

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2020



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Shivraj showers sops on farmers ahead of bypolls, promises ₹4K per annum



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Newcomer Sharvari Wagh bags a mega 3-film deal with Yash Raj Films



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Britain's Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, reacts during a visit to Battersea Park as she met up with some mothers in London on Tuesday. — AP

Major decline: 75,083 new Covid cases in 24 hours

New Delhi: A major decline in fresh cases of novel coronavirus was recorded in the last 24 hours as newly detected cases came down to 75, 083. This is the fifth consecutive day when cases are found to be reducing from 97, 894 on September 17. Union Health Secretary Mr Rajesh Bhushan said that the decline in fresh cases has nothing to do with lesser testings. This coincided with over 1 lakh recoveries in one day for the first time taking the country's Recovery Rate to 80.86 per cent. ■ **More on Page 4**

Building collapse toll rises to 25 in Maha

Mumbai: The death toll in the Bhiwandi building collapse in Maharashtra rose to 25 on Tuesday, with the recovery of seven more bodies overnight, police said. Bodies of a two-and-a-half-year-old boy and a young couple were recovered 24 hours after the crash, police said. — PTI

Nasa plans to send 1st woman to moon

Washington: Nasa is preparing to launch its Moon Mission for the year 2024. To achieve the return of humanity on the moon, Artemis mission is all set to propel to take the first woman and the next man, to further the innovative research with advanced level technology. — Agencies ■ **More on Page 6**



No need to rush... all your party MPs have been suspended!

WEATHER

Max: 32°C
Min: 25°C
RH: 69%
Rain: 20%

Forecast: Partly cloudy

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Adhika Ashwayuja
Shuddha Saptami till 8.02 pm
Star: Jyeshtha till 6.29 pm
Varjyam: Nil
Durmuhurtam: 11.44 am to 12.32 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.16 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.10 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 1.25 PM
MOONSET TODAY 10.58 AM

Opp. joins ranks, boycotts RS till suspension of 8 MPs is revoked

■ Government adamant, says apologise first; 'dy chairman acted with utmost restraint'

■ Various Opp. parties boycott Lok Sabha in solidarity with suspended RS members

■ After Opp. boycott, RS passes 7 Bills, including Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill

AGE CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22

A number of Opposition parties on Tuesday staged a walkout from the Rajya Sabha and decided to boycott proceedings of the House till the suspension of eight members is revoked, even as the government insisted on an apology from the “unruly” MPs.

Among the parties that boycotted the proceedings of the House included the Congress, which was among the first to walk out, followed by members of the CPI-M, CPI, TMC, SP, Shiv Sena, RJD, DMK, TRS and AAP.

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad, said they would boycott the proceedings till the suspension of members is revoked and also demanded that the government bring another Bill to ensure that no private player should buy food grains from farmers below the MSP fixed by the government.

Joining their colleagues in the Upper House, Opposition parties in the Lok Sabha also boycotted House proceedings later. Congress leader in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, said all Opposition parties are boycotting Parliament in solidarity with the Rajya Sabha members who were suspended on Monday. Along with Congress MPs, TMC, BSP and TRS members also walked out of the Lok Sabha.

Mr Chowdhury did not specify for how long the boycott would continue. For Lok Sabha, Monsoon Session likely to end on Wednesday.

With the Opposition deciding to boycott the Rajya Sabha, its eight suspended MPs on Tuesday ended their overnight sit-in inside the Parliament House complex and said they would take their fight against the farm Bills to the street.

After Opposition parties boycotted proceedings, Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed seven Bills, including the Essential

Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which is one of the three farm sector related Bills w h i c h

Opposition parties and farmers’ organisations have been protesting against, saying they are “anti-farm-

ers” while the Modi government asserts that they are “revolutionary.”

“I demand that the government brings another Bill in the House which should ensure that no private player can buy food grains from farmers below the MSP. The government should also ensure that the MSP is fixed as per c2 formula under Swaminathan Committee and the should also ensure that all procurement done by central, state governments and FCI be not done below MSP. The colleagues who have been suspended for the rest of the session, their suspension be revoked. Till the government does these three things, we will boycott the session,” Mr ■ **Turn to Page 4**

Anguished Harivansh observes 1-day fast

New Delhi: Rajya Sabha deputy chairman Harivansh declared on Tuesday that he was observing one-day fast till Wednesday, expressing anguish over Opposition attacks in Parliament during the vote on the government’s farm Bills in the House. **PAGE 3**

the suspension of members is revoked and also demanded that the government bring another Bill to ensure that no private player should buy food grains from farmers below the MSP fixed by the government.

