

SHORT TAKES

TRS AND BJP LEADERS TOLD TO RESIGN

From page 1

“Bheemeshwar was using police to harm those who questioned him by branding them as Naxal informers. He was fleecing money in the name of interest from farmers who had run up debts with him,” the Maoists’ letter said. It warned TRS and BJP leaders of the area to resign or meet a similar fate.

Mulugu superintendent of police Sangram Singh G. Patil, however, maintained that the Naxals had demanded funds from Bheemeswar.

They killed him when he refused to pay. “Maoists are depriving tribals living in the border areas of the fruits of development and welfare programmes of the state government. They are hampering progress by digging up roads and causing inconvenience to people,” he said.

VERY HEAVY RAINS, TAKE CARE: KCR

S.A. ISHAQUI I DC HYDERABAD, OCT. 11

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Sunday asked people in the state to be alert and cautious following Indian Meteorological Department’s warning of heavy to very heavy rains across the state over the next two days.

He instructed Chief Secretary to keep the official machinery on high alert and wanted him to monitor the situation with district collectors, superintendents of police and police commissioners at regular intervals and take necessary relief measures.

Accordingly, the Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar issued directions to the authorities stating that IMD has warned of heavy to very heavy rainfall over isolated parts of the state, especially the erstwhile districts of Adilabad, Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Warangal and Khammam.

While cautioning the state administration that massive flooding and waterlogging are likely to occur in low-lying areas and trees and electric poles falling on roads, he asked the collectors and superintendents of police to ensure that the entire district administration strictly follows the flood protocol.

Stating that reservoirs, tanks and streams may overflow causing inundation of low-lying areas and cause low bridges and causeways to overflow, posing threat to traffic and people, he asked the authorities to pay special attention to low-level bridges and causeways. The Chief Minister also wanted prohibition of all traffic and pedestrian movements so as to ensure no loss of lives.

ADILABAD AIR CELEBRATES 35TH ANNIVERSARY

DC CORRESPONDENT ADILABAD, OCT. 11

The All India Radio (AIR), Adilabad station is unique as it is known to create programmes in the Telugu dialect and promoting local culture and food among its listeners.

The Adilabad AIR will be celebrating its 35th anniversary this year. It is considered the first local radio station in united Andhra Pradesh and the third in the country.

Its tagline is ‘Mana Basha, Mana Yasa and Mana FM’ and this reflects in its programmes, content and commitments.

Adilabad AIR program head Sumanaspati Reddy said that AIR Adilabad was set up in Adilabad district on October 12, 1986, to preserve the local culture and traditions, especially of the Adivasis and other marginalised sections for future generations.

The station was initially established initially as ‘AM’ and later upgraded into ‘FM’ in 2015. Its programmes are now available on AIR Live (Adilabad) App.

Sumanaspati Reddy said, “We are not only focusing on preserving and promoting Telangana dialect through our programmes but also encourage local artists.”

Adilabad AIR has been organising food festivals to popularise and showcase a variety of local recipes and snacks. Besides this, the station also creates programmes to raise awareness on various issues among the children, women, and farmers.

■ **SET UP** to preserve the local culture and traditions.

Set up helpline for Dharani: People

Some columns on the website not active; don’t know whom to approach, say citizens

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA I DC WARANGAL, OCT. 11

Though municipal bodies have asked citizens to update their non-agricultural property details online on the Dharani portal, citizens have several doubts over registration on the portal, apart from information to be shared with field officials in case of offline registration.

Citizens feel a helpline that could guide them on registering their properties online would have been a great help.

“I received a text from the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) to register my property details online. However, when we tried to do the same, some of the columns on the website were not active.

We did not know how those details are to be filled. There is also no information on whom to approach in case of such problems. Government should have created awareness about this instead of going forward with the process in haste,” said M. Sudheer Babu, a retired teacher from Warangal.

GWMC officials, including bill collectors and tax inspectors, have been going door-to-door to register details of non-agricultural properties on the

● **GWMC OFFICIALS**, including bill collectors and tax inspectors, have been going door-to-door to register details of non-agricultural properties on the Dharani app.

● **ENUMERATORS WILL** be able to register a house owner’s details quickly if the information like name, owner’s Aadhaar card number, electricity meter number, and family members’ Aadhaar card numbers are kept ready.

Dharani app. Even they are facing problems with non-availability of house owners and non-cooperation from residents in some cases.

Warangal Urban district collector Rajeev Gandhi Hanumanthu said enumerators will be able to register a house owner’s details quickly if the information like name, owner’s Aadhaar card number, electricity meter number, and family members’ Aadhaar card numbers are kept ready.

“Owners must keep these details handy before the arrival of enumerators to speed up the process,” the collector suggested.



Enumerators register non-agriculture property details in Warangal.

— DC

● **56 CATEGORIES** in the Dharani survey have to be filled.

● **100 HOUSEHOLDS** a day is the target.

● **30 MINUTES** it takes for each enumerator to fill each form.

● **NEW FEATURE** in survey allows for house owners to upload the details of their property by themselves through the dharani portal link <https://bit.ly/36o32bd>

● **MANY NON-RESIDENT** Indians (NRIs) who own property here are worried. Many of them do not have either an Aadhaar card or an Indian mobile number to enrol their property details online.

