

IN BRIEF

Noida: ATM robbery bid foiled, one held

Noida: The Gautam Buddha Nagar Police thwarted an ATM loot bid early on Saturday and arrested a man after a gunfight, officials said. Four men were at an ATM in Noida's Raipur village, under Expressway police station limits, around 4 am and trying to cut open the machine when a local police team confronted them, the officials said. "Soon the men fled from the spot in their Hyundai Santro but later they were intercepted at the Pusta by more police personnel, including those from Sector 49 police station, after which a gunfight broke out," Noida additional deputy commissioner of police Ranvijay Singh said. "Three of them managed to escape taking refuge in the bushes, while one of them got surrounded by policemen and he opened fire on them, hoping to escape. He got injured in retaliatory firing and was held," Singh said.

5 men held with ₹27L drugs in Noida

Noida: Five men allegedly linked to a bigger narcotics supplying group in Delhi-NCR were arrested in Noida on Saturday after over 4 kg of contraband worth ₹27 lakh was seized from them, police said. The arrested men were involved in supply of drugs in Noida as well as some posh areas of the national capital and operated via phone and online communication, the police said. "There has been illegal use of narcotics in the Delhi-NCR region. We had got a tip-off regarding these men and their link to a larger network of illegal narcotics trade in the region," Addl DCP, Noida, Ranvijay Singh said. "The police have seized 4.5 kg of high-quality narcotic substance from them. It's an expensive variety and the seized contraband is estimated to be worth ₹27 lakh," Singh said. Posh areas of Delhi and educational institutions were chief target areas of the accused, the officer said, citing preliminary investigation. "We have gathered some details regarding their link and the group. Efforts will be made to bust the entire racket and arrest all those involved in it," Singh said. The arrested men have been identified as Himanshu Pawar, Rohit Singh, Aman Shrivastava, Vishal Tiwari, all residents of Noida, and Prince, a resident of Delhi, the police said.

Man wanted in ₹15L extortion case, held

New Delhi: A 36-year-old man, who tried to extort ₹15 lakh from a businessman and was on the run since 2015, has been arrested from Uttar Pradesh's Rampur district, police said on Saturday. Vishnu had threatened businessman Pranab Seth that he would blow up his marriage pandal if he failed to pay the ₹15 lakh, they said. Police said that Vishnu was declared a proclaimed offender in the case by a Delhi court in 2015. He was arrested from his village in Rampur district on September 4 and police used technical surveillance to trace him, they said. Seth, a resident of Roop Nagar, in his complaint in 2015 had said that he owns a marriage pandal near Wave Cinema, a senior police officer said. In his complaint, the businessman had said the accused had threatened that if the extortion money of ₹15 lakh was not paid, he would blow up his pandal, he said.

NDMC's command, control centre opened

New Delhi: 12: Lieutenant-governor Anil Bajjal on Friday inaugurated the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) and the Shera Maidan Sports Centre, which was redeveloped by the NDMC. According to NDMC, the ICCC has been designed to serve as the nerve centre for NDMC services. Nineteen services have been integrated in phase one. Other services will be continuously added from time-to-time. These 19 services include solid waste management, street lighting, parking, sewage treatment plants, electric, and water billing. These are at the core of the municipal services of the NDMC. Mr Bajjal said that the ICCC will enable the NDMC to improve efficiency and quality and promote a better quality of life for residents of NDMC areas with optimal utilisation of resources.

Highest single-day spike with 4,321 Covid cases

Total number of cases 2,14,069 ■ Death toll mounts to 4,687**AGE CORRESPONDENT**
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

Delhi recorded its biggest single-day jump of 4,321 fresh Covid cases on Saturday, taking the city's tally to over 2.14 lakh, authorities said.

This is the fourth successive day when over 4,000 fresh cases have been recorded in Delhi.

The total number of coronavirus cases has climbed to 2,14,069, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department.

The city recorded 28 fatalities, pushing the death toll to 4,715, the bulletin said.

On Friday, the death toll due to Covid stood at 4,687 in the city. The number of active cases rose to 28,059 on Saturday from 26,907 the previous day.

The Delhi government has significantly ramped up testing in the past few days. The number of tests conducted and corresponding fresh cases reported from August 30-September 11 are: 14,389 (1,358); 20,437 (2,024); 24,198 (2,312); 28,835 (2,509); 32,834 (2,737); 36,219 (2,914); 38,895 (2,973); 36,046 (3,256); 22,954 (2,077); 45,797 (3,609); 54,517 (4,039) and 58,340 (4,308); and 60,580 (4,266).

On Saturday again, over 4,000 cases were recorded for 60,076 tests conducted the previous day. As many as 50,894 Rapid Antigen Tests and 9,182 RT-PCR, CBNAAT and True NAAT tests were conducted on Friday, totalling to 60,076, according to the bulletin.

As on Saturday, the number of tests done per million stands at over 1.09 lakh, while the total number of tests stands at 20,82,776. The positivity rate stood at 7.19 per cent on Saturday and the recovery rate was over 84 per cent, the bulletin said, adding that the case fatality rate was 2.2 per cent. The number of containment zones in Delhi jumped to 1,333 from 1,329 the previous day.

'Delhi violence caused by hate speeches, not conspiracy'**AGE CORRESPONDENT**
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

Civil society members under the banner of Forum for Constitutional Rights and Democratic Freedoms (FCRDF) has alleged in a statement that Delhi riots in February were caused by hate speeches of ruling party leaders and not due to any conspiracy as claimed by the Delhi police.

The joint statement issued by the forum endorsed a write-up of social activist in connection with the riots in Northeast Delhi that claimed over 50 lives and rendered scores of people injured.

"We write to express our full support, in principle, for the statement 'we will not be silenced' made by Harsh Mander on September 4, 2020. We agree with him that the communal riots in Delhi have not been caused by any conspiracy as alleged by the Delhi police. On the contrary, they have been caused by hate speech and provocative statements made by political leaders of the ruling party," the FCRDF said in the statement. They asserted that the government will not be able to silence their voice and expressed their commitment for building a just, equal, and kind nation.

"We declare here — and hope those holding highest office in the country hear us loud and clear — that the government will never succeed in silencing us and will never succeed in taking away from us the dream we inherited from our freedom struggle, the dream of together building a country which is just and equal and kind," the statement added.



Covid patients interact with family members via a robot as they celebrate the birthday inside a dedicated ward in Greater Noida on Saturday.

Noida: Covid cases cross 10K mark

Noida, Sept. 12: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar on Saturday recorded 198 new Covid cases, pushing the district's infection tally to 10,006, according to official data.

The number of active cases jumped to 1,990 from 1,909 on Friday and 1,820 on Thursday, showing a steady rise over the week, according to the data released by the UP health department for a 24-hour period.

There were 1,696 active cases on Wednesday, 1,599 on Tuesday, 1,520 on Monday and 1,429 on Sunday, data from corresponding days showed.

On the brighter side, 117 more patients got discharged during the 24-

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hour period, as the total number of recoveries in the district reached 7,968, the data showed.

The district has so far recorded 48 deaths linked

to the pandemic, with one of the lowest mortality rates — 0.47 per cent — in the state, it showed. Meanwhile, the recovery rate dropped slightly to 79.63 per cent from 80.04 per cent on Friday, 80.55 per cent on Thursday and 81.35 per cent on Wednesday, as per the statistics.

Gautam Buddha Nagar now ranks sixth among the 75 districts in the state in terms of active cases, seventh in recoveries and 25th in death toll, according to the official figures.

There were 67,955 active cases across UP on Saturday. So far, 2,33,527 patients have recovered across the state, while the death toll linked to Covid climbed to 4,349, showed the data.

— PTI

Health Minister Satyendar Jain also held a meeting with medical directors and superintendents of all Delhi government hospitals to review the status of testing.

Since August 18, daily cases in the city have again been coming in a four-figure count. According to the bulletin, 8,096 beds in Covid hospitals are vacant. Also, 3,293 beds in Covid

Care Centres are occupied by people under quarantine, including travellers who returned under the Vande Bharat Mission and bubble flights, the bulletin said.

