieved one nearly naked body and gingerly put it in a white bag to be taken away in an ambulance while several horrified residents watched on and wept.

One witness said they were woken by a huge blast that levelled an entire square block of one- and two-storey houses in the early hours of the morning, leaving nine apartments destroyed.

— *AFP*

28 ARRESTED IN WISCONSIN PROTESTS

Wauwatosa, Oct. 11: Police used tear gas on demonstrators and arrested 28 people during a third straight night of protests over the lack of charges against a suburban Milwaukee police officer who fatally shot a PoC teen, authorities said, as they took to Twitter on Saturday to outline what they called an "escalation in force by the protesters."

About 100 people gathered outside City Hall on Friday past Wauwatosa's 7 pm curfew and refused multiple orders to disperse, according to police. Police said they used tear gas on the crowd, after bottles were thrown at officers. On Saturday, the Wauwatosa Police Department posted on Twitter that people have been asking valid questions about the police response over three nights of protests.

Police posted a picture of bottles they said were found in a backpack, including a bottle of lighter fluid, noting that the materials can be used to start fires.

— *AP*

Prominent cleric shot dead in Karachi

Karachi, Oct. 11: A prominent Pakistani Sunni Muslim cleric was shot dead along with his driver by unidentified assailants in Karachi, police said on Sunday. Maulana Dr Adil Khan, head of Karachi's Jamia Farooqia seminary, was attacked in a market on Saturday evening, they said. According to a senior police official, as the car carrying Khan stopped near a shopping centre in Shah Faisal Colony to purchase sweets, armed pillagers opened indiscriminate fire on the car and fled.

The police official said it appeared to be a targeted attack. Khan was the son of late prominent scholar Maulana Saleemullah Khan, who founded the Jamia Farooqia, a seminary located in Shah Faisal Colony. Jamia Farooqia adheres to the Sunni Muslim teachings of the Deobandi sect.

The seminary spokesperson, Amjad Rizvi, said that the Maulana expired in hospital from multiple bullet wounds while his driver, Maqsood Ahmed, died on the spot.

— *PTI*

IN RARE PUBLIC APPEARANCE, MARYAM TO ADDRESS OCT. 18 KARACHI PDM RALLY

Karachi, Oct. 11: In a rare public appearance, Maryam Nawaz, Vice-President of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), will address the grand anti-government rally on October 18 here organised by the alliance formed by the opposition parties to oust the Imran Khan-led government.

On September 20, the leaders of 11 major Opposition parties announced

formation of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and launch of a three-phased anti-government movement under an "action plan" starting with countrywide public meetings, protest demonstrations and rallies before a "decisive long march" towards Islamabad in January 2021. The first anti-government rally is scheduled on October 16 in Gujranwala.

— *PTI*

TEMPLE IN SINDH VANDALISED, ONE ARRESTED

Islamabad, Oct. 11: A Hindu temple has been vandalised by a person in Pakistan's southeast Sindh province, according to the police. One person has been arrested and a case registered in connection with the incident which took place on Saturday, *The Express Tribune* reported.

— *PTI*

CHINA CONSULAR ACCESS FOR TWO CANADIANS

Toronto, Oct. 11: The Canadian government said Saturday that China granted consular access to two detained Canadians in China for the first time since January.

The Global Affairs department said Dominic Barton, Canada's Ambassador to China, was granted virtual consular access to Michael Spavor on Friday and virtual consular access to Michael Kovrig on Saturday.

— *AP*

NEW | FIND

Monkey species is probably the ancestors of some of the modern primates

Oldest monkey fossils outside of Africa found

Beijing, Oct. 11: Scientists have found that the fossil samples unearthed in a lignite mine in China belong to a monkey species that lived about 6.4 million years ago, a discovery which indicates that they existed in Asia at the same time as apes, and are probably the ancestors of some of the modern primates in the area.

According to the researchers, including Nina G. Jablonski from the Pennsylvania State University

in the US, the samples collected from a mine in southeastern Yunnan Province in China are "some of the very oldest fossils of monkeys outside of Africa". "It is close to or actually the ancestor of many of the living monkeys of East Asia. One of the interesting things from the perspective of paleontology is that this monkey occurs at the same place and same time as ancient apes in Asia," Jablonski noted. The study, published

in the *Journal of Human Evolution*, noted that the unearthed jaw and thigh bones were found in close proximity, "and are probably of the same individual". The scientists also uncovered a left calcaneus — heel bone — that belongs to the same species of monkey, *Mesopithecus pentelicus*.

"The significance of the calcaneus is that it reveals the monkey was well adapted for moving nimbly and powerfully both on

the ground and in the trees," Jablonski said. "This locomotor versatility no doubt contributed to the success of the species in dispersing across woodland corridors from Europe to Asia," she added.

According to the researchers, the lower jawbone and upper portion of the leg bone indicate that the individual was female. The scientists believe these monkeys were probably "jacks of all trades" able to navigate in the

trees and on land, and their teeth indicated they could eat a wide variety of plants, fruits and flowers, while apes eat mostly fruit. "The thing that is fascinating about this monkey, that we know from molecular anthropology, is that, like other colobines (Old World monkeys), it had the ability to ferment cellulose. It had a gut similar to that of a cow," said Jablonski.

The monkeys were successful since they could

eat low-quality food high in cellulose and obtain sufficient energy by fermenting the food and using the subsequent fatty acids then available from the bacteria. They said a similar pathway is used by animals like cows, deer, and goats. "Monkeys and apes would have been eating fundamentally different things. Apes eat fruits, flowers, things easy to digest, while monkeys eat leaves, seeds," Jablonski said.

— *PTI*

IN BRIEF

FLOODING IN CAMBODIA KILLS 11

Phnom Penh (Cambodia), Oct. 11: Flooding in Cambodia has killed at least 11 people since the beginning of the month, a disaster official said on Sunday. Seasonal rains were made worse by a tropical storm, which caused flash floods in several provinces last week, said Khun Sokha, a spokesman for the National Committee for Disaster Management. Among the 11 dead, 10 have reportedly drowned in floodwaters and one was killed by lightning, he said. Several hundred families have been evacuated to higher ground, he said. On Friday, Prime Minister Hun Sen ordered local authorities to mobilise assistance to those affected.