People want govt to lower the amounts to be paid under LRS

RAVINDRA SESHU I DC KHAMMAM, OCT. 11

Who is responsible for selling plots in illegal layouts? Why does the government leave the realtors and go after gullible people who bought plots with their hard-earned money? How are realtors allowed venture layouts without proper specifications such as 30 feet roads, greenery and leaving ten percent open space for parks? Will the Chief Minister, K. Chandrasekhar Rao, waive the 14 per cent tax on the land or not? What is the fate of plot owners whose plots in the layouts that had less than 10 per cent open space for greenery?

These and other questions are plaguing citizens as the LRS buzz takes over.

Neither the town planning officials nor the revenue officials have any answers to the questions.

G. Anand, a resident of Khammam, said “There

● **THERE** are various questions on the LRS. Every five persons out of 10 in Khammam town are worried about the scheme. Getting huge amounts for LRS is a problem to many.

are various questions on the LRS and there are no answers. Every five persons out of 10 in Khammam town are worried about the scheme. Getting huge amounts for LRS is a problem to many. Mr Chandrasekhar Rao has thought only of filling the government’s coffers without considering the problems of the people.” People who took plots in layouts that not follow some of the specifications are worrying about claiming open space by the realtors after paying amounts as individuals.

N. Venkat Rao, who bought a plot in such a venture, said, “The government should give clarifications on such issues.

The officials should suggest we form residents’ welfare associations and hand over leftover space (not as per the norms) to them as a safety measure. The amounts to be paid under LRS should be reduced as per the space availability in the layout.”

The government’s decision not to register plots that were not regularised turned out to be a curse for many.

Some realtors hid the old plans and designed new layouts as per their convenience. Many of the crop channels were made into plots. Such incidents happened in the ventures in Raghunathapalem mandal.

A. Purnima, a housewife, said, “We purchased the plot as part of saving and hoping it may help at the time of our daughter’s marriage. Collecting huge amounts in the name of LRS is nothing but inhuman, especially in Covid-19 times.”

UoH students fume over FIR

HARLEEN MINOCHA I DC HYDERABAD, OCT. 11

The Cyberabad police on Saturday booked at least 14 students of University of Hyderabad (UoH) for taking part in an anti-CAA rally from the university campus to the Maulana Azad National Urdu University (Manuu) on February 21 this year.

The notice said that the students may be arrested without a warrant if necessary in relation to a first information report (FIR) that had been filed against them.

108 STAFF DEMANDS TO BE LOOKED INTO, SAYS ETALA

Hyderabad: Employees working for the 108 ambulance services in Telangana state have been playing a vital and critical role in saving lives of the people, particularly in these difficult times of the coronavirus pandemic, health minister Etala Rajendar said.

Addressing a meeting of 108 ambulance workers, the minister assured them that the government will attend to their demands related to Provident Fund (PF), Employees State Insurance (ESI), and capping work hours to 12 a day.

■ **THE FIR** invokes Indian Penal Code Sections 143 (unlawful assembly) and 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) read with Section 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention).

The complaint said that students of the university had illegally gathered at the Manuu campus and conducted a rally showing placards and shouting slogans against the Centre, and gave lectures that were being deemed as provocative and intended to break tranquillity at the university.

The complaint further

stated that the rally was conducted without permission from either Manuu authorities or from the police.

The FIR invokes Indian Penal Code Sections 143 (unlawful assembly) and 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) read with Section 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention).

Telangana registers 1,717 cases, 2,103 recover

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, OCT. 11

The state recorded 1,717 new cases of Covid-19 on Saturday, the state health department reported on Sunday, adding that five more people lost their lives to the disease, taking the total cases so far to 2,12,063, and the fatalities to 1,222.

For the 24-hour period between Friday and Saturday evening, the department, in its Covid-19 bulletin, said that 2,103 persons were declared as recovered from the disease.

With this, the number of

people who have overcome Covid-19 so far has reached 1,85,128 which is 87.29 per cent of all cases in the state so far.

A total of 46,657 tests were conducted between Friday and Saturday evening and results from 1,093 of these tests were awaited, the bulletin said. While 20,529 persons tested were primary contacts of Covid-19 patients, 5,598 were secondary contacts. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area had 276 new cases, followed by 132 in Ranga Reddy, 131 in Medchal-Malkajgiri, 104 in Kar-

imnagar, 101 in Nalgonda, 87 in Bhadrachalam, 85 in Siddipet districts. There were 1,830 patients admitted to government hospitals while this number was 2,674 in private hospitals.

The health department appealed to the people to follow safety measures including wearing face masks, maintaining six feet with any other person around them, keeping their hands clean by washing with soap or using a sanitiser, and avoid stepping out of their homes unless required to do so.

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were laid to trap the leopard after a cattle death was reported in the area but in vain.

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SHORT TAKES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INCREASED DURING LOCKDOWN: JUDGE

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, OCT. 11

District judge M. Laxman said that the National Women Commission is working for the welfare of women and their rights. Women can get any assistance from the commission if they have any issues.

"Women can get protection and services of a para legal volunteers by approaching the Commission," he said.

