

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
ANANTAPUR | MONDAY | 28 SEPTEMBER 2020



NATION | 4

Pawar meets Uddhav after Raut's surprise

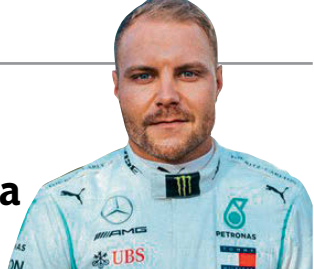


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Pak to protect RK, Dilip Kumar's ancestral houses

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Bottas wins Formula One Russian GP



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WEATHER

Max: 31.0°C
Min: 14°C
RH: 83%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 31/14 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES
(+71,704*)

60,53,010

*Without Maharashtra tally covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,967) (+9)

TS: 1,85,833 1,100

(+6,923) (+45)

AP: 6,75,674 5,708

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

3,31,99,123

DEATHS

10,00,556

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana

Tithi: Adhika Ashwayuja Shuddha

Star: Dhanishta till 10.30 pm

Varjyam: Nil

Durmuhurtam: 12.30 pm to 1.18 pm; 2.53 pm to 3.41 pm

Rahukalam: 7.30 pm to 9 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Safar ul Muzaffar 10, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5:31 am

Zohar: 12:26 pm

Asar: 4:28 pm

Maghrib: 6:05 pm

Isha: 7:21 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6:08 AM

SUNSET TODAY 6:25 PM

MOONSET 12:42 PM

MOONRISE 12:56 AM

COUNTER POINT

Want to see all your favourite heroines at one place? Go to NCB office

IN BRIEF

Militants killed in J&K encounter

Srinagar: An unidentified militant was killed in an encounter with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district on Sunday, police said. Acting on specific information about the presence of militants in the Samboora area of Awantipora in the south Kashmir district, security forces launched a cordon and search operation there, a police official said. He said as the forces were conducting the searches in the area, the militants fired upon them. The security forces retaliated, ensuring an encounter. In the exchange of fire, a militant was killed, he said.

Al-Qaeda terrorist arrested in WB

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested another person from West Bengal's Murshidabad district for his alleged involvement with a Pakistan-sponsored module of the al-Qaeda, a senior officer said on Sunday. The NIA arrested Shamim Ansari from his residence at Jalangi on Saturday, he said. "We have found his involvement with those arrested earlier. We have seized his mobile phone. He is being interrogated," he said. The agency had earlier arrested nine people for their links with the Pakistan-sponsored module of the al-Qaeda.

Flood time



Gushing flood water gushes in at Sitanagaram ghat in front of Kanaka Durga temple on the banks of Krishna river in Vijayawada on Sunday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

ALERT SOUNDED IN AREAS ALONG PENNA RIVER

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, SEPT. 27

A high alert has been sounded at habitations all along the Penna River, including Nellore, as 1.02 lakh cusecs of water, is being released downstream from Somasila Project. Revenue officials said measures are being taken to shift people living in low-lying areas to safer places.

According to project officials, the current storage in Somasila is 74.545 tmc. ft. with fresh inflows of 1.25,245 cusecs. As a result, 1,12,884 cusecs of water was being released at as 3 pm. This includes 1,01,764 cusecs being released downstream into Penna River, apart from 10,700 cusecs to Kandaleru Dam and 420 cusecs to Somasila North Feeder Canal.

■ **Page 3: Relief camps set up in Nellore**

POLICE RESCUE EIGHT STRANDED IN RIVULET

NAGESWARA RAO BALLEDA I DC KADAPA, SEPT. 27

Police have rescued eight workers near the right station in Chintakom-madinne mandal Saturday midnight when their auto struck in a rivulet's stream. In another incident, B. Kodur police rescued three persons from the floods at Sagileru Saturday night.

The labourers were returning from work when the vehicle they were traveling in got stuck in a gorge near the radio station.

■ **Page 3: Cops responded to SOS call on 100**

All gates lifted at Prakasam barrage

MD ILYAS I DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 27

All gates of Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada have been lifted on Sunday to release Krishna floodwaters into the sea. According to officials, nearly six lakh cusecs of water is being released from the barrage.

District collector A. MD. Imtiaz held a teleconference with officials of various departments and asked them to be cautious about possible floods, as six lakh cusecs of water is likely to reach Prakasam Barrage by 10 pm on Sunday, when the second flood warning will be issued.

Imtiaz said irrigation minister Anilkumar Yadav has reviewed the situation with district officials. He said the first flood warning was issued at 11.30 am on Sunday. He asked officials of various

departments to be vigilant and plunge into action whenever an emergency crops up.

The collector instructed tahsildars of Kanchikacherla, Jaggayyapet, Penamalur, Thotlavalur and Kankipada to alert people in their areas and take all precautionary measures. Similar directions have been issued with regard Chandrapaladu, Chinallanka and Pedalanka of Ibrahimpatnam mandal.

The teleconference was attended by joint collector K. Madhavilatha, sub-collector H. M. Dhyanchandra, Pulichentala project superintendent, apart from engineering and irrigation officials.

The Kondaveeti Vagu is continuing to overflow cutting off the connection between old Amaravathi and capital Amaravati, Mangalagiri and Vijayawada.

Struck in floods, man dies to heart attack

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI I DC KURNOOL SEPT. 27

With floodwaters swamping Bramhanapalle and the approach roads in Chagalamarri mandal, a person who suffered a heart attack could not be rushed to a hospital as an ambulance could not enter the village.

The man, identified as Thomas, was carried on a cot by locals to a distance of over four kilometres before they could reach the road. The ambulance was waiting at the spot, unable to travel towards the village. The locals could not use their vehicles to carry Thomas due to the floodwaters.

Those who accompanied

THE MAN, identified as Thomas, was carried on a cot by locals to a distance of over four kilometres before they could reach the road. The ambulance was waiting at the spot, unable to travel towards the village.

Thomas said he struggled for life till they reached the road. Just before he could be shifted into the ambulance, he died.

Kurnool Medical College cardi thoracic surgeon Dr C. Prabhakar Reddy said that bringing the patient to hospital within the "golden hour" was very crucial as chances of recovery are greater in that period in case of a stroke or heart attack.

Prez signs controversial agriculture Bills into law

Modi defends farms Bills in his Mann Ki Baat broadcast

Akali Dal's exit from NDA reshapes politics in Punjab

New Delhi, Sept. 27: President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday gave assent to three contentious farm Bills passed in Parliament last week that have triggered farmers' protest especially in Punjab and Haryana.

These three farm bills are: The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 2020.

A gazette notification has been issued in this regard. Parliament last week cleared the Bills that are aimed at liberalising the agriculture sector and allowing farmers to sell their produce anywhere they want at a better price.

The Opposition is, however, criticising the manner in which these bills were passed in Parliament. They had alleged that the Bills were passed "unconstitutionally" in a "complete disregard" of Parliamentary norms.

They had requested the President to return the Bills, and only give his assent after they have been passed after following proper rules and procedures.

Even NDA's oldest ally Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Saturday parted ways on the issue of these farm Bills as farmers in Punjab and Haryana intensified protest.

The government has asserted that these Bills will allow farmers to sell their produce anywhere they want at a better price.

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 aims to permit the sale of agricultural produce outside the mandis regulated by the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMC) constituted by different

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH, SEPT. 27

A day after the Shiromani Akali Dal walked out of the NDA, new political equations seem to be emerging with the Trinamul Congress, the Congress, Nationalist Congress Party and other rivals of the BJP hailing the move and expressing support for the ongoing farmers' agitation.

The Congress on Sunday dared BJP allies Janata Dal (United), LJP and JJP to oppose the Centre and not to support the agriculture bills, which it alleged were like "cancer and slow poison that will kill farmers".

At a joint virtual press conference, Congress' Haryana chief Kumari Selja and Punjab PCC chief Sunil Jakhar urged all parties to join hands and oppose the farm bills, while asking the government to take back the laws, saying these would make farmers the slaves of big businesses.

Ms Selja and Mr Jakhar said the NDA allies should



Leaders of the JJP abused the BJP ahead of the elections and after a fractured verdict in Haryana, joined hands with it. Dushyant Chautala should open his eyes and stand with farmers.

— **KUMARI SELJA**
Haryana Congress chief

back the Opposition the way they had extended support against the Land Acquisition Bill, which the Centre had been forced to withdraw. On the Akali Dal's exit from the NDA, Mr Jakhar said the party did not quit the ruling coalition on its own, but was forced to do so by farmers, who made it difficult for the Akalis to enter Punjab otherwise.

Mr Jakhar said the Akalis had only staged a

state legislations. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 provides for contract farming.

The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 2020 aims to deregulate the production, supply, distribution of food items like cereals, pulses, potatoes and onion.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the passage of two of the three bills by

Parliament last week had termed the laws as a "watershed moment" in the history of Indian agriculture that will empower crores of farmers.

The Prime Minister in his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast on Sunday said that a large number of peasants have benefited since fruits and vegetables were brought out of the APMC Act in some states a few years ago and asserted that grain-producing farm-

drama of first quitting the Cabinet and then the alliance as the BJP had openly said they were very much a party to the clearing of the bills in the Cabinet.

"The resignation by the Akali minister was not given but taken by the BJP and the Akali Dal did not quit the NDA on its own but were thrown out," he claimed.

"The anger of farmers and the BJP's arrogance forced the Akalis to buy a permit to enter Punjab by this drama," Mr Jakhar told reporters.

Ms Selja dared the JJP, which shares power with the BJP in Haryana, to quit the alliance and stand with farmers in the state.

Taking on the JJP, she said: "Leaders of the JJP abused the BJP ahead of the elections and after a fractured verdict in Haryana, joined hands with it. Dushyant Chautala should open his eyes and stand with farmers."

In Mumbai, NCP supremo Sharad Pawar congratulated the Akali Dal's leadership for its decision to quit the NDA over the farm Bills.

ers will now have the same freedom.

Protests by farmers against the laws continued on Sunday, with peasants in Punjab squatting on the Amritsar-Delhi railway track. Farmers have expressed apprehension that the Centre's farm reforms would pave a way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big companies.

— PTI

JASWANT SINGH, CO-ARCHITECT OF INDO-U.S. TIES, PASSES AWAY

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, SEPT. 27

Former Union minister Jaswant Singh, who held the major portfolios of finance, defence and external affairs in various stages in the Atal Behari Vajpayee government, passed away at the Army's R&R Hospital in New Delhi early Sunday morning after a cardiac arrest. He was 82.

The funeral took place at his farmhouse on the outskirts of Jodhpur on Sunday.

The hospital said he was treated for sepsis with multi-organ dysfunction syndrome and the effects of severe head injury that he had suffered in 2014.

Jaswant Singh had accompanied three terrorists, including Jaish-e-Mohammed head Masood Azhar, released by the government to end the Kandahar hijack crisis in 1999.

He has described the period as the "most demanding and emotionally a most draining period" of his life.

He will be mainly remembered for his negotiations with the United States representative Strobe Talbott after India tested nuclear bombs.

MONEY | POWER

Allianz wealth report says Covid pandemic has made poor countries poorer

Covid widens wealth gap between rich and poor

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD I DC MUMBAI, SEPT. 27

At a time when the health and wealth of people are at risk due to Covid-19 pandemic across the world, a survey hinted at the widening gap between the rich and the poor because of monetary easing policy adopted by central banks around the world.

According to the Wealth Report 2020 released German multinational financial services company Allianz Global, the accommodative monetary policies are protecting the

wealth of the super-rich from the adverse impact of Coronavirus.

Never in the last ten years, there was such a big increase in wealth for the rich. "Worldwide, gross financial assets grew by 9.7 per cent in 2019, clocking the strongest growth since 2005," the report said.

"The year 2019 was marred by social unrest, escalating trade conflicts and an industrial recession. But as central banks reversed course and embarked on broad-based monetary easing, stock markets decoupled from

Zero and negative interest rates are a sweet poison. They undermine wealth accumulation and aggravate social inequality, as asset owners can pocket nice windfall profits. It's not sustainable."

ALLIANZ GLOBAL WEALTH 2020 REPORT

fundamentals and soared by 25 per cent, lifting financial assets in the process: The asset class of securi-

ties increased by a whopping 13.7 per cent in 2019; never was the economic growth faster in the 21st century," Allianz Global said.

"The growth rates of the other two main asset classes were lower – but still impressive: Insurance and pensions reached a plus of 8.1 per cent, mainly reflecting the rise of underlying assets, and bank deposits increased by 6.4 per cent. In fact, all asset classes clocked growth significantly above their long-term averages since the Great Financial Crisis (GFC)."

"The same story is about to repeat itself in 2020 – but only in extreme," Allianz Global said.

"For the moment, monetary policy has vaccinated financial assets against Covid-19. But we should not fool ourselves. Zero and negative interest rates are a sweet poison. They undermine wealth accumulation and aggravate social inequality, as asset owners can pocket nice windfall profits. It's not sustainable."

"The wealth gap between rich and poor countries also has widened... We

need more than ever structural reforms post Covid-19 to lay the foundations for more inclusive growth," the Allianz Global report said, adding that Covid-19 had plunged the world economy to its deepest recession in 100 years.

In 2019, the gross financial assets of households in North America and Oceania (Australia, New Zealand) – which are by far the richest – increased by a record 11.9 per cent each and topped the regional growth league table dominated by Emerging Markets.

SHORT TAKES

Jagan condoles demise of Singh

Vijayawada: Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has expressed grief over the demise of former Union minister Jashwant Singh ji. The soldier turned Parliamentarian was an inspiring personality whose contribution to Indian polity is immense, the Chief Minister said and conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family members.

JAC FORMED TO FIGHT FOR KAPU RESERVATIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 27

A new organisation, Kapu Samkshema Sena Joint Action Committee (KSSJAC), has been formed to fight for reservations to Kapus and their overall development.

Senior Kapu leader C. Hari Rama Jogaiah formed KSSJAC and appointed members on Sunday. Earlier, Mudragada Padmanabham had led the Kapu movement for BC reservations and other issues but recently he expressed his inability to lead them, which was the reason a new organisation had been formed.

Mr Jogaiah said that KSSJAC is purely a non-political organisation and would strive only for the uplift of Kapu related communities in both the Telugu States. He said that they would exert pressure on the State and Union governments through different modes in the matter of getting reservations for Kapus in education, employment and political institutions. He stated that their organisation will render all possible to help the poor from the community.

KSSJAC convener Chandu Srinivas said a dozen advisers, two co-conveners, one general secretary, 13 vice-presidents, 11 secretaries and 11 members were in the Committee. He said that they would conduct special activities that can inspire youth to achieve their goals and career aspirations. He said that they had sought appointment with Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to take up the issues of Kapus, Telagas, Balijas, Ontari and other castes.

