

SHORT TAKES

ANANTAPUR TO AMARAVATI ROAD NOW IN NHDP: MP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

YSR Congress MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu has said that Union transport minister Nitin Gadkari has positively responded to his request for development of Anantapur-Amaravati greenfield express highway under the National Highways Development Programme (NHDP). The MP said on Thursday that he had written a letter to the Union minister in this regard.

Mr Devarayalu said that Hyderabad-Visakhapatnam and Nagpur-Vijayawada Expressways were included in the mega expressway programme. Anantapur-Amaravati greenfield expressway was conceived in 2016 at an estimated cost of ₹27,600 crore with an objective to accelerate industrial development and generate employment in drought-hit Rayalaseema, the MP said.

YSRC CHALLENGES LOKESH TO PROVE GRAFT CHARGES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

Refuting the allegations of graft made by Telugu Desam leader Nara Lokesh, YSR Congress has dared him to prove the charges levelled against 40 ruling party MLAs.

YSR Legislator Jogi Ramesh termed the allegations as baseless and challenged Lokesh to prove them. He claimed that the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government works with utmost transparency and all 151 MLAs stood by the people even during the Covid-19 pandemic.

IUMLAP SEEKS PROTECTION OF WAKF PROPERTIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

The Indian Union Muslim League AP has sought protection of wakf properties and registration of Muslim religious places.

IUMLAP state president Sk Basheer Ahmed on Thursday said that majority of Muslim religious places were not registered with the government. The IUMLAP submitted a memorandum to deputy chief minister S.B. Amritha Basha in this regard.

Mr Basheer Ahmed said that there were numerous Muslim religious places like masjids, madarassas, idgahs, shadikhana, peerla chavidi, ashukhanas, etc in the state. He said the government should create a data base of these places with all details like place, door number, electricity service numbers, boundaries, details of structure with geo-tagging.

MAN ARRESTED FOR TRYING TO CHEAT YSRC MLA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

An imposter, posing as a top CMO official, tried to dupe YSRC Chilikaluripet MLA Vidadala Rajani. The MLA quickly realised that there was something fishy and lodged a complaint with the Pattabhipuram police, who tracked the cheat, identified as Thota Balaji Naidu, to Paravada of Visakhapatnam with the help of his phone calls. He was soon arrested by the Paravada police.

He introduced himself as Babu Jagajivan Rao working as a top official in the secretariat at Velagapudi.

Claiming that the government had released Rs 2 crore to each Assembly constituency to help the kin of Covid victims, the imposter asked the MLA to select eight families for ₹25 lakh loan with 75 per cent subsidy. He demanded ₹50,000 as bribe from each beneficiary for sanctioning the loan. The insisted on immediate payment of the entire amount of ₹4 lakh through Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS).

Ms Rajani suspected that there was something amiss as Balaji Naidu mentioned that the Chief Minister directed him to take the names of the beneficiaries through the MLA for payment of the amount. She immediately called police on another phone and alerted them about the cheat.

The police said that earlier Balaji Naidu tried to cheat YSRC MLC Zakia Khanum. Guntur urban SP R.N. Ammi Reddy said that the Pattabhipuram police registered a case and started investigation.



People from various sections of life join the members from the North Andhra Representatives Association during a protest against the government demanding three capitals for AP state near GVMC Gandhi Statue Junction in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

— K. MURALI KRISHNA

Govt to provide 13 types of services to farmers at RBKs

CM says doubling farmers' income is his government's priority

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy stated that doubling the income of farmers was his government's priority and would do whatever was needed to achieve the goal.

He announced setting up facilities for 13 types of services at Rythu Bharosa Kendras such as warehouses, drying platforms, collection centers, cold storage rooms, custom hiring centers, primary processing centers, assaying equipment, janata bazaars, bulk milk cooling units, cattle sheds, aqua infra, procurement centers and e-marketing.

Reviewing with officials the status of agriculture and RBKs with officials at Tadepalli on Thursday, he

affirmed that in an attempt to make agriculture sustainable, the government of Andhra Pradesh decided to set up multi-purpose facilities. Mr Jagan also discussed the steps to be taken to strengthen Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS).

The CM said, "A total of 13 types of facilities would be set up next to RBKs at an estimated cost of ₹6,000 crore. It was decided that all the necessary proposals for setting up of multi-purpose facilities should be sent to NABARD through state co-operative bank (APCOB) for further action."

He directed the officials to take steps to strengthen Primary Agricultural Credit Societies financially. He told the officials to study pros and cons of set-

ting up of Janata Bazaars at warehouses and prepare a report.

The Chief Minister emphasized the need for providing infrastructure facilities to strengthen RBKs and said there should be quality in material, seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides in RBKs. "Farmers can sell their produce across the country through e-marketing platforms and Janata Bazaars should be made available for the farmer to sell his produce, he said.

Mr Jagan said e-cropping would make it easier to pay insurance premium for crops and to provide farmers a minimum remunerative price and compensation in case of crop loss. He directed the officials to implement policies which will help

the farmers to double their income. He asked the officials to prepare a report on constructing warehouses, and Janata Bazaars and aqua works. He said the e-marketing platform should be ready by next Kariff. He directed the officials to prepare plans for Janatha Bazaars, scheduling and secondary processing and then focus on minimum support price to crops.

The government signed an MoU with Amul and other companies to provide employment opportunities to women. He claimed that installation of meters is necessary for supply of quality power to farmers and the money would be directly credited to farmers' bank accounts and there will be no burden on them.

MINISTER SEEKS CENTRE'S HELP FOR AP DEVELOPMENT

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, SEPT. 10

Industries and IT minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy has appealed to the Union government to extend support for key projects, infrastructure and overall development of AP.

As part of his mission to promote AP as a destination for industries, Mr Goutham Reddy met Union ministers Anurag Thakur, Manuskh Mandaveeya and Piyush Goyal in New Delhi on Thursday.

He urged Mr Anurag, minister of state for finance, to extend financial support to establish a bulk drug park and two Skill Universities in AP. He also invited him to meet industrialists in the state. In his interaction with Mansukh Mandaviya, he sought funds for infrastructure such as national highways to connect ports and harbours.

Mr Goutham Reddy told him about their plans to set up three ports and 10 fishing harbours under the Maritime Board.

He also pointed to the commitment of the Centre to develop a major port.

TD an obstacle to development, says chief whip

NAGESWARA RAO
BALLEDA | DC
KADAPA, SEPT. 10

Government chief whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy has accused Telugu Desam of creating obstacles in everything that the state government is doing for people, fearing it will bring a good name to Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Speaking to reporters at the party office in Rayachoti on Thursday, Srikanth Reddy pointed out that while the state government has made English as medium of instruction to develop government schools on par with

private ones, TD leaders have filed cases against it in courts. He asked whether TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu is sending his grandson to a Telugu medium school.

He demanded that all Telugu Desam leaders, who have filed cases in court against English being the medium of instruction, should pull out their children and grandchildren from English medium schools and admitted them into Telugu medium schools. He accused TDP leaders of enacting drama and asked them whether children of poor should not be educated in English medium schools.

YOGI VEMANA VARSITY SIGNS MoU WITH WORLD FORUM OF EDUCATION

Kadapa: Yogi Vemana University (YVU) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the World Forum of Education, Bengaluru, through virtual mode on Thursday.

Vice-chancellor of the university Prof Munagala Surya Kalavathi said

the MoU with WFE would help large section of students and faculty through the mutual exchange of expertise, resources and facilities at global level.

YVU is the first university in AP was first to sign an MoU with the World Forum of Education.

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

Several government officials who received calls demanding money from fraudsters claiming to be from ACB, have appealed to the state government to order a thorough probe to find out how they managed to get their private phone numbers and also details of their families.

Kurnool police have found a gang of eight persons, including the kingpin Jaya Krishna, hailing from different parts of Anantapur, who were threatening government officials to expose them for their corrupt deals if they failed to pay up.

The police arrested six of them on September 1 and sent them to judicial remand at Anantapur district jail in Reddipalli. Jaya Kri-

shna from Pedda Kottala village of Uravakonda mandal in Anantapur district, and another accused, who was a bank account holder, are absconding.

Based on confessions, police said that all the gang members were having criminal records and some having also served jail terms. The main accused, while in jail, teamed up with fellow-inmates and soon after release on bail, they began blackmailing government officials. The modus operandi was to identify government departments notorious for high-level corruption and search for the mobile numbers of officials on the internet. Armed with a list of numbers, they used to call up the officials claiming to be from ACB and tell them about their corrupt deals

● The police found out 18 targeted government officials by the gang; two of them succumbed to Covid-19.

