

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 13 | SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 27°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aavani 28
Tithi: Ekadashi
Star: Punarpusam
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.47 am
Zohar: 12.12 pm
Asar: 3.21 pm
Maghrib: 6.16 pm
Isha: 7.28 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.12 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 1.42 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 2.57 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+89,871)	(+1.074)
47,47,250	78,577

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,495)
TN: 4,97,066 8,307

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,88,37,565

DEATHS

9,22,572

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
213

worldometers.info

Neet today amid strict Covid-19 precautions

New Delhi: Over 15 lakh candidates are expected to appear in medical entrance exam Neet on Sunday which will be conducted amid strict precautions in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to officials of the National Testing Agency (NTA). In order to maintain social distancing, the NTA has increased the number of exam centres from originally-planned 2,546 to 3,843, while the number of candidates per room has been reduced from earlier 24 to 12. The crucial National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Neet), which is a pen and paper based test unlike engineering entrance exam JEE, has already been deferred twice in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. The exam was originally scheduled for May 3, but was pushed to July 26, and then to September 13. A total of 15.97 lakh candidates have registered for the exam. — *PTI*

COUNTER

POINT



They don't let any chance slip by for publicity!

Enforcement Directorate seizes Jagathrakshakan's properties

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT 12

Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has ordered the seizure of properties worth ₹89.19 crore held by S. Jagathrakshakan, DMK MP representing Arakkonam and owner of a medical college in Chennai, and his family members.

A press release from ED said on Saturday that Jagathrakshakan had ille-

gally acquired, held and transferred foreign security to the tune of Rs 89.19 crore in a Singapore based company by violating the provisions of Foreign Exchange Management Act (Pema).

Jagathrakshakan and his son Sundeeep Aanand had subscribed to 70,00,000 shares and 20,00,000 shares (valued at Singapore \$1 each) respectively of M/s Silver Park International

Pte Ltd, Singapore, without obtaining the approval of Reserve Bank of India on June 15, 2017.

These shares were transferred by Jagathrakshakan to his family members in contravention of Section 4 of FEMA read with Regulation 3 of the Foreign Exchange Management (Transfer or Issue of Foreign Security) Regulations, 2004, the ED said.



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HC: DCI must revisit rules on student migration



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Assange court case to resume

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RCB are in great shape, says Kohli



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Covid recovery rate in TN shows growth

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, SEPT 12

Bringing relief to the people and the authorities in the state fighting pandemic Covid-19 after relaxing lockdown norms and allowing more economic activities, the daily recovery rate of patients infected with Coronavirus has improved after the last 40-day of decline.

A total of 24,402 patients recovered for the last twenty days, which is an increase from 20,759 in the previous 20 days. As per the data provided by the state health department, 22,202 positive cases were reported in the last 20 days while 22,404 people tested positive in the previous 20 days.

The number of deaths also came down in the last twenty days (August 23-September 12) to 378 from the 405 recorded during the previous 20 days (from August 3 to August 23).

The number of recovered cases had quadrupled from May 3 to May 13, doubled between May 13 and May 23, rose in between May 23 and June 3 and improved in between June 13 and June 24. The test positivity rate and the active cases have also shown a downward trend in the City for the last 20days.

The declining trend in daily positivity rate shows as 1,692 (June 24 July 14), 1,166 (July 15 to August 3) 1,120 (August 3 to 23) and 1,110 (August 23 to September 12)

The number of positive cases also recorded a steady growth, though

Trial of Oxford vaccine resumes

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

Biopharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford on Saturday said that clinical trials for their coronavirus vaccine have resumed in Britain after the Medicines Health Regulatory Authority's (MHRA) confirmed that the trials were safe. The human trials resumed days after a pause had been announced in the trials after an adverse reaction in one of the participants

However, the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has ordered the Serum Institute of India (SII)

without a regular pattern: from 1,273 on May 3 to 4,882 on May 13 to 9,364 on May 23 to 16,585 on June 3 to 45,814 on June 24 to 79,662 on July 14 to 1,02,985 on August 3 to 1,25,389 on August 23 to 1,47,591 on September 12

The trend of active cases, as per the data, shows that it moved up from 1,007 on May 3 to 4,012 on May 13 to 5,461 on May 23 to 7,805 on June 3 to 18,673 on June 24 but slowed to 15,814 on July 14 and further down to 11,983 on August 3 but rose to 13,223 on August 23 but fell to 10,645 on September 12. ■ **P4**

to suspend any new recruitment in Phase 2 and 3 clinical trials for Covid-19 vaccine candidate ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 till patient safety issues are resolved.

AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford, as the trial sponsor, said that they cannot disclose further medical information but confirmed that independent investigations concluded that the trials were safe to restart

"Clinical trials for the AstraZeneca Oxford coronavirus vaccine, AZD1222, have resumed in the UK following confirmation by the MHRA that it was safe to do so," AstraZeneca said in a statement. ■ **P7**

COVAXIN ANIMAL TRIAL A SUCCESS: BHARAT BIOTECH

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 12

Animal trial results of the two-dose, unactivated SARS-Cov 2 vaccine, Covaxin BBV 152, has shown protection and reduction in the replication of SARS-Cov 2 virus in nose, throat and lung tissues.

According to the official note released by Bharat Biotech International Limited, there have been no adverse side-effects noted in the trials. The animal trials were conducted on 20 monkeys in India and three different vaccine candidates were tried on them.

The first dose of vaccine was given on Day 0 and the second dose was given on Day 14.

India to top in Covid infections by Oct. 18

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT 12

The gap between the US and India in new cases is 50,000 on September 12 and, at this speed, experts predict that in 38 days (by October 18) India will be number one in Covid-19 cases in the world. The good news is that the strain is not as virulent

and will not be fatal.

The total difference on September 12 was 1,978,868 cases. The US recorded a total of 6,636,247 cases while India recorded 4,657,379 cases on September 12 The increasing number of cases in India is a fact but 90 per cent of them are mild cases due to the less virulent strain of SARS-Cov 2 virus.

Govt scraps all-party meet ahead of monsoon session

ANIMESH SINGH | DC
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

As the monsoon session of parliament, which starts on Monday, is being held despite the coronavirus pandemic raging across the country, which has taken over 77,400 lives, the government -- in an unusual development -- has decided not to hold the customary all-party meeting which is normally held a day prior to a session and is presided over by the Prime Minister.

The session will be held from September 14 to October 1. The two Houses will sit in shifts without a break for all 18 days, including Saturdays and Sundays.

The parliamentary affairs minister's office confirmed to this newspaper that the all-party meeting will not be held on Sunday, September 13. This sends out a signal of defiance to the Opposition, despite the fact that the

● **The session will be held from September 14 to October 1. The two Houses will sit in shifts without a break for all 18 days, including Saturdays and Sundays**

monsoon session is being held amid significant developments like the escalating Chinese aggression on the Line of Actual Control, the Centre's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, with India among the top three worst-affected nations globally, and the economic slowdown.

The ruling NDA is, meanwhile, quite confident that a "divided" Opposition will not be able to attack the government effectively during the session. It believes the division among its rivals is likely to be visible during the parliamentary debates.

BJP sources pointed out

how Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's aggression against the Centre over the tense border situation found "little" support from the other Opposition parties.

"The way the government has strongly defended the country's interests at the border is there for all to see. We are sure that the Congress will be isolated during any debate over the issue," a party leader said, claiming that most non-NDA parties are backing the Narendra Modi government over the issue. There was a lot of uneasiness within the Congress, a BJP leader claimed.

However, the Opposition, including the Congress, Trinamul Congress and DMK, are planning a joint offensive against the government on national security issues like the border situation with China, the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, the economy and GST compensation to states.



An Indian Army convoy moves on Manali-Leh road towards amid India-China stand off, near Manali, Saturday.

— *PTI*

Troops on Chinese border get ready for harsh winter

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

The Union ministry of home affairs (MHA) has started preparing well in advance for potential threats from the Chinese forces in the coming winter season by rushing bulk supplies of essential commodities such as special winter tents and heaters, warm clothes, sunglasses and packaged food.

The MHA is trying to ensure that adequate stocks for over six months are available at all high-altitude border locations along the India-China border in the next 10 days. Sources claimed a large consignment of "good quality essential supplies" were being transported to all remote locations in the high-altitude region. In view of the increased tensions with China in Ladakh, the forces are making

unprecedented arrangements to ensure China does not attempt any border incursions during winter.

It has also been decided all security forces will remain at their respective locations all through the winter to deal with any Chinese threat. Both Indian and Chinese forces used to withdraw from their patrolling locations during the harsh winter months but this time the Indian forces will remain at their positions.

The MHA has already asked all border guarding forces to send in their specific requirements for winter deployment along the sensitive China border. It also directed these forces, particularly on the China and Nepal borders, to finalise their "winter deployment schedule" by this month and start deployment from next month.

China hands over 5 Indians who went missing from Arunachal

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, SEPT. 12

Five men who had strayed across the international border in Arunachal Pradesh about 10 days back have been handed over to India by China's People's Liberation Army on Saturday.

Disclosing this, defence PRO Lt. Col. Harsh Wardhan Pande said: "The Indian Army took over all five individuals at Kibithu on September 12, 2020 after completing all the necessary formalities."

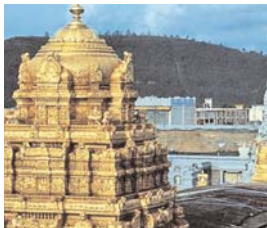
All the five will now be quarantined for 14 days and will be handed over to their family members.

TTD says it will resume allotting SSD tokens soon

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, SEPT. 12

Reiterating that its first priority is for common pilgrim devotees, the Tirumala Tirupati devasthanam (TTD) stated that it will resume the free slotted sarva darshan (SSD) tokens for common devotees to enjoy Srivari darshan as early as possible.

TTD stated that it has temporarily stalled SSD



tokens in view of spreading of the coronavirus in temple city.

TTD clarified that it had recently resumed issuing 3,000 SSD tokens at

Tirupati. However, it was suspended following concerns expressed by local public representatives and denizens about the spike of Covid-19 cases in the temple city with the anticipated influx of ten to twelve thousand devotees from Tamil Nadu in the Purattasi month.

TTD said it had compensated for the suspended 3,000 tokens by enhancing the quota of Rs 300 special darshan tickets.

24 students score 100 percentile in IIT JEE Main

New Delhi, Sept. 12: As many as 24 students, five of them from the national capital, scored 100 percentile in the JEE-Mains exam which was conducted earlier this month after being postponed twice in view of Covid-19.

The result for the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE)-Mains was declared late night on Friday.

The exam for admission

to engineering colleges was conducted from September 1 to 6, amid stringent precautions and social distancing measures.

Based on the results of the JEE-Mains Paper 1 and Paper 2, the top 2.45 lakh candidates will be eligible to appear for the JEE-Advanced exam, which is a one-stop exam to get admission into the

23 premier Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). JEE-Advanced is scheduled to take place on September 27.

A total of 8.58 lakh candidates registered for the JEE-Mains exam for admission to engineering courses in IITs, NITs and Centrally Funded Technical Institutions while only 74 per cent of them appeared. *PTI*

How yaks help PLA survive in the mountains

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD SEPT. 12

They chop it well from the head to tail, dump the large portions of flesh into a container and store it a few feet below the earth for several days for worms to feed on the flesh and multiply. Weeks later, the container is pulled up and it is feast time.

This is how the soldiers of the People's Liberation Army of China deployed along the Line of Actual

Control (LAC) in Tibet autonomous region eat the yak, with the worms, which makes them stronger and hardier. A few kilometres on the Indian side, the yak, dwindling in numbers, is worshipped.

The yak is a special animal to the PLA. Recently, the eastern command of the Indian Army handed over 13 yaks and four calves that strayed across the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh, to China, in what was called a



humane gesture.

Sources acquainted with the functioning and habits of the PLA soldiers told *Deccan Chronicle* that the Chinese army has been heavily dependent on yaks even prior to the 1962 war.

In fact, the PLA has a dedicated yak unit which takes men and material through impenetrable mountain passes along the LAC.

"Although the PLA soldiers kill and eat yaks, they do so mostly when the animal dies accidentally or is old and of no more use for them, though there have been instances wherein they have snatched yaks from locals in Tibet and consumed them. They use yaks for patrolling. Their soldiers have survived on

the mountains not due to their technological advancements but due to the yaks which even provide warmth to the soldiers who sleep beside them during harsh winters," the sources said. The PLA considers the yak to be a symbol of good luck, success and strength. According to feng shui, a traditional practice which originated in ancient China, yak heads and tails both symbolise good luck. The head symbolises strength. ■ **P5**

Endemic species sighted during Covid lockdown

Chennai, Sept 12: The lockdown forced people to largely remain within the confines of their homes, but it was life as usual for birds and a good number of them were sighted by bird watchers here and in other parts of Tamil Nadu.

At least 80 bird species in June and about 83 in July were spotted in the Pallikaranai marsh, the last remaining wetland in the city, which also attracts migratory birds, according to the Tamil Nadu Forest department.

"The Greater Flamingo was the seasonal migratory bird here. The marshland is the home for about 8,300 birds," a senior official told PTL.

Apart from breeding residents, the biodiversity rich area attracts a good number of winter visitors.

The migratory bird season at Pallikaranai usually begins with the onset of the northeast monsoon in October.

Some of the resident bird species include Purple Swamphen, Common Moorhen, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Purple Heron, Black-Winged Stilt, Common Coot, Indian Spot-Billed Duck, Spot-Billed Pelican, and Pied Kingfisher. Members of the Salem



Cattle Egret



Indian Spot-Billed Duck



Asian Koel



Pied Kingfisher

Ornithological Foundation (SOF) have recorded 81 endemic bird species in the city in western Tamil Nadu during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Asian Koel, Cattle Egret, Red-vented Bulbul, common Myna and Yellow billed Babbler were among the birds spotted in Salem.

With a steep decline in noise pollution and industrial and other human activities coming to a halt, the call or song of birds fill our ears, said wildlife activist K. Mohan Raj.

"But the sky, the air, the birds are always there. We are experiencing them anew as we are staying at home. It

is not that the birds have suddenly surfaced because of the lockdown," he said.