The district judge participated in a webinar organised by the Women Commission, National Legal Services Authority (NSLA) and the District Legal Services Authority (DSLA) and addressed the women.

He said that domestic violence against women has increased during the Covid-19 situation and senior citizens are being neglected in the society. Such cases will be solved by DSLA if they approach it, he said.

YOUTH DROWNS WHILE TAKING SELFIE IN ADILABAD

Hyderabad, Oct. 11: A youngster who was on a picnic with a group of friends drowned in a waterfall while trying to take a selfie near Khandala village in Adilabad Rural mandal on Saturday.

The incident came to light on Monday. The victim was identified as Akash, 22, of Subhashagar in Adilabad, the Adilabad Rural police said.

Police said Akash was standing on a rock and trying to take the selfie when he slipped and fell into a deep portion of the water. His friends tried to rescue him but in vain. They called the police who deployed expert divers to retrieve the body. A case of suspicious death was reported based on a complaint lodged by the family. Inquiries have been taken up.

— INN

APPLICATIONS DATE FOR HOSP MGMT EXTENDED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT. 11

The last date for submission of applications for admission to the Masters in Hospital Management programme offered by the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) has been extended to October 20, hospital authorities said on Sunday.

NIMS, a university under a special Act of the state government, offers this course to medical and non-medical graduates. Anyone who meets this requirement and does not cross 30 years of age on December 31, 2020, is eligible to apply. For SC/ST students, a three-year age relaxation rule will apply. The two-year programme offers a six-month internship at NIMS.

Students can apply at https://nims.edu.in/nimset?tab=curr&adm_id=MJM2 along with an application fee of ₹1,100. More details are available with Dr G. Sravanthi at 8555839760, K. Anusha at 7794043987, Shipra Chakraborty at 9046484856, Vignan Reddy at 9059544844, and Suresh Alishala at 9160793142. NIMS said. Queries can also be mailed to nimsmhm2020@gmail.com.

● **NIMS, A university under a special Act of the state government, offers this course to medical and non-medical graduates. Anyone who meets this requirement and does not cross 30 years of age on December 31, 2020, is eligible to apply.**

50 TSWCE students test +ve

School officials said only 3 pupils infected as they did not want parents to panic

PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC
KARIMNAGAR, OCT. 11

As many as 50 students of the Telangana Social Welfare Centre of Excellence (TSWCE) situated in Alugunoor of Thimmapur mandal have tested positive for Covid-19.

A total of 206 members of talented students who had been selected from various corners of the state from Class 10 to Intermediate are pursuing their education at TSWCE centre in Alugunoor. The school management reopened the school some days back.

Having learnt that some of the intermediate students who are pursuing CEC (Civics, Economics and Commerce) group are showing Covid symptoms,



The Telangana Social Welfare Centre of Excellence situated in Alugunoor of Thimmapur mandal. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

TSWCE approached the health officials and requested them to conduct Covid-19 tests of all their students. Antigen tests were conducted on 206 per-

● **AS PER** the bulletin released by the health department about 176 positive cases were reported in the last 24 hours in the erstwhile Karimnagar district. Of them 104 positive cases were reported in Karimnagar, 22 in Rajanna Sircilla, 28 in Peddapalli and 22 in Jagtial districts.

sons, including staff members. Overall, 56 tested positive, including 50 students and six staff members.

However, they did not disclose the development in order to avoid parents from getting panicky. They announced that only three

students have contracted the Coronavirus and they have been shifted to a quarantine centre.

Principal of the TSWCE centre, Sammaiah said that classes were resumed after duly taking consent of parents.

Since, the students who tested positive have been shifted there is no need to panic. The health condition of the remaining students is good, he added.

Meanwhile, as per the bulletin released by the health department about 176 positive cases were reported in the last 24 hours in the erstwhile Karimnagar district. Of them 104 positive cases were reported in Karimnagar, 22 in Rajanna Sircilla, 28 in Peddapalli and 22 in Jagtial districts.

Loan limit to self-help groups enhanced

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, OCT. 11

The Telangana government has decided to enhance the loan limit for self-help groups (SHGs) that lift farm produce in the state from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh. However, the enhanced amount will be available only to those thrift groups whose payments have been proper.

The decision to enhance the loan limit has been taken for strengthening the women SHGs and enhancing economic growth in rural areas.

Nearly 8,193 self-help groups will be eligible for ₹10 lakh loans in Khammam district. It has been noticed that these

● **NEARLY 8,193** self-help groups will be eligible for ₹10 lakh loans in Khammam district. It has been noticed that these groups not only employ themselves but also provide employment to some others in the district.

● **There are 24,195** SHGs in the district, including 1,488 eligible for loans below ₹1 lakh, 1,791 eligible for loans up to ₹2 lakh, 2,478 that can take loans till ₹3 lakh and 3,108 self-help groups eligible for loans up to ₹4 lakh.

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help groups eligible for loans up to ₹4 lakh.

All these groups are involved in some kind of economic activity, with 50 per cent of them lifting farm produce.

Since the involvement of these thrift groups, lifting of paddy has become easy for civil supplies and agri-

culture departments. Nearly 20 per cent of these groups are into dairy farming and ready-made fabrics.