● ACB officials ask people to call on toll free no. 14400 to lodge complaints about graft.

and demand money to avoid further inquiry on them.

They managed to get three SIM cards with fake credentials. They also got two persons having bank accounts in Canara Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank in Karnataka and offered them 10% commission to return money credited into their accounts. Contrary to their calculations, these bank accounts helped the police to zero in on the culprits.

The ACB had recently disclosed the names of government officials who paid how much money to the

No leads yet on gutting of chariot in Antarvedi

VADREVU SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, SEPT. 10

The police investigation on the gutting of the chariot in the Sri Lakshmi Narasimha swamy temple in Antarvedi has not come to a conclusion yet.

Additional police forces are on strict vigil in the village and also in the Konaseema region in general. Nobody is being allowed to go to Antarvedi and the police are preventing passersby along the route to Antarvedi.

The endowment department's additional commissioner, Ramachandra Mohan, has been appointed as special officer at the temple to coordinate and oversee issues pertaining to the reconstruction of the chariot. It is learnt that a computer operator and a security guard were suspended at Antarvedi temple on Thursday.

The Jana Sena Party has given a 'Chalo Antarvedi' call. However, the Eluru range DIG, K. V. Mohan Rao, made it clear that nobody would be allowed in Antarvedi as Section 144 and Section 30 are in force. He said that if the party leaders or workers try to come, the police will not allow them. He said a scientific research and investigation is going on in the gutting incident and no law and order problems would be entertained.

Expressing concern over the gutting incident, BJP and Jana Sena party leaders took up resentment fasts for one hour in their respective houses and party offices.

BJP state president, Somu Veeraj, along with leaders R. Sri devi, Bommala Dattu, A. Ramakrishna Rao and others took up resentment fasts at BJP office in Rajahmundry on Thursday. Veeraj alleged that the state government was not responding though the attacks are being done on Hindu temples. He said that the party would not keep silent if such attacks go on further. BJP leaders Pydah Krishna Mohan, Pydah Bhavan Prasad, Y. Ramkumar and M. Subba Rao, BJP former president, Y. Malakondaiah and others participated in the stir in their respective houses. The BJP Kakinada parliamentary district president, Ch. Ramkumar, said that BJP workers took up the stir in all mandals. Jana Sena leaders K. Durgesh, P. Venkateswara Rao and others took up their stir at their houses at Rajahmundry and Kakinada respectively.

Kapu corporation chairperson, Jakkampudi Raja, visited Antarvedi temple and inquired about the incident. He said that the government was taking the issue seriously and the police officials are on duty to nab the culprits. However, he said that the opposition parties were unnecessarily making the issue controversial.

Former MLA and Telugu Desam leader, Vanamadi Venkateswara Rao (Kondababu), expressed concern over the Antarvedi incident and demanded that the government conduct an impartial probe without attributing it to beehive hunters and mentally-ill persons. He said that during the YSRC government, several attacks are taking place on Hindu temples and prayer houses.

CM TOOK SWIFT ACTION IN CHARIOT GUTTED ISSUE, SAYS BOTSA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

Municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana said that the Jagan government came out with a welfare calendar and was strictly following it by direct transfer of money to the beneficiaries. He alleged that the previous Telugu Desam government had gone back on its promise to

waive agriculture and DWACRA loans.

He said that it was objectionable that BJP and TD were resorting to provocative speeches in the Antarvedi temple chariot burning case. Accusing TD leader Nara Lokesh of misleading the people, the minister said one should not forget the fact that CM Jagan's swift response following the incident funds released for a new chariot.

YSRC: HOW COULD TD TRUST CBI NOW

From Page 1

Officials informed that a GO to this effect will shortly be issued on the matter. Opposition parties and Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu had been demanding a CBI probe.

The CM has taken the matter of the fire seriously and while the state police have been trying their best, there was criticism from political and other groups casting aspersions on the government. No one would be spared and stringent action

would be taken against those involved, irrespective of their position, was the government stand.

Meanwhile, YSRC MLA and party spokesperson Ambati Rambabu stated that there is no negligence of the government in the Antarvedi incident as the government had initiated swift measures. He said earlier Naidu had no confidence in CBI and had banned the agency during his tenure but now he is distrusting the AP police and had started believing the CBI which shows his political opportunism.

Minister blamed for attacks on temples

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 10

President of AP Sadhu Federation Srinivasananda Saraswati on Thursday blamed endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas for 'attacks' on Hindu shrines in the state.

Speaking to reporters here, he said 27 attacks had taken place on temples during the last 15 months. Demanding resignation of the minister, Saraswati said most of the temples in the State were losing valuable lands to encroachers and strongly condemned the arrest of 37 BJP leaders who went to Antarvedi to stage a protest over the burning of 62-year-old chariot.

Convener of Save Simhachalam, Turaga Sriram said vast stretches of Si-

mhachalam temple lands were being grabbed by unscrupulous elements. He warned that if the government failed to free the lands from the crutches of the land grabbers, he would call all the Kar Sevaks from across the country to join him to save the temple lands.

Meanwhile, BJP leaders staged a silent protest at the Visakhapatnam city party office condemning the burning of the chariot. Former Visakhapatnam MP K. Haribabu carried a placard which said 15 temples were attacked during YSRC regime and 17 under TDP rule. The placard of MLC P.V.N Madhav said YSRC government enhanced Holy Land tour funds from Rs 40,000 to Rs 60,000, but no funds for travel to Ayodhya.

Chariots at TTD-run temples secure: CVSO

AVINASH P SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 10

Chief vigilance and security officer of TTD Gopinath Jatti has said that special surveillance steps have been made for the protection of chariots in the 49 temples across the country. The CVSO and Tirupati Urban SP Avula Ramesh Reddy reviewed the security arrangements for the protection of temples and the ensuing annual Brahmotsavams from September 19-27, at a meeting held in Annamaiah Bhavan on Thursday at Tirumala.

Speaking to reporters later, Mr Jatti said that the TTD vigilance wing in coordination with the police department made elaborate security arrangements including round-the-clock CCTV

surveillance at all the TTD-run temples across the country, he explained.

Since it has been decided that annual Tirumala Brahmotsavams would be held in 'ekantham' in view of the prevailing Covid-19 restrictions, only devotees with online Srivari darshan tickets would be allowed to visit Tirumala.

SP Ramesh Reddy said CC cameras were installed at all TTD temples, mutts etc., to ensure protection to the holy places. "Any activity by individuals or social media aimed at disturbing communal harmony and peace will be dealt strictly," he added while appealing to the public to call on WhatsApp No: 80999 99977 if they came across suspicious movements, if any, at temples and other vital places in the district.

the case with the municipal commissioner from Palamaneru in Chittoor district.

The government officials are a worried lot as they are getting calls from the police as their numbers were found in the call data of the mobile phones of the accused to enquire whether they paid money to the gang. They have made a fervent appeal to the state government to order an inquiry to find out how their personal details are being leaked out and even suspected moles in their departments.

A senior official from ACB said, "We wonder as to why not a single official called us when somebody claiming to be from ACB began demanding money. We also maintain a toll free number where complaints can be lodged."

IN BRIEF

APSP constable dies as gun misfires

Kurnool: An APSP police head constable died after his gun allegedly misfired at APSP second battalion ground here on Thursday. The deceased was identified as Solomon Raju, 49, a native of Vaddemana Village in Nandikotkur. A 1992 constable, he was posted at second battalion under the control of the APSP DIG Venkateswarlu. IV Town police station CI Srinivasa Reddy said that the incident occurred while he was cleaning his gun around 9 am while on duty. It misfired and bullets pierced into his body and he died on the spot. He said that the body was sent to Kurnool government general hospital for post-mortem. A case has been registered and investigation is on, the CI added. The deceased survived by his wife and two children.

2 brothers killed in mishap

Visakhapatnam: Two brothers were killed on the spot, and the driving instructor sustained serious injuries when their car rammed a tree near Natavaram, about 60 km from Visakhapatnam on Thursday morning.

The rural police said Asapu Srinivas, 28, and his younger brother Hanuman Sai took off from their village Natavaram in the early hours and reached Tandava junction as a part of their training in light vehicle driving. While returning, one of them lost control over the vehicle and hit a cashew tree. Both the brothers died on the spot while the driving instructor Ankamreddy Vamsi sustained severe head injuries. He was rushed to KGH where his condition was said to be serious.