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SSR death: NCB may question Deepika as well

SAURABH JOSHI MUMBAI, SEPT. 22

The list of Bollywood actors on the radar of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has gone up further with name of Deepika Padukone surfacing in the drugs angle being probe in connection with Sushant Singh Rajput’s suicide. The investigators have allegedly found chat messages between Padukone and her manager Karishma Prakash where she reportedly asked her manager for drugs. ■ **More on Page 4**



Deepika Padukone

Rhea and brother move HC for bail

Mumbai: Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty and her brother Showik, both arrested by the NCB which is probing drugs case linked with actor Sushant Singh Rajput’s death, on Tuesday filed a fresh bail application in the Bombay High Court. A special NCB court same day extended judicial custody of both the persons for 14 days. ■ **More on Page 4**

Suspended Rajya Sabha MPs end dramatic sit-in



Deputy chairman of the Rajya Sabha Harivansh Narayan Singh offers tea to suspended MPs at the premises of Parliament House as they stage a protest over their suspension from the remaining Monsoon Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

LS likely to end today, 8 days before schedule

New Delhi: The Lok Sabha is likely to be adjourned sine die on Wednesday, eight days ahead of the scheduled end of the Monsoon Session, amid concerns of spread of coronavirus among legislators, sources said on Tuesday. The House, which will meet at 3 pm on Wednesday is likely to be adjourned sine die (when there is no decided date for resumption) around 5 pm after taking up an extended Zero Hour, the sources said. The decision to curtail the session has been conveyed to floor leaders of parties in the Lower House, the sources said. — PTI

LS passes 3 Labour Codes amid boycott by Opposition

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22

Amid boycott of Lok Sabha proceedings by Opposition parties led by the Congress in protest against the suspension of eight Rajya Sabha members, three key Bills related to labour reforms were passed by the Lower House.

“The labour reforms that are being undertaken by the government will prove to be a milestone for the welfare of workers,” labour minister Santosh Gangwar said while introducing the Bills in Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

Mr Gangwar told the Lok Sabha that the amendments in labour laws were a realisation of the dreams of Bhimrao Ambedkar, who wrote India’s

► **THE INDUSTRIAL Relations Code, 2020, seeks to consolidate and amend the laws relating to trade unions, conditions of employment in industrial establishments or undertaking, investigation and settlement of industrial disputes.**

Constitution.

While moving the Bills for consideration and passage, the minister said the government has come out with changes in the legislations after extensive consultations with state governments and other stakeholders.

He said about three-fourth of the recommendations of the Standing Committee, which scruti-

nised the labour Codes, have been incorporated in the Bills.

On September 19, Mr Gangwar had introduced the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, and the Code on Social Security, 2020. Over 29 labour laws have been merged into four codes and one (Code on Wages Bill, 2019) of them has already been passed, according to the minister. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, will strengthen and amend the laws regulating the occupational safety, health and working conditions of persons employed in an establishment and othr matters. ■ **Turn to Page 4**

I-T dept notices sent to Pawars, Thackerays over poll affidavits

BHAGWAN PARAB with agency inputs MUMBAI, SEPT. 22

The income-tax department has issued a notice to NCP supremo Sharad Pawar seeking a clarification on his poll affidavits submitted to the Election Commission. He took a dig at the Centre, saying the notice was sent to him because the government “loves us”.

The veteran Maharashtra leader on Tuesday confirmed he has received a notice from the Centre asking for a “clarification and explanation” on his election affidavits. “I got the notice yesterday. We are happy that they

◀ I got the notice yesterday. We are happy that they (Centre) have a special love for us (Pawar family) among all members. The notice was served by the I-T department after the Election Commission asked (it) to... We will reply to the notice.

—Sharad Pawar NCP supremo

(Centre) have a special love for us (Pawar family) among all members. The notice was served by the I-

T department after the Election Commission asked (it) to... We will reply to the notice,” he said.