'Will raise removal of 48K slum dwellings in Assembly session'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, on Saturday, said that BJP MLAs will raise the issue of removal of 48,000 slums along railway tracks in the city during the one-day session of the Legislative Assembly on September 14.

BJP legislator O.P. Sharma also demanded that the one-day session should be extended for 3-5 days for discussion on issues like growing cases of coronavirus in the national capital.

In a joint press conference, Mr Bidhuri said, "BJP will vociferously raise the issue of 48,000 slum dwellers settled on railway land during the Assembly session."

BJP MLAs Abhay Verma, Jitender Mahajan, and Mohan Singh Bisht were also present in the



Ramvir Singh Bidhuri

press conference.

BJP has a clear stand that the 48,000 slum dwellers, who are to be removed from the railway land, should be rehabilitated in around 50,000 vacant flats of the Delhi government.

The Supreme Court, in its order on August 31, directed removal of 48,000 slum dwellings along the railway tracks in the national capital within three months.

"If the Delhi government fails to rehabilitate the slum dwellers, BJP will do it and rehabilitate them in the vacant flats," Mr Bidhuri asserted.

Online classes taking physical, mental toll on children: Experts

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

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

According to senior orthopaedic consultant at Indian Spinal Injuries Centre (ISIC) Dr Maninder Singh, 10-year-old Simarjit complained of a wrist pain and they realised that the device the child was using for more than 10 hours a day for classes, exams, and games had strained his wrist and caused tendonitis (inflammation of muscles around the wrist).

Doctors said that more screen-time has caused various physical problems in children such as back pain and lack of

sleep while older children are facing psychological problems such as attention deficit disorder and depression.

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

Most children were suggested remedial measures through teleconsultation. "We suggested they use a chair-table combination for such long duration engagements. Also, they should take a 5-minute break every 40 minutes and between classes by looking away from the screen," Dr Singh added.

▶ **THE BJP** has a clear stand that the 48,000 slum dwellers, who are to be removed from the railway land, should be rehabilitated in around 50,000 vacant flats of the Delhi government

The Delhi government agency, DUSIB (Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board), has written a letter to the Railways saying that the responsibility of rehabilitation of slum dwellers lies with it.

The Railways will have to pay the cost of land and construction as well as relocation charges to DUSIB if it is entrusted the rehabilitation work, the agency said in a letter to Railways.

"The BJP MLAs will also raise the issues of 'huge' power and water bills being sent to people," Mr Bidhuri added.

5 Delhi boys score 100 percentile in JEE-Main

New Delhi, Sept. 12: Five students from the national capital have scored 100 percentile in the JEE-Mains exam which was conducted earlier this month after being postponed twice in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

The top scorers from Delhi are Chirag Falor, Gurkirat Singh, Laksh Gupta, Nishant Aggarwal and Tushar Sethi. They are among the 24 candidates who have scored 100 percentile in the crucial exam. Laksh Gupta, who wants to study at IIT Delhi, said the delay in the exam due to coronavirus made him anxious.

"The multiple rescheduling of the exam made me anxious but it also gave me time to prepare more. Rescheduling

HC reduces no. of benches holding physical hearings

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

The Delhi high court on Saturday said it has reduced the number of benches that would be holding physical hearings due to the "alarming" rise in Covid cases in the national capital and majority of lawyers preferring virtual hearings.

According to a note issued by the office of registrar general Manoj Jain, a full court of the judges of the Delhi high court deliberated on continuing with physical hearings, which were started from September 1, and decided not to discontinue them completely.

The full court decided that physical hearings would be conducted each day, from September 15 onwards, by one division bench and two single judge benches on rotation.

Till now, two division benches and three single judge benches were holding physical courts on rotational basis.

The decision was taken on the basis of statistics, submitted before the full court by the Registry, which indicated that around 94 per cent of the advocates had indicated

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their preferred mode of hearing as "virtual" mode on the designated mentioning link/e-filing module of the High Court.

"Most of the advocates, whose matters were listed before the benches constituted for physical hearing, expressed their inability, reluctance or unwillingness to appear physically and that requests, in large number, were received for taking up the matters through video conferencing.

"The physical appearances were largely before the single benches, exercising criminal jurisdiction whereas the appearance before the other benches was relatively low," the note said.

It also said that the full court "also noted that the number of Covid cases has been rising alarmingly in the NCT of Delhi".

It further said that regular medical camps were

organised in the high court as well as district courts for testing and the results revealed that 45 officials of the high court (including contractual and outsourced staff) and 192 officers/officials of district courts have already contracted Covid.

"The UCO Bank situated in the high court building had been shut down recently as its three bank officials tested positive," it added.

Delhi High Court chief justice D.N. Patel had recently said, during a hearing, that physical hearings would not be stopped completely and would be continued slowly.

"Once things have started in this high court, they are not going to be stopped. We will not start and close like the other high courts," the chief justice had said.

His comments came after some counsels in a case before his bench sought that their matter be listed on a date when virtual hearings are held.

The high court, according to the note, had decided to commence physical hearings "in view of persistent requests" by the various bar associations.

Delhi Assembly panel summons Facebook official

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

A top Facebook executive has been summoned by a Delhi assembly panel headed by the Aam Aadmi Party MLA Raghav Chadha over complaints alleging "deliberate inaction on the part of social media platform to apply hate speech rules".

Ajit Mohan, Facebook India's vice president and managing director, has been asked to appear before the panel next week on Tuesday (September 15) over alleged "complicity of Facebook in the orchestration and aggravation of Delhi riots", the panel said.

"Having regards to the compelling evidences brought forth by the witnesses, the committee is of the belief that Facebook should be impleaded as co-accused in the Delhi Riots investigation," an official statement read, adding that the proceedings, which will begin at 12 PM, shall be live-streamed. Summons were issued "on the basis of scathing depositions of the key witnesses as well as incriminating material submitted by them on record," it said. The panel said it has examined numerous witnesses, including journalists Paranjay Guha Thakurta and Kunal Purohit; Nikhil Pahwa, an author, and activist Awesh Tiwari.



Ajit Mohan

All the witnesses "so far have strongly agreed that an independent probe must be carried out against the alleged role and complicity of Facebook in the orchestration and aggravation of Delhi Riots," the panel said.

Earlier this month, Facebook India boss Ajit Mohan was questioned for more than three hours over hate speech allegations by Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology chaired by Congress's Shashi Tharoor, which considers issues like social media abuse.

The Delhi assembly peace panel, in its summons, yet again referred to an article published by the foreign publication — The Wall Street Journal — last month. The article, which claimed the social media giant ignored hate speech and objectionable content from leaders and workers of the ruling BJP, had triggered a political controversy prompting the Congress to attack BJP.

Retail tomato prices surge to ₹80-85/kg

New Delhi, Sept. 12: Retail prices of tomato on Saturday skyrocketed to ₹80-85 per kg in the national capital due to tight supply from growing areas, according to private traders.

Tomato prices have been firm since June and were ruling in the range of ₹50-60 per kg depending on the variety till last few weeks. The rates have suddenly shot up this week on reports of lower arrival of the new crop from key growing states, traders said.

On Saturday, tomato was quoted at ₹80-85 per kg by vegetable hawkers and vendors in unorganised markets depending on the quality and residential colonies. But the government data showed the average retail price of tomato at ₹60/kg in Delhi. Mother Dairy's Safal vegetable outlets were selling tomato at ₹78/kg, while e-tailer Grofers at ₹74-75/kg and Big Basket at up to Rs 60 per kg on Saturday.

At Azadpur mandi, Asia's largest fruits and vegetable wholesale market, tomato prices were ruling at ₹40-60 per kg, according to trade data.

"Prices are rising on reports of less arrival of new crops from growing regions," PPA Tomato Association (in Azadpur mandi) Ashok Kaushik told.

— PTI

City sees 71% less rains in Sept. so far

New Delhi, Sept. 12: The national capital has recorded 71 per cent less rainfall in September so far, according to IMD data. The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, has recorded just 20.9 mm rainfall so far against the normal of 72.6 mm this month.