No tonsuring at Durga temple

Vijayawada: The famous Dasara utsaval at Kanaka Durga temple atop Indrakeeladi here will be held amid stringent Coronavirus guidelines from 17 to 25 October. Darshan will be allowed only between 5 am and 9 pm, instead of 3 am and 12.30 am during normal times. Krishna district collector A Md Imtiaz said that a preparatory meeting was conducted with temple officials, police and other departments for smooth conduct of Dasara festival.

Kavi Samrat remembered



Telugu language-lovers pay tributes to statue of Kavisamrat Viswanatha Satyanarayana on the occasion of 125th birth anniversary celebrations at Lenin Centre in Vijayawada on Thursday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

No respite from rising number of Corona cases

EG continues to lead with highest no. of cases at 1,412

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

Andhra Pradesh has 10,175 new Covid-19 cases scaling up the tally to 5,37,687 and 68 deaths, taking the death toll from Covid-19 to 4,702 in the last 24 hours.

Thursday's Covid-19 bulletin reported that out of 72,229 samples tested, 10,175 were found infected with coronavirus.

Out of a total of 43,80,991 samples tested so far in the state, 4,35,647 patients have been discharged from various hospitals after recovery while 97,338 patients are still active with the infection and taking treatment.

East Godavari continues to lead the state with the highest number of new infections at 1,412, followed by 1,386 in Prakasam, 1,139

in West Godavari, 968 in Chittoor, 838 in Guntur, 823 in Nellore, 664 in Srikakulam, 576 in Kadapa, 545 in Krishna, 516 in Anantapur, 482 in Vizianagaram, 482 in Kurnool, 422 in Anantapur and 404 in Visakhapatnam.

East Godavari registered the highest number of cumulative infections in the state with 72,497, followed by 50,182 in Kurnool, 47,548 in Anantapur, 47,248 in West Godavari, 46,469 in Chittoor, 43,147 in Guntur, 42,436 in Visakhapatnam, 41,041 in Nellore, 34,090 in Kadapa, 33,607 in Prakasam, 30,372 in Srikakulam, 26,196 in Vizianagaram, 19,959 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery of Covid-19 infection patients has been good in East

Godavari at 59,292, followed by 45,338 in Anantapur, 42,209 in West Godavari, 42,191 in Anantapur, 36,072 in Visakhapatnam, 34,898 in Guntur, 34,800 in Nellore, 25,866 in Kadapa, 23,436 in Srikakulam, 18,157 in Prakasam, 16,697 in Vizianagaram, 16,578 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries. Among deaths of Covid-19 infected patients, Chittoor, Kadapa and Nellore registered nine each, followed by seven each in Krishna and Prakasam, six in Anantapur, five each in East and West Godavari, four each in Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam, two in Guntur and one in Chittoor registered the highest number of cumulative

deaths at 504, followed by 446 in Guntur, 442 in East Godavari, 405 in Kurnool, 391 in Anantapur, 376 in West Godavari, 369 in Nellore, 351 in Prakasam, 341 in Visakhapatnam, 330 in Krishna, 282 in Kadapa, 279 in Srikakulam and 185 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities have discharged 10,040 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery.

AP has carried out Covid-19 tests on 82,041 samples per million population and has registered a Covid-19 positive rate at 12.27. Maharashtra has tested 39,152 samples and has a positive rate at 19.78 and Telangana has tested 48,106 samples with positive rate at 7.81, showing that AP remains the most responsible and proactive state in the fight against Covid-19.

Collector wants health official suspended, arrested

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 10

In yet another case of high-handedness on frontline Covid-19 health-care professionals, Guntur collector I. Samuel Anand kicked up a row by directing a senior health official to suspend a doctor and ordered the police to arrest him.

Dr Somla Naik, working in Narasaraopeta division, complained about lack of adequate beds for Covid-19 patients in government hospitals to admit them and provide treatment, during a review meeting chaired by the collector at Narasaraopeta in Guntur district.

The collector had expressed his displeasure over the rise in number of Covid-19 cases especially in rural areas and had asked health officials to highlight any problems.

When Dr Naik complained about lack of beds, the collector lost his cool and said that when 1,300 to 1,400 beds were lying vacant, how the doctor could say that no beds

were available.

Dr Naik was reportedly trying to explain that during the recent visit of a joint collector, they were instructed not to keep anyone with Covid-19 symptoms in home isolation and shift them to the government hospitals. They did so, which filled up the vacant beds.

When the collector instructed officials to shift all 60-plus Covid-19 infected people to hospitals for treatment, Dr Naik allegedly informed him that as higher officials were giving different directions, they were getting confused as to which instruction to follow. He said that they were finding it difficult to get beds to admit the patients in hospitals.

The repeat statement of lack of beds resulted in arguments between the two. At this juncture, collector Anand directed the district medical and health officer to place Dr Naik under suspension. When Dr Naik reportedly questioned the collector for issuing such a directive, collector Anand instructed the police to arrest the doctor on

charges of violation of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

As the collector was repeatedly asking the police to arrest Dr Naik, the medical officer left the meeting. Anand directed revenue authorities to lodge a complaint against Dr Naik.

The police later escorted Dr Naik to the Narasaraopeta DSP office and made him to wait there for some time. The doctor returned home after some time. Narasaraopeta DSP M. Veera Reddy said, "As we have not received any complaint on Dr Naik, we have not booked a case and not arrested anyone so far."

Reacting to the incident, AP Government Doctors' Association state convenor Dr D. Jayadheer said, "We condemn the high-handedness of the Collector on the medical officer. The collector has no right to issue directions to arrest Dr Naik. If there are any issues, a departmental inquiry can be ordered and action can be taken if he is found guilty of violation of norms."

Student's mistake unravels fraud

From Page 1

However, by mistake, the student also pinned the hall ticket to the answer sheet. During the evaluation, the additional controller of examinations in JNTUK smelled a rat.

The university appointed an internal committee to inquire into the matter and the committee found the involvement of the three outsourcing personnel of the university and three other personnel, including the driver and cleaner of the vehicle and also an employee of an affiliated college. The university suspended the three outsourced personnel for negligence of the duty as

they were route officers securing confidential material.

The JNTUK registrar lodged a complaint with the Sarpavaram police, seeking an investigation of the matter and the involvement of other individuals mentioned in the internal committee.

Sarpavaram police station house officer, R. Govindarajulu, said that a case was registered based on the complaint given by the JNTUK and is being investigated.

However, many of the answer sheets have been tampered in such a way and the role of four engineering colleges in north Andhra districts are suspected.

PESO ASKED TO CHECK SAFETY AT STORAGE FACILITY

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 10

The AP Pollution Control Board has asked the Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organisation to inspect the safety parameters as mentioned in the Ammonium Nitrate Rules of 2012 at the Sravan Shipping and Services Pvt Ltd, the stevedores company that handles storage and evacuation of ammonium nitrate.

In his letter to the chief explosive officer of Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation, last week, the member secretary of the pollution control board, Vivek Yadav said that the ministry of environment and forests on October 30, 2008 gave consent to Sravan Shipping and Services to store 20,000 tons of ammonium nitrate in its three sheds located in Chukkavanipalem, Visakhapatnam. The AP Pollution Control Board also gave consent on April 6, 2018 to handle the same quantity.

However, the Board found that the Sravan Shipping had failed to meet the safety standards and asked the management to stop handling ammonium nitrate until further orders. Invoking rule 18 of Manufacture, Store and Import of Hazardous Chemicals, 1989, the board sent a letter to Visakhapatnam Port Trust not to engage Sravan Shipping and Services in handling the ammonium nitrate till further notification.

The secretary said the Board also requested the Visakhapatnam-based deputy controller of explosives to ascertain the adequacy of safety measures at the shipping company warehouse to store 20,000 tons of ammonium nitrate.

58 get recruited under APCOS in V'nagaram

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 10

The Vizianagaram Education department appointed 58 outsourced employees through Andhra Pradesh Corporation for Outsourced Services (APCOS) and presented the orders to the job achievers on Thursday.

While handing over the appointment letters, Collector, Vizianagaram Dr M. Hari Jawaharlal said that 100 per cent transparency was being maintained while recruiting various posts.

According to the need of the education department in the district, 58 people have been recruited for various duties. The department recruited the persons through APCOS ensuring complete transparency, the Collector said.

The appointed APCOS employees would work as nonteaching staff in KGBVs and at Mandal Resource Centres in the district, the Collector added.

The Collector also claimed that the administration has collectively worked in the recruitment of village secretariat employees and other category recruitments without any corruption allegations.

According to the government directions, the district administration would follow the directions with absolute transparency, he added.

