



The Statesman

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



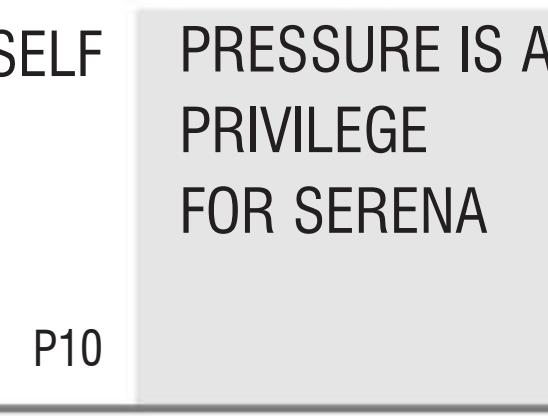
'BORROW MORE
TO STIMULATE
DEMAND'



NAVALNY CASE:
GERMANY
PRESSES RUSSIA



COHEN CASTS HIMSELF
AS STAR WITNESS
AGAINST TRUMP



PRESSURE IS A
PRIVILEGE
FOR SERENA

P4

P10

P10

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky with light rain/thunderstorms. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 36 and 23 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: 018.8 Mm

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100%	Min: 61%
TEMPERATURE	
Max: 35.5°C (+1)	Min: 23.0°C (-3)
SUN RISES	SUN SETS
06:03 hrs	18:35 hrs
MOON RISES	MOON SETS
21:39 hrs	11:07 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh being received by Iranian Minister of Defence, Amir Hatami, in Teheran on Sunday.

PIB

One killed in stabbing incident in Birmingham: UK police said a murder inquiry has been launched on Sunday after one man was killed and seven people injured in multiple stabbings overnight in the city of Birmingham. According to reports, West Midlands Police believe the victims were picked at random and do not believe the incident was terror or gang related. While a man and a woman are battling serious injuries, the injuries of five others are not life-threatening, the force said.

PTI

Delhi's single-day Covid cases top 3K: Delhi on Sunday recorded 3,256 coronavirus (Covid-19) cases — its highest single-day spike in about two-and-a-half months — which took the city's Covid caseload to 1,91,449, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. The recovered Covid patients discharged from different hospitals in the national capital during the past 24 hours were 2,188, which took the cumulative total of such patients to 1,65,973. Delhi's Covid recovery rate dipped to 86.69 per cent.

P4

NCB quizzes Rhea for about 6 hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 6 SEPTEMBER



Actress Rhea Chakraborty was on Sunday questioned for about six hours by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in the drugs case linked to the death of her live-in partner and actor Sushant Singh Rajput. The 28-year-old arrived at the agency's office in the Ballard Estate area at 12 noon and left shortly after 6 p.m.

She was escorted by police personnel. Officials said she has been asked to appear again on Monday for questioning and recording of her statement like today.

A team of the agency had early morning visited her home to serve summons to her for joining the probe. A team

led by NCB joint director Sameer Wankhede had visited Rhea's house in Santa Cruz (west) area accompanied by local police and women personnel.

He said the agency also conducted fresh raids in this case against a man identified as Anuj Keshvani after his

name came to the fore during the interrogation of Kaizan Ebrahim who was arrested by the agency earlier in the case.

The agency has said it also wants to confront Rhea with her younger brother Showik Chakraborty (24), Rajput's house manager Samuel Miranda (33) and his house staffer Dipesh Sawant in order to ascertain their individual roles in this alleged drug racket after it obtained mobile phone chat records and other electronic data that suggested some banned drugs were allegedly procured by these people. The NCB has, over the last two days, arrested these three men in this case.

Officials said Rhea was questioned on these lines. Rhea, in interviews given to multiple TV news channels, has said that she has never consumed drugs herself. She had, however, claimed that the late actor used to consume marijuana. A total of eight people have been arrested till now by the NCB.

When the probe in the case began, the agency had arrested two men, Abbas Lakhani and Karan Arora, for alleged drug peddling and officials have claimed that through them they reached Zaid Vilatia and Abdul Basit Parihar who are allegedly linked to this drugs case as they were in touch with Miranda.

Miranda, they had said, used to allegedly procure drugs from them on the purported instructions of Showik, agency officials said.

Key petitioner in 'basic structure of Constitution' case no more

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER



The acclaimed basic structure doctrine, which clipped the widest power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and simultaneously gave the judiciary the authority to review any amendment, came into being in 1973 while deciding a case of Kerala seen Kesavanda Bharati.

Bharati, the petitioner in the landmark judgement in Indian legal history, died in Kerala on Sunday.

In 1970, Bharati, the hereditary head of Edneer Hindu 'Matha' in Kasaragod district of Kerala, had moved the top court challenging the state government's two land reform Acts

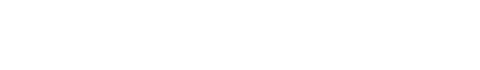
meant to restrict the management of religious properties. The case had a number of offshoots to its credit. It was heard by the largest bench ever of 13 judges for maximum number of days till date that is 68 and the judgment was 703-

page long. The arguments commenced on 31 October, 1972, and ended on 23 March, 1973. However, the most important takeaway of the historic judgment was that the principle that Parliament has all the power under the sun

to amend every bit of the Constitution was shattered by a wafer-thin majority of 7:6 bench headed by Chief Justice S M Sikri with Justice H R Khanna leading from the front. The then sharply-divided verdict, which later found many supporters among eminent jurists, had held that though Parliament has power to amend under Article 368 of the Constitution, it did not have the power to emasculate its basic features.

It said every provision of the Constitution can be amended but they will be subject to judicial review to ascertain that the basic foundation and structure of the Constitution remains the same.

TURN TO PAGE 4



Kejriwal launches 10-week campaign against dengue

The Delhi government's '10 Hafte 10 Baje 10 Minute' campaign seeks to raise public awareness in the national capital about prevention of dengue and other vector-borne diseases

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal today launched the "10 Hafte 10 Baje 10 Minute" anti-dengue campaign by inspecting his house for any signs of stagnant clean water — which might lead to the breeding of mosquitoes and vector-borne diseases such as dengue, malaria, and chikungunya — and draining it.

The Delhi government's 10-week mass awareness campaign against dengue thus began and will continue every Sunday. Kejriwal said that like last time the two crore people of Delhi will join hands and work together to fight against dengue.

The CM said, "The rainy season is here again, and it is the first week of September. We all know that at this point, the breeding of mosquitoes that spread dengue is at a peak. We have to save ourselves and our family from dengue. Last year, we participated in a massive campaign against dengue, 10 Hafte 10 Baje 10 Minute — Har Ravivar Dengue Par Vaar — and we will do that again this year. Last year, there were only 1400-1500 dengue cases in Delhi, which was a big achievement for us because this number was around 14000-15000 a few years back. Like last year,



today is the first Sunday, and for the next 10 Sundays, please spend 10 minutes to inspect your homes for stagnant clean water at 10 AM. Please drain the standing water and replace it. I hope and believe that the people of Delhi will again participate and save Delhi from dengue just like they did the last time."

Taking to social media, Kejriwal tweeted, "The people of Delhi have once again started a war against dengue. On the first Sunday of this 10-

week massive campaign, I have also changed the clean water accumulated in my house and eliminated the possibility of mosquito-borne diseases. For the next 10 weeks, every Sunday at 10 AM, we need to check our homes for just 10 minutes. Along with saving our families from dengue, we have to save Delhi from dengue. I am sure the people of Delhi will defeat dengue this time as well."

Last year, through the "10 Hafte 10 Baje 10 Minute campaign", which was launched

for any possible sources of stag-

I am glad that metro services are finally resuming in the city on Monday. I inspected the station and am satisfied with the arrangements in place

KAILASH GAHLOT

DELHI TRANSPORT MINISTER

Capital

Delhi Metro set to resume services from today after 169-day hiatus

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

After being closed for over five months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Delhi Metro is all set to resume services in three stages from Monday, even as it appealed to people to use the rapid transport only if urgently needed.

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) authorities on Sunday reiterated that stations located in containment zones, as per the status on the day of journey, will remain closed.

Officials of the urban transporter had earlier cautioned that "trains may not stop at some of the stations" if social distancing norms are not adhered to by passengers.

Along with Kejriwal, all the ministers, MLAs, and officials of the Delhi government also participated in the anti-dengue campaign today by inspecting their houses for signs of accumulated stagnant clean water.

After the first week of the launch of this campaign, a doctor will share advice on the do's and don'ts to prevent dengue in the second week. The campaign also seeks to engage the residents of the city to pick up their phones and call 10 of their friends/relatives and advise them on the good practices of preventing dengue.

The RWAs will also be asked to come together and help in the fight against dengue and promote the "10 Hafte 10 Baje 10 Minute" campaign. Many celebrities and social media influencers would also take part in the campaign by following the good practices advised during the campaign and subsequently share them through their various social media platforms.



Central Secretariat and Vishwavidyalaya stations of the Yellow Line, which resume services on September 7.

At other stations, auto-dispenser for sanitiser will be there, but thermal screening will be done manually using a thermal gun, the officials said.

Also, at 16 metro stations spanning 50 lifts, including at Kashmere Gate, Rajiv Chowk, IGI Airport, Hauz Khas, and Mandi House, push-button facilities to call a lift has been disabled, and commuters can press a foot pedal to call it, and beyond that the lift will operate automatically, from vertical movement to opening and closing of doors.

As also for the COVID-19 safety norms, a maximum of three passengers will be allowed in a lift at any time, a senior official said.

Meanwhile, in keeping with the new normal, the Delhi Metro has taken a slew of measures to ensure least physical contact for riders when it resumes services, like an automated thermal screening-cum-sanitiser dispenser and lift calling system driven by a foot pedal.

On Thursday, a preview was held for mediapersons at Rajiv Chowk Metro Station to give an actual feel of the new normal the commuters will experience, from the point of entering station premises to boarding a coach.

A city police official said, wearing of masks inside the premises and inside trains is mandatory, and "challans will be used if they violate this".

Use of Aarogya Setu App by commuters will be advisable, it said. Officials said at all stations, the CISF staff will be doing "contactless frisking" and red lines have been drawn at a gap of 1 ft to ensure social distancing during queuing.

At the point of entry at 45 stations, automated thermal screening-cum-sanitiser dispensers have been installed, which can read a commuter's body temperature once he or she puts the forehead in front of it, and sanitiser will drop from a dispenser below, once hands are kept below the nozzle, the DMRC said.

Over a period of next five days, rest of the lines will also be made operational with all safety measures in place to check the spread of COVID-19 in the metro premises which requires everyone to follow a new normal of social distancing, face mask use and regular hand sanitisation, the officials said.

This facility will be available at 17 metro stations, including Rajiv Chowk, Patel Chowk,

Six held for aviation fuel theft in Delhi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Six members of a gang have been arrested for allegedly stealing a huge quantity of aviation oil from the pipelines of an oil and gas company and selling it in various places across the national capital, police said on Sunday.

The accused, identified as Sanjay Dhawan, Mukesh Kumar, Samay Pal, Avlesh, Himanshu and Sanjay, were arrested by a Crime Branch team of the Delhi Police, they said. Police said that a probe was initiated after they received several complaints about a gang involved in theft of petrol, diesel and aviation oil from the supply pipelines of an oil and gas company in the area of Delhi and NCR.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Bhisham Singh said, "The arrests were made after our team received information on Saturday that five members of the gang, involved in theft of aviation oil from the pipelines of oil and gas company, were coming in the area of Nihal Vihar to sell the stolen oil in a tanker accompanied by a car."

Fear of contracting COVID-19 prevents parents from taking kids for vaccination

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Parents are delaying vaccination for kids by avoiding hospital visits to prevent their exposure to coronavirus, even as paediatricians call it a disturbing trend as skipping timely administration of vaccines can have long-term impact on children's health.

The experts on Sunday said parents should take their children for timely vaccination, especially in the first year of a child's life.

"I had a patient yesterday who came to me after three months for vaccinating their child for polio. There are certain vaccines that you cannot catch up. For instance, the rotavirus vaccine is limited to a specific time. The last dose can be given by seven months. The vaccines act best when they are administered on time," said Dr. Rahul Nagpal, Director, Paediatrics, Fortis Hospital Vasant Kunj said.

Vineet Kwatra, Head and Senior Consultant, Department of Pediatrics and Neonatology, Medeor Hospital said there were few patients in the first three to four months of the pandemic outbreak due to the lockdown, fear of

contracting the infection and less number of clinics which were functional.

"Parents are still very hesitant and are unnecessarily delaying vaccination. There are vaccines which are administered at six weeks, 10 weeks and 14 weeks, and they should not be missed. They can wait for a month or so but not beyond that," Kwatra explained.

He said he has had patients coming to him in September for vaccination of their kids which were due in March since they were scared of stepping out.

Assuring parents, Nagpal said many doctors have separated their immunisation clinics from the regular clinics to ensure that children are not exposed to other patients.

"I have specific vaccination days and I do not see any other patient that day. Only one person is allowed inside my clinic with the child. Earlier, the whole family would come. After thermal checking and other checks, I vaccinate the

child and encourage the parents to talk to me over phone or WhatsApp after stepping out. I keep aside 5 to 10 minutes for that," he said.

He added that the entire place is sanitised after every patient visit.

Underlining the importance of vaccines, Kwatra said primary vaccines are administered in the first year of a child's life and these are most important and should not be delayed.

These include pneumococcal, polio and DPT vaccine, he said, adding that measles vaccine is crucial in the first year. "If a child catches measles, it reduces the immunity greatly," he noted.

In the second year of life, a child is given booster vaccines which are also important but a bit of delay is not harmful, Kwatra said.

Sandhya, a resident of north Delhi's Burari, said, "I have been delaying the vaccination of my 18-month-old daughter because of COVID-19 scare. The vaccination was due in August, but I have been scared to take my child out due to the pandemic. 'Elders are fine with wearing face masks, but kids do not like them. We cannot force them to wear such masks,' she rued.

Under normal circumstances, a vaccine can be delayed by seven days. In the second year of a child's life, vaccines can be delayed by one or two months but not beyond that," Kwatra explained.

He said he has had patients coming to him in September for vaccination of their kids which were due in March since they were scared of stepping out.

Assuring parents, Nagpal said many doctors have separated their immunisation clinics from the regular clinics to ensure that children are not exposed to other patients.

"I have specific vaccination days and I do not see any other patient that day. Only one person is allowed inside my clinic with the child. Earlier, the whole family would come. After thermal checking and other checks, I vaccinate the

Peak power demand in Delhi surges

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

The peak power demand of Delhi has increased by over 50 per cent with the resumption of normal activities following the easing of lockdown restrictions, discom officials said on Sunday.

The peak power demand in the city has been muted this year as compared to the last year due to the lockdown and weather conditions.

However, since the easing of restrictions on May 18, Delhi's peak power demand has increased by over 50 per cent. If we compare the peak power demand since April, it has already increased by over 87 per cent," a discom official said.

After the end of lockdown 3.0 on May 17 and easing of restrictions, Delhi's peak power demand started increasing and the gap narrowed, officials said.

"In fact, in July and August, Delhi's peak power demand surpassed last year's peak power demand on the corresponding days on 13 occasions -- seven in July, six in August -- by up to 19 per cent," an official said.

A spokesperson of the Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL) said the peak demand dipped from 1,238 MW in March, when the lockdown was clamped but rose steadily with the unlock relaxations.

"The peak demand dipped to 1,002 MW in the TPDDL distribution areas in April. It rose to 1,556 MW in May, 1,814 MW in June and 1,854 MW in July," he said.

The cooling load is the main factor behind the increase in Delhi's power load, an official of BSES discoms BYPL and BRPL said.

"Commensurate with Delhi's growing appetite for power, its electricity infrastructure must also keep pace. The BSES will continue to successfully meet the ever-increasing power demand and as always, be an active partner in the future development of the city, he said.

During the lockdown, the BSES strengthened its network and energised two 66/11 KV grids that will benefit over two lakh residents of the city, he added.

Classified

COLLECTION: 110, B.C. RD., Barabazar (Near C.M.S. School) Burdwan, Ph.: 0342-2560069 / 8926434614. NEW COMPUTER INDIA: New Market, Benachiy, Durgapur-713213. Ph.: 9883934508. M: 9732302070. NARAYAN DASGUPTA: Mahakali Paper Centre, B-9/16 (CA), Kalyani-741235. Nadia: Phone: 9851771877 / 2582-7177 (10 a.m. - 6 p.m.). Sunday Closed. STANDARD BOOK DEPOT: 10/1, Grand Trunk Rd. (South) Howrah Maidan, Howrah-711101. Ph.: 2641-4114 / 2474-5856. RINKU AD AGENCY: Chanchal Bhattacharya, 74, Santiram Rasta, Bally, Howrah-71201. Mobile: 831834485. RAYCOPHONY: Arghya Commercial Plaza, Upper Ground Floor, Room No. 8, Burnpur Rd. Asansol-4, Burdwan. Ph.: 933 3104777. Fax: 933 2253099. AISHEE XEROX CENTRE: Khudiram Nagar, Opposite Zilla Parishad, Paschim Medinipur, 721101, 9434702050. S. TRIVEDI, Pathakpara, Bankura, (0324) 232065, 9735801256-57. TYPE CORNER: Collectry More (opposite SP Bungalow), Krishnanagar-741101, Dist.: Nadia, 9474334978, (03472) 257432. KRISHNA DEB, C/o Balurghat Barta, Balurghat-73101, Dist.: Dakshin Dinajpur (W.B.), Ph.: (03522) 249230. Mobile: 8759169158 / 09434247137.

The Statesman

KOLKATA

Statesman House,
4, Chowringhee Square
Kolkata-700 001
Tel: (033) 22127070-76,
(033) 41071700
Fax: (033) 2212-6181 / 7107-1780
Email: thestatesman@vsnl.com
statesmandisplay@gmail.com
thestatesmanclassified@gmail.com

DELHI

Statesman House,
148, Barakhamba Road,
New Delhi-110 001
Tel: (011) 2331 5911
Ishan House (2nd floor)
A-90, Sector II, NOIDA,
UP 201 301
Tel: (0120) 4171421

Email:
delhi.statesman@gmail.com
hyderabad@thestatesmangroup.com

BANGALORE

No. 68, First Floor, Gold Tower,
50 Residency Road, Bangalore-560025.
Tel.: 080-2229129, 080-22234813

Email:
delhi.statesman@gmail.com
bangalore@thestatesmangroup.com

MUMBAI

5, Kasturi Buildings, Jamshedji Tata Road,
Mumbai-400 020
Tel: (022) 2202 1045
Email:
delhi.statesman@gmail.com
mumbai@thestatesmangroup.com

CHENNAI

Fagun Mansion (4th floor), 26, Ethiraj Road,
Chennai-600 008, Tel: (044) 28278037, 28224800
Email:
delhi.statesman@gmail.com
chennai@thestatesmangroup.com

LUCKNOW

2/2, Butler Palace (Near Jopling Road), Lucknow-
226 001, Ph.: (0522) 2260705
Email:
delhi.statesman@gmail.com
lucknow@thestatesmangroup.com

RANCHI

11/C, Road#1, Ashoknagar, Ranchi - 834 002
Fax: (0651) 2247054
Email:
delhi.statesman@gmail.com
ranchi@thestatesmangroup.com

AIR-SURCHARGE: Kathmandu - Re. 2, Eastern Region - Re. 1
All other stations in India - Re. 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

"When will you come home?" the daughters of doctor Ajit Jain would ask when they used to talk over phone late at night.

The nodal officer for novel coronavirus at the Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital in Delhi has not been home for over five months. Duty and fear of spreading the infection among the family members kept him away.