The Lodhi road weather station has gauged only 18.5 mm precipitation against the normal of 72.6 mm — a deficiency of 75 per cent. The Palam weather station has recorded 30.3 mm rains against the 50-year average of 73.6 mm, according to IMD data. In August, Delhi recorded 237 mm rainfall, the highest for the month in seven years. Overall, the city has recorded 576.5 mm rainfall against the usual of 594.6 mm since June 1, when the monsoon season starts. The IMD also said that monsoon is likely to stay longer in Delhi and start withdrawing only in the "initial days of October."

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Hit by flood, Odisha farmer ends life

Bhubaneswar: A farmer at Barpada village under Binjharpur block in Odisha's Jajpur district committed suicide on Friday night by hanging after allegedly suffering huge crop loss due to the floods. The deceased was identified as Ramakant Malik. The farmer was under severe mental stress after floodwater marooned his farmland causing a massive crop loss.

Distressed over the loss, Malik took the extreme step and hung self from a banyan tree on his agricultural land, family members of the late farmer alleged. Jajpur district borne the brunt of high floods in the Baitarani, Birupa and Brahmani river systems a week ago. Thousands of hectares of ripe crops, including paddy and cereals, got washed away in the gushing flood waters. Besides, guest workers who had started different projects like poultry, fish farming and iron fabrication units after returning from Surat, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Hyderabad and Raipur also suffered huge losses in the disaster.

Scheme beneficiary praises Article 370

Bhopal: A beneficiary of Central government-sponsored housing scheme in Madhya Pradesh on Saturday heaped praises on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for passing landmark legislations abrogating Article 370 according special status to Jammu and Kashmir and declaring triple talaq unlawful, leaving him amused. Narendra Namdeo of Gwalior, one of the 1.75 lakh beneficiaries of PM Awas Yojana in Madhya Pradesh, congratulated the PM for taking the bold steps to resolve the two vexed issues while interacting with him in a virtual programme organised on the occasion of 'Griha Pravesh' ceremony observed by them. His remarks have left the PM amused Mr Modi in a lighter vein observation asked him if he was aspiring to contest polls. Later, Mr Namdeo narrated his ordeals of living in a dilapidated house before his new home was built under the PM Awas Yojana.

Odisha officials save rare species of croc

Berhampur: Forest officials rescued a mugger, an endangered crocodile species from a paddy field in Odisha's Ganjam district on Saturday. The reptile was rescued at Talasingi village under Digapahandi forest range. The animal was released into the Ghodahada reservoir, one of the major habitats for the mugger, near Digapahandi, said divisional forest officer Berhampur Amlan Nayak. The farmers of the area spotted it while they were working in the paddy field and informed the forest staff. — PTI

Security forces seize cache of arms at LoC

Jammu: Security forces on Saturday recovered a cache of arms and ammunition along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch, scuttling an attempt by anti-national elements to carry out subversive activities in the border district. The recoveries made during the operation included three Chinese pistols with six magazines and 70 rounds, 11 hand grenades, a wireless set, an IED, two batteries, two flags, a mobile phone, a charger and a pen drive, a police officer said. Two overground workers of terrorists were arrested during the operation carried out jointly by SOG of local police and the Army in Mendhar sector, the official said.

Paudwal's son dies due to kidney failure

Mumbai: Veteran playback singer Anuradha Paudwal's son Aditya Paudwal died on Saturday after suffering a kidney failure at a hospital. He was 35. Aditya, who breathed his last early on Saturday morning, had been suffering from kidney ailments for "quite some time", an official from Cine Singers Association said. "I got a call from Aditya Paudwal's family this morning and they said he died due to kidney failure at a hospital. We later informed all our members. He had been unwell since quite some time, he had kidney problems," said Himanshu Bhatt, General secretary of Cine Singers' Association. Aditya was a music arranger and producer.



Police use water cannons to disperse BJP Yuva Morcha activists who were staging a protest against Kerala higher education minister K.T. Jaleel in Thiruvananthapuram on Saturday. — PTI

Attack on retd Navy officer: 'Shiv Sainiks' granted bail

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 12

Six suspected Shiv Sena workers were granted bail on Saturday in a case of assaulting a retired Navy officer resident of Malad for allegedly forwarding a cartoon of the party president and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on social media, evoking allegations of political pressure from the BJP. Denying any political interference, Joint commissioner of police (law and order) Vishwas Nangre Patil said the bail was granted to the accused in view of the Covid-19 situation.

The six persons were arrested after local BJP MLA Atul Bhathalkar posted a video of Friday's assault on the retired officer, Madan Sharma (62), on Twitter. A complaint was filed against Sena workers at Kandivali police station. Leader of opposition in the state Legislative council Pravin Darekar, Bhathalkar and the victim's family members staged an agitation outside the ACP's office in Kandivali. They demanded that the accused be booked under sections 326 (causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons and means), and 452 and 450 (house-trespassing) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which are non-bailable.

'Partisan' cops should quit, sell vegetables: Dilip Ghosh

Kolkata, Sept. 12: West Bengal BJP chief Dilip Ghosh on Saturday criticised the state police administration for its "partisan role" against the opposition parties and suggested they should "resign from their jobs and sell vegetables instead".

Launching a scathing attack on the police administration, Ghosh alleged most of the "police personnel don't have the spine" to stand up to the "corrupt" Trinamool Congress dispensation in the state. "Efficient officers have been sidelined and the incompetent ones have been given prime postings so that they can work as TMC cadre. Even their family members laugh at

The corrupt police personnel are shameless. Instead of working as TMC cadre, they should resign and sell vegetables to lead an honest life.

— Dilip Ghosh
Bengal BJP chief

them." Mr Ghosh said at a 'Cha Chakra' (chat over a cup of tea) programme in Belgharia area in North 24 Parganas district.

He said the days of the ruling TMC government in West Bengal "are numbered". "The corrupt police per-

sonnel are shameless. Instead of working as TMC cadre, they should resign and sell vegetables to lead an honest life," Ghosh, also the Medinipur MP, said.

The TMC came down heavily on Mr Ghosh, saying the state police works in a free and fair manner unlike BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh, where the police force has "let loose a reign of terror in the name of fake encounters".

"Dilip Ghosh should stop lecturing us on the impartiality of the police force. The people of West Bengal are well aware of the impartiality of central agencies like the CBI and the ED," senior TMC leader Firhad Hakim said. — PTI

Health ministry also seeks seamless admission of corona patients
Pvt hospitals told not to deny Covid patients beds

New Delhi, Sept. 12: The Union health ministry on Saturday urged private hospitals providing Covid-19 treatment to ensure that patients, afflicted with the viral disease, are not denied beds and they get prompt care.

The ministry, in collaboration with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and AIIMS, New Delhi, at a virtual conclave with private hospitals providing Covid-19 treatment emphasised the collective goal must be to have a health system that is available, affordable and accessible to all.

During the meeting, the importance of timely treatment of comorbid patients to reduce fatality was stressed upon. Hospitals were encouraged to protect healthcare workers by adopting all practices on infection prevention and control and keep the staff motivated, the health ministry said.

Hospitals were also asked to ensure seamless admission of patients. The importance of evidence-based treatment protocols and reducing heterogeneity in treatment of Covid-19 patients was also underscored, it said.

Union health secretary

THE HEALTH MINISTRY also encouraged the hospital representatives to share their key concerns and challenges being faced while managing Covid-19 in their facilities.

Rajesh Bhushan inaugurated the virtual conference.

"He reiterated the government's resolve to ensure that Covid-19 patients must not be denied beds and must be provided prompt treatment," the health ministry said. "The collective goal must be to have a health system that is available,

'They ride, eat yaks and consider them good for luck'
Yaks, worms keep PLA soldiers warm at LAC

VIKRAM SHARMA
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 12

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

This is how the soldiers of the People's Liberation Army of China deployed along the line of actual control (LAC) in Tibet autonomous region eat the yak, with the worms, which makes them stronger and hardier. A few kilometres on the Indian side, the yak, dwindling in numbers, is worshipped.