"Had we kept our eyes and ears alert, we would have spotted the resident birds on normal days," says N. Subramaniam, an avid bird watcher.

"All the birds that have been spotted in towns and villages were always there, but we failed to see them due to our fast-paced life," Raj said.

S. Venkatesh, a naturalist and member of the SOF, said the foundation managed to keep its members engaged during the lockdown by requesting them to sight the birds even from their backyards and record them.

"With the lockdown imposing numerous restrictions we could not venture out. So, we were asked to spot the birds from our windows, gardens and villages. Since our members were spread across the rural areas of Salem district we were able to notice and record 81 endemic species on World Endemic Day (in May)," he said.

The foundation had even introduced lockdown nature writing challenges to encourage the habit of nature writing and also to keep boredom and stress at bay. — PTI



Dolls put up for Navarathri-Kolu exhibition cum sales at Poompuhar showroom on Anna Salai.

— DC

Unlocked TN gets Kolu dolls ready

N. SAMPATH | DC
CHENNAI, SEPT. 12

Dollmakers are getting ready with their new dolls for the nine-day Navarathri festival, which will be the first major Hindu festival after the state government implemented the unlock procedures.

According to Kumar, a dollmaker from Kancheepuram, they have started making dolls and dispatching them to various places. "For the past five months, due to the lockdown, we were not able to make dolls. But as the lockdown has been relaxed now, we have expedited dollmaking and started dispatching the dolls to various parts of Tamil Nadu and neighbouring states.

Rajalakshmi, a housewife, said she is happy because the government has relaxed the lockdown and now her relatives can visit her house for the Navarathri festival which she plans to celebrate following the government norms, including social distancing and washing of hands.



Medical consent forms under scanner



Sanjay Pinto

Do you remember signing a consent form at a hospital, before a surgery or procedure, either as a patient or as a relative and attendant? Chances are that you would have hurriedly affixed your signature against the 'x' mark indicated, without reading the content in its entirety. You are not alone. That's how most of us in a state of anxiety and panic comply with this formality.

In a recent decision in Vinod Khanna Vs R.G. Stone Urology & Laproscopy (2020) the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, while dismissing a complaint of medical negligence, made scathing observations about a "pre-printed and fixed 'informed consent cum undertaking' form, with blank spaces for limited select handwritten entries and signatures". Terming it "administrative arbitrariness one-sided high handedness, unfair and deceptive", it imposed exemplary costs of ten lakh rupees on the hospital, and ordered it to discontinue the "unfair trade practice" under Section 2(1)(r) of the old Consumer Protection Act, 1986, with immediate effect. The commission's antenna went up as "the main body of the form" could "fit into any procedure, any doctor, and any patient."

This stricture by the country's highest consumer law body calls for an overhaul of the existing nature of consent forms. While doctors and hospitals do need to have legal documentation in place before performing surgeries on patients, the actual contours of consent need to be explored. Consent must ideally be specific and not a carte blanche. There are practical issues. Can consent for a diagnostic procedure be expanded to include removal of organs, citing a medical emergency? What if the patient is not conscious and the attendant present is not educated enough to give consent for a major operation? This is applicable to many senior citizens whose children may be abroad, in a different time zone and not immediately accessible even on the telephone. How many patients or relatives have sufficient knowledge of medical complexities to be able to take a potential life altering decision?

In a seminal judgment on the point, the Supreme Court in Samira Kohli Vs Dr Prabha Manchanda (2008) had laid down 5 broad principles on consent. First, the consent must be voluntary and based on reasonable competence and understanding of what the surgery entails. Secondly, the patient must be given adequate information – on the nature, purpose, benefits and risks involved in both undergoing the procedure and refusing it. Thirdly, the consent must be for specific treatment, with an emergency being the only exception for an addi-



JUSTICE
FOR ALL

tional and unauthorised procedure. Fourthly, a common consent can be obtained in advance for a further procedure if it becomes necessary on the operating table. Fifthly, the information furnished by the doctor to the patient must conform to common professional standards and hinge on the patient's physical and mental condition. These guidelines were reiterated by the Supreme Court in Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences Vs Prasanth S. Dhanaka (2009)

Quoting from medical literature, the Supreme Court in Samira Kohli's case clarified that "a surgeon need not warn the patient of remote risks, any more than an anaesthetist need warn the patient that a certain small number of those anaesthetised will suffer cardiac arrest or never recover consciousness. Only where there is a recognised risk, rather than a rare complication, is the surgeon under an obligation to warn the patient of that risk. He is not under a duty to warn the patient of

the possible results of hypothetical negligent surgery."

At play is the code of medical ethics laid down by the Medical Council of India, drawing its legitimacy from Section 33 of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956. Under Clause 13 of the Code, "Before performing an operation the physician should obtain in writing the consent from the husband or wife, parent or guardian in the case of a minor, or the patient himself as the case may be. In an operation which may result in sterility the consent of both husband and wife is needed."

My heart goes out to doctors who have a stringent standard of disclosure. In the middle of their noble task of saving lives, the men in white have an onerous responsibility of deciding not just the dosage of drugs but also calibrating the amount and nature of information to be communicated to the patient - all inherent and potential hazards of the proposed treatment, the alternatives, if any, and the likely effect, if the patient remained untreated. The apex court referred to instances where information disclosed "might cause psychological damage, or where the patient would become so emotionally distraught as to prevent a rational decision."

With many patients today gripped by 'cyberchondria', signing on the dotted line can be quite like a procedure in itself!

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

Politicking in echo chamber of social media



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

Does the manner in which a recent tumult in actor Seeman's Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) unfolded indicate an emerging style of politicking in Tamil Nadu? The question is being raised with trepidation because a similar trend is perceptible elsewhere, too, and it is indeed frightening to envisage the new style becoming the regular norm in future.

For those who know little about the NTK or the upheaval, let me elucidate. The party run by Seeman on the principles of Tamil nationalism, which, to put it succinctly, primarily means that Tamil Nadu is for Tamils and others have no business there, faced a purely internal strife with two of its popular leaders bidding adieu.

Seeman or the NTK cannot be dismissed lightly in the present day political sce-

nario as the party has more supporters than the BJP in the State and its voter base has been swelling – in the 2016 Assembly elections it polled 1.1 per cent of the votes while in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls it secured 3.9 per cent.

So, why did the departure of the two leaders, Kalyanasundaram and Rajiv Gandhi, who were in fact the faces of the party in the public domain, not become a matter of public discussion? Well, it did and that is precisely the cause of the trepidation. The entire drama unfolded on social media and social media alone.

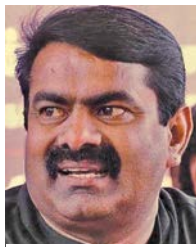
Starting from the meek speculations on Kalyanasundaram's plans to quit to Seeman concluding, in a 36-minute interview, that he did not want to have anything to do with the two traitorous 'younger

brothers', every development on the episode was on social media, where the bickering was triggered, facilitated, accelerated and exacerbated. It's a different matter that the real reasons for the fight were not known till the end.

But despite the oodles of bad blood and acrimony, usually associated with all such break-ups and purges, frothing and overflowing in a series of interviews, news reports, memes etc., very little of the story spilled out into the mainstream media or the political arena. And it was not quite surprising for the simple reason that most of the political business of the NTK itself has been resonating only in the echo chambers of social media.

In a state where political agendas and slogans were framed on public platforms, hall meetings, student gatherings and public debates and carried out among the people, political dynamics has changed so much that to know political developments one now has to look into YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and so on.

In fact, there is no way of keeping a count on the Tamil YouTube channels that had proliferated of late



Seeman



Kalyanasundaram



Rajiv Gandhi

- it could run into lakhs. But it is definitely a welcome trend in the context of mainstream media failing to be objective and truthful to the people's aspirations. And it was a phalanx of those alternative media channels that ran roughshod on the issue by actively participating in the narration of the NTK episode.

Indeed, there were too many interviews, in too many channels, of a slew of dramatis personae in the sordid episode, which primarily boils down to being an internal matter of a party headed by someone who is an admirer of Adolf Hitler. To put it clearly, it is Seeman's party, whose agenda, policies, principles and style of functioning is defined by him alone. So a revolt by two leaders, who were actually propped by him, can be nothing more

than inconsequential.

Yet, it is a development whose vignettes could be captured frame by frame and presented to an information hungry audience, at least in view of its gossip value, at least to draw eyeballs. That it happened in the social media platforms – if YouTube channels rushed to meet the people concerned, Twitter and Facebook came handy to disseminate the basic information, views and opinions – and the stakeholders were kept informed of the developments is something that had to be taken note of.

Diverse views were expressed with those supporting Seeman and those finding fault with him, be it within the framework of the party or outside of it, putting out tweets, Facebook posts, memes and also giving interviews that

it sort of gave the impression that a party like NTK, whose ideology is rooted in a traditional idea of Tamil nationalism and identity politics, is being run on social media.

Can a political idea be disseminated through the various social media platforms alone and be rest assured that it would reach the entire population of Tamil Nadu? Going by some recent happenings, it is not only the NTK, the following for which necessarily comes from the younger generation of tech savvy population, that is depending on social media. Even popular political parties having the patronage of mainstream media and having a tradition of reaching out to people physically are investing much on social media campaigns and even putting out political teasers occasionally. A recent Twitter hashtag that was made to trend through deliberate design and vengeance said something like the DMK was full of lechers. Earlier on when the 'I don't know Hindi' hashtag trended with some celebrities showing off their T-shirts with a few slogans that went to say that they don't know Hindi, the

counter hashtag that trended the same day was one against the DMK party. These incidents clearly indicate that the hashtags were made to trend by the IT wings of political parties that were opposed to the DMK, though it is difficult to pinpoint them with evidence.

That does not mean the DMK lags behind in this game of using social media as a channel of communication and a weapon for political mobilisation. The party has already roped in the services of I-PAC, an organization run by renowned political strategist Prashant Kishor whose specialty is using social media for the campaigns. Even DMK's Youth Wing leader Udhayanidhi Stalin has his exclusive team to handle social media campaigns.

AIADMK's IT wing has an ambitious plan of recruiting 80,000 people before the Assembly elections in 2021 and has already built a robust structure. The BJP's IT wing has recruited people, including journalists, to tweet and put out posts in support of the party and its ideology for a handsome remuneration. So, will the next electoral battle be

fought on social media platforms that operate on internet connections?

The recently introduced online classes for students of all kinds, in the wake of the Coronavirus crisis, threw up some real-life facts that showed the gaps on the internet connectivity issue. Though mobile phones might have reached most households in the State, not everyone uses the internet or has access to social media due to economic reasons. There are people who cannot afford to buy a smartphone or cannot pay for the internet. So, trying to run political operations only through social media can leave out large chunks of the population in oblivion.

There are people and communities that need a direct interaction with politicians and leaders to make political decisions. That could be one reason for the NTK's inability to make inroads into all sections of Tamil society. But it should not become a cause for future failure of established political parties that lately tend to develop a tunnel vision and view the developing political scenario through YouTube.

SHORT TAKES

Pondy logs 419 new Covid-19 cases, five more deaths

Puducherry, Sep 12 (PTI) With 419 more people testing positive for coronavirus in Puducherry on Saturday, the overall tally of infections rose to 19,439 in the union territory.

Director of Health and Family Welfare, S Mohan Kumar said in a release that five more people succumbed to the viral infection during last 24 hours ending 10 am on Saturday, pushing the toll to 370.

The official said 455 patients recovered and were discharged on Saturday.

Most of the deceased had co-morbidities and they were in the age group of 42 to 71 years.

The fresh cases were identified after examination of 3,792 samples, he said and pointed out that of the total 19,439 Covid-19 cases 4,831 were active, while 14,238 patients recovered and were discharged.

As many as 95,919 samples were tested so far and 74,136 out of them were found to be negative.

The result of examination of remaining samples was awaited.

The fatality and recovery rates were 1.90 per cent and 73.24 per cent respectively.

Of the 419 new cases, Puducherry region accounted for 380 while Karaikal had 15 and Yanam 24.

Mahe region an enclave in Kerala did not report any fresh case, the Director said. — PTI

As many as 95,919 samples were tested so far and 74,136 out of them were found to be negative. The result of examination of remaining samples was awaited

Two teens 'drown' off Mahabs beach

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 12

Two boys aged 17 and 15 feared drowned off Mamallapuram beach, as they remained untraced after going missing while swimming the sea on Saturday.

The police said Harihar Vignesh, 17, a first-year engineering student and Akash, 15, a class 10 student, were neighbours.

They live in Kodambakkam. On Saturday, the duo along with their families visited Mamallapuram beach and were swimming in the sea, even though policemen deployed there warned them not to venture into the sea.

Harihar Vignesh and Akash were sucked in by a giant wave. After the families alerted the police patrol team, a rescue operation was launched with the help of fishermen. However, they could not be traced until 6 pm on Saturday.

The Mamallapuram police who have registered a case suspect that the duo could have drowned. However, as their bodies did not wash ashore, the search operation has not been abandoned yet. The Indian Coast Guard has also been roped in to trace the missing boys.

Leaders mourn death of Neet aspirant

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 12

Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam and DMK president M. K. Stalin were among those who condoled the death of Jothishree Durga, a Neet aspirant from Madurai who committed suicide by hanging on Saturday, the day before the medical entrance test date.

It is sad to know that students, the pillars of our future, were taking such extreme steps, lamented Panneerselvam in a tweet, urging parents to stand by students and help them face the challenges with fortitude.

Stalin, in his Facebook page, said he was shocked to hear about the girl's death. Suicide is not a solution, Neet is not a test, Stalin said.

Since the Centre was adamant in holding the Neet we do not know how many more lives we might lose, said MDMK general secretary Vaiko in a statement. Recalling the various cases of suicide by students fearing the outcome of Neet, he said Neet should be banned to save lives and uphold social justice.

Conveying his condolences to the family of the Jothishree Durga, PMK founder Dr S Ramadoss said she hanged herself out of fear of Neet after leaving a message. So far 15 Neet aspirants had committed suicide, he said in a statement.