District Educational Officer Nagamani said that the department had informed the APCOS about the need of outsourced persons for various jobs.

The APCOS has selected and appointed the personnel, she added.

Drought-like situation in north AP

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 10

Unprecedented in any rainy season in the north Andhra districts, the farmers of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts have been experiencing drought and dry weather conditions in the ongoing kharif season. The farmers in the three districts have lost hope as the crops are drying.

Vizianagaram district is facing almost drought-like situation. Out of 34 man-

dals in the district, 32 have been suffering deficit and scanty rainfall. In Srikakulam, out of 38 mandals, 19 have deficit rainfall and five scanty rainfall.

In Vizianagaram, the main vegetation activity mandals, including Hukumpeta Araku, Madugula, G. Madugula, K. Kotapadu, Anandapuram, Bheemili, Naravada, Sabbavaram, Nakkapalli and Payakaraopeta are facing deficit rainfall.

Visakhapatnam Urban and Rural and

Atchutapuram mandals are also facing trouble due to scanty rainfall. In Visakhapatnam district, 15 mandals face a rainfall deficit.

The Vizianagaram district administration has started damage control measures and directed officials to create awareness among farmers to turn to alternative crops.

Paddy is being cultivated in 1,22,997 hectares every year. This has been limited to 77,000 hectares. Due to poor rainfall, even this

crop is drying up. As there are no water sources, only 50 per cent of other crops have been sown against the total extent of 1.8 lakh hectares.

Proposals have been sent to commissioner of agriculture for alternative crop planning and seeds. The district resource centre is conducting training programmes with farmers on alternative crops as a part of drought relief measures, said joint collector, Vizianagaram, Dr G.C. Kishore Kumar.

Infection may decline soon: Survey

From Page 1

He said that the surveillance would be conducted for all communicable diseases to find out their prevalence among the people to help the government come up with plans to handle them.

A similar survey was carried out on Covid-19 to find out its prevalence among the population. He said that as the

prevalence rate could go up to some level, it would come down gradually as was the case with Krishna district during the first phase of sero survey as its prevalence peaked and started coming down subsequently.

Referring to the highest percentage of prevalence in Vizianagaram district at 30.6 per cent, he said that they were expecting the rate to come down

gradually in the district. Similarly, as West Godavari showed only 12.3 per cent of prevalence, they were expecting the cases to go further up in the days to come, he said and added that accordingly, they would plan to conduct more Covid-19 tests and arrange beds in hospitals and also recommending people to go for home isolation.

NGT | INITIATIVE

The committee will submit report before Nov. 17, 2020

Panel to check ONGC, GAIL pollution

VADREVI SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, SEPT. 10

The national green tribunal (NGT) appointed a joint committee to ascertain air, sound, soil and water pollution caused on account of the oil and gas explorations of ONGC and GAIL along the Krishna-Godavari Basin.

The committee will comprise a senior officer from the ministry of environment and climate change, a senior officer from the central pollution control board, Chennai, a senior officer as deputed by the chairperson of the AP pollution control board, the East Godavari District collector or a senior officer not below the

rank of assistant collector or sub-divisional magistrate and an expert on petroleum engineering from Andhra university college of engineering, Visakhapatnam.

The committee will submit its report on or before 17, November, 2020. Venkatapathi Raja Venumula filed a petition in NGT against the oil companies, alleging that there used to be the usual phenomena of oil leakage in the pipelines established by these units causing damage to agricultural land and also affecting water bodies.

The units are not following the pollution control mechanisms which prevent such leakages and there is no proper maintenance

of pipelines carried out by them which causes frequent oil and gas leakages, causing deaths.

The applicant stated and said that though the district collector reviewed frequent gas leakages in the district and certain directions were given to ONGC as well as GAIL authorities to take precautionary measures to avoid them in the future, no action has been taken by the oil companies and similar incidents occurred on May 18 and August 21 in 2020.

The applicant also alleged that they are discharging untreated effluents into nearby water bodies and the seashore causing water pollution as well as marine pollution.

The NGT stated that the committee is at liberty to co-opt any other expert in the field of petroleum engineering to assist in preparing the report, especially on offering advice on safety measures to be taken to avoid such things in future

tion, affecting the marine ecology. Instead of discharging treated effluents into the deep sea, following the conditions of environmental clearance, they are discharging them onto the seashore and shallow sea causing pollution in the sea water which affects marine life and indirectly affects the

livelihoods of the local fisherpeople.

The NGT stated that the committee is at liberty to co-opt any other expert in the field of petroleum engineering to assist in preparing the report, especially on offering advice on safety measures to be taken to avoid such things in future.

The NGT directed the committee to ascertain as to whether the pollution control mechanisms provided by the oil companies are adequate and, if not, what are the upgradations and improvements required to minimise or avoid such incidents in future and also to prevent pollution, damage and death of human and marine life.

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SHORT TAKES

2 SOG JAWANS
KILLED IN
ENCOUNTER

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 10

Two jawans of Special Operation Group (SOG) of Odisha police died in an exchange of fire between security forces and Maoists in a forest near Sirki village on Kalahandi-Kandhamal border, police said on Thursday.

The martyrs were identified as Sudhir Kumar Tudu (28) of Mayurbhanj district and Debasis Sethy (27) of Angul district. At least five Maoists had died in the gun-battle that took place on Wednesday. Initially, four bodies of Maoists were recovered from the spot. During the combing operation following the encounter, the security personnel recovered another body of a Maoist.

On a tip-off from Intelligence input, an operation was launched on Kalahandi-Kandhamal border on September 8. Two composite teams of SOG and District Voluntary Force (DVF) had participated in this operation. Following heavy firing from the Maoists, a team of SOG and DVF had retaliated, said an official statement issued by Odisha Police.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik paid tribute to the martyred jawans. "Salute to the martyrdom of Debasis Sethy of Angul and Sudhir Kumar Tudu of Mayurbhanj who laid down their lives fighting against left-wing extremists. My heartfelt condolences to the families of the martyred jawans," the Chief Minister tweeted.

LUKEWARM
OPENING DAY FOR
RLYS SPL TRAINS

New Delhi, Sept. 10: There was a lukewarm response from passengers towards railways' 80 special trains, bookings for which opened on Thursday, with the average occupancy rate being less than 50 per cent, except for two trains which showed more than 100 per cent occupancy.

While Indore Jn Bg Railway station to Howrah in West Bengal showed an occupancy of 108 per cent, the Shramik Express from Valsad station to Muzaffarpur in Bihar showed occupancy of 179 per cent, according to data provided by the national transporter. Though the Indore to Howrah train was over booked, the train in the reverse direction had only 15 per cent occupancy.

Another train running over western railway between Manmad and Mumbai in Maharashtra showed 52 per cent occupancy. Occupancy in trains originating from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal for journeys towards Karnataka and Telangana maintained an average occupancy of around 30 per cent. The most occupancy of 47 per cent was seen in the Muzaffarpur-Bangalore weekly special train, followed by the Gorakhpur-Yeshwantpur Jn Railway station at 32.4 per cent and the Darbhanga-Secunderabad special which has an occupancy of 31 per cent.

INFANT
TRAFFICKING GANG
BUSTED IN MP

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, SEPT. 10

Indore police on Thursday busted a newborn babies trafficking gang, took two people including a woman into custody, and rescued a 10-day-old infant from them.

Acting on a tip off by a non-government organisation (NGO), a team of women police sealed a particular area in Indore and foiled the bid by the two accused, identified as Bablu alias Tejkarant Thakkar and Shilpa Telang, to sell the infant to an unidentified person who managed to escape from the spot, police said.

"We have rescued the baby. Investigation is on to find out the biological parents of the child", Indore district additional superintendent of police Manisha Pathak said.

According to the police, the two accused were trying to sell the baby for ₹1.20 lakh to their 'client'. "Both the accused are health workers. We suspect that they steal newborns from hospitals", a senior police officer from Indore told this newspaper on the condition of anonymity. Interrogation of the two accused would unearth the entire network of child trafficking in the state, he added.

Tibet under electronic surveillance

China is miffed over India's recruitment of Tibetans in the Special Frontier Force

Army on alert along LoC after ISI uses drones

Srinagar, Sept. 10: A quadcopter used by Pakistani spy agency ISI in Jammu and Kashmir has necessitated alert along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Valley as the Army believes it could be used for dropping weapons for terrorists.