STATE COMMITTEE OF VILLAGE WARD SECTT ELECTED

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 27

Andhra Pradesh Village Ward Secretariats Employees Association (APVWSEA) has elected a new state committee in Vijayawada on Sunday. G. Rajesh has been elected as the president of the panel and Abdul Razak has been elected as the general secretary. Sri Lakshmi and Y. Naidu have been elected as the vice-president and the treasurer respectively.

Besides, 20 members have been elected in the State Executive Committee. The elections were held under the supervision of Andhra Pradesh Government Employees Association president K.R. Suryanarayana.

Mr Suryanarayana said the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had recruited 1.32 lakh village and ward secretariat staff to give transparency in the administration. He said that he was pleased that the village and ward secretariat staff became part of the government. He praised the services of the village, ward secretariat staff stating that the people appreciate their services. He said the main objective of the village, ward secretariats is to provide all services to the people in one place.

Newly elected president Rajesh said they would work with the APVWSEA.

TD takes first steps in bid to rejuvenate party

Naidu appoints presidents for all the 25 parliament segments

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 27

Former chief minister and opposition Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday appointed presidents for all the 25 parliament constituencies in the state to strengthen the party and regain power in 2024 elections. However, there was no word on the much-talked-about appointment of TDLP deputy leader K. Atchannaidu as state president in place of incumbent Kala Venkatrao.

Mr Naidu also announced coordinators for 13 parliamentary segments. The TD chief's move acquires significance as the YSR Congress government has decided to carve a new district out of each parliament constituency. The former CM made a swift move and appointed party presidents for each parliament segment before official announcement of new districts to rejuvenate the TD whose cadres are in disarray after humiliating defeat in the last elections.

In a clear indication of Mr Naidu's preference for BCs and Kapus to stage a comeback in the coming elections, he gave nearly 50 per cent of the posts to leaders from these dominant communities who form the backbone of TD in the state. The former CM also kept in mind the need for balancing different caste and religious equations. According to

YSRC SLAMS NAIDU FOR USING DALITS TO ACHIEVE POLITICAL GAINS

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 27

YSR Congress has alleged that N. Chandrababu Naidu has been using Dalits for his political gains and has been trying to create a wedge among them.

Speaking to media here on Sunday, YSRC MLA T.J.R. Sudhakar Babu reiterated that Naidu is an anti-Dalit but was trying to cast aspersions on Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. He stated that the a roundtable conference was organised here on Saturday only to safeguard the political interests of Mr Naidu and use the Dalit card for gaining public sympathy. He affirmed that the public are not going to fall for his words but in turn attack the opposition leaders for their false propaganda against Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Sudhakar Babu criticised Naidu for the round-

table conference and stated that the meeting was held by his puppets who parroted his script. He said that unlike in the previous government, where Dalits were insulted and assaulted by TD leaders, they are happy with the rule of Jagan Mohan Reddy. He wanted to know why Naidu never had round-table meetings during his regime, when Dalits were subject to several attacks.

He demanded an apology from the former chief minister for his comments 'No one wants to be born a Dalit' and stated that Dalit leaders who were in support of Naidu should seek an apology from him before convening the meeting. He said that Naidu has always conspired against Dalits but used them for political gains. The legislator said that Jagan is a true leader for Dalits, as he laid a big pedestal for the welfare of the Dalits.

Popular leaders from Kapu community former Rajya Sabha MP Thota Seetharama Lakshmi and senior TD leader Jyothula Nehru's son Jyothula Navin, were named presidents of Narsapuram and Kakinada parliamentary constituencies respectively. Mr Naidu also appointed 13 senior party leaders as

FORMER TD MLA QUILTS PARTY FOR 'IGNORING' HIM

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 27

Former Telugu Desam MLA and a senior leader of the party in north coastal Andhra Pradesh Gadde Babu Rao resigned from the Telugu Desam on Sunday.

Addressing the media, Mr Babu Rao said the party has been ignoring him since the 2004 general elections.

"The condition of the party is not good. There is no recognition in the party even after working for a long time," the former MLA said and added that he worked hard to reach this stage. He further said that he came from a very poor family and put in all the efforts for the welfare of the people. He said that TD chief Chandrababu Naidu is not giving any respect to him.

coordinators for two to three parliamentary segments each.

The TD presidents of parliament constituencies include Kuna Ravikumar (Srikakulam), Kimidi Nagarjuna (Vizianagaram), Gummadi Sandhya Rani (Araku) and Palla Srinivasa Rao (Visakhapatnam).



Classical dancers pose at the designer Rangoli during the World Tourism Day celebrations organised by AP-State Government at VMRDA Children's Arena Hall in Visakhapatnam on Sunday.

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

New AP tourism policy soon, says Muttamsetti

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 27

Tourism and culture minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao disclosed that a new tourism policy will be announced soon to increase footfalls of tourists. He asserted that tourism will become a major source of revenue after agriculture in Andhra Pradesh.

Speaking as chief guest on the World Tourism Day, whose theme is Tourism and Rural Development, at VMRDA Children's Arena in Visakhapatnam on Sunday, the minister said under the new tourism policy, a single window system would be introduced to clear all projects on a fast-track.

Stating that 30 nations in the world are depending on tourism, the minister said AP is first in the

● Under the new tourism policy, a single window system would be introduced to clear all projects on a fast-track. 12 projects under PPP mode planned

country to open tourist resorts after the lockdown has been eased. "There is huge scope for tourism in the state. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has planned 12 projects under PPP mode in 13 districts. Detailed Project Reports have been completed and very soon we will be calling for tenders," the minister announced.

AP Tourism Authority chief executive officer Praveen Kumar said coinciding with this year's

theme, special focus will be on cultural and heritage centres in the state. Etikoppaka toys will stand to benefit under the new policy, he added.

District collector V. Vinay Chand said agency and rural areas will be developed on an equal footing. Infrastructure will be added at Lambasinghi, where the temperature falls to zero degrees during peak winter. He said additional facilities would also be added to Buddhist shrines in AP to attract tourists from Asian countries.

Official Language Committee chairman and former Rajya Sabha member Yarlagaada Lakshmi Prasad said there is huge scope for temple tourism in the state.

Local MLAs spoke on the scope of tourism in their respective constituencies.

Temple tourism to help Kurnool

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC KURNOOL SEPT. 27

Kurnool district has great tourism potential, particularly for religious tourism. Srisailem, Mahanandi, Mantralayam and Ahobilam are major religious places that are visited by people from across the country. Besides, there is also a good scope for eco-tourism in Nallamala forests. Adventure sports tourism at Orvakallu rock garden is a big draw as it attracts youth from Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai.

In this regard, the Department of Tourism had drawn up plans to spend ₹20 crore during the current year. But Covid-19 has confined all these plans to drawing boards.

According to tourism officer B. Venkateswarlu, the department has proposed boarding facility, floating jetty, children's park, and snack bar at Sunkesula Dam costing ₹1.5 crore.

The department has already identified 2 acres of land at the site and some works have been started. Narasimhaswamy temple at Urkunda village in Kowthalam mandal is another site that tourism department wants to develop.

It is proposed to construct a dormitory, restaurant and public toilets at this place at a cost of ₹1 crore. Ancient rock paintings

at Kethavaram are also going to get a face lift with establishment of an amusement park and a snack bar at a cost of ₹1 crore.

AP Tourism dormitory at Yellarthi Dargah premises in Hollagunda mandal will get a restaurant and water facility at a cost of ₹1 crore. It is felt that absence of a restaurant at Yellarthi has made it non-attractive for tourists. Valmiki Caves at Boyavandlapalli in Peapuly mandal have been shortlisted for providing internal and external steps at the caves. Illumination of caves, waterfalls, and a snack bar are on the cards. This would cost ₹2 crore.

It is proposed to provide illumination at Sri Ramalayam near Peddatumbalam in Adoni mandal at a cost of ₹1.5 crore. Boating facility, floating jetty, snack bar and a children's park are being planned at Gajuladinne project at Iranbanda village in Gonegandla mandal. Construction of dormitories, public toilets and snack bars are proposed for Sangameshwara Temple and RS Rangapuram Maddileti Swamy Temple in Bethemcharla mandal at a cost of ₹1.5 crore.

The department is also planning to set up a sculpture centre at Allagadda. This will help Allagadda sculpture artists exhibit their talent across the world, the tourism official added.

WORK ON NEW ANTARVEDI CHARIOT STARTS

VADREVI SRINIVAS | DC KAKINADA, SEPT. 27

Work has started on Sunday for building a new chariot for the famous Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple at Antarvedi in Sakshinipalli mandal of East Godavari district at the temple premises. Deputy Chief Minister Dharma Krishna Das, BC welfare minister Ch. Srinivasa Venugopala Krishna and endowment officials performed pooja for cutting wood meant for the new chariot.

No social distancing was maintained at the ceremony held on Sunday, though 80 police personnel posted at Antarvedi have contracted Covid-19. They were among the policemen posted at the Antarvedi temple after gutting down of the earlier chariot on August 5, which led to tension. Darshan at the temple was also cancelled for 15 days, though on the pretext of curbing Covid-19.

The Deputy CM said that the new chariot will get ready in time for the celestial marriage of Lord Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple. He said those responsible for burning of the chariot will be brought to book. He wanted people to exercise restraint over the issue and assured that the government will take all necessary measures to check such incidents.



Priests perform Chakra Snanam in a newly constructed makeshift Pushkarini inside the Srivari temple in Tirumala on Sunday.

9-day Salakatla Brahmotsavams conclude with Chakra Snanam

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, SEPT. 27

The nine-day Navahnika Salakatla Brahmotsavam of Lord Venkateswara concluded on Sunday with the auspicious Chakra Snanam inside the Srivari Temple at Tirumala.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the temple deities were bathed in the newly constructed makeshift Pushkarini (temple tank) inside the Srivari temple

facing Ayina Mahal.

The Snapanam Tirumanjanam for Lord Malayappa Swamy, Sridevi, Bhudevi and Sudarshana Chakrattalwar was performed in a grand manner amidst chanting of Veda Mantras.

Panchabhisheka Snanam was performed for the deities with milk, curd, honey, turmeric and sandal paste.

Later, the Sudarshana Chakrattalwar was brought ceremoniously to

the temple tank and immersed in the holy waters at the sacred muhurtham time. With this, the nine-day annual Brahmotsavams concluded in a grand manner on the Shraavana star, the birth star of Lord Venkateswara with Chakra Snanam.

Earlier, the procession of Tiruchi seva was taken out in the four Mada streets. Later, amid Garuda Patham at Dwajasthambam, the

Dhwaja was lowered amidst chanting of Veda mantras by Vedic pundits, signifying the successful completion of the annual Brahmotsavams.

TTD chairman Y. V. Subba Reddy, executive officer Anil Kumar Singhal, board members Sekhar Reddy, Siva Kumar, D.P. Ananta, Nischitha, additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy, C.E. Ramesh Reddy, deputy E.O.P. Harindranath and others were present.

NATIONAL | FLOWER

Horticulture wing to draw action plan to conserve

AP to revive near-extinct lotus

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 27

In a belated but welcome development, the state government has decided to give a fresh lease of life to the national flower, lotus, which is on the verge of extinction in the state. The horticulture department is to shortly announce an action plan that is aimed at conserving the lotus, which was adopted as a national flower in 1950.

Despite prominence in mythology, and its proven uses in various applications, it started to fade out even in

rural areas essentially because of climatic conditions and rapid urbanisation. Today, the production is a meagre 10 per cent of what it was in the glory days.

Officials from the horticulture department have taken note of concerns expressed in leading international magazines and of researchers, mentioning that lotus is on the verge of disappearing from India.

In order to conserve the flower, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Srivarahalakshmi Nrusimha Swamy Devasthanam and six

other 'A' temples have announced conservation plans by developing special ponds, but in vain.

The horticulture department will work in association with endowments, panchayat raj and other government departments and district water management agencies. They will provide support to agencies that have come forward to take up conservation efforts so that lotus culture would not fade out, joint director of AP horticulture department P. Hanumantha Rao told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Government agencies and medicinal plant boards have failed to identify dangers to the national flower even though the flower, its stem and leaves have multiple medicinal values. The Centre has failed to alert state-level agencies on saving the multipurpose lotus.

'It is true. There is no specific sub-department in our department. Now awakened to the importance of the national flower, the department will convene meetings with other concerned agencies to promote a vibrant lotus culture, he said.

Lotus has immense medicinal properties

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 27

Apart from having a breathtaking natural beauty, the national flower, lotus has tremendous mythological importance apart from proven medicinal values. Considering its relevance to Hindu philosophy, soon after Independence, the then Union Government declared lotus as the national flower in 1950 and mandated all states that it be protected and conserved.

Revered as goddess Lakshmi and offered to Gods and Goddesses in every auspicious occa-

● THE NATIONAL flower is on the verge of extinction - AP has woken up to the importance of promoting lotus culture.

● PRODUCTION declined to just 10 per cent. Lethargic governments responsible for decline in its cultivation

sion, lotus bloomed till the 1990s. However, due to adverse climate conditions and slump in revenue, the farming community has neglected conservation of the flower.

In the olden days, its leaves were used for packing food and also to cure blood wounds. In spite of the demand, rapid urbanisation and lethargic gov-

ernments, the flower has virtually vanished from even rural areas.

On the medicinal front, every bit of the water plant has high-end values. Its medicinal properties are such that it controls and stabilises blood pressure, cures headache, promotes digestion, gives sound sleep, cures nose-bleeding, inflammation

and controls diarrhea. Sufficient amounts of potassium in its roots ensure a healthy heart.

The Union Government, after considering the strong Hindu sentiments and use as medicine, adopted the lotus as the national flower, pointed out noted ayurveda doctor Mallajyotsyula Srinivasa Rao.

Unfortunately, although it is the national flower, there are no conservation initiatives from the government.

In fact, several Asian countries are cultivating the flower as a major commercial water plant, Rao said.

OTHER STORIES

Official suspended for killing dogs

Vijayawada: A sanitary inspector was suspended for the killing of stray dogs at Chilakaluripet in Guntur district. Nearly 100 strays were allegedly killed by municipal staff on September 24 at Purushothapatnam following which the Help for Animal Society lodged a complaint and Guntur collector-I Samuel Ananda Kumar ordered a probe. Chilakaluripet municipal commissioner Ch Srinivas said that he conducted an inquiry as directed by collector Kumar. He said that he found that the staff was involved in the killing of stray dogs, and the suspension of sanitary inspector-2 A. Srinivasa Rao was ordered for his negligence towards discharging his duties. Ch Srinivas said that the killing of stray dogs is an offence. Sanitary inspector-1 Ch N.V. Rama Rao appointed as his replacement and further inquiry is in progress.