Neet helped private coaching centres to make money, he said, adding that the Centre should cancel the test at least for Tamil Nadu.



Jothisri Durga who committed suicide in Madurai.



Revenue minister R.B. Udayakumar consoling the parents after their daughter Jothisri Durga committed suicide in Madurai on Saturday. — K. Manikandan

Stop eulogising student suicides, says Ponnar

M. ARUOLI | DC
THOOTHUKUDI, SEPT. 12

Eulogising and popularising students' suicide will be detrimental, responded former Union minister and BJP leader Pon Radhakrishnan.

Responding to media persons here on Saturday, after presiding over the Thoothukudi district BJP functionaries meet over the suicide of Neet aspirant, Jothisri Durga, of Madurai, Radhakrishnan said that students with suicidal tendencies could be saved by

the intervention of the parents and teachers at the right time, by rightly understanding their problems.

Such students need psychological support and proper guidance.

But political leaders eulogising such unfortunate incidents and popularising it through the media goes counter-productive, regretted the BJP leader.

"Let the media handle such issues with utmost care and responsibility," said Radhakrishnan.

Reacting to DMK presi-

dent M K Stalin's statement that the DMK would come to power in the state in the next eight months, Radhakrishnan said, "He has been day dreaming like that since 2011, and I wish he continues his dreaming even after 2021 election."

Regarding the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana scam, though Radhakrishnan appreciated the steps taken by the government to book the culprits, he said it was the government's responsibility to properly implement the scheme.

Neet: Pondy CM says people will teach BJP lesson during polls

Puducherry, Sept. 12: Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy on Saturday said the BJP-led Central government was allegedly playing with the lives of the youth by holding the Neet despite protests.

Addressing a virtual press conference here, he said the people of Puducherry would teach

the BJP a lesson in the forthcoming Assembly polls for sticking to its guns to hold the Neet.

Assembly poll is due in 2021 as the present ministry which was installed in office in June 2016 would complete its five-year term.

The Chief Minister said he had written several letters to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him

to drop the Neet-based selection of the students.

He said Neet, designed on the basis of the CBSE syllabus, would be tough to crack as students here have been following state board syllabus.

So, he said, Neet should be done away with in the interest of the students in Puducherry.

Narayanasamy expressed grief over students in

recent days n ending their lives by suicide out of fear and anxiety caused allegedly by the Centre's decision to hold Neet for admission to medical courses.

He said the system of selecting students for professional courses by the Puducherry government through centralised admission committee (Centac) on the basis of marks obtained in the plus-2 public exami-

nation was helpful and did not cause any hardship.

Referring to the Covid-19 norms and alleged police harassment of two-wheeler riders for not wearing masks, the Chief Minister asked the law enforcers not to mete out such treatment.

"Police should not harass the people, instead should act as their friends," he said. — PTI



A Chennai school, venue for Neet to be held on Sunday, getting ready.

— DC

Journalist Sudhangan no more

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 12

Well known Tamil journalist Sudhangan passed away at the age of 63 on Saturday. He was undergoing treatment for a lung ailment in the last few days.

Sudhangan, whose original name was Rangarajan, had to change the name when he worked in the Kumudam magazine as there was another



Tamizhan Express.

Later on he was associated with several TV channels like Raj TV, Vijay TV and Jaya TV.

His book Suttachhu Suttachhu on the MGR-MR

Radha dispute which led to the shooting incident was a bestseller, said Madras Reporters Guild president R. Rangaraj.

He also conducted a number of programmes on old Tamil songs through Jaya TV channel. In recent times, he was associated with vikatakavi.in, a web-based Tamil magazine, Rangaraj said in the condolence message released on behalf of the Guild.

Chennai Press Club joint secretary Bharathi Tamilan, on behalf of the Club, conveyed his condolences to the grieving family of Sudhangan and to all his journalist friends.

Several journalists who had worked with him or had been mentored by him, social activists and politicians took to social media to remember the man who had a chequered career in journalism.



Indian Community Welfare Organisation (ICWO) in association with Greater Chennai Corporation creates corona awareness at Anna Nagar on Saturday. Essential items were distributed to families.

— DC

Lady doctor killed in road accident near Cheyyur

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 12

A 29-year-old doctor died after the car she was driving rammmed a tree near Cheyyur on East Coast Road on Saturday afternoon.

The deceased has been identified as Rekha, who lived in Puzhal in the city. She worked at a private hospital in the city.

According to police sources, Rekha was heading towards Puducherry on the East Coast Road with her two friends. At around 2:30 pm, when the car was crossing Nainarkuppam near Seiyur, the driver lost control of the car and rammmed it against a palm tree on the roadside. In the impact, the front portion of the car was completely damaged and Rekha was crushed to death on the spot. The local people who witnessed the accident alerted the ambulance. Two other occupants of the car, who are yet to be identified, were taken to the Chengalpet government hospital for treatment.



Mangled remains of the car after the accident which claimed the life of a woman.

The local police were alerted, who arrived at the spot and held inquiries. They shifted the body of the deceased to the Chengalpet government hospital for post-mortem.

A case has been registered and further investigation is under way.

In another accident, near Tambaram in the early hours of Saturday, a courier van plying between Chennai and Tanjore overturned, injuring the driver.

The injured person has been identified as Balaji, 36. The incident happened at 3 am, when Balaji was travelling to Tanjore to deliver couriers. While he was near Kannadapalayam, the car hit the median and turned around on the side of the road.

He suffered minor injuries and is undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the city. The Chromepet traffic police registered a case. a

HC: DCI must revisit rules on student migration

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, SEPT. 12

Dealing with a case of migration of a student from one private dental college in the city to another, the Madras high court has noted that the facts and circumstances of the case highlight the necessity for the Dental Council of India (DCI) to revisit the BDS regulations on migration in order to create a framework that ensures high standards of dental education enabling migra-

tion on reasonable grounds. Disposing of an appeal filed by the DCI, the first bench comprising Chief Justice A.P. Sahi and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy set aside an order of a single judge, which directed the DCI to give permission to PSR Lakshmi Bhuvaneshwari Preethi, a student of Madha Dental College and Hospital in the city, to join Ragas Dental College and Hospital in Uthandi in the third year of the BDS course for the academic year 2020-2021.

Considering the career of the student, the bench said, "Keeping in mind the situation and the discussion in the preceding paragraph, in case the first respondent (PSR Lakshmi Bhuvaneshwari Preethi) is willing to join the IIInd year and the fourth respondent college (Ragas Dental College) is willing to admit her in the IIInd year, we grant leave to her to make a fresh representation to the DCI through the Dr M.G.R. Medical University for permission to migrate by join-

ing the IIInd year. Upon receipt of such representation, the DCI is directed to consider the same in the light of the observations contained herein and pass orders thereon on merits within four weeks from the date of receipt of such representation".

According to Preethi, since the Madha Dental College demanded exorbitant tuition and examination fees and donations, she filed three petitions and while the petitions were pending, she obtained a

transfer certificate from the college. While disposing of the petitions, the court directed the Dr M.G.R. Medical University to forward the request for her migration to the DCI, along with its recommendation, for approval.

In these circumstances, she decided to migrate to the Ragas Dental College, which also agreed to admit her in the IIIInd year. However, the DCI rejected her request. Challenging the same, she filed a petition and a single judge

allowed it.

S. Haja Mohideen Gisthi, counsel for DCI, pointed out that migration from one dental college to another was not a student's right and that a request for migration may be considered and approved by the DCI only on compassionate grounds. Moreover, migration was permitted only in the beginning of the IIInd year and not in the IIIInd year, Gisthi added.

The bench said on perusal of note 1 (i) of regulation IV of the BDS Regulations, it

was clear that migration was permitted only in the beginning of the IIInd year. The proposed migration by this student was for the purpose of joining in the IIIInd year in Ragas Dental College.

The single judge was also conscious of the fact that the BDS regulations do not permit migration and recorded the same in his order. Thus, the order of the single judge cannot be sustained and was liable to be set aside, the bench added.

DTCP PLOTS @ SATHY ROAD

KOVILPALAYAM	Rs. 2.30 Lacs
ATHIPALAYAM	Rs. 3.90 Lacs
GANESAPURAM	Rs. 3.95 Lacs

CLUB HOUSE, SWIMMING POOL

9952 0000 10

SHORT TAKES

12-foot python caught

Pudukkottai: Forest officials here caught a 12-foot python from a temple premises at Ammankrichi near Ponnamaravathi in the district, on Saturday. Official sources said a group of villagers were engaged in cleaning operations inside the Siva temple there, and found a python. They informed the forest officials, and a team of forest officials rushed in and caught the reptile. Later, they released it in to nearby Sevilimalai forest area, sources added.

Protests in Salem against Neet

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC SALEM, SEPT. 12

With the suicide of 3 students preparing for Neet in a row on a single day in different parts of the state, the Indian Democratic Youth Union staged a protest near the railway junction here demanding cancellation of Neet, which is to take place on Sunday.

The suicide of the students has caused a great stir throughout the state. Members of the IDYU staged a protest in front of the Chief Post Office near the Salem junction demanding cancellation of Neet n Tamil Nadu.

Over 1L cancer patients treated since March: Govt

Chennai, Sept. 12: The Tamil Nadu government has helped provide cancer-related medical treatment to over 1.30 lakh people in government hospitals and government medical college hospitals across the state since March, health minister Dr C. Vijaya Baskar said on Saturday. Also, about 250 cancer patients, who had tested positive for Covid, were treated, he said. Of the total 1,31,352 cancer patients who were provided treatment till date, 48,647 were admitted to hospitals. In a press release here, the Minister said efforts were being taken to provide uninterrupted medical care to cancer patients during the pandemic. As many as 2,191 patients underwent surgery, including for breast cancer. While 27,721 people underwent chemotherapy, 11,678 took radiation therapy, and 6,664 received treatment through pain and palliative care units. The state government's 102 vehicle service was utilised to shift patients from their homes to the hospitals and back after treatment during the Covid-19 lockdown. "This has facilitated uninterrupted treatment for the patients during the lockdown period. About 1,396 patients benefited through the vehicle service from March till date," the minister said.

Assembly issues notices anew to Stalin, DMK MLAs in gutka issue

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT. 12

The privilege issue against 19 DMK MLAs, including the party president M K Stalin, for waving gutka sachets in the Assembly on July 19, 2017, has been revived with the MLAs receiving a notice from the Privileges Committee that met on September 7, seeking a reply from them by September 14.

Since the move was aimed at preventing the DMK MLAs from attending the Assembly session, beginning on September 14, they were moving a writ petition at the Madras High Court, a press release from the DMK headquarters said on Saturday.

Though the first bench of the Madras High Court comprising Chief Justice A P Sahi and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamurthi had quashed the privilege notice against the 19 MLAs on August 25, the Privileges Committee that met under Deputy Speaker Pollachi Jayaraman had decided to discuss the issue again in the House, the DMK press release said.

The new notices were issued to the DMK MLAs to ensure that they did not attend the session and raise questions on the manner in which the government handled the coronavirus crisis, the release said.

While quashing the earlier privilege notice issued against the MLAs for bringing sachets of gutka, which is a banned substance in the state, to the House, on August 25, the Madras High Court had said that the Privileges Committee was at liberty to reconsider the issue.



Stalin challenges notice issued by Assembly

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, SEPT 12

DMK president and leader of the Opposition in the Assembly M.K.Stalin has filed a petition in the Madras high court to quash the notice dated September 7, 2020, relating to gutka issue, issued by Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly secretary by referring to the decision said to have been made by the Privileges Committee in the meeting held on September 7, 2020, presided over by V.Jayaraman, chairman, Privileges Committee, Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly.

This petition filed by M.K.Stalin is likely to come up for hearing early.

According to Stalin, he had earlier filed a petition to quash a notice dated August 28, 2017 issued by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly secretary on the basis of a reference made by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Speaker on July 19, 2017 to the Privileges Committee. The high court had on August 25, 2020 held that "The issuance of the impugned notice of breach of privilege based on the incident dated July 19, 2017, suffers from a foundational error of assuming the conduct of the petitioners to be prohibited by the notification dated May 23, 2017 and we hold accordingly. The petitioners cannot be proceeded against on the strength of the impugned notices dated August 28, 2017 by treating their conduct on July 19, 2017 of displaying Gutkha sachets and photographs as being violative of any prohibitory law particularly the notification dated May 23, 2017. Our conclusion aforesaid is confined only to the interpreta-

tion of the notification dated May 23, 2017 vis-à-vis the specific conduct of the petitioners inside the House that was made the basis for the issuance of notice of breach of privilege and is not of the construed as an interpretation regarding a prosecution or trial of any offence before a competent forum arising out of the notification. We leave it open to the Committee of Privileges, if it so chooses, to deliberate upon the issue any further in case it still is of the opinion that any breach has been committed of the privileges of the House by the petitioners and in that event, the petitioners will be at liberty to raise all such objections that have been raised before us, or even otherwise available under law".

He said in this background, the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly secretary has issued notice to him dated September 7, 2020 on the basis of a meeting of the Privileges Committee held on the same day. The Notice broadly states that the Speaker had made reference dated July 19, 2017 to Privileges Committee, which had discussed the contents of the Common Order and further steps to be taken with regard to the displaying of Gutkha Packets in the Assembly without the permission of the Speaker of the House, the disturbance caused to the assembly proceedings, setting a bad precedent and causing disorder and bringing disrepute to the proceedings of the assembly. For these reasons, the Privileges Committee has decided to proceed against nineteen Members of the Legislative Assembly (including him), he added.

He said he has been called to provide a written explanation/reply to the notice, which was received by him only on September 10, 2020, by September 14, 2020. The reference made by the Speaker dated July 19, 2017 only speaks about the act of "bringing and displaying prohibited items within the Legislative Assembly" and this was claimed to be the basis for the exercise of authority by the Privileges Committee in issuing the present notice dated September 7, 2020. The present notice has outlined for issues, which were nowhere to be found in the reference dated July 19, 2017. The timing for issuance of the notice dated September 7, 2020 seeking an explanation/reply by September 14, 2020 was not innocuous or coincidental, as the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly was scheduled to convene from September 14, 2020. The malafides was writ large on the face of the notice as its primary objective was to prevent him and other legislators belonging to the principal opposition party (to whom notices have been issued) from attending the upcoming assembly session, he alleged.