The notice was in reference to the affidavits submitted in 2009-10, 2014 as well as 2020. Mr Pawar said the department was seeking some information and clarifications related to the last three elections, and similar notices were also sent to his daughter Supriya Sule, a Lok Sabha MP, Mr Pawar said.

Besides the NCP chief and Ms Sule, similar notices were also sent by the I-T department to Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray ■ **Turn to Page 4**

ED attaches ₹203 cr worth Dubai assets of Mirchi kin

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate has provisionally attached Dubai-based assets worth over Rs 203 crore of late gangster Iqbal Mirchi’s family in connection with a money laundering case. According to a statement issued by the Central probe agency here on Tuesday, the attached assets include 15 commercial and residential prop-

erties belonging to Mirchi’s “family members”. A hotel, Midwest Hotel Iqbal Apartment, is Mirchi among the properties attached. Mirchi, who died in 2013, was alleged to be the right-hand man of terrorist Dawood Ibrahim in drug trafficking and extortion. ■ **More on Page 4**



IN BRIEF

Man arrested for kidnapping cabbie

New Delhi: A 22-year-old man booked a cab for an outstation ride and then kidnapped the driver for slapping his friend a few days earlier over a petty issue, police said on Tuesday after arresting him. The accused has been identified as Rabbani, who works as an AC mechanic and his friend Ashif, who was slapped by the cab driver is absconding, they said. According to the police, the incident took place on Monday. After being kidnapped, the victim — Mohammad Nazim — somehow managed to send his location via phone to his brother who immediately informed the police. The victim was then safely rescued by the police from a house in Zakir Nagar in southeast Delhi's Jamia Nagar area where he was confined after abduction. The accused was also arrested from the house, police said. deputy commissioner of police (Southeast) R.P. Meena said, "During investigation, Nazim told the police that he works as a driver for an app-based cab service."

10 'trafficked' children rescued

New Delhi: The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) claimed on Tuesday that it had rescued 10 children who were allegedly trafficked to work as child labourers, even as the police said they were in the process to ascertain the trafficking angle. The DCPCR said it conducted rescue operation of 10 child labourers from the New Delhi Railway Station in coordination with teams of the police, NGOs Bachpan Bachao Andolan and Prayas ChildLine, and the Karol Bagh 'tehsildar' on Tuesday. The children were being trafficked from Jainagar in Bihar to work in the National Capital Region and Ambala, Haryana, and most of them were found unaware of being forced into child labour, it said in a statement, adding that they were in unsafe and unhygienic conditions. The children were rescued by the teams successfully and provided with masks, sanitisers and refreshments, the DCPCR said. Statements of the rescued children have been recorded, followed by medical and coronavirus tests. The children will be produced before a child welfare committee (CWC) on Wednesday over video conference and they will, meanwhile, stay at the child care institution at Lajpat Nagar, it added. — PTI

1 held for stealing mobile phone

New Delhi: A 22-year-old man was arrested after he allegedly snatched a mobile phone and also made a fake PCR call of his motorcycle robbery to mislead investigators, police said on Tuesday. Khush Dutta was standing near a petrol pump at Hari Nagar Ashram on Monday when a motorcycle-borne man snatched his mobile phone. The snatcher was caught by the public while trying to escape, but he managed to flee leaving behind his bike at the spot, according to police. A case was registered and while police were checking the scene of the crime, the suspect, Saurabh Sharma, returned to spot and made a fake PCR call regarding the robbery of his bike and also to mislead the police. Sharma was then arrested after a detailed interrogation, during which he confessed to have snatched the phone, DCP (Southeast) R P Meena said.

Body found hanging from tree in Gr Noida

Noida: The decomposed body of a man was found hanging from a tree in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida on Tuesday, officials said. The body was found hanging from a mulberry tree by a saree along a road in Dadri area, they said. "The body is decomposed and it appears that the man died a few days ago. It looks like the man was aged around 30 years. "Forensic teams are working on the case and efforts are on to ascertain the identity of the deceased and unravel the case," a police spokesperson said. The 5.8 feet tall man was wearing a track-pant and a shirt, had a 'kalaava' (a Hindu religious thread) on his right arm and had a tattoo of the letter 'U' in Hindi on the backside of his palm, the official said. A case has been lodged and further proceedings are underway, the police said.