27-year-old man's body found in well

Kakinada: A 27-year-old man's body was found in a well in Gokavaram in East Godavari District on Sunday. According to Gokavaram Sub-Inspector P. Chenna Rao, the deceased was identified as Gattu Sai, who he was working in a cloth shop in Rajahmundry. He was missing since Friday evening after stepping out of his house. Mr Chen-narao said that a case was registered as a suspicious death and investigating is on.

Photographer hacked to death

Anantapur: A man was hacked in the heart of the town near Ramnagar on Sunday. The deceased was identified as Mohammad Rafi of Mangalolla Colony who was working as a photographer. The police suspect Rafi had an extra marital affair with a family member of Shiva of Kalyanadurgam road. Shiva reportedly hacked Rafi and threw his dead body at the 80 ft road of Ramnagar area in Anantapur. DSP Veera Raghava Reddy inspected the spot, and a case was registered based on a complaint by relatives of the deceased.

123 red sanders logs seized

Kadapa: Rajampet forest officials seized 123 red sanders logs and arrested eight Tamil labourers. According to the Ramapuram Narayana, Forest Range Officer, Rajampet, the information received to the DFO, incharge Y.V. Narasimha reddy that some of the accused were preparing to transport red sanders logs in Rollamadugu beat area. Following his orders, Narayana and his staff rushed to the spot and identified eight Tamil labourers at the spot and 123 red sanders logs. The forest officials seized the logs and arrested the labourer. The FRO said the logs were worth ₹10 lakh as per the government price.

'NO USE OF INCREASE WATER LEVELS IN GANDIKOTA'

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, SEPT. 27

Pradesh Congress Working president Narreddy Tulasi Reddy said that it was inhuman and immoral to immerse oneself in the reservoir without paying compensation and providing proper rehabilitation to the residents of villages like Talla Proddatur in the Gandikota Reservoir area. The Chief Minister, being a resident of Kadapa district, said that it was not appropriate to take such a stand against the people of this district. He spoke to the media in Vempalli on Sunday. He said it was unfair for Prakasam district to announce ₹12.5 lakh compensation for Velugonda project evacuees and ₹10 lakh for Kadapa district Gandikota Reservoir residents. He questioned why the Chief Minister was so discriminating against his district.

He said there is no benefit to farmers with water stored more than 12 TMC in the Gandikota reservoir. Major canals, sub canals and crop canals were not constructed anywhere, he said.

Mr Reddy questioned the government on what would be the benefit of storing additional water without compensating and rehabilitating the displaced in such situations. He demanded the government to make a cutoff date for compensation as 31-12-2020 instead of 30-09-2017. He requested the government to provide the minimum facilities at the rehabilitation colonies.

6,923 new Covid positive cases, 45 deaths in AP

Total number of covid positive cases reaches 6,75,674

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 27

The decrease in positive cases of Coronavirus in AP continued on Sunday with their number falling to 6,923 from an earlier average of 10,000 cases per day. As many as 7,796 patients have been discharged, increasing the recovery rate during the past 24 hours.

The total positive cases reached 6,75,674 on Sunday in which 6,02,195 are recoveries, 64,876 active cases and 5,708 Corona deaths. East Godavari district continues to top AP in registration of Covid-19 cases with 1,006 during the past 24 hours.

As many as 45 new Covid-19 deaths have been registered in the past 24 hours. The highest number of eight deaths have been registered in Prakasam district, followed by six in Krishna, five in Guntur, four each in East and West Godavari, three each in Anantapur, Kadapa, Kurnool, Nellore and Visakhapatnam, two in Chittoor and one in Vizianagaram district.

As many as 76,416 Coronavirus tests have been conducted in the past 24 hours of which 6,923 turned out to be Covid-19 positive.

AP has tested a total of 56,00,202 samples for Corona till date and is at the top place in the country in terms of testing.

As many as 7,796 patients have recovered from Covid-19 in past 24 hours and discharged from various hospitals in the state.

The single day highest number of 1,006 cases has been registered in East



Medical staff collect the swab from people for Covid-19 testing at IGM Stadium in Vijayawada on Sunday. —DC

Godavari district in the past 24 hours, increasing the total to 94,190 in which 10,571 are active cases. The second highest number of 929 cases has been registered in West Godavari district, increasing the total to 64,433 in which 6,275 are active cases. Prakasam district is in third place, registering 659 new positive cases, increasing the total positive cases to 46,722 in which 10,355 are active cases.

Chittoor district registered 577 new Covid-19 positive cases in the past 24 hours, increasing the total positive cases to 59,820 in which 6,328 are active cases. 535 new cases have been registered in Guntur district, increasing the total positive cases to 53,244 in which 6,259 are active cases. 506 new cases registered in Nellore district, increasing the total positive cases to 50,999 in which 2,339 are active cases.

In Srikakulam district, 503 new Corona positive cases have been registered in the past 24 hours, increasing the total posi-

tive cases to 38,593 in which 4,091 are active cases. 480 new cases have been registered in Anantapur district, taking the total positive cases to 56,209 in which 2,237 are active cases. 472 new positive cases have been registered in Kadapa district, increasing the total positive cases to 42,861 in which 3,246 are active cases.

In Vizianagaram district, 376 new cases have been registered in the past 24 hours, taking the total positive cases to 34,179 in which 4,213 are active cases. 333 new cases have been registered in Krishna district, increasing the total positive cases to 26,487 in which 2,804 are active cases. 318 new cases have been registered in Visakhapatnam district, increasing the total positive cases to 49,357 in which 4,134 are active cases.

The least number of 229 new Corona positive cases have been registered in the past 24 hours in Kurnool district, increasing the total positive cases to 55,685 in which 2,024 are active cases.

Villagers remain reluctant to wear masks

From Page 1

Social activist R.C. Vinod, who serves Covid patients voluntarily, said that many people in villages show reluctance to wear face masks and ignore physical distance when attending Rachabanda. He said that in the beginning, rural people fearing corona threat used to lock their villages by closing the entry points. But now

the increase in recovery rate has cleared their fears. They are treating Covid-19 as a treatable disease and this is hampering the efforts to contain.

A higher-level official, on the condition of anonymity, said that the home isolation and quarantine facility washed out fears of Corona from the minds of many in rural areas. He said that restarting cultivation works in

this Kharif season, milk trade and labour activities are forcing rural people to go to work.

Guntur district collector, I Samuel Ananda Kumar said that the surge in rural areas was alarming. Rural areas where four positive cases are registered would be declared as containment zones. He said that village secretariats employees would conduct surveys of primary

YOUTH DONATES PLASMA THRICE IN 40 DAYS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, SEPT. 27

A youth, who has recovered from Coronavirus, donated his plasma for the third time within 40 days at the Red Cross Blood Bank in Nellore on Sunday.

Red Cross authorities have appreciated the youth, Bayya Vinayaka Savarkar, for his humanitarian gesture. Incidentally, the donor is son of plasma donation motivator and district committee member of Red Cross Society, Bayya Prasad.

Chairman of Nellore unit Indian Red Cross Society P. Chandrasekhar Reddy said Vinayaka Savarkar is the 300th donor of plasma from SPSR Nellore district. With this, Nellore RCS has become a model for all southern states in plasma collection during Covid-19 times.

Mr Chandrasekhar Reddy announced that they have collected 600 units of plasma from 300 donors till date.

Mr Bayya Prasad pointed out that of these, 596 units have already been administered to Coronavirus victims in Nellore so far.

IRCS treasurer Suresh Kumar Jain, member Yadavalli Suresh, and blood bank convener Ajay Babu were also present.

Six-member gang of temple thieves nabbed Nandi idol vandalised 'for treasure'

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 27

The Vizianagaram police arrested a six-member gang for allegedly stealing cash from temple hundi in Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts. North Andhra reported 46 temple hundi theft cases during the last two years. The number could be more if temple managements had lodged complaints regarding minor thefts.

Those arrested on Sunday were identified as M. Nagarjuna, T. Veera Babu, M. Dhanaraju, Ch. Sai, A. Chiranjeevi and G. Eswar Rao, all of them from the two districts.

Cash and valuables were found stolen from a temple hundi at Jammu village on Wednesday and an abortive attempt was made the same day to rob another temple at Dasannapeta in Vizianagaram district.

The special team formed by the Vizianagaram police following a string of temple thefts nabbed the gang early on Saturday while they were travelling in an autorickshaw.

Briefing the media at Vizianagaram on Sunday, deputy inspector general (Visakha Range), L.K.V. Ranga Rao said that during interrogation the gang confessed to having stolen cash from temple hundi apart from valuables from many temples.

"The gang members robbed four temples in Vizianagaram district, five in Visakhapatnam Rural and 10 in the city. But com-

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 27

Tension prevailed at Agara Mangalam village in G.D. Nellore mandal of Chittoor district after an idol of Nandi installed in front of Lord Shiva Temple in the Sri Abhaya Anjaneya Swamy Temple complex was vandalised late on Saturday.

Soon after the issue came to light, Chittoor D.S.P.K. Eswar Reddy formed three special teams to probe the incident. According to him, certain miscreants, who have not yet been identified, entered the temple late on Saturday night and broke the idol. They thought that they may find some treasure inside the idol.

"The same idol had

developed cracks a few years ago. Village elders and temple committee members then got it repaired by filling the cracks with "sesam" liquid metal.

At that time, rumours had spread that along with panchaloha (five metal alloys) some molten gold too had been poured into the idol to seal the cracks.

Preliminary enquiries show those who vandalised the statue must have been looking for molten gold inside the Nandi idol. After knowing that it was nothing but sesam, they left the broken idol at the temple premises and left the spot," he added.

A case is registered and investigation is on.

plaints were made in only eight cases," Ranga Rao said.

The DIG said in the past Thota Veerababu was involved in 11 thefts in Visakhapatnam, Nagarjuna in seven cases in Vizianagaram and one in Tuni in East Godavari, Ch. Appa Sai in nine cases in Vis-

'OPERATION SAMAIKHYA' LAUNCHED TO PROTECT TEMPLES IN CHITTOOR

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 27

In the backdrop of increasing attacks on the properties and idols of Hindu temples across the state, including the fire incident at Antarvedi temple, the Chittoor district police wing has launched Operation Samaikhya, a special drive to protect temples from acts of vandalism.

As part of the operation, Chittoor SP S. Senthil Kumar has been touring the prominent temples in the district. On Sunday the SP took part in a programme at Sri Prasanna Venkateswara Swamy temple at Madanapalli. Speaking at the

programme, the SP expressed concerns that some unknown elements were trying to disturb the communal harmony in the state by resorting to acts of vandalism at temples in the last few weeks.

"Any activity by individuals or social media aimed at disturbing communal harmony and peace will be strictly dealt with seriously irrespective of their background or affiliation. We will not tolerate any acts of vandalism and miscreants resorting to such activities," the SP warned.

He said that the police wing has stepped up vigil at all places of worship across the district to prevent acts of vandalism and maintain harmony.

NAIDU APPEALS TO JAGAN TO SET UP MUSIC VARSITY IN MEMORY OF BALU

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 27

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday appealed to the YSR Congress government to set up a music university in memory of renowned singer late S.P. Balasubrahmanyam in Nellore town.

Mr Chandrababu Naidu wrote a letter to Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, underlining the need for pre-

serving the legendary singer's memory by setting up a Sangeeta Kala Kshetra and through this, music and fine arts may be encouraged in the state.

Stating that Balu made the Telugu people across the globe proud with his outstanding contributions, he said already, over seven academies have been set up to promote and preserve culture and arts in the state.

PACKING TIPS FOR DISTRICT FARMERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, SEPT. 27

The Indian Institute of Packing of Hyderabad would provide training for farmers and traders about packing tips of vegetables and fruits without damage during transportation. The government had recent-

ly introduced Kisan train from Anantapur to New Delhi to sell horticulture produces in Delhi markets. Anantapur MP Talari Rangiah met the IIP regional director Madhu in Hyderabad on Sunday and sought training the farmers to get tips in packing of fruits.

'FARMERS NEED NOT PAY POWER CHARGES FOR 30 YEARS'

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, SEPT. 27

Agriculture minister Kurasala Kannababu said that the farmers need not pay power charges for agriculture purposes as the state government is making efforts to supply power to the agriculture sector with free of cost up to 30 years. He added that a mega solar power project is being planned for the purpose.

The minister, along with Kakinada MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekhara Reddy, released a poster regarding free agriculture power scheme on Sunday. He said that the power for the agri sector would be supplied nine hours for day time with three-phase quality power with free of cost to 45,500 agriculture services in East Godavari. He said that the government would pay the power charges of the farmers through cash transfer to be credited directly to their accounts and the farmers will pay to the AP Transco.

Inter-state dacoit gang nabbed, 21 held

NAGESWARA RAO BALLEDA | DC
KADAPA, SEPT. 27

An inter-state dacoit gang comprising 21 members was arrested by Rajampeta police on Sunday. District Superintendent of Police Karur Karunapathi Nagendra Kumar Anburajan told media persons on Sunday working on a tip-off about inter-state dacoit gang's movement, he alerted Rajampeta police sub divisional officer Vupputuri Narayana Swamy Reddy.

On Saturday one dacoit case was registered at Mannur police station. Based on the information, the officers found six suspects at Brahmanapalli power substation on Rajampeta - Rayachoti road Sunday at 3 a.m.

On interrogation, they learnt about the remaining gang members, who were arrested at Hatyarala Shivalayam. They seized Rs.10,300 cash, one country made pistol with four rounds, one pepper spray bottle, a

Safari car, three motorcycles and 15 mobile phones.

Baba alias Usman Ali Khan alias Mohammed Baba of Anantapur, and Animala Kiran Kumar were the kingpins with the former based in Anantapur for about 18 months targeted houses where they were assured of big loot.

In the meanwhile, they also lured youth in the 20-30 years age-group and formed gangs. The arrested include Mumme Vamshi, Jalla Damodar Damu, Chintala Arun Kumar, Mumme Ramakanth, Animala Kiran Kumar, Ramayana Gary Rajesh, Sugali Sai Kumar, Kattolla Gangaraju, Turra Srinivas, Penakacharla Veera Brahmayya, Rekander Sai Kumari, Bille Lingamayya, Chukkalaru Sudarshan Reddy, Reddymaina Nagesudu, Allakunta Venkata Shiva, Ramireddy Venkata Nares Reddy, Pagadala Prasad Reddy, Kadirappagari Parameshwar Reddy and Sheikh Abbas Ali.

TOURISM | DAY

HM releases book *Kondaveedu Charitra* written by M. Ravikrishna

Kondaveedu Fort to be a heritage tourist centre

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 27

AP home minister Mekatothi Sucharita has assured that the ancient hilltop Kondaveedu Fort will be developed as a heritage tourist centre to reflect the pride of the Reddy Kingdom.

She was speaking at a meeting organised by Kondaveedu Heritage Society on occasion of

World Tourism Day on Sunday at Guntur.