General-Officer-in-Command of strategically located XV Corps in Kashmir Lt Gen B.S. Raju said after an incident "across Peer Panjal", a reference to Jammu region in army parlance, "we have alerted all formations to keep a check on any flying object seen along the LoC". He said the terrorists holed up in the Kashmir valley have been facing acute shortage of arms and ammunition and they are desperately looking for some help from across the border for the same.

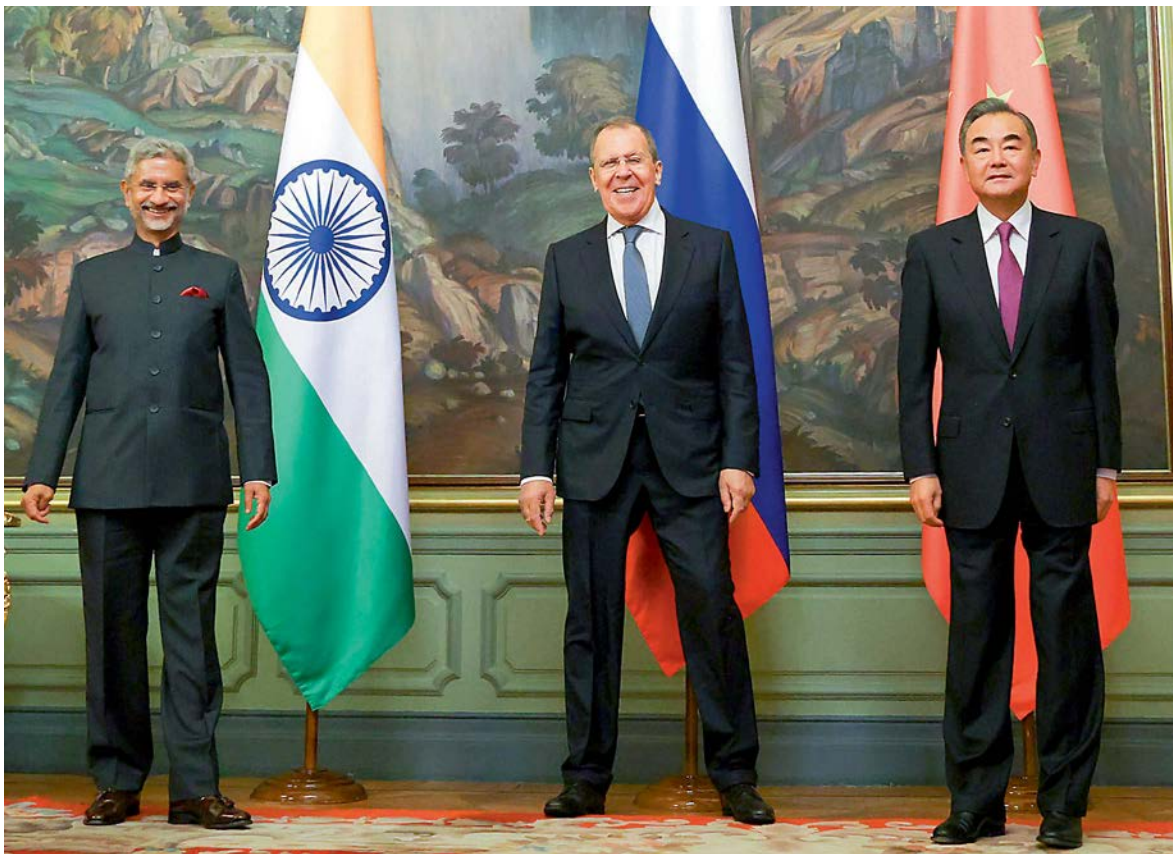
In June, BSF had shot down a Pakistani drone, loaded with a sophisticated rifle and seven grenades, along the International Border in Kathua district

of Jammu region.

The Chinese-made drone weighed about 17.5 kgs and had a payload of 5.5 kg including a sophisticated US-made M4 semi-automatic carbine and seven Chinese grenades. Four batteries, a radio signal receiver and two Global Positioning Systems were also recovered.

This, according to Gen Raju, is a "new dimension" in decades of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism.

"Instructions have been passed on to the forward formations to keep an eye on any flying object coming from across the border (LoC) and hit it hard to bring it down," he said. As small drones are tough to detect, an extra vigil using all high-tech gadgets along with human scrutiny is being maintained. A strict watch is also being maintained for movement of civilians along the LoC as terrorists may disguise themselves as nomads or shepherds to pick up arms consignment. — PTI



Foreign minister S. Jaishankar, left, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, and China's foreign minister Wang Yi, pose for a photo on the sidelines of a meeting of Foreign Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Commonwealth of Independent States and Collective Security Treaty Organisation Member States in Moscow on Thursday.

THE FALLOUT

- Tibetans living close to the Indian borders and otherwise are under massive electronic surveillance following tensions between India and China
- Ever since the Galwan valley clashes, surveillance has been increased on Tibetans and many of them who remained in close touch with Indians are now incommunicado
- Indians residing close to the borders in Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh and other areas share a good rapport with Tibetans
- In Tibet, human rights abuses include disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests and detentions, forced abortions and infanticide
- According to one report, 87,000 deaths have been recorded in Lhasa alone between March 1959 and September 1960

between the two countries following the clashes in Galwan valley in June. This includes mobile-phone monitoring and keeping an eye on other forms of communication, be it emails or chats — the contents of which are being monitored round the clock. It is learnt that in some areas close to the Indian borders, mobile-phone networks have been jammed to ensure there is

no communication.

Threats from the PLA have ensured that people keep to themselves lest they invite the wrath of PLA, whose brutality against Tibetans is well known. For the PLA, places like Purang are significant as they are not only close to the borders with India and Nepal, the Mansarovar lake and Mount Kailash are located towards the north of this

town, the area where the PLA has deployed surface-to-air missiles and is expanding its military base by taking up construction work.

Indian SIM cards do not work here due to poor connectivity and many locals in Dharchula use Nepal Telecom SIM cards to talk business with Tibetans.

It is not only Purang that PLA is worried about. Sources say that the

Chinese Army is heavily surveilling villages in Demchok in Ladakh, Tago and Yamrang areas in Khimkulla Pass along the LAC in Himachal Pradesh, Linzhi, a city in the southeast of the Tibet Autonomous Region which borders Arunachal Pradesh where the Bokar tribes live on both sides and also the areas near Nathu La.

"Tibetans living close to

the borders with India share a great rapport from even before the 1962 war as most of these routes were used for trade between the two nations. Generations of tribes or traders have close cultural ties besides having business interests which makes the PLA uncomfortable. With tensions at its peak between the countries ever since the 1962 war, the PLA wants to have a tighter grip over Tibet and its people, especially due to the friendship with the Indians," sources said.

Besides strict electronic surveillance, Indian agencies have learnt that due to the heavy mobilisation of

forces on the Chinese side, many Tibetans have been asked to evacuate and relocate to areas far away from the borders. In Tibet, not following the dictate of the PLA has led to disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests and even killings. Denial of freedom of speech and the Internet is a constant.

Recently, Chinese President Xi Jinping in his address to the seventh Central symposium on Tibet had called for building a "new modern socialist" Tibet and constructing an "impregnable wall" against separatism and "sinicisation" of the Tibetan Buddhism.

Kangana Ranaut episode over for Sena, says Raut

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, SEPT. 10

A day after the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) demolished illegal constructions at Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut's office, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Thursday said that the issue was over for his party.

However, the actress has continued her vitriolic against Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray calling him an example of nepotism and accused him of turning Shiv Sena into "Sonia Sena."

"The Kangana Ranaut episode is over. We have even forgotten it. We are now busy with our government and social work," Raut said after meeting the Chief Minister at his residence Matoshree.

Raut also denied his party has a role in the demolition carried out by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation in Kangana's office at Pali Hill in Bandra.

"The action at Kangana Ranaut's office is done by the BMC. It has no con-

● THE ACTRESS has continued her vitriolic against Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray calling him an example of nepotism and accused him of turning Shiv Sena into 'Sonia Sena.'

nection with Shiv Sena. You can talk to the Mayor or the BMC Commissioner on it," he said.

The Shiv Sena-ruled BMC had razed illegal alterations at Kangana's office on Wednesday. However, the Bombay High Court later ordered a stay on it.

Meanwhile, Kangana has continued with her outburst against the Chief Minister calling him prime example of nepotism and accusing him of misusing the power. Just like Wednesday, she posted a series of tweets too on Thursday targeting Thackeray.