National Conference president & MP Farooq Abdullah and other lawmakers protest demanding restoration of special status of J&K and other issues in front of Mahatma Gandhi statue during the ongoing Monsoon Session at Parliament House in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

6-member expert panel likely to submit its report by Sept. 30**L-G asks experts to suggest measures to tackle Covid-19**

New Delhi, Sept. 22: In view of rising coronavirus cases in Delhi, Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal on Tuesday asked a six-member expert panel to come up with suggestions to deal with the current Coronavirus situation and ramp up health facilities in the national capital, sources said. Mr Bajjal held a meeting with the members of the panel among who are Indian Council of Medical Research Director-General Balram Bhargava, AIIMS director Randeep Guleria and National Centre for Disease Control Director Sajeet Kumar Singh. The expert panel will hold another meeting in the next few days to discuss the strategy to arrest the spread of the coronavirus in the national capital and it is likely to submit its report by September 30, the sources said. "The L-G has asked the six-member expert panel to come up with suggestions on how to tackle the current Covid situation in Delhi. Also, it will suggest

Only 44% people are compliant in wearing mask, finds survey

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22

A survey revealed that despite 90 per cent people being aware about the importance of wearing face masks to contain Covid-19, only 44 per cent are completely compliant in terms of wearing it correctly and in all relevant situations. Breathing problems (50 per cent) followed by discomfort and inconvenience (44 per cent) are key reasons for not covering the face. About 45 per cent respondents believe that as long as social distancing is maintained, they were not required to wear a mask.

The survey was initiated

measures to ramp up health facilities, including beds," a source said.

Before September 20, the national capital recorded over 4,000 Covid cases a

day for five consecutive days. The city recorded 4,071 cases on September 19; 4,127 on September 18; 4,432 on September 17; 4,473 on September 16 and

4,263 on September 15.

On Monday, 2,548 new cases were reported as only 33,733 tests were conducted on Sunday.

Earlier in the day, the Delhi High Court stayed the AAP government's order directing 33 big private hospitals to reserve 80 per cent of ICU beds for Covid patients.

However, the Delhi government said it would challenge the high court order on Wednesday.

A Delhi government functionary said that it is extremely important to reserve ICU beds in private hospitals to deal with rising coronavirus cases in the city.

Since August 18, cases again have been coming in four-figure count in the city. According to the bulletin, out of the total number of 15,804 beds in Covid hospitals, 8,753 are vacant.

It said that 1,620 beds in Covid care centres are occupied by persons under quarantine, including travellers who have returned by Vande Bharat Mission and bubble flights. — PTI

Covid: Govt wants 80% ICU beds reserved, to challenge HC order

City records 3,816 cases, total tally over 2.53 lakh

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22

Delhi has recorded 3,816 new Covid-19 cases taking the tally to over 2.53 lakh, while the death count climbed to 5,051. Delhi government, meanwhile, said it will challenge the High court order on Tuesday, staying reservation of ICU beds for Covid-19 patients in private hospitals.

Of the total 2,53,075 patients, 31,263 are active and 2,16,401 patients were recovered. With 37 deaths in the last 24 hours, total death counts rose to 5,051. The count of over 3,800 fresh cases came after 59,013 tests were done the previous day. The tally of active cases on Tuesday stood rose to 31,263 from 30,941 the previous day.

The Delhi High Court stayed city government's decision to reserve 80 per cent ICU beds for Covid-19 patients in 33 private hospitals. "It is extremely important to reserve ICU

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beds in private hospitals to deal with increasing corona cases. We are challenging this order tomorrow," said a Delhi government functionary.

The High Court bench of Justice Navin Chawla said prima facie Delhi government's September 13 order is "arbitrary, unreasonable and violative of fundamental rights of citizens" guaranteed under the Constitution. The court issued notices and sought responses of the Delhi government and the

Centre on a plea by 'Association of Healthcare Providers' to quash the order to reserve 80 per cent ICU beds for Covid-19 patients.