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

Sources acquainted with

PEOPLE'S LIBERATION Army of China deployed along the LAC in Tibet autonomous region eat the yak, with the worms, which makes them stronger and hardier. A few kilometres on the Indian side, the yak, dwindling in numbers, is worshipped.

the functioning and habits of the PLA soldiers told this newspaper that the Chinese Army has been heavily dependent on yaks even prior to the 1962 war. In fact, the PLA has a dedicated yak unit which takes men and material through impenetrable mountain passes along the LAC.

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

have survived on the mountains not due to their technological advancements but due to the yaks which even provide warmth to the soldiers who sleep beside them during harsh winters," the sources said.

The PLA consider the yak to be a symbol of good luck, success and strength. According to feng shui, a traditional practice which originated in ancient China, yak heads and tails both symbolise good luck. The head symbolises strength.

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

IAF seeks land to set up U'khand base

Dehradun, Sept. 12: Amid the ongoing standoff with China along the LAC, Central Air Command chief, Air Marshal Rajesh Kumar met Uttarakhand chief minister Triendra Singh Rawat to seek land for setting up facilities that will help the IAF carry out its activities in the border areas.

The Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C), Central Air Command, during his meeting with Rawat on Friday also discussed the

availability of land for installing air defence radars and advance landing ground in the hilly areas of the state due to their strategic significance, an official release said.

Uttarakhand shares its borders with China and Nepal.

Setting up facilities like air defence radars and an advance landing ground in Uttarakhand's hilly districts of Chamoli, Pithoragarh and Uttarkashi will be of great help to the air force as they

are in the country's north-east, the AOC-in-C said.

The Air Marshal also requested for expansion of Pantnagar, Jollygrant and Pithoragarh airports besides seeking allocation of land for an airport in Chaukhutiya.

The chief minister said land will be made available to the IAF on priority basis to conduct its activities and immediately ordered appointment of a nodal officer in the administration to identify suitable land for the purpose. — PTI

Court issues warrant for former Punjab DGP Saini

Chandigarh, Sept. 12: A Mohali court on Saturday issued an arrest warrant against



S.S. Saini, former Punjab DGP Sumedh Singh Saini in connection with the 1991 Balwant Singh Multani disappearance case.

It has directed police to arrest Saini and produce him before the court by September 25, according to an order.

The police on Saturday moved the court for the issuance of an arrest warrant against Saini, the former Punjab director general of police.

Special Public Prosecutor Sartaj Singh Narula said the Punjab Police team was facing obstacles in getting assistance from the police of other states in the absence of a warrant to arrest Saini.

Mr Saini continues to remain elusive despite the special investigation team of the Punjab Police conducting raids at several places.

The SIT has already carried out raids at many places in Punjab, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi but failed to arrest the former state police chief. Mr Saini, whose whereabouts were still unknown, was booked in May in connection with the disappearance of Multani in 1991. — PTI

Sonia going for check up abroad, to miss session

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

Congress President Sonia Gandhi along with her son and MP Rahul Gandhi has left the country for her annual medical check up. They will not attend the first part of Parliament's Monsoon Session starting Monday. Congress chief spokesperson tweeted, "Congress president, Sonia Gandhi is travelling today onwards for a routine follow up & medical check up, which was deferred due to the pandemic. She is accompanied by Rahul Gandhi. We take this opportunity to thank everyone for their con-

WHILE MRS SONIA Gandhi will remain out of the country for at least two weeks, her son, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, who is accompanying her, is expected to return after a few days.

cern & good wishes."

While Mrs Sonia Gandhi will remain out of the country for at least two weeks, her son, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, who is accompanying her, is expected to return after a few days, when Ms. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra joins them to assist her. Before leaving Mrs. Sonia Gandhi held meetings with her parliamentary

strategy group and has given clear directives for better coordination in both Houses and to raise key issues that are affecting the nation. The party is likely to raise issues like economic slowdown and the handling of the coronavirus pandemic by the Centre, in parliament.

Her medical check-up was overdue and was delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic, insiders added. They further added that Mrs. Gandhi will return in the last week of September. Her return will see the clearing of the names of candidates for the assembly elections of Bihar scheduled in November this year.



Candidates undergo thermal screening as they enter an examination centre for appearing in JEECUP UP Polytechnic Entrance Examination 2020 in Prayagraj on Saturday. — PTI

NEET: Pondy CM says people will punish BJP

Puducherry, Sept. 12: Chief minister V. Narayanasamy on Saturday said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Central government was allegedly playing with the lives of the youth by holding the NEET (National Eligibility-cum Entrance Test) despite protests.

Addressing a virtual press conference here, he said the people of Puducherry would teach the BJP a lesson in the forthcoming Assembly polls for sticking to its guns to hold the NEET. Assembly poll is due in



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

The chief minister said he had written several letters to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to drop the NEET-

The people of Puducherry would teach the BJP a lesson in the forthcoming Assembly polls for sticking to its guns to hold the NEET.

— V. Narayanasamy
Puducherry CM

based selection of the students.

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

board syllabus.

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

Mr Narayanasamy expressed grief over students in recent days ending their lives by suicide out of fear and anxiety caused allegedly by the Centre's decision to hold NEET for admission to medical courses.

He said the system of selecting students for professional courses by the Puducherry government through centralised admission committee (CENTAC) on the basis of marks obtained in the

Plus-two public examination was helpful and did not cause any hardship.

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

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

Mr Narayanasamy earlier on Friday flagged off a mobile unit to carry out campaigns in urban and rural areas on the various dos and don'ts on Covid-19. — PTI

SEARCH OF KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl, (depicted in the photo), **Namely:** Shahida Khatun, D/o: Mohd. Irshad, R/o: H.No. D-1058, Gali No. 10, Khajuri Khas, Delhi Aged: 14 years 7 months, has been kidnapped from her house since 16.08.2020. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 718/20, u/s 363 IPC, Dated 17.08.2020, has been lodged at P.S. Khajuri Khas, Delhi.

Her physical description is as under:

Height: 4'2" Feet, Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Long, Build: Normal, Clothing: Red Colour Suit-Salwar and Hawai Chappal in her feet.

Any person is having any information/clue about this kidnapped girl, may inform SHO, PS Khajuri Khas, Delhi at E-mail: ctc@cbi.gov.in or website : http://cbi.nic.in or Fax No. 011-24368639, Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641, Extn. 2101.



Shahida Khatun

S.H.O

P.S. Khajuri Khas, Delhi

Ph: 011-22962735, 22195181

DPI/275/NE/2020.

SHORT TAKES

Engineer suspended for criticising PM

Lucknow: A junior engineer posted in Varanasi has been suspended for allegedly posting derogatory comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and criticising government policies on Facebook. Praveen Kumar, posted in Nalkoop division of Varanasi, had "made adverse comments against the Prime Minister on his Facebook wall using derogatory language and also shared pictures presenting himself as the future MLA", an official release issued here said. He had also criticised the policies of the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh government and had been missing from work since August 26 without informing, the release said. Kumar has been suspended with immediate effect. — PTI

Darbhanga airport to operate from Nov.

New Delhi: Flights from Darbhanga airport, the construction of which is nearing completion, will begin in the first week of November before the Chhath Puja festival, said civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday. Puri on Saturday reviewed the under-construction airports in Darbhanga district of Bihar and Deogarh district of Jharkhand. "The bookings for daily flights will start by end of September from Darbhanga to Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru," Puri was quoted as saying in a statement by the civil aviation ministry. He said work at Deogarh airport is at an advanced stage and will be completed on schedule, the statement noted. — PTI

All-party meet won't be held before session

■ Continued from Page 1

Opposition parties. "The way the government has strongly defended the country's interests at the border is there for all to see. We are sure that the Congress will be isolated during any debate over the issue," a party leader said, claiming that most non-NDA parties are backing the Narendra Modi government over the issue. There was a lot of uneasiness within the Congress, a BJP leader claimed, referring to the group of 23 Congress leaders who sought an overhaul of the party organisation, and this can come to the fore in Parliament.