When he finally came home, 13 kilometres

CURSED TRANSPORT



Before the app-based cabs entered the scene, Delhi's roads were monopolised by autorickshaws. The auto drivers were in the habit of bluntly saying 'no' to most passengers unless the destination was of their choice. This habit had made them unpopular with Delhiites. At times, people had to plead with them with folded hands to drop them at their destination but the auto drivers would just not listen. Once the app-based cabs started operating, the situation improved and the monopoly of these autorickshaws was busted. Passengers would simply book the app-based cabs on their mobile phones and vehicles would reach their doorstep. Even though they are a little costlier, the app-based cabs were found to be much more convenient and comfortable. But nowadays, drivers of these cabs have also started throwing tantrums. Many have start-

ed asking inconvenient questions, annoying the passengers. A few days back, after multiple attempts a colleague was finally able to book a cab to return home. As soon as he boarded the cab, the driver asked him where he wanted to be dropped. After hearing the name of the place, the driver seemed uneasy and started making lame excuses that he was running short of gas and that the AC in the car was also not working. But the colleague was not ready to give up and said he was comfortable even without the AC. When the car got stuck in a traffic jam and he himself started sweating, the driver switched on the AC. When asked how the AC had started functioning, he sheepishly said sometimes it would work. This colleague then just smiled and said to himself that Delhi will always remain 'cursed' when it comes to public transport.

TRYST WITH NATURE

Monsoons have made Delhi a Green City. Nature is in full bloom everywhere—in every park, every street and every locality. You step out of house and go for a walk, the trees welcome you with new leaves. The air is fresh. The green cover is soothng for eyes. Trees provide shade from the bright sun. On any road leading to India Gate's C-Hexagon, the trees look taller, and heavier. New Delhi's neem trees have grown old but they provide fresh air all day. There is greenery on the river banks, and on the slopes of Delhi's numerous nullahs. A sizable part of Delhi's green cover is contributed by government

bungalows in Lutyens' Delhi. The green lawns of these bungalows have survived as additional construction is not allowed there. Delhi's tree wealth includes amaltas, harsingar, palash, kadamb, gulmohur, mahua, champa and maulsari. Peepal and bargad are grown for shade since eternity. The city's historic monuments like Humayun's Tomb and Safdarjung's Tomb are a visual treat. Their flower beds add colour to greenery. In government staff colonies, kikar and babool trees have turned big and need pruning. Ashok trees got popular for their Christmas-tree look; their thin upper branches swing in rain. The Ridge, cut asunder by Shankar Road, is teeming with tree life. None can miss the grassy

smell that emanates from its two sides after rains. Green slopes in Lodi Gardens, Nehru Park, Buddha Jayanti Park are inviting, although they can be wet. A common sight on pavements during rains is dropping of jamuns from their trees. At one time, India Gate lawns were famous for that. Now in many areas, you are forced to walk on jamuns. People are in such hurry that they no longer pick them up and enjoy their juicy flesh. The monsoon delight costs a hefty Rs 100 per kg. Flyovers are the only spots in Delhi which wear a barren look in the monsoons. The rains were considered the right season for planting trees in Delhi. Appropriately, the nation's tree plantation festival, Van Mahotsav, was launched by

the then Agriculture and Food Minister K M Munshi in 1950 by planting a tree at Rajghat. In spite of the dark shadow of Corona, Delhiites joined the VIPs in planting tree saplings this year too. Nurseries are doing good business offering plants for pots. Every morning, gardeners turn up at street corners to sell plants. Jamun, shahoot, guava and amla are popular in houses with small gardens. The apartment-owners are growing ayurvedic plants for making kaadhas for immunity.

SAVE OR SPEND?

The debate over whether it's consumerism or saving that keeps the

light-video animations, laser and holographic projections and augmented reality. Furniture designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens for the Viceroy's residence; ceremonial coaches, photographs and memorabilia of the President's Body Guard were displayed at the museum. The completion of his third year in office was marked by his inauguration of a restored Clock Tower at President's Estate in July 2015. A heritage structure, the Clock Tower was built by Sir Lutyens in 1924 for men of the President's Body Guard, and provided reading and recreational rooms and canteens. Since 1947, it has been occupied by the President's Body Guard as its Regimental Headquarters. The clock was built by Gent and Company of Leicester, UK, whose clocks adorn many important buildings around the world. The Museum's Phase-II (2016) was developed at the site of a heritage building, where the Garage for Rashtrapati Bhavan vehicles was earlier located. The Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum finally encompassed the Stables Museum, the Garages Museum and the Clock Tower.

India

HP Assembly session to get underway from today

It'll be a stormy session as the Congress is set to corner the BJP government on 'corruption & Covid mismanagement'

SANJEEV KUMAR
SHIMLA, 6 SEPTEMBER

With the principal Opposition Congress party set to corner the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on issues ranging from alleged corruption to mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Himachal Pradesh Assembly Session, set to begin from Monday, is likely to be a stormy affair.

The Jai Ram Thakur government, on the other hand, will highlight its "achievements" during the COVID-19 crisis, especially the praise made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for its Active Case Finding (ACF) campaign as well as various awards for performance of the state and CM Thakur in various surveys.

"There was complete failure of government machinery during the Corona pandemic as the state government failed to extend help to the general public and various sectors, resulting in Himachal's economy suffering heavy losses."

The government, instead, withdrew subsidy on ration to APL families and on electricity, and hiked bus fares that put additional burden on people who were already reeling under financial stress," Leader of the Opposition Mukesh Agnihotri told The Statesman.

Agnihotri said there was also a health scam which led to resignation of Nahan MLA Rajeev Bindal from the post of state BJP chief and arrest of former director of the Health and Family Welfare Department.

In addition, one minister



Suresh Bhardwaj



Mukesh Agnihotri

in the BJP government had been found indulging in a land purchase scam in which the Vigilance Department was conducting a probe and there were irregularities in BPL list as names of over 100 gazetted officers had appeared in it, he added.

Agnihotri further said that the BJP government claimed to be carrying out all-round development of the state but "it seemed to be 'asymptomatic' as people had heard about it though no one could find it."

"The only achievement of the state government is filing sedition cases against journalists for exposing its corrupt deeds and formation of new panchayats that too have been mired in controversies," Agnihotri added.

HP Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Bhardwaj, on other hand, praised the achievements of the Thakur government and said its achievements and functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic had won accolades in the country.

"Himachal has been adjudged as best performing state in the country during the COVID-19 period and Chief Minister Thakur has been voted as best performing CM in the country," Bhardwaj told The Statesman.

Countering the allegations of corruption, he said the Congress had no right to talk on the issue of corruption as it was the NGOs and the BJP which came out to support and extend help to the general public during the lockdown period.

regime its ministers had remained busy in visiting Delhi to join CBI investigations.

"If they have any knowledge of corrupt deeds of any sort, they should back it with evidence and prove them instead of making false accusations," he said, adding the BJP government should be praised for taking action on corruption allegations on its own.

Bhardwaj targeted the Congress leaders for remaining "dormant" during the Corona crisis and charged that they did not extend help to people of the state and that it was the NGOs and the BJP which came out to support and extend help to the general public during the lockdown period.

Himachal BJP leader slams Sena for remarks against Kangana

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 6 SEPTEMBER

Himachal Pradesh Finance Commission chairman and former HP BJP chief Satpal Singh Satti on Sunday slammed the Shiv Sena leaders for allegedly making "indecent" remarks against Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut and said it has exposed their "Talibani" attitude towards women.

Satti said the Shiv Sena which claimed to follow Shivaji's ideology was allegedly

insulting his legacy by making such remarks against Ranaut as the legendary warrior used to consider women's respect above his life.

"Ranaut is a respected citizen of the country and such statements amounts to disrespecting the entire women power," he added.

He said the Bollywood actress had the constitutional right to visit and reside any part of the country. The Shiv Sena leaders can't abuse or throw out anyone from Mumbai as the city belonged to every citizen of the country.

"It isn't crime to seek justice for suspicious death of a person or brutal killing of saints or raise questions on drug

mafia in film industry and discriminatory attitude of Mumbai police.

Ranaut has raised these questions, being a responsible citizen of the country and Shiv Sena leaders have incurred people's anger by making such statements.

They are now using regionalism to gain lost ground in Maharashtra," he added. He even called on Congress leaders to clarify their stand on these statements as they were the part of state government in Maharashtra.

Man-eating leopard shot dead in a forest dept special operation in Uttarakhand

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 6 SEPTEMBER

A man-eating leopard, which was reported to have created "terror" in Devprayag and its adjoining villages in Tehri district, was shot dead in a special operation carried out by the Uttarakhand forest department on Sunday. The leopard had featured on two CCTV videos which had made waves, drawing public attention and generating buzz on social media.

In the first video the feline was seen chasing stray animals and sitting right on the middle of the highway and that too in front of the Devprayag police station and the cops running inside to save their lives. In the new video the leopard captures a calf and in a dramatic development abandons the prey and flees after being challenged and attacked by bull. Both these videos became viral on social media.



Expert shooter Joy Hukil with the dead leopard in Devprayag on Sunday.

The man-eating leopard had killed a 30-year-old mentally-challenged person in

Devprayag on 30 August. The jungle cat was active in Devprayag and three villages adjoining it-Tungi, Koti and Bhweet. Expert shooter Joy Hukil shot dead the man-eating leopard to bring relief to affected villagers.

Joy Hukil said, "The leopard had terrorized local people by entering their residence in daytime and attacking their pets. The nails of the leopard were damaged." With this, Hukil has so far killed 38 man-eating leopards in Uttarakhand.

The leopard was active on highways and other public places. Forest ranger Devendra Singh Pundir, Maniknath Range, said, "By killing one person and injuring two others, the leopard had created fear among the local residents."

After the 30 August incident, the forest department was forced to issue permits to shoot down the dangerous leopard. The one week long operation of the forest department finally concluded on Sunday.

THUMBNAILS



Pigeons sit on an electric wire in the Capital on Sunday. DEEPAK

Kisan Rail frequency: With demand for Kisan Rail increasing ~ almost 4 times since 7 August inaugural run ~ the Union Railway Ministry announced to increase the frequency of Devlali-Muzaffarpur by 33 % from 9 September. SNS

Harsh Vardhan's mother passes away: Union health minister Harsh Vardhan's mother died on Sunday morning at the age of 89, after a cardiac arrest, the minister said on Twitter. Her eyes were donated at the AIIMS. PTI

Banned gutkha seized: Police seized banned gutkha worth Rs 15.53 lakh from two godowns in Maharashtra's Palghar district and arrested four persons, an official said on Sunday. PTI

Borrow more to stimulate demand: PC to govt

Suggests measures to raise money that include relaxing FRBM norms, accelerating disinvestment and borrowing money from global banks



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Former Union finance minister P Chidambaram on Sunday suggested the government to borrow more to help stimulate demand and revive the country's economy. The senior Congress leader also suggested some measures to raise money which include relaxing FRBM norms, acceler-

ating disinvestment and borrowing money from global banks.

As part of his measures to revive the economy, he sought transferring cash to the poorest 50 per cent of families, offering them foodgrains and increasing spending on infrastructure, besides paying arrears of GST compensation to states.

He tweeted some concrete steps to stimulate demand/consumption and revive the economy:

- Transfer some cash to the poorest 50 per cent of families.
- Offer foodgrain to all families, those who need will take it. Increase spending on infrastructure projects.
- Use foodgrain stock to pay wages in kind and start massive public works.

■ Recapitalize banks to enable them to lend and Pay the arrears of GST compensation to the States.

"All of the above will need money. Borrow. Don't hesitate," he suggested.

"Here are some concrete steps to raise money:

- Relax the FRBM norm and borrow more this year.
- Accelerate disinvestment.

■ Use the offer of \$6.5 billion by IMF, WB, ADB etc.

■ As a last resort, monetise part of the deficit.

Chidambaram has been urging the government to take concrete measures to revive the economy and has called upon it to provide GST compensation to states, as promised to them at the time of GST implementation.

'GST second major attack on India's unorganised economy'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said the NDA's Goods and Services Tax (GST) is not a tax system but an "attack" on India's poor and on its small and medium businesses, and urged all to stand against it.

Dubbing the GST as "Gabbard Singh Tax", he said that it is the second major attack on India's unorganized economy, and is an "absolute failure". He had earlier said demonetisation was the first attack on the informal sector in the economy.

As part of his video series

on the economy, the former Congress president alleged that the NDA government has kept four different tax slabs to help those big industrialists with means and contacts to change the taxes under the GST regime.

"We have to recognise this attack and stand against it together," he said.

Gandhi shared the under 3-minute video on Twitter and said: "Another major reason for the historic decline in GDP is the Gabbard Singh Tax (GST) of the Modi government. It has destroyed a lot - lakhs of small businesses, crores of jobs and the future of youth and the financial health of



states. GST means economic devastation."

This is the third of the four-part series by him on the economy. Gandhi and the Congress have stepped up their attack on the Modi government over the state of the

economy after India's economic growth suffered its worst fall on record in the April-June quarter, with the gross domestic product (GDP) contracting 23.9 percent.

He claimed that the GST was UPAs idea, which meant "One tax, minimal tax, standard and simple tax". NDA's GST is completely different. Four different tax slabs, up to 28 per cent, complicated and difficult to understand," he alleged.

He said the small and medium businesses cannot pay this tax, whereas the big companies can easily pay it by employing a few accountants to do the job.

Bodies of two Corona patients exchanged in hospital

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
MEERUT, 6 SEPTEMBER

Lala Lajpat Rai Memorial medical College hospital (LLRM) has fallen in yet another controversy after the bodies of two Covid-19 patients were exchanged while being handed over to their respective families on Saturday.

The cremation of one of the deceased was unknowingly carried out by family members of the other deceased. The matter came in light when the fam-

ily members of the other deceased opened the sealed bag of the body to catch the last glimpse of their loved one. The angry family members of the deceased Gurbachan (84) from Modinagar, Ghaziabad district, then lodged their complaint with the LLRM hospital authorities. They informed that they were handed over the mortal remains of someone else.

Commenting on the charges Dr Gyanendra Kumar, LLRM Medical College prin-

cipal, said a team has been constituted to investigate the matter and submit the report by Monday morning.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Rajkumar and Addl District Magistrate Ajai Tiwari also visited the medical college. They inquired about the charges from the LLRM Medical College and Hospital authorities. The matter is under investigation and we would submit our report after getting the conclusive details from the LLRM team probing

the matter, said the CMO.

Two Corona patients died in Covid ward of LLRM Medical College on Saturday. One was 84-year-old Gurbachan and another was 54-year-old Yashpal of Kankhera locality in Meerut, informed Dr Rajkumar.

The bodies, he added, were sealed as per the protocol and somehow they got exchanged. The family members of Yashpal performed the last rites of the sealed body at Suraj Kund cremation

ground on Saturday night. But this body was of Gurbachan and not Yashpal.

On the contrary when Gurbachan's family returned with his body to perform the last rites the family members opened partially the sealed bag to catch a last glimpse. They were shocked to find someone else's body. They reported the matter to medical college authorities and demanded Gurbachan's body that meanwhile was cremated by Yashpal's family.

Assam scribe dies of Covid-19

GUWAHATI, 6 SEPTEMBER

The Covid-19 pandemic takes its first toll in Assam's media fraternity today, as Udalguri-based scribe Dhaneswar Rabha succumbed to the virus in Guwahati medical college hospital.

Rabha, 35, was suffering from renal problems for some time and lately tested positive for Covid-19.

Assam continues to report new Covid-cases as 2,698 individuals tested positive for the infection in the past 24 hours where Kamrup (metro) reported 700 cases followed by Bongaigaon (190), Lakhimpur (151), etc.

At present, the state has 28,507 active cases as 95,060 individuals were discharged from hospitals after medical interventions. It lost 352 persons due to Covid-19 complications.

Lately, the corona casualties among the media fraternity across India started rising as every third day it is losing a media person to Covid-19 complications.

Days back, Mumbai-based senior film-journalist Shyam Sarma, Nellore (Andhra Pradesh)-based scribe Narayana Seshacharyulu, Pune's TV reporter Pandurang Raikar succumbed to the infection.

The list includes Kanpur TV journalist Neelanshu Shukla, Patiala photojournalist Jai Deep, Tirupati TV reporter Madhusudan Reddy & video journalist M Parthasarathy, Chennai TV reporter Ramanathan & news videographer E Velmurugan.

Kolkata's photojournalist Ronny Roy lost his battle against the virus. SNS

district hospital.

The elder woman was dropped at Kozhanchery hospital and the vehicle proceeded towards Pandalam. The driver, then stopped the vehicle at a deserted area in Arunmula and sexually assaulted the girl. He then dropped off the girl at Pandalam CFLTC and drove to Adoor hospital.

The girl reported the incident to health workers at the CFLTC. A medical examination confirmed sexual assault.

State Women's Commission registered a case into the incident. It drew wide condemnation from the Opposition Congress and BJP, even as health minister K K Shailaja said strict instructions had been given to take strong action against the culprit.

Jadavpur University professor faces casteist abuse on social media



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, 6 SEPTEMBER

thinking stems from quota-centric state of mind" implying that Murmu had academically benefited being a tribal. Ahurt Murmu, who did her undergraduate studies at Presidency College before doing research at JNU, expressed anguish in her reply how her opinion as an individual was ignored by student and wondered if someone can be called undeserving if he/she carries a tribal surname. This invited more trolling as many others supported the young third year student of Bethune College while support also poured in for the professor.

The Bethune College Students' Committee posted a statement on social media saying, "it is extremely disheartening and condemnable that a student of our college is still unaware of the caste dynamics in India and the need of reservations for the underprivileged."

Delhi's single-day Covid cases top 3K again after over 2 mths

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Delhi today recorded 3,256 coronavirus (Covid-19) cases — its highest single-day spike in about two-and-a-half months — which took the city's Covid caseload to 1,91,449, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The recovered Covid patients discharged from different hospitals in the national capital during the past 24 hours were 2,188, which took the cumulative total of such patients to 1,65,973. Delhi's Covid recovery rate dipped to 86.69 per cent.

The city's Covid death toll mounted to 4,567 with 29 fatalities taken into account today.

The number of patients getting treatment under the home isolation system was stated to be 11,010. The number of containment zones in the city was 1,076.

As many as 36,046 coronavirus tests were conducted in the national capital today, the health bulletin said. These reportedly included 26,829 rapid antigen tests and 9,217 RTPCR/CBNAAT/TrueNat tests.

Seeking to declare a "war" on Covid in Delhi, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had yesterday said that the recent surge in Covid cases in the city was attributable to doubling of tests, even as he had asserted that the situation was completely under control and there was no need to panic.

Delhi had yesterday recorded 2,973 new Covid cases — its highest single-day spike in 71 days — and 25 fresh Covid fatalities.

GET, SET & GO



A youth stands on a submerged portion of Aril Ghat as he prepares to jump into the flooded Yamuna river, in Allahabad on Sunday. AFP

Moon's surface is rusting, reveal Chandrayaan-1 images

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

ISRO's maiden mission to the Moon has sent images which showed that the Moon might be rusting along its poles, claimed minister in the Prime Minister Office, Jitendra Singh on Sunday.

Data study sent by Chandrayaan-1 mission suggested that Moon's outer surface is rusting along its poles despite the fact that the presence of water and oxygen is not known — the two elements needed to create rust. Though the Moon is known to have iron-rich rocks, it is surprising how it could rust without the presence of water and oxygen, the Minister said.

In a Press statement issued here on Sunday, the department of space said NASA scientists claim the rusting could be

because of the Earth's own atmosphere. Oxygen from the earth's atmosphere could be helping in causing rust on the Moon's surface. The scientists are trying to decipher if data from Chandrayaan-1 mission suggested that the Moon's poles are home to water.

Referring to India's planned Chandrayaan-3 mission, the minister said the launch may now take place somewhere in early 2021. Chandrayaan-3 will be a mission repeat of Chandrayaan-

2 and would include a Lander and Rover similar to that of Chandrayaan-2, but without an orbiter.

Meanwhile, preparations are going on for India's first ever Human Space Mission Gaganyaan, and the training processes and other procedures are also in place, he said.

He said constraints due to the Covid-19 pandemic led to some disruptions in the plan for Gaganyaan but efforts are being made to stick to the timeline of around 2022.

IAF boosts night flight ops, force sees it as game-changer

SOMA MOOKHERJEE
KOLKATA, 6 SEPTEMBER

With the fresh developments on the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh towards the end of August, the Indian Air Force has intensified night flights along the border by its combat aircraft.