Terming the MVA government in Maharashtra as a 'milavast Sarkar,' she accused Uddhav of compromising on its identity. "The ideology on which Shri Balasaheb

Thackeray built Shiv Sena, today they have sold the ideology for power, becoming Sonia Sena from Shiv Sena. The goons who broke my house behind my back, do not call them a civic body. Don't insult the constitution."

"Your father's good deeds can give you wealth, but you have to earn respect, you will shut my mouth, but my voice will echo in a hundred millions after me, how many mouths will you shut? How many voices will you suppress? Till when you will run away from the truth, you are nothing but, an example of dynasty," she said in another tweet.

Referring to Shiv Sena's alliance with the Congress, Kangana said Uddhav has turned it into a "Sonia Sena".

The actress had found herself in controversy after criticising the Mumbai police and comparing Mumbai with Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK). It had evoked a sharp response from Raut who asked her not to visit Mumbai.

KALPESH
MHAMUNKAR | DC
MUMBAI, SEPT. 10

The Bombay High Court on Thursday expressed surprise that the government had no control over the electronic media and asked why television news should not be regulated by the state.

A bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni was hearing a bunch of petitions that sought various reliefs related to the case of the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, including a direction to restrain the press in its coverage of the case.

The bench impleaded the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting as a party in the matters. It also directed the ministry to file a reply in court indicating the extent of state control that is exercised in respect of telecasting news, particularly such news that may have serious ramifications.

The bench also made the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and the Enforcement Directorate

● THE BENCH made the NCB and ED, the central agencies that are currently probing cases related to actor's Sushant Singh Rajput's death, as parties after one of the petitioners alleged that the agencies were 'leaking' probe related information to the press and the public.



(ED), the central agencies that are currently probing cases related to the actor's death, as parties after one of the petitioners alleged that the agencies were "leaking" probe related information to the press and the public.

The bench, however, refused to implead actor Rhea Chakraborty as respondent in the case. "We do not see any reason to implead Chakraborty, an accused who is presently in judicial custody," it said.

The petitions, filed by activists, and eight retired senior police officers, allege, among other things that several TV channels were running a parallel probe into the

case and that they were running a malicious campaign against the Mumbai police through their current reportage in the case.

On September 3, another bench had heard the same pleas and had passed an order urging the press to show restraint while covering the developments of Sushant Singh Rajput's death case.

On Thursday, senior advocate Milind Sathe, who appeared for the former police officials, told the bench that despite the order, TV channels were continuing with their slander against the Mumbai police. Sathe submitted transcripts

from news broadcasts whereby, channels had insinuated that the Mumbai police had been assisting or shielding the accused, and the "drug mafia".

CJ Datta told advocate Sathe that he shouldn't be bothered by what a news anchor was saying. He, however, added that the court hoped and trusted that the spirit of the order dated September 3 would be kept in mind by TV news channels.

The Union government, meanwhile, pointed out that the petitioners should have approached the Press Council of India, a statutory body which regulates the print media, and the News Broadcasting standards Authority (NBSA) with its grievances against the TV news channels. At this, the bench noted that the NBSA wasn't a statutory body.

"We are surprised that the state has no control over the electronic media. Why should it (TV news) not be regulated in case they may have serious ramifications," the bench said.

Kerala is witnessing a huge spike in Covid-19 cases and also experiencing heavy rainfall

Pinarayi convenes all-party meeting on byelections

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPT. 10

Close on the heels of Kerala government writing to Election Commission of India to cancel the forthcoming byelections to Chavara and Kuttanad Assembly constituencies, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has convened an all-party meeting on Friday to arrive at a consensus on the issue.

The EC has announced

that the polls to the two seats would be held along with Bihar elections in November. In a letter written to EC, Kerala chief secretary Vishwas Mehta has listed out the reasons for reconsidering the decision to hold by the polls in the two constituencies.

The chief secretary has pointed out that going by the voting percentage in Kuttanad assembly segment in the last Lok Sabha polls, at least 1.17 lakh voters are likely to turn up for casting their votes in 172

● THE OPPOSITION Congress-led UDF is not averse to cancelling the Assembly bypolls. The Opposition says that even if the two MLAs are elected, they would get just four months term as the next Assembly elections are due in April 2021.

polling stations. Similarly, 1.32 lakh voters are expected to exercise their franchise in 163 polling stations in Chavara.

With the state witnessing a huge spike in Covid-19 cases over the last couple of weeks, social distancing will be at risk in these polling stations. The state has also been experiencing heavy to very heavy rainfall during the south west monsoon.

This is a cause of concern especially in Kuttanad constituency where many areas are below sea level and prone to floods and water logging. Hence arranging logistics for polling would

be a major problem. The state government has also apprised the EC of the huge pressure under which the officials of police, revenue, local bodies and various government departments are working as Covid-19 warriors. It is because of their relentless work that the state could contain the virus in the first two phases.

On the political front, the opposition Congress-led UDF is not averse to cancelling the Assembly

bypolls. The Opposition says that even if the two MLAs are elected, they would get just four months term as the next Assembly elections are due in April 2021.

Apart from Covid-19 threat, the elections will also put a huge financial burden on the government especially at a time when the state's economy is in dire straits.

The UDF, however, wants the local bodies poll also postponed by a few weeks or at least a month. The

elections to the 1,000-plus local bodies including corporations, municipalities, panchayats are scheduled to be held in October.

The BJP on the other hand is for cancelling Assembly bypolls. However, the party wants the local bodies poll as scheduled. All these issues will be discussed in detail at the all party meeting on Friday.

The government will try to arrive at a consensus before going to the EC again.

IN BRIEF

Quake strikes New Jersey

New York: A magnitude 3.1 earthquake struck in East Freehold, New Jersey, early Wednesday morning, the US Geological Survey reported. Residents took to social media to express their shock at the rare occurrence. Hundreds of people as far away as Philadelphia and Long Island, New York, contributed to the USGS' "Did You Feel It?" map, reporting only weak or light shaking and no damage. "It would be very surprising for us to see anything more than you know, damaged shelves or picture frames falling off of windows," said Robert Sanders, a geophysicist with the survey. The USGS said the earthquake happened about 2 a.m. and was centered 1.25 miles south, southeast of the centre of East Freehold.

Greece rescues 151 migrants

Athens: Greece's coast guard says a rescue operation was launched overnight after a yacht carrying more than 150 migrants was found in distress in bad weather northeast of the Aegean island of Amorgos. The coast guard said Wednesday a nearby cargo ship picked up 151 people from the yacht during the search and rescue operation Tuesday, in which coast guard and Greek navy vessels also participated.

A witness on board the Antigua and Barbuda-flagged cargo ship said they saw one person swimming away from the yacht, but gale force winds in the area were hampering any further search and rescue operations Wednesday morning, the coast guard said. It said the cargo ship was transporting the migrants to Turkey. Thousands of people fleeing war or poverty in the Middle East, Africa and Asia arrive on Greek islands each year in an attempt to make their way into Europe.

Probe on if netted shark killed surfer

Canberra: Authorities will investigate whether a dead tiger shark caught in a net off an Australian beach killed a surfer, an official said Wednesday.

Nick Slater, 46, was fatally mauled on Tuesday off popular Greenmount Beach on the Gold Coast tourist strip in a rare attack off a beach protected by shark netting. His death is only the second fatal shark attack at one of Queensland's 85 beaches that have been protected by nets and drum lines since as early as 1962, the state government said. The first was a 21-year-old swimmer who was mauled by more than one bull shark off a netted beach on North Stradbroke Island, north of the Gold Coast, in 2006. Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said a large tiger shark had been found since Slater's death tangled in a net off Greenmount Beach. "Further investigations will be conducted to discover if there is any link between it and the fatal attack," Palaszczuk said. Before nets were put in place, the last fatal shark attack was in 1958.

2K HOMES WRECKED IN N. KOREA

Seoul, Sept. 9: A typhoon that struck North Korea wrecked nearly 60 bridges and destroyed or inundated more than 2,000 houses, state media reported Wednesday, with leader Kim Jong Un saying the damage had disrupted central planning for the rest of the year.

Typhoon Maysak brought days of heavy downpours to the country's east coast last week even as the North was still reeling from earlier flooding and typhoon damage, and this week it was followed by Typhoon Haishen.

Maysak "destroyed or inundated" more than 2,000 houses and tens of public buildings in the affected regions, the official KCNA news agency said, while 60 kilometres of roads and 59 bridges collapsed, with over 3,500 metres of railway roadbeds "swept away". Natural disasters tend to have a greater impact in the North due to its creaking infrastructure, and the country is vulnerable to flooding as many mountains and hills have long been deforested.