FOREST FIRES IN LEBANON, SYRIA KILL 3

Damascus, Oct. 11: Forest fires in Syria and neighbouring Lebanon have killed three people and burned swathes of land since Thursday, state media and officials said. Syrian state television on Saturday morning broadcast scenes from the affected areas, where firefighters were working to extinguish the blazes. It said hundreds of hectares had burned in the countryside of Syria's coastal Latakia and Tartus provinces, and in the central Homs province. The health ministry said three people had died in Latakia province since Friday as a result of the fires, and that 70 people were taken to hospital suffering breathing difficulties. Dozens of fires were burning, including "45 in Latakia and 33 in Tartus", Syria's Agriculture Minister Mohammed Hassan Qatana told a radio station late Friday. The Latakia fire brigade said they were "facing the largest series of fires seen in Latakia province in years". Official news agency SANA said fire burned homes in Banias, in Tartus province. In neighbouring Lebanon, there have been more than 100 fires across the country since Thursday, according to George Abu Musa, head of operations for the country's civil defence. "The situation is crazy, there are fires everywhere," Abu Musa told AFP. "We have mobilised 80 per cent of our personnel and almost all our centres in Lebanon," he said.

N-PROJECT IN ROMANIA: U.S. OUSTS CHINA

Bucharest, Oct. 11: Washington's energy ministry said that the US would dislodge China as financier for two new reactors at Romania's only nuclear power plant. Romanian Energy Minister Virgil Popescu and US counterpart Dan Broillette had initialised a "draft intergovernmental Agreement to cooperate on the expansion and modernisation" of Cernavoda in Romania's southeast, the US Department of Energy said in a statement. Bucharest will gain access to "US expertise and technology", while a "multinational team" will take on the work of building the new reactors and refurbishing one of the existing ones, it added. "Now we have a great clean American company, AECOM, leading this \$8 billion project, with assistance from clean Romanian, Canadian and French companies," Washington's envoy to Romania Adrian Zuckerman said at the signing event. The deal would "unshackle" Romania from China's "malign influence", Zuckerman said, adding that "the communist party's control of every Chinese company, domestically and abroad, poses an existential danger". Bucharest in June broke off its agreement with China General Nuclear Power Corporation (CGN) on the two new reactors, as distrust of Chinese investments in Europe grows. CGN had been the only company to bid when Bucharest put the project out to tender in 2014. It has since then been added to a US blacklist of companies Washington accuses of trying to steal technology for military applications. Romania then pledged to find a new partner among its EU or NATO allies for the Cernavoda project, which it has struggled for almost a decade to get off the ground. Six European companies — GDF Suez, Iberdrola, CEZ, RWE, Enel and ArcelorMittal — stepped back from the project one by one.



An aerial view of flood waters from Hurricane Delta surrounding structures destroyed by Hurricane Laura in Creole, Louisiana on Saturday. — AFP

Delta: Louisianans left reeling, out of power

Weakens to a tropical depression as it moved inland

Lake Charles, Oct. 11: Weary residents of coastal Louisiana began cleaning up on Saturday from wind and water damage inflicted by Hurricane Delta to their already storm-battered region, even as it weakened and moved northeast. Delta made landfall near the town of Creole in Cameron Parish early Friday evening as a Category 2 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale, packing sustained winds of 100 miles per hour.

Though not as powerful as August's Hurricane Laura, a Category 4 storm that tore homes and businesses apart, Delta toppled trees and power poles, leaving hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents without power.

The storm weakened to a tropical depression as it moved inland to western Mississippi, according to the National Hurricane Center, but still carried heavy rains.

Sylvia Pastrano, 65, said the roof of her Lake Charles, Louisiana home leaked from Delta's rains

SOME 3,000 National Guard troops had been called up to distribute relief supplies, clear roads, maintain security and conduct search and rescue operations, Governor John Bel Edwards said.

after being initially damaged by Laura. She positioned three trash cans over her bed to catch the water. "We were debating whether to leave or not but my husband has got orthopedic issues and I do too and we're just too exhausted to even get up and evacuate," Pastrano said. "Last night it was terrifying, the whistling and whistling." Delta brought widespread flooding of streets and riverbanks, mostly in southwestern Louisiana, tracking the path of destruction left by Laura but causing damage over a larger swath of the Gulf Coast. "Even if it wasn't quite as powerful as Hurricane Laura, it was much bigger," Governor John Bel

Edwards told a briefing in Baton Rouge.

Some 3,000 National Guard troops had been called up to distribute relief supplies, clear roads, maintain security and conduct search and rescue operations, the governor said.

While no deaths have so far been linked to Delta, Edwards said storm-related fatalities often occur in accidents such as falls, during clean-up operations, or from carbon monoxide poisoning from residents using home generators.

About 600,000 of the state's electric customers, 25% of the total, were without power at midday, Edwards said. But restoration was progressing faster than it did after Laura because Delta's winds were less damaging to the infrastructure, he said.

Laura's winds damaged tens of thousands of homes, leaving roofs across the region dotted with blue tarpaulins. More than 6,000 people were still living temporarily in hotels when Delta struck.

Delta spared many of the

rooftop tarps that were still up, but deluged some streets and littered others with downed trees and branches. "Laura was much worse," said Lake Charles resident Matthew Williams, 49. "This was more rain than wind."

Williams, who had just gotten his power back about a week and a half ago after the outage left by Laura, said he rode out the storm at his home.

With the sun shining brightly, Frederick Hannie, 35, surveyed the water damage to his gym, CrossFit Lake Charles, which had already sustained wind and roof damage from Laura. Between two hurricanes and the Coronavirus pandemic, Hannie said, "it definitely takes a little financial gymnastics" to run a business this year. As Delta made its way over the Gulf of Mexico on Friday, energy companies cut back US oil production by about 92%, or 1.7 million barrels per day - the most since 2005's Hurricane Katrina.

— Reuters

HSBC targets net zero carbon emissions by '50

London, Oct 11: HSBC HSBA.L will target net zero carbon emissions across its entire customer base by 2050 at the latest, and provide between \$750 billion and \$1 trillion in financing to help clients make the transition, Chief Executive Noel Quinn told Reuters.

The pledge is the strongest statement by Europe's biggest bank on climate change to date, although it met with criticism from some environmental groups for not taking more immediate action to curb its fossil fuel financing.

"Covid has been a wake-up call to us all, including me personally. We have seen how fragile the global economy is to a major event, in this case a health event, and it brings home the reality of what a major climate event could do," Quinn told Reuters in a video interview.