This would be a 'game-changer' because training by night will strengthen the IAF's capability to conduct full-spectrum operations at the Line of Actual Control on short notice, given Leh's proximity to the LAC.

The capability is fuelled by upgrades to the MiG-29, including advanced avionics and extensive training of IAF pilots, said Group Captain (retd) RK Das. Leh is not a permanent fighter base, but detachments of aircraft are sent

there on a regular basis. The MiG-29s are carrying out extensive, round-the-clock flights from Leh, which will also help the force validate geospatial data to enhance its capabilities in night operations, he said.

"For fighters to undertake night flying up in the mountains is an arduous task due to lack of visibility of ground features that can be seen in the day. The threats encountered whilst contour flying in mountainous terrain are numerous. The terrain in most mountainous areas is highly variable," Grp Captain Das said.

He said valleys can be wide with gentle sweeping turns or very narrow with abrupt changes in direction. Ridge heights can often exceed 18,000 feet and the rate of

change in terrain elevation can vary from gentle slopes to near vertical cliffs several thousand feet in height.

Terrain awareness is a critical component of flight safety in mountainous areas. Wind is almost always a factor when operating in mountainous terrain, Grp Captain Das said.

Mountains are associated with strong winds blowing perpendicular to the mountain range and are generally considered mid-to-high altitude risk.

Aircraft performance decreases with an increase in density altitude. In mountainous terrain, a momentary loss of situation awareness could result in a navigation error such as turning into a blind valley. Day flying by itself is a challenging task; therefore to undertake mis-

sions at night is a daunting task said Grp Captain Das.

Fighters such as the Sukhoi Su-30s are conducting night operations in the Leh and Ladakh regions, but they are operating from bases that have night capabilities. Apache and Chinook helicopters are also carrying out night-time operations.

Grp Capt Das said that India's newly-acquired Rafale aircraft are practising night flying in the mountainous terrain of Himachal Pradesh so that the Golden Arrows squadron with its Meteor beyond visual range air-to-air missile and SCALP air-to-ground stand-off weapon will be ready if the situation deteriorates on the 1,597 km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Ladakh sector.

Key petitioner in...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

power of courts.

However, later it became a case where the width and scope of Parliament to amend the Constitution under Article 368 was discussed and decided for all times to come.

The 13-judge bench had delivered 11 separate judgments in which they agreed on some points and differed on some.

But the 'basic structure' principle was supported by 7 out of 13 judges which later became the ground of setting aside several constitutional amendments; one such recent case was the quashing of the Constitutionality



The economy is completely paralysed. But the Union finance minister directly blamed gods for it. This is an insult of Hindutva

RESPONDING TO SITHARAMAN'S REMARKS ON BLAMING GOD FOR FAILURE OF INDIA'S ECONOMY

SHIV SENNA MP SANJAY RAUT

The Statesman

05

NEW DELHI, MONDAY 07 SEPTEMBER 2020

THUMBNAILS



Carpenters work outside closed shops after lock-down norms for weekends and public holidays, in Amritsar on Sunday. AFP

Charred body of Thai woman found: Charred body of a Thai woman was found in a flat in Magdala, Gujarat, police said on Sunday. The body has been sent for post mortem to ascertain if it was murder or suicide. PTI

Official J&K languages: Senior J&K Apni Party leader Mumtaz Ahmed Khan on Sunday appealed to the Centre to include Gojri and Pahari as official languages of the UT. The appeal came even as various Sikh organisations expressed resentment over non-inclusion of Punjabi as official languages of the UT. PTI

Landslide in Udhampur: At least nine families were rendered homeless after seven houses got damaged in a landslide in J&K's Udhampur district, a government official said on Sunday. No one was hurt. PTI

Nirav extradition trial: Fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, lodged at a prison in London since his arrest in March last year related to the \$2-billion PNB fraud and money laundering case, will appear via video link for the second leg of his extradition trial at a UK court on Monday. PTI

Assam polls: The political party to be launched by the All Assam Students' Union and AJYCP will contest 80-100 seats in the Assembly polls in Assam due early next year, a AASU leader said on Sunday. PTI

Bodies of two drowned terrorists recovered

JAMMU, 6 SEPTEMBER

Bodies of two heavily armed terrorists of Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), who infiltrated into India, and got drowned have been recovered from the Kishanganga river in the Gurez area along the Line of Control (LoC).

Police said preliminary investigation reveals, both of them were local Kashmiri terrorists and were active across the LoC and in a bid to infiltrate back to this side both of them died due to drowning while crossing the river. Case under relevant sections of law has been registered and further investigation is in progress.

Police along with Army recovered two bodies from river Kishanganga in Tulail area of Gurez, besides arms and ammunition have also been recovered. The bodies were shifted to Gurez hospital for medico-legal formalities.

Incriminating materials and arms and ammunition were also recovered which includes, AK-47 magazine 4, AK-47 rounds 115, pistol 9mm rounds 17, hand grenade 1, Wireless set, Wrist watches 4, pouch 1, jacket 1, matrix sheets etc.

As per the documents recovered, one has been identified as Sameer Ahmad Dar resident of Dogripura Pulwama. As per police records, he was missing since May 2018 and had joined proscribed terror outfit HM after crossing LoC. While the identity of the other deceased is being ascertained, and families have been called for their identification.

Meanwhile, based on specific inputs regarding presence of terrorists in the forest area of Dana Behak Hemli Top of Warnow Kupwara, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by SOG and 28RR of the Army. SNS

Opp planning joint offensive against govt in Parliament

Issues to be raised are border situation with China, handling of Covid pandemic, economy & GST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Opposition parties are planning a joint offensive against the government to corner it in Parliament on issues of national security like the border situation with China, handling of the Covid pandemic, economy and GST compensation to states, sources said.

Leaders of various Opposition parties are expected to meet later this week to formulate a joint floor strategy in both the houses of Parliament, they said. The Monsoon session of Parliament will commence on 14 September amid Covid-induced changes in its proceedings. Congress President Sonia Gandhi has convened a meeting of the party's strategy group on September 8, the sources said.

Opposition leaders are keen that various like-minded parties should work closely with each other to take on the government in Parliament. This was expressed by Trinamool Congress (TMC) chief Mamata Banerjee, Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray



The Opposition will demand answers from the government on the issue.

The rapid rise in the number of Covid-19 cases will also come up for discussion. The opposition will also raise the heat in Parliament on the row over social media giant Facebook and allegations that it is soft on ruling party members when it comes to applying hate speech rules.

The holding of various examinations including the NEET will also come up for discussion in Parliament. The opposition has accused the government of risking the lives of students and youths by holding the exams at a time when coronavirus cases are rising every day.

The Congress is also set to

oppose the ordinances issued by the government in the recent past.

The government has issued as many as 11 ordinances. Congress chief Whip in Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh, who is also the convenor of the strategy group, is learnt to have told the party leaders at the last strategy meeting about the merits and demerits of these ordinances, the sources said.

The leaders of opposition parties are likely to raise the issue of doing away with the Question Hour in this session. Officials have said that there will be no question hour and private members' bills, and the Zero Hour will be restricted.

The Congress leaders in both houses will be writing to the Rajya Sabha chairman and the Lok Sabha Speaker seeking restoration of the Question Hour.

The Congress, the sources say, will demand short duration discussions and Calling Attention Motions on issues of Chinese aggression on India at the border, the economic slowdown and the collapse of GDP to record lows, unemployment and migrants' prob-

lems, besides on grant of GST compensation to states and the Facebook controversy.

Meanwhile, hectic preparations are on for the upcoming session which will be the first of its kind in Parliament's history due to unprecedented measures necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

While last-minute preparations are on including seating arrangements, security agencies are finalising plans for allowing entry to MPs, their support staff and the media. The chambers of both houses and the various galleries will be used to seat the MPs.

Except for the first day, the Rajya Sabha will sit in the morning from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Lok Sabha will sit in the evening from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. officials said. The Monsoon session is likely to be adjourned on the first day due to the death of former President Pranab Mukherjee, who has been the leader of both the Houses.

Besides, sitting Rajya Sabha members Amar Singh and P P Veerendra Kumar, and Lok Sabha member H Vasantha Kumar have died during the inter-session period.



A handout picture released by Iran's Defence Ministry on Monday shows defence minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami (C-L), wearing a protective mask, welcoming his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh in Tehran. AFP

Rajnath discusses regional security with Iranian defence minister

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Regional security issues and the situation in Afghanistan figured prominently during talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Iranian counterpart Brig Gen Amir Hatami in Tehran, the Defence Ministry said today.

Singh made a transi halt in the Iranian capital yesterday on his way back home from Russia where he attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) defence ministers' meeting.

"Had a very fruitful meeting with Iranian defence minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami in Tehran. We discussed regional security issues including Afghanistan and the issues of bilateral cooperation," he tweeted this morning.

The meeting between the two ministers took place in a cordial and warm atmosphere. They emphasised the age-old cultural, linguistic and civilisational ties between India and Iran.

The two ministers discussed ways to take forward bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on regional security issues, including

peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The defence minister's visit to Tehran came a day after he expressed concern over the situation in the Persian Gulf and called upon countries in the region to resolve differences through dialogue based on mutual respect and sovereignty.

Singh is the first top Indian official to travel Iran since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

After JEE Main, National Testing Agency gears up for medical entrance NEET



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

After JEE Main, the National Testing Agency (NTA) is now gearing up for conducting medical entrance exam NEET scheduled to be held on 13 September for which over 15 lakh candidates have registered.

The Joint Entrance Exam (JEE Main), which began on September 1 for admission to engineering colleges, will conclude on Sunday.

The crucial exams are being conducted in September after being postponed twice in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to NTA officials, 15.97 lakh candidates from across the country have registered for NEET, which is a pen-paper based test unlike JEE. In order to maintain social distancing, the NTA has increased the number of centres from 2,546 to 3,843 for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) while the number of candidates per room has been reduced from earlier 24 to 12.

"For ensuring social distancing outside the examination hall, the entry and exit of candidates has been staggered. Adequate arrangements have also been made outside the examination centres to enable candidates stand with adequate social distancing.

The NEET-UG was originally scheduled for 3 May, but was pushed to 26 July and then scheduled for 13 September.

tancing while waiting," a senior NTA official said.

"Candidates have also been issued an advisory guiding them about the 'dos and don'ts' for proper social distancing. We have also written to state governments to extend support in local movement of the candidates so that they are able to reach their examination centres on time," the official added.

Making hand sanitiser available at the entrance of the examination centre and inside the exam hall at all times, replacing the process of checking the admit cards of candidates with barcode readers, increasing the number of examination centres, alternate seating plans, fewer candidates per room and staggered entry and exit are among the steps the NTA has taken.

"While all the candidates will be asked to go to the exam centres with masks and sanitisers, once they enter the centre, they will have to use the masks provided by the examination authority."

"Each candidate will be offered a three-ply mask at the time of entry and are expected to wear the same during the examination in order to avoid any form of unfair means at the time of examination," the official added.

While the governments of Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have assured students that they will provide them transportation, a group of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) alumni and students have also launched a portal to provide transport facilities to exam centres for the candidates in need.

Asked if he would apologise for his remark against Ranaut while reacting to her tweet on a news channel, Raut told reporters that "anybody who lives and works here and

GRAVE CONCERN



A municipal worker sanitises a graveyard after the burial of coronavirus infected people in Ranchi on Sunday. AFP

Will think apology if Kangana says sorry to Maha: Raut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday said he would consider tendering an apology only if actress Kangana Ranaut does so for her "insulting" remarks against Mumbai and Maharashtra.

In a veiled jibe at the BJP, Raut asked whether the actress had the courage to compare Ahmedabad to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

The actress had recently compared Mumbai to PoK in a tweet, evoking ire of leaders of the ruling Sena.

Asked if he would apologise for his remark against Ranaut while reacting to her tweet on a news channel, Raut told reporters that "anybody who lives and works here and

speaks ill of Mumbai, Maharashtra and Marathi people, I

would say (to them) to apologise first, then I will consider apologising".

"If that girl apologises to Mumbai and Maharashtra for calling Mumbai a 'mini Pakistan', then I will think about it. Does she have the courage to say the same about Ahmedabad?" he asked.

The trouble started when Ranaut had said that she felt unsafe in Mumbai after the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

BJP leader Ram Kadam had recently asked the Sena-led state government to provide the police protection to Ranaut, since "she wanted to expose the Bollywood drug nexus". Responding to Kadam's tweet, the actress had said she feared the Mumbai police more than the "movie mafia", and would prefer security either from Himachal Pradesh or the Centre.

Reacting strongly, Raut had purportedly said, "We kindly request her not to come to Mumbai. This is nothing but an insult to Mumbai Police".

Hitting back, Ranaut tweeted: "Why is Mumbai feeling like Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir?". She had tagged a 1 September news report on Raut asking her not to return to Mumbai if she was afraid of the city police.

Kolkata containment zones down to one; state adds 3,087 new cases

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, 6 SEPTEMBER

North 24-Parganas registered the highest number of Covid-19 cases in the state during the day with 590 cases and 10 deaths, though the district, as well as South 24-Parganas, saw a fall in the number of containment zones.

North and South 24-Parganas now have 31 and 54 zones respectively while Howrah and Hooghly have 74 and 18 zones respectively.

Currently, there are altogether 2,662 containment zones in the state with Nadia having the highest number of 489 zones, while North Dinajpur, which had witnessed a surge in zones, has registered a dip with 292 zones. In the last 24 hours the state registered 3,087 fresh cases and 52 deaths due to the infection taking the total case count to 1,80,788 and death toll to 3,562 while there are 23,218 active cases.

Amid standoff, Ladakh braces for winter stocking

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, 6 SEPTEMBER



Advisor to Lt-Governor Ladakh Umang Narula chairing a review meeting on Saturday. FILE PHOTO

immediate construction of hangars for ensuring heli-services and arranging for air cargo services for air transportation of essential goods during the winters.

It was brought out that the Food Corporation of India and Food Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs departments are well stocked with food grains till September 2021. The IOCL appraised that this winter's Special Winter Grade diesel will be available in their petrol pumps.

The oil companies have ensured complete stocking to cater to demand during winter which will be regularly

replenished till the time of road closure.

The Deputy Commissioner Leh appraised that the cold storage being constructed at Leh will become functional by the end of September and will be able to store 1000 metric tons of essential food supplies, milk and meat products.

Narula instructed the Divisional Commissioner and Secretary Cooperatives Ravinder Kumar to ensure that the amount of winter stocking of food grains required beyond the capacity of merchant associations to be procured timely by the Cooperative Societies and a seamless distribution network be planned immediately.

Narula also emphasised the importance of stocking adequate quantities of fodder for cattle in both Leh and Kargil so that there is no shortage of fodder during the coming winters.

J&K administration announces third phase B2V amid Corona spike

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, 6 SEPTEMBER

Amidst the coronavirus spike in Jammu and Kashmir, the administration has announced launching of the 11 days long third phase of the Back to Village (B2V) programme from 2 October when 4000 gazetted officers will visit each panchayat and try to settle grievances of the people on the spot.

The programme will culminate on 12 October.

The B2V is a unique programme under which top bureaucrats visit the rural areas to have a first hand feel of the area and redress grievances of the people. The B2V has been announced at the time when the union territory was witnessing a spike of Covid-19 cases and the number of deaths due to the virus

was also increasing day by day.

Principal Secretary, Power Development, Rohit Kansal, who is also government spokesperson, described the first two phases of B2V as a huge success. It is a unique programme which received tremendous respect from the people when 4000 Gazetted Officers from J&K administration visited each and every panchayat of J&K.

The flagship programme has generated huge interest, affection and respect among people and the administration has decided another version of the programme in the form of Phase-III of B2V

Health for All

The National Digital Health Mission launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Independence Day has caught the attention of health providers across the country. Going digital sounds futuristic, but what is needed is something here and now as the nation is caught in the coronavirus pandemic crisis with no sign of the end of the tunnel. According to the strategy document of NDHM, it would help patients avoid the burden of carrying medical reports to a specialist or other hospitals. One can also avail of tele-medicine support from renowned specialists if required. The scheme will replace existing data generation systems with a new software for all machines in the health sector in the country with a central processor that will extract the relevant data from individual records. Independent practitioners of allopathic and Indian systems of medicine who run small clinics and dispensaries are not in the habit of storing patient data on computers. They rely mostly on personal memory. They cannot afford to instal computers and engage data entry operators merely to comply with the NDHM. Digitisation of medical data of 1.3 billion Indians is not the most pressing problem facing the health sector in the country. What is needed most is adequate number of qualified medical practitioners in both allopathic and Indian systems of medicine and to make their services affordable to the common man.

Voluntary Health Services, a multi-specialty tertiary care referral hospital in Chennai serving economically weaker sections of society has come out with a novel Grand Health Insurance Plan. Developed by Dr CV Krishnaswami and his team of medical researchers, it is a transparent health insurance model to provide quality healthcare free of cost for all earning up to Rs 30,000 a month. Those drawing Rs 30,000 and above will pay one per cent of their total income and it will cover the health insurance of two. Under the scheme the insured will get quality medical care which the rich get in corporate hospitals. Explaining its salient features, Dr Krishnaswami said it is sustainable and economically self-generating. The model can be scaled up or down to cover the entire country of 1.3 billion people. This innovative health insurance scheme has been accorded instant recognition in international peer reviewed journals like *Journal of Science of Healing*. Dr Krishnaswami had studied all health insurance schemes in vogue in developed countries like the United Kingdom and the USA and found their shortcomings and weaknesses before developing the Health Insurance Plan. He said the exorbitant costs charged by corporate and private hospitals were the result of lobbying by the pharmaceutical companies that saw big opportunities in converting 'health care' into 'medical care.' Due to adverse drug reaction and unnecessary interventions, mortality rates have shot up manifold.

Campus kerfuffle

In a wasted year, judging by the benchmark of teaching and learning, it is unfortunate that Odisha has been roiled by street demonstrations against the ruling Biju Janata Dal over the proposed amendments to the Odisha Universities Act, 1989, i.e. 30 years after it was legislated. The burning of effigies in front of Utkal University and the National Highway on Friday would suggest that in the season of the coronavirus pandemic, both the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress are now up in arms against the amendments to the Act primarily to settle scores with the ruling BJD. The latter has countered the protests by flaunting placards in support of the amendment in front of the university. Despite the tragedy of a health emergency, education has been reduced to an issue of political wrangling. The BJP's youth wing, ABVP, and the Samajwadi Party ~ with hardly any influence in Odisha ~ have made the waters murkier by shrilling for the restoration of autonomy in universities. Preaminently, the Ravenshaw University Act, 2005, has been debunked as "shameful and undemocratic". The legislation has now been repealed. The ruling party needs to address the grouse of the Opposition that the government's primary objective is to ensure "bureaucratic control" over the campuses. Most importantly, the fear that recruitment of lecturers, non-teaching staff and Vice-Chancellors will be controlled by bureaucrats. The administration in Bhubaneswar will be expected to ensure that the amendment is not tweaked in order to run counter to the certitudes of the National Education Policy. The abolition of the Senate, another critical issue of contestation, also needs to be addressed. Of particular concern is the fact that placing of annual reports ~ a vital document on functioning ~ has also been done away with. It is no defence of the ruling party to claim that the move is "reformist and progressive". There is little substance in this somewhat contrived defence, articulated by the BJD's spokesperson and MP, Dr Sasmit Patra. It is somewhat presumptuous to aver that the reforms will lead to better academics and research. Thus far, there is no indication that the Syndicate, which plays a pivotal role in university administration across the country, will be strengthened. And the decision to place details of the university's finances and expenditure on the website ought to make operations more transparent. There is little doubt that a hornets' nest has been stirred in Odisha over matters academic and in parallel to the renewed surge in the coronavirus graph, with Bhubaneswar now the worst affected. This ought to be of riveting concern at the moment. Other issues are of relatively lesser moment. And yet Odisha, faced with the daunting task of tackling the relentless pandemic, went ahead with the amendment to the Odisha Universities Act on 2 September. More's the pity. This ought not to be a season of political kerfuffle.