The Delhi government, however, defended its decision in the court, saying it is only for 33 hospitals and 20 per cent ICU beds remain for the non-Covid-19 serious patients and it has been done keeping in view the sudden spike in cases of the virus.

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Monday said 30 per cent of the Covid-19 patients admitted to city hospitals are from other states and most of them have been occupying ICU beds at private facilities.

The number of containment zones in Delhi jumped to 1,937 on Tuesday from 1,889 on Monday.

The positivity rate on Tuesday stood at 6.47 per cent while the recovery rate was over 85 per cent, the bulletin said, adding that the case fatality rate stood at two per cent.

Covid death toll in Noida rises to 50, total at 11,663

Noida, Sept. 22: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar recorded one more fatality linked to Covid that pushed the district's death toll from the pandemic to 50 on Tuesday, official data showed.

The district also recorded 244 new coronavirus patients and its tally of cases reached 11,663, while the number of active cases climbed to 1,623, according to the data released by the UP health department for a 24-hour period.

On the brighter side, 198 more novel coronavirus patients got discharged during the period, bringing the recovery count to 9,990 in the district, the data showed.

The district, adjoining Delhi, has so far recorded 50 deaths linked to the pandemic, with one of the lowest mortality rates

— 0.42 per cent — in the state, it showed.

Meanwhile, the recovery rate of patients reached 85.65 per cent, slightly down from 85.75 per cent on Monday, as per the statistics.

Gautam Buddh Nagar now ranks ninth among the 75 districts in the state in terms of active cases, seventh in recoveries and 31st in death toll, according to the official figures.

There were 63,148 active Covid cases across Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday. So far, 2,96,183 patients have recovered from the infection in the state, while the death toll linked to Covid climbed to 5,212, the data showed.

The state's average recovery rate stood at 81.25 per cent on Tuesday, up from 80.69 per cent on Monday, according to government officials. — PTI

Govt releases ₹32.1cr to 6 colleges of DU

New Delhi, Sept. 22: The AAP government on Tuesday released a grant-in-aid of Rs 32.1 crore to six Delhi University colleges fully funded by it to pay salaries to staffers.

However, the Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) called the grants inadequate.

The government has released ₹4 crore to Indira Gandhi Institute of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, ₹6.80 crore to Acharya Narendra Dev College, ₹4.65 crore to Shaheed Rajguru College of Applied Sciences for Women, ₹5.80 crore to Maharaja Agrasen College, ₹6.35 crore to Bhim Rao Ambedkar College and ₹4.50 crore to Bhaskaracharya College of Applied Sciences.

The government and 12 of the colleges fully funded by it have been locked in a tussle over the release of grants.

The colleges have alleged that the grants released by the city dispensation have been inadequate and they have not been able to pay salaries to their staffers since May, while the government has said it has released adequate funds. — PTI

Mechanic driving Merc crashes into auto, 3 hurt

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22

A car mechanic who was driving a Mercedes in an inebriated state hit an auto-rickshaw and injured three pedestrians in south Delhi's Sarai Kale Khan area, police said on Tuesday.

The mechanic has been identified as 28-year-old Alam, a resident of New Seelampur, they said.

During patrolling at 8.55 pm on Sunday, police found a Mercedes car had crashed into an auto-rickshaw near a Sarai Kale Khan red light, a police official said.

Enquiry revealed that the car after hitting the auto-rickshaw at the rear side jumped the divider and injured three pedestrians on the opposite side of the road, he said.

"On further enquiry, it was revealed that the car was driven by Alam and his two women friends accompanied him. He was drunk at that time and some beer bottles were found in the vehicle," deputy commissioner of police (southeast) R.P. Meena said.

The accused said that he works as a car mechanic at Seelampur in northeast Delhi and the vehicle belonged to one of his clients who had left it at his workshop for repairing, the deputy commissioner of police said.

North DMC announces amnesty scheme for illegal colonies

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22

In a major relief to residents of unauthorised colonies, the North Delhi Municipal Corporation has rolled out an amnesty scheme.

North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash said that as per the terms of the scheme, taxpayers of residential properties in aforesaid colonies are required to pay property tax for the financial years 2019-20 and 2020-21 and all outstanding tax prior to the financial year 2019-20 shall be exempted.