N. Sunitha of Chaitanya Mahila Sangham in Wyras said, "Our loan limit has been extended from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh. With the loan, we can now double lifting of paddy from 100 tonnes to 200 tonnes. Government makes payments to groups within a week after we pay farmers. The facility will be helpful in strengthening our group economically".

Bankers have already identified the thrift groups eligible for ₹10 lakh loan. The groups will be extended loans within a day or two.

MISSING CLASS 12 STUDENT TRACED BY COPS IN 72 HRS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT. 11

In a swift operation, Rachakonda police traced and brought home a 16-year-old girl within 72 hours on the filing of a missing complaint.

The Class 12 student, a resident of Ganapathi Colony in Hayathnagar, was missing since Wednesday night. In the early hours of Thursday, the parents lodged a missing complaint with police.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Rachakonda police Commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat said, "Special teams were formed and all wings worked hard to trace the girl."

The police tracked her within 72 hours. "This was the best gift to the parents on International Girl Child Day," he said.

The girl's father had told her not to use her phone late at night for chatting.

After an argument on Wednesday night, the girl left the house, leaving her mobile behind and without any money.

● **THE CLASS 12** student, a resident of Ganapathi Colony in Hayathnagar, was missing since Wednesday night. In the early hours of Thursday, the parents lodged a missing complaint.

International Day of the Girl Child celebrated

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, OCT. 11

The Childline 1098 Warangal Urban District and Abhyudaya Seva Samithi jointly celebrated the International Day of the Girl Child under the theme 'My Voice, Our Equal Future' on Sunday at Markondaiahnagar.

Childline District Nodal Coordinator Iqbal Pasha presided over the meeting. Warangal District Child Welfare committee chairperson Mandala Parashramulu said, "Discrimination against girls from certain sections of the society continues to take place even today. Girls are forced into child marriage, female foeticide and trafficking of girls continues."

"It is gratifying to see Prime Minister Narendra Modi's, 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' as well as Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao setting up SC, ST, BC, Minority, KGVB, Model Schools for the development of girls. Parents should pay special attention to girls and work continuously for their development. Girls should be sent for vocational training."

Childline District nodal coordinator Iqbal Pasha said that the Childline 1098 is there to protect children. The development of a country will take place when a girl child grows mentally and financially."

A rally was taken out



District collector G. Ravi unveils a wall poster to mark International Day of the Girl Child at the collectorate in Jagtial district on Sunday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

Collector: Give equal opportunity to girls

DC CORRESPONDENT
JAGTIAL, OCT. 11

On the occasion of the 'International Day of the Girl Child,' district collector G. Ravi unveiled a wall poster with the theme 'My Voice for our Equal Future' at the collectorate in Jagtial on Sunday.

He said, "It is the responsibility of parents to provide equal opportunities to girl children along with the boys and to motivate them to aim high in life." He said, "Girls are competing equally with

boys in all sectors and are striving hard in achieving their set goals. But, the social evils like child marriage, child trafficking, female foeticide still exists in society and prevent them from achieving their life ambitions.

"In many regions, especially in rural areas, girl children still drop out of school, irregular attendance and illiteracy. There is a need to create awareness among the people and motivate them to encourage the girl children," he said.

under the slogan, 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' Let's save the girl child, let's save the creation'. Present on the occasion was ICDS

supervisor Revathi, village head Hari Prasad childline counsellor T. Sirisha along with others were present.

CROP LOSS DUE TO RAINS IS ₹25-L IN KHAMMAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, OCT. 11

The value of crop loss due to the fourth spell of rains in Khammam district is estimated at ₹25 lakh. Crop on 30,000 acres belonging to 14,500 farmers in 243 villages in the district were damaged.

The crops like green gram, cotton, paddy, maize, black gram, chilli and red gram were among the damaged crops. The present Kharif registered the highest rainfall with 47 per cent excess rains.

The total rain days in the ongoing Kharif season was 72 against 59 in 2017-18, 48 in 2018-19 and 55 days in 2019-20.

Rainfall was witnessed for 14 days in June, 22 days in July, 19 days in August and 13 days in September.

October has already seen four rain days and crop damage occurred more in these three days. The farm officials surveyed the crop loss and submitted it to the government. There is no response from it.

Telangana Rythu Sangham district president Bonthu Rambabu said that the farmers spent ₹10,000 to ₹15,000 on each acre for raising the crops.

He demanded that the government release the compensation immediately. He said that cotton plants witnessed infestation of pests due to the stagnant rainwater in the fields. "The farmers will organise a struggle against the government if compensation is not paid," he said.

● **THE TOTAL** rain days in the ongoing Kharif season was 72 against 59 in 2017-18, 48 in 2018-19 and 55 days in 2019-20.

● **CROPS LIKE** green gram, cotton, paddy, maize, black gram, chilli and red gram were damaged.



Elkathurthy police show the arrested lorry driver.

Drunk truck driver booked for murder

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, OCT. 11

In a first, the Warangal Commissionerate police registered a case charging a truck driver for murder after he caused an accident while driving under the influence of alcohol, killing a man and his buffalo.