He said the common order makes it clear that the notice dated August 28, 2017 suffers from a foundational error. The 2017 notice and the present notice both arise out of the same reference made by the Speaker. The reference made by the Speaker comes to a predetermined conclusion with regard to the question of privilege and therefore, the present notice dated September 7, 2020, also suffers from the same foundational error, he contended.

Another scam?



Congress MP Vishnu Prasad on Saturday shows a petition at Sathyamurthy Bhavan regarding alleged irregularities in the implementation of PM housing scheme. — DC

Novel heart procedure saves septuagenarian

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC TIRUCHY, SEPT. 12

A team of doctors from Apollo specialty hospital here has performed a novel minimal procedure (TAVI) and saved the life of a septuagenarian, for the first time in the city.

Consultant interventional cardiologist Dr R Ravindran, who led the doctors team told newsmen here on Saturday that the 75-year-old patient from a village near Thuraiyur near here, came to the hospital with complaints of severe breathlessness.

They had taken a CT scan elsewhere and were told it could be possible Covid. But, precise clinical evaluation and correlation indicated heart failure and intense evaluation showed

the patient's vital parameters were grossly deranged.

The patient was not able to lie down flat on the bed with high heart rate and low blood pressure for which appropriate medications and oxygen were started. They finally diagnosed low flow low gradient (LFLG) aortic stenosis that can completely explain the severe weakness of the heart.

Explaining LFLG, Dr Ravindran said, the valve becomes narrow and the left ventricle struggles to pump blood against the narrow valve, resulting in the patient experiencing breathlessness, chest pain and giddiness.

Being a septuagenarian, the patient was a high-risk case for surgical correction of the valve problem, but the team successfully per-

formed the TAVI procedure on him, Dr Ravindran added.

He claimed that the procedure had already been performed in Chennai, Madurai and Coimbatore, and this is the first time such a complex high-risk procedure is being performed in Tiruchy.

Dr Rohini Sridhar, Chief Operating Officer, Apollo Hospitals, Madurai division, said soon they are going to introduce the advanced state of the art intravascular imaging (Optical Coherence Tomogram - OCT & Intravascular Ultra sound - IVUS) and physiology (Fractional Flow Reserve - FFR & Resting Full cycle Ratio - RFR) techniques, which are currently available only in Chennai and other metros.

Coronavirus deaths decreasing from August

From P1

The data show, the number of deaths increased from 26 (in between June 3 and June 24) to 31 (June 24 to July 14) to 44 from July 14 to August 3 but the figures started declining from

August 3 to 23 as 20. Now the rate touched 19 for the last 20 days.

The death toll mounted from 17 cases on May 3 to 2,959 as of September 12.

It was on March 9 the first case of Covid 19 was reported

in Chennai. But the cases started spiraling as a result of attendance of Cheennaites at Tablighi Jamaat conclave held in Delhi in March and the crowds at the Koyambedu vegetable wholesale market.

RESTORATION WORK



Greater Chennai Corporation Ambattur zonal officials in association with Korattur lake protection movement begin restoration work at the nearly 100-year-old Kandigai pond on Saturday. — DC

Plea to improve hygiene, sanitation in TMCH

G SRINIVASAN | DC THANJAVUR, SEPT. 12

Stating that hygienic conditions and facilities are far from satisfactory at the Thanjavur medical college hospital for treating corona patients, Thiruvaiyaru MLA and Thanjavur DMK south district secretary, Durai Chandrasekaran, called for improving sanitation and treatment facilities at the TMCH, which is a major Covid-19 treatment centre.

He told presspersons here on Saturday that hygienic conditions of wards and toilets in the hospital leave much to be desired, despite the recent visit of Chief Minister Edappadi K

"The government spends ₹375 per head for providing food for corona patients, but both quality and quantity of food is unsatisfactory," the MLA alleged

Palaniswami to the city. Drainage from the wards and garbage removal should be improved. "The government spends Rs 375 per head for providing food for corona patients, but both quality and quantity of food is unsatisfactory," the MLA alleged. He also called for disease

protection facilities for frontline corona warriors like doctors and nurses. "Corona infection has increased from 90 persons to 130 persons now in the district per day. Five to six deaths occur daily, and unfortunately, many corona deaths are not properly declared, and relatives have been asked to take the bodies without any safeguards to stop the spread. In a village called Arcot in my assembly constituency, the body of a corona patient was allowed to be taken by relatives without any safeguards due to which four more persons who were involved in the funeral contracted corona," the MLA alleged.

He said that tests should be increased and corona deaths should be properly declared. This apart, private hospitals should be instructed to collect only the fees prescribed by the government for treating corona patients, but they seem to mint money in the name of treating such patients. He said that following instructions from DMK president M K Stalin, the party's MLAs met Collector M Govinda Rao and suggested measures for prevention of corona spread. The DMK also provided benefits to the poor affected by the lockdown in the district. "We provided mostly rice and provisions," he added.

Travel curbs hinder tourism revival in Nilgiris

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, SEPT 12

The summer months of April and May of 2019, witnessed a record one million tourists visiting 'The Queen of the Hills' - The Nilgiris, contrary to the 'zero' footfalls registered here this summer. The obvious reason for this is the pandemic related lockdown since March 17 this year which lasted till September 8, which crippled the tourism industry, badly affecting revenue flow and the economy of the place.

However, hope dawned when the government gave its nod to throw open tourist spots like the horticulture-department run public parks like the Government Botanical Garden and Government Rose Garden here from September 9. But sadly, restrictions imposed on tourists and travel even now, including the very limited number of e-passes provided to tourists



The famed Government Botanical Garden in Ooty, in the backdrop of autumn colours, is still awaiting good number of tourists to arrive.

to visit the Nilgiris, have made things tougher for the tourism industry, which is looking forward for a revival. These restrictions have enabled only a couple of hundreds of tourists to visit the hills since September 9.

Secretary, Nilgiris Hotels and Restaurants Association, N

Chandrasekar, said the tourism industry wants the government to allow up to at least 2,000 tourists per day to visit the Nilgiris, as that only will help revive tourism here.

"Now, restrictions imposed by the district administration on tourist e-passes to visit the Nilgiris, only adds

to the woes of tourists since only a few are able to get it. That too they are from the Tamil Nadu side. We want inter-state tourism to pick up, to help the tourism industry here. But, sadly that is not happening. The tourism industry in the Nilgiris, a major lifeline for many in the

hills, is in bad shape and many hotels have gone bankrupt due to fall in revenue since March. After 'Unlock 4' in other parts of India, normalcy is returning, whereas in the Nilgiris, it is like the lockdown still continuing," added Chandrasekar. "Since Aadhar card is the base for issuing

e-passes for tourists, the government should set up e-pass kiosks on the district borders and inter-state borders in the hills to help tourists show their Aadhar details for an e-pass from these kiosks, and visit the hills. The details can be passed on to the district control room for tracking and follow up. As the 'autumn tourist season', the second major tourist season in the Nilgiris next to the 'summer tourist season' is dawning, the government should come forward to ease e-pass norms for tourists visiting the Nilgiris. Since the tourism industry is left penniless since March, recouping the lost trade is quite a challenge. The Centre should come forward to give a tax-holiday for the tourism industry in the Nilgiris this fiscal. We want the elected representatives in the Nilgiris to raise their voice to revive tourism in the Nilgiris," Chandrasekar said.

Ooty's 19th century legacy makes a turnaround

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, SEPT. 12

Savoy Hotel, the oldest hotel in the hills here, with a 191-year heritage hospitality legacy, a connecting link between the 19th and the 21st century, that survived two pandemics in its long existence here, is raring to start a new innings to overcome the Covid-19 scar.

While the pandemic has forced this heritage hotel to close down since the second week of March, this hotel also witnessed the 'Spanish flu' that hit the hills as in other parts of the country in 1918. Since, Spanish flu hit the Nilgiris after July in 1918, during the SW monsoon, then it was not known to cause any notable damage to tourism, since tourism during the SW monsoons here usually would be at its lowest.

In this cyber world, while Covid-19 has almost turned everything upside down, now after 'Unlock 4' it is the time to plan for recovery and recouping. Indeed, the Savoy Hotel, a grand old hotel in the country itself,



The gorgeous environs of the 191-year-old Savoy Hotel in Ooty.

has prepared itself to slowly but steadily recover its glory and be back on track to attract tourists.

General Manager, Savoy Hotel, Ritesh Choudhary, said that the hotel, besides following the Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) laid down by the government, is implementing its own SOP in the campus to ensure that tourists

enjoy the visit safely and in a hygienic manner.

This apart, if a guest checks out, we do not allot that room to other guests for a 48 hour period. We have started providing 'Hot Toddy', a signature brand of herbal welcome drink of Savoy, which contains herbal ingredients that help in immunity boosting, Choudhary added.

SHORT TAKES

B'WOOD SUCCESS
DUE TO TALENT,
NOT RELIGION: SSDC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 12

In a veiled attack on actress Kangana Ranaut, Shiv Sena on Saturday said that Bollywood legends have never betrayed Mumbai. In a strong-worded editorial in *Saamana*, Shiv Sena mentioned several names in Bollywood stalwarts saying many of them came to Mumbai and made their names, but they were never dishonest to their *karmabhoomi*.

The Sena said that the foundation of the Indian film industry was laid by Dadasaheb Phalke, a Maharashtrian, and artists have achieved success in the industry due to talent and not religion. People from all over came to try their fate in Mumbai's cine-world, first lived in hovels or on pavements, but after luck smiled on them, went onto build palatial homes in Juhu, Pali Hill or Malabar Hill. But they were never ungrateful to Mumbai-Maharashtra, it said.

"Several veteran Muslim artistes like Madhubala, Dilip Kumar, Meena Kumari or Sanjay Khan took Hindu names as the industry was 'secular' in that era. Even when Marathi and Punjabi dynasties ruled the roost like the Kapoors, Roshans, Duttos or Shantarams, as many families do today. There were several others with no 'gharana' behind them like Rajesh Khanna, Dharmendra or Jeetendra who came up with hard work, and launched their own 'gharana' for their children," the editorial said.

RAHUL HITS OUT
AT CENTRAL
GOVERNMENTDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday hit out at the Central government for the decline in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), job losses and the increasing number of Covid-19-related cases and deaths in the country.

The Congress has accused the Modi government of not handling the Covid-19 pandemic effectively.

Taking a jibe at the Modi government, he said its "well-planned fight against Covid-19 has put India in an abyss of 1. historic GDP reduction of 24%, 2. loss of 12 crore jobs, 3. Rs 15.5 lakh crore additional stressed loans, 4. highest daily Covid-19 cases and deaths globally. But for GOI and media 'sab changa si'."

Mr. Gandhi's reference to "well-planned fight" against Covid-19 is seen as a jibe at Home Minister Amit Shah.

Mr. Gandhi's tweet comes days after Union Home Minister Mr. Amit Shah said that India is putting up a "well-planned" fight against the pandemic under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

On Wednesday, Mr. Gandhi had criticised the Modi Government for its mismanagement of the Covid 19 crisis, saying that Mr. Modi promised to end the crisis in 21 days but instead finished off small businesses and the livelihood of crores of people.

ANURADHA
PAUDWAL'S SON
PASSES AWAYDC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 12

Veteran playback singer Anuradha Paudwal's son Aditya Paudwal died on Saturday after suffering a kidney failure at a hospital. He was 35.

Aditya, who breathed his last early on Saturday morning, had been suffering from kidney ailments for "quite some time", an official from Cine Singers Association said. "I got a call from Aditya Paudwal's family and they said he died due to kidney failure at a hospital. We later informed all our members. He had been unwell since quite some time, he had kidney problems," said Himanshu Bhatt, General secretary of Cine Singers's Association.

Aditya was a music arranger and producer. He had arranged and produced a song for Nawazuddin Siddiqui-starrer *Thackeray*, which was released in 2019.

The news of Aditya's death was first shared by music composer Shankar Mahadevan, who took to Instagram to pay his tributes.

Language matters



People belonging to Sikh community during a signature campaign for inclusion of Punjabi language in the list of official languages, in Jammu district on Saturday. The Union Cabinet on September 2 approved a Bill under which Kashmiri, Dogri and Hindi, apart from the existing Urdu and English, will be the official languages in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The Bill is likely to be tabled in Parliament during the Monsoon Session next week.

- PTI

Seats to Manjhi's HAM may
be allotted from JD(U)'s quota

Nadda meets Nitish to discuss seat-sharing, rift among NDA allies

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, SEPT. 12

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Saturday held an hour-long meeting with Bihar CM Nitish Kumar to discuss the prevailing political scenario in view of the Assembly elections due later this year.

The meeting assumes significance as it was held amid an ongoing rift between the NDA partners - Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) led by Chirag Paswan and the JD(U).

Both JD(U) and LJP have been sparring over the past few months on issues including the Bihar government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic,

guest workers crisis and flood scenario in the state.

Former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who has been made in-charge for the Assembly elections, and BJP national general secretary Bhupendra Yadav along with Bihar Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi was among those present at the meeting with Nitish Kumar at his official residence 1, Anne Marg in Patna.

One of the key issues discussed during the meeting was seat-sharing among alliance partners of the NDA. Sources aware of the development said that Nitish Kumar wants the BJP to settle the issue

before election dates are announced.

Political analysts keeping tab of the developments in Bihar believe that amid ongoing rift with LJP, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is likely to persuade Mr. Nadda to first settle the seat adjustment issue with JD(U) and then allocate seats to the LJP from BJP's quota.

Sources said, "seats to Jitan Ram Manjhi's HAM will be allotted from the JD(U)'s quota". After returning to NDA camp earlier this month Jitan Ram Manjhi had said that his party was in NDA to support Nitish Kumar who has been working for the development of the

state.