According to Mr Prakash, similarly in the case of non-residential properties in aforesaid colonies, if the tax payer pays outstanding property tax of last three years and the current year, his property tax arrears for the prior period shall be exempted.

"The benefit of the amnesty scheme will be

available only upon filing of property tax return and making the payment of the aforesaid tax dues without any interest and penalty only till October 31," Mr Prakash added.

Property tax department of all six zones will organise special camps in these colonies in association with the respective councillors.

"Residents of these colonies are from poor and middle class families and generally are not in a position to make payment of their pending property tax dues of last so many years. Now, with this scheme of payment of tax for the current and last year in respect of residential property, all the prior dues shall be exempted and upon payment of current year's and last three years' tax in respect of non-residential property, all outstanding dues shall be exempted," said the North Delhi mayor.

CM targets Central govt over passage of farm Bills

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday targeted the government over the passage of the "dangerous" farm Bills without division of votes in Rajya Sabha, while lauding the sit-in protest on the Parliament premises by the eight suspended MPs. The eight Rajya Sabha members, including AAP MP Sanjay Singh, were suspended for the remaining part of the Monsoon Session over "unruly behaviour" during the passage of the farm Bills in the Upper House of Parliament.

The other MPs are Derek O'Brien, Rajeev Satav, Elamaram Kareem, K.K. Ragesh (CPI-M), Syed Nazir Hussain, Ripun Boren and Dola Sen (TMC).

Since their suspension on Monday, the eight MPs



Arvind Kejriwal

have been holding a protest on the Parliament premises. They called off the protest around noon.

Kejriwal said these eight MPs were fighting for the rights of farmers without worrying about heat, mosquitoes or other inconveniences and have spent the night protesting in the Parliament complex.

"They are not asking for anything for themselves. They are fighting for democracy and the Constitution. They are struggling for the farmers of the country," Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi. Farmers across the country are say-

ing that these laws will end them, he added.

"Such a dangerous Bill was passed without division of votes. Then what is the meaning of Parliament, what is the meaning of elections? If you have to pass the law this way, then why did you call a Parliament session," Kejriwal asked in another tweet in Hindi. Delhi deputy chief Minister Manish Sisodia compared the present government to the British colonial rulers.

"The British ruled the same way. They would commit atrocities on the farmers, labourers and businessmen. They would make black laws to perpetuate the atrocities. And when they met Gandhiji and other leaders, they (the British) would offer them tea. Our rulers are running the government in the same way still," Sisodia said in a tweet in Hindi.

DELHI VIOLENCE**Radical group called for protests against Babri verdict: Cops**

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22

A radical communal group named "Student of Jamia" (SOJ) had distributed pamphlets to mobilise students of Jamia Millia Islamia University against the Supreme Court's judgement in the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case, police have alleged in the charge sheet.

Delhi Police alleged that JNU student Sharjeel Imam, who is one of the key conspirators in the communal violence, was in touch with the SOJ group.

The charge sheet filed on September 16 in a court here also stated that a WhatsApp group of

"Muslim Students of JNU" (MSJ) was formed and Imam was the main and active member of the group.

Police said on December 4, 2019, the Cabinet Committee gave nod to present the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) in both the houses of parliament.

"Thereafter, in the intervening night of December 5/6, 2019, a WhatsApp group of "Muslim Students of JNU" (MSJ) was formed and Sharjeel Imam was the main and active member of the group, the creation of the WhatsApp group was the brain child of Imam.

"WhatsApp chat between Imam and Arshad Warsi,



► **Delhi Police alleged that JNU student Sharjeel Imam, who is one of the key conspirators in the communal violence, was in touch with the Student of Jamia group**

student of Jamia Millia Islamia University, revealed that Imam was in touch with a radical communal group of "Student of Jamia" (SOJ). Chat also revealed that both MSJ and SOJ were distributing pamphlets in various mosques in Delhi," it claimed.

Police alleged that on

December 6, 2019, the pamphlets printed by MSJ were so printed that it would create a "sense of fear and insecurity among the Muslim community".

"Chats also revealed that SOJ's pamphlets distributed on December 6, 2019 were against the verdict of the Supreme Court on November 9, 2019 in the

Babri Masjid issue and pamphlets were distributed by SOJ for mobilising the students of JMI in this regard. The date, time and venue of protest against the SC order was on December 6, 2019, at 4.30 pm at Polytechnic lawn JMI university.