The Opposition parties, including the Congress, Trinamul Congress and DMK, are planning a joint offensive against the government on national security issues like the border situation with China, the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, the economy and GST compensation to states. In another unprecedented development, the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of both the Houses, which normally meets during the session to discuss the weekly agenda like bills to be introduced, issues to be discussed or any motion to be moved, is now meeting on September 13, the day before the Monsoon Session begins.

The BAC for the Lok Sabha will meet at 11 am on Sunday, while the BAC for the Rajya Sabha will meet at 4 pm. The Lok Sabha's BAC is presided over by the Speaker while the Rajya Sabha's BAC is conducted by the Chairman, who is India's vice-president.

PLA hands back 5 Indians who crossed LAC

■ Continued from Page 1

Army, five missing hunters from Indian side of the LAC in Upper Subansiri, who had inadvertently crossed over to the other side on September 2, 2020, were traced. The Chinese Army had on September 8 responded on the hotline and confirmed that the missing Indians have been found on their side."

The Army also admitted three such incidents, including the latest one, had taken place this year in Upper Subansiri and West Siang districts of Arunachal Pradesh, and that all those affected had been brought home.

The Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police use locals as porters, guides and scouts during long-range patrols. They need help from the porters to carry supplies at all strategic points along the McMahon Line, the de facto border between India and China in this sector.

After Kangana row, no more videos, photos in flights: DGCA

New Delhi, Sept. 12: The Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Saturday warned all domestic airlines that their scheduled flights will be suspended for at least two weeks if anyone is found taking photographs or doing videography inside the plane.

The warning comes shortly after images of an incident where actress Kangana Ranaut was crowded by media persons in the Chandigarh-Mumbai IndiGo flight became viral on social media. Chandigarh is a defence airport where videography and photography is strictly prohibited.

A viral video of Wednesday's incident showed that reporters and camerapersons of various TV channels were jostling and bunching up near the front rows to get a comment from Ranaut after the plane landed at the Mumbai airport. The video purportedly showed that the actor was sitting in one of the front rows.

The DGCA has also sought an explanation from IndiGo with regard to photography on board in violation of Aircraft rules 13, violation of Covid-19 protocols and certain actions falling within the purview of unruly behaviour by passengers on board.

▶ **THE DGCA** has also sought an explanation from IndiGo with regard to photography on board in violation of Aircraft rules 13, violation of Covid-19 protocols and certain actions falling within the purview of unruly behaviour

"It has been decided that from now on, in case any violation occurs on any scheduled passenger aircraft - the schedule of flight for that particular route shall be suspended for a period of two weeks from the next day (of the incident)," DGCA order said.

According to the DGCA

order, as per Rule 13 of the Aircraft Rules 1937, no person is allowed to take any photographs inside a flight except when permission is granted by the DGCA or the Civil Aviation Ministry. This permission is, however, not applicable when the aircraft is landing, taking off or on ground on a defence aerodrome.

"In spite of these regulations, it has been noted that at times, the airlines have failed to follow these stipulations primarily because of lack of diligence on their part. Needless to say that such deviations result in compromise in maintaining the highest standards of

safety and therefore, is not to be allowed," the order said.

The DGCA has put the onus on the airlines to ensure passengers adhere to the rules and regulations. The order said that if any incident of photography takes place inside any flight, that scheduled flight will be suspended for two weeks and it will be restored only after the airline has taken all the necessary punitive action against those responsible for the violation.

As per the DGCA rules, an airline can put an unruly passenger on its no-fly list for a certain period of time after an internal enquiry. — PTI

Threat caller of Maha CM, NCP chief and HM arrested

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, SEPT. 12

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) arrested a man from Kolkata for claiming to be ardent fan of actor Kangana Ranaut, posing as member of Dawood Ibrahim gang and making several threat calls to state chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, NCP chief Sharad Pawar and home minister Anil Deshmukh. The accused had been making numerous calls on the landlines

of these politicians, officials said.

The arrested accused has been identified as Palash Bose (49), a science graduate, who was nabbed in a joint operation of the ATS and Kolkata police. Bose has been brought to Mumbai and will be produced in a local court to seek his custody.

The officials said that Bose has worked in Dubai for 15 years and hence they would investigate if he was ever linked to the gang.

MP by-elections: Infighting in Cong over 1st list

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, SEPT. 12

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

Former minister and Congress spokesman here P C Sharma, considered a staunch loyalist of party veteran Digvijay Singh, took Congressmen here by surprise when he said PCC was unaware of any such list.

"PCC is not aware if any candidates' list has been released by AICC", Mr Sharma told reporters here. He however refused to speak on the issue further.

The surprising remark by him comes in the wake of reports that the candidates' list released by AICC on Friday has caused consternation in a powerful faction of the party in the state.

Sources said the powerful faction led by Mr Singh felt ignored in finalization of the first list of 15 candidates released by AICC on Friday.

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

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

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

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

This has dismayed the party faction that backed his candidature.

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

By-elections to 27 assembly seats, necessitated due to resignation of 25 Congress MLAs and death of two other legislators, are expected to be held by the end of October this year.

Politicians, activists pay last respect to Swami Agnivesh

New Delhi, Sept. 12: Political leaders, rights activists and the general public on Saturday paid their last respect to Swami Agnivesh, and remembered him as a "truly secular" person, who fought for bonded labourers and women rights.

Social activist Agnivesh, who was suffering from liver cirrhosis for a long time, died of multi-organ failure at a Delhi hospital on Friday. He was 80.

His last rites will be performed on Saturday at the Agnilok Ashram in Behelpa, Gurgaon at 4 pm. Before that, his body was kept at his office at 7, Jantar Mantar Road for people to pay their last respects.



Swami Agnivesh's followers near his mortal remains in New Delhi on Saturday.

"He was a great friend of the entire Left movement. He used to call me comrade and I also addressed him as comrade Swami. He never hesitated in identifying himself with progressive forces fighting for the poor," CPI leader D. Raja said.

"Despite his saffron dress, he was secular to the core. He was a champion of bonded labourers in the country," he said.

Top leaders of the DMK and the PMK, M.K. Stalin and S Ramadoss, condoled the death of Agnivesh.

"Despite being attacked by communal forces many times, he remained steadfast on his policies," Stalin said in a statement. PMK founder S Ramadoss mourned the death of his 'friend', Swami Agnivesh and said he was supportive of the party's stand against alcohol and smoking.

Those who came to pay last respects wore masks and followed Covid-19 protocols. — PTI



Justice N.V. Ramana

two tweets against the judiciary, saying he has attempted to denigrate the reputation of the institution of administration of justice.

Justice Ramana said that the main theme of the book is the responsibilities and duties of a judge.

BJP launches campaign with theme song

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

Formally launching the BJP's campaign for the coming Assembly elections in Bihar, party president J.P. Nadda on Saturday launched the poll campaign with the theme song — "Jan Jan ki Pukar Atmanirbhar Bihar — BJP hai to bharosa hai" and a campaign seeking suggestions from state's voters for the manifesto.

Crucial Assembly polls in the state are scheduled in October-November. Highlighting development agenda of the BJP and the Modi government's focus on issues like electricity, potable water, roads and infrastructure, the theme

▶ **BIHAR ELECTION**

▶ **BJP** president J.P. Nadda once again reiterated that the NDA will contest the coming polls in Bihar under Nitish Kumar's leadership and is confident that the ruling alliance will retain power.



J.P. Nadda

song "Vikas ki baari, hum Bihari, pooche duniya saari, hum Bihari... Jan Jan ki pukar Atmanirbhar Bihar..." showcases the positive changes that have taken place in the state while the campaign video

seeking suggestions highlights how the state has prospered and benefitted under the Modi government as well as "15 years of sushashan (good governance)".