BJP insiders, however, said that the party's leadership would soon meet Chirag Paswan in Delhi to resolve the differences between the LJP and JD(U). Later while inaugurating "Aatma Nirbhar Bihar" and party's campaign song for Bihar polls at BJP office in Patna Mr. Nadda said that, "Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and leadership of Nitish Kumar, the NDA comprising BJP, JD(U) and LJP will contest Bihar polls and win".

"Since people want NDA to return, it is our responsibility to make Bihar self-reliant so that it gets

includes in the list of other developed states. People are not going to get trapped by the conspiracy being hatched by opposition parties", BJP national president JP Nadda said during his speech during the event.

Union Minister of State, Home affairs Nityanand Rai had said that the NDA under Nitish Kumar will retain power in Bihar by winning 220 seats. "NDA will form government in Bihar under the leadership of Nitish Kumar by winning 220 seats", Nityanand Rai told reporters after attending the meeting of the BJP's election chaired by J.P. Nadda.

2 Cong MLAs join
JD(U) in Bihar

Patna Sept. 11: The JD(U) made fresh inroads into the Grand Alliance as two Congress MLAs, a former RJD minister and several other leaders including an RLSP spokesman joined the ruling party ahead of the Bihar Assembly polls due in October-November.

The opposition Grand Alliance comprises four parties the RJD, Congress, RLSP and the Vikassheel Insaan Party.

Congress legislators Sudarshan Kumar and Purnima Yadav, senior RJD leader and former state minister Bhola Rai, Rashtriya Lok Samata Party's (RLSP) Bihar unit spokesman Abhishek Jha are among those who

switched sides on Friday.

These leaders took the membership of the JD(U) state headquarters here in the presence of senior leaders such as Ashok Choudhary, Neeraj Kumar and Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh.

A total of seven RJD MLAs have so far quit the party to join the Janata Dal (United) in the past one month while five RJD MLCs joined the ruling party in June.

Those who joined the party on Friday reposed their faith in the leadership of Chief Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar, saying that they want to work with him for states all round development. -PTI

Online classes taking physical,
mental toll on children: ExpertsSHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

Health experts claimed that spending more than usual time before the screen for the last four months while taking classes and exams online has caused various physical problems in children such as back pain and lack of sleep while older children are facing psychological problems such as attention deficit disorder and depression.

"Children in the age group of 14 to 22 years are complaining of nagging back and neck pain the most mainly caused by prolonged use of tabs and mobiles for gaming and chatting. Some of the children are also suffering from attention deficit disorder and addiction to online games. Some have suffered online bullying, some are withdrawn and interact less with friends and family and some have shown signs of depression," said Dr Singh.

Most children were suggested remedial measures through teleconsultation.

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How yaks help Chinese
PLA survive in mountains

From page 1

Just like the Indian Army has been dependent on mules and ponies in mountain warfare, Chinese troops cannot do without yaks and keep 'recruiting' the best breeds. Of them, Tibetan yaks are the most popular and useful. "PLA soldiers also drink yak milk and eat yak butter, both considered highly nutritious and cures to various ailments. Yak blood is high in protein and raw yak meat is highly nutritious," the sources said.

What makes it the best suited animal in mountains is its massive respiratory system and outer coat and the fact that its blood takes in more oxy-

● **WHAT MAKES** it the best suited animal in mountains is its massive respiratory system and outer coat and the fact that its blood takes in more oxygen than other bovines making it survive easily in the harshest of the climates. Yaks hardly sweat.

gen than other bovines making it survive easily in the harshest of the climates. Yaks hardly sweat. Old timers who served in the Indian army say that the PLA is so touchy about yaks that it will not hesitate to go to war over them. "A missing flock of 59 yaks and about 800 sheep had triggered ten-

sions between the two countries in 1965. It led to a border conflict between the two armies in Sikkim in 1967. There were heated exchanges between the two countries over the yaks and sheep after the PLA accused Indian forces of stealing the animals from Tibetan herds-men on the Sikkim border," a former army officer who worked along the LAC recalled.

Though there have often been suspicions that the PLA sends yaks and sheep into Indian territory fitted with spying tools, the Indian army, wary of PLA's designs, has not found any concrete evidence of that.

India records
over 97,000
Corona casesDC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12AP Covid number
goes below 10K mark

India on Saturday had two records in a day.

On one hand it recorded the highest numbers of fresh coronavirus cases, with 97,570 new infections, but also had the highest number of recoveries in a single day after 81,533 patients were discharged, taking the recovery rate to 77.77 per cent.

The Union health ministry said 60 per cent of total recoveries had taken place in five states: Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

2278 new cases, 10
deaths in Telangana

Hyderabad: Telangana registered 2,278 new Covid-19 cases and 10 more fatalities with no signs of a let up in the spread of coronavirus infections in the state. The new cases and deaths reported in the 24-hours have taken the total cases to 1,54,880 and the toll to 950, as per the Covid-19 bulletin issued by the health department.

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala on Saturday recorded 2,885 cases of Covid 19 even as 1,944 people got cured from the infection. Kerala has so far recorded 1,05,139 cases of Covid - 19 of which 75848 have recovered. The total active cases at present are 28,802.

Karnataka adds 9,140
new patients

Bengaluru: Karnataka on Saturday reported 9,140 new coronavirus cases taking the total number of infections to 4,49,551 while the death toll touched 7,161 with 94 fatalities. The total infections comprised 3,44,556 discharges.

Infighting in Cong
to fore as first list
for bypolls is outRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, SEPT. 12

Infighting in Congress here on Saturday came to the fore with a senior party leader virtually questioning the first list of candidates released by the AICC for the upcoming by-elections to 27 Assembly constituencies in Madhya Pradesh, saying the Pradesh Congress Committee was not aware of it.

Former minister and Congress spokesman here P.C. Sharma, considered to be a staunch loyalist of party veteran Digvijay Singh, took Congressmen here by surprise when he said that the PCC was unaware of any such list. "PCC is not aware if any candidates' list has been released by the AICC", Mr Sharma told reporters here. He, however, refused to speak on the issue further.

The surprising remark by him comes in the wake of reports that the candidates' list released by the AICC on Friday has caused consternation in a powerful faction of the party in the state. Sources said the powerful faction led by Mr Singh felt ignored in finalization of the first list of 15 candidates released by the AICC on Friday.

The list was released a day after MP PCC president Kamal Nath met Congress high command at Delhi on Thursday.

● **CONGRESS SPOKESMAN** Sharma took Congressmen by surprise when he said that the PCC was unaware of any such list.

● **AT LEAST** four candidates figured in the first list of candidates have joined Congress in the last couple of weeks from other parties such as Bharatiya Janata Party and Bahujan Samaj Party.

At least four candidates figured in the first list of candidates have joined Congress in the last couple of weeks from other parties such as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).

Incidentally, former BJP leader Satish Sikarwar who has quit BJP and joined Congress a couple of weeks ago with the hope of getting ticket for the by-elections to Ambah (SC) Assembly constituency has been left in lurch with the party deciding to field Satyaprakash Sikarwar in the state.

This has dismayed the party faction that backed his candidature.

Meanwhile, Mr Nath on Saturday launched the campaign for the party for the by-elections to 27 Assembly seats in the state at Agar Malwa by leading a 'padayatra' or foot march of party workers and leaders there.

ALLY | SPEAKS UP

Nirupam slams Shiv Sena for attack on a retired officer

6 Sainiks held for assault on retd Navy officer

SONU SHRIVASTAVA |
DC
MUMBAI, SEPT. 12

Six suspected Shiv Sena workers were granted bail on Saturday in a case of assaulting a retired Navy officer resident of Malad for allegedly forwarding a cartoon of the party president and Chief Minister

Uddhav Thackeray on social media, evoking allegations of political pressure from the BJP. Denying any political interference, Joint commissioner of police (law and order) Vishwas Nangre Patil said the bail was granted to the accused in view of the Covid-19 situation.

The six persons were arrested after local BJP MLA Atul Bhatkalkar posted a video of Friday's

assault on the retired officer, Madan Sharma (62), on Twitter.

A complaint was filed against Sena workers at Kandivali police station.

Leader of opposition in the state Legislative council Pravin Darekar, Bhatkalkar and the victim's family members staged an agitation outside the ACP's office in Kandivali.

They demanded that the accused be booked under sections 326 (causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons and means), and 452 and 450 (house-trespassing) of the Indian Penal Code, which are non-bailable.

Nangre Patil, who visited the site of the protest, told the protesters the accused were booked under section 325 of the IPC for causing grievous

hurt and rioting sections, which was a bailable offence.

"Six persons arrested under section 325 of the IPC. They were granted bail in view of the Covid-19 situation. There is no political pressure. I don't think section 326 can be invoked since that amounts to the use of sharp weapons. We will see the legal scrutiny of slapping trespassing clauses against them," the police officer said.

The Shiv Sena heads the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) dispensation, also comprising the NCP and Congress.

Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam slammed Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena over the attack on a retired Navy officer by the Shiv Sainiks for allegedly forwarding a

cartoon of Mr Thackeray on social media.

Sena founder Balasaheb Thackeray was himself a cartoonist and had regards for the force, the Congress leader said.

The 65-year-old officer has been discharged from Shatabdi Hospital in Kandivali.

Meanwhile, the BJP staged a protest against the attack near the additional police commissioner's office.

Mr Nirupam, who was a former Shiv Sena leader and Rajya Sabha member said, "Shiv Sena has not changed. It is still a party of goons. The government sponsored *gundagardi* (hooliganism)". He said that the attack is a gross abuse of power. The state government and police are

shielding the Shiv Sainiks. The Shiv Sena is showing off nationalism.

Balasaheb ji himself used to make cartoons and make political and social comments through the cartoons, Mr Nirupam said.

When asked why are you not speaking the language of BJP, Mr Nirupam said that he would say it is the other way round, the BJP is speaking the language of Sanjay Nirupam. He has been speaking against the Sena since he was a spokesperson. He had been raising the issues against the Sena since he was Mumbai Congress chief. When the MVA government was formed, he was against the coalition government in Maharashtra with the Shiv Sena.

DECCAN Chronicle

13 SEPTEMBER 2020



Shashi Warriar

Off the beaten track

JFK, yoga, and intermittent fasting

In every home that my wife and I have occupied since our marriage, and in all the homes my parents made while I grew up, there was a piece of furniture that held a group of airtight plastic or steel containers, placed fairly high up, outside the reach of a child. If you opened any one of those containers, you'd find a bunch of opened plastic bags containing biscuits or deep fried bits of joy, or junk food.

I call this bit of furniture, which you will find in practically every middle-class home, the JFK, for Junk Food Kuponboard. It has one branch in the fridge, in a box that contains pieces of cake, chocolate, and other sweets, and a second in the freezer, the home of ice-cream. The shop that supplies most of its contents, incidentally, is the JFP, or Junk Food Paradise, which we will visit shortly.

Yoga, I believe, is one of the forms of discipline that most people give up regularly. I believe this for two reasons. First, it was Google that told me, so it must be true, like everything else Google tells us. Second, I know how tough it is, for I very nearly gave it up some years ago. I managed to hang on to it despite the creaking of aged limbs and so on, so I even got a bit smug about continuing my practice in the face of all these difficulties. My weight stayed more or less the same for a decade or so.

The lockdown changed all that. Week after week of staying put, with large and regular meals and plenty of snacks in between, turned my waistline into a sort of coastline. By the middle of May, I had developed an equatorial bulge, and the effort of getting into my clothes left me breathless. Worst of all, the roundness was spreading. I upped my yoga practice, but to no avail, for it only made me hungrier and fatter.

At the end of May, when I discovered I could no longer shoehorn myself into my loosest pair of jeans, I decided to go on a diet. Wondering what kind of diet to go on, I turned once again to reliable old Google, which came up with something — after searching through a gazillion sites in a micro-second — that sounded about right.

Intermittent fasting. You restrict your eating to a six-hour period every day, during which you eat whatever you like. During the remaining 18 hours, you fast, your only intake being plain water or tea without sugar or milk.

I've been doing this for some weeks now: I eat only between eight in the morning and two in the afternoon. So let share with you what my day looks like.

I come awake, without an alarm of any kind, by half-past-five. Under the new scheme of time, this is 150 minutes AM (Ante Mealtime), with each minute feeling like an hour. I finish my ablutions, feed the pets, two dogs and a cat, and take the dogs for a walk. Back home, I prepare the next meal for the dogs. The clock now stands at 105 AM, and the minutes are getting longer.

I bring out the yoga mat and start on my regular practice, which used to take about 45 minutes before I started fasting. When I roll up the yoga mat afterwards, I discover that it's 75 AM, so I've finished my practice in 30 minutes. Amazing how supple fasting makes you!

Casting about for ways to fill in the remaining minutes, I clean out my desk, reply to emails and WhatsApp messages, and remove all the junk files from my laptop and phone. I go through the news channels, Indian and foreign, and am disappointed to find that none mentions my fast. It's now 45 AM. Amazing how efficient fasting makes you!

The remaining minutes pass like blocks of concrete. 1 AM finds me at the kitchen door, watch in hand, and when that last dreadful minute is past, I charge for the JFK, there being no time to cook a proper breakfast. Eleven minutes later, the JFK is sadly depleted, and needs replenishment.

After a short nap, still pleasantly full, I replenish the JFK. I hop onto the bike with an empty backpack and ride out to the JFP, a couple of kilometres away. The owner greets me with delight, tells me that he will give me a 10 per cent discount on all my purchases, and shows me three different kinds of savouries I haven't tried before. I take a packet of each, besides the regular stack. I buy another couple of packets of fried nuts. For unexpected visitors, you see. The backpack feels very heavy when I pick up. Great exercise for my shoulders, so it's all good.