According to Elkathurthy police inspector Srinivasji, the accused, Boppala Anjaneyulu, was speeding recklessly at the time of the accident on Saturday.

The deceased, Ambala Swamy (60), a resident of

Mulkanoor village was returning home with his buffalo after finishing his farm work. The truck hit Swamy and his buffalo near the warehouse of the Mulkanoor agricultural market. The buffalo died on the spot. Ambala Swamy was taken to the MGM Hospital where he was pronounced dead by a doctor.

Mulkanur police registered a case under Sections 279, 429, 304 Part II of the Indian Penal Code and section 185 of Motor Vehicle Act 1988 against the lorry driver.

Trump fan dies of a heart attack as prez tested positive

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, OCT. 11

Bussa Krishna, a diehard fan of US President Donald Trump, died of a heart attack on Sunday at his native Konne village of Bachannapeta mandal in Jangaon district.

Trump Krishna, as he was called by the villagers, on hearing the news that the US President had tested positive for Covid-19, Krishna was worried and depressed. He was praying for the speedy recovery of Trump, his friends said.

Krishna made headlines when he built a six-foot-tall statue of Donald Trump in his house and performed daily prayers including, abhishekams to his statue four years back. He had turned his home into a shrine of sorts for Trump.

The 33-year-old used to carry a photo of Trump to all the shrines he visited in the country. He also gave Trump's picture holy baths in rivers and waterfalls. He fasted on Fridays for the long life of Trump. Before commencing any work, he would pray to a picture of the US President.



Bussa Krishna supporting Donald Trump's win in the upcoming Presidential elections. — DC

The walls of his house have 'Trump' written all over. Even the shirts he wore daily have Trump's name on them. Krishna was also rooting for the re-election of Trump as the

President of the USA. When Donald Trump visited India earlier this year, Krishna was eager to meet him and had even written to the government but was not allowed by the authorities.

BACK IN BUSINESS 4 families, comprising of 16 members, came to Palli village in Talamadugu mandal; purchases may start on Oct. 19

Agri labourers from Maha arrive for cotton picking in Adilabad

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, OCT. 11

Agriculture labourers have started returning in huge numbers to Adilabad district from Maharashtra for cotton picking during the Kharif season.

A bumper cotton crop is being expected in the district but many farmers were forced to invest huge money on second or third sowing of seeds due to lack of germination and untimely rains after sowing seeds a little early in the Kharif season in some places.

Landowners are engaging

● **AS MANY** as 4,21,343 farmers have cultivated cotton in 1,33,838 acres in the district and officials estimate that Kharif will have 47,93,390 quintals of cotton yield.

agriculture labourers from Maharashtra and are likely to pay ₹5 to ₹6 for picking one kg cotton produce. The labourers have come with families as schools have remained closed.

Most of them are from Kinwat taluka. Babu Khale of Himayatnagar village in Nanded district said that four



Agriculture laborers came in a hired van to Adilabad district from Himayatnagar in Nanded district of Maharashtra for to pick cotton on Sunday.

families, comprising 16 members, came to Palli village in Talamadugu mandal. He said that cotton yield would be low

in the barren lands they had in their native when compared to black soil fields of Adilabad district. He said



said they will complete cotton picking in their own lands within no time.

'Engaging agriculture

laborers from Maharashtra began with sowing of BT cotton seeds and that gave good yield in the starting years",

said Sudeep of Gona of Bheempur mandal and added that BT cotton also created a demand for agriculture labourers and the situation was different when farmers used to sow non-BT cotton seeds.

It is also observed that Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme has created demand for agriculture labourers in villages. Ramakanth Reddy of Palli village said that they have engaged the labour for cotton-picking from Maharashtra for the Kharif.

According to sources, as many as 4,21,343 farmers have cultivated cotton in

1,33,838 acres in the district and agriculture officials have estimated that Kharif will have 47,93,390 quintals of cotton yield.

Meanwhile, the district administration is planning to start commercial operations of cotton soon and a meeting has been convened with ginning and pressing factory owners and officials of Adilabad branch of Cotton Corporation of India and Adilabad Market committee on Monday to decide on the date for starting cotton purchases.

It is likely that the purchases could start on October 19 instead of during the commencement of Dasara.

SHORT TAKES

CONG ALLEGES K'TAKA CM'S KIN HAND IN SCAM

New Delhi, Oct. 11: The Congress on Sunday attacked the BJP over reported allegations of corruption against some family members of Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa in connection with a housing project and demanded a time-bound judicial probe into the matter.

When Leader of Opposition Siddaramaiah had made the allegations against the Chief Minister in the Karnataka Assembly last month, Yediyurappa had dismissed them as "baseless" and challenged the Congress leader to prove the charges.

Citing media reports, Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi on Sunday alleged that the BJP government in Karnataka is "engulfed in the clutches of corruption with dented, tainted leaders ruling the roost".

"If the Chief Minister has the slightest sense of shame, he must resign or be sacked," Singhvi said.

He also questioned the "silence" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda over the reported allegations of corruption and kickbacks against the son, son-in-law, and grandson of Yediyurappa.

The matter relates to a ₹662-crore construction of an apartment project in Bengaluru, Singhvi said.