HSBC aims to achieve net zero emissions in its own operations by 2030, he added. While other UK banks such as NatWest NWGL have already set similar net zero goals, HSBC's aim to achieve it across its huge Asia-focused client base is one of the most significant pledges made by a global lender to date. However, the bank will be closely watched for how quickly and fully it pursues its new goals, which are mainly stated as aims rather than hard commitments.

It will also face scrutiny on whether it has allowed

THE BANK will be closely watched for how quickly and fully it pursues its new goals, which are mainly stated as aims rather than hard commitments. It will also face scrutiny on whether it has allowed itself leeway to continue financing some fossil fuel-linked clients.

itself leeway to continue financing some fossil fuel-linked clients, especially in developing markets.

HSBC has come under increasing pressure from activists, shareholders and politicians who say it is contributing to climate change by financing environmentally harmful projects. Quinn said the bank was focused on expanding its capital markets-focused carbon transition policies to a broader one encompassing all its activities across financing, asset management, and corporate and retail banking.

"What we have given the market is an ambition that our total financing by 2050 will be net zero, that is a far bigger prize or goal than picking a sub-segment of our portfolio and saying 'I am not going to bank you' because that's not what the world needs," he said.

"That industry or that customer may then just go to Bank X, Bank Y or Bank Z. They won't have changed their business model," Critics have said HSBC lagged peers in responding to the climate

challenge and risked losing out to rivals such as BNP Paribas BNPPPA that are ahead on setting carbon reduction targets.

This week, Wall Street heavyweight JPMorgan JPM.N became the latest bank to expand investment in clean energy and work towards net zero emissions by 2050, in line with the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate.

With many Asian clients directly connected to or reliant on the coal sector - from which emissions are a leading contributor to global warming — HSBC is in a relatively tougher position.

It gave no detail on plans to tighten its policy on lending to the coal industry — still a key driver of many Asian economies — in a move likely to anger campaigners.

Instead, the bank said it would apply "a climate lens" to financing decisions and would also continue to take into account "the unique conditions for our clients across developed and developing economies". Several pressure groups said they were disappointed the bank was not taking more immediate action.

"The very bare minimum would be to immediately exclude all companies with coal expansion plans and require others to adopt a coal exit strategy, as BNP Paribas and many more serious banks have already done," said Lucie Pinson, founder and executive director. — Reuters

Resolve climate crisis: William

San Francisco, Oct. 11: Prince William issued an urgent plea Saturday for a global effort to resolve the climate crisis by the end of this decade so that "we won't have to sacrifice everything we enjoy." The prince was speaking as part of a free streamed TED event aimed at unifying people to face the threats of climate change. Speakers range from Pope Francis to actor Chris Hemsworth and former US vice president Al Gore.

The remarks from William, the duke of Cambridge, came in a pre-recorded 18-minute video, part of which was released early on YouTube.

"The shared goals of our generation are clear — together we must protect and restore nature, clean our air, revive our oceans, build a waste-free world and fix our climate," he said.

The 38-year-old prince recently helped launch the Earthshot prize, providing a cash award for people, companies, organisations, governments, cities or even countries that propose workable solutions to climate change.

The prince joined forces with Sir David Attenborough, the respected broadcaster and natural historian, in launching what they hoped would become a "Nobel Prize for environmentalism".

Laying out the global challenge in his TED remarks, the prince said, "We must strive to do all of this in a decade." "If we achieve these goals, by 2030 our lives won't be worse and we won't have to sacrifice everything we enjoy. Instead, the way we live will be healthier, cleaner, smarter and better for all."

— Reuters



The shared goals of our generation are clear — together we must protect and restore nature, clean our air, revive our oceans, build a waste-free world and fix our climate

— PRINCE WILLIAM Duke of Cambridge

Other participants include UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, Mexican activist Xiye Bastida and actors Priyanka Chopra, Jane Fonda, Don Cheadle and Mark Ruffalo.

Saturday's programme, dubbed Countdown, featured the blend of arts, ideas and innovation seen as the hallmarks of TED events.

Hundreds of TEDx mini-events were also taking place around the world in an effort to encourage local action for the environment.

The six-hour main programme began in California at 8:00 am (1500 GMT) on YouTube's TED channel. In a TED first, it was being aired free of charge.

— AFP

CLIMATE +VE GOAL: SAILGP LOOKS BEYOND WIND POWER

London, Oct. 11: SailGP aims to be climate positive when its "foiling" F50 catamarans begin their second season next year, in a move it hopes will speed up the electrification of the marine industry.

To reach this goal, SailGP said this week it will both drastically reduce its carbon output and invest in projects to eliminate more than any remaining emissions, including contributing to a scheme that involves planting mangroves.

"We have to take decisive and ground-breaking measures, leading by example not only in sailing but across the marine and sports industries," SailGP Sustainability Director Susie Tomson said of setting a goal beyond a zero carbon footprint.

While SailGP's catamarans, which in their first season hit speeds of more than 50 knots (92 kilometres per hour), are driven entirely by the wind, its support boats use fossil fuels.

SailGP, which is backed by Oracle founder Larry Ellison, said it will switch 11 boats to electric motors and find a way to use electricity for its high-speed "chase boats". "The overall goal is to have a fully electric support boat fleet by 2025 — removing the equivalent of 175 cars from the road — and helping to lead a clean energy revolution in the marine industry," SailGP's organisers said in a statement. Onshore, SailGP said it will move to 100% renewable power by 2025. — Reuters

Deforestation in Amazon falls for 3rd straight month

Brasilia, Oct. 11: Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon rainforest fell in September for the third straight month compared to a year ago, government data showed on Friday, but destruction remains far higher than before President Jair Bolsonaro took office in 2019.

Forest clearances in the world's largest rainforest are down 10% in the first nine months of 2020, compared to the same period a year ago, according to data released by government space research agency INPE.

September was the 7th highest month for deforestation on record, outstripping any month in the two years preceding Bolsonaro's inauguration.

"The deforestation numbers continue to be terrible and unacceptable," said Marcio Astrini of the Climate Observatory NGO, who said deforestation alerts used to be measured in hundreds of

square kilometres and now they are reported in the thousands.

"Everything that brought us to this scenario of environmental chaos, of uncontrolled deforestation and crime taking hold in the Amazon continues to exist," he told Reuters.

Environmental advocates blame right-wing Bolsonaro, who has rolled back environmental enforcement and called for mining and farming protected areas of the Amazon, for emboldening illegal loggers, ranchers and miners to destroy the forest.

Bolsonaro says he aims to lift the region out of poverty and that the amount of forest still standing shows Brazil is a model for conservation.