The damage obliged the authorities to "change the direction of our struggle after comprehensively considering the year-end tasks that were underway", Kim told a top committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, according to KCNA. It did not give specific details.

Trump downplayed Covid to avoid panic: Woodward

Washington, Sept. 10: US President Donald Trump has acknowledged downplaying the dangers posed by the deadly Coronavirus, saying he did not want to create panic in the country, according to a new book by a renowned American investigative journalist.

The book, 'Rage', by Bob Woodward is being described by the publisher as an "unprecedented" and "intimate tour de force" of new reporting on the Trump presidency that is facing a pandemic, economic disaster and racial unrest. The book is scheduled to hit the stores on September 15, less than two months before the November 3 presidential election. Excerpts of the book and clippings of the interviews with Trump were released by Woodward to some media outlets on Wednesday.

"I wanted to, I wanted to always play it down," Trump told Woodward in March, a recording of which was released by the 77-year-old veteran journalist to *The Washington Post*. "I still like playing it down, because I don't want to create a panic."

In another interview on February 7, the audio clip of which was posted by *The Washington Post*, Trump told the journalist, who broke the Watergate scandal in 1972, that the Coronavirus was deadlier than the flu and could be transmitted through the

Justice Dept. push into Don case could prompt dismissal

Washington, Sept. 10: Attorney General William Barr on Wednesday defended the Justice Department's move to intervene in a defamation lawsuit against President Donald Trump, even as experts were skeptical of the federal government's effort to protect the president in a seemingly private dispute. The Justice Department's action is "a normal application of the law. The law is clear. It is done frequently," Barr said at an unrelated news conference in Chicago.

He added, "The little tempest that is going on is largely because of the bizarre political environment in which we live." But experts said it's far from clear that the conduct at issue — whether Trump defamed E. Jean Carroll, a writer who

accused him of raping her at a New York luxury department store in the 1990s — has anything to do with the scope of his White House duties. The department's move is likely to have an ancillary benefit for Trump in delaying the case, but administration lawyers have a tough task at hand trying to argue that the president was acting in

his official capacity when he denied Carroll's allegations last year, experts say. "I wouldn't make such an argument, and if a president approached me to do it, I would say, 'Don't,'" said Stuart Gerson, who led the Justice Department's Civil Division in President George H.W. Bush's administration when Barr was attorney general for the first time.

"The president gets sued all the time and is defended by the government," Gerson added, "but those are for lawsuits that have to do with actions in his official capacity as the president. This isn't anything like that."

The Justice Department's action is consistent with the expansive view of executive authority it has taken under Barr. — AP

WH: PREZ NOBEL NOMINATION HARD-EARNED

Washington, Sept. 10: The nomination of Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize for brokering the landmark Israel-UAE deal is a "hard-earned and well-deserved honour," the White House has said, underlining that the US President has made peace a cornerstone of his foreign policy efforts. Far-right Norwegian lawmaker Christian Tybring-Gjedde on Wednesday nominated Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in mediating the deal between Israel and the UAE which is seen as a historic step towards peace in the Middle East.

Israel and the UAE announced on August 13 that they were establishing full diplomatic relations. The first commercial direct flight between Israel and the UAE landed in Abu Dhabi on August 31 after both countries announced normalisation of relations. The deal would be signed on September 15 at the White House. The UAE is only the third Arab country to establish diplomatic ties with the Jewish state. Israel's neighbours, Egypt and Jordan, being the other two Arab states to recognise Israel. — PTI



This photo released by the semi-official Fars News Agency shows Iranian troops participating in a military drill near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, on Thursday. Units from the navy, air force and ground forces are participating in a nearly 2 million-square-kilometre area of the Gulf of Oman.

Iran war games amid US tension

Tehran, Sept. 10: Iran's military Thursday began an expansive annual three-day exercise near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, state TV reported, with the manoeuvres taking place amid heightened tensions between the Islamic Republic and the United States.

Units from the navy and air force and ground forces are participating in a nearly two million-square-kilometre (772,200-square-mile) area of the Gulf of Oman.

State TV said Iranian submarines and drones were being deployed. Adm. Habibollah Sayyari,

commander of the annual exercise dubbed Zolfaghar-99, said Wednesday the operation is aimed at "improving readiness in confronting foreign threats and any possible invasion."

Sayyari's comments hinted at the threat of military conflict amid tensions between Iran and the US, which has sought to extend a years-long United Nations weapons embargo on Tehran that is due to expire in October. — AP

Iranian state television later acknowledged the brief seizure, referring to the operation as a routine inspection without elaborating. In July, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard fired a missile from a helicopter targeting a replica of a US aircraft carrier in the Strait of Hormuz in an exercise aimed at threatening the US. In January, a US drone strike killed a top Iranian general at the Baghdad airport and Tehran responded by firing ballistic missiles at American forces in Iraq.

Iran's navy operates in the Gulf of Oman on the eastern side of the strait. — AP

Pompeo: Moscow 'poisoned' Navalny

Washington, Sept. 10: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Wednesday there was a strong chance Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's poisoning was ordered by senior officials in Moscow. "I think people all around the world see this kind of activity for what it is," Pompeo said in a radio interview.

"And when they see the effort to poison a dissident, and they recognise that there is a substantial chance that this actually came from senior Russian officials, I think this is not good for the Russian people," he told conservative host Ben Shapiro.

Navalny, the most visible critic of President Vladimir Putin within Russia, fell violently ill last month as he took a flight in Siberia. He was flown for treatment to Germany, where doctors said he was poisoned. Pompeo reiterated that the United States and its European allies all wanted Russia to "hold those responsible for this accountable" and said Washington would also try to identify the perpetrators.

"It's something that we'll take a look at, we'll evaluate, and we'll make sure we do our part to do whatever we can to reduce the risk that things like

CAMPAIGNER FOR NAVALNY BEATEN UP

Moscow, Sept. 10: Unidentified attackers beat up an activist campaigning for hospitalised Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny in the Urals city of Chelyabinsk, his colleagues said Thursday. Alexei Baraboshkin, the local coordinator for Navalny, was "assaulted by unknown attackers" late Wednesday after receiving threats for several weeks, his campaign office wrote on Telegram. It posted a picture of him with a bruised and bleeding eye. Navalny is being treated in Germany for poisoning with Novichok in an incident that has sparked international condemnation and the threat of sanctions against Russia. — AFP

this happen again." Pompeo's remarks come despite President Donald Trump's comment last week that he had seen no proof that Navalny was poisoned. Trump has sought warmer relations with Putin. — AP

Covid risk pauses Assange hearing

London, Sept. 10: The London hearing on WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's extradition from Britain to the United States was suspended Thursday because one of the lawyers may have been exposed to the Coronavirus. District Judge Vanessa Baraitser ordered the proceedings adjourned until Monday while a lawyer representing the US government is tested for the virus.

Assange is fighting American prosecutors' attempt to get the British government to send him to the US to stand trial on spying charges. US prosecutors have indicted the 49-year-old Australian on 18 espionage and computer misuse charges over WikiLeaks' publication of secret US military documents a decade ago. The charges carry a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison.

Assange's lawyers say the prosecution is a politically motivated abuse of power that will stifle press freedom and put journalists around the world at risk. The hearing started Monday at London's Old Bailey criminal court and is scheduled to last about a month. — AP

Court hears Nawaz surrender review

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 10:

Pakistan's Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday conducted hearing on former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's review petition against order to surrender in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills corruption reference.

During the hearing, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor said that the ex-premier has been declared proclaimed offender by the court.

Justice Mohsin Kiyani remarked that Nawaz Sharif's bail had been rejected after which he has become absconder in the case. The former premier is residing in London but his doctors are present in United States, he added.

Subsequently, the court directed to present arguments over admissibility of the plea and adjourned the hearing till September 15. Meanwhile, NAB has challenged Nawaz Sharif's bail in

3 PIA OFFICIALS SACKED OVER FAKE LICENCES

Islamabad, Sept. 10: Three officials of Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority have been sacked for their alleged involvement in the fake flying licence scandal in the country's national carrier, Pakistan International Airlines, according to a media report on Thursday. A fourth CAA employee obtained a stay order from a court against the possible decision to sack him, the Dawn newspaper reported. — PTI

Avenfield reference in IHC, saying that the ex-PM is a convict and absconder. Interior secretary and foreign ministry should take action as per law for Nawaz Sharif's return.

FILM | FEST

Journalists are watching digital screenings, virtual red carpets in their pyjamas due to Covid

Tiff opens, beams on thousands of laptops globally



SUPARNA SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 10

The annual Toronto International Film Festival (Tiff), which serves as the diving board for big Hollywood and European films eying the Oscars, opened on Wednesday on a thousand laptop-screens across

the world.