WOMAN DIES AFTER GIVING BIRTH TO 16TH CHILD IN MP

Damoh (MP), Oct. 11: A 45-year-old woman gave birth to her 16th child in Madhya Pradesh's Damoh district, but both of them died soon afterwards, a local health worker said on Sunday.

The woman, Sukhrani Ahirwar from Padajhir village in the district, delivered a baby boy at home on Saturday, Kallo Bai Vishwakarma, an Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), said.

"However, the condition of the woman and her newborn turned critical and they were rushed to a primary health centre, where both of them were pronounced dead," she added.

According to her, Ahirwar had given birth to 15 children earlier, however, the family had lost seven of them. District Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr Sanjeeta Trivedi confirmed the incident.

INDIA, CHINA CORPS COMMANDERS' TALKS TODAY

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, OCT. 11

Indian and Chinese Corps Commanders are scheduled to hold the 7th round of military talks on Monday where India will again press China to disengage from all friction points in Ladakh and restore the status quo of April 2020.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh, foreign affairs minister S. Jaishankar, national security advisor Ajit Doval and Army Chief General M.M. Naravane among others are part of this crucial group.

Last week, the high-powered China Study Group had discussed the agenda for the 7th round of Corps Commanders level meeting on the five month old stand-off between the two armies in eastern Ladakh.

PAK VIOLATES CEASEFIRE IN POONCH, RAJOURI

Jammu, Oct. 11: Pakistani troops on Sunday shelled mortars in three sectors along the Line of Control in Poonch and Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesperson said. The shelling from across the border in Degwar and Khari Karmara sectors in Poonch and Rajouri's Sunderbani drew a befitting retaliation by the Indian Army, he said, adding that there was no immediate report of any casualty. Pakistan initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and intense shelling with mortars in Degwar sector around 6.15 pm. It was followed by firing and artillery shelling in Khari Karmara at 6.40 pm, the spokesperson said. At 6.45 pm, Pakistani troops targeted forward areas along the LoC in Sunderbani sector of Rajouri, he said.

Nadda sounds poll bugle in Bihar with Gaya public rally

First public meeting by political party under the shadow of Covid pandemic

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, OCT. 11

BJP chief J.P. Nadda kick-started the NDA's political campaign in Bihar by addressing a public rally at the historic Gandhi Maidan in Gaya on Sunday. He listed the works done by the NDA government at the Centre and praised Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's policies for the development of Bihar.

He also used the occasion to lash out at the Opposition parties, especially the Congress and the RJD, for misleading people and doing caste and religion-based politics.

"Modi believes in showing work to the people but the Congress has been doing politics based on caste and religion for political gains. Remember 'Modi hai to Mumkin hai' and 'Nitish hai to Pradesh agay badhega' (Modi makes it possible and under the leadership of Nitish Kumar the state will progress). The future of India is secure in the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and it is important that we should support Nitish Kumar for the progress of Bihar," Nadda said.

Nadda appreciated the Nitish Kumar-led state government for extending help to people during Covid-19 pandemic.

He said, "The Nitish Kumar government took care of the people. Financial assistance was also provided by the state government to those who were stuck outside Bihar."

This was the first public meeting to be organised by a political party under the



BJP national president J.P. Nadda with party leaders and NDA candidates during the first election rally at Gandhi Maidan in Gaya on Sunday.

Congress forms committees, Surjewala to head key panel

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 11

The Congress will hold a meeting of its Central Election Committee on Monday where the last of the candidates to the 70 seats on which it is contesting in the Bihar Assembly polls would be finalised.

The party also formed various panels for the upcoming Assembly polls with party general secretary Randeep Surjewala named chairman of the election management and coordination committee.

The 14-member election

management and coordination committee includes senior leaders like Meira Kumar, Tariq Anwar, Shatrughan Sinha, Kirti Azad, Shakeel Ahmed and Sanjay Nirupam while Mohan Prakash would be the convener of the panel.

Elections to the 243-member Bihar Assembly will be held in three phases from October 28 to November 7. The counting would take place on November 10.

On Sunday, Congress president Sonia Gandhi also approved the setting up of the publicity com-

mittee, media coordination committee, public meeting and logistics committee, legal committee and office management committee for the Bihar elections, a party statement said. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara will head the media coordination committee of which Prem Chand Mishra and Rajesh Rathor would be convener and co-convener respectively. While Subodh Kumar has been appointed the convener of the publicity committee, Jaeya Mishra was named the co-convener of the panel.

national general secretary Bhupendra Yadav.

From the state, Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi, Union ministers Nityanand Rai, Giriraj Singh Ashwini

NITISH TO HIT CAMPAIGN TRAIL FROM TODAY

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

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

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

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

— PTI

Hathras case: MP doctor who stirred row served notice

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, OCT. 11

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

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

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

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

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

However, she was not yet contacted by the SIT so far for investigation into the matter. Dr Bansal, however, denied that she had ever given her identity as sister-in-law of the victim as was

being reported in a section of the media.

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

Dr Bansal said she was moved by the incident and decided to visit the victim's family on humanitarian grounds.

She met the victim's family on October 4 and stayed with them till October 6 following their request.

She chose to reply to questions by the media persons since the victim's family requested her to talk to them on their behalf.