JD(U) chief and chief minister Nitish Kumar is often called "sushashan babu" by his supporters. Trying to invoke the Bihari pride, the campaign song also highlights the state's contribution since pre-Independence, mentioning the Champaran movement led by Mahatma Gandhi to the 'bhodan' movement led by Vinoba Bhave to the mass movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan against the Indira Gandhi led government in the 70's.

The campaign also highlights the state has always benefitted from the NDA government whether it was the Atal Bihari Vajpayee led government or the current Modi government by citing AIIMS centre to higher education institutions like the IIT, IIM and others coming up and how the state has been contributing to the country's development.

Mr Nadda also held a meeting with the chief minister apparently over the seat sharing and other issues. Mr Nadda once again reiterated that the NDA will contest the coming polls under Mr Kumar's leadership and is confident that the ruling alliance will retain power.



123rd Saragarhi Day was observed at the Indian Army's Sikh Regimental Centre of Ramgarh Cantonment in Jharkhand. Sikh Regiment celebrates the Day of the Battle of Saragarhi on September 12 every year as the "Regimental Battle Honour Day". Brig M. Sri Kumar, Saurya Chakra, Commandant, The Sikh Regimental Centre officers, JCOs and jawans laid wreaths at the Sikh Regimental Centre Saragarhi Memorial.

Bhushan moves SC in contempt case, seeks right to appeal

New Delhi, Sept. 12: Activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan, convicted and fined for his contemptuous tweets against the judiciary, on Saturday moved the Supreme Court seeking the right of appeal against convictions in original criminal contempt cases to be heard by a larger and a different bench.

Bhushan on August 31 was directed to deposit the fine with the Supreme Court registry by September 15 and failure to comply would entail a three-month jail term and debarment from law practice for three years.

In a fresh plea filed through lawyer Kamini Jaiswal, he has sought a declaration that a "person convicted for criminal contempt by this court, including the petitioner herein, would have a right to an intra-court appeal to be heard by a larger and different bench".

Bhushan, in the plea, suggested procedural changes to reduce the chances of "arbitrary, vengeful and high-handed decisions" in criminal contempt cases saying that in such cases the top court is the aggrieved party, the "prosecutor, the witness and the judge" and hence they raise fear of inherent bias.

The petition said the right of appeal is a fundamental right guaranteed under the Constitution and is also guaranteed under international law and this would act as a "vital safeguard against wrongful conviction and would truly enable the provision of truth as a defence".

The plea, to which the Ministry of Law and Justice and the Registrar of the apex court have been made parties, has also sought a direction for framing rules and guidelines "providing for intra-court appeal against conviction in original criminal contempt cases".

Under the present statutory scheme, a person convicted for the criminal contempt has the right to file review petition against the judgement and that plea is decided in chambers by the bench usually without hearing the contemnor. — PTI

Auto driver's daughter receives smartphone from Sonu Sood

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 12

Joys knew no bounds for a poverty-stricken talented girl of Odisha as she received a smartphone from Bollywood actor Sonu Sood on Saturday. The actor provided the phone to Lipsa Das, daughter of an auto-rickshaw driver hailing from Sambalpur district, so she could get on with her NEET preparation online.

Lipsa, who had secured 90.6 per cent marks in high school examinations and 93 per cent in Plus II examinations, will appear in the national-

level entrance test on Sunday.

On September 1, Lipsa's friend Chhabi Rani had tagged Sonu Sood in a tweet requesting him to help her meritorious friend in her preparation for the upcoming NEET examination by providing her a smartphone. She had mentioned that Lipsa's father is an auto-rickshaw driver and the Covid-19 lockdown has worsened the situation of the family financially. And, this has hampered Lipsa's preparation for NEET.

Chhabi Rani's tweet was retweeted by several users.

IN BRIEF

China satellite can't reach orbit

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

250 guns seized in Germany

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

50 die in Congo mine collapse

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

Assange court case to resume

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

TANKER FIRE WARNING NEGLECTED

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

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

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

Covid vaccine trials resume

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

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

The human trials resumed days after a pause had been announced in the trials after an adverse reaction in one of the participants. AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford, as the trial sponsor, said that they cannot disclose further medical information but confirmed that independent investigations concluded that the trials were safe to restart. "Clinical trials for the AstraZeneca Oxford coronavirus vaccine, AZD1222, have resumed in the UK following confirmation by the MHRA that it was safe to do so," AstraZeneca said in a statement. "AstraZeneca is committed to the safety of trial participants and the highest standards of conduct in clinical trials."

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

JOIN IN VIRUS FIGHT: INDIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PoC beaten to death in Italy

Rome, Sept. 12: Hundreds of people in Italy walked in a funeral procession on Saturday for a young PoC whose brutal beating death has shaken up the country and drawn condemnation from the highest levels of government. Premier Giuseppe Conte and Italy's interior minister attended the funeral of 21-year-old Willy Monteiro Duarte, who was killed during a fight in Colleferro, a city on the outskirts of Rome, in the early hours of September 6. Four Italians have been arrested, including a pair of brothers with police records, but to date prosecutors haven't indicated if the slaying was racially motivated.

Italian news reports have quoted witnesses as saying Monteiro Duarte, who was born in Rome and whose family is from the African island nation of Cape Verde, intervened while seeing a friend get beaten up in the fight and was then fatally beaten

himself. The funeral procession featured hundreds of people, most wearing white shirts and masks, walking toward the sporting stadium where Monteiro Duarte was honoured and then clapping in respect as his casket was carried out.

It was a strong show of solidarity for the young man, who was described as hard-working and upstanding by those who knew him. Italy's premier has displayed dismay over Monteiro Duarte's death. He called the family to express his condolences. In a statement, Conte demanded justice and asked rhetorically what it means that someone could be killed in Italy for having tried to help a friend.

"Will we tell our children to turn their heads away? Not to intervene to quell disputes or to try to protect weaker friends or friends in obvious difficulty," Conte said. —AP

Belarus president to visit Russia on Monday: Kremlin

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

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

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

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

FILM | FEST

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

SUPARNA SHARMA
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12

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

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

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

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

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

male directors.

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

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

Protest in Paris



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

Republishing Mohammed cartoons: Al-Qaeda threatens Charlie Hebdo

Paris, Sept. 12: Al-Qaeda has threatened French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* with a repeat of a 2015 massacre of its staff, after it republished controversial cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, the SITE observatory said on Friday. Al-Qaeda in its publication *One Ummah* had warned that Charlie Hebdo would be mistaken if it believed the 2015 attack was a "one off", after the magazine printed the "contemptible caricatures" in a defiant issue that marked the start of the trial in Paris of suspected accomplices in the attack.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RUSSIAN COPS SEEK TO GRILL NAVALNY

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

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

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

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

● PAKISTAN FM called the negotiations a golden opportunity for the Afghan leadership to pave the way for durable peace in Afghanistan.

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

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

SHAFQAT ALI ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 12

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

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

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

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

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

tiff

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

Though Mikami some-

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

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

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

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

Yet I could not walk away from *Under the Open Sky* because of Koji Yakusho. He doesn't inhabit the character of Mikami. He creates it with a mix of humanity, a yearning for a mundane life even as he struggles with some remains of the raging gangster he once was. These emotions reside in his dialogue and expressions, of course, but also in the smallest of gestures.

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

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

THE ASIAN AGE

13 SEPTEMBER 2020



Shashi Warriar

Off the beaten track

JFK, yoga, and intermittent fasting

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Subhani



De-escalation in Ladakh: Mixed signals after talks



K.C. Singh

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

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

ese roads and military installations.

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

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

of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership? Alternatively,

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

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

subsidising Japanese companies wishing to shift businesses out of China.

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

HEALTHY MORALE

The five-point consensus between Indian external affairs minister S. Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi is not expected to de-escalate the tension at the LAC in Ladakh. The joint statement has neither mention of restoring the status quo at LAC, nor has any time limit been set for total disengagement. It is good news for us that Chinese troops have been caged by aggressive Indian troops in eastern Ladakh and the morale of Chinese PLA has hit rock bottom. The Chinese Army baying for the blood of Indian soldiers must remember that India has lost no war and China has won none since 1962.