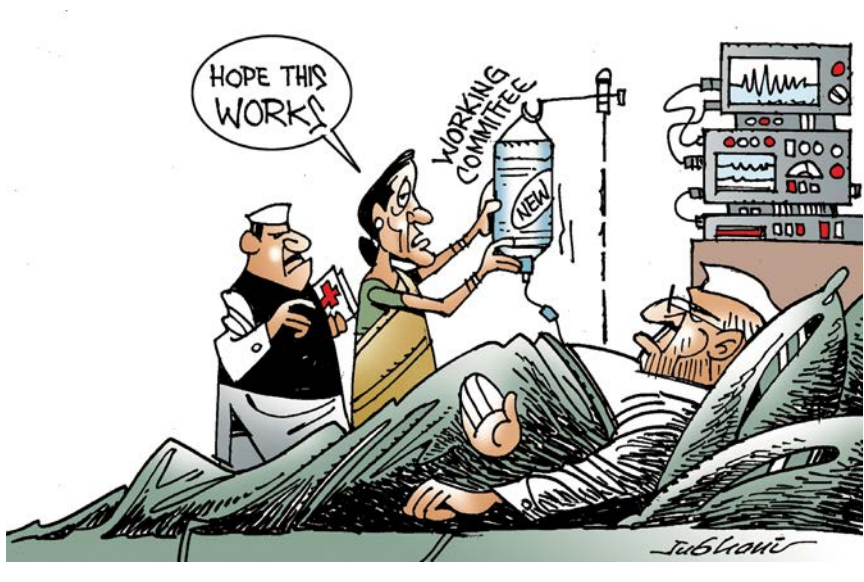
Back home, I restock the JFK, and, needing refreshment, try one of the new savouries. Excellent! I return to my study and sit down to work, but spend most of the time wondering about lunch. Fasting certainly gives you an appetite!

After a long and pleasant lunch that would feed an Ethiopian family for a week, I return to the fridge. A couple of minutes before the end of my eating window, 2PM under the old scheme of time, there is still a cup of vanilla ice-cream in the freezer, and I manage to finish it just in time. Since I believe always in looking to the future, the time is now 1080 AM, of which I will spend 480 minutes sleeping, and dreaming of food.

After three weeks of this, when I still can't get into my jeans, I visit the weighing machine, and discover that I've put on four kilos! So now I'm wondering why they call it intermittent fasting and not intermittent feasting...

Shashi Warriar has written fairy tales, thrillers, a semi-fictional biography, satires, and a love story. Besides writing, he teaches strategic communication at a business school.

Subhani



De-escalation in Ladakh: Mixed signals after talks



K.C. Singh

The Ladakh imbroglio has been a complex interplay between military jostling at the Line of Actual Control and talks at the official, military and political levels. The Galwan setback was followed by a military-to-military understanding on the PLA's pullback. Video conferences followed between external affairs minister S. Jaishankar and national security adviser Ajit Doval with Wang Yi, who doubles up as China's foreign minister and state councillor. However, till August's end, the Chinese were unwilling to fully restore the status quo. In fact, they consolidated their hold on the northern bank of Pangong Tso and other areas like Depsang Plains, threatening India's access to Daulat Beg Oldie and the Karakoram Pass.

Surprised by China's lightning deployment of heavily armed troops at multiple points on the LAC, India also needed time to mirror deployments, with troops needing acclimatisation for high-altitude duty. Even the threat of economic decoupling, with over 200 Chinese apps barred, left China's military posture unaffected. On August 28-29, the Indian Army dramatically seized the highest Kailash range mountaintops, overlooking Spanggur Tso and the Chinese military garrison at Moldo. Below them lies Spanggur Gap, between two lakes, through which Chinese troops attacked in 1962. India's positions were then overrun as they were at lower heights. Mukphari, now held, and to its northwest Black Top, perhaps contested, dominate the entire region from south of Pangong Tso to Spanggur Tso lake and beyond, overlooking Chin-

ese roads and military installations.

This just preceded the meeting of the Indian and Chinese defence ministers on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting. China's rhetoric changed instantly, with allegations of India breaching agreements and the LAC, aping Indian allegations earlier. India was clear its forward push was pre-emptive and only up to Indian claim lines and understanding of the LAC. India was merely following the playbook the Chinese used since April. After the Galwan betrayal, the rules of engagement were changed with local commanders empowered to use all means at their disposal to protect their troops and defend Indian posts and territory. With three of five agreements — signed in 1993, 1996 and 2013 — breached by China, India also set them aside. India's countermove levelled China's first-mover advantage somewhat, giving India's diplomats vital negotiating chips.

It was against this background that Mr Jaishankar arrived in Moscow for an on-the-sidelines meeting with his Chinese counterpart. Most analysts were sceptical about a positive outcome as there was no consensus about Chinese motives. Was Chinese ire persisting over the constitutional and territorial changes made by the Indian government in Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019? Or was China paranoid over the India-US strategic convergence, symbolised by excessive bonhomie between Narendra Modi and Donald Trump at the "Howdy Modi" and "Namaste Trump" extravaganzas? Finally, was it India's rejection of China's Belt and Road Initiative or the perceived Indian sabotage

of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership? Alternatively, was the provocation more local over India's upgraded infrastructure, or misreading of jingoism of Union ministers threatening to seize Pakistan- and China-occupied Kashmir, or perceived threat to Chinese investments in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor? However, there is no doubt over one overweening purpose, rekindled by President Xi, to create a China-dominated, Sino-centric Asian regional order. Cutting India, its only possible strategic rival, down to size has been a Chinese preoccupation since 1962.

China has chosen the moment well, with the world distracted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the US presidential election and a global economic slowdown. Chinese assertiveness over territorial claims and international affairs manifested after the 2008 financial crisis. It was sharpened as Xi took the presidency in 2013. Instead of moderating its behaviour and recognising its constructive liability for the pandemic, China has shamelessly and aggressively pursued narrow national interests. But globally China is facing headwinds as even Europe is beginning to see demerits of engaging China blindly. Whoever wins in America or succeeds Japanese PM Shinzo Abe, the decoupling from China will continue. Xi faces a major Communist Party plenary in October, where he wants his choice of the next PM endorsed. China's economy may have revived fast, but the developed world and larger markets are circling their wagons. Australia, India and Japan are discussing a "supply chain resilience initiative", while Japan is

subsidising Japanese companies wishing to shift businesses out of China.

Mr Jaishankar and Mr Wang produced a five-point joint statement which recalled the "consensus" reached by Mr Modi and Mr Xi, reiterated the need to reduce tensions and abide by agreements and suggested the resumption of dialogue at civil, military and political levels. The only new element was a recognition that after the situation eases, new confidence-building measures are needed, allowing both sides to address strategic and local concerns. But the relief was shortlived as the individual statements by both sides seemed to undercut the feelgood joint statement. China asserted its "stern" position, said India must stop "provocations" like firing and recall all personnel and equipment that had trespassed to enable an enhanced dialogue. It claimed Mr Jaishankar accepted Chinese policy towards India had not changed and bilateral relations did not depend on "settlement of the boundary question". India contested China's claims, insisting that Mr Jaishankar had forcefully sought restoration of the status quo. What does this dissonance between an agreed statement and separate claims mean? Both sides may be posturing for home audiences, while agreeing in private to slowly restore normality. It could also mean Chinese unwillingness to exchange its cross-LAC territorial gains for India's vacating the heights south of Pangong Tso.

The next few weeks will show whether de-escalation will start or jostling for tactical gains and capture of vantage points, in a barren terrain littered with ridges, continue. If the latter, the possibility lingers of armed local action spiralling into the use of heavy arms or even air power.

It could also mean Chinese unwillingness to exchange its cross-LAC gains for India's vacating the heights south of Pangong Tso

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambksingh.

LETTERS

NEW PANCHSHEEL

One of the five important points agreed between India and China is the difference of opinion between these two countries regarding border areas should not become disputes. The agreement would not have come at a better time. Reason has dawned on them! Covid-19, which is fast raging across India, demands huge allocation of monetary resources. We can ill afford to spend them on border and other international political issues. The Centre and States should not leave any stone unturned to correct the economic instability which has haunted the nation, thanks to the deadly pandemic. To put it differently, economics should take precedence over politics.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

REMOVE E-PASS

WITH NEAR normalcy having been restored after various restrictions placed on people due to Covid-19 were removed in their movements outside the homes and in other public areas, the insistence that Tamil Nadu people who have been stranded in states outside Tamil Nadu to get e-pass for returning appears to be redundant and also is a definite inconvenience and irritant. The government of Tamil Nadu can very well lift this condition for the benefits of those stranded outside Tamil Nadu to return to their home state without a glitch.

V. Girilakshmi, Coimbatore

SENA'S WITCH HUNTING

SHIV SENA has been quite often accusing BJP of its "intolerance" to criticism after embracing Congress to form its government in Maharashtra. However the Mumbai watchers are bemused and bewildered at the way it treats Ms Kangana Ranaut for some of her open comments against the Chief Minister's stand in the Sushant's death and other issues. The anger of the Chief Minister has gone to the extent of ordering demolition of Kangana's bungalow for 'violation' of BMC's building rules. Should anybody need any proof of Shiv Sena's intolerance when unpalatable questions are put to them? When politicians pretend to be saints when out of power become sinners all of a sudden even if an ant bites them at some 'inconvenient' spots!

V. Rahul Venkatasubramanian, Chennai

Mail your letters to editor@deccanmail.com

Swami who fought against BJP's Hindutva denied in death

Threat to Tomar

Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar is a worried man these days. On his home turf of Gwalior-Chambal, crucial Assembly bypolls are set to take place, which may establish the supremacy of Jyotiraditya Scindia as BJP's iconic figure on Mr Tomar's turf. Mr Tomar, who holds the additional charge of panchayati raj and rural development, was embarrassed when a well-known party spokesman fumbled and failed to name him as the country's agriculture minister. The spokesperson, having roots in the BJP's economic cell, reportedly took Radha Mohan Singh's name, who was agriculture minister in the previous Narendra Modi ministry. Sources close to Mr Tomar feel their leader needs more visibility if he has to counter Mr Scindia within the BJP.

Dissidents' new dilemma

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi turned out to be smarter than her detractors. The 23 Congress dissenters who wrote a letter seeking inner party democracy are now perplexed by Sonia's move to appoint the Congress

Working Committee nominating some prominent dissidents who were asking for CWC polls. Would Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma and Mukul Wasnik muster the courage to turn down a CWC nomination? As per the party constitution, 12 members are required to be elected while an equal number can be nominated. Last time when CWC polls were held, the party was led by Sitaram Kesri in 1997. Sonia is travelling abroad for her medical checkup and likely to skip the monsoon session of parliament. In her absence, a six-member panel [without Rahul or Priyanka Gandhi] would officiate.

How to protest

The monsoon session of Parliament is starting amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Ironically, when the House had met in March 2020, the chair had reprimanded members for wearing masks. Six months later, wearing masks has been made mandatory. The seating arrangement is also bothering the Opposition as members are spread to galleries in order to enforce social distancing. How would they protest if access to the well of the House is denied?



By WAQYANAWIS

AAP in hills?

Though the Uttarakhand state Assembly poll is scheduled for early 2022, the BJP has begun preparation. Politically, the Trivender Singh Rawat government does not seem strong enough to return to power. So BJP strategists are looking for a "third front" to prevent the Harish Rawat-led Congress

from edging the party out of power. The buzz is that Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party is set to contest the hill state poll in a big way. The presence of a third contender will be bad news for the Congress. The BJP is also reportedly promoting the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal, otherwise considered a defunct outfit. The calculations are that if AAP and/or Uttarakhand Kranti Dal get a few seats through cutting into Congress votes and anti-BJP votes, then a Haryana-like situation can bring the BJP back to power.

Bhai closes Darbar

Jafferbhai Mansuri of Delhi Darbar fame is no more. Covid-19 took another toll. Jafferbhai was a legend in Mumbai as his biryani of the Delhi Darbar chain of restaurants was worth every paisa. In 1973, Jafferbhai had founded his Delhi Darbar restaurant at Bombay's Grant Road, and by 2006 he became the Biryani King, having a chain of restaurants called "Jaffer Bhai's Delhi Darbar" from Grant Road to Jogheshwari. The chain also owns several restaurants in the UAE. Jafferbhai's biryani was much sought after

in wedding receptions. An unassuming and affectionate person, Jafferbhai used to keep a keen eye on his friends and acquaintances who were often given a packet of biryani and kebabs to relish at home.

Silence, they said

Swami Agnivesh will be greatly missed. The social crusader in saffron was a spare time politician who did not get his due even in death, as most English-language newspapers did not carry his obituary. Surprisingly, most Urdu dailies had news of his death on the front page with some editorials and lengthy obits. Perhaps it was due to Agnivesh's consistent opposition to BJP's brand of Hindutva. A brahmin from Andhra, Agnivesh was a vocal Arya Samaji whose influence spread from Punjab-Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan to other parts of the Hindi heartland. Agnivesh had given up a career as a professor in Calcutta to be a full-time social activist. His mission was to resist the RSS at all levels.

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

IN BRIEF

China satellite can't reach orbit

Beijing: China's optical remote-sensing satellite Jilin-1 Gao-fen O2C failed to enter the pre-set orbit on Saturday, official media reported here. The satellite was launched aboard the Kuaizhou-1A carrier rocket from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center at 1:02 pm (local time). The launch centre said the mission failed because of abnormal performance, state-run *Global Times* reported. Specific reasons for the failure are under investigation, it said.

250 guns seized in Germany

Berlin: German police said Saturday they have seized about 250 firearms and a few thousand rounds of ammunition from a man who is believed to be a far-right sympathiser. Police in the northwestern state of Lower Saxony said the weapons were found in the Seevetal area, just south of Hamburg, during a search on Friday evening. A police statement said investigators think the man has right-wing sympathies "because of the overall circumstances." The statement didn't elaborate or say why the man might have had the firearms, citing the ongoing investigation into a suspected violation of weapons laws.

50 die in Congo mine collapse

Kinshasa: More than 50 people are dead after landslides collapsed three artisanal gold mining wells near the city of Kamituga in eastern Congo's South Kivu province on Friday, officials said. Heavy rains for days led to the disaster. "The diggers and the transporters of the stones were swallowed up by the waters," said the Kamituga mayor, Alexandre Bundya. "A team of rescuers with motor pumps came to recover the bodies of the victims." Diwa Honoré, who survived the tragedy, said more than 50 people had been in the three wells, which are about 50 metres deep.