She said she has donated her one month's salary to the victim's family. She also refuted the allegations that she had links with the Maoists and the Bhim Army. "I do not know how such allegations emerged and from where", she said.

Meanwhile, Congress MP and AICC legal cell chairman Vivek Tankha issued a veiled warning to the Madhya Pradesh government not to harass her to appease the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

"I appeal to the Madhya Pradesh government not to harass Dr Rajkumari Bansal to appease the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister. There are many people like her in the society who get emotionally involved in incidents such as Hathras", Tankha tweeted.

THACKERAY SHIFTS METRO CAR SHED FROM AAREY

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, OCT. 11

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

"I had opposed the metro car shed at Aarey. The project will now be relocated to Kanjurmarg. The plot belongs to the government and it will be available at zero cost. No cost will be incurred for the purpose," Thackeray said in a webcast on Sunday.

Despite stiff Opposition from the Shiv Sena and environmentalists, the earlier Devendra Fadnavis-led government had decided to build a metro car shed at Aarey Colony, which is called the green lungs of Mumbai city. The citizens and green activists had protested the project citing the felling of trees and perceived damage to the environment in Aarey due to the project.

Spread over 2000 acres, the Aarey Colony is one of the few green spaces left in Mumbai. The Maharashtra government, on September 3, had declared 600 acre of Aarey land as a reserve forest.

"The government has now revised the forest area to 800 acre. Biodiversity in Aarey needs to be to conserved and protected. Nowhere is there an 800-acre jungle in an urban set up. Mumbai has a natural forest cover. There will be no infringement on rights of tribals in the Aarey forest," said the CM.

Thackeray earlier had also directed the state home department to withdraw cases registered against the protesters last year for opposing the felling of trees at Aarey Colony.

The Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) had chopped more than 2,600 trees at Aarey colony on October 25 last year to construct a car shed for the ₹3200 crore underground Colaba-Bandra-Seez Metro corridor.

— PTI



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

Centre wary as winter, festivals approach

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, OCT. 11

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

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

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

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

During the fifth episode

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ASSEMBLY | BYPOLLS

Party orders probe into incident, expels two members for indiscipline

Cong woman protests 'rapist' nominee, thrashed

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

National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Rekha Sharma said she has written to Uttar

Pradesh director general of police seeking strict action against the accused.

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

As the videos of the ugly scenes at the meeting held on Saturday went viral sparking outrage, the state unit of the Congress

termed it as a "political conspiracy" to defame the party.

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

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

him. As she hurled a bouquet towards Sachin Naik, angry workers allegedly roughed up Yadav and whisked her out of the meeting venue, the eyewitnesses claimed.

"A police complaint has been received. The matter is being probed. However, no case has been registered so far," SHO Kotwali Chandrabhan Singh said.

Yadav, who claimed to be associated with the party for four years, said she

was only questioning the choice of candidate and never expected that the party members would react in such a manner.

"You have given the ticket to a rapist, and this has tarnished the image of Congress. You could have given the ticket to someone else. As I said this, I was pushed by someone from behind. Can I not even put forth my point of view. These people want to destroy the Congress and

end it," Yadav said.

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

— PTI

IN BRIEF

Thailand bus-train collision: 17 dead

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

Mexico asks Pope for abuse apology

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

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

France aircraft collision kills 5

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

N. KOREAN NEW MISSILE NAGS SOUTH

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

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

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

Anti-TB vaccine trials in UK

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

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

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

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

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

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

Adviser: UK running into Covid-19 headwind

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

Trump no longer considered transmission risk to others

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

longer considered a transmission risk to others."

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

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

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

INDIAN ENVOY SELF ISOLATES AFTER MEETING VIRUS +VE NEPAL MINISTER

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

Ambassador Kwatra has

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

Protest against Netanyahu

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

28 ARRESTED IN WISCONSIN PROTESTS

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

About 100 people gathered outside City Hall on Friday past Wauwatosa's 7 pm curfew and refused multiple orders to disperse, according to police. Police said they used tear gas on the crowd, after bottles were thrown at officers. On Saturday, the Wauwatosa Police Department posted on Twitter that people have been asking valid questions about the police response over three nights of protests. Police posted a picture of bottles they said were found in a backpack, including a bottle of lighter fluid, noting that the materials can be used to start fires.

"Over the past three nights, we have seen an escalation in force by the protesters," police tweeted. — *AP*

Prominent cleric shot dead in Karachi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joe may end cap on Green card: Indians

Washington, Oct. 11: Distressed that professionals from India on H-1B visas have to wait for decades to get their Green Card, Indian-origin law-makers have expressed hope that a Biden administration would come to their rescue by removing the country cap on the legal permanent residency. A Green Card, officially known as a Permanent Resident Card, is a document issued to the immigrants in the US as evidence that the bearer has been granted the privilege of residing permanently. It allows a non-US citizen to live and work permanently in America. Indian IT professionals, most of whom are highly skilled and come to the US mainly on the H-1B work visas, are the worst sufferers of the current

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

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

Joe 'shipped' jobs to China: Trump

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

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

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

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

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

Shelling dashes Karabakh truce

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

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

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

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

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

CHINA CONSULAR ACCESS FOR TWO CANADIANS

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

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

TEMPLE IN SINDH VANDALISED, ONE ARRESTED

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

NEW | FIND

Monkey species is probably the ancestors of some of the modern primates**Oldest monkey fossils outside of Africa found**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The monkeys were successful since they could

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

DECCAN Chronicle

12 OCTOBER 2020

Recovery contingent on curbing Covid-19

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

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

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

Another data point that was not highlighted by the RBI governor is the rise in bank deposits. According to RBI data, banks have seven per cent more deposits in September compared to February. The loan books of the banks have risen merely by two per cent. When seen together, these metrics indicate that people who have surplus money are not confident enough to spend. Job losses and reduction in salary have reduced disposable incomes of lakhs of people and, as a result, taken a toll on consumption.