Last week, US Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden called for a world effort to offer \$20 billion to end Amazon deforestation and threatened Brazil with unspecified "economic consequ-

ences" if it did not "stop tearing down the forest".

In response, Bolsonaro blasted Biden as making cowardly threats to Brazil's sovereignty.

Despite the consecutive months of falling deforestation, Brazil's official deforestation measure for 2020 is expected to show a rise. Deforestation is measured annually by how much forest has been cleared as of the end of July, as compared to the previous August. Those months have less cloud cover that interferes with the satellite images. For that period, deforestation rose 34.6% to 9,216 square kilometres, the preliminary data show.

The final data is generally far higher than the preliminary figures. Brazil's Amazon Environmental Research Institute (IPAM) estimates the final deforestation figure will be above 14,000 square kilometres.

— Reuters

Duke Energy for solar, wind facilities

Boston, Oct. 11: Top US utility Duke Energy Corp plans billions of dollars of new spending this decade as it ramps up efforts to slash greenhouse gas emissions, executives told Reuters.

The move comes amid growing pressure from Democratic politicians and activist investors for power producers to reduce their hefty contribution to climate change.

"If you're going to pursue the more aggressive carbon-reduction targets, you're going to retire coal earlier; you're going to be replacing it earlier with renewables, batteries, sto-

rage etcetera," said Duke Chief Financial Officer Steve Young in an interview. "That pushes up the capital profile."

According to Young and an investor presentation, Duke will boost projected capital spending by \$2 billion to \$58 billion for the period from 2020 to 2024, and projects a capital plan "in the range of \$65 billion to \$75 billion" for the following five years. Neither the near-term spending increase, nor the longer-term projection have been previously reported.

Duke said the increased spending will cover efforts to cut greenhouse gas

TOP US utility Duke Energy Corp plans billions of dollars of new spending this decade as it ramps up efforts to slash greenhouse gas emissions.

emissions by retiring old coal plants and replacing them with more solar and wind facilities, with the exact targets tied to forthcoming regulatory decisions. Other power utilities have embraced similar strategies as the cost of renewable generation falls. But the outlook from Charlotte, North Carolina-based Duke, the largest

regulated US utility, also stands out because it has given public officials and other stakeholders a large say on how quickly to move away from fossil fuels. Duke has outlined various fuel-mix scenarios in recent "integrated resource plans" filed to regulators in North and South Carolina, but did not make a recommendation on which to pursue.

The omission was unusual for a large utility since a faster move will require more spending, but Young said the approach should help build public support. Duke will make a similar filing in Indiana, he said.

Shares in Duke were up less than 1% at \$93.61 at midday. Chief Executive Lynn Good told investors on a webcast that Duke will add a climate goal to its executive compensation plan in 2021 "just to ensure that we are making the progress that we need to make" in areas like advocacy and public policy.

Asked about reports that Duke had rebuffed acquisition interest from NextEra Energy Inc, the world's largest generator of renewable energy, Young said "we can't comment on rumors".

In August Duke took a \$1.6 billion charge for the

cancellation of a natural gas pipeline.

Young said the move did not affect Duke's broader strategy but will probably lead to changes in the locations of new plants.

Duke has set a target of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Faster technical advances would be required to meet the 2035 timeframe proposed by US presidential candidate Joe Biden, Young said. For the period through 2024, Duke's efforts should allow earnings per share to grow "at the upper end" of its current forecast of 4% to 6%, the company said. — Reuters

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	40,509.49	0.81
Nifty 50	11,914.20	0.67
S&P 500*	3,477.13	0.88
Dollar (₹)	73.14	0.13
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.67	0.30
Euro (₹)	86.31	0.20
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,558*236	0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	42.82	-0.52
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.937	-0.002
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.769	0.002

* As of Friday/Saturday

FPIs invest ₹5,245 crore into equities in Oct.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have invested Rs 1,086 crore on a net basis so far in October in Indian markets, tracking encouraging factors including improved GST collection, acceleration in economic activity and positive global cues. Depositories data shows FPIs pumped in a net Rs 5,245 crore into equities and withdrew Rs 4,159 crore from the debt market during October 1-9.

Cello re-enters stationery biz after 5 years



After selling its stationery business to France's BIC five years ago, the Cello Group is re-entering the category and plans to launch products in the local market. In Dec. 2015, BIC Group acquired Cello Pens for Rs 540 crore. "We have just started stationery business with a different brand name (Uno-max)... here was a non-compete (agreement)... so we couldn't do same products portfolio," Gaurav P. Rathod, MD, Cello Group, said.

Snapdeal on-boards over 5,000 mfg-sellers

Snapdeal has added over 5,000 manufacturer-sellers on its platform so far this year, most of them in the September quarter, exceeding the target it had set for itself earlier in the year, a company official said. Adding new sellers will help the e-tailer to ramp up its Diwali sales plans as direct shipment to buyers help manufacturers move stocks faster to customers. The marketplace has over 5 lakh registered sellers.

H&M to expand physical stores in India

Swedish apparel retailer H&M will continue to expand its physical stores in India although it is closing down 250 stores globally, betting on the long-term potential of the country. H&M, which opened its first store in India in 2015, has 48 outlets in 24 cities but may not open as many stores in the next five years, as it also focuses on enhancing its digital presence, according to H&M India's country manager Janne Einola.

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₹20-crore entry capital recommended Panel for low base for microinsurers

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, OCT. 11

At a time when millions of Indians, especially in the informal sector, have lost their livelihoods to the Covid-19 pandemic, a panel set up by the insurance regulator has recommended a steep cut in the entry level capital requirement for floating a standalone microinsurance company to help accelerate the expansion of this segment. The panel wants the threshold be cut to Rs 20 crore, from the current requirement of Rs 100 crore for microinsurance companies.

Stating that India would need to allow multiple players in the field if it wants to substantially increase insurance penetration, the panel has suggested that microinsurance companies, as well as cooperative and mutual insurers, should be allowed to act as composite insurers to transact both life and non-life business through a single entity. "Their portfolios should have a balance of both life and non-life business," said the panel.

However, the changes would require amendments to the Insurance Act, 1938 to bring the standalone microinsurance business under the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India's (Irdai) purview. This will include defining microinsurance, microinsurers, reducing the capital requirement and/or giving powers to insurance



regulator to decide on capital requirements for standalone microinsurance companies.