The Open Book route

An Open Book examination tests students' ability to quickly find relevant information and then to understand, analyse and apply knowledge, while thinking critically. Answering the question will require more than just copying information from texts



It has been realized that amidst the pandemic, the show must go on even in the education sector and hence the need to conduct final year examinations in our colleges and universities. And that too must be transparent and reliable. The prospect of online examinations has been jeopardized by a digital divide. The introduction of Open Book Examination seems to be the only option in the present situation to be conducted by our universities in the coming month.

There is nothing new about open book examinations. The results of the nationwide survey made by the Australian Examination Board in Spring 1997 showed that teachers and pupils, on the whole, are satisfied or very satisfied with the arrangements of Open Book Examination. Of course, the shaping of such exams offers challenges. The formation of tasks must not invite uncritical reproduction of information from textbooks or other sources. To find the right information may be important, but if it is not evaluated, adapted and rightly used, this is of little importance.

Considering the restricted material access in an ideal Open Book Examination, the goal was to find assessment methods that best encouraged and supported holistic learning. The primary intention was to change student perceptions of "what is really important" for the application of course to real life. This was necessary because students identify difficult topics and believe it is best learnt by rote. As a result, there was little impetus for students to pursue quality learning outcomes, and the capacity to integrate and apply information was not tested. This could lead them to ignore these components, so even though they appreciated the need to apply knowledge to real life cases, few attempted to approach learning from this perspective. Obviously, the nature of the assessment task had a detrimental impact on students' learning approaches and outcomes. The Open Book Examination system modified assessment tasks to encourage them to actively engage with the material and develop their own under-

standing.

The questions required students to identify pathways for information processing and describe how they functioned to perceive and respond to them. The differentiated nature of the questions meant that each student constructed unique answers which were exciting to read as they produced their own original concept maps, skillfully depicting the complexity of the subject, suggesting that they had actively engaged themselves in learning difficult topics.

The focus of education has been to maximize the utility of academic activities. The concept of Open Book Examination is that of a learning tool, both able to objectively rank students according to ability, and to enrich the learning environment. This test may fulfill both requirements of an assessment tool and a student-centred approach to education - as a technique that may reduce the level of anxiety experienced by students. This may result in more comprehensive examination preparation, and hence more consistent learning throughout the course of study.

Open Book Examinations allow students to take notes, texts or resource materials into an examination situation. The tests assess their ability to find and apply information and knowledge that are often used in subjects requiring direct reference to written materials. The materials may vary. In some tests the materials are restricted, for example, to formula sheets, tablets, or a limited number of texts while in others they may be more fully restricted. Materials used in take-home examinations are usually unrestricted. The tests are conducted usually in two forms: one, a traditional sit-down examination with varying degrees of access to resources and references; two, a take-home open book exam done at home. Questions are handed out and answers are attempted without any assistance from others.

An Open Book Examination may test more than just rote learning. It tests students' ability to quickly find relevant information and then to understand, analyze and apply knowledge, while thinking critically. Answering the question will require more than just copying information from texts. Having access to a textbook may stop them from giving a wrong answer if they cannot remember a fact or formula, but just getting the fact correct will not fetch them good marks. How they locate, apply, and use information is more important.

The misconception about Open Book Examinations is that students do not need intense study. Having all notes and books might mean students do not have to memorize but they still need to be able to apply it effectively. This means they must understand the content of the course so that they can find and use appropriate information. An Open Book Examination requires them to: i) learn for understanding rather than just remembering; ii) understand how to find information; iii) make good notes and organize materials for fast reference; and iv) apply the information in their sources to the question.

So, an Open Book Examination is introduced to remove rote learning and more superficial application of knowledge. Teachers can devise questions that require students to answer in more analytical and critical ways thus encouraging high-order thinking skills.

Open Book Examinations work only when answers cannot be readily extracted from the material, but only from a synthesis of all the knowledge within. There must be no single right answer, but a range of possibilities requiring creativity. Thus, cheating can be detected because every student should be producing his or her own unique answer. The teacher's role is crucial

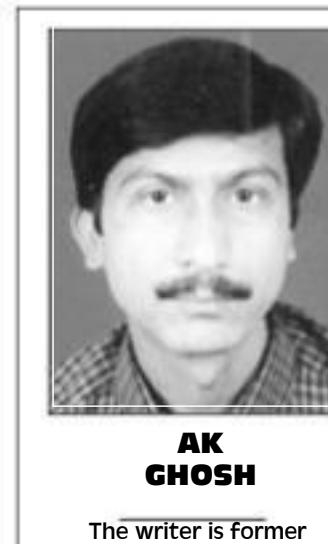
in the entire scheme of things. They may not know how to develop and devise effective questions that require students to apply their knowledge through analysis and critical thinking. Students may be lulled into a false sense of security and fail to properly prepare for such examinations. Questions need to be devised to assess the interpretation and application of knowledge.

So Open Book Examinations will have effects on teaching strategy too. The strategy for preparing the students to take the exam will also have to change. Teachers will have to design tasks that will provide exercises for appropriate mental skill required in handling questions. The teaching-learning process will be interactive, and teaching involve training of the mind in certain intellectual skills.

One of the blunders students may make while preparing for such an examination is placing too much emphasis on reference materials. During the examination, extensive notes, text-books and reference materials can quickly become a crutch rather than an asset. One cannot expect to have time to review one's notes, peruse text-books or discover new information during an Open Book Examination.

In fact, Open Book Examinations are ideally suited to teaching programmes that aim at developing the skills of critical and creative thinking. It is generally thought that the primary goal of teaching is the dissemination of knowledge. This approach treats the information content of a subject to be the most important. The teacher's role is that of facilitating the transfer of information from the textbook to the student's mind.

The student, in turn, is expected to understand it, retain it and know how to retrieve it during the examination. If the purpose of examination is to test information that students have memorised, an Open Book Examination is fruitless. But if the examination aims to test the skill of problem solving and critical thinking, then there is no harm in their consulting study materials. At a time when a secure examination system is the need of the hour, Open Book Examinations will definitely serve the purpose.



AK GHOSH
The writer is former Associate Professor, Department of English, Gurudas College, Kolkata and is presently with Rabindra Bharati University

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES

Technological change beyond Covid-19

There are 47 robots at work in Jewel Changi Airport and in the airport's terminals. They represent the face of automation that helps to keep Changi Airport humming along every day. The use of robots and other machines at a time of rising unemployment might appear intuitive, but it is part of the push for automation that is important for Singapore to stay abreast of global trends. Workers must participate in the remaking of the economy beyond Covid-19 and not get stuck in the deceptive comforts of the gig economy.

Changi Airport is emblematic of the larger benefits of technological change. For example, the use of robots has helped to ease the more laborious tasks of staff, as well as those of partners, at Jewel.

This has resulted in smarter work and higher productivity. These advantages, in turn, help to sustain the future of Jewel in particular and the airport at large.

The ultimate beneficiaries are Singaporean workers. This is a truism in normal times. It is more difficult to accept during abnormal periods of economic history.

However, the truth is that only a higher-level combination of human and machine labour will enable the Singaporean worker to hold his own against the global competition, which has been sharpened by the assault of Covid-19.

Japan is a case in point. The McKinsey Global Institute estimates that

THE STRAITS TIMES

the country will need a 21/2-fold increase in productivity growth over the next decade just to maintain its recent gross domestic product growth rate. Here, McKinsey makes the interesting point that the coronavirus pandemic is "accelerating a shift towards digitisation in order to reduce the spread of the virus" while allowing more people and economic processes to move online.

That movement could catalyse the automation of operations and the retraining of workers to deliver greater value.

At the national level, automation would provide relief for a nation plagued by low birth rates and rising life expectancy. Placed in a comparable demographic situation, Singapore cannot but embrace automation even as it plans for a post-pandemic economy.

The challenge lies in getting workers to buy into that greater purpose when their immediate needs are so insistent. The danger is that for some, if not many, vulnerable workers, the gig economy might appear to deliver the goods immediately.

There is no doubt that the gig economy, whether in Singapore or elsewhere, is here to stay, but it must not be confused with the value and contributions made by the mainstream economy.

The continuous impetus for skills improvement and productivity-driven growth that characterises mainstream activity provides the best protection against unemployment and unemployment. The workers of Singapore, a nation of survivors, must be ready to tap technology if they are to stay ahead in the next lap of an unending journey.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR editor@thestatesman.com

TV must stop news vulgarity

SIR, TV news channels had not sunk to this level before with #Arrest Rhea Now splashing across screens, and #Justice for Rhea not far behind. This is unprecedented. The Press Council has noted that all media norms have been violated, and the so-called self-regulatory mechanism of the Broadcasting Council is felt only by its absence.

The Bombay High Court has told electronic media to observe restraint, but the show is still going on. It demeans the media itself, makes fools of people, obstructs the course of justice and undermines the rule of law.

Finding the truth is the remit of the investigating agencies. The job of the media is only to report it.

But it is now taking on the roles of the judge and the jury and is an executioner of reputations, forgetting its own role.

Every wrong element has been thrown into the brew that gets cooked round-the-clock in the studios, with too much spice and even bile thrown in. The narrative is one-sided, sensational, loud and exaggerated,

CLAIMS BELIED

SIR, ~ Since the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A, there have been continuous pronouncements by the government regarding developmental activities which include fundamental and civic rights, freedom of speech and expression etc. But the people are still in illegal detention.

The court has abdicated its responsibility to make the executive accountable for the deprivation of the right to liberty of the citizens. The most glaring example is the recent bizarre episode when the State declared in court that Congress leader Saifuddin Soz was not under detention and free to move outside his house.

The same evening, media visuals showed him being barred from coming out of his house. It is not the only example; the latest being PDP leaders stopped from attending a party meeting. Contrarily, the BJP has been organizing regular meetings and its leaders have travelled across J&K. The party's general secretary, Ram Madhav, had been advocating political activities in the J&K. Thus all tall claims of the government for maintaining peace in J&K are belied.

Yours, etc., SK Khosla, Chandigarh, 4 September.

world taking conflicting positions.

A different trend is discernible at present with the UAE setting up diplomatic ties with Israel. Saudi Arabia has also permitted Israeli aircraft to fly over its territory.

THAW IN TIES

SIR, This refers to your editorial, 'A Historic Flight' (4 September). The Middle-east always remains in the vortex of political turmoil over the issue of Palestine with Israel and the Arab

once Israel is recognised by its Arab neighbours, one of the dangerous global flash points will be defused and a solution to the Palestine problem will become easier.

Yours, etc., Aranya Sanyal, Siliguri, 4 September.

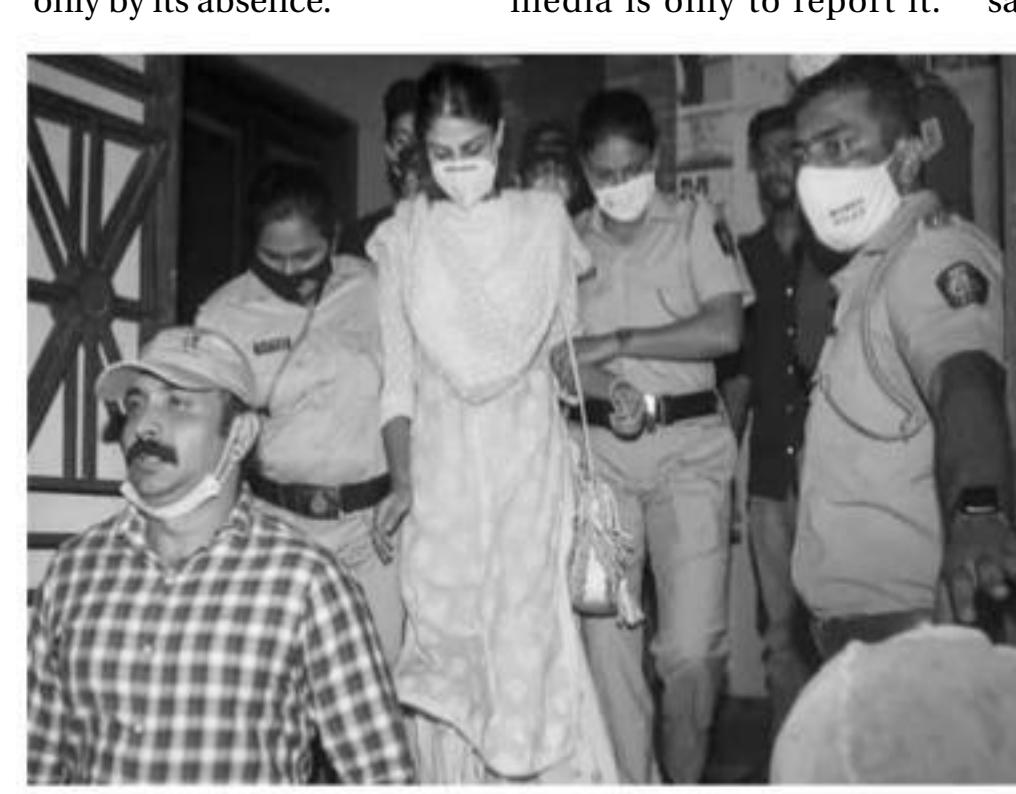
QUESTIONABLE

SIR, It's a very sad move on the part of our government to gag common men's issues as they have announced that there will be no Question Hour in Parliament.

Over the last few months, our Central government is making one grave mistake after another in controlling the abnormal situation that has engulfed our daily lives.

Such moves curtail the rights of common men and they also violate the sanctity of our democracy. Should we now call ourselves a democracy when whoever dares to question the wrongdoings of our government is labelled as a traitor or anti-national without reflecting on justified queries?

Yours, etc., Iftekhar Ahmed, Kolkata, 4 September.



Many myths about draft EIA



J P GUPTA

The draft Environmental Impact Assessment 2020 was issued by the Ministry of Environment & Forest vide Gazette Notification No. S.O. 1199 (E) dated 23 March 2020, and is a simple, bona fide and strategic tool which is strong enough to protect the environment. The draft EIA 2020 has allowed us to proceed with a positive note since the green ministry has honestly simplified the structure and brought greater transparency and accountability by integrating all amendments and office memoranda since September 2006, and has removed any confusion among the environmental fraternity. The focus is to improve the system's capabilities to monitor and implement regulatory requirements.

It is commendable that the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change through this Draft Notification has made an outstanding effort to resolve the practical difficulties of border areas and their development by considering the exemption of public consultation. This includes only projects concerning national defense and security or involving other strategic considerations as determined by the Central government including all linear projects in the border areas. It may be worthwhile to note that normally, oil and gas facilities and defense installations are located in the border and LAC areas and practically there is no other industry operating in these difficult terrains.

Hence, the process of proposing the exemption of public consultation

in these tough terrains will not only enhance energy security of the country but also protect national defense interests without compromising the issue of Environment Protection. The draft notification also facilitates such exemption to industries having no impact or less impact on the environment such as industries with clean technologies and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises as these will contribute to the country's GDP. Further, reduction in public hearing time from 30 to 20 days is a welcome step of the green ministry as this will enable applicants to obtain environmental clearances faster by using advanced communication/digital technology without compromising on the stakeholder's views about the project.

The proposed EIA notification is comprehensive and will fast-track

ECs for small projects. It will also encourage modernisation, rationalisation of categorisation of projects and public consultation process, extend validity of EC and ToR aligning with other acts and strengthen the monitoring mechanism, for example mining projects: 50 years (subject to commencement of mining within 10 years); river valley projects: 15 years; nuclear projects: 15 years and other projects: 10 years.

For the past few months, we have heard and read a lot of public outcry in the media, by various activists and environmental groups on the issue of "violation" termed as regularisation of post facto violations. It is a sheer misinterpretation and an absolute myth.

One must clearly understand that the spirit of the notification and existing provisions of the EPA will not permit

any environmental violation to proceed without any scrutiny in the process of EC. Such projects are subject to rigorous appraisal with full wisdom and due diligence of the EAC and will be considered on strict merit. If projects qualify on merit, only then will these be considered; otherwise they will be punished and penalized as per EPA. Even the Supreme Court has clearly said that we cannot close down industry but may impose penalty/fine for violations. Therefore, the draft notification is also in line with the Supreme Court order including EPA. It is essential to understand that there will only be prospective environmental clearances based on merit coupled with rigorous penalties that will be imposed on violating companies. In my opinion "post-facto regularization" is mere false propaganda.

It may also be seen that this draft EIA also decentralises certain category of projects by empowering states to appraise at their level. This prevents PPs and consultants from running with their full teams to Delhi and at the same time helps PPs and consultants from incurring financial burden besides significant saving on carbon footprint. The other salient feature of this draft notification is incorporation of Technical Committee and Monitoring Committee in addition to the EAC which was not there in the 2006 EIA notification. This creation will take care of aspects of sustainable development.

To conclude on a positive note, the 2020 draft notification has a clause dedicated to definitions to several terms related to EIA. It will be very useful in the sense that it consolidates and clarifies every term mentioned in the proposed notification and brings about absolute transparency. At the same time it provides fair interpretation to all concerned.

Certainly, this notification will be a milestone for environment protection, sustainable development and for Climate Mitigation in times to come. But of course, "Beauty lies in the eyes of beholder."

The writer is chairman, Expert Appraisal Committee, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India and can be reached at jpglobalconsultinggroup@gmail.com

100 YEARS AGO OCCASIONAL NOTE

In his speech at Krishnagar, replying to addresses which amongst other matters alluded to the Turkish question, Lord Ronaldshay had occasion to refer to the wicked slanders which have been spread against Great Britain. His Excellency cited some examples of the "monstrous and cruel" lies found circulating in some parts of the Presidency; and he exposed their falsity. Apparently these lies are of the stealthy kind which seldom come out into the light of print but spread their poison, as their authors intend them to do, beneath the surface. There is, perhaps, too great a tendency to treat such slanders with silent contempt instead of vigorously exposing them. The well-worn maxim that "truth is great and will prevail" can only hold good if the truth is made known. The motley crew of anti-British agitators act on the principle that, if truth is great, a lie is greater so long as it can escape detection. It may be a matter for wonder why Great Britain, after pouring out her blood and treasure without stint in the greatest struggle for human freedom ever fought since the world began, should now be attacked on all sides by a propaganda of calumny, vituperation, and malicious falsehood for which it would be difficult to find any parallel. This represents the last hope of Britain's enemies. It needs to be met by equal energy in the exposure of falsehood.

NEWS ITEMS

THE FRENCH COLONY IN CALCUTTA

The French sloop of war Altair which arrived in Calcutta on Saturday evening is on her way from Toulon to Saigon, where she will be attached to the French Naval Division in Indo-China. She belongs to a class of vessels built in 1916 for submarine hunting and for escorting convoys of merchant vessels. Since the Armistice the Altair has been in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. On Sunday morning the acting French Consul-General Mr. F. Dupuy, visited the vessel and was received by Lieutenant-Commander Magescas, and his staff. Visits have been exchanged by the Commander with the British Military and Naval authorities. The Commander accompanied by the French Consul-General, the staff and 37 of the crew on Monday visited Chandernagore, where they were received by the Administrator of the French Territory.

GERMANY

A memorial signed by 22 prominent German economists which was presented to the Peace Conference in view of the Spa Conference says that the German offer of May, 1919, to pay a maximum of a hundred milliard of marks in gold cannot be redeemed, as the economic position of Germany has become considerably worse. Germany's minimum import needs during the next twelve months are four-and-a-half million tons of foodstuffs and three-hundred thousand tons of phosphates, for which Germany requires foreign credits in the form of an emergency loan. The memorial lays down the conditions of a new German offer, including that restitution of articles taken from occupied territories shall be considered part of the reparations debt.

SEAMENS' CONFERENCE

The International Seamen's Conference today engaged in an animated discussion on point four of the Draft Convention, providing for the insertion of a special clause dealing with Lascars, that the rules with regard to the working hours of Lascars should be made after consulting the Ship-owners' and Lascars' organisations, and that if a reduction of the hours of work are granted to other seamen the working hours of Lascars must also be reduced. The French, Italian and Dutch delegates opposed any difference in nationality, race or religion, also any rule which might create economic competition between European and Indian seamen. Mr. Cuthbert Laws emphasised the difference between Lascars and Europeans, and declared that lascars did not do half the work done by Europeans in the same time.