On the occasion, the minister released a book "Kondaveedu Charitra" written by Telugu pandit Modugula Ravikrishna, which explains the rich culture and heritage of the hilltop fort and kingdom.

Sucharita said the government will initiate all necessary measures for protecting the heritage of

● **THE REDDY** kings who ruled coastal and central Andhra for over a hundred years from 1325 to 1425. constructed the fort during their regime.

Kondaveedu for future generations. She disclosed that Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has pro-

posed a plan to develop Kondaveedu Fort into a heritage and cultural tourist centre of the state. She said the ongoing Coronavirus crisis has halted development works of the fort. They would be speeded up once normalcy returns in the coming days.

Responding to absence of proper connectivity to Kondaveedu Fort, the home minister directed

officials to prepare proposals for extension of Kondaveedu-Ameenabad road from Guntur to Kondaveedu Fort for convenience of tourists.

Guntur district collector I. Samuel Anand Kumar recalled the history and heritage of Kondaveedu Fort.

He said that the Reddy kings ruled coastal and central Andhra for over a hundred years from 1325

to 1425. They had constructed the fort during their regime.

YSRC MLA Vidadala Rajani, AP Madhya Vimochana Prachara Committee chairman V. Lakshmana Reddy, Kondaveedu Heritage Society secretary Kalli Siva Reddy, Forest Department range officer M. Srinivasa Rao and others participated in the programme.

Pendlimarri police responded immediately after a SOS on 100t. The team, led by Sub-Inspector Kondareddy brought the eight stranded persons ashore. The district police chief congratulated Pendlimarri SI Kondareddy team for their remarkable rescue operation.

Meanwhile, the three who were stranded in Sagileru stream make charcoal in the rivulet area near Kondamotupalli village. As a result of heavy rains, the Sagileru dam was overflowing and officials raised gates of the dam. Three persons who were stranded in the stream that flowed in the rivulet were rescued with the help of ropes.

SHORT TAKES

2.25 LAKH PEOPLE AFFECTED BY FLOODS IN ASSAM

Guwahati, Sept. 27: A total of 2.25 lakh people in nine districts were affected and over 10,000 hectares of crops submerged on Sunday as fresh floods hit Assam, the state disaster management authority said. Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Morigaon, Nagaon, Majuli, West Karbi Anglong, Sivasaagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts have been affected, the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said in its report.

Incessant rain in the last few days has triggered this year's third wave of floods in the state, claiming one life in Nagaon district on Saturday, it said. The fresh fatality has pushed the number of deaths in flood-related incidents in Assam this year to 118, the report said.

The number of affected people was 1.8 lakh on the previous day. Nagaon is the worst-hit district with 1.51 lakh affected people, followed by Morigaon (32,711), Dhemaji (16,792) and Dibrugarh (10,622), the report said. Human habitations and farmland in 219 villages in nine districts are submerged, it said. The mighty Brahmaputra is flowing above the danger mark at Neamatighat in Jorhat district and Tezpur in Sonitpur. A total of 43 relief camps have been set up in three districts so far, the report said. Road connectivity has been affected in Morigaon, Nagaon and West Karbi Anglong districts, it added.

21-YEAR OLD HELD FOR KILLING ROOMMATE

New Delhi, Sept. 27: The Delhi Police has arrested a 21-year-old man from southeast Delhi's Govindpuri area for allegedly killing his roommate whom he suspected of having a relationship with his niece, officials said on Sunday.

The accused has been identified as Suman, a resident of Tugalakabad village, they said. On September 17, after receiving information that a man was injured at Kangar Mohalla in Tugalakabad village, the police rushed to the spot and found him unconscious. Blood was oozing out from the man's nose and mouth and he was rushed to AIIMS hospital where he was declared brought dead, a senior police officer said. The deceased was later identified as Kamlesh (20).

In the autopsy report, the lacerated wounds was revealed as the cause of death. Thereafter, a murder case was registered at Govindpuri police station, police said. During investigation, the CCTV footage of the nearby area was analysed. "CCTV footage revealed that there was contradiction in the version Suman had given as he was seen entering and leaving the house at the time when the deceased was was reportedly killed. "Later, the accused admitted to killing Kamlesh with a pair of scissors while he was sleeping in his room," Deputy Commissioner of Police (southeast) R. P. Meena said.

3 KILLED, 7 HURT AS VAN COLLIDES WITH BUS IN UP

Kannauj, Sept. 27: Three persons, including a seven-year-old boy, were killed while seven others seriously injured on Sunday evening when their van collided head-on with a bus in Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj district, police said.

After colliding with the van, the bus fell in a roadside ditch. Eighteen passengers of the bus received minor injuries, the police said. According to Kotwali police station SHO, Vikas Rai, the accident took place on the GT Road at Jalalpur village of the district. The seven people, who were seriously injured, were in the van, police said.

Among the deceased, one was Ayush, the son of a man named Sonu, who was returning with his family members to Kanpur from Farrukhabad after attending the last rites of his brother-in-law. The van's driver Ajit Kumar (30) and Shakuntala (35) also died in the incident, police said. Three of the seriously injured, whose condition was critical, were referred to the Medical College and Hospital in Tirwa. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed grief over the loss of lives, and directed that the injured persons should get adequate treatment, a statement issued by the UP government said on Sunday.

Farmers will be masters of their produce: Modi

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 27

In the wake of protests from a section of farmers, particularly in states such as Punjab and from political parties in the Opposition, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' address on Sunday strongly defended the farm Bills passed by Parliament, arguing that farmers can now sell their produce directly "anywhere and to anyone" without middlemen.

Terming this "the foundation of their (farmers') progress", Modi said that this power has been imparted to all farmers "not only for marketing of the fruits and vegetables but whatever they are producing or cultivating in their fields — paddy, wheat, mustard, sugarcane — ...they have now got the freedom to sell where they can get a higher price according to their wish."

In a statement issued on Sunday, the government said, "He (PM Modi) shared the example of Kanwar Chauhan, a farmer from Haryana, who used to face great difficulties in marketing his fruits and vegetables outside the mandi (traditional market), but in 2014, fruits and vegetables were excluded from the APMC Act, which greatly benefited him. He formed a farmer producer's organisation and farmers in his village now cultivate sweet corn and baby corn and supply produce directly to Azadpur mandi in Delhi, to big retail chains and five-star hotels, which has substantially boosted

their income."

Modi said, "Even in this time of crisis, the agricultural sector has again shown its resilience. The agricultural sector of the country, our farmers, our villages are the very basis of Atmanirbhar Bharat. If they remain strong then the foundation of Atmanirbhar Bharat will remain strong. In the recent past, these areas have liberated themselves from many restrictions and tried to break free from many myths. I get many such letters from farmers. I've had a dialogue with farmer organisations."

The statement said, "The Prime Minister cited the benefits accruing to farmers due to exclusion of fruits and vegetables from APMC purview by sharing the example of Sri Swami Samarth Farm Producer Company Limited — a farmer producer's organization in Maharashtra. He noted that farmers in Pune and Mumbai are running weekly markets and selling directly without middlemen. He also talked about the Tamil Nadu banana farmer produce company, a collective of farmers, which purchased hundreds of metric tons of vegetables, fruits and bananas from nearby villages during the lockdown and supplied a vegetable combo kit to Chennai. He mentioned the Irada farmer producer group from Lucknow who, during the lockdown, procured fruits and vegetables directly from the cultivators' fields, and sold directly in the markets of Lucknow, free from the middlemen."

Rahul Sinha revolts over BJP's new V-P

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, SEPT. 27

Anger is brewing in the BJP in West Bengal after the promotion of two Trinamul Congress defectors, Mukul Roy and Anupam Hazra, in the saffron patry's rank and file at the cost of old-timers ahead of the Assembly election in the state.

On Saturday evening, Rahul Sinha, a party veteran, found his name dropped from the new list of national secretaries announced after the organisational reshuffle.

What infuriated him was the appointment of Hazra, known to be a follower of Roy who has been made vice-president, in his place from the state. Disappointed, Sinha revolted publicly. Tagging Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's party and the Prime Minister he tweeted, "Served @BJP4India for 40 Years as the Warrior and today just to include @AITCOfficial Leaders, I have been asked to Left the Post of the Party. @narendramodi @BJP4Bengal (sic)."

The former state BJP president, who contested many elections but never won any, shared a video message but with a deadline. "The gift of serving the BJP is like this: I have to go away because a Trinamul Congress leader is coming. Nothing can be more unfortunate than this. I will not comment anything beyond this. I don't want to say anything in favour or against the gift that the party gave. I will state whatever I have

BJP LEADER CALLS MAMATA BIGGER ENEMY THAN COVID-19

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, SEPT. 27

Emboldened by his promotion in the BJP, Trinamul Congress defector Anupam Hazra on Sunday described West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as the "bigger enemy than Covid-19." Triggering controversy, he also spoke about his wish to "hug" the Trinamul supremo if he would get infected by Covid-19.

Hazra said that the saffron party had stopped giving importance to the pandemic. He was appointed BJP secretary from West Bengal in place of party veteran Rahul Sinha on Saturday. On the sidelines of a BJP meeting at Baruipur in South 24 Parganas, Hazra said, "Our party's functionaries are fighting Mamata Banerjee who is a bigger enemy than Corona. So when they have felt they have done it without masks, we are not giving any importance to Corona in view of the present situation. I also have decided that if I get infected by Corona, I will hug Ms Banerjee first."

to say in the next 10-12 days and I will decide my future activities," he said.

RESCUE | MISSION

Ship was carrying 905 tn rice and sugar to the African nation Coast Guard save 12 from sinking ship

Ahmedabad, Sept. 27: Twelve crew members of a cargo vessel sinking in the Arabian Sea off the Gujarat coast have been rescued by the Coast Guard, officials said on Sunday.

Around 9 pm on Saturday, the Coast Guard received information that there was flooding onboard the vessel 'MSV

Krishna Sudama' around 10 nautical miles off the Okha coast.

The vessel had on Saturday started sailing from Mundra in Gujarat for Djibouti, carrying 905 tonne rice and sugar to the African nation, the Coast Guard said in a statement.

"Search and rescue was immediately commenced

On the protest track



Farmers block railway tracks during Rail Roko Andolan against the Central government's newly introduced farm bills, at Devi Dass Pura village, 20 km from Amritsar, on Sunday.

— PTI

India's Covid-19 cases surpass 60-lakh mark

Country records single-day spike of 88,600 infections

New Delhi, Sept. 27: India's Covid-19 caseload sprinted past the 60 lakh on Sunday night, 12 days after it crossed the 50-lakh mark, while the total number of recoveries too surged to 50,02,959, according to data from states and union territories.

The Union health ministry data updated on Sunday 8 am showed a single-day spike of 88,600 infections, taking the country's Covid-19 tally of cases to 59,92,532, while the death toll climbed to 94,503 with 1,124 people succumbing to the disease in a day. However, by night, a PTI tally showed India's Covid-19 caseload at 60,66,061, death toll at 95,466 and recoveries at 50,03,084.

The tally has been compiled according to information provided by the states and union territories. India is in pole position in terms of the number of recoveries, followed by Brazil and the US, according to the Johns Hopkins University (JHU), which has been compiling Covid-19 data from all over the world. India is the second-worst hit nation in terms of Covid-19 cases after the US, while it is in the third spot in terms of fatalities globally after the US and Brazil, according

New Delhi, Sept. 27: Travellers from Dubai and the UK were primary sources of Covid-19 importations into India, according to an analytical study done by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mandi.

According to the research, which has been published in the Journal of Travel Medicine, Covid-19 got induced into Indian states mainly due to international travels. The study has also found that infected cases from Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh played less role in spreading the disease outside their communities. Whereas infected people in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, and Karnataka played a significant role in

the local transmission, and some of them caused interstate transfer too.

"We tracked the spread of Covid-19 and its diffusion from the global to national level and identified a few super spreaders who played a central role in the transmission of the disease in India. The Covid-19 spread in phase one was traced using the travelling history of the patients, and it was found that most of the transmissions were local," Sarita Azad, Assistant Professor, IIT Mandi, said. "The research team has used the travel history of infected patients from January to April as the primary data source and a social network was created depicting the spread in the early phase of the pandemic.

to JHU data.

The Union health ministry on Sunday said a total of 49,41,627 people have recuperated from coronavirus infection tak-

ing the national recovery rate to 82.46 per cent, while the Covid-19 case fatality rate was recorded at 1.58 per cent. There are 9,56,402 active cases of

The research found that the maximum numbers of connections were established from Dubai (144) and the UK (64)," she added. Azad explained that statistical metrics calculated from the data revealed that Dubai and the UK played a crucial role in spreading the disease in Indian states and were the primary sources of Covid-19 importations into India. "Dubai's eigenvector centrality was the highest that made it the most influential node. The statistical metrics calculated from the data revealed that Dubai and the UK played a crucial role in spreading the disease in Indian states and were the primary sources of Covid-19 importations into India — PTI

Coronavirus infection in the country which comprise 15.96 per cent of the total caseload, the health ministry data showed. — PTI

Ex- DGP Gupteshwar Pandey joins JD(U) ahead of Bihar polls

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, SEPT. 27

Former Bihar DGP Gupteshwar Pandey joined the JD(U) in the presence of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar at his residence in Patna on Sunday. After he took voluntary retirement last week, it was being speculated that he would join the JD(U). On Sunday, while talking to reporters, he said that his next political move depends on the party. "I have joined JD(U) and as a good soldier of the party I would like to wait for the instructions and advice of the top leadership", Pandey said.

Reports suggest that Pandey is likely to get a ticket to contest either the Assembly election from Buxar or the Valmikinagar Lok Sabha seat where a bypoll has been necessitated due to the death of JD(U) MP Baidyanath Mahto.

This is the second time he is trying his luck in electoral politics. In 2009 he had opted for voluntary retirement to contest the Lok Sabha polls from Buxar but returned to the service after he failed to get the ticket from the BJP.

"I have spent my life working for the people and will continue to serve them in future also. As far

NCB WANTED ME TO IMPLICATE KARAN JOHAR: KHSITIJ PRASAD

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, SEPT. 27

Executive producer Kshitij Ravi Prasad, who has been arrested by Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in a drugs case linked with the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, has been remanded to police custody till October 3. According to his lawyer, when Kshitij was produced before the court, he alleged before the magistrate that he was tortured and pressurised and asked to name Karan Johar or some other top official linked with Dharma Productions.

Initially when Prasad's name cropped up it was said that he was an employee of Dharma Production, but Karan Johar denied it and said that he was not linked with his firm.

According to advocate Satish Maneshinde, Prasad was produced before magistrate through videoconferencing. At that time the lawyer informed the magistrate that Kshitij was harassed and blackmailed to make a statement as told by the probe officer. On his request the magistrate recorded the statement made by Prasad.