However, amending the Insurance Act, 1938, may require time. In the immediate term, the central government may be approached to issue rules under Section 24(2)(c) read with Section 14(2)(g) of Irdai Act, 1999 giving the Irdai powers to put in place a regulatory framework for floating micro insurers.

Such an approach was adopted by the government to allow insurers in special economic zones (SEZs) when there was no specific power with the Irdai for regulating entities in SEZs said, the Irdai-appointed committee in its report.

"India too will need to improve access for multiple players if it wants to substantially increase insurance penetration. This is all the more urgent in the current context of the Covid-19 pandemic when millions of Indians, especially in the informal sector, have lost their livelihoods, are now leading more insecure lives and

are falling back into poverty," said the report.

The committee has also suggested that a risk-based capital (RBC) approach should be adopted to enable the progressive growth of the microinsurance business while maintaining the highest prudential standards.

Referring to the low insurance penetration, the report said, "Dedicated standalone microinsurance institutions can close this gap by making insurance affordable and available to low-income families, thereby providing a measure of risk mitigation and security. The committee therefore recommends that the government and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India license such businesses which can cater to the low-income segment."

The Irdai had constituted the committee in February 2020 consisting of members from NGOs, independent consultants and experts working in financial inclusion and regulatory fields.

GST COUNCIL TO MEET AGAIN TODAY TO IRON OUT DIFFERENCES

New Delhi, Oct. 11: The GST Council in its meeting on Monday is likely to discuss the suggestion of non-BJP ruled states of setting up a ministerial panel to develop consensus on the issue of compensation, sources said.

The Council, chaired by Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising state finance ministers, will for the third time in a row discuss the issue of funding the shortfall of goods and services tax (GST) revenue of states.

While some opposition ruled states are demanding that a Group of Ministers be set up to arrive at a decision on the mechanism for funding the compensation shortfall, BJP-ruled states, which have already opted for the borrowing option given by the Centre, are of the view that they should be given a go-ahead so that they can get money quickly.

The 43rd meeting of the council will discuss the single agenda of the way forward, sources said. In its previous meeting last week, the council had decided to extend the surcharge on taxes on luxury goods such as cars and tobacco products beyond June 2022, but failed to reach a consensus on ways to compensate states for loss of tax revenue.

The projected total compensation shortfall in current fiscal stands at Rs 2.35 lakh crore.

—PTI

Oil PSUs asked to build 50,000 houses for renting

New Delhi, Oct. 11: The petroleum ministry has asked oil PSUs such as Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) to build 50,000 houses for renting to migrant workers as part of the government plan to develop affordable rental housing after millions of labourers fled cities for villages amidst the coronavirus lockdown.

The ministry wants IOC and other public sector undertakings (PSUs) under its administrative control such as Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), Gail India Ltd and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) to build the housing units on their land, three officials who attended a meeting on the subject said.

The meeting, they said, was chaired by oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan who asked the PSUs to come up with plans to build the housing units at the earliest.

The ministry had on October 5 tweeted about the meeting, saying Pradhan "held a meeting with officials of MoPNG and PSUs to review the efforts made by PSUs in providing houses on rent to migrants and urban poor working on oil & gas projects under the affordable rental housing scheme of @MoHUA_India."

MoPNG is the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, while MoHUA is the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

"The Affordable Rental Housing Complexes, a sub-scheme of #PMAY



aims to provide ease-of-living to urban poor and migrant workers in need of affordable housing near their work sites as a result of the #Covid19 induced reverse migration," the ministry had tweeted without giving details.

Under diktat from the ministry, the PSUs have started looking for land within or near their installations for the housing project, the officials said.

However, some of the PSUs officials found little merit in the move.

They said operating units such as refineries rarely have spare land and they often struggle to house new units or staff. Also, the new projects such as pipelines are in remote areas where migrant workers may not be willing to go.

Those working on oil and gas projects are often housed in temporary housing units near the project sites and it may be difficult to get them into rented units, they said.

The government had in July approved a plan to develop affordable rental housing for migrant workers after millions of labourers fled cities for

villages as the lockdown left many of them without jobs and homes.

The scheme, part of a housing project aimed at providing housing for all by 2022, was aimed at converting existing vacant government housing into affordable rental housing complexes (ARHC).

Private developers could also participate.

The programme will benefit about 3,00,000 workers initially, according to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs statement issued after the Cabinet approval of July.

The plan, announced initially in May as part of a coronavirus stimulus package and approved by the Cabinet in July, will offer subsidised loans, tax incentives and additional floor space allowances to developers.

No government agency has a database of the total number of migrant workers in India. The government had recently informed the Supreme Court that approximately one crore migrant workers had returned home in Shramik Special trains, buses and on foot since the lockdown began on March 25.

—PTI

Sail to produce HH rails for high-speed lines

New Delhi, Oct. 11: State-owned steel maker Sail plans to commence commercial production of head hardened (HH) rails in this fiscal, its chairman Anil Kumar Chaudhary said.

HH rails are special rails used in high-speed freight corridors and metro rail projects. Such rails are manufactured using the head hardening technology to bear about 50 per cent higher pressure compared to normal rails.

Sail has set up facilities for production of HH rails at the new Universal Rail Mill (URM) at its Bhilai Steel Plant in Chhattisgarh, and the cold trials for the same have already been completed, Chaudhary said.

"Though the commissioning of the facility has got delayed on account of Covid-19 pandemic, the company is planning to commence commercial production of the head hardened rails during the current financial year as per the requirement of Indian Railways," he said.

He said the company meets the requirement as and when any order is received from the Railways.

—PTI

Project completion drags in H1

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 11

Lockdown and unlock restrictions have affected completion of capacity expansion projects to the extent that the value of projects commissioned in the past two quarters are a fraction of those completed in the pre-Covid quarters.

Projects commissioned during the September and June 2020 quarters were worth Rs 32,600 crore and Rs 24,000 crore, respectively. In comparison, project completions averaged Rs 1.3 lakh crore per quarter in 2019-20 and

Rs 1.6 lakh crore per quarter in 2018-19, says CMIE's CapEx service that tracks project execution.

Most projects completed in the September 2020 quarter were in the infrastructure sector. Rail and road transport claimed the biggest share among all sectors. These two together accounted for 43 per cent of the total completed projects. The transport infrastructure services sector accounted for 35 per cent of the total value of commissioned projects.

Government projects accounted for 63 per cent of all commissioning of projects in the September

quarter.

In the last three quarters, government projects accounted for over 60 per cent of all commissioning, with the private sector going slow.