FINE TENNIS

At Wimbledon, Tilden's victory in the Singles' final was won by the most convincing all-round tennis ever seen in this country. The pace throughout was terrific. Both players possess a super-service, which furnished each with many winning points outright. But the test came when, after an experimental first set, Tilden settled down to plugging Patterson's backhand relentlessly with a heavily-chopped ball, which throughout the last three sets Patterson was seen to be returning into the net consistently. Experts point out that Patterson's backhand is fundamentally weak, because he plays it with a forehand grip and the forehand face of the racket. The Mixed Doubles final, in which Patterson and Mlle Lenglen beat Lyceet and Miss Ryan was the greatest mixed doubles ever seen at Wimbledon. Lyceet was the outstanding player of the foursome.

IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

Summer Leaves

I can't let summer go without a word. When I lived in India, summer was the dominant season. It was almost always summer, except when it rained. The rains you could not fail to notice, because they were so abundant, often so violent. Accompanied by strong winds, they blew roofs, brought down energy poles and left streets flooded. Winter? There was no such thing in eastern India, where I lived. For about a month you donned a jacket, a flimsy blazer most likely, only because you left for work early or returned late from a party, and felt a gust of cool air on your face. For the rest, it was all summer.

It was about the same in the Philippines, where I spent several years. In that country, there are only two seasons, summer and more summer. Being an archipelago, when it rained it looked like floodgates had opened, but it made not the slightest difference to the temperature. The heat and humidity remained constant. In December, my Filipino colleagues cheerfully declared that winter had arrived, but I felt little difference. If I went for a walk in the early dawn, I sweated before I had taken ten steps.

Years passed, years since the time I spent my winter holidays happily in freezing but beautiful Minnesota, White Christmas and icy New Year's Eve included. Parties did not seem lively enough if the roads did not entail braving mountains of snow and overcoming detours through misperceived ditches. The world has changed, and so have I, perhaps more than the world. Now a pair of sturdy horses would not pull me out of the home on a snow-laden day and I would rather look at snowflakes from a bedroom window than a car windscreen. My affection for wintry days has gone south, my tolerance for frost and sleet has wilted, and I have learned to embrace summer like a long-lost lover.

Washington – which many early residents referred to as a "swamp" and Donald Trump seems to have revived the title – can be warm and humid. No I fished out my mail from the mailbox with a gloved hand, and I

walked everywhere in intrepid boots instead of my comfortable shoes. That too passed in months and new leaves appeared on the trees. The weather turned congenial again, heralding the advent of spring. Neighbours started strolling in our barrio, kids ran around kicking an orange ball, and I started on my leisurely walk around the lake.

There is much to be said for the congenial air of spring and early fall, but I thought in those days that winter was overly maligned. While it is no fun to get up at the crack of dawn, gulp a mug of coffee and rush for work when it is still dark, much of the time I was quite comfortable in my office, in the car and back in my den. Then came the shameless but delightful overeating of Thanksgiving and the ethereal conviviality of Christmas, and I could not put my heart in running down winter as a miserable interval when life is dark and pleasures are verboten. I had my soft corner for winter, despite the cold beds and icy roads.

Years passed, years since the time I spent my winter holidays happily in freezing but beautiful Minnesota, White Christmas and icy New Year's Eve included. Parties did not seem lively enough if the roads did not entail braving mountains of snow and overcoming detours through misperceived ditches. The world has changed, and so have I, perhaps more than the world. Now a pair of sturdy horses would not pull me out of the home on a snow-laden day and I would rather look at snowflakes from a bedroom window than a car windscreen. My affection for wintry days has gone south, my tolerance for frost and sleet has wilted, and I have learned to embrace summer like a long-lost lover.

Washington – which many early residents referred to as a "swamp" and Donald Trump seems to have revived the title – can be warm and humid. No



Illustration: Debabrata Chakrabarty

doubt it is not the best place to be in July. I would rather be in Bogota, Bilbao or Brindisi, or the abundant beaches of Bimini. Yet, in a compromise with an imperfect world, I am quite content these days to pass my days in a warm and moist Washington.

The first thought that occurs to me is that I would rather have it than the rigors of winter. Maurice Chevalier said reportedly that old age isn't so bad when you consider the alternative. In a similar spirit, contentedly, I contend with sweat rather than sweaters. I am happy to go around in tee shirts and shorts, and happier still to see women go around in distinctly less.

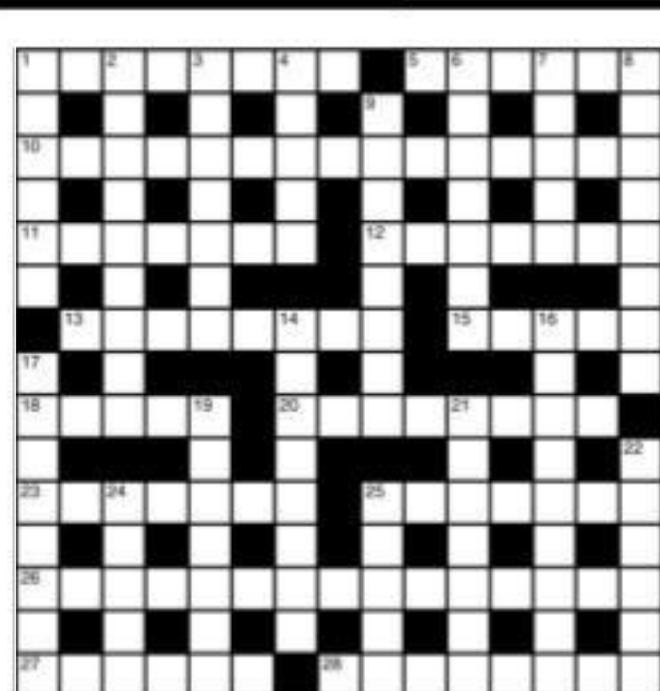
Doctors are telling us more and more, though we are hearing it less and less, that it is no healthy living to spend all our time in confined spaces that are smartly heated and thermos-tatically airconditioned. We live away from sunlight and open spaces, and begin to lose alertness, damage our sleep cycle, lose bone density and get hypertension and mood disorders. We live like termites and our life becomes insect-like. The summer months offer a way out. To soak not just the sun, but life itself. To encounter other people who step out and to see a little of the world around us. To spread our invisible but real wings.

That is perhaps what the summer really means in this part of the world. A chance to venture out, explore what has remained unseen and unexplored, live in a different way than the way we have mostly lived, meet the people we haven't met, the strangers who are our neighbors, and simply have a grand time.

So, as the pleasant autumn air brushes my face, I must take a minute and take note that summer is about to end. At least for this year.

The writer is a Washington-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Unconventional subject in Prague once (8)
- 5 Was relieved, having fought without focus (6)
- 10 Driver driven to distraction on day off? (1,7,7)
- 11 Drawers might be glossy bags (7)
- 12 Enigmatic poser's a cheat making a fresh start (7)
- 13 Die before undertaking parole at camp (8)
- 15 Part for diva is almost conventional (5)
- 18 Unfenced coast is haven of peace (5)
- 20 Prints I consult about (8)
- 23 Incompetent appeal collecting very little money in NY without permission (7)
- 25 Receive honour after cycling speed trial (7)
- 26 Could Dragnet be treated this casually? (5,5,7)
- 27 A habit isn't something she's accustomed to (6)
- 28 Gathered information and got it wrong (8)
- 1 Barman from The Queen coming

DOWN

- 2 It contains shifting sand over time (9)
- 3 Actors finally perform (season having delayed opening) (7)
- 4 South Africa embodies England for her, on reflection (5)
- 6 Damsel endlessly in distress? Here's a knight in shining armour (7)
- 7 Dali following Lowry to draw in Lakeland village (5)
- 8 Visionary feature made Yard remarkable (8)
- 9 Princess supporting actor and new dramatist (8)
- 14 Offering favour without initially intending good (8)
- 16 Extremely reliable vehicle – one holding things back? (9)
- 17 Province engaged in function not arising in place near 7 (8)
- 19 Supporters helping (7)
- 21 Greens – a group once almost locked up? (7)
- 22 Married by eminent cleric in Charlock? (6)
- 24 Popular President hugged by lady every now and then (5)
- 25 Urge power company to retain horse (3,2)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

NO 28066





India's target to gasify 100 million tons of coal by 2030 will entail an investment of over Rs 4 lakh crore

PRALHAD JOSHI
UNION COAL MINISTER

THUMBNAILS

Infosys hiring: Bengaluru-based tech giant Infosys has announced that it plans to hire 12,000 American workers over the next two years, bringing its hiring commitment in the country to 25,000 over five years. "In 2017, Infosys committed to hiring 10,000 American workers over two years and has exceeded that goal by creating 13,000 jobs in the US to date. Through this expanded commitment, Infosys will hire an additional 12,000 workers by 2022 across a variety of roles," the company said in a statement.

Fund mop-up via NCDs: Fund raising through retail issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) slumped 79 per cent to Rs 882 crore in the first four months of this fiscal due to falling institutional participation and decline in credit ratings of such instruments. A total of five firms - Muthoot Mini Financers, Muthoot Fincorp, Kosamattam Finance, KLM Axiva Finvest and Sakthi Finance - have mopped-up funds totalling Rs 882 crore through retail issuance of NCDs in the current fiscal till 15 July, data with markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) showed.

Neo-Bank: Singapore-based fintech company Atlantis has entered the Indian market with the launch of digital bank, Neo-Bank. Eyeing the \$15.7-billion global millennial banking industry, Atlantis, a Singapore-headquartered fintech company, has announced the launch of Neo-Bank For Gen Z and millennials, Atlantis said in a release.

BPCL plant: The Bakaro LPG bottling plant of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) will be commissioned in December this year, a senior company official said. The Bakaro plant will be the first state-of-the-art LPG bottling plant in Jharkhand, CGM (sales) of BPCL, Vijay Tilak, said.

Faceless assessment of Customs to roll out countrywide from Oct 31

The pilot programme was launched in Chennai on August 14 for primarily electrical machineries

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBIC) has decided to roll out the faceless assessment at an all India level in all ports of import and for all imported goods by October 31.

The Faceless Assessment is being rolled out under the umbrella of the next generational Turant Customs programme. The key elements of the Turant Customs programme are faceless, contactless and paperless customs clearance processes.

This includes faceless or anonymised assessment, self-registration of goods by importers, automated clearances of bills of entry, digitisation of Customs documents. "The objectives sought to be achieved are exponentially faster clearance of goods, reduced interface between trade and Customs officers and enhanced ease of doing business", as per an internal CBIC circular.

The phased launch of the Turant Customs programme

in select ports of import was aimed at testing in a real-life environment, the IT capabilities as well as the responsiveness of the trade and Customs officers to the various initiatives.

"The results have been reviewed and these have confirmed that the stated objectives are being met. The stage is now set for extending the Turant Customs programme across all Customs ports pan India and thereby ushering in a more modern, efficient, and professional Customs administration with resultant benefits for trade and industry", CBIC noted.

The pilot programme of Faceless Assessment was launched in Chennai on August 14 for primarily electrical machineries falling under Chapter 85 of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975.

This pilot programme was subsequently expanded to Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai and Visakhapatnam for goods primarily falling under Chapters 39, 84, 86 to 92, 72 to 83 and 50 to 71 of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975.

CBIC said it was intimat-



ed that the designated nodal Commissioners would be precursors to the National Assessment Centres (NACs). Accordingly, the Board has decided to constitute a total 11 NACs, as mentioned in Annexure II. These NACs are organized commodity-wise according to the First Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act, 1975.

Each NAC shall be convened by the Principal Chief Commissioners/Chief Commissioners of the Zones. Each NAC shall consist of the Principal Commissioners/Commissioners of Customs.

The NACs have a critical role in the successful implementation of Faceless Assessment.

In addition to their

existing work, the NACs need to work in a coordinated manner to ensure that all assessments are carried out in a timely manner and there is no delay or hold up of the Bills of Entry. The NACs would also examine the assessment practices of imported goods across Customs stations to bring about uniformity and enhanced quality of assessments.

The important responsibilities of the NACs will be to monitor the assessment practice for enhancing uniformity of classification, valuation, exemption benefit and compliance with import policy conditions. It will also assess the application of Compulsory Compliance Requirements (CCRs) and ensure uniform practices in accordance with the relevant statutes/Legal provisions.

It will also study audit objections and take corrective actions regarding assessments, wherever necessary and provide inputs to the concerned ports of import.

NACs shall also coordinate with Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and

Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGII) related to management of alerts undertaken by the NAC. Directorate General of Valuation (DGIV) to enhance expertise related to sensitive commodities handled. DGIV shall also appoint a nodal person for every NAC for better coordination. Before the rollout of Faceless Assessment, the Nodal Commissioners in the NAC shall coordinate to take all measures to ensure that Faceless Assessment is smooth and creates no disruption in the assessment and clearance of goods.

Before the launch, the Customs locations within each Zone, performing Faceless Assessment may be identified. The volume of import and availability of adequate officers may be taken into consideration for such identification and nominate sufficient number of officers for the Faceless Assessment.

The officers should be more than two at all levels, to ensure availability. To the extent possible, a dedicated team of officers may be posted to the Faceless Assessment Groups.

Before 1st commercial coal mine goes under hammer, govt prunes list of mines



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Even before bids for the first set of coal mines for commercial extraction get underway, the government has further revised the list of mines to be offered under the new route. Now a lower number of 38 coal blocks would go under the hammer to the private sector instead of 41 mines identified earlier for the first round of auctions.

The coal ministry has withdrawn five mines: Moga South Coal Mine, Fatehpur East, Madanpur (North), Moga-II, and Sayang Coal Mines from the list of mines that were proposed to be offered for commercial mining. It has, however,

added two mines: Dolesara, Jarekela and Jharpalman-Tangarghat (in Chhattisgarh). Therefore, 38 coal mines are offered for auction for commercial mining under 11th Tranche of Auction under CM(SP) Act, 2015 and 1st Tranche of Auction under MMDR Act, 1957," a statement from the coal ministry said.

Though no reason has been provided for changes in the list of commercial coal mines, it is largely on technical grounds. As part of the initiative of opening up of the coal sector and allowing the private sector to commercially extract coal, the government launched the auction process for 41 coal mines on June 18, 2020.

IL&FS gets NCLT nod for sale of education assets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has approved the sale of education assets of debt-ridden IL&FS to Lexington Equity Holdings Ltd (LEHL).

A two-member Mumbai Bench of the NCLT approved the sale of IL&FS's 73.69 per cent stake in Schoolnet India, formerly known as IL&FS Education & Technology Services, to Falafal Technology Pvt Ltd. Falafal Technology is a step-down subsidiary of LEHL, which already owns 26.13 per cent stake in Schoolnet.

Schoolnet has two subsidiaries - IL&FS Cluster Development Initiative (ICDI) and Skill Training Assessment Management Partners (STAMP) - and also owns 80 per cent stake in IL&FS Skill

Development Corporation (ISDC). "We are of the view that the sale of education assets has been done within the resolution framework and the same is approved and recorded," NCLT said in an order dated 31 August.

The tribunal has also allowed other reliefs regarding the deal sought by IL&FS.

According to the order, the committee of creditors (CoC) has already approved the deal with a voting share of 75.46 per cent by value.

Justice D K Jain, who is supervising the resolution process of IL&FS is being done on the lines of corporate insolvency resolution process under the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

Cotton spinners' revenue may fall to 6-yr low

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Revenue of cotton spinners is likely to decline by 30-35 per cent to a six-year low in the current financial year due to tepid domestic as well as export demand following the Covid-19 pandemic, according to Crisil Research.

This revenue loss along with inventory losses and lower profitability is expected to result in moderation in credit quality of cotton spinners this fiscal, Crisil Research said in a report.

"Cotton spinners are facing a double whammy of sharp erosion in revenue and inventory losses. Revenues of the domestic industry, which had fallen last fiscal, is set to slip again and touch a six-year low."

"Additionally, inventory losses loom because cotton prices have declined 10-15 per

cent on a sequential basis in the first quarter of the current fiscal," Crisil Research director Hetal Gandhi said.

Domestic demand for cotton yarn, which accounts for over 70 per cent of overall demand, has been impacted because of slack in end-user segments such as readymade garments (RMG) and home textiles.

Similarly, cotton yarn exports have been affected because of fewer orders from China and Bangladesh, which account for over half of India's exports, the report said.

Revenue from exports had already wound back by a third last fiscal, with China increasing procurement from other countries, predominantly from Vietnam, it added.

The decline in yarn offtake since Covid-19 disruptions began in February 2020 has meant the current fiscal began with higher inventories of 4-

DOUBLE WHAMMY

» Cotton spinners are facing a double whammy of sharp erosion in revenue and inventory losses. Revenues of the domestic industry, which had fallen last fiscal, is set to slip again and touch a six-year low, Crisil Research director Hetal Gandhi said.

» Additionally, inventory losses loom because cot-

4.5 months compared with 3-3.5 months on an average in the past two fiscals.

With demand likely to revive only from the second half of this fiscal, inventories will remain high in the first half, it noted.

With yarn prices falling more than cotton prices, cotton yarn spread is seen narrowing down to Rs 75-80 per

kg this fiscal compared with Rs 80-85 per kg in the previous financial year.

Operating margin is expected to contract by 350-400 basis points (bps).

Further, the report noted that the working capital cycle has got elongated because of a stretch in receivables following steep business pressure on key end-users such as

May launch electric vehicles in next couple of yrs: Yamaha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Japanese two-wheeler major Yamaha is currently evaluating electric mobility ecosystem in India and can look at entering the segment in the next few years, according to the report.

The company, which currently has two-wheeler manufacturing facilities at Surajpur (Uttar Pradesh), Faridabad (Haryana) and Chennai (Tamil Nadu), believes success of electric products would depend on available infrastructure, affordability and acceptance by the customers.

"We are conducting a feasibility study on EVs (electric vehicles) and are trying to understand the market requirements as well as the government's roadmap on

EVs. We might introduce electric vehicles in India in next couple of years," Yamaha Motor India sales (senior vice-president) Ravinder Singh said.

Electric vehicles are the future of automobile sector and have a very high potential in long term, he added.

"India can achieve success only through a clear roadmap, stable policy and proper planning," Singh said.

There are bigger challenges related to investments in infrastructure, charging stations, battery production and swapping infrastructure for electric vehicles, he noted.

Elaborating on the company's prowess in EV segment, he said Yamaha already has a tie-up with Taiwanese manufacturer Gogoro to develop EVs in Taiwan.

The company has already launched the EC-05 electric scooter in Taiwan last year, Singh noted. When asked if reduction in goods and services tax (GST) on two-wheelers would help in reviving the segment, he added.

"India can achieve success only through a clear roadmap, stable policy and proper planning," Singh said.

"There are bigger challenges related to investments in infrastructure, charging stations, battery production and swapping infrastructure for electric vehicles, he noted.

"The crisis in demand continued with little respite in July. With essentially four in five air travellers staying home, the industry remains largely paralysed," said Alexandre de Juniac, Iata's director-general and chief executive officer.

The Iata represents some 290 airlines comprising 82 per cent of global air traffic.

De Juniac said: "Governments reopening and then closing borders or removing and then re-imposing quarantines does not give many consumers confidence to make travel plans, nor airlines to rebuild schedules."

Scheduled domestic passenger flights resumed in India on 25 May this year after a gap of two months due to the coronavirus pandemic. However, airlines are allowed to operate only up to 45 per cent of their pre-Covid domestic flights.

Scheduled international passenger flights continue to remain suspended in India since 23 March this year due to the pandemic. However, special international flights have been operating under the Vande Bharat Mission since May and under bilateral air bubble pacts formed with various countries since July.

Airports sector needs \$50 billion investments

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 6 SEPTEMBER

seven international airports in joint ventures and one private state government-run international airport. The country also has 10 custom airports, 58 domestic airports and another 11 private/state government-run domestic airports, according to the AAI website.