The central bank's optimism also betrays the fact that consumer confidence is at an all-time low. According to RBI's consumer confidence survey, people have curtailed spending and discretionary spending would continue to remain low in the near future. A subdued demand would make businessmen hesitant in expanding their operations. Exports, another key component of the Indian economy, are also languishing at low levels. Given the global economic outlook, Indian exports may not see a major revival unless the country can attract some of companies de-risking their operations from Chinese dependence. This, however, may not happen in the short term, as infrastructure in India remains woefully inadequate.

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

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

Don't buy into US rhetoric

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

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

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

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

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KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
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DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax : 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234

Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285

Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208

Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904

Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalpally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433

Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burnanpur Village, Venkatchalam (M), Chemmudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580

Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/ 48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Feet Road, Koramangala, Bengaluru-560 095 Ph: 080-43460500; Fax: 080-22960552

Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255

Kochi: No.3-B, 3rd Floor of DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408

Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph's Press, TC 15/1040, Cotton Hill, Thiruvananthapuram 695 014

Kozhikode: Door No 6/1002 E, First Floor of City Mall, Opp. YMCA, Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001, Fax : 0495 4019 018

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Subhani

How farm laws might hurt national security



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

On the 27th of September, 2020, the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, gave assent to the three farm bills, namely, The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020, and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020, thereby paving the way for their notification as law.

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

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

The saga of Punjab has

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

MENTAL HEALTH

On the occasion of the World Mental Health Day on October 10, it is pertinent to note that society is getting sick morally, mentally and physically with each passing day and unless it changes its thought process, things will come to a nought in the years to come.

Dr K. Srinivas
Hyderabad

EDUCATION SYSTEM

The education system has become a double-edged sword (*Hiked fees: Case against Glendale filed, DC, Oct. 9*). On one hand we have teachers doing their duty irrespective of whether they are paid or not and on the other we have students, a majority of them unable to pay, hindering their education. School managements are not paying teachers by blaming children for not paying fee. While some managements are in a position to pay, but do not. Some parents don't pay though they can after seeing other children being allowed to attend classes without paying fees.

Blandina
Sainikpuri

DHARANI PORTAL

I am a landowner and have not updated details on the Dharani portal as I am getting tax receipts in the name of the owners from whom I purchased 20 years ago. The Dharani updation staff are not accepting previous electricity and water bills on my name. They are not even accepting people who bought houses through notarised document. The change of name on the tax receipt has not been done by Rajendranagar municipality for 80 per cent in our locality. How will the updation be done?

Syed Wasif
Hyderabad

Site for Vizag steel plant selected

VISAKHAPATNAM, Oct. 11 The plant selection committee of the Union Government has approved Gajuvaka-Kanithi-Balacheruvu area for the proposed steel plant in Andhra Pradesh.

According to present indications about 6,000 acres would be earmarked for the plant at

Gajuvaka area which lies on the grand trunk road.

The Anglo-American consortium and the Hindustan Steel had also recommended the same site for location of a steel plant.

An intensive study of the area would be made and extensive drilling operation will be conducted to study soil and rock conditions.—PTI

Kishwar Desai
London Diary



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quick BITES

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

* As of Friday/Saturday

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

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

Cello re-enters stationery biz after 5 years



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

Snapdeal on-boards over 5,000 mfg-sellers

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

H&M to expand physical stores in India

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



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

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, OCT. 11

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

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

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



regulator to decide on capital requirements for standalone microinsurance companies.

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

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

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

are falling back into poverty," said the report.

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

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

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

GST COUNCIL TO MEET AGAIN TODAY TO IRON OUT DIFFERENCES

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

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

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

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

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

—PTI

Oil PSUs asked to build 50,000 houses for renting

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

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

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

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

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

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



Dharmendra Pradhan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Private developers could also participate.

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

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

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

—PTI

Sail to produce HH rails for high-speed lines

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

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

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

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

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

—PTI

Project completion drags in H1

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 11

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

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

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

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

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

quarter.

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

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

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

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

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

Action-packed week ahead for stock market

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, OCT. 11

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

LOW | APPETITE

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

Five of 12 PSU bank stocks trade near face value

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

"After the initial rebound, mostly PSU

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

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

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

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

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

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

—PTI

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

NUMBERS GAME

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL

- Matches: 24
- Kolkata: 14
- Bangalore: 10

MEETING IN 2019

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

FOR THE RECORD

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

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

spinner was getting his mojo back and could have