The 45th edition of Tiff is the first of its kind — a hybrid in the times of Coronavirus.

Every September, Tiff, which rolls out the red carpet on Toronto's buzzy King Street to welcome 400-odd films and their creators, actors, has this year split between screenings in cinema halls, and "outdoor screenings" in Toronto's two drive-in venues.

Film journalists from across the world, who are usually in attendance, are taking part in the festival virtually, watching digital

screenings, virtual red carpet events in their pyjamas.

"We began this year planning for a 45th festival much like our previous editions," said the festival's artistic director Cameron Bailey, "but along the way we had to rethink just about everything. This year's lineup reflects that tumult". It's true.

The 11-day festival opened on Thursday with Spike Lee's *American Utopia*, and the closing film, or well series, will be a taste of Mira Nair's *A Suitable Boy* (an adapta-



Alma Poysti as Tove Jansson in Finnish film *Tove*.

tion of Vikram Seth's 1993 novel). Tiff, considered the most

middle brow of the Big 4 international film festivals (amongst the high-brow

Cannes, Venice and Berlin), is the most inclusive, democratic film festivals. Of all the films it's showing this year, 43 per cent are directed, co-directed or created by women, and 49 per cent are directed, co-directed, or created by Black, Indigenous or POC (people of colour).

There is *One Night in Miami*, Regina King's film about a young Muhammad Ali, actress Halle Berry's directorial debut, *Bruised*, Ricky Staub's *Concrete Cowboy* starring the Covid-recovered Idris Elba, and Francis Lee's *Ammonite*

starring Kate Winslet.

And there is, of course, Chaitanya Tamhane's Marathi film, *The Disciple*.

If there is a god of film festivals, it is *Serendipity*. Because that's all that can explain why my very first film at Tiff on Thursday was the delightful, peppy, *Tove*. A Finnish film written and directed by two women — Eeva Putro and Zaida Bergroth, respectively — Tove tells the story of the Helsinki-based author and illustrator, Tove Jansson (played with both verve and affecting vulnerability by Alma Poysti).

NATIONAL CAMP BADMINTON OFF DUE TO COVID RULES

New Delhi: The national badminton camp in Hyderabad for next month's Thomas and Uber Cup Final was on Thursday scrapped after it became clear that players would not get any relaxation on the mandatory seven-day quarantine period. The camp was originally scheduled to start on September 7 and conclude on September 27 for the event set for October 3 to 11 in Aarhus, Denmark. It was proposed by the Sports Authority of India (SAI) at the SAI Pullela Gopichand Academy. Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, SAI wanted all the 26 players to be in quarantine for at least a week before training, an idea which was rejected by the players and Badminton Association of India (BAI). SAI had said that players will have to stay and train at the Gopichand academy to ensure greater health safety amid the raging pandemic. However, top players, who are mostly from Hyderabad, were against the idea and voiced their reluctance to stay at the academy to SAI in a video conference. While many players have already reached Hyderabad for, several outstation shuttlers were asked to wait by BAI.

— PTI

Live on TV

CRICKET

England vs Australia 1st ODI from 5.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FORMULA ONE

Italian Grand Prix Practice-1 from 2.25 pm; Practice-2 from 6.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

US OPEN TENNIS

Women's Doubles Final from 9.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 2, HD

MMA

One Championship bouts from 6 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

WWE SMACKDOWN

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

VICTOR AZARENKA

Serena, the other Mum, too into US semis

New York, Sept. 10: Serena Williams battled into a US Open semifinal showdown with Victoria Azarenka on Wednesday as top men's seeds Dominic Thiem and Daniil Medvedev booked their spots in the last four. Serena, seeded third, came from a set down to overcome unseeded Bulgarian Tsvetana Pironkova and keep alive her bid for a 24th singles Grand Slam title at Flushing Meadows. Later, Azarenka blew away Belgium's Elise Mertens as she continues her hunt for a first Grand Slam title in seven years. Serena's comeback included two astonishing shots with her left hand that contributed to winning points. A sluggish start saw the American lose the first 6-4, but she fought back to take the next two 6-3, 6-2, in 2hr 12min inside Arthur Ashe Stadium. Serena is looking to match Margaret Court's record for the most number of singles Grand Slam wins. In the last four she will renew her rivalry with Azarenka who demolished Mertens 6-1, 6-0 in just 1 hour and 13 minutes. Serena had defeated Azarenka in the final of the US Open in 2012 and 2013. Both are coming back on the circuit post motherhood. In the men's draw, Russia's third seed Medvedev downed compatriot and childhood friend Andrey Rublev 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, 7-6 (7/5). Rublev raced to a 5-1 lead in the first-set tie-break before Medvedev, last year's US Open runner-up, hauled back to win it 8-6 with an ace. Medvedev will play second seed Thiem who demolished Alex de Minaur 6-1, 6-2, 6-4. — AFP



Victoria Azarenka celebrates after winning her women's singles quarterfinal match against Elise Mertens at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York on Wednesday. Azarenka won 6-1, 6-0. — AFP

THE RESULTS

Men's singles quarterfinals: Daniil Medvedev (RUS x3) bt Andrey Rublev (RUS x10) 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, 7-6 (7/5); Dominic Thiem (AUT x2) bt Alex De Minaur (AUS x21) 6-1, 6-2, 6-4.

Women's singles quarterfinals: Serena Williams (USA x3) bt Tsvetana Pironkova (BUL) 4-6, 6-3, 6-2; Victoria Azarenka (BLR) bt Elise Mertens (BEL x16) 6-1, 6-0.

SINNER DOWNS PHILIPP IN GENERALI OPEN

Kitzbuehel (Austria), Sept. 10: Jannik Sinner defeated former two-time champion Philipp Kohlschreiber 6-3, 6-2 at the Generali Open Tuesday, a week after both players lost in the opening round of the US Open. Sinner, the 2019 ATP Next Generation finals champion, won 85 per cent of the points on his first serve to keep his perfect record against Kohlschreiber, after also beating the German player in straight sets in Vienna last year. The 44th-ranked Sinner set up a second-round match against Laslo Djere. The Serb rallied from 4-0 down in the final set to defeat the eighth-seeded Albert Ramos Vinolas 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 (2). Also, Feliciano Lopez downed Pierre-Hugues Herbert 6-4, 6-3; Federico Delbonis won an all-Argentine duel with Juan Ignacio Londero 6-4, 6-0; and Jordan Thompson beat John Millman 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (2) in just under three hours. — AP

Smith sings Virat praises, says best

Manchester, Sept. 10: Australian run-machine Steve Smith has rated his great Indian rival Virat Kohli as the best ODI batsman in world cricket currently. The two batsmen, who will face off in the upcoming IPL and also during India's tour of Australia later this year, have been fierce rivals on the field but share cordial relations off it. Smith, who is currently in England for the three-match ODI series against the hosts starting from Friday, said this during an Instagram session with fans. When a fan asked the 31-year-old Australian to name the best ODI batsman, Smith had no hesitation in taking Kohli's name. The Indian captain is currently the leading scorer in ODIs among active cricketers with 11867 runs at an average of 59.34. He has 43 hundreds to his name and is only seven away from surpassing Sachin Tendulkar's world record for most hundreds in ODIs. During the session, Smith described Kohli's RCB teammate and South African great AB de Villiers as a "freak". Smith, who is set to represent Rajasthan Royalist in IPL 2020, said India's KL Rahul and Sanju Samson are the two players to watch out for. Smith will join the Rajasthan Royals squad in UAE after the ODI series against England ends on September 16. — PTI

Morgan and team set to take on Oz

London, Sept. 10: Eoin Morgan is hoping for spinning pitches during England's one-day series against Australia as the world champions plan for the 2023 World Cup in India. The England captain is anticipating a gentle turner in Manchester, where the fierce rivals will play three one-day internationals over the next week, with weather conditions conducive to slow bowlers. England's rise to top spot in the 50-over rankings was built around posting big totals on good batting tracks and their tournament triumph last summer was driven by their pace attack. But with the next World Cup due to be held in India in three years' time, as well as a T20 World Cup there next year, Morgan is embracing the need for change. "It's a huge benefit to us playing at Old Trafford, particularly if we play on the wicket I think we're going to play on which will hopefully be slow and take a lot of turn," he said. The three-match ODI series starts on Friday, following a Twenty20 series in Southampton, which England won 2-1. — AFP

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