"India needs over \$50 billion in building assets to cater to the estimated demand over the next two decades. Our immediate need over the next five years is estimated to be \$20 billion. Much of that investment will need to come from the private sector," the report, titled "Catalysing the National Infrastructure Pipeline - Project India", said.

Private interest in developing large commercially

KPMG REPORT

» India needs over \$50 billion in building airport assets to cater to the estimated demand over the next two decades. Our immediate need over the next five years is estimated to be \$20 billion. Much of that investment will need to come from the private sector.

» By 2027, the number of domestic passengers is estimated to be around 500 million while the number of international passengers is expected to swell to 200 million by that time.



estimated to be around 500 million while the number of international passengers is expected to swell to 200 million by that time.

viable assets has also allowed the government to focus on financing regional airport infrastructure with the intent of expanding regional air connectivity and supporting traf-

fic growth at hub airports, it said.

Recently, the government green-signalled the leasing out of three airports - Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvanan-

thapuram - through public-private partnership (PPP). So far, 12 airports have been cleared this year for privatisation - Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Mangaluru, Thiruvananthapuram, Guwahati, Amritsar, Varanasi, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Raipur and Trichy.

The 2020 Union Budget has proposed the development of 100 new airports under the Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) scheme in addition to the already existing ones under the initiative.

According to the report, as per the National Infrastructure Policy (NIP) 2020, which envisages 68 various projects entailing a capital expenditure (capex) of \$1.9 billion over five years, more than

half of the 50 busiest airports in the country are operating over capacity since 2018.

Also, as per the "Infrastructure Vision 2025" document, as many as 30-35 AAI-run airports are to be awarded for concession, it stated.

The Infrastructure Vision 2025 is the cornerstone of India's infrastructure policy and is principally meant to improve the ease of living in India. To streamline project implementation and facilitate investments, the government has integrated various infrastructure projects under the programme. To achieve the programme's goals, the government has also announced NIP projects worth \$1.5 trillion over 2020-25.

Stating that aviation is one



They're either going to understand the language of politics & diplomacy, or in the field with painful experiences

TURKISH PRESIDENT RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

WARNING GREECE TO ENTER TALKS OVER DISPUTED EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN TERRITORIAL CLAIMS

NEW DELHI, MONDAY 07 SEPTEMBER 2020

09

China tries to flip pandemic script

State media lavishly covers a "reborn" "Wuhan" that trumpets the country's epidemic-control efforts

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WUHAN, 6 SEPTEMBER

China is recasting Wuhan as a heroic coronavirus victim and trying to throw doubt on the pandemic's origin story as it aims to seize the narrative at a time of growing global distrust of Beijing.

The public relations blitz plays out daily in comments by Chinese officials and lavish state media coverage of a "reborn" Wuhan that trumpets China's epidemic-control efforts and economic recovery while the United States struggles. The drive peaked in the past week as Chinese primary schools welcomed back students with considerable fanfare and Wuhan hosted executives from dozens of multinationals, from Panasonic to

Dow and Nokia, on a highly choreographed tour of the central Chinese city.

"There are few places in the world today where you don't need a mask and can gather," Chinese official Lin Songtian told the executives, implying that Wuhan was one of those places. "This testifies to Wuhan's triumph over the virus and that (the city) is back in business."

Lost in this retelling, however, is that a wet market in Wuhan is widely believed to be ground zero for the pandemic. China's foreign minister suggested on Aug 28 during a European outreach trip that the virus might not have emerged in China.

The drive indicates that China recognises Covid-19's damage to its brand and wants to leverage its relatively suc-

cessful recovery to counter growing international challenges, analysts said.

China faces foreign bitterness over the virus and an initial cover-up attempt by Wuhan officials, plus criticism of Beijing's tightening grip on Hong Kong and generally more aggressive international posture.

"Beijing wants the narrative to be: We handled it, we can help you handle it and (hopefully) we're the first to have a vaccine that works," said Ms Kelsey Broderick, Asia analyst with Eurasia Group.

"That's really the only way China can come out ahead of the idea that a wet market in Wuhan started this crisis."

The US' fumbling pandemic response provides a clear opening, said Ms Yun Jiang, director of Australian

National University's China Policy Centre.

"The fact that the US is not only not doing enough, but actually doing things that go against American interests, is a big help to China," she said.

The three-day Wuhan tour also included foreign media outlets and ended on Saturday (5 September).

It featured primary school students performing traditional Chinese opera and ballet, a renovated food market presented as a model of sanitation, and a Yangtze riverfront cruise underneath a skyline ablaze with towering light displays referencing the virus recovery.

The city of 11 million - which suffered more than 80 per cent of China's 4,634 Covid-19 deaths - has come a long way since the pan-

demic's grim early days, when a suffocating weeks-long lockdown rendered it a ghost town. No new local transmissions have been reported in months, traffic jams are back, shoppers cram malls, and al-fresco diners gobble up the city's signature spicy crayfish dish.

Face masks sag from the neck or are abandoned altogether. The growing confidence was displayed at a Wuhan pool party attended by thousands of maskless people last month that prompted overseas accusations of recklessness after images of the event went viral. China countered that the party indicated the nation's success in taming the coronavirus.

"What risks can there be?" asked Wuhan factory worker Xie Ailiang while speaking to

AFP. "I think now Wuhan should be absolutely safe."

But not everyone is taking a victory lap. Many Wuhan citizens express persistent concern over an uneven recovery and fear of new outbreaks.

"The economy has really declined. The benefit of even coming to work is questionable," said Madam Yi Xinhua, 51, who sells tofu from her stall at a Wuhan wet market. TBlocks of tofu were neatly arranged by shape and size, but there few buyers - Madam Yi says her sales are only half of the pre-pandemic level.

It is a common complaint in Wuhan, blamed by many business owners on lingering fear of going out in public and the widely expressed belief that millions who fled the city early in the pandemic have still not returned.

Experts join efforts to salvage burning tanker off Sri Lanka's coast



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO, 6 SEPTEMBER

others who had joined the rescue operations are continuing to use extinguishing agents and water to douse the fire. The operation is carried out in safe waters 40 nautical miles away from the shores, the Navy said. It said an additional 10 professionals from the UK and the Netherlands with expertise in rescue operations, disaster evaluation, and legal consultation will be arriving in the country on Sunday.

The Sri Lanka Navy said the commercial owners of the tanker had appointed an international Singapore-based company as its salvage expert.

Two more large tugboats

that can handle crude oil tankers have already left Singapore and Mauritius to join the salvage operations of Panama-registered tanker MT New Diamond that caught fire on Thursday.

The ship was carrying

270,000 metric tonnes of crude oil from Kuwait to India.

The Sri Lanka Navy on Friday

confirmed that a Filipino sailor died in the boiler explosion in the engine room of the ship.

Indian ships are sup-

porting the Sri Lanka Navy to

douse the flames on the tanker

off the coast of Sanga-

mankanda in Ampara. The fire

has been brought under con-

trol but is still not extin-

guished. Some 5 ships of Indian coast guard and one Indian Navy ship are still engaged in fire fighting, the Navy said.

The Sri Lanka Navy and

other

for the first time since the accident, 20 crew members who were rescued will connect with their families over the telephone, it said.

The joint disaster relief

operation, which is being

carried out on the instruction

of experts, has successfully

contained the spread of the

ship's fire and there is no

report of the ship leaking oil

into the sea, the Navy said.

The Navy said on Saturday

that they were assisted by

the Air Force, the Ports Authority

and the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard who

were working jointly. The dis-

aster relief operation was

joined by Indian Coast Guard Ship Sarang, ICGS Sujay, TTT One - a tug equipped with fire-

fighting equipment and professional firefighters, and 02 Dornier aircraft of Indian Coast Guard since the previous night, it said in a state-

ment.

Hong Kong police arrest 289 at protests over election delay

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HONG KONG, 6 SEPTEMBER

About 290 people were arrested Sunday at protests against the government's decision to postpone elections for Hong Kong's legislature, police said.

The elections were to have taken place Sunday but Chief Executive Carrie Lam on July 31 postponed them for one year. Lam blamed an upsurge in coronavirus cases, but critics said her government worried the opposition would gain seats if voting went ahead on schedule. Police said that 289 people had been arrested, mostly for unlawful assembly. One woman was arrested in the Kowloon district of Yau Ma Tei on charges of

assault and spreading pro-independence slogans, the police department said on its Facebook page. It said such slogans are illegal under a newly enacted national security law.

Anti-government protests erupted last year over a proposed extradition law and spread to include demands for greater democracy and criticism of Beijing's efforts to tighten control over the former British colony. The coronavirus and the tough new security law have diminished the demonstrations this year, but smaller groups still take to the streets from time to time. The ruling Communist Party's decision to impose the law in May prompted complaints it was violating the auto-

nomous status of the territory when it was returned to China in 1997. Washington withdrew trading privileges granted to Hong Kong and other governments suspended extradition and other agreements on the grounds that the territory of 7 million people is no longer autonomous.

Also Sunday, police fired pepper balls at protesters in Kowloon's Mongkok neighborhood, the South China Morning Post reported. In the nearby Jordan neighborhood, protesters raised a banner criticizing the election delay, the Post said. I want my right to vote! activist Leung Kwok-hung, was quoted as saying. The newspaper said Leung was later arrested.

PANDEMIC CURBS



Policemen loyal to Hamas stand behind barriers with messages urging people to remain at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday. AFP

Pandemic turns summer into European tourism's leanest season

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BRUGES (BELGIUM), 6 SEPTEMBER

Bruges mayor Dirk De fauw first realised something was desperately wrong with European tourism when on a brisk March morning he crossed the Burg square in front of the Gothic city hall and there was nothing but silence.

There are always people. Always," De fauw said. That morning? Nothing. Nobody is on that large square" at the heart of Europe's most picturesque cities, he said.

Six months later, as Europe's meanest tourist summer season in history is starting to draw to a close, COVID-19 is yet to loosen its suffocating grip on the continent. If anything the pan-

demic might tighten it over the coming months, with losses piling up in the tens of billions of euros across the 27-national European Union, and the continent's vaunted government support and social security system under increasing strain to prop up the sector.

The upheaval so far, the bloc's executive European Commission said, shows that

bookings for September and October remain abnormally low," as dire as 10% of capacity in Bruges. It hopes that a brief uptick in business in July would be a harbinger of something more permanent.

Over the summer, though, came fresh spikes in COVID-19 contamination, new restrictive measures and regional color codes that spelled disaster for local tourism when they turn red. It left the European tourism industry relying on hope more than anything else. It was all evident on a late summer's day in Bruges, when usually throngs of American and Asian tourists should have been mixing with European tourists along the cobblestone streets below gabled houses to help boost the annual visit

numbers to over 8 million in the city of 110,000.

The swans have it all to themselves," muttered Michiel Michielsens as he slowed his boat behind a bank of swans who gracefully obstructed a quick passage on the canals. On a normal day - not like the one when he had 114 customers instead of 1,200 - tourists instead of birds would rule the waters. Now a boat could be seen showing a single couple around while normally 40 people fit in one.

For tourists who can live with wearing masks for hours, there are some advantages. In Bruges, it extends to the city's famed museums where the medieval Flemish Primitives take centre stage.

(representational image)

Search operation at Beirut building sparked by dog stops, no survivor found

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIRUT, 6 SEPTEMBER

A search operation of a building that collapsed during last month's deadly blast in Beirut stopped on Sunday after rescue workers said they did not find any survivors.

The operation in the historic Mar Mikhael district had gripped Lebanon since Thursday, sparking hope that a survivor might be found under the rubble a month after the blast on August 4 that killed 191 people and wounded nearly 6,500. Seven people remain missing.

The devastating explosion of nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate at the port of Beirut caused widespread damage to

several neighbourhoods. The Lebanese capital is still reeling from the blast, with a quarter of a million people made homeless by the impact of the explosion on apartment buildings.

The latest rescue operation began Thursday when a dog used by a Chilean search-and-rescue team signalled the detection of a possible human pulse under the rubble of a collapsed building during a tour of streets in the area.

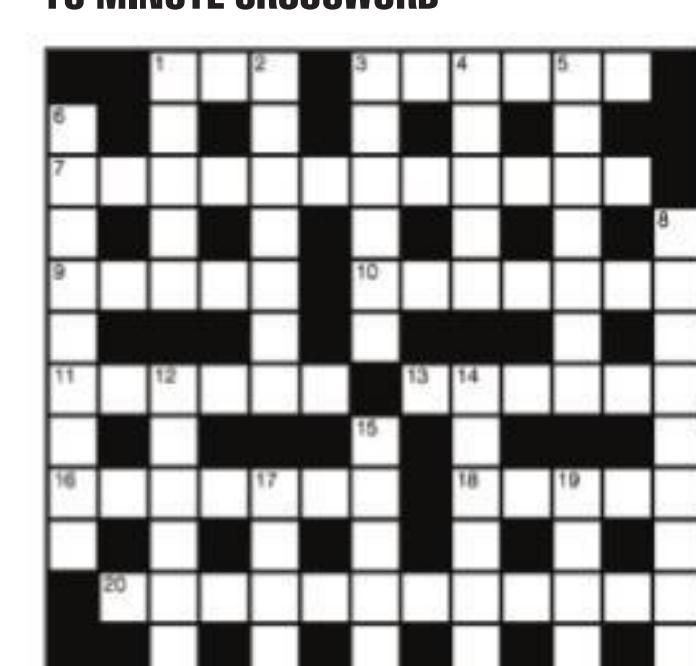
Rescue workers used cranes, shovels and their bare hands in a meticulous search after a pulsing signal was then detected by a device. The black-and-white 5-year-old dog named Flash inspected the building

several times a day as aid workers removed debris. Photos of Flash, in red shoes to protect its paws, circulated on social media and the dog became a hero to many Lebanese.

The head of the Chilean team, Francisco Lermando, told journalists at the scene late Saturday they had not found any bodies amid the rubble. Lermando said the pulsing signals heard might have come from a member of the rescue team. In past days, the Chilean team had urged people on the streets, including journalists, to turn off their mobile phones and remain quiet for several minutes at a time to avoid interfering with their instruments.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS	1 Great importance (3)	1 Afghan capital (5)	14 Pardon me, 12 Tourist, 15 Arms, 17 Slope, 19 Surf, 20 Dame, 22 Cathedral city (3)
DOWN	1 Residual, 18 Fuss, 21 Spoon, 22 Glazier, 23 Fete, 24 Zest, 25 Grandeur,	1 Surrendered (7)	3 Short form (12)
9	3 Lied (Mis-lead), 7 Monarch, 8 Means, 10 Trot, 11 Grandeur,	3 Complain (Informal) (6)	9 Ticked over (5)
10	10 Breakfast cereal (7)	4 Additional (5)	10 Be an example of (6)
11	11 Be after this afternoon (7)	5 Study of animals (7)	13 Colouring stick (6)
12	12 Group of intriguers (5)	6 Party document (9)	15 Colouring stick (6)
13	13 Colouring stick (6)	8 Resolute (9)	16 Lie back (7)
14	14 Lie back (7)	12 Sudden source of wealth (7)	17 Urge on (3,2)
15	15 Moral values (6)	13 Plunder (5)	18 On (3)
16	16 Residual, 18 Fuss, 21 Spoon, 22 Glazier, 23 Fete, 24 Zest, 25 Grandeur,	14 Tourist, 15 Arms, 17 Slope, 19 Surf, 20 Dame,	19 Plunder (5)

By arrangement with The Independent. Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker

RED EYE/Bill Yates &



Please, brothers and sisters, let's try to not gossip. Gossip is a plague worse than Covid. Worse. Let's make a big effort: No gossiping!

VATICAN CITY POPE FRANCIS

WEATHER

CITY	MAX (°C)	MIN (°C)
SINGAPORE	30	25 H
HONG KONG	30	27 H
TOKYO	33	24 H
LONDON	19	11 H
DUBAI	39	29 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	31	16 S
NEW YORK	28	20 S
MOSCOW	25	16 H

S=sunny, CL=clear, H=hazy, R=rainy...

THUMBNAILS



Participants build a human chain in Budapest on September 6, 2020 during a demonstration to protest against the Orban government's education policy.

AFP

China's spacecraft makes landing: China's reusable experimental spacecraft, which was launched into orbit two days ago, successfully returned to its predetermined landing site on Sunday, according to the official state media. It was launched on board a Long March-2F carrier rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center on Friday. Military officials said there were many firsts in this launch.

PTI

Rare spat between Serbia and Russia after US-brokered deal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BELGRADE, 6 SEPTEMBER

A social media post by the Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman apparently ridiculing Serbia's president after he signed a US-sponsored agreement between Serbia and Kosovo has triggered a rare spat between traditional allies Moscow and Belgrade.

Maria Zakharova posted a photo showing Vucic sitting across US President Donald Trump at his Oval Office table.

She posted that along with another photo, the iconic scene from thriller *Basic Instinct* showing Sharon Stone being questioned by police as she sits cross-legged in a chair. Zakharova mocked Vucic in a comment on the Facebook post, saying that he was invited to the White House to be interrogated.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and other Serbian officials reacted furiously. The primitive and vulgarity she showed speaks about herself, but also about those who have given her the job, Vucic told the pro-government Pink TV. Zakharova apologised on Twitter later Sunday, saying her post had been misinterpreted. Vucic said while in Washington he defended Serbia's close ties

Navalny poisoning probe: Pressure mounts on Russia

Germany says it may rethink fate of gas pipeline project with Moscow

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BERLIN, 6 SEPTEMBER

Germany on Sunday increased pressure on Russia over the poisoning of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny, warning that a lack of support by Moscow in the investigation could force Germany to rethink the fate of a German-Russian gas pipeline project.

I hope the Russians won't force us to change our position regarding the Nord Stream 2 pipeline being built under the Baltic Sea, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told weekly *Bild am Sonntag*.

Maas also said that if there won't be an contributions from the Russian side regarding the investigation in the coming days, we will have to consult with our partners.

He did not exclude possible punishments against Russia, telling the newspaper that if we think about sanctions, they should be pointed effectively.

However, Maas also admitted that halting the building of the nearly completed gas pipeline would harm German and European companies.

Whoever demands this has to be aware of the consequences, he said. More than 100 companies from 12 European countries are involved (in the construction), about half of them from Germany.



The German government has come under growing pressure to use the joint German-Russian pipeline project as leverage in getting Russia to provide answers on Navalny.

The Nord Stream 2 project would deliver Russian gas directly to Germany under the Baltic Sea when completed, bypassing Ukraine.

Navalny, a Kremlin critic and corruption investigator, fell ill on a flight to Moscow last month and was taken to a hospital in the Siberian city of Omsk.

He has been in an induced coma in a Berlin hospital since he was flown to Germany for treatment on August 22.

German authorities have said that tests showed that he had been poisoned with a

chemical nerve agent from the Novichok group. British authorities previously identified the nerve agent, developed during the Soviet era, as the poison used on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in England in 2018.

We have high expectations from the Russians to bring light into this severe crime, Maas said. If they have nothing to do with this attack then it's in their own interest to put the facts on the table.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman has brushed off allegations that the Kremlin was involved in poisoning Navalny and said last week that Germany hadn't provided Moscow with any evidence about the politician's condition.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called Navalny's poisoning an attempted murder that aimed to silence one of Putin's fiercest critics and called for a full investigation.

Merkel personally offered the country's assistance in treating Navalny. He's now in stable condition at Berlin's Charite hospital, but doctors expect a long recovery and haven't ruled out that the 44-year-old could face long-term effects to his health.

Merkel has previously rejected the idea that the Navalny case should be linked to the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.

The US has long opposed the project, which has been increasingly a source of friction between Berlin and Washington.

In early August, three Republican senators threatened sanctions against an operator of a Baltic Sea port located in Merkel's parliamentary constituency over its part in Nord Stream 2. The Mukran port is a key staging post for ships involved in its construction.

The US argues the project will endanger European security by making Germany overly dependent on Russian gas. The project is also opposed by Ukraine and Poland, which will be bypassed by the pipeline under the Baltic, as well as some other European nations.