Assange court case to resume

London: The London court hearing on WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's extradition from Britain to the United States is set to resume after a Covid-19 test on one of the participating lawyers came back negative, WikiLeaks said Friday. District Judge Vanessa Baraitser ordered the proceedings adjourned Thursday while a lawyer representing the US government was tested for the Coronavirus. WikiLeaks said the case is now set to continue on Monday. Assange is fighting American prosecutors' attempt to get the British government to send him to the US to stand trial on spying charges. The extradition hearing at London's Old Bailey criminal court is scheduled to last until early October. US prosecutors have indicted the 49-year-old Australian on 18 espionage and computer misuse charges over WikiLeaks' publication of secret

TANKER FIRE WARNING NEGLECTED

Colombo, Sept. 12: The authorities of the oil tanker that went up in flames off Sri Lanka's eastern waters seemed to have neglected warnings from the crew on possible fire on board, a Sri Lankan court has heard. The Panama registered MT (Motor Tanker) New Diamond, a Greek-owned vessel and under charter by the Indian Oil Corporation, was carrying nearly two million barrels of crude oil from Mina Al Ahmadi port in Kuwait to the Indian port of Paradip when it caught fire off the coast of Sangamankanda in Ampara district on Thursday last.

A Filipino crew member died and another was injured in the mishap. The fire was doused in a joint operation of the Indian and Sri Lankan forces on Sunday last. But a new fire broke out within hours due to extreme heat and strong winds. After the second fire was brought under control on Wednesday, the tanker was towed away from the site.

A narrow diesel patch was noticed and an Indian Coast Guard aircraft sprayed dispersants to minimise potential damage to the marine environment. The state authorities sought court's permission to obtain oil samples on board the vessel to carry out tests to verify that the oil leaks visible in the surrounding sea area were those from the tanker.

Covid vaccine trials resume

Recommended after a pause following an adverse reaction in one of the participants

London, Sept. 12: Biopharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford on Saturday said that clinical trials for their Coronavirus vaccine have resumed in the UK after the Medicines Health Regulatory Authority's (MHRA) confirmed that the trials were safe.

The human trials resumed days after a pause had been announced in the trials after an adverse reaction in one of the participants. AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford, as the trial sponsor, said that they cannot disclose further medical information but confirmed that independent investigations concluded that the trials were safe to restart. "Clinical trials for the AstraZeneca Oxford coronavirus vaccine, AZ-D1222, have resumed in the UK following confirmation by the MHRA that it was safe to do so," AstraZeneca said in a statement. "AstraZeneca is committed to the safety of trial participants and the highest standards of conduct in clinical trials."

"The company will continue to work with health authorities across the world and be guided as to when other clinical trials can resume to provide the

JOIN IN VIRUS FIGHT: INDIA

United Nations, Sept. 12: India, along with 168 nations, voted in favour of a Covid-19 resolution in the UN General Assembly that reaffirms international cooperation to respond to "one of the greatest global challenges" and acknowledges the World Health Organisation's "key leadership role" in responding to the outbreak, a reference the US objected to as it opposed the resolution. — *PTI*

vaccine broadly, equitably and at no profit during this pandemic," the company said.

On September 6, the standard review process triggered a voluntary pause to vaccination across all global trials to allow the review of safety data by independent committees, and international regulators.

The UK committee concluded its investigations and recommended to the MHRA that trials in the UK are safe to restart. All trial investigators and participants will be updated with the relevant information and this will be

disclosed on global clinical registries, according to the clinical trial and regulatory standards, AstraZeneca said.

AZD1222 was co-invented by the University of Oxford and its spin-out company, Vaccitech. It uses a replication-deficient chimpanzee viral vector based on a weakened version of a common cold virus (adenovirus) that causes infections in chimpanzees and contains the genetic material of the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19 virus spike protein).

After vaccination, the surface spike protein is produced, priming the immune system to attack the SARS-CoV-2 virus if it later infects the body. AstraZeneca, the biopharmaceutical giant in tie-up with the university to produce the vaccine, had described the pause as a "routine" one following what was "an unexplained illness". The Oxford University's Jenner Institute team started working to develop a vaccine against the SARS-CoV-2, or the virus which causes Covid-19 in January this year and says it has been working with "unprecedented urgency" in a race against the Coronavirus. — *PTI*

U.S. SIGNS DEFENCE DEAL WITH MALDIVES

Washington, Sept. 12: The US has signed a framework for defence cooperation with the Maldives to deepen engagement in support of maintaining peace and security in the strategic Indian Ocean, the Pentagon has announced, as the Trump administration looks for strengthening alliances in the Indo-Pacific to counter China's growing presence in the region.

The framework for defence and security relationship was signed in Philadelphia on September 10 between Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for South and Southeast Asia Reed Werner and Maldivian Minister of Defence Mariya Didi. "It sets forth both countries' intent to deepen engagement and cooperation in maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean, and marks a step forward in the defence tie-up," the Pentagon said. — *PTI*

Belarus president to visit Russia on Monday: Kremlin

Moscow, Sept. 12: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday will hold talks with Belarus strongman Alexander Lukashenko, who faces the biggest protest of his nearly three-decade rule, the Kremlin said.

Lukashenko's visit will be the first to Soviet-era master Russia by the Belarusian leader since protests broke out over his disputed election win last

month. Putin has been keen to unify Russia and Belarus, and Moscow has accompanied its recent offers of military aid with calls for tighter integration. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday however there was no plan for the leaders to hold a news conference or sign any documents. The location of the "working visit" in Russia was yet to be announced, he said.

Lukashenko said last week that during his talks with Putin, he planned to "dot all the i's on issues that are very sensitive and delicate for the two states". Lukashenko, who has been in power for 26 years, has vowed that he will not give up power to the opposition, which claims its candidate Svetlana Tikhonovskaya was the rightful winner of the August 9 polls. — *AFP*

FILM | FEST

Under the Open Sky showcases small joys, big disappointments and generosity of strangers

The female gaze: Lighting up and lightening the *yakuza*

SUPARNA SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

I have attended the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) twice in person, and am now, in these surreal Covid-times, participating in the festival digitally.

Today is Day 3 of the 11-day festival. And usually, for those who fly into Toronto from the sub-continent, this is when jet-lag really hits. There is no jet-lag this year, but there is Net-lag. For two days I have struggled with a crappy WiFi that keeps disappearing, only to make sudden, brief, special appearances. I am pleased that despite

my annoying WiFi stretching the 126-minute Japanese film, *Under the Open Sky*, to almost four hours, I stayed with it.

I had to. It's that rarest of rare films — a *yakuza* (Japanese crime syndicate/gangster) movie directed by a woman.

Yakuza is, perhaps, one of Japan's most loved gifts to the world after sushi. It's a film genre that has not just inspired great directors across the world, but has also helped sustain many grindhouse talents and enterprises. But, *yakuza* movies have always been men's domain. Films about alpha men made by alpha

male directors.

Director Miwa Nishikawa, who has also written *Under The Open Sky*'s screenplay, has not made a typical *yakuza* film as they have come to be defined by its master-directors, though she uses many of the tropes of the post-retirement funk that ex-*yakuza* characters often struggle with, especially in Takeshi Kitano's stunning *Satishine* (1993) and Yasuo Furuhashi's *Demon* (1985).

Her film follows Mikami (Koji Yakusho), an ex-*yakuza*, as he returns to the world after serving a 13-year jail sentence for murder. But the world has mo-

Protest in Paris



A protester kicks back a tear gas canister as around 1,000 people gathered in two "yellow vest" protests against President Emmanuel Macron's perceived prioritisation of business and the rich over struggling ordinary families, in the Paris on Saturday. "Yellow vest" marches had been announced for other major cities in France including Marseille, Toulouse, Lyon and Lille. — *AFP*

Republishing Mohammed cartoons: Al-Qaeda threatens *Charlie Hebdo*

Paris, Sept. 12: Al-Qaeda has threatened French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* with a repeat of a 2015 massacre of its staff, after it republished controversial cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, the SITE observatory said on Friday.

Al-Qaeda in its publication *One Ummah* had warned that Charlie Hebdo would be mistaken if it believed the 2015 attack was a "one off", after the magazine printed the "contemptible caricatures" in a defiant issue that marked the start of the trial in Paris of suspected accomplices in the attack.

The comments came in an English edition of the Al-Qaeda publication that

purported to mark the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States carried out by the terror network.

It said it had the "same message" for the France of President Emmanuel Macron as it did for his predecessor Francois Hollande who was president at the time of the 2015 attacks.

It said France under Macron "gave a green light" to the republication of the cartoons. Twelve people, including some of France's most celebrated cartoonists, were killed on January 7, 2015, when brothers Said and Cherif Kouachi went on a gun rampage at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*, whose no-taboo st-

yle, including publishing cartoons of the prophet, had divided the country.

The trial, which began on September 2 and is expected to continue until November, sees 14 suspected accomplices face justice even though all the perpetrators were killed in the wake of the attacks.

It had reopened one of the post painful chapters in France's modern history which heralded a spate of jihadist attacks on its territory that have claimed more than 250 lives.

Charlie Hebdo's director Laurent Sourisseau, known as "Riss" and who was himself badly wounded in the shoulder in the attack, told the court this

week that there was nothing to regret in publishing the cartoons. "What I regret is to see how little people fight to defend freedom. If we don't fight for our freedom, we live like a slave and we promote a deadly ideology," he said.

Charlie Hebdo's republication of the cartoons drew new condemnation from states, including Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. But Sourisseau, who now lives under round the clock protection, said it had to republish them.

"If we had given up the right to publish these cartoons, that would mean that we were wrong to do so" in the first place, he said. — *AFP*

RUSSIAN COPS SEEK TO GRILL NAVALNY

Moscow, Sept. 12: Russian police said Friday they were seeking to question opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Berlin after Moscow rubbished Germany's declaration that he was poisoned with a Novichok nerve agent.

The 44-year-old Kremlin critic and anti-corruption campaigner fell ill after boarding a plane in Siberia and was hospitalised there before being flown to Berlin.

Germany said there was "unequivocal evidence" that he was poisoned with the nerve agent but Russia says its doctors found no trace of poison. The Siberian transport police, who have been retracing Navalny's movements, said in a statement Russia would be preparing a request for its officers and an "expert" to shadow German investigators.

Navalny is now out of a medically induced coma and reacting to speech. Russia said it wanted its officers to be present as "German colleagues carry out investigative activities with Navalny". — *AFP*

No military solution to Afghanistan: Pak

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 12

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi Saturday said that Pakistan has been holding the stance that Afghan issue could not be resolved through use of force and it is welcoming that the world is now accepting Pakistan's stance.

He was speaking through video link in the opening ceremony of Intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha. Qureshi said that holding of these negotiations is an important milestone in establishing peace in Afghanistan.

The FM called the negotiations a golden opportunity for the Afghan leader-

ship to pave the way for durable peace in Afghanistan. Qureshi reiterated that Pakistan sincerely played its reconciliatory role in Afghan peace process as a shared responsibility, and it will continue doing so.

He also urged international community to play its due role to take the peace process to its logical conclusion. He said the mistakes of the past should not be repeated.

Arab Emirates earlier this month. The Afghan sides are also expected to discuss constitutional changes, and power sharing.

Even seemingly mundane issues like the flag and the name of the country could find their way on to the negotiation table. — *AP*

tiff

ved on, and it didn't leave a place at the table for him. A proud man with few usable skills and an expired driving licence, Mikami has to now live off state welfare. That's almost physically painful for the man who once thought nothing of venting his anger with his sword or fist at even a hint of an insult.

Though Mikami some-

times finds himself reacting in his old ways, there is no brooding, sulking, or bloody outrage in Nishikawa's film.

There is a very obvious touch of a woman in the film's rhythmic, everyday pace as Mikami experiences small joys, big disappointments, and the touching generosity of strangers.

Under the Open Sky is more than a genre curiosity. It's as if Nishikawa switched on a bright white light in what was till now a smoke-filled grimy world with an old, dim, yellow light bulb. And then she opened the windows and let some fresh air in.

The film has some lovely moments, but it's not a great film. Its plot meanders, and Nishikawa, at times, labours her point, even pausing the story to deliver flat, dreary speeches. And sometimes, when it's on Mikami's job search, it feels as if we are watching like a government-sponsored video on the reformation, rehabilitation and assimilation of ex-gangsters.

Yet I could not walk away from *Under The Open Sky* because of Koji Yakusho. He doesn't inhabit the character of Mikami. He creates it with a mix of humanity, a yearning for a mundane life even as he struggles

with some remains of the raging gangster he once was. These emotions reside in his dialogue and expressions, of course, but also in the smallest of gestures.

Yakusho brings to the character of Mikami a complex mix of quiet humility, dignity and simple-minded naivety. It's a moving, measured performance but with the fluidity of an actor who creates an interiority and brings feeling and meaning to even stock scenes, like where he is just sitting and staring out of a window.

It's more than a stirring performance. It's an honourable one.