M.C. Joshi
Lucknow

WELL DONE, CONGRESS

THE CONGRESS has done well to ring in changes to its organisational structure. Old warhorses Ghulam Nabi Azad and Mallikarjun Kharge, who were among the 23 signatories of the recent letter demanding an overhaul and reform within the party, have been dropped as general secretaries, though they kept their positions in the CWC. The move to accommodate members of Team Rahul and make them shoulder more responsibilities is a welcome step. The rejig after the G-23 shock augurs well for the "Grand Old Party".

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

ISLAMOPHOBIA

A 28-YEAR-OLD was assaulted and his right hand chopped off in Haryana's Panipat town. The incident happened on August 24, and the man's family members lodged an FIR on September 7. They took this time to recover their wits post the trauma. Akhlaq had left home in Nanauta, near Saharanpur city, to find work in Panipat. When night fell, he sat down to rest in a park. Some youths came by, asking for his name. As soon as they came to know he was Muslim, they beat him up and when they saw a tattoo on his hand, they got jealous and hacked it off with a chainsaw. He was then taken to the railway station and dumped across the tracks, in a bid to pass it off as an accident.

Noor Ahmad
Hyderabad

SINGER DEPARTS

THE DEATH OF popular singer Anuradha Paudwal's son Aditya Paudwal due to kidney failure on Saturday at the age of 35 is most shocking. Aditya Paudwal used to sing bhajans and devotional songs. At the same time he had worked with several Bollywood music composers. In the Limca Book of Records, Aditya's name is included as Indian's youngest music director. There has been wave of mourning in the Bollywood film industry with his death. Rest in peace.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Swami who fought against BJP's Hindutva denied in death

Threat to Tomar

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

Dissidents' new dilemma

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

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

How to protest

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



By WAQYANAWIS

AAP in hills?

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

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

Bhai closes Darbar

Jafferbhai Mansuri of Delhi Darbar fame is no more. Covid-19 took another toll. Jafferbhai was a legend in Mumbai as his biryani of the Delhi Darbar chain of restaurants was worth every paisa.

In 1973, Jafferbhai had founded his Delhi Darbar restaurant at Bombay's Grant Road, and by 2006 he became the Biryani King, having a chain of restaurants called "Jaffer Bhai's Delhi Darbar" from Grant Road to Jogeshwari. The chain also owns several restaurants in the UAE.

Jafferbhai's biryani was much sought after

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

Silence, they said

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

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

Virtual vultures on the rise, will courts crack the whip?

From calling women sl*** to dishing out unreasonable hate social media has made way for mischief mongers to turn into self-proclaimed guardians of society.



Apsara Reddy

And the point is..

Latching on to the fame of established individuals and those with a huge fan following some gutter-mouths are going all out to build themselves up as opinion shapers.

From morphed videos and photos to heavily edited audio notes, haters are taking all routes possible to scuttle the spirit of those struggling to navigate through life. Very often men place themselves on these social media chat shows and discuss women celebrities at length. Who are they to pass judgement? If neither the father of the brother or the husband has an issue with a woman's choice of partner or clothes or profession, then how can a fame-seeking notorious individual be allowed to concoct malicious stories?

Freedom of speech is a pillar of democracy but society

is quickly crumbling under the extent of damage unleashed by irresponsible social media platforms and individuals.

Social media isn't the place to settle scores or deliver judgment. There are courts and law enforcement agencies for that. When a statement can end marriages, cripple careers and drive people to suicide; then we need to relook at how freedom of speech is being so grossly misunderstood and misused by trouble makers.

These social media avatars and pseudonyms, are covering up cowards, for whom anonymity is power and even inspiration. Behind these IDs and faceless identity hide the most vicious cowards who prey on women. The judiciary must deliver judgments so as to set precedents that instil a sense of respon-

sibility and fear in the minds of those trying to destroy another human being's right to dignity and life.

The reality of social media is that there are virtual vultures waiting to pounce in and join the abuse thread. Cowards who created "armies" for themselves. But the good part is the inhabitants exist only to the extent that we pay attention to them. Without it, they are trees falling noiselessly in a deep dark forest. It is a real crowd in the real world that can cause real concern. A virtual gang has only the voice we give it.

As online followers we must stop paying them any attention. They crave it and on which they thrive. Most disheartening of all is that we pay most attention to the loudest and ugliest of them, giving a boost to more of their kind. The legal fraternity and police officials must look at this as a serious crime or else social media bullying has become an extortion racket where many innocent victims are falling prey to cold calculated murder of their reputations and with it their souls.

Of course, we must make a

distinction between harmless humour and savage slander. It's necessary and important to raise the issue of stalking and bullying as many have anointed themselves as cleansers of society. Using this self-titled designation they go about wrecking havoc through hate hashtags.

In the meantime, for us as citizens, the plausible answer to online abuse is to muster up the willpower to ignore the vile vindictive commentary that seems to terrorise the victims. I feel for the victims of online hate. For some the reflexive response to an abusive post is to lash out. But that is to engage the abuser on their terms. Reaction is their vindication. Ignore.

To ignore trolls does not signify defeat or fear. We should cold-shoulder them altogether. It's the form of fight-back they are unable to digest. It's what they fear most, irrelevance.



Teacher challenges GO denying monthly pension to retired staff

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI



A school teacher, who retired under voluntary retirement scheme, has approached the Madras high court, to quash a GO in so far as it directs the accumulation of the employee's contribution along with the government's contribution to the contributory pension scheme, to the employees retired, resigned, died or otherwise terminated after getting an undertaking from those concerned that they would not make any further claims under the contributory pension scheme introduced in 2003 and thereby denies payment of monthly pension to those who joined service after introduction of the scheme.

Justice V. Parthiban before whom the petition filed by R.Renukadevi came up for hearing ordered notice to the state government and posted to October 8, further hearing of the case.

Petitioner's counsel S. Ayyathurai submitted that the petitioner joined an aided school in the city on October 6, 2005, as a junior PG assistant (Tamil). Thereafter she was brought under regular scale of pay and after completion of more than 11 years of service; she retired from service under VRS on January 31, 2017. When she approached various authorities for payment of her retirement benefits including pension, she did not receive any proper reply. When she consulted her advocate, he informed her that as per a GO dated February 22, 2016, she will not get any pension and she will get only the accumulation of the amount of her contribution and government contribution along with interest on giving an undertaking that she would not make any further demand for any monetary benefits on the government. Therefore, she filed the present petition challenging the GO, he added.

Ayyathurai contended that the impugned order in so far as it does not provide for monthly pension and compels the employees to accept the entire accumulation of the contribution of the employee and the government was arbitrary, unreasonable, unfair, and hence illegal. Right to pension was a legal right and continued to be so by virtue of recognition as such by the courts over more than a century and it has now crystallized into a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution because of the judgment of the Supreme Court that the

● As per GO dated February 22, 2016, petitioner will not get any pension and she will only get the accumulation of the amount of her contribution

pension was a deferred compensation for the services rendered. The government cannot deprive retired employees, who joined service after April 1, 2003, of their right to pension by an administrative order without backed by appropriate legislation, he added.

He said as per the contributory pension scheme being operated in quasi-government organizations, after disbursing the contribution of the employee's contribution in a lump sum payment, the retired employees were paid pension every month by the Pension Fund Authority by utilizing the management's contribution. The same procedures can be adopted and followed by the government for the employees including those who joined service after April 1, 2003, and retired from service either on reaching the age of superannuation or on voluntary retirement. If the employees who joined service after April 1, 2003, in the public sector undertakings can be paid monthly pension by the public sector undertakings concerned there was no reason why the government employees or the employees of the aided educational institutions cannot be paid pension by government by utilizing the government's contribution, he added.

Ayyathurai said the impugned order does not provide for payment of gratuity to the employees who joined service after April 1, 2003 under the new pension scheme. The Central government has extended the benefits of payment of gratuity to its employees who joined service after April 1, 2003. It was unfortunate that the Government of Tamil Nadu should remain quiet over payment of gratuity to those who joined service after April 1, 2003, he added.