Jacob Blake speaks out for first time since police shooting

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MILWAUKEE, 6 SEPTEMBER

Jacob Blake has spoken publicly for the first time since a Kenosha, Wisconsin, police officer shot him seven times in the back, saying he's in constant pain from the shooting, which doctors fear will leave him paralysed from the waist down.

In a video posted Saturday evening on Twitter by his lawyer, Ben Crump, Blake said from his hospital bed that, Twenty-four hours, every 24 hours it's pain, nothing but pain.

It hurts to breathe, it hurts to sleep, it hurts to move from side-to-side, it hurts to eat. Blake, a 29-year-old father of six, said he has staples in his back and stomach. Your life, and not only just your life, your legs, something you need to move around and forward in life, can be taken from you like this, Blake said, snapping his fingers.

He added: Stick together, make some money, make everything easier for our people out there, man, because there's so much time that's been wasted. Blake, who is Black, was shot in the back by a white police officer on August 23 after walking away



In a video released on social media by his lawyer Ben Crump, Jacob Blake delivers a message from a hospital bed in Kenosha, Wisconsin on Saturday. ■ AFP

from the officer and two others who were trying to arrest him.

The officer, Rusten Sheskey, opened fire after Blake opened his own SUV's driver-side door and leaned into the vehicle. The shooting was captured on video and posted online, sparking several nights of protests and unrest in Kenosha, a city of about 100,000 between Milwaukee and Chicago.

Sheskey and the other officers who were at the scene were placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of an investigation by the Wisconsin Department of Justice.

None of them have been charged. Blake, who had an outstanding arrest warrant when he was shot, pleaded not guilty Friday to charges accusing him of sexually assaulting a woman in May and waived his right to a preliminary hearing.

Blake appeared remotely via video conference from his Milwaukee hospital bed, wearing a dress shirt and tie. He spoke only to respond to the judge's questions.

The state Justice Department has said a knife was recovered from Blake's vehicle, but it has not said whether he was holding it when officers tried to arrest him.

The man who made the widely seen cellphone video of the shooting, 22-year-old Raysean White, said he saw Blake scuffling with three officers and heard them yell, Drop the knife! Drop the knife! before gunfire erupted. He said he didn't see a knife in Blake's hands.

The Kenosha police union said Blake had the knife and refused orders to drop it. Blake fought with police, including putting one officer in a headlock, the union said. Police twice used a Taser, which did not stop Blake.

RESOLUTE



Belarus opposition supporters attend a rally to protest against the disputed 9 August presidential election results in Minsk on Sunday.

AFP

1 killed, 7 injured in multiple stabbings in UK's Birmingham



Police forensics officers gather evidence inside a cordon on Hurst Street, following a stabbing incident in the centre of Birmingham on Sunday.

■ AFP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 6 SEPTEMBER

UK police said a murder inquiry has been launched on Sunday after one man was killed and seven people injured in multiple stabbings overnight in the city of Birmingham.

According to reports, West Midlands Police believe the victims were picked at random and do not believe the incident was terror or gang related. While a man and a woman are battling serious injuries, the injuries of five others are not thought to be life-threatening, the force said. A hunt has been initiated for a male suspect, who is believed to have gone on a stabbing spree, starting at Constitution Hill in Birmingham.

"The events during the early hours of this morning are tragic, shocking and understandably frightening," said Chief Superintendent Steve Graham, responsible for policing in Birmingham.

"Please be assured that we are doing absolutely everything we can to find whoever was responsible and try to understand what exactly happened. We have well-rehearsed plans for dealing with major incidents," he said, calling on the public to remain vigilant and report anything suspicious. The force is also calling for anyone with CCTV or mobile footage to contact the police. The police believe the incidents, which took place between 12:30am and 2:20am local time, are linked and are

following a number of lines of enquiry. An increased uniformed and armed response has been put in place across the city.

The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson, said: "Last night's events are truly terrible and have shocked the people of Birmingham, the West Midlands and the country."

"My first thoughts are with the victims and their families at this time. I have every faith in West Midlands Police who are working extremely quickly on this investigation."

Earlier, the police had declared a major incident as cordons were put up and an investigation was launched following reports of the stabbings.

A major incident describes any situation involving serious harm or a security risk to the public and covers special arrangements for all of the emergency services to work together.

West Midlands Police said they are uncertain as to the motive behind the stabbings and are working to establish the details after they were called to reports of one stabbing just after midnight in the city centre. Officers have set up a cordon at the junction of Hurst Street, a popular night-life area in the city centre. Officers have set up a cordon at the junction of Hurst Street, a popular night-life area in the city centre.

The Kenosha police union said Blake had the knife and refused orders to drop it. Blake fought with police, including putting one officer in a headlock, the union said. Police twice used a Taser, which did not stop Blake.

Berlusconi responding to virus drugs but in 'delicate' phase

ROME, 6 SEPTEMBER

Former Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi is responding optimally to Covid-19 treatment but is the most vulnerable type of patient and is in the most delicate phase of the virus, his personal doctor said Sunday.

Dr Alberto Zangrillo repeated Sunday that he nevertheless remained cautiously optimistic about Berlusconi's recovery. The three-time premier turns 84 in a few weeks and has had a history of heart problems that required being fitted with a pacemaker several years ago. He checked into the San Raffaele hospital in Milan early Friday after testing positive for the virus earlier in the week. At the time he had the early stages of a lung infection.

The patient is responding optimally to treatment," Zangrillo told reporters outside the hospital. This doesn't mean we can claim victory because, as you know, he belongs to the most fragile category, given his age. Data from Italy's Superior Institute of Health indicates that men aged 80-87 have the highest Covid-19 death rate among all cases in Italy, at 47 per cent.

Zangrillo suggested Berlusconi wouldn't be released anytime soon, recalling that the virus requires adequate treatment and takes its time. Berlusconi spent some of his summer vacation at his seaside villa on Sardinia's Emerald Coast. Many of Italy's recent cases of COVID-19 have been linked to clusters in people who vacationed in Sardinia. Zangrillo, Berlusconi's longtime doctor, is head of intensive care at San Raffaele. To date, Berlusconi is believed to still be in a VIP ward of the clinic. Zangrillo has been criticized for having asserted at the end of May, when Italy's lockdown had greatly slowed its rate of new infections, that clinically speaking the virus doesn't exist anymore."

West Midlands Police said they are uncertain as to the motive behind the stabbings and are working to establish the details after they were called to reports of one stabbing just after midnight in the city centre. Officers have set up a cordon at the junction of Hurst Street, a popular night-life area in the city centre.

The Kenosha police union said Blake had the knife and refused orders to drop it. Blake fought with police, including putting one officer in a headlock, the union said. Police twice used a Taser, which did not stop Blake.

"Please be assured that we are doing absolutely everything we can to find whoever was responsible and try to understand what exactly happened. We have well-rehearsed plans for dealing with major incidents," he said, calling on the public to remain vigilant and report anything suspicious. The force is also calling for anyone with CCTV or mobile footage to contact the police. The police believe the incidents, which took place between 12:30am and 2:20am local time, are linked and are

following a number of lines of enquiry. An increased uniformed and armed response has been put in place across the city.

Britain's chief Brexit negotiator talked tough ahead of a crucial round of post-Brexit trade talks, saying the UK was not afraid to walk away if the European Union does not give ground on key issues.

David Frost told the Mail on Sunday newspaper that Britain wants to get back the powers to control our borders and that is the most important thing.

Frost and EU negotiator Michel Barnier are due to meet in London on Tuesday for the eighth round of negotiations since Britain left the now 27-nation bloc on January 31. That political departure will be followed by an economic break when an 11-month transition period ends on 31 December and Britain leaves EU's single market and customs union. The two sides are trying to strike a new deal on trade, security and other issues, but talks are deadlocked. The key sticking points are European boats' access to UK fishing waters and state aid to industries. The EU is deter-

Cohen memoir casts him as 'star witness' against Trump

ASSOCIATE PRESS

NEW YORK, 6 SEPTEMBER

Michael Cohen's tell-all memoir makes the case that President Donald Trump is guilty of the same crimes that landed his former fixer in federal prison, offering a blow-by-blow account of Trump's alleged role in a hush-hush scandal that once overshadowed his presidency.

Of all the crises Cohen confronted working for Trump, none proved as vexing as the porn actress Stormy Daniels and her claims of an extramarital affair with Trump, Cohen writes in *Disloyal: The True Story of the Former Personal Attorney to President Donald J. Trump*.

Trump, despite his later protestations, green-lighted the \$130,000 payment to silence Daniels ahead of the 2016 election, reasoning he would have to pay his wife a far greater sum if the affair ever became known, Cohen writes, adding the president later reimbursed him with fake guilt.

It never pays to settle these things, but many, many friends have advised me to pay, Trump said, according to Cohen. "If



Cohen's allegations, the most detailed to date, are part of an unsparing and deeply personal put-down of Trump. He assails Trump as an organized crime don and master manipulator, but allows that he saw much of himself in a man he once considered a father figure

an organized crime don and master manipulator, but allows that he saw much of himself in a man he once considered a father figure.

I care for Donald Trump, even to this day," Cohen writes, and I had and still have a lot of affection for him. Cohen remains at a loss to explain his unwavering allegiance to a cut-throat businessman who abandoned him at the most vulnerable point in his life.

He likens his fealty to Trump to a mental illness

Demand for self-administration

The Naga Peace Accord might also impact ongoing talks with the Kukis

ISRAKIP

The Naga peace talks, after going past the 31 October 2019 deadline set by the Central government, has recently witnessed renewed efforts from most stakeholders involved. Amid talks of finalising the agreement, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah released a press statement accusing RN Ravi, Governor of Nagaland and interlocutor, of branding the Naga issue as just a "law and order" problem. Interestingly, the Naga National Political Group and a few others have maintained their silence as far as allegations on the interlocutor is concerned.

It is worth mentioning that earlier in January 2020, the NNPG and Kuki National Organisation, in a first between the two communities, signed an agreement to work closely towards resolving differences and respecting each other's history and culture. As the Naga Peace Accord enters its final stage, the fate of other ongoing talks, especially the Tripartite Suspension of Operations with the Kuki militants, has become a topic of interest for many people.

KUKI APEX BODY'S MEMORANDUM TO THE PRIME MINISTER

The Kuki Inpi Manipur, the apex body of the Kuki community, in its latest memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister on Independence Day reminded him of its various memoranda with regards to the concerns of the Kuki people. One of the main requests was a simultaneous resolution of the Kuki and Naga issue or if not so, to resolve the Kuki's concerns first.

Even as it reminded the PM of NSCN-IM's "genocidal" activities against the Kuki people in the 1990s, it categorically said that the community will not accept any Naga agreement if it involves Kuki-inhabited areas, especially the five districts where they are the majority – Churachandpur, Pherzawl, Kangpokpi, Tengnoupal and Chandel. While clarifying that they welcome a peaceful solution for any community, the Kuki requested the government to expedite talks with Kuki groups and resolve the long-pending issue in the best interests of peace and development in the region.

SIGNIFICANCE OF 'SAHNIT NI'

13 September 1993 was not just any day for Manipur as more than 100 people belonging to the Kuki community were mercilessly butchered. Since then, Kukis all around the world have observed the day as "Sahnit ni" or Kuki Black Day. From 1992 to 1996, more

than a thousand lives were lost by the Kuki community to what they alleged was the handiwork of Th Muivah in a bid to grab the lands of the Kuki people for his party's greater Nagaland dreams. The NSCN-IM on the other hand, alleged that it was the Kukis who started the clash and that there are victims on both sides.

In 2018, a monolith in memory of the Kukis killed in the conflict was erected and a prayer organised under the aegis of Kuki Inpi Churachandpur. According to the Kukis, "Sahnit ni" is not about vengeance but remembering the departed souls. "They were killed for no fault of theirs but because they were Kukis. They were asked to leave homes and fertile fields not because they didn't know that it belonged to the Kukis since time immemorial but because they wanted to stake a claim to them," said M Henkai, chief of Joupi, in an interview with a local news channel in 2018. He had lost his older brother, then chief of Joupi, on that fatal day.

VICTIMS OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN 2020

Chassad village, which has an important place in the history of Kukis as the Anglo-Kuki war hero Pu Pache hailed from there, was burnt down in March 2020 by its neighbouring villagers of Kamjong and Sampui. The reason behind the arson was said to be a land dispute, which went back to decades old misunderstandings. According to people in Kamjong, Chassad villagers were protesting the burning down of two huts by Sampui villagers by blocking roads and burning an under construction petrol pump. It resulted in the clash which eventually led Kamjong villagers to wipe out the houses of Chassad.

However, Doungul Lelen, a villager of Chassad, claimed that it was not an issue of them protesting alone that resulted in the arson. "We have been repeatedly threatened by the NSCN-IM to pay taxes or leave Chassad. The issue of land disputes and inter-village feuds are just a ploy to frustrate us and cover up their real intention to stake claim to Chassad as part of their land. We have all the necessary land records and copies of court rulings but they have guns," said Doungul. The NSCN-IM refuted the claims by stating that it was an inter-village clash.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF KUKI DEMANDS

The Anglo-Kuki war, also recorded as the Kuki Rebellion or Kuki Uprising from 1917-1919, was fought by the



Kukis to protect their ancestral land and freedom, among many other reasons. It was a defining moment as it was proof that the Kukis lived independently and were ready to face any force, including the British.

Unfortunately today, the once heroic group of people have been tagged as refugees in their own land. The Kukis have been denied their right for self-determination for decades. With almost all the communities in the North-east having their own different level of autonomy and self-administration, it is the Kukis who have been sidelined for quite a while now.

It was on this basis that Kuki militants took up arms. The logic appears to be – if the Central government could deal with the issue of the Naga people, who have a state of their own, why is it ignoring the concerns of the Kuki people?

CONSTITUTIONAL AMBIT VERSUS SEPARATE CONSTITUTION

Kuki militants first took up arms with a demand for sovereignty and the reclamation of Kuki country. Later on, with an agreement to hold talks with the Central government, the KNO and United People's Front acceded to drop sovereignty demands. It was a dream that could have integrated the now scattered Kuki people in three different countries – Bangladesh, India and Myanmar.

The message of the need for a

solution within the ambit of the Indian Constitution, conveyed regularly in various platforms, finally convinced the people after initial resentment. The Manipur government, on the other hand, was hell bent on protecting the integrity of the state. Eventually, the idea of a Territorial Council in the line of the Bodoland Territorial Council was agreed upon for discussions. For Kukis, while a TC was a huge climb-down from their initial demands, several rounds of talks thereafter have failed to bring any amicable solution.

In a stark contrast to what Kukis demand, the NSCN-IM's chairman said in his 2020 Independence Day speech that a separate constitution and flag are non-negotiable as the Nagas, according to him, already have one and it is up to the Centre to recognise it or not. Its other demand of integrating the Naga-inhabited areas has received opposition from all neighbouring states, namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. In Manipur, 18 youngsters had lost their lives in protest against the inclusion of the state in the ceasefire area in 2001.

Also notable is the press statement on 28 August 2020 made by the United Committee of Manipur, a conglomerate of various valley-based civil society organisations, which strongly asserted that the people of Manipur will not accept the Naga Peace agreement if it affects the integrity and

identity of Manipur. It is unthinkable what could befall the region in the unlikely event of the Central government acceding to the demand of integration.

Interestingly, many Nagaland-based organisations like NNPGs are not vocal about the integration theory but more focused on the completion of the Naga Peace Accord and the return of normalcy. The idea of integration is now viewed by many as an attempt by the Manipur Naga community in general and the Tangkhul tribe in particular, to which Muivah belongs, to have a larger share and voice in the social and political scene of Nagaland.

THE ONLY WAY FORWARD

Militancy issues in the North-east have been a stumbling block for peace and development. While Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Meghalaya have by and large overcome the issue, Manipur, Nagaland and parts of Assam are still far from that. The Naga issue, being one of the oldest militancy issues in the region, deserves an amicable solution.

One feels that it is the sincere hope of people in the North-east that militancy issues of not just the Nagas but others, including the Kukis, are resolved by involving all the stakeholders concerned.

*The writer is author of *Hilly Dreams: The Story of Aboi**

CRACKS IN THE CULTURAL MOSAIC

Given its multi-religious and multi-lingual populace, no one can say for certain who is Assamese and who isn't

1951, and then reserving land, jobs and political representation in an exclusive manner for them is not exactly what the Constitution desires. The constitutional recognition of scheduled tribes, minorities and other such groups with claims of special rights is adopted by considering whether it would create discrimination or a negative impact on the lives of others.

Assam, being a multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious state, formed by slicing off certain territories of erstwhile eastern Bengal like Sylhet actually comprises a huge area where people of non-Assamese ethnic origin live. Despite occasional differences and struggle for rights, Assam, as it stands today, is a melting pot of cultures, languages, ethnicities and identities.

This process of naturalisation in a cultural sense is part of India's national identity. In the same breath, heroes such as King Sukapha, Sati Joymati, Kanaklata, Bipin Chandra Pal, Piyali Phukon, Ajan Pir and Sankardeva make one understand Assam's deep-rooted history of respectful co-existence among multiple strands of spirituality and social life. That said, struggles for identity recognition and territorial homeland claims have occupied a major part of public discourse in

post-colonial Assam.

Looked at from the colonial prism, Assam was quite different in the past. Assam, after 1826 for example, was limited to the North bank or Upper Assam, which did not include the vast western plains of Goalpara or present-day Barak Valley. Its territorial definition was ambivalent in relation to the hills like Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao. From then on, the history of territorial inclusion and exclusion within what we find today as post-colonial contemporary Assam is a history of several assemblages and dissociations.

The infamous Sylhet referendum that ceded a huge territory to Pakistan along with the port city of Chittagong, often hailed as Gopinath Bordoloi's point of bargain to save Assam from going to Pakistan in the Boundary Commission, also marks a big source of displacement and violence on linguistic and religious minorities falling within those areas who wanted to join India. The Constitution of India, through several international pacts, legal declarations and clauses in the Citizenship Act of 1955, recognised the needs of Partition victims and allowed them to naturalise in post-Independence Assam as people of India.

It is a question of polity making in consciously avoiding discrimina-

tory tags like refugee, immigrant or outsider as it provides for many unintended consequences for a segment of people. The idea of "Bor Assom" or greater Assam by including many non-Assamese ethnicities in a constitutional framework of right to equality and freedom of expression evolved through a long struggle for accommodation and transformation. All that has been achieved during the 73 years after Independence cannot be dismantled for electoral gains.

The report making 1951 as the cut-off date for deciding who is Assamese or indigenous leaves out several diverse inter-ethnic groups from the ambit of its definition. It requires re-normalisation of group rights with specific claims of rights and identities.

It brings into question the status of official languages also. Bengali and Bodo have been defined as official languages within the Barak Valley and Bodo areas by the committee report.

Certain forces want to create a space for reinterpreting the very notion of language by trying to remove Bengali as the official language of the Barak Valley. Those forces want to categorically exclude people and groups who could be termed by the cut-off year as non-indigenous. Such unintended consequences, which are against the spirit of Assam and India, is gaining ground before the Assembly elections of 2021.

There is also a sharp language of polarisation that affects the democratic public space. Identifying certain linguistic groups as encroachers based on specious tracts of colonial history is overwhelming identity discourse in Assam. No one can go back to the

The writer is a philosopher and human rights activist based in Shillong

PLUS POINTS

Course launched



A new post-graduate programme titled Master's in Hospital Administration was launched in Guwahati recently, where the degree holders are expected to be qualified to manage diverse roles of leadership, management and administration in the healthcare sector.

The University of Science and Technology Meghalaya, in association with Dr B Barooah Cancer Institute, officially launched the two-year course, which would be a mix of theories, assignments and case studies, in presence of a host of dignitaries. "The objective behind launching the programme is to cater to the needs of the healthcare sector where trained and skilled administrators are needed in hospitals and other healthcare institutes for smooth functioning," said USTM chancellor Mahbubul Hoque.

BBCI director Dr Amal Chandra Kataki stated that candidates with a Bachelor's degree in any discipline with 50 per cent aggregate marks can apply for the new Master's degree course. He also announced that considering the economic hardship arising due to Covid-19, a special incentive would be given to economically under-privileged students.