"Private sector projects could take much longer to revert to aggressive completion of projects. While the logistical reasons for slowing down of project completions may be getting over, the problem of depleted demand will linger and will remain a hindrance to project completions," says CMIE.

If the lockdown was not a good period to implement a project, it was also not a

good time to decide about abandoning a project. Hence, compared to the past, the number of projects getting abandoned during the nine-month period till September 30 remains modest. Projects worth Rs 77,500 crore were abandoned during the nine-month period. In the past five-six years, such a number had averaged Rs 1.52 lakh crore per nine-month period.

While implementation of projects worth Rs 9.9 lakh crore was stalled during the first nine months of 2020 till September 30, projects worth Rs 9.2 lakh crore have been revived.

Action-packed week ahead for stock market

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, OCT. 11

This is billed to be an action packed week for the stock market. UTI AMC and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders will debut on the bourses on Monday. The day could also see the market's full response to the RBI's policy decisions on Friday.

Tech majors Wipro, Infosys, and HCL Technologies will announce their results on October 13, 14 & 16, respectively. The Supreme Court will hear the matter of loan moratorium and interest waiver on Tuesday, October 13.

Macroeconomic data release of IIP, CPI and WPI inflation numbers are also scheduled on Monday & Wednesday.

US stimulus packages and upcoming presidential debates will also be closely watched for cues.

Experts believe the market is poised to scale higher due to improving macro-economic scenario, the pick-up in industrial activity and gradual return to normalcy with Covid-19 cases flattening.

Last week, Tata Steel informed the stock exchanges about highest-ever quarterly deliveries of 5.05 million tonnes of steel in the quarter, a jump of 72



per cent quarter-on-quarter, and 22 per cent year-on-year in the second quarter of FY20, signalling a continued pick-up in demand for steel. JSW Steel also reported a jump in its crude steel production for the second quarter, and also in its capacity utilisation as the company produced 3.85 million tonnes of steel in the quarter.

The bull party may continue in the market, with the RBI policy measures favouring heavyweight financials and IT sector majors expected to announce good numbers.

HDFC Bank will be kicking off the earnings season for banks on Saturday.

Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking, said, "We feel the recent buoyancy in the banking, financials and IT majors could help the Nifty to retest the 12,100 zone. On the flip side, the 11,600-11,800 zone would act as a cushion in case of any profit-taking."

—PTI

LOW | APPETITE

A reason for weak interest in these stocks is limited free float

Five of 12 PSU bank stocks trade near face value

New Delhi, Oct. 11: Five out of 12 public sector banks are trading near the face value of their equity shares on the bourses, regardless of a rally in stock benchmark indices, an analysis shows.

Shares of Indian Overseas Bank are even trading below the face value of Rs 10 per share. On the BSE, the stock closed at Rs 9.27 on Friday.

The Chennai-based bank tapped the market first in September 2000, offloading part of the government's stake at the face value of Rs 10 per share.

Remaining four public sector banks— Bank of Maharashtra, Uco Bank, Punjab & Sind Bank and Central Bank of India—are trading near the face value of Rs 10 per share.

Shares of Punjab & Sind Bank closed at Rs 10.81 and Bank of Maharashtra at 11.29 on Friday. Mumbai-based Central Bank of India is slightly better positioned, with a closing price of Rs 12.45 per share followed by Kolkata-based Uco Bank at 12.14 per unit.

Gurpreet Sidana, chief operating officer, Religare Broking Ltd, said, "We've witnessed a



remarkable recovery in the benchmark in the last few months but the PSU banking pack is still struggling.

"After the initial rebound, mostly PSU

banking stocks are again hovering closer to their 52-week lows."

There are multiple overhangs on the sectors, including asset quality concerns, subdued business environment and low credit offtake.

All these issues put together are weighing on stock prices of the PSU banks and even the biggest name on the list, SBI, is not spared as it is currently quoting less than the sum total of value of its subsidiaries, Sidana explained.

One reason for the low interest of investors in these stocks is their limited

free float, an analyst said, adding that most of the banks have government holding of over 90 per cent, leaving a limited number of shares for the public to trade.

The government holding in Indian Overseas Bank is at the highest level of 95.84 per cent followed by Uco Bank at 94.44 per cent, Bank of Maharashtra at 93.33 per cent and Central Bank of India at 92.39 per cent. The government holding in Delhi-based Punjab & Sind Bank was at 83.06 per cent at the end of June 30, 2020.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

Germany hold on to beat Ukraine

Kyiv, Ukraine: Germany finally won a Nations League game at the seventh attempt, holding on to beat Ukraine 2-1 to ease the pressure growing on coach Joachim Löew. Defender Matthias Ginter and midfielder Leon Goretzka scored to give Löew's team their first win in Group 4 of League A, their first of the year, and coming after three games including the friendly against Turkey in which they squandered leads to draw. A late penalty from Ruslan Malinovskyi ensured another nervy ending, but a Ukraine side depleted by coronavirus cases and injuries were unable to draw level. Andriy Shevchenko's side were thrashed by France 7-1 in their friendly on Wednesday. After drawing with Turkey 3-3 in Cologne the same day, Löew restored his regular players in Kyiv, building the team around the Bayern Munich "block" of Manuel Neuer, Niklas Süle, Joshua Kimmich, Leon Goretzka and Serge Gnabry. — AP

Swiss goalie goof gives Spain win

Madrid: Spain needed a passing blunder by Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer to secure a 1-0 win and keep the lead of their Nations League group. Sommer got flustered by Spain's pressure and passed the ball past his teammate and directly to Mikel Merino, who set up Real Sociedad clubmate Mikel Oyarzabal to score the game's only goal in the 14th minute. Where Sommer let his team down, David de Gea rescued Spain. Switzerland's only scoring opportunity came before Oyarzabal's goal. Silvan Widmer got free on a counter-attack and his pass across the area reached fellow wing back Loris Benito arriving alone on the left side. De Gea, however, made a great one-handed save to parry Benito's powerful strike. Spain lead Group 4 with 7 points. — AP

Alex conquers 1st MotoGP podium

Le Mans, France: The Repsol Honda Team achieved their best result of the season to date, Alex Marquez stunning with second place from 18th on the grid as Stefan Bradl makes it a double top ten. It was another cold start to the day in France for round 10 of the MotoGP World Championship. Forecasts had predicted it to stay dry throughout, but the French sky had other ideas just moments before the lights went out. A delayed start due to rain on the grid saw the race declared wet and had the entire field switch to wet tyres, the race distance reduced by one lap. Alex shot forward from 18th on the grid and made up eight places in just a few laps. The gap to eventual race-winner Petrucci proved too big as Alex crossed the line in front of a delighted Repsol Honda Team.