SHORT TAKES

Hami takes pole as Merc dominate

Mugello, Italy: Lewis Hamilton claimed a record-increasing 95th pole position on Saturday when he outpaced Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas to seize the prime grid position in qualifying for Sunday's inaugural Tuscan Grand Prix. It was the series leader and six-time champion's seventh pole in eight races this year as Mercedes continued their dominant run to nine poles out of nine this season with an eighth consecutive front row lockout. Bottas had been fastest in all three practice sessions, but he was unable to maintain his superiority over the Briton in the decisive hour albeit that his second run was affected by yellow flags after Esteban Ocon spun in his Renault. Red Bull's Max Verstappen was third ahead of his team-mate Alex Albon with Charles Leclerc claiming fifth for Ferrari. — *AFP*

Indonesia to skip Thomas-Uber Cup

Jakarta: Concern over the coronavirus has resulted in Indonesia becoming the fifth team to withdraw from the prestigious Thomas and Uber Cup badminton competition that is scheduled to be held in Aarhus, Denmark from October 3 to 11. Indonesian badminton officials said on Saturday they were concerned that players could contract Covid-19 during the tournament. "Everyone was excited because they saw such a big opportunity, but in the course of time and looking at the development of Covid-19 that had not been resolved, both in Indonesia and in other countries, it raised doubts among athletes," a statement said. — *PTI*

Celtics ease past Raptors to advance

Los Angeles: Jayson Tatum finished with 29 points and 12 rebounds as the Boston Celtics booked their spot in the NBA's Eastern Conference finals with a 92-87 game seven win over the defending league champion Toronto Raptors on Friday. Jaylen Brown scored 21 points, Marcus Smart added 16 points and Kemba Walker 14 for the Celtics who won the series 4-3 and advanced to their third Eastern Conference finals in the past four seasons. "If you want to achieve something great, if you want to win, it's not going to be easy," Tatum said. "That's what we're here for." Boston will play the Miami Heat with game one of the best-of-seven series scheduled for Tuesday in the quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida. — *AFP*

Injured Serena pulls out of Rome

Rome: Four-time champion Serena Williams withdrew from the upcoming Italian Open on Saturday citing the Achilles issue that bothered her in a loss to Victoria Azarenka in the U.S. Open semifinals, organizers announced on Saturday. Williams took a medical timeout for a tape job on her Achilles during her three-set loss on Thursday. — *AP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

England vs Australia: 2nd ODI from 5.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FORMULA ONE

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

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: West Bromwich Albion vs Leicester City from 6.30 pm; Tottenham Hotspur vs Everton from 9 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Spanish League: Deportivo Alaves vs Real Betis from 5.30 pm; Real Valladolid vs Real Sociedad from 7.30 pm; Villarreal vs Huesca from 10 pm; Valencia vs Levante from 12.30 am (Monday). All matches on LaLiga page on Facebook

TENNIS

US Open: Men's singles final from 1.30 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, 2, HD

Regd. No.
TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by
K. Sudhakar on behalf of
Deccan Chronicle Holdings
Limited and Printed at
Deccan Chronicle Press situated at
No 2/22, Sengalipalayam Road,
N.G.G.O Colony Post,
Kurudampalayam Village,
Coimbatore - 641 022. RNI
Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692
Ph No : 2231252, 253, 255, 257 & 358
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Gunners on fire

Rampant Arsenal crush Fulham as Premier League returns

London, Sept. 12: Arsenal made a flying start to the new Premier League season as Gabriel Magalhaes grabbed a debut goal and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored a stunner in Saturday's 3-0 win at Fulham.

Just 48 days after last season's delayed conclusion, the Premier League is back and Arsenal hit the ground running with the kind of confident display that has become their hallmark since Mikel Arteta took charge.

Arsenal's free-flowing attack was too incisive for promoted Fulham and Alexandre Lacazette gave the visitors an early lead at Craven Cottage.

Brazilian defender Gabriel scored Arsenal's second after the break in his first appearance since his close-season move from Lille.

Aubameyang added the final flourish with a typically eye-catching strike that emphasised why Arsenal are so desperate for the Gabon forward to sign an extension to the contract which expires at the end of the season.

Arteta has said that fans concerned Aubameyang will leave can "relax" because he is "very optimistic" his captain will agree a new deal soon.

With former Chelsea winger Willian providing a pair of assists on his debut, it was the ideal way for Arsenal to start a season that appears full of promise after last season's FA Cup triumph.

Although their eighth-placed finish in the Premier League ranked as Arsenal's lowest final position since 1995, Arteta had little to do with that after taking charge in December following the dismal reign of Unai Emery.

The former Manchester City assis-



Arsenal's Gabriel (second from left) is cheered by teammates after scoring against Fulham in their English Premier League match in London on Saturday. Arsenal won 3-0. — *AP*

tant coach has been a much-needed breath of fresh air for Arsenal and pushing for a place in the top four should not be beyond his revitalised team this term.

While the continued absence of fans due to the coronavirus and shorter than usual break has taken a little anticipation away from the new campaign, Arsenal were keener than most to get back in action after beating Chelsea in the FA Cup final. — *AFP*

NEYMAR BACK IN SQUAD AFTER QUARANTINE

Paris, Sept. 12: Brazilian star Neymar is back in the Paris Saint-Germain squad for Sunday's Ligue 1 match against Marseille after serving a Covid-19 quarantine, PSG coach Thomas Tuchel has confirmed.

Neymar tested positive for coronavirus on September 2, having contracted the virus holidaying in Ibiza following the 1-0 loss to Bayern Munich in the Champions League final in Lisbon last month.

The Brazilian, along with the likes of Kylian Mbappe, Angel Di Maria and Leandro Paredes, were all quarantined, with Neymar making his return to training on Friday.

LYON HELD AT BORDEAUX

Champions League semifinalist Lyon were held at Bordeaux to 0-0 in a tepid French league encounter.

In a game of rare chances on Friday, Lyon almost

stole a win 10 minutes from the end when highly rated midfielder Houssem Aouar hit the post after skipping past center half Laurent Koscielny.

Bordeaux remained in second place with five points from three games, while Lyon was third with four points having played one game less. Lyon lost to eventual winner Bayern Munich 3-0 in the Champions League semis last month. — *Agencies*

Thiem, Zverev in new-look Slam final

New York, Sept. 12: Dominic Thiem of Austria will play Germany's Alexander Zverev in the US Open final for their first Grand Slam titles after they won their last-four matches in contrasting styles on Friday.

Second seed Thiem ousted third-seeded Russian and last year's runner-up Daniil Medvedev in a closely fought three-setter that was packed with powerful baseline rallies and impressive serving.

The 27-year-old Thiem won 6-2, 7-6 (9/7) 7-6 (7/5) in 2hr 56 min inside Arthur Ashe Stadium to reach his fourth Grand Slam final.

Earlier, Zverev came from two sets down to complete a remarkable comeback against 20th-seeded Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta and reach his first tennis major final.



Germany's Alexander Zverev reacts after defeating Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 during their US Open semifinal in New York on Friday. — *AP*

The 23-year-old German won an error-strewn, scrappy encounter 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 in 3hr 23min.

It marked the first time

in Zverev's career that he came from two sets behind to win.

"I actually looked at the scoreboard when I was

down two sets to love," Zverev said.

"I was like, 'I can't believe it. I'm playing in a semi-final, I'm supposed

to be the favourite and I have no chance, I'm playing that bad."

Zverev made 36 unforced errors in the first two sets compared to just 12 for Carreno Busta as the nerves of the occasion seemed to get the better of him.

FIRST-TIME DUO TAKE DOUBLES CROWN

First-time doubles duo Laura Siegemund and Vera Zvonareva won the women's doubles title, defeating China's Xu Yifan and Nicole Melichar of the United States in straight sets in the final.

Germany's Siegemund and Russian partner Zvonareva had never played doubles together before this year's US Open.

However, the unseeded pairing romped past the third-seeded Xu and Melichar 6-4, 6-4 to cap a fairytale victory. — *AFP*

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

RCB are in great shape, says Kohli

Dubai, Sept. 12: Back into the thick of things after five months of coronavirus-forced break, Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Virat Kohli is happy with the fitness level of his team members, saying "everyone is looking in great shape" ahead of the IPL beginning on September 19.

Kohli, a fitness freak, also said that he himself felt good from the first training session after landing in the UAE.

"From fitness point of view everyone is looking great, everyone is in good shape. It's a matter of feeling good and I think I felt good from the first session onwards," Kohli said in a video posted on RCB's twitter handle.

"Obviously, there are few things that you try and rectify along the way and once you reach your optimum mind set and you enter competition you just want to stay in that as much as possible."

The India captain said the team management's focus during the two-week training period in the UAE was a balanced approach to avoid injuries to players.

"We don't want to push anyone into a niggle or an injury because we understand it's been a while away from the game. So I think we moved ahead in a

● **The India captain said the the team management's focus during the two-week training period in the UAE was a balanced approach to avoid injuries to players.**

balanced manner.

"We don't want to be a maniac like doing 6 sessions in six days. We gave ample off time to the boys which we will continue to do along the course of the these next few training sessions also," Kohli said.

Kohli said after the long break, the need of the hour was to start slowly and increase the intensity of training sessions gradually, which the RCB has now managed to attain.

"First few days we are just getting our eye in, getting back in thick of things after 5 months, it's a bit different, try and get into the frame of mind which you usually want to be. It takes a bit of time, in these session now we are mostly batting in the middle, trying to figure out hitting angles, understanding the pace of wicket and all these."

"I am very very happy with how the team is shaping up," said the talismanic batsman. — *PTI*

Khan to be first American in IPL

Abu Dhabi, Sept. 12: The IPL is set to see participation of a player from the USA for the first time when Kolkata Knight Riders roping in fast bowler Ali Khan for the upcoming 13th edition of the league.

The two-time winners will pick the 29-year-old fast bowler — pending IPL approval — as a replacement for the English seamer Harry Gurney, according to an *ESPNcricinfo.com* report.

Gurney is scheduled to have surgery related to a shoulder injury, and has pulled out of both the IPL and England's Vitality Blast last month.

Khan's signing will make him the first USA player to feature in the IPL.

Khan was part of the Trinbago Knight Riders' squad which remained unbeaten on the way to their CPL title win on Thursday. He picked up

eight wickets from as many matches with an economy rate of 7.43.

He was on KKR's radar last season as well but no deal could be worked out.

The pacer burst on to the limelight during the 2018 Global T20 Canada, where he was spotted by star West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo, who brought him to the CPL. Khan returned a haul of 16 wickets from 12 matches for Guyana Amazon Warriors that year, the second-most by a fast bowler in the season.

Bravo, in one of his Instagram stories, posted a video with Khan, Brendon McCullum and a few more inside a plane with the caption 'Next stop Dubai'.

Former Rajasthan Royals bowler Rusty Theron, who now plays for USA, was part of the now defunct Deccan Chargers team in 2011 and Kings XI Punjab in 2010. — *PTI*

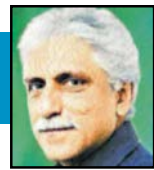
AUSSIES OPEN ODI SERIES WITH WIN AGAINST HOSTS

Manchester, Sept. 12: Australia beat England by 19 runs to win the first one-day international at Old Trafford on Friday. World champions England, set 295 for victory, finished on 275-9 as Australia defeated their arch-rivals for just the third time in 14 ODIs.

Fast bowler Josh Hazlewood reduced the hosts to 22-2 on his way to 3-26 before leg-spinner Adam Zampa (4-55) struck twice in two overs to leave England in dire straits at 57-4. But Sam Billings hit 118 — a maiden ODI hundred — after his fifth-wicket partnership of 113 with opener Jonny Bairstow (84) gave the hosts hope of an unlikely victory. — *AFP*

Brief scores: Australia 294/9 in 50 overs (G. Maxwell 77, M. Marsh 73; M. Wood 3/54, J. Archer 3/57) bt England 275/9 in 50 overs (S. Billings 118, J. Bairstow 84; A. Zampa 4/55, J. Hazlewood 3/26).

Djoker's US Open ouster shows rules are paramount



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

It's turning out to be an eminently forgettable year for Novak Djokovic. He suffered a major setback when the Adria Tour he had organized mid-year had was called off for violating the protocol to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Four players tested positive including Djokovic himself, and the tour was kaput.

The world no.1 tennis player's attempt to form a parallel tennis players body, while it has made some progress, has invited deep controversy too.

However, the worst blow was his ouster from the US Open last week, which wrecked his chances of winning an 18th Grand Slam title.

Djokovic was 'defaulted' from the tournament for breaking the rules. The incident happened in the 11th game of the first set of the fourth-round match against Pablo Carreno Busta when he was broken. Busta now led 6-5 and would have served for the set.

Before play could resume, however, Djokovic hit the ball in frustration,

which struck the line judge behind him. She collapsed, and with this, also went Djokovic's hopes of winning another Slam and edge closer to Rafael Nadal (who has 19 titles) and Roger Federer (20).

With Nadal (because of Covid fear) and Federer (recovering from surgery) both skipping the US Open, Djokovic was odds-on favourite to win. He had looked in impressive form too, dropping just a single set in three matches before the unhappy incident in the fourth match.

Sport can be gloriously or cruelly uncertain, of course, so one can only speculate how the tournament would have panned out. But with his major rivals missing, Djokovic's path to the title seemed relatively easy. A momentary

lapse of reason, one impetuous action, and his hopes came crashing down.

Sensing immediately that what he had done was wrong, Djokovic, to his credit, immediately apologised to the line judge and inquired of her well-being. But the damage had been done. Within minutes, the decision had been taken. Djokovic would have to forfeit the match.

US Open Tournament Referee Soeren Friemel explained later why the harsh punishment: "Based on the facts that the ball was hit angrily, recklessly; that it went straight at the line umpire's throat; that the line umpire was clearly hurt and in pain, the decision was made that Novak [Djokovic] had to be defaulted."

Was such a punitive action against him justified, more so when Djokovic did not intend to hit the line judge? The tennis world has been in turmoil since the incident. Djokovic's supporters have been livid, claiming he was being victimized. An equal, if not more, number of aficionados think the punishment fair.

I believe the action against him was not only justified, but necessary. It also sends out a strong message of how rules must be held paramount in sport, which is particularly relevant in our part of the world where prima donnas can get away with anything.

For this, the ATP and the US Open tournament officials deserve credit. Think of it. In a year where sport

is so badly hit by Covid, and in a tournament already missing the two biggest drawcards in tennis — Federer and Nadal — it wouldn't have been easy to banish the third member of the game's superstar troika.

Throwing Djokovic out would affect audience participation in the US Open, even if it was being played only for TV audiences. The ramifications of this could be wider: it could affect monetization prospects, and certainly cause internal dissent within the tennis universe.

I can think of several instances in India — and elsewhere in the sub-continent — where a similar breach by a topnotch sportsperson — especially a cricketer — would have been glossed over, or

brushed under the carpet, and things allowed to continue as if nothing had happened.

That is great disservice to sport. Being lenient with superstars because of the many benefits they otherwise undoubtedly bring is not being pragmatic, as some argue, but in fact diminishes the sport. Being lenient in such situations is bad example, especially for youngsters for whom these stars are role models.

Ultimately, every sport has to be bound by rules for it to be fair and successful. These rules are the same for everybody and must apply equally to all, particularly the most famous and powerful. Any exemption makes the edifice fragile, and more likely to crumble.