—NAVA THAKURIA

Meghalaya reshuffle



In a major reshuffle of the Meghalaya bureaucracy, East Khasi Hills deputy commissioner Matsiewdor War Nongbri and 15 other senior officials have been transferred from their present posts, says a report in the Guwahati-based *Assam Tribune*.

The deputy commissioner of East Khasi Hills has been transferred and posted as the secretary of information and public relations. In her place, deputy commissioner of South West Khasi Hills, Isawana Laloo, was appointed as the new DC of East Khasi Hills. The secretary of the social welfare department, Caramai Kharkongor, has been posted as the new deputy commissioner of South West Khasi Hills district.

On the other hand, East Jaintia Hills deputy commissioner Frederick M Doph has been transferred and posted as the secretary, textiles. In his place, the secretary of the Meghalaya Urban Development Authority, Ethelbert Kharmpali, would hold the charge as the DC of East Khasi Hills district. Deputy commissioner of North Garo Hills district, Sibhi Chakravarthy Sadhu, has been transferred and posted as the director of community and rural development.

In his place, RP Marak, the Additional Chief Electoral Officer, has been posted as the deputy commissioner of North Garo Hills district, subject to clearance by the Election Commission of India.

The Chief Electoral Officer of the Shillong Municipal Board, Batlang Samuel Sohliya, who is the director of information and public relations, will now take charge as the secretary of Muda. The joint secretary, urban affairs, Gideon Kharmpawhlang will additionally function as the director of the urban affairs department.

Additional deputy commissioner of East Khasi Hills, MB Tongper, has been posted at Nongpoh, while extra assistant commissioner of Shillong, MA Challam, has been posted at Jowai.

Mindless revelry

In the wake of the detection of 62 fresh Covid-19 cases, including 49 last Thursday, in the Aalo area of Arunachal Pradesh following a 'DJ night' event, West Siang deputy commissioner Moki Loyi Loipai promulgated prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC, restricting movement of people and vehicles to enable doctors and health workers to carry out contact tracing and prevent further spread of the virus.

The DC said that the Humgo Rigo Resort, where the alleged event was held in violation of Covid-19 protocols, has been banned and another resort, Cozy Resort, has been declared a containment zone after five of its workers tested positive for Covid-19, says a report in the *Assam Tribune*.

Further, an FIR has been lodged against the event organisers, the DC said, adding that a thorough magisterial and police inquiry would be conducted and accordingly, action would be initiated. The district administration clarified that it did not give any permission, nor the organisers of the event sought any permission in this regard.



CRACKS IN THE CULTURAL MOSAIC

Given its multi-religious and multi-lingual populace, no one can say for certain who is Assamese and who isn't

1951, and then reserving land, jobs and political representation in an exclusive manner for them is not exactly what the Constitution desires. The constitutional recognition of scheduled tribes, minorities and other such groups with claims of special rights is adopted by considering whether it would create discrimination or a negative impact on the lives of others.

Assam, being a multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious state, formed by slicing off certain territories of erstwhile eastern Bengal like Sylhet actually comprises a huge area where people of non-Assamese ethnic origin live. Despite occasional differences and struggle for rights, Assam, as it stands today, is a melting pot of cultures, languages, ethnicities and identities.

This process of naturalisation in a cultural sense is part of India's national identity. In the same breath, heroes such as King Sukapha, Sati Joymati, Kanaklata, Bipin Chandra Pal, Piyali Phukon, Ajan Pir and Sankardeva make one understand Assam's deep-rooted history of respectful co-existence among multiple strands of spirituality and social life. That said, struggles for identity recognition and territorial homeland claims have occupied a major part of public discourse in

post-colonial Assam.

Looked at from the colonial prism, Assam was quite different in the past. Assam, after 1826 for example, was limited to the North bank or Upper Assam, which did not include the vast western plains of Goalpara or present-day Barak Valley. Its territorial definition was ambivalent in relation to the hills like Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao. From then on, the history of territorial inclusion and exclusion within what we find today as post-colonial contemporary Assam is a history of several assemblages and dissociations.

The report making 1951 as the cut-off date for deciding who is Assamese or indigenous leaves out several diverse inter-ethnic groups from the ambit of its definition. It requires re-normalisation of group rights with specific claims of rights and identities.

It brings into question the status of official languages also. Bengali and Bodo have been defined as official languages within the Barak Valley and Bodo areas by the committee report.

Certain forces want to create a space for reinterpreting the very notion of language by trying to remove Bengali as the official language of the Barak Valley. Those forces want to categorically exclude people and groups who could be termed by the cut-off year as non-indigenous. Such unintended consequences, which are against the spirit of Assam and India, is gaining ground before the Assembly elections of 2021.

There is also a sharp language of polarisation that affects the democratic public space. Identifying certain linguistic groups as encroachers based on specious tracts of colonial history is overwhelming identity discourse in Assam. No one can go back to the

The writer is a philosopher and human rights activist based in Shillong

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

VALUABLE PLAYER

Kolkata Knight Riders, who have a new think tank in place headed by coach Brendon McCullum, are exploring the options of promoting their explosive all-rounder Andre Russell (*in photo, left*) at number three, team mentor David Hussey said on Sunday. Hussey said they are thinking of different combinations this season, which includes promoting Russell at three. "If it benefits the team and helps us win games of cricket, why not? If that means Andre Russell comes in at three and bats 60 balls, he might actually make a double hundred. Anything can happen with Dre Russ," Hussey said.

THUMBNAILS

Mohammedan Sporting rope in forward Subhash Singh: Mohammedan Sporting Club completed the signing of experienced forward Singam Subhash Singh as the Black Panthers added depth to their squad ahead of their 2020-2021 2nd Division League qualifier campaign. Singh, who turned out for Neroca FC last season, arrived in Kolkata on Sunday afternoon.

Punia discharged from hospital: World championship silver-medalist wrestler Deepak Punia, who tested positive for COVID-19 upon his arrival at the national camp, has been discharged from hospital and advised home isolation. Besides the Olympic-bound Punia (86kg), the other two wrestlers who tested positive for the virus were Navin (65kg) and Krishan (125kg).

Shuttlers training: Top singles players such as Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth will finally resume training from Monday as the Sports Authority of India (SAI) gave its go-ahead to the national badminton camp at the Pellela Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad under strict COVID-19 guidelines. The players who will be part of the camp are Nehwal, Sai Praneeth, P Kashyap, Srikanth (all singles), women's doubles pair of Sikki Reddy and Ashwini Ponappa, along with seven coaches, four support staff and three sparring partners.

Yates retains yellow jersey after stage 8: Britain's Adam Yates retained the yellow jersey of the 2020 Tour de France after an arduous stage eight as local rookie rider Nans Peters won the stage. However, Saturday was a day of mixed feelings for local fans because fellow Frenchman Thibaut Pinot fell on the second climb of the day and finished over 25 minutes behind Peters, whose hopes of becoming the first home rider to win the Tour since 1985 have diminished as he sits nearly 19 minutes behind on the overall standings.

AITA gets new president: The All India Tennis Association (AITA) on Sunday elected BJP Rajya Sabha member Anil Jain as new president while Anil Dhpur was chosen as its secretary general during the national federation's Annual General Meeting in New Delhi. India's Davis Cup captain Rohit Rajpal was elected as the treasurer for a four-year term till 2024. All the office bearers as well as the new executive committee members were elected unopposed. Immediately after his election as AITA president, Jain announced setting up of a Centre of Excellence (CoE) at the Delhi Lawn Tennis Association (DLTA).

Sussex pacer Clayton suspended: Australia-born English first-class cricketer Mitch Clayton has been suspended by his county side Sussex for allegedly applying hand sanitiser on the ball. The 37-year-old right-arm medium pacer has been accused of applying hand sanitiser in a match against Middlesex last month in which he took three wickets. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has opened an investigation into the case.

Mbappe helps France edge past Sweden: Paris Saint-Germain striker Kylian Mbappe scored as France earned a 1-0 win over Sweden in the UEFA Nations League on Saturday. Mbappe's goal in the 41st minute was his 14th goal for his country. The 21-year-old cut in from the left and found the gap between Sweden goalkeeper Robin Olsen and the post with a left-footed shot.

Kolkata Knight Riders, who have a new think tank in place headed by coach Brendon McCullum, are exploring the options of promoting their explosive all-rounder Andre Russell (*in photo, left*) at number three, team mentor David Hussey said on Sunday. Hussey said they are thinking of different combinations this season, which includes promoting Russell at three. "If it benefits the team and helps us win games of cricket, why not? If that means Andre Russell comes in at three and bats 60 balls, he might actually make a double hundred. Anything can happen with Dre Russ," Hussey said.

For more updates www.thestatesman.comAGENCIES
NEW YORK, 6 SEPTEMBER

Winning a Grand Slam is hard. For Serena Williams (*in photo*), managing the overwhelming expectations that come with a two-decade long career in the spotlight seems even harder.

The third seed advanced into the second week of the U.S. Open on Saturday, surviving a third-round scare from fellow American Sloane Stephens before winning 2-6, 6-2, 6-2 in her toughest test at this year's tournament so far.

about chasing records, Williams told reporters. "Maybe that would have been, would have, would, could be a good idea."

Her next hurdle comes in the form of Maria Sakkari of Greece, who cut short Williams' Western & Southern Open campaign just 10 days ago in the tournament's third round.

For Williams, a relentless perfectionist, the meeting is yet another chance for self-improvement. "I don't think it's anything tricky, especially when you lost it's good to kind of go back out there and try to do a little bit better," she said.

Azarenka finally feeling the joy of tennis

Victoria Azarenka won two Grand Slams and ascended to the world's No. 1 ranking earlier in her career but the Belarusian says she has never felt happier on court than she does now. The 31-year-old, who beat Iga Swiatek 6-4, 6-2 on Saturday, has not dropped a set this week en route to the fourth round at Flushing Meadows, where she



reached back-to-back finals in 2012 and 2013, losing both to Serena Williams.

"I feel like I've been always passionate, but the joy of playing and kind of accepting the process, all of the good and bad in the process, I have never done that before in my career, even when I was No. 1, when I was winning Grand Slam," she said.

"I feel like sometimes this quick turnaround can work in your favour," she told reporters.

Thiem sees off Cilic

Second seed Dominic Thiem staved off a spirited fightback from Marin Cilic to beat the former champion 6-2, 6-2, 6-3 on Saturday and reach the fourth round of the U.S. Open.

Thiem had won both his pre-

vious meetings with the 31st seeded Croat and quickly stamped his authority on the evening's final match on the Arthur Ashe Stadium court with two service breaks in each of the first two sets.

"I think the quick start was more because of him," the Austrian said of Cilic, who was taken to five sets in his opener and four in the last round.

"He had two very tough opening rounds, long matches."

Cilic regrouped in the third set, however, and once the former world No. 3 found his range the winners started to flow.

Thiem, who has reached three Grand Slam finals without success, began to struggle with his second serve and Cilic broke for the first time in the

match to go up 4-2 and then forced a fourth set.

Thiem had to save five break points during the set and converted his only opportunity in the sixth game to nose ahead before sealing the match with a big first serve when Cilic's return found the net.

Bopanna-Shapovalov enter quarterfinals

India veteran Rohan Bopanna and his Canadian partner Denis Shapovalov stumped sixth seeds Kevin Krawietz and Andreas Mies in a hard-fought three-setter to advance to the quarterfinals of the US Open men's doubles event here.

The unseeded Indo-Canadian pair on Saturday overcame a set deficit to beat the Ger-

Mladenovic out of US Open because of coronavirus quarantine

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, 6 SEPTEMBER

in singles she lost in the second round after blowing a 6-1, 5-1 lead and winning one in doubles. And the other half-dozen players found to have contact with Paire also played in the tournament, including No. 32 seed Adrian Mannarino in men's singles, whose match Friday was delayed for more than 2 hours until it was determined he could play. He lost.

Mladenovic was one of seven players placed under extra restrictions during the tournament after contact tracing determined she potentially could have been exposed to COVID-19 by Benoit Paire, the only entrant to test positive. The U.S. Tennis Association announced Saturday that it was removing Mladenovic and her partner, Timea Babos of Hungary, saying it was obligated to adhere to government guidance. Mladenovic and Babos were supposed to play their second-round match against Gabriela Dabrowski of Canada and Alison Riske of the U.S., who advanced via walkover.

Mladenovic had been allowed to compete until Saturday, playing two matches

man duo 4-6, 6-4 in a second-round encounter that lasted one hour and 47 minutes.

Bopanna and Shapovalov will play on Dutch-Romanian combination of Jean-Julien Rojer and Horia Tecau in the quarterfinals. Bopanna is the lone surviving Indian in the tournament after the exit of Sumit Nagal and

Divij Sharan. While Sumit Nagal bowed out in the second round after losing in straight sets to world no. 3 and second seed Dominic Thiem of Austria, Sharan and his Serbian partner Nikola Cacic were knocked out in the opening round of the men's doubles event by eighth seeds Nikolay Mektic and Wesley Koolhof.

Gasly surprise Italian GP winner as Hamilton given penaltyAGENCIES
MONZA, 6 SEPTEMBER

AlphaTauri driver Pierre Gasly (*in photo*) claimed an unlikely victory at the Italian Grand Prix after a thrilling race which saw world champion Lewis Hamilton given a 10-second penalty and both Ferraris fail to finish at their home circuit on Sunday.

It was Gasly's first-ever win in Formula One. The 24-year-old Frenchman finished 0.415 seconds ahead of McLaren driver Charles Leclerc and 3.358 ahead of Racing Point's Lance Stroll on a surprise podium.

All three drivers had never won a race and each had only one top-three finish to their name.

Hamilton appeared on course for a comfortable victory from pole position but he was given the stop-go penalty for entering the pit lane when closed.

The Mercedes driver finished seventh, 17.245 behind Gasly.

Ferrari's abysmal weekend continued as Sebastian Vettel had a brake failure on Lap 7 and he limped into the pits with his right-rear brake disc in flames. It was the



four-time champion's first DNF at Monza in his 14th start.

His teammate Charles Leclerc had made it into fourth but lost the rear of the car under acceleration through Parabolica on Lap 25 and crashed into the barriers, causing the race to be red flagged.

By that time Hamilton's penalty had been announced. Hamilton had pitted immediately after the safety car had been deployed after Kevin Magnussen broke down but was unaware the pit lane was closed as the marshals recovered Magnussen's Haas.

Antonio Giovinazzi received the same sanction.

BCCI finally releases IPL schedule, Mumbai Indians to face CSK in openerPRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Ending days of anxious wait, the BCCI on Sunday released the schedule for the upcoming IPL, and in keeping with tradition, defending champions Mumbai Indians will take on runners-up Chennai Super Kings in the opener in Abu Dhabi on September 19. Moved out of India due to a surge in COVID-19 cases, the upcoming edition of the world's biggest T20 league will be held in the three venues of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah in the UAE.

After the tournament opens in the capital city, Dubai will host its first game the next day when Delhi Capitals take on Kings XI Punjab followed by the third match on Monday between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bangalore. The action will then shift to Sharjah on September 22 when Rajasthan Royals will host Chennai Super Kings.

There will be 10 double headers, with the first match starting at 3:30pm IST and the second 7:30pm, according to a BCCI release. In all, 24 matches will be held in Dubai, 20 in Abu Dhabi and 12 in Sharjah.

Venues for the playoffs and the IPL 2020 final will be

announced later. The final is slated for November 10. The upcoming 53-day edition is by far the longest in the history of the league. The schedule was expected to be out in the last week of August but the announcement was delayed after 13 personnel of the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) camp tested positive for the dreaded virus.

Also, due to different quarantine rules in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, IPL's operations team took time to finalise the schedule. As per IPL rules, the defending champions and the last year's runner-up face off in the tournament opener. The same is going to happen this year after concerns over Chennai Super

Kings' readiness were erased with their first practice session in Dubai on Friday.

CSK were the last franchise to hit the nets after clearing final rounds of COVID-19 testing.

Captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and all other CSK players, except for the COVID-19 afflicted duo of Deepak Chahar and Ruturaj Gaikwad, started training on Friday.

With Deepak and Ruturaj testing positive last week along with 11 members of the CSK contingent, the team was forced to delay its training plan after completing the six-day quarantine, including three tests, upon arrival on August 21.

The virus free players had to undergo three additional tests before beginning their training on Friday. The infected players are in 14-day quarantine.

This year's IPL was originally scheduled to be held from March 29 to May 24 but was postponed barely two weeks before the start of the tournament due to the coronavirus outbreak. Then, as the number of cases increased, the league was indefinitely postponed but the postponement of the T20 World Cup cleared the decks for the league to take place in the September-November window.

I have not given up hope on Test comeback: DhawanPRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI, 6 SEPTEMBER

more difficult. The left-handed batsman, though, remains optimistic. "I will keep trying my best. The T20 World Cup is there next year, so I need to keep performing, keep myself fit, make runs consistently."

"If I keep doing these, other things will automatically fall into place," Dhawan has so far played 34 Tests and scored 2,315 runs with seven centuries under his belt at an average of 40.61. He remains in the scheme of things in ODIs and T20Is and is gearing up for IPL 2020, to be held in UAE from September 19.

The experienced Dhawan will turn out for Delhi Capitals and spoke about the challenges being faced by the players while staying in a bio-bubble amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dhawan stroked his way to the fastest Test century by a debutant, against Australia in 2013, but has often struggled for consistency in the five-day game. In Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul, Mayank Agarwal and Prithvi Shaw, the Test team has a number of options at its disposal for opener's role, making Dhawan's case even

speculation.

The Rs 1,800 dues is mentioned in the JSCA's annual report 2019-20 that has recently been published. However, the report gives no other detail of the dues except that this amount was "receivable" from one of India's most successful captains based in Ranchi. Later, Sahay apparently clarified that it was actually the GST amount that Dhoni has to pay on his JSCA life membership fees of Rs 10,000.

Pathak said when he went to deposit the cheque at the JSCA's registered headquarters at the Keenan Stadium in Jamshedpur it was not accepted.

"Some school kids and Dhoni's fans collected the money and got a draft made of Rs 1,800. But when I, along with some other people, went to the JSCA office to deposit it, they refused to take it - perhaps on someone's instructions -- and gave an acknowledgement receipt. We were advised we could send it by post," Pathak, who is known

to protest against alleged irregularities in the JSCA, told IANS.

Sahay asked if Dhoni had authorised those people to deposit the amount. "If someone has to do something he is free to do that. He can't be stopped. Suppose I authorise someone to pay fees or money on my behalf, only then can that person pay it, isn't it?" Did Dhoni authorise these people to pay his dues? My per-

mission (to accept the draft) is not needed in this; the permission of the person who is supposed to pay dues is required - that they could deposit the dues on that person's behalf. Isn't it? Otherwise, anyone can come and offer to pay the dues of anyone," Sahay told IANS.

And when asked if Dhoni had submitted his dues, Sahay left enough scope for more speculation. "I can't tell you that," he would merely say. He tried justifying this by saying: "This issue is between us (JSCA) and the person who is to pay the dues. The JSCA annual report is up to March 31, 2020. Who knows whether he has paid his dues after March 31? Only I know; no one else knows this. This is an internal matter of the association. So, let it be with the association."

It is being said in Jharkhand cricketing circles that a JSCA representative had gone to Dhoni's home in Ranchi to collect the Rs 10,000 life membership fee after the JSCA's management committee's decision was approved at the JSCA's October AGM. But, strangely, the JSCA took an inordinately long time to publish the members' list on its website, and finally did it this July.

Dhoni's ₹1,800 membership dues of JSCA kicks up stormINDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 6 SEPTEMBER

Printed and published by VINOD KUMAR GUPTA for THE STATESMAN LTD, Statesman House, 148 Barakhamba Road, New Delhi ♦ Editor: RAVINDRA KUMAR ♦ Executive Editor: ARYA RUDRA ♦ Printed at Vibha Publication Pvt Ltd, D-160 B, Sector 7, NOIDA 201301 (UP). © The Statesman Ltd. RNB REG. No. M-8905, RNI No. 507/57