"On December 6, 2019, the pamphlets printed by MSJ were distributed in the area of Jama Masjid and Nizamuddin. Contents of the pamphlets were written by Imam, as revealed in his chat with Arshad Warsi of SOJ. Pamphlets so printed were having content, which would create a "sense of fear and insecurity among the Muslim community," the charge sheet alleged.

SHORT TAKES

Two 91-yr-old men recover from Covid

Bhubaneswar: Two nonagenarian Covid-19 patients in Odisha have got fully cured of the highly infectious disease. The two patients — Satchidananda Mohanty and Dhirendranath Das — both aged 91, were on September 5 admitted to designated Covid-19 hospitals in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar respectively after being diagnosed with the disease. Satchidananda, an eminent advocate in Kendrapara town, was also suffering from hypothyroid and neurological ailments. He was immediately shifted to the ICU after his admission to the hospital. Dhirendranath Das, a former senior official with the Press Information Bureau and the All India Radio, defeated the disease by religiously following the regimen of the Covid hospital.

Tusker kills woman in Chhattisgarh dist

Jashpur: A 40-year-old woman was trampled to death by a wild elephant in Chhattisgarh's Jashpur district, a forest official said on Tuesday. The victim, Phulmati, was attacked by the jumbo in Kudkelkhajri village under Pathalgaon forest range on Monday night when she was walking with her husband, he said. While her husband managed to escape, the elephant caught hold of Phulmati and slammed her on the ground with its trunk, he said. A team of forest personnel rushed to the spot and chased away the pachyderm, he said. The kin of the deceased have been provided an instant relief of ₹25,000 while the remaining compensation of ₹5.75 lakh will be given later, the official added. — PTI

Woman crushed to death by truck

Amethi, UP: An elderly woman riding pillion with her husband on a motorcycle died after she fell off the vehicle and her head was crushed by a truck here on Tuesday, police said. The deceased has been identified as Yashoda Devi, 62, they said. Devi was going somewhere with her husband Vardan Singh on the motorcycle. She fell on the road when the motorcycle was going over a speed breaker near Sahjipur railway crossing in Sangrampur area here, the police said. A truck, which was passing by, crushed her head, killing her on the spot, they said. The truck driver fled the spot with his vehicle. Efforts are underway to nab him, the police said. — PTI

Pawars, Thackerays receive I-T notices

■ **Continued from Page 1** and his son Aaditya, the state environment minister. The Election Commission is learnt to have reminded the Central Board of Direct Taxes of its request to probe the allegations of false affidavits being filed by Uddhav and Aaditya Thackeray and Supriya Sule. Mr Pawar has also refuted the possibility of the imposition of President's Rule in Maharashtra, saying that the Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA coalition government had a clear majority in the Maharashtra Assembly. "Is there any reason for (imposing President's Rule)? Is President's Rule some joke?" he asked. Union minister of state for social justice Ramdas Athawale had said that President's Rule should be imposed in Maharashtra, alleging that the MVA government had failed to handle the law and order situation in the state. Independent MP Navneet Kaur-Rana had also demanded that President's Rule be imposed in the state.

LS passes 3 Labour Codes amid boycott

■ **Continued from Page 1** The Industrial Relations Code, 2020, seeks to consolidate and amend the laws relating to trade unions, conditions of employment in industrial establishments or undertaking, investigation and settlement of industrial disputes. The Code on Social Security, 2020, will amend and consolidate laws relating to social security with the goal to extend social security to all employees and workers in the organised sector and the unorganised sector. Mr Gangwar said efforts have been made to work out a balance between welfare of workers and ease of doing business for the industry.

NCB may quiz Deepika in Sushant death case

'Chat messages show actress asked her manager for drugs'

SAURABH JOSHI
MUMBAI, SEPT. 22

The list of Bollywood actors on the radar of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has gone up further with name of Deepika Padukone surfacing in the drugs angle being probe in connection with Sushant Singh Rajput suicide. The investigators have found online chat messages from her number where she allegedly asked her manager for drugs. The NCB has summoned Ms Padukone's manager and may also grill the actor later.