Prasad told the court that when NCB searched his house they found nothing objectionable. However, the officials still mentioned in the panchanama that his house was a "ganja joint" and at his wife's insistence they added the word "believed" to be a ganja joint.

He alleged that at the time of recording his statement, an NCB officer, despite his protests, inserted various patently false claims in his statement. The statement was not recorded as per Prasad's narration and language, he claimed.

According to the lawyer, Prasad alleged before the court that NCB officer had told him that since he was associated with Dharma Production, they would let him off if he implicated either Karan Johar, Somel Mishra, Rakhi and others alleging that they consumed drugs. However, he did not agree despite pressure being mounted on him as he did not know any of these people personally and didn't wish to implicate anyone, the lawyer said.

● "I HAVE joined JD(U) and as a good soldier of the party I would like to wait for the instructions and advice of the top leadership", Pandey said.

as my contesting elections is concerned it's the party which has to take a decision", Pandey said after joining the JD(U).

Political analysts are of the view that the JD(U) which draws its support from the OBCs and a large section of minority voters hopes to reach out to the Brahmin voters with the induction of Pandey. "He has been a competent officer and we saw how efficiently he handled communal and other sensitive issues. The party will benefit from his entry," JD(U) MP Lalan Singh said.

The Assembly election in Bihar for 243 seats is to be held in three phases beginning October 28 and the results will be declared on November 10.

Pandey had hit headlines by taking a strong stand on the death of Sushant Singh Rajput. He had criticised the Mumbai police in matters pertaining to the investigation. He had also stoked a controversy by saying that "Rhea Chakraborty doesn't have the stature (aukat) to comment on Bihar CM".

IN BRIEF

Lebanon shooting: 2 soldiers killed

Beirut: Gunmen in a car opened fire on an army post in the Minyeh region of northern Lebanon Sunday, triggering a shootout in which two soldiers and one gunman were killed, the Lebanese military said. Another gunman fled to an unknown destination. An army operation is underway to arrest the fugitive and uncover the circumstances of the attack, the military said. The shootout occurred as the army was engaged in a heavy exchange of fire with a group of militants linked to Sunni extremists in northeast Lebanon, close to the border with Syria.

16 killed in China mine accident

Beijing: Sixteen people trapped in a coal mine in south-west China's Chongqing Municipality on Sunday were killed due to the presence of excessive levels of carbon monoxide, official media reported. The incident happened when the burning belts in the mine caused the carbon monoxide to exceed safety limit, trapping 17 people inside, state-run *Xinhua* news agency reported. A 75-member rescue team has entered the mine and 30 medical workers have rushed to the scene, it said. One person who survived the accident was rushed to the hospital, *CGTN TV* reported.

15 perish in Pakistan inferno

Karachi: At least 15 people were killed when a passenger van travelling in southern Pakistan crashed and caught fire. The van was carrying passengers from Karachi to Hyderabad city when it struck an object and careered off the road late Saturday. "The death toll has reached 15," Owais Shah, the transport minister of Sindh province, said. Five other people were injured, three of them critically. Most of the bodies were burned beyond recognition, said Faisal Edhi, head of the non-profit Edhi Foundation which runs the morgue the bodies were taken to. Investigators were looking to see if a natural gas cylinder aboard the bus had contributed to the inferno.

Chinese soldiers' remains returned

Beijing: The remains of 117 Chinese soldiers who died in the 1950-53 Korean War were returned to China on Sunday in an annual repatriation delayed this year by the Coronavirus outbreak. South Korea handed over the remains at a ceremony at Incheon airport outside Seoul, and a Chinese military transport plane flew them to Shenyang, a north-eastern Chinese city near the North Korean border. Chinese soldiers fought on the North Korean side against US-led forces in the South during the war on the Korean Peninsula. Most of the 117 remains were found in the Demilitarized Zone that separates North and South Korea.

NORTH KOREA ACCUSES SEOUL OF INTRUSION

Seoul, Sept. 27: North Korea accused South Korea of sending ships across the disputed sea boundary to find the body of a South Korean official recently killed by North Korean troops, warning Sunday the intrusion could escalate tensions. South Korea denied the accusation. "We urge the South side to immediately halt the intrusion across the military demarcation line in the West Sea that may lead to escalation of tensions," the official *Korean Central News Agency* said. "It arouses our due vigilance as it may lead to another awful incident." Along with its denial, South Korea proposed a joint investigation to resolve discrepancies in each country's account of the South Korean official's death last week. Officials in Seoul have said the 47-year-old was likely attempting to defect before North Korean troops aboard a boat fatally shot him and burned his body.

According to Seoul, North Korea on Friday sent a message, including a rare apology by leader Kim Jong-un for the shooting death of the official, who was found floating on an object in its waters. It said its troops shot the official because he attempted to flee after refusing to answer to questions. It said North Korea maintained troops were unable to find the official's body and burned the object he was floating on in line with anti-Coronavirus rules.



In this image taken from a footage released by Armenian Defence Ministry on Sunday, Armenian forces destroy Azerbaijani military vehicle at the contact line of the self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan. Fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan has broken out around the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian Defence Ministry says two Azerbaijani helicopters have been shot down. Ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanyan also said Armenian forces hit three Azerbaijani tanks. — AP

Martial law in Azerbaijan as fighting erupts with Armenia

RETURN TO NEGOTIATIONS OVER KARABAKH, SAYS EU

Yerevan (Armenia), Sept. 27: After fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan broke out on Sunday around the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian Defence Ministry said two Azerbaijani helicopters were shot down, Azerbaijan on Sunday declared martial law and a curfew in capital Baku and several other cities, as fighting with Armenian rebel forces in Nagorno-Karabakh claimed military and civilian casualties on both sides.

A top territorial official said 16 people were killed and more than 100 wounded. "Martial law will be introduced as of midnight as well as a curfew from 9 pm to 6 am," in Baku, several other cities and districts that are close to the Karabakh frontline, presidency spokesman Hikmet

Brussels, Sept. 27: The European Union called Sunday for a halt to fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani separatists over the Nagorno-Karabakh region and an "immediate return to negotiations".

The worst clashes since 2016 broke out on Sunday between arch-foes Azerbaijan and Armenia, which have been locked for decades in a territorial dispute over the Armenia-backed breakaway region.

"Military action must stop, as a matter of urgency, to prevent a further escalation," European Council president Charles Michel tweeted, calling for "an immediate return to negotiations, without preconditions".

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell stressed the urgency of relaunching negotiations over Nagor-

ny Karabakh under the auspices of the so-called "Minsk Group" led by France, Russia and the United States. "The European Union calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities, de-escalation and for strict observance of the ceasefire," he said.

A major conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia could draw in top regional players Russia and Turkey.

— AP

with an Azerbaijani attack, but Azerbaijan said the Armenian side attacked and that Azerbaijan launched a counteroffensive. The news was harshly received in Turkey, a close ally of Azerbaijan. Turkey's ruling party spokesman Omer Celik tweeted: "We vehemently condemn Armenia's attack on Azerbaijan. Armenia has once again committed a provocation, ignoring law."

He promised Turkey would stand by Azerbaijan and said, "Armenia is playing with fire and endangering regional peace."

Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin also took to Twitter: "Armenia has violated the ceasefire by attacking civilian settlements ... the international community must immediately say stop to this dangerous provocation."

— AP

Despite lockdown, thousands of Israelis stage protest in Jerusalem

Jerusalem, Sept. 27: Thousands of Israelis gathered outside the official residence of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday night to demand his resignation, pressing ahead with weeks of protests against the embattled Israeli leader despite a strict new lockdown order. With Israel facing one of the world's worst Coronavirus outbreaks, the tough lockdown rules went into effect Friday, closing many businesses, banning large gatherings and ordering people to stay close to home.

But Israel's Knesset, or parliament, was unable to agree on proposed legislation that would ban the right to protest. Netanyahu has pushed hard for a ban on the demonstrations, claiming they pose a threat to public safety, and he has threatened to declare a state of emergency to halt the unrest. But his opponents accuse him of using the health crisis as a pretext to put a halt to weeks of demonstrations against him.

For over three months,

Prince Charles: 1mn youth require help

London, Sept. 27: Britain's Prince Charles on Sunday issued an urgent plea in favour of the youth, who he fears are being severely impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic. In an article for *The Sunday Telegraph*, the 71-year-old heir to the British throne, warned that at least 1 million young people could be in "urgent need of help" as he reflected upon the work of his Prince's Trust charity in this area over nearly 45 years.

"Over all these years since the Trust was launched, there has never been an easy time. However, there has never been a time as uniquely challenging as the present, when the pandemic has left perhaps another million young people needing urgent help to protect their futures," writes the royal.

"The task ahead is unquestionably vast, but it is not insurmountable," he said. He cited unemployment in the 1970s that prompted him to set up the Prince's Trust to help people aged between 11 and 30 seek job opportunities and life skills.

— PTI

WISCONSIN SEES RECORD SPIKE IN COVID-19 CASES

Madison (US), Sept. 27: Wisconsin on Saturday hit a record for Coronavirus cases reported in a single day as health officials reported 2,817 people have tested positive for the virus. The state has seen some of the nation's fastest Coronavirus spread over the last two weeks.

The rolling average number of daily new cases has increased by 950, an increase of nearly 97 per cent, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. In that time, the state has reported the nation's third-highest number of new cases per capita, with about 423 new cases per 100,000 people. In another troubling trend, the positivity rate for Coronavirus testing has also been among the country's highest. That's an indicator that many more have infections than tests are revealing.

— AP

Police: One shot and killed, seven injured in Iowa

Waterloo (US), Sept. 27: Gunfire erupted early Saturday at a gathering of motorcycle clubs in Iowa, killing one person and wounding seven others, authorities said.

About 100 people were at the gathering inside a building in Waterloo when there was "some kind of confrontation shortly after 3 a.m.," Joel Fitzgerald, the police chief of the city about 145 kilometres northeast of Des Moines, said at a news conference.

Officers were nearby at a traffic stop when the shooting started, said Capt. Joe Leibold with the Waterloo Police Department. They arrived to find a chaotic scene, with people hurt and others fleeing the area, and they began administering aid as paramedics and firefighters pulled up. "It was a pretty dynamic scene," said Battalion Chief Ben Petersen with Waterloo Fire Rescue. "Coming into something like that, you are trying to size up the patients

SHOOTING AT POLICE STATION: SUSPECT HELD

Los Angeles, Sept. 27: A police officer was hurt in a shooting at a Los Angeles police station late Saturday, and a suspect is in custody, police said.

The Los Angeles Police Department said in a series of tweets that the shooting occurred at its Harbor Station.

The officer was taken to a hospital with an injury that's not considered to be life-threatening, the department said.

A suspect was in custody. Chief Michel Moore said in a tweet that the officer was stable.

— AP

and triage the scene." Eight people had gunshot wounds and one of them later died.

— AP

After Barrett nod, GOP invests \$10m in boosting Trump

Washington, Sept. 27: The Republican National Committee is putting Amy Coney Barrett's Supreme Court confirmation fight front and center with voters just weeks before Election Day.

The confirmation battle will be featured in a new \$10 million RNC digital ad campaign to encourage battleground state voters to return vote-by-mail ballots or go to the polls. The national party, in concert with President Donald Trump's campaign, is planning local events and protests across the country to support Barrett's confirmation as well.

The party is also incorporating Barrett's nomination into its scripts that staffers and volunteers use when calling or knocking on voters' doors, with a focus on social conservative Catholic and evangelical voters — particularly in swing states

like Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Florida.

Filling the vacancy created by the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has been an unexpected political opportunity for Trump, who won the White House in 2016 in large part because conservatives were animated around filling the seat opened by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia. The RNC on Saturday unveiled a website, ConfirmBarrett.com, to allow supporters to contact lawmakers to urge them to put Barrett on the court. "With a full-throated effort from now until President Trump's nominee is confirmed, our teams will expose Democrats' partisanship, aggressively promote the qualifications of Judge Barrett, and use this issue to galvanize voters to the polls in November," said RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel.

— AP

Trump campaign sues to block mail-in ballot rule changes

Raleigh (US), Sept. 27: President Donald Trump's campaign committee and the Republican National Committee sued Saturday to block North Carolina election officials from enforcing rule changes that could boost the number of ballots counted in the presidential battleground state.

The Republicans' lawsuit claims a new system adopted by the State Board of Elections will allow for absentee ballots to be cast late and without proper witness verification, which invites fraud, coercion, theft, and otherwise illegitimate voting.

The elections board on Tuesday issued new guidance allowing mail-in absentee ballots with defici-

ent information to be fixed without forcing the voter to fill out a new blank ballot for November's general election.

The change means absentee voters who don't provide complete information on their envelope about a witness who saw them fill out the ballot won't have to complete a new ballot and locate another witness.

A voter will just have to turn in an affidavit confirming they filled out the original ballot.

North Carolina is one of eight states with witness and or notary public requirements for absentee ballots, according to the Brennan Center for Justice.

— AP

NATIONAL | TREASURE Dept of archaeology to fund repairs to heritage buildings of the Indian celluloid stars

Pak's KP govt to buy houses of Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar

Peshawar, Sept. 27: The provincial government in Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has decided to purchase the ancestral houses of legendary Bollywood actors Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar to conserve the historic buildings which are in dilapidated condition and facing demolition threat.

The Department of Archaeology in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province has decided to allocate sufficient funds for purchasing the two buildings, which have been declared as the national heritage and lie in the heart of Peshawar city, an

official said. An official letter has been sent to the Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar to determine the cost of both the historic buildings, where the two greats of Indian cinema were born and raised in their early days before the partition, said Dr Abdus Samad Khan, the head of department of archaeology.

Raj Kapoor's ancestral home, known as Kapoor Haveli, is situated in the fabled Qissa Khwani Bazar. It was built between 1918 and 1922 by the legendary actor's grandfather Dewan Basheswarnath Kapoor. Raj Kapoor and

his uncle Trilok Kapoor were born in the building. It has been declared national heritage by the provincial government.

Veteran actor Dilip Kumar's over 100-year-old ancestral house is also located in the same locality. The house is in shambles and was declared as national heritage in 2014 by the then Nawaz Sharif government.

Khan said the owners of the two buildings made many attempts in the past to demolish them for constructing commercial plazas in view of their prime location but all such mo-

ves were stopped as the archaeology department wanted to preserve them keeping in view their historic importance.

However, the owner of Kapoor Haveli, Ali Qadar, said that he did not want to demolish the building and made many contacts with the archaeology department officials to protect and preserve this historic structure which is a national pride. The owner has demanded Rs 200 crore from the KP government to sell it out to the government. In 2018, the Pakistan government decided to convert the Kapoor Haveli



The houses of Dilip Kumar and (R) Raj Kapoor.



into a museum, heeding to a request by Rishi Kapoor who died this year in Mumbai. However, the announcement to this effect could not be materialised.

— PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

28 SEPTEMBER 2020

Duplicitous government exposed on GST funds

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (CAG) that the Union government wrongly retained ₹47,272 crores of GST compensation cess that was collected specifically to compensate states for the loss of revenue in the financial years 2017-18 and 2018-19 is a stinging rebuke of its financial management.

The GST (Compensation to States) Act, 2017, guarantees all states an annual growth rate of 14 per cent in their GST revenue in the first five years of implementation of GST beginning July 2017. Should there be a shortfall, the Union government will compensate it from the GST Compensation Cess Fund, created by levying a cess on certain luxury and “sin” goods. The Act and the accounting procedure mandate that the entire cess collected during a year is credited to the Fund, a non-lapsable one which can be used only for the purpose for which it is created. For the financial year 2017-18, the government collected ₹62,612 crores as cess and transferred ₹56,146 crores to the Fund and for 2018-19, it collected ₹95,081 crores and transferred ₹54,275 crores. In effect, it retained ₹6,466 crores in 2017-18 and ₹40,806 crores in 2018-19. This is a violation of the law, the CAG said. Worse, the Centre transferred the money to the Consolidated Fund of India, thereby making it available for use for purposes other than what was provided in the Act. This has “led to an overstatement of revenue receipts and understatement of fiscal deficit for the year”, the report said.

The government has not officially responded to the CAG report but it has let it be known that the cess mess was not a diversion but a retention of funds. This is ridiculous. The Union government has no right over the funds; its job is to collect and distribute it as per the approved formula. By not following its own mandate, the government has defiled the law, the national consensus on GST and the legislative intention behind the constitutional amendment. That it got an opinion of the attorney-general in its favour is no matter of pride.

The GST was implemented with a number of noble and notable aims including making tax administration a smooth affair and plug leakage by creating a proper trail of goods and services from the first the point to the last. However, this tax reform took a heavy toll on the state governments’ finances as it took away their right to levy taxes and deposited them all with the Union government. The CAG report says the latter has failed to keep its part of the bargain.

It may be remembered that the states, fatigued by the long-drawn fight against pandemic Covid-19, have been knocking on the Union government’s doors for financial aid, including GST compensation. The government, which consumed the excess cess in the previous fiscal, took shelter behind “act of god” and shrugged its shoulders. This is gross, and strikes at the very root of the idea of constitutional democracy that India is. The earlier the government corrects itself, the better.

Golden voice of SPB

A mellifluous voice that sang in innumerable Indian tongues has fallen silent but the songs of the polyglot playback singer will live on. The passing of S.P. Balasubrahmanyam, or just “SPB” in affectionate abbreviation, is just another tragedy caused by the shadow of the coronavirus Covid-19 falling on the lives of millions. The virus seems to have acted wilfully in the case of so many celebrated talents in the fields of music, performing arts and fine arts who have passed on in the last six months in which the pandemic has been raging globally. It is small consolation that their works will live on in music tracks, celluloid or video.

The outpouring of grief and the underlying affection for the charismatic singer illustrates the depth of his engaging personality who, as a public performer, was peerless in dealing with people in the film music industry. His greatness lay in his humane qualities and the manner in which he made everyone around him feel important and touched by playing a constructive part in the expression of his art. His fans, enraptured by the melodies he sang or the devotional songs he rendered in emotional asseveration of faith in a higher being, will immortalise his songs by playing them again and again.

Remarkably, in a career that began in 1966 and ended only on the day he was admitted to hospital in August 2020, the 74-year-old singer’s voice retained its richness, depth, range and timbre. His felicity in rendering his songs in concerts was phenomenal, making his shows a celebration of the artiste and his works while establishing a direct link with lovers of popular music. He never trained formally in classical music and still made his name reverberate nationally with his songs in *Sankarabharanam*, a movie that brought the vibrations of Carnatic music to the common man. Music has always had the quality of uniting Indians across the divides of a unique national diversity. SPB, who sang in 16 languages while capturing every nuance, was a true pan-Indian performer who lent his golden voice to matinee stars across the country.

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Subhani



Govt didn’t bring Opp. on board on China question



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

It is unfortunate that Parliament ducked discussing the most serious National Security challenge that India faces since 1962 i.e. the stand-off in Eastern Ladakh and North Sikkim qua China. It is obvious that government would try and avoid answering the hard questions but the combined Opposition in both Houses should have pushed hard for a full-fledged discussion and not contented itself with a bland statement from the defence minister with some pro-forma clarifications in the Rajya Sabha and not even that in the Lok Sabha.

In fact, this writer wrote to the defence minister on September 16, 2020, urging that the government should suo-moto propose a discussion on the border situation for not only would it demonstrate the strength of our democracy but also convey our unequivocal national resolve expressed through the collective will of Parliament to the Chinese. I reminded him that during the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict 165 Members of the Lok Sabha had participated in a discussion on the ongoing Sino-Indian war in the Lok Sabha and an equal number including former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in a concurrent discussion in Rajya Sabha. In fact, the day the Chinese invaded India on October 20, 1962, on the urging of Mr Vajpayee who was one of the MPs of a four-member Bharatiya Jan Sangh group in Rajya Sabha Nehru unhesitatingly summoned Parliament to meet on November 8, 1962.

A day later Mr Vajpayee took the floor. He commenced by fiercely critiquing the Nehru administration just as the Chinese were seizing the two crucial knolls — Green Pimple and Yellow

Pimple — thereby giving them a bird’s eye view of the 4 Dogra battalion HQ established at Walong on that very day.

Unconstrained by the consideration that the Indian Army was locked in a brutal battle with the Chinese trespassers he began up by highlighting the need for introspection especially with regard to the events leading up to the Chinese offensive all through the 1950s and early 1960s.

He demanded answers to some very uncomfortable questions — namely — why our army was not “in full force” in NEFA and why were they not battle-ready. He enquired why between September 8 when China’s bellicose intent started manifesting itself and October 20, when they struck, the Army had not mobilised itself in full force to preempt the belligerents. He insisted on clarity on the identity of those “eminent” in both the civil and military establishment who had kept the dispensation in the dark and what action had been taken against them.

Mr Vajpayee intuitively understood that in a democracy we must state the truth howsoever uncomfortable it might be rather than brushing sensitive issues under the carpet. That is why 37 years later when the Kargil intrusion took place in April-May 1999, just one year after the highpoint of the Lahore bus ride, he had no qualms about telling the nation that he had been betrayed by the Pakistanis and they had captured key heights in Drass, Kargil and other areas overlooking National Highway 1-A that connects Srinagar to Leh. Similarly, during the December 1971 war for Liberation of Bangladesh, Late Mrs Indira Gandhi did not dodge Parliament.

Unfortunately, Mr Vajpayee’s successors lack the moral courage to be forthcoming on the latest Chinese transgressions. They hide behind the specious fig leaf of national security to avoid the hard questions labelling everyone who tries to hold their policies and personnel to account as anti national. Such is the paranoia of this government that all my questions — and there were only unstarred questions permitted in this session of Parliament addressed to the Prime Minister, defence, home and external affairs ministers on the Sino-Indian face-off — were disallowed on grounds of “sensitivity” despite having been balloted in the list of 230 questions that are supposed to be answered on any given day. This level of opacity only raises further misgivings that the government is attempting to hide the truth from the nation.

During both World Wars I and II, parliaments of democratic nations across the world regularly met to discuss the conduct and direction of war. Winston Churchill’s most famous speeches were made on the floor of the House of Commons during the duration of the Second World War.

The present mess that India finds itself in one is of its own making. India failed to read the Chinese intent. When India was busy playing the friendly neighbour the Chinese were preparing themselves for the confrontation.

China deceived India by making it complacent. The present confrontation shows that the 2018 Wuhan and the 2019 Mamallapuram summits were but a smokescreen. The lack of early detection of the Chinese activities on the LAC has intelli-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s official statements of denying the transgressions have played to China’s advantage. It now accuses India of violating the LAC.

gence, strategic and tactical failure written all over it. The Chinese know that the ruling party is heavily invested in maintaining its hyper-nationalist image. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s official statements of denying the transgressions have played to China’s advantage. It now accuses India of violating the LAC.

The ongoing stand-off does not seem to end anytime soon. Talks have been ongoing since May with a goal to disengage and to restore the status quo ante. However, the talks have failed because there is a differing understanding of what status quo ante means to the two parties. India wants a status quo ante as of the pre-April 2020 situation. However, the Chinese seem to prefer the pre-2019 situation before the revocation of the autonomous status of the region. Both the parties have dug into their positions, to deny the other any strategic advantage. Both the parties do not want the confrontation to turn into a full-fledged war; therefore, this would turn into a war of attrition that would further sap our already-weakened economy. The Chinese are taking advantage of the stand-off situation to rapidly augment their offensive capabilities along the entire LAC. The Chinese, by occupying and building infrastructure in the previously viewed “grey areas” by both the parties, have forced India to accept the Chinese claim line as the new normal through the force of arms.

Should any self-respecting nation tolerate this national humiliation, notwithstanding the obfuscation that the government is blatantly encouraging by running a Bollywood soap opera on what were till yesterday supposed to be news and current affairs dissemination outlets?

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

LETTERS

INDIA IN UN

The vociferous appeal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the UN for a permanent membership in the Security Council has echoed the sentiments of our nation. Our contribution in sending peacekeeping forces wherever necessary and sending supplies to various countries is laudable. We need to make sure that our lobbying at the world body works to our advantage.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

WELL DONE, SRINIVAS

D. Srinivas, a constable posted at Hanuman Junction, was rightly appreciated by home minister Mekathoti Sucharitha and DGP Gautam Sawang for his commitment and dedication (*Cop felicitated for committed duty amidst rain, DC, Sept. 27*). His dedicated duty in the heavy rain must be an inspiration to others. Felicitating Srinivas with a shawl and a cash award is truly a good encouragement for sincere, honest, hard-working and dedicated cops. This take the reputation of the police to the next level.

Panchakarla Govardhana Rao
Kankipadu

ACTORS AND SPB

It is a pity that the entire Telugu film industry kept away from the last rites of the great singer S.P. Balasubrahmanyam. At least a few could have represented keeping in mind the Covid-19 protocol. He is instrumental in their success by lending his voice.

P. Ramakrishna
Rajahmundry

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle
‘Sloganisation is dangerous’

NEW DELHI, Sept. 27
Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon, MP, today warned against the democratic institutions being misused by political leaders to inject fascist and dictatorial elements in the country’s body politic.

Speaking on “democratic life in India” at a seminar here this morning, Mr. Menon said “sloganisation” was one of the principal maladies of the Indian democracy. Unfortunately, “even Hitler achieved dictatorial powers in Germany through slogans promising everything to everybody” he added. — UNI

Sanju Verma



Farm laws to end Arhatiya control, bring down prices

The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which removes cereal, pulses, oilseed, edible oil, onion and potatoes from the list of essential commodities, was passed by the Rajya Sabha on September 22, 2020, to curb hoarding, artificial scarcity and trade cartelisation. Earlier last week, the Narendra Modi government also passed two historic farm bills, to defang APMCs and allow farmers to engage in contract farming, in the Rajya Sabha. The three bills had already cleared the Lok Sabha.

A beleaguered Opposition electorally vanquished by the Modi juggernaut, cried foul, alleging the bills were passed by only a voice vote in the Upper House. A voice vote is perfectly democratic and the deputy chair of the Rajya Sabha was within his rights to pass these bills with a voice vote.

Keeping the politics aside, the moot question is, will these farm bills help farmers? The answer is a resounding, “yes”. Do the farm bills remove MSP or public procurement? No, they do not.

The procurement process will continue as before. The minimum support price (MSP) payment to farmers for paddy rose by 2.4 times at ₹4.95 lakh between 2014 and 2019 under the Modi government, as against only ₹2.06 lakh crores under the previous Congress-led one between 2009 and 2014. The MSP to farmers for wheat increased by 1.77 times during 2014-2019, as compared to 2009-2014. For pulses, MSP payment of ₹49,000 crores to farmers was up by a massive 75 times. Payment to farmers for oilseeds and copra surged 10 times to ₹25,000 crores.

Do the farm bills dismantle the existing “APMC-Anaj Mandi” structure? No, they do not. The rights or livelihood of those associated with Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Mandis will not be encroached upon. However, it is a known fact that APMC structure has been inefficient, with farmers relying on APMC agents to help them sell their produce. In this system, while APMC agents walk away with hefty commissions, while the hapless

farmers make precious little. It is precisely to unshackle them from predatory agents and middlemen that the Modi government passed the farm bills.

APMCs will not be dismantled but they will certainly face stiff competition now from “Trade Areas”, which will be created and will exist alongside APMC Mandis. Farmers will be free to sell their produce to whomsoever they wish to, at a price they deem fit, in these “Trade Areas”. So let it be clear that it is not farmers who are protesting but middlemen and APMC Mandi owners who are upset because their monopoly has been broken. There will be no taxes by either the state or central governments on trade conducted in these “Trade Areas”, thereby reducing the cost of transaction in the entire food chain from farm to fork.

The farm bills also allow for contract farming, whereby farmers can enter into contracts, at a predetermined price, even before the crop has been harvested, with private companies, aggregators, food processors and exporters. This is

an unprecedented reform, as it allows farmers to lock in a good price for their harvest and insulates them from any post-harvest price volatility.

Is partial privatisation of agriculture good? Of course, it is. Who will pay for the insurance, cold storage, machinery and farm equipment when farmers enter into contracts with private players? The farm bills clearly state that these will be paid for by the counter-party and not the farmer. This will be a big relief for especially small and marginal farmers who can access superior farm technology and become agripreneurs without having to go out of pocket.

How will farmers negotiate with private entities that are supposedly equipped with more business acumen? Well, in Budget 2020, the Modi government announced the formation of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs). These FPOs are largely big groups of farmers who are brought together, as they will have better bargaining skills, rather than farmers operating as individuals. There are already

about 5,000 FPOs in India.

Why are protests largely from Punjab? Well, in Punjab, there are over 40,000 powerful arhatiyas or middlemen, with one lakh clerks working under them. Arhatiyas also double up as moneylenders to farmers. Under the existing system, in states like Punjab, APMC/Mandi fees come to around 8.5 per cent — a market fee of three per cent, rural development charge of three per cent and the Arhatiya’s commission of 2.5 per cent. The “Arhatiya” system is more influential in Punjab than elsewhere in India, and hence most protests are from this region. In FY20, 40,000 Arhatiyas in Punjab reportedly pocketed commissions worth over ₹1,600 crores.

Prime Minister Modi’s farm bills, however, seek to put money into the hands of farmers, something no political leader ever attempted before.