BREATHING LIFE INTO STONE



Mamallapuram, an hour's drive away from Chennai, holds a unique place in Indian history. An ancient seaport with a history of maritime trade, Mamallapuram is now an important site for pilgrims, tourists and history buffs. The place is most popular for Tiger's Cave, Arjuna's penance, Krishna's Butterball, the light house and the world famous Shore Temple - a Shiva Temple. For generations, Mamallapuram has been home to master sculptors. The work of these sculptors is nothing but poetry. These artisans, who chisel life-like sculptures out of granite rock, were hit hard during the lockdown due to absence of tourists. Now post lockdown, work has resumed for these talented people who have adapted to latest trends in technology while creating masterpieces in stone.

Photos: E. K. Sanjay



A cinematic rescue with some court help



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

It had all the elements of a celluloid potboiler. A young couple in love. Caste comes in the way of their union. Angry parents separate them, locking up the girl and tormenting her. Boy gets an SOS message and goes in search of her. Boy spots girl and girl waves at him. The couple walks hand-in-hand into the sunset. But this real-life romantic saga assumed an extra sparkle for two reasons.

One, the way in which modern technology was harnessed in expediting the case and also in tracing the girl. And two, the judiciary's proactive role that saw the lawyers and judges dealing the case with patience and humanism, thus setting a precedent in the process. For, a case of that nature might have been thrown out in normal times.

Even this one was almost thrown out when the court registry refused to number the Writ of Habeas Corpus

filed by the young man from Chennai demanding the production of his girlfriend, who, he claimed, was being held illegally by her parents in their home in another town.

But lawyer Sudha Ramalingam saw to it that the case was taken up by the Madras High Court division bench of Justice R Kirubakaran and Justice V M Velumani, thus setting in motion the process of locating the girl and ascertaining if her boyfriend's allegations against her parents were true.

"They have unlawfully detained her against her will and are refusing to let her leave the house. She is facing abuse at the hands of her parents and her grandparents," he had alleged in his affidavit. He said he intended to marry the girl but her parents would not approve of their relationship because of caste differences and were trying to force the girl to marry

someone of their choice.

The girl, who has been 'overpowered', had sent messages to her boyfriend and also to her other friends and colleagues about her father threatening to hit her with slippers and her mother calling her a prostitute, among other things, which prompted the boyfriend and other friends to file online complaints with the Superintendent of Police of the district in which she was held. But no action was taken by the police, he said in the affidavit.

Earlier, the girl's father had made the boy sign an undertaking that he would not claim any of the girl's or her family's property. Once he had the undertaking in hand, he went to the Chennai Commissioner of Police with a complaint. The father had alleged that the boy was 'looking to cheat the girl sexually' though the two of them were in a 'consensual relationship' for over a year.

The boy was called for an enquiry by a joint commissioner of police, to whom he explained that he hailed from a decent, law-abiding and educated family and was keen to marry the girl. He also told the joint commissioner that the girl's family found his inter-caste parentage - Mudaliar father

and Brahmin mother - to be a problem as they were Brahmins.

Now that the SP and the Police Inspector of the station, under whose jurisdiction the girl's parents live, were apathetic to the problems of the girl, despite being informed about the illegal detention, the boy has no other alternative other than approaching the court with the petition, he claimed.

So, even as the petition was being filed on Thursday, Ramalingam alerted the judges and the public prosecutor about the need for urgency in hearing the case since the boy had called to inform her that the parents of the girl were planning to marry her off to someone else. The judges then ordered the police to produce the girl through video conference the next day.

In the meantime, the court registry people had doubts. How can parents hold their daughter in illegal custody? What locus standi does a 'boyfriend' have to seek production of a girl? Which meant the case was not registered and the papers were not presented before the judges the next day.

Ramalingam, however, presented herself before the judges even as the boy trav-

elled to the girl's town. When the judges asked for the case papers, they were told that the petition filed was not in order. When they informed that to the lawyer, she flared up asking them how a petition filed by her could be not in order, impelling the bench to start the proceedings.

Just then, the police in the girl's town threw cold water by sending a picture of the locked house, claiming that there was no one there. It was then that the boy, who roamed the street in true cinematic style and spotted the girl in a house two doors away. She too waved at him. So, he informed the lawyer who told the court about it, adding pace to the case.

The court, in which the proceedings were on through video conference, let the boy join in and he logged in using his mobile phone from the road opposite to the house where the girl was found. He showed the court the visuals of the house and the judges spotted policemen standing there. So the judges asked the police men to talk to them, which the policemen declined. So the Public Prosecutor intervened.

The mention of the world Public Prosecutor did the magic and the policeman took the phone to the sub-

inspector who responded, agreeing that the girl was in the house. The phone was taken to her. The judges asked her to remove her mask and answer their questions. She was clear in her reply. Her parents were tormenting her and she wanted to go with her boyfriend.

The parents, when called to address the court, wept and created a scene. How could they send their daughter with the man who would not marry her but live with her? They had a litany of such parental woes. But they were told that the girl was old enough to take decisions concerning her life. The court asked the boy if he was prepared to marry her and he said 'yes.' So the girl was allowed to go with her boyfriend and the lawyer was directed to produce them as a married couple on Tuesday.

Such a quick resolution of the case would not have been possible prior to the Coronavirus induced lockdown, said Ramalingam, marveling at the wonder

technology had done to legal proceedings. Apart from her, the two judges, the bench clerk and the public prosecutor were all at their own homes during the entire proceedings, while the boy, the girl and her parents responded to them from the far away town.

In normal times, if the boy had traced the girl after the police had informed the

court that the house was locked, it would have taken a week's time to inform the court itself. Then every move would have taken its own time. Here, everything happened in a jiffy and justice rendered on time.



SHORT TAKES

Hami takes pole as Merc dominate

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

Indonesia to skip Thomas-Uber Cup

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

Celtics ease past Raptors to advance

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

Injured Serena pulls out of Rome

Rome: Four-time champion Serena Williams withdrew from the upcoming Italian Open on Saturday citing the Achilles issue that bothered her in a loss to Victoria Azarenka in the U.S. Open semifinals, organizers announced on Saturday. Williams took a medical time-out for a tape job on her Achilles during her three-set loss on Thursday. The Italian Open, which was rescheduled from May due to the coronavirus pandemic, begins Monday. Azarenka remained entered for Rome. In the men's tournament, U.S. Open finalists Dominic Thiem and Alexander Zverev withdrew, as did Daniil Medvedev, who lost to Thiem in the semifinals in New York. Rafael Nadal headlines the field at the Foro Italico, marking his return to tennis after a seven-month layoff. — *AP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

FORMULA ONE

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

FOOTBALL

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

TENNIS

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

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Gunners on fire

Rampant Arsenal crush Fulham as Premier League returns

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The former Manchester City assis-



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

tant coach has been a much-needed breath of fresh air for Arsenal and pushing for a place in the top four should not be beyond his revitalised team this term. While the continued absence of fans due to the coronavirus and shorter than usual break has taken a little anticipation away from the new campaign, Arsenal were keener than most to get back in action after beating Chelsea in the FA Cup final. — *AFP*

NEYMAR BACK IN SQUAD AFTER QUARANTINE

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

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

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

LYON HELD AT BORDEAUX

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

In a game of rare chances on Friday, Lyon almost

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

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

Thiem, Zverev in new-look Slam final

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

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

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

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



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

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

It marked the first time

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

"I actually looked at the scoreboard when I was

down two sets to love," Zverev said.

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

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

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

FIRST-TIME DUO TAKE DOUBLES CROWN

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

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

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

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

RCB are in great shape, says Kohli

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

balanced manner.

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

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

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

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

Khan to be first American in IPL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

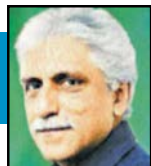
AUSSIES OPEN ODI SERIES WITH WIN AGAINST HOSTS

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

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

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

Djoker's US Open ouster shows rules are paramount



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

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

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

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

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

Busta now led 6-5 and would have served for the set.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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