The officials earlier came across names of actors Sara Ali Khan, Rakul Preet Singh and interior designer Simone Khambatta who were found to be doing drugs. The probe also revealed that Sara had even visited Rajput's farmhouse at Lonavala with others and partied together where they also did drugs. The NCB is likely to question all of them in the coming weeks.

Meanwhile the NCB has found chats between Ms Padukone and her manager Karishma Prakash who was summoned for ques-

Rhea, brother move HC for bail, NDPS court extends custody

SHAHAB ANSARI
MUMBAI, SEPT. 22

Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty and her brother Showik, both arrested by the NCB which is probing drugs case linked with actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death, on Tuesday filed a fresh bail application in the Bombay High Court. A special NCB court same day extended judicial custody of both the persons for 14 days.

Their lawyer Satish Maneshinde confirmed filing of bail pleas in the HC. Refusing to divulge any details mentioned in the bail applications, he said,

"The matter is likely to be heard on Wednesday before the single bench of Justice Sarang V. Kotwal and details would be out during the hearing." A special NDPS court on Tuesday extended their judicial custody till October 6. This court had rejected Rhea's bail application on September 11.

The NCB had arrested Showik on September 5 and Rhea was arrested on September 8. They had filed bail pleas as soon as they were remanded to judicial custody. The court had rejected their bail applications on the ground that the investigation was still on.

Yeddy to remain CM, no leadership change in K'taka'

Bengaluru, Sept. 22: The BJP in Karnataka on Tuesday termed as baseless and misleading reports about leadership change in the state by replacing chief minister B. S. Yediyurappa.

State BJP spokesperson Captain Ganesh Karnik said a few TV channels have repeatedly reported that there is going to be a change in the leadership of Chief Minister Yediyurappa.

"BJP strongly refutes this report," he clarified in an official statement. "We categorically state that such reports are absolutely baseless, misleading and far from truth," he added.

There have been strong speculations about possible change in leadership in the future, considering Yediyurappa's age. The speculation had gained momentum during the 77-year-old leader's recent visit to New Delhi, during which he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several union ministers and BJP national president J.P. Nadda.

There were reports that Yediyurappa might be replaced after the Bihar assembly polls or after him presenting the budg-

et in March 2021. They suggested that looking at BJP's policy towards seniors crossing 75 years of age, the party was considering honourable exit to the Lingayat strongman by giving him a gubernatorial position and a key post for his younger son B Y Vijayendra, who is now the state BJP vice president. Several state BJP leaders, including state unit President Nalin Kumar Kateel, minister R. Ashoka among others have rejected such reports.

Despite this, there were rumours that several Lingayat legislators, especially from the north Karnataka region, were unhappy with the chief minister and were rallying behind a leader from the community who belongs to their region. — PTI



B. S. Yediyurappa



Commuters waded through a waterlogged street following heavy rainfall in Guwahati on Tuesday.

— PTI

J&K violence dropped by 50%: Govt

AGE CORRESPONDENTS
NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, SEPT. 22

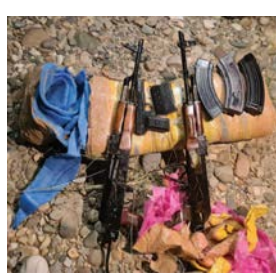
There has been a marked improvement in the overall security scenario in the Kashmir Valley since abrogation of Article 370 last August in the former state of Jammu & Kashmir which has now been converted into a Union Territory. Key security parameters reveal a drop of almost 50 percent in incidents of violence in the entire Valley.

Latest data analysis by the security forces have revealed that in the last one year, since Article 370 was abrogated, there has been a drop in number of terrorist incidents from 443 to 206

in the same corresponding period. Interestingly, there has been a sharp drop even in incidents of stone pelted to 310 since August 2019 as compared to 703 between August 2018 to 2019.

What has come as a huge respite to the security forces is the fact that even the number of security personnel killed since Article 370 was repealed is 49 in comparison to 125 during the same corresponding period. There was a drop in the civilians killed in terrorist incident from 54 to 45.

"Security forces have had an upper hand in dealing with terrorism in the Valley in last one year and the statistics reveal the same picture. This clearly



J&K police