The writer is an economist, chief spokesperson for BJP Mumbai and bestselling author of Truth & Dare — The Modi Dynamic.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	37,388.66	2.28
Nifty 50	11,050.30	2.27
S&P 500*	3,298.46	1.60
Dollar (₹)	73.61	0.39
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.01	0.03
Euro (₹)	86.01	0.19
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,551▼0.71	353
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	41.78	-0.16
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.038	0.046
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.659	-0.005

* As of Friday/Saturday

DPIIT spots 24 key sectors to boost mfg

The DPIIT has shared a list of 24 key sectors, including food processing, toys, furniture, agro chemicals and textiles, with respective ministries asking them to work on an action plan with a view to boost domestic manufacturing and make India a self-reliant country, an official said. The other sectors include organic farming, iron, aluminium and copper, electronics, industrial machinery, furniture, leather and shoes.

Centre offers moong, urad at subsidised rates



The Centre has offered to provide processed moong and urad pulses from its buffer stock to state governments for retail sale at a subsidised rate in the current lean period in a bid to check any possible price rise, according to consumer affairs secretary Leena Nandan. Moong will be offered at Rs 92 per kg and urad at Rs 84-96 per kg, much lower than prevailing retail market prices, she said.

HDFC Bank aims to rope in 20 mn small merchants

HDFC Bank is targeting a ten-fold increase in the number of small merchants it serves to 20 million in the next three years, sources at the lender have said. The bank started targeting merchants about 18 months ago with solutions on accepting payments, providing value-added services like creating a simple website for them, taking care of their inventory and lending based on cash flows, through a single app.

Voda Idea starts upgrading 3G users to 4G

Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) said it has started upgrading its 3G users to 4G in key markets. Further, VIL said it is in the best position to upgrade 2G customers also to 4G, but it will continue with basic voice based services to its 2G subscribers. "While the company will continue to offer basic voice services to its 2G users, 3G data users will gradually be upgraded to 4G...VIL has started informing its customers."



Accommodative stance, tweaks expected RBI may opt for rate status quo

FALAK NAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, SEPT. 27

Elevated retail and rising core inflation seem to rule out a rate cut on October 1 from the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India. However, the RBI would continue to emphasise its accommodative stance and keep doing tweaks to liquidity and regulatory operations to keep financial market conditions benign, said economists who now expect the central bank to cut rates only in December or in February policy.

The six-member MPC headed by RBI governor is scheduled to meet for three days, starting September 29. The resolution of the MPC would be announced on October 1. The RBI has cut the repo rate by 115 basis points since February.

While price stability is the prerogative of the MPC, the central bank is also juggling other policy priorities, with some of them running counter, such as managing the dollar deluge while ensuring currency stability; keeping bond yields low just as inflation plays spoilsport.

"The current elevated level of inflation, which is well above the RBI's upper bound of 6 per cent, suggests the MPC will pause again in October. However, given more durable damage to growth versus a more transitory shift in inflation, we expect 50 basis points in cumulative rate cuts in



total, with the next 25 basis points to be delivered at the December policy meeting," said Sonal Varma, chief India economist at Nomura.

The August CPI inflation stayed steady at 6.7 per cent year-on-year heading in a favourable direction, but still above the RBI's 2-6 per cent target range while growth has slipped quite sharply. Core inflation (ex-food and fuel) ticked up to 5.8 percent YoY compared to 5.7 per cent in July, with the core-core (core excluding transport and gold) witnessing a pullback. Rural and urban inflation also remained high, moving in lockstep in recent months, as supply hit impacted across geographies.

At 9.1 per cent in August, food inflation was the lowest since November 19. Inflation of pulses, cereals, meat, spices and milk showed softened inflation. While the liquidity situa-

tion is comfortable, bank credit growth has been negative.

The policy comes at the time when the term of three external members of the MPC ends in September, but a short extension of their term may be considered, according to media reports.

"High-frequency indicators (and staple food prices) along with rising number of infection cases necessitating regional movement restrictions suggests that September inflation is also likely stay firmly in the 6 per cent-plus terrain for a fifth consecutive month. Our evolving forecast trajectory points to shallow pullback toward the 4 per cent CPI target only in IQ21. This lowers the odds of a rate cut in December, prompting us to revise our forecast to a pause in December and 25 basis points cut in 1Q," said DBS.

All 4 labour codes to take effect by Dec.

Sept. 27: The government is aiming to implement all the four labour codes in one go by December this year and complete the final stretch of labour sector reforms, labour minister Santosh Gangwar has said.



Santosh Gangwar

Parliament in its just concluded session passed three labour code bills: the Industrial Relations Code, the Social Security Code, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code.

The Wage Code Bill, 2019 was passed by Parliament last year. The labour ministry had circulated the draft rules on the Wage Code Bill last year but held back its finalisation and implementation. The ministry wanted to implement all the four codes and rules under those in one go as all of them are inter-linked.

Talking to PTI, Gangwar said, "Government is doing all efforts to complete the labour reforms by implementing the all four labour codes by December this year..."

He further said "the rules under these legislations would be enforced at once". —PTI

Dhanlaxmi needs course correction, Aibea tells RBI

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, SEPT. 27 SEPT

The banking sector's largest union, the All-India Bank Employees' Association (Aibea), has asked the central bank to effectively intervene in Dhanlaxmi Bank to prevent it from running into problems once again. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed its nominee G. Jagan Mohan as additional director on the board of the private lender and through him the RBI should actively intervene to oppose management decisions that can adversely impact the bank, C.H. Venkatachalam, general secretary, Aibea told *Financial Chronicle*.

In a strongly worded letter to RBI governor Shaktikanta Das, the union opposed management decisions to change



the business profile of the bank, opening of branches in northern India, and appointment of a large number of sales executives and senior executives on contractual and cost to company bases at much higher remuneration, which could adversely impact the bank.

"We strongly believe that RBI's role in the board of directors of the bank should be reviewed as otherwise RBI would become answerable if things go bad," wrote

Venkatachalam.

The 93-year-old Dhanlaxmi Bank (originally Dhanalakshmi Bank) is a small-sized private bank headquartered in Thrissur, Kerala. A few years ago, particularly during 2008 to 2012, the bank was facing multiple problems regarding its performance and made losses to the tune of Rs 850 crore during this period.

The letter said that after making losses for continuously for five years the bank is making profit for the last eight quarters. The profit for 2019-20 at Rs 65 crore was the highest since the bank's inception. However, in the beginning of this year, the top management has changed and "in the recent months we are concerned to observe that perhaps the bank is once gain heading in the wrong direction."

TCS offers its hiring test to other firms

New Delhi, Sept. 27: Tata Consultancy Services has opened its National Qualifier Test (NQT) to corporates to help them in their fresher recruitment programmes. Till last year, the NQT was restricted to hiring for TCS.

NQT—conducted by TCS' strategic unit TCS iON—is a multi-level assessment to assess competence on core cognitive abilities required for entry-level jobs, industry-specific knowledge and insights, and specialisation on skills required for performing the job role. Introduced in 2018, NQT

last year saw more than 3.6 lakh students participating from over 2,600 colleges.

"NQT will now be a common gateway test for several participating corporates for their fresher recruitment programmes. This standardised test will provide candidates with access to open positions at multiple corporates giving millions of young jobseekers an opportunity to work for India's top corporates," TCS iON global head Venguswamy Ramaswamy told PTI.

It will provide subscribing corporates with a well-

rounded evaluation of candidates' abilities, and access to quality talent across the nation at speed and scale, he added.

Apart from large groups, the company is also in touch with small businesses across 600 cities so that students from these locations can get the NQT score and smaller enterprises can hire local talent.

Young professionals with up to two years experience, and students from any stream, can apply for the test, conducted every quarter and the score will be valid for two years. —PTI

ORIENT LAUNCHES DECORATIVE WATER HEATERS

Sept. 27:

Orient Electric Limited, part of the \$2.4 billion CK Birla Group, has announced the launch of its new range of decorative water heaters, with alluring designs and finishes.

The new models include Aura Neo Art instant water heater with designer marble finish and BEE 5-star rated Evapro PC and Gusto Art storage water heaters flaunting distinctive designs.

The storage water heater have Ultra-Diamond Glassline tank for durability, Glassline coated heating element for better heating, Magnesium anode rod for enhanced tank life, PUF Insulation for better heat retention.

Salil Kappoor, Business Head, Home Appliances, Orient Electric, said, "Consumer's expectation about product functionality, reliability and aesthetics has increased manifold and thus we are routinely introducing products that address their evolving needs."



Salil Kappoor

BPCL pays up for Videocon in Brazil

New Delhi, Sept. 27: State-owned Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) has been forced to pay for its defaulting partner Videocon Industries Ltd after it had relied on a rarely used model to acquire stake in five oil blocks in Brazil, sources said. In September 2008, BPCL and Videocon had formed a 50:50 joint venture to acquire a Brazilian oil exploration firm for \$283 million.

The two firms formed an incorporated joint venture IBV Brasil Petroleo Limitada to acquire Encana Brasil Petroleo Limitada from Canadian gas producers EnCana.

Sources said usually such acquisitions are done through unincorporated joint ventures but BPCL chose to form an incorporated joint venture.

Incorporated joint venture is organised as separate and distinct legal enti-

ty. And the entire entity is held in default if any one of the partners doesn't pay for its share of cost.

With bankrupt Videocon unable to pay its cash calls for exploration and development of the oilfields, IBV faced likelihood of a default and the risk of being booted out.

To save the day, BPCL infused \$53.98 million into IBV in 2019-20, resulting in its share in the JV rising to 55.13 per cent. —PTI

'Medical tourism requires govt support'

New Delhi, Sept. 27: Apollo Hospitals Enterprise said India's medical tourism sector needs support from the government to get back on its feet after being severely impacted by the pandemic.

"The medical tourism sector came to a standstill due to the lockdown. This has impacted not just India but Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and other Asian countries also which have a thriving medical tourism sector", Apollo Hospitals Group joint MD Sangita Reddy told PTI.

While there is easing out of the lockdown, it will take government level discussions to help bring



Sangita Reddy

patients in for treatment, she added.

"For example, Malaysia has seen some patients coming in for open-heart surgery from Brunei as a direct result of government level discussions. Similarly, in India, there is a need for government support to ensure that medical value tourism in

India gets back on its feet," Ms Reddy said.

Medical value travel tourism is still nascent in India and holds great potential. Niti Aayog has identified medical value travel as one of the major growth drivers and a major source of forex earning, she added.

"As the world unlocks, we will see a gradual increase in patients, all taking due precautions, turn to India for their treatments. In a world where people have become increasingly cost-conscious, India offers a significant advantage with high quality, high value care," Ms Reddy said. —PTI

DRAWING | EYEBALLS

US cosmetics giant pays Nasa \$128,000 for photo shoot in space

Estee Lauder skin serum to show off in space station

KIM BHASIN &
JUSTIN BACHMAN
SEPT. 27

Estee Lauder Cos is sending its newest skincare formula into space, and it'll cost only about as much as paying a big influencer for a few Instagram posts.

The US cosmetics giant is spending \$128,000 for Nasa to fly 10 bottles of its skin serum to the International Space Station. Once there, astronauts will take pictures of Estee Lauder's Advanced Night Repair in the cupola control tower, which has panoramic views of the cosmos. The images

will be used on social media, with the company planning to auction one bottle off for charity when the items return to Earth this spring.

The global recession, triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, has pushed brands to get more creative with their advertising because consumers are cutting back. Within beauty, several companies are spending less on traditional ads, while looking for new ways to break through the glut of content out there. In a press release, Estee Lauder highlighted it being the "first beauty



brand to go into space" as a means to tout its "skincare innovation."

The Northrop Grumman Antares rocket that will transport the skin serum as part of a supply run is scheduled to

launch on Tuesday night from Wallops Island, Virginia. The Cygnus cargo craft will then dock on the space station early Saturday.

Estee Lauder's push into micro-gravity is part of

Nasa's effort to commercialise low-earth orbit and make it a domain where private enterprise eventually does business as routinely as the government conducts spacewalks. Companies from Goodyear Tire & Rubber to Merck & Co have used space for research, and Nasa is hoping to expand its use, including private citizens visiting the space station.

"We need to expand people's perspective on what we can accomplish in space," said Phil McAlister, Nasa's director of commercial spaceflight development. —Bloomberg

Malabar Gold opens Khammam showroom

Khammam, Sept. 27: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest gold and diamond retail chains in the country, has inaugurated its 13th store in Khammam of Telangana with a one-of-its-kind virtual store launch event.

Brand ambassador and actress Tamannaah virtual-ly opened the store along with Malabar Group chairman M P Ahammed and O. Asher, MD, Indian operations. Shamal Ahamed, MD, international operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds and Abdul Salam KP, group executive director,

Malabar Group and other senior management officials were also present at the virtual inauguration.

The store launch was preceded by a special preview sale which attracted encouraging response from the jewellery buyers. As part of the inauguration customer will get free silver equal to the weight of gold purchased. The offer valid up to October 10. Located at Wyra Road, Khammam, the showroom is a part of the global expansion plan of the jeweller. The store will offer a safe and hygienic retail environment to its customers.

Business
NOTE

SHORT TAKES

Chelsea stage superb fightback

West Bromwich: Chelsea staged a superb second-half fightback from three goals down as Tammy Abraham's last-gasp strike rescued a thrilling 3-3 draw against West Bromwich Albion on Saturday. Frank Lampard's side were torn apart in the first half as Callum Robinson's brace and Kyle Bartley's goal punished woeful defending. But Mason Mount reduced the deficit soon after the break and Callum Hudson-Odoi got Chelsea's second before Abraham equalised deep into stoppage-time.

On Sunday, Tottenham were denied by another controversial penalty given for handball deep into stoppage time as Callum Wilson's spot-kick snatched a 1-1 draw for Newcastle. — *AFP*

Ramos snatches win for Madrid

Madrid: Sergio Ramos scored a late penalty as Real Madrid came from behind to scrape a 3-2 win against 10-man Real Betis, their first La Liga victory of the season.

Betis were ahead at half-time after two goals in two minutes from Aissa Mandi and William Carvalho overturned Fede Valverde's opener for the reigning champions. But Betis defender Emerson endured a nightmare start to the second half by scoring an own-goal.

VAR again intervened in Madrid's favour in the 82nd minute as Marc Bartra was adjudged to have cleared with his arm, leaving Ramos to chip in the winning penalty. — *AFP*

James powers Lakers into Finals

Miami: The Los Angeles Lakers, fueled by a triple-double from superstar LeBron James, beat the Denver Nuggets 117-107 on Saturday to reach the NBA Finals.

With the win in the league's quarantine bubble in Orlando, the Lakers completed a 4-1 victory over the Nuggets in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals.

James scored 16 of his 38 points in the fourth quarter as the Lakers remained perfect in elimination games this post-season. Denver, already the first team to twice come back from 1-3 series deficits in the same playoffs, couldn't work the magic again.