Mixed day for girls at Asian chess

Chennai: The Indian women's chess team endured mixed fortunes, winning the first two matches before being upstaged by Iran which pushed them to eighth spot after three rounds of the Asian Online Nations (Regions) Cup Team Championship on Sunday. The team led by Mary Ann Gomes started with a 4-0 rout of Syria before edging Mongolia 2.5-1.5. In the third round, the top-seeded Indians went down 1.5-2.5 to sixth-ranked Iran despite R. Vaishali winning on the top board against Sarasadat. — PTI

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Royal Challengers Bangalore vs Kolkata Knight Riders from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

TENNIS

St Petersburg Open: Matches from 3.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

WWE RAW

Bouts from 5.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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Royals in the pink

Tewatia, Parag snap Rajasthan's 4-match losing streak

Dubai, Oct. 11: Rahul Tewatia's uncanny ability to win tricky games rescued Rajasthan Royals yet again as they eked out a five-wicket victory against Sunrisers Hyderabad to snap their four-match losing streak in the IPL, here on Sunday.

Tewatia, who became a household name with five sixes in an over against Kings XI Punjab, smashed an unbeaten 45 off 28 balls as Royals overhauled the 159-run target with a ball to spare.

Along with Riyan Parag (42 not out off 26 balls), Tewatia won the game in 'Royals' style keeping Steve Smith's men in the mix after they were reduced to 78 for 5 in 12 overs.

With two needed off two balls, Parag hit Khaleel Ahmed for a six over extra cover and broke into an impromptu 'Bihu jig'. They added 85 runs for the sixth wicket in their eight overs when their illustrious international stars flattered to deceive.

Tewatia brought back memories of the Sharjah night but this time it was Rashid Khan who was at receiving end in the 18th over as the left-hander struck three consecutive boundaries.

With 22 needed off two overs, Tewatia launched into T. Natarajan, who lost his length trying to bowl yorkers, for a four and a six over short fine leg that swung the match in favour of Royals.

Earlier, Manish Pandey struck an impressive half-century but Rajasthan Royals restricted Sunrisers Hyderabad to 158 for 4 in stipulated overs. — PTI



Rajasthan Royals' Rahul Tewatia (left) and Riyan Parag during their Indian Premier League match against Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Sunday.

— BCCI

SCORECARD

Sunrisers Hyderabad: David Warner b Archer 48, Jonny Bairstow c Samson b Kartik Tyagi 16, Manish Pandey c Tewatia b Unadkat 54, Kane Williamson (not out) 22, Priyam Garg run out (Archer/Buttler) 15. **Extras:** (nb-1, w-2) 3. **Total:** (for 4 wks, in 20 overs) 158. **FOW:** 1-23, 2-96, 3-122, 4-158. **Bowling:** Jofra Archer 4-0-25-1, Shreyas Gopal 4-0-31-0, Kartik Tyagi 3-0-29-1, Jaydev Unadkat 4-0-31-1, Rahul Tewatia 4-0-35-0, Ben Stokes 1-0-7-0. **Rajasthan Royals:** Ben Stokes b Ahmed 5, Jos Buttler c Bairstow b Ahmed 16, Steven Smith run out 5, Sanju Samson c Bairstow b Rashid 26, Robin Uthappa lbw b Rashid 18, Riyan Parag (not out) 42, Rahul Tewatia (not out) 45. **Extras:** (lb-4 w-2) 6. **Total:** (for 5 wks, in 19.5 overs) 163. **FOW:** 1-7, 2-25, 3-26, 4-63, 5-78. **Bowling:** S. Sharma 4-0-32-0, Khaleel Ahmed 3.5-0-37-2, T. Natarajan 4-1-32-0, A. Sharma 1-0-11-0, Rashid Khan 4-0-25-2, Vijay Shankar 3-0-22-0.

IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Mumbai Indians	7	5	2	0	10	+1.327
Delhi Capitals	7	5	2	0	10	+1.038
Kolkata Knight Riders	6	4	2	0	8	+0.017
Royal Challengers Bangalore	6	4	2	0	8	-0.820
Sunrisers Hyderabad	7	3	4	0	6	+0.153
Rajasthan Royals	7	3	4	0	6	-0.872
Chennai Super Kings	7	2	5	0	4	-0.588
Kings XI Punjab	7	1	6	0	2	-0.381

Tabulated as Played, Won, Lost, No Result, Points, Net Run Rate

Quinton, Surya script MI win

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 11: Mumbai Indians defeated Delhi Capitals by five wickets in an Indian Premier League match here on Sunday.

Opener Shikhar Dhawan scored unbeaten 69, while skipper Shreyas Iyer made 42 as DC scored 162 for four.

For MI, Krunal Pandya picked up two wickets giving away 26 runs.

Later chasing the target, Quinton de Kock and Suryakumar Yadav scored 53 each to guide MI home with two balls to spare.

Earlier, Dhawan gave himself enough time to play sheet anchor's role even as MI bowlers did a decent job in the slog overs to not let the batsmen play too many big

SCORECARD

Delhi Capitals: Prithvi Shaw c Krunal Pandya b Boult 4, Shikhar Dhawan (not out) 69, Ajinkya Rahane lbw b Krunal Pandya 15, Shreyas Iyer c Boult b Krunal Pandya 42, Marcus Stoinis run out 13, Alex Carey (not out) 14. **Extras:** (w-5) 5. **Total:** (for 4 wks, in 20 overs) 162. **FOW:** 1-4, 2-24, 3-109, 4-130. **Bowling:** Trent Boult 4-0-36-1, James Pattinson 3-0-37-0, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-26-0, Krunal Pandya 4-0-26-2, Kieron Pollard 1-0-10-0, Rahul Chahar 4-0-27-0. **Mumbai Indians:** R. Sharma (c) c Rabada b AR Patel 5, O de Kock c Shaw b Ashwin 53, S. Yadav c Iyer b Rabada 53, Ishan Kishan c A. Patel b Rabada 28, H. Pandya c Carey b Stoinis 0, K. Pollard (not out) 11, K. Pandya (not out) 12. **Extras:** (w-4) 4. **Total:** (for 5 wks, in 19.4 over) 166. **FOW:** 1-31, 2-77, 3-130, 4-130, 5-152. **Bowling:** K. Rabada 4-0-28-2, A. Nortje 4-0-28-0, A. Patel 3-0-24-1, R. Ashwin 4-0-35-1, H. Patel 2-0-20-0, M. Stoinis 2.4-0-31-1.

shots.

Dhawan's unbeaten 69-run knock came off 52 balls with six fours and a six, while Iyer's 33-ball 42

had five shots to the fence.

After Prithvi Shaw (4) was snared early by Trent Boult and Ajinkya

Rahane too following him back in the dug out soon, there were no free runs for the Capitals in the beginning after electing to bat.

Rahane, playing his first game of the season, was trapped in front of the wicket by Krunal Pandya, introduced timely by MI skipper Rohit Sharma, considering that the India Test vice-captain struggles against left-arm spinners.

With in-form Iyer and Dhawan at the crease, the boundaries came here and there. It kept the scoreboard ticking at a decent run-rate.

Iyer's trademark along the ground-strokes, played with straight bat, were effective and a treat to watch. — PTI

CSK'S BATTING MAIN WORRY FOR DHONI

Dubai, Oct. 11: Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni says batting has become his team's major worry in an IPL campaign thrown haywire by "too many holes in the ship".

"Too many holes in the ship and when you try to plug one there is water flowing from another. We need to get our act together," Dhoni said after they lost to RCB by 37 runs on Saturday night.

"Batting has been bit of a worry and today also it was evident. We can't just keep turning up...It is almost the same thing that is happening maybe the individuals are different." — PTI

KKR fret over Russell's fitness, Narine's chucking complaint

Sharjah, Oct. 11: Kolkata Knight Riders will have a lot on their plate when they take on a resurgent Royal Challengers Bangalore in an IPL match here on Monday with their lethal weapon Sunil Narine blunted by a chucking complaint and fitness clouds hovering over enforcer Andre Russell.

Narine, who have had multiple complaints of suspect action against him, is again in trouble after on-field umpires' report post KKR's thrilling two-run win against Kings XI Punjab in which the spinner played a massive role.

Not only KXIP, the match against CSK also witnessed Narine's entry after 10 overs, stifling M.S. Dhoni's men. It seemed that the

NUMBERS GAME

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:
● Matches: 24
● Kolkata: 14
● Bangalore: 10

MEETING IN 2019

● Kolkata Knight Riders beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 5 wickets at Bangalore
● RCB beat KKR by 10 runs at Kolkata

FOR THE RECORD

● AB de Villiers' duck in the previous match against Chennai Super Kings was ninth in 148 innings of 160 matches in IPL.
● Virat Kohli scored 674 runs at an average of 37.44 in 21 innings of 24 matches against Kolkata Knight Riders in IPL.
— S. PERVEZ KAISER

spinner was getting his mojo back and could have



Spain's Rafael Nadal celebrates his 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 win over Novak Djokovic of Serbia in the French Open men's singles final at Roland Garros in Paris on Sunday. — AP

Nadal lifts 13th French trophy

Paris, Oct. 11: Rafael Nadal demolished Novak Djokovic 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 to win his 13th French Open and equal Roger Federer's all-time record of 20 Grand Slam titles on Sunday.

For world number one Djokovic, the defeat ended his hopes of an 18th Slam and of becoming the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to win all four majors twice.

Nadal, 34, claimed his 100th match win at Roland Garros against just two defeats since his 2005 debut.

The Spaniard, the oldest champion in Paris since Andres Gimeno in 1972, claimed the title without dropping a set.

He finished the one-sided affair with just 14 unforced errors to his opponent's 52. "Congrats to Novak for another great tournament. Sorry for today. We've played plenty of times together — one day one wins, another the other," said Nadal.

"After all the things I have been through in my career with injuries, I could not have done it without my family."

Nadal said he wasn't even thinking about matching Federer's record.

"It's been a very tough year. Winning here means

LEADING MEN'S GRAND SLAM WINNERS

20: Roger Federer (SUI)
20: Rafael Nadal (ESP)
17: Novak Djokovic (SRB)
14: Pete Sampras (USA)
12: Roy Emerson (AUS)
11: Rod Laver (AUS), Bjorn Borg (SWE)
10: Bill Tilden (USA)

everything to me so it's not about equalling Roger on 20, for me today it's just a Roland Garros victory," said Nadal who had skipped the US Open due to the global health crisis.

"Roland Garros means everything to me. I spent most of the most important moments of my tennis career here.

"Just playing here is a true inspiration. The love story I have with this court and city is unbelievable."

For Djokovic, it was just his second loss of 2020 following his default at the US Open.

'KING OF CLAY'

"Today, Rafa showed why you are the king of clay. I was out-played by a better player."

Nadal also used his victory speech to thank organisers for staging the tournament, pushed back from its traditional May-June slot due to the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP



Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes celebrates on the podium after winning the Eifel Grand Prix at the Nuerburgring racetrack in Nuerburg, Germany, on Sunday. — AP

HAMI EQUALS SCHUMI'S RECORD WITH 91st WIN

Nürburgring (Ger-many), Oct. 11: Lewis Hamilton controlled his emotions on Sunday as he equalled Michael Schumacher's record of 91 F1 wins with a measured triumph and thoughtful homage at the Eifel Grand Prix.

After completing his seventh win of the season, Hamilton was surprised to be greeted Mick Schumacher, the son of the German seven-time champion. Mick presented a red helmet from his father's career collection to Hamilton.

"Congratulations on a great achievement," said Schumacher, a rising star who is leading the F2 series.

Clearly moved, Hamilton struggled for words.

"Thank you so much," he said. "It's such an honour: I don't know what to say. When you grow up watching someone and idolising them..."

"Seeing his dominance for so long, I don't think I imagined I would be near him in terms of records so it's an incredible honour."

"As I came in the pit lane, that was only when I realised I had equalled the

record. "I hadn't computed it when I crossed the line — and I couldn't have done this without this incredible team pushing behind me. So, a big thank you — and huge respect to Michael."

Taking full advantage of team-mate and pole-sitter Valtteri Bottas' early retirement with engine problems, the runaway series leader and six-time champion drove a well-judged race to claim his landmark victory.

On a circuit where Schumacher, a seven-time champion, won five times, Hamilton came home 4.5 seconds ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen to take his second Nurburgring victory, the other for McLaren in 2011. Daniel Ricciardo was third for Renault. — AFP