James added 16 rebounds and 10 assists. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Royal Challengers Bangalore vs Mumbai Indians from 7:30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

England Women vs West Indies Women: Fourth T20 from 10:30 pm on Sony Six, HD

TENNIS

French Open: Matches from 2:30 pm on Star Sports, Select 2

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Fulham vs Aston Villa from 10:30 pm on Star Sports 3; Liverpool vs Arsenal from 12:30 am (Tuesday) on Star Sports Select 2, HD

Italian League: Bologna vs Parma from 12:15 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

BASKETBALL

NBA Eastern Conference Finals (Game 6 of best-of-7): Miami Heat vs Boston Celtics from 6 am on Sony Six, HD

WWE RAW

Bouts from 5:30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

ROYAL TWIST

RR record highest IPL rurchase, beat KXIP by 4 wickets

Sharjah, Sept. 27: Rajasthan Royals recorded the highest rurchase in IPL history to beat Kings XI Punjab by four wickets in a high-scoring encounter here on Sunday.

Put into bat, Mayank Agarwal smashed a 50-ball 106, while skipper K.L. Rahul cracked a 54-ball 69 as the duo stitched a 183-run opening stand off 99 balls to power Punjab to an imposing 223 for 2.

Sanju Samson then put on a lion-hearted effort with a 42-ball 85 studded with seven sixes and four boundaries, while Steve Smith scored a 27-ball 50 to keep RR in the hunt.

However, it was Rahul Tewatia, who turned hero when he smashed five sixes in the 18th over off Sheldon Cottrell to turn the match on its head. He scored a 31-ball 53 after struggling initially to take them to the brink of win.

Earlier, Agarwal outshone his captain Rahul with a maiden IPL hundred.

The duo just missed the record of highest opening wicket partnership in IPL history by a mere two runs when Agarwal was out in the 17th over after hitting 10 fours and seven sixes during his magnificent 50-ball knock.

Nicholas Pooran then hit 25 not out from just eight balls while Glenn Maxwell also remained unbeaten on 13.

Rahul was content to playing second fiddle to Agarwal though the KXIP captain also made some brilliant shots during his 54-ball knock studded with seven fours and a six, continuing his rich vein of form after his 132 not out against Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Agarwal surged ahead of his captain by reaching his fifty (from 26 balls) in style with a six off Shreyas Gopal and followed it up with another maximum to bring up KXIP's 100 in the ninth over. — *PTI*



Rahul Tewatia of Rajasthan Royals plays a shot on way to his half-century against Kings XI Punjab in their Indian Premier League match at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium in the United Arab Emirates on Sunday. — *BCCI*

IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Delhi Capitals	2	2	0	0	4	+1.100
Rajasthan Royals	2	2	0	0	4	+0.615
Kings XI Punjab	3	1	2	0	2	+1.498
Mumbai Indians	2	1	1	0	2	+0.993
Kolkata Knight Riders	2	1	1	0	2	-0.767
Chennai Super Kings	3	1	2	0	2	-0.840
Royal Challengers Bangalore	2	1	1	0	2	-2.175
Sunrisers Hyderabad	2	0	2	0	0	-0.730

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

SCORECARD

Kings XI Punjab: K. L. Rahul c Shreyas Gopal b Rajpoot 69, Mayank Agarwal c Samson b Tom Curran 106, Glenn Maxwell (not out) 13, Nicholas Pooran (not out) 25. **Extras: (b-1, w-8, nb-1) 10. Total: (for 2 wks, in 20 overs) 223.**

FoW: 183-1, 194-2

Bowling: Jaydev Nadkarni 3-0-30-0, Ankit Rajpoot 4-0-39-1, Jofra Archer 4-0-46-0, Shreyas Gopal 4-0-44-0, Rahul Tewatia 1-0-19-0, Tom Curran 4-0-44-1.

Rajasthan Royals: J. Buttler c Khan b Cottrell 4, S. Smith c Mohammed Shami b Neesham 50, S. Samson c Rahul b Mohammed Shami 85, R. Tewatia c Agarwal b Mohammed Shami 53, R. Uthappa c Pooran b Mohammed Shami 9, J. Archer (not out) 13, R. Parag b Ashwin 0, T. Curran (not out) 4. **Extras: (b-1, lb-1, w-6) 8. Total: (for 6 wks, in 19.3 over) 226.**

FoW: 1-19, 2-100, 3-161, 4-203, 5-222, 6-222.

Bowling: S. Cottrell 3-0-52-1, Mohammed Shami 4-0-53-3, Ravi Bishnoi 4-0-34-0, J. Neesham 4-0-40-1, M. Ashwin 1.3-0-16-1, G. Maxwell 3-0-29-0.

Warner hits out at SRH's batters

Abu Dhabi, Sept. 27: Sunrisers Hyderabad skipper David Warner has criticised the below-par effort of his batsmen after they slumped to their second successive defeat in the ongoing IPL, saying poor application in the middle overs let the team down yet again.

Manish Pandey (51 off 38) and Wriddhiman Saha (30 off 31) failed to take on Kolkata Knight Riders' disciplined bowling in the middle overs to set a modest 143-run target after Warner chose to bat.

Coming in place of an injured Vijay Shankar, Bengal wicketkeeper batsman Saha was particularly slow to start with and wasted a lot of balls before being run out.

"We could have applied a bit more pressure on the bowlers and tried to hit more boundaries in that middle period," Warner said after the seven-wick-

We could have applied a bit more pressure on the bowlers and tried to hit more boundaries in that middle period. I'm disappointed more about the dot balls we played — there were about 35-36 dot balls in the middle, which in T20 cricket is not acceptable. I think we need to change our mindset.

— **DAVID WARNER**

Sunrisers Hyderabad skipper David Warner after losing the match against Kolkata Knight Riders

et loss to KKR on Saturday.

"I'm disappointed more about the dot balls we played — there were about 35-36 dot balls in the middle, which in T20 cricket is not acceptable. I think we need to change our mindset."

The dashing Australian opener said SRH were 20-30 runs short of what could have been a good score. "We were probably 20-30 runs short and then it would have been a good game. If you don't put the right total on board, it's going to be hard to defend."

Warner said after the seven-wick-

"We could have hit a little bit harder, taken a few more risks. We just can't be having batsmen on the bench and just two batsmen batting 20 overs. We played four-five overs for about 20 runs after I got out," Warner said.

Saha came in at No. 4 ahead of Afghan hard-hitting all-rounder Mohammad Nabi, who was fresh from his exploits in the Caribbean Premier League.

But Warner defended the move, saying he wanted a "genuine batsman" to build a partnership

after his dismissal.

"You got to put a genuine batsman in, when I got out, we were trying to build partnerships. It's easy to say, send pinch-hitter in or what not, but you got to generate some momentum," he said.

"It's just unfortunate that they bowled well. They pulled their length back. We're unable to hit the boundaries. They executed well."

Warner looked in his elements in a 30-ball 36 before becoming spinner Varun Chakravarthy's maiden IPL victim.

"Obviously, it was a very poor and soft dismissal for myself. We just got excited, pressed the button and started going on," he said.

"I don't blame anyone. I take full responsibility for myself for not batting through the overs and getting a soft dismissal."

— *PTI*

AFRIDI LAMENTS ABSENCE OF PAK PLAYERS IN IPL

Karachi, Sept. 27: Pakistan's former captain Shahid Afridi has rued the absence of top players from his country in a "big platform" like the Indian Premier League.

In a report published in the Pakistani media, Afridi said that the IPL is a big platform for any player to get exposure, gain experience and improve.

"The IPL is a big brand and I know that if our players like Babar Azam and others get a chance to play in it they would learn to play under pressure situations.

Unfortunately, due to the existing policies, our players are not getting that big platform," he said.

Pakistani players have not been part of the IPL since the first edition in 2008. — *PTI*

MI test awaits Kohli's squad

Dubai, Sept. 27: Royal Challengers Bangalore would be looking to address their pace-bowling concerns when they face defending champions Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League here on Monday.

RCB started on a winning note but then they collapsed against Kings XI Punjab, resulting in a humbling 97-run defeat.

After scores of 14 and 1, Kohli is due for a big one and would be itching to spend more time in the middle. Opener Devdutt Padikkal, who started his IPL career with a classy half-century, did not do much against KXIP and will be aiming for consistency.

Australian limited overs captain Aaron Finch would be hoping to convert starts into match-winning performances while AB de Villiers will be expected to provide the late fireworks again with the lower-order not inspiring a lot of hope.

It is still not clear whether RCB will have the services of South African all-rounder Chris Morris, who sat out of the first two games due to a side strain.

In the bowling department, Yuzvendra Chahal, as always, will be the key man with pacers, barring Navdeep Saini, leaking runs.

Dale Steyn and Umesh Yadav have proved expensive so far. The South African great is likely to retain his place in the playing eleven but the same can't be said about Yadav, who could make way for Mohammad Siraj.

England all-rounder Moeen Ali will be a welcome addition to the middle-order but with Josh Philippe keeping wickets regularly, he can only replace Steyn.

Mumbai Indians, who ticked all the boxes in their comfortable win against Kolkata Knight Riders, are unlikely to tinker with

NUMBERS GAME

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:

- Matches: 25
- Rajasthan won: 16
- Punjab won: 9

MEETING IN 2019

- Mumbai Indians beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 6 runs in Bangalore.
- Mumbai Indians beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 5 wickets in Mumbai.

FOR THE RECORD

- Virat Kohli, who scored 8,915 runs at an average of 40.89 in 268 innings of 283 innings, needs 85 runs to become first Indians and seventh batsman overall to complete 9,000 runs in Twenty-20 cricket.

- Rohit Sharma, who scored 689 runs at an average of 29.95 in 25 innings of 26 matches, is the second highest run-getter behind Mahendra Singh Dhoni (794 runs in 27 matches) against Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL.

— *S. PERVEZ QAISER*

their team composition. The biggest positive is that skipper Rohit Sharma is back among the runs and looked in ominous touch against KKR, and so did Suryakumar Yadav.

The only change that the team can make is bring in Ishan Kishan in place of the bulky Saurabh Tiwary.

Apart from their batting prowess, Hardik Pandya and Kieron Pollard can jointly perform the role of an additional bowler, but MI coach Mahela Jayawardene has made it clear that they don't want to take any risks with Hardik, who is playing after a long break following a back injury. — *PTI*

GILL HAILS CUMMINS' SUPERB COMEBACK

Abu Dhabi, Sept. 27: Young Kolkata Knight Riders opener Shubman Gill, who played an unbeaten match-winning knock against Sunrisers Hyderabad, hailed Pat Cummins for his strong comeback after the Australian pacer had a forgettable outing against Mumbai Indians in their opening IPL fixture.

The world number one Test bowler, who leaked in excess of 16 runs an over without any success against MI, smartly altered his length on Saturday to return with tidy figures of 1 for 19 as KKR restricted SRH to a below-par 142 for 4 here.

And then Gill made an unbeaten 70 off 62 balls to anchor KKR's chase.

"One odd day doesn't mean much to us and he (Cummins) bowled really well in this game," Gill said after helping KKR beat SRH by seven wickets to register their first win in IPL 2020.

Cummins, who was



Shubman Gill

bought by KKR for a record ₹15.5 crore, shared the new-ball with spinner Sunil Narine and castled an in-form Jonny Bairstow (5) with a delivery that sharply nipped back in.

"Pat is one of the best bowlers in the world right now. We had to start with Pat and Sunil," Gill said.

Gill said as an opener it's his duty to bat through the innings.

"I think as an opener, it's very important to stay there and it's your duty to see the team through," he said. — *PTI*

Halep reaches second round, Venus bows out

Paris, Sept. 27: Top-seeded Simona Halep won 10 straight games in beating Sara Sorribes Tormo 6-4, 6-0 to reach the second round of the French Open on Sunday and extend her winning streak to 15 matches.

Halep won on her 29th birthday, but with minimal celebrations planned for the evening since the coronavirus pandemic means players stay locked inside the security bubble of their hotels.

Wearing thick black leggings and a long-sleeved pink jersey to combat the chilly conditions, the 2018 champion made a series of unforced errors and trailed 4-2. But then she found her range, clinching the first set with a hold to love and

FRENCH | OPEN

sealing victory on her first match point when her Spanish opponent clipped a forehand wide.

Over on Court Suzanne Lenglen, U.S. Open runner-up Victoria Azarenka experienced a vastly different temperature to Flushing Meadows only two weeks ago.

The 10th-seeded Azarenka, who beat Danka Kovinic 6-1, 6-2, fumed when match officials didn't immediately send them back to the locker room during a rain interruption.

"I am going to get frozen," she complained.

"No. I'm not waiting here a couple of minutes because I'm cold. It's eight

degrees, eight degrees, I live in Florida, I am used to hot weather."

After the match, she said the conditions were risky. She next faces Anna Karolina Schmiedlova, who won 6-4, 6-4 against American veteran Venus Williams. "Even on my really good shots she had a lot of amazing replies that just kind of came out of nowhere," Williams said.

Williams exited in the first round at Roland Garros for the third straight year and is 0-3 in Grand Slams this year following the Australian Open and the U.S. Open. Since the start of 2018, the seven-time Grand Slam champion has lost in the first round in seven of the past 11 major tournaments. — *AP*

Bottas exploits Hami's troubles in Russia



Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas celebrates on the podium after winning the Russian Formula One Grand Prix at the Sochi Autodrom circuit on Sunday. — *AP*

Sochi (Russia), Sept. 27: Valtteri Bottas took full advantage of a troubled day for his Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton to claim the ninth win of his career with a measured drive to victory in Sunday's incident-packed Russian Grand Prix.

The Finn swooped to take second place at the start and inherited the lead when the runaway series leader and six-time champion took an extended pit-stop to serve two five-second penalties for irregular pre-race practice starts.

A disgruntled Hamilton, aiming to win and equal Michael Schumacher's record of 91 Grand Prix triumphs, re-joined in 11th

place, but fought back to finish third behind Bottas and Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

His second win in Russia and second this season reinvigorated Bottas' challenge for the drivers' title and reduced Hamilton's lead to 44 points.

Sergio Perez came home fourth for Racing Point ahead of Renault's Daniel Ricciardo, who had to take a five-second penalty for an infringement, and Charles Leclerc, who was sixth for Ferrari. Esteban Ocon was seventh for Renault ahead of local hero Daniil Kvyat and his Alpha Tauri team-mate Pierre Gasly and Alex Albon in the second Red Bull.

Hamilton did not want to talk about his penalty.

"It doesn't matter. It's done now. I'll take the points and move on, but congratulations to Valtteri," said Hamilton.

STEWARDS ARE TRYING TO STOP ME: HAMILTON

Hamilton accused the stewards "trying to stop me" after he was handed two five-second penalties that wrecked his hopes of a record-equalling 91st victory.

The runaway series leader said the stewards' penalties, given to him for a minor infringement when he performed two pre-race practice starts, were excessive. — *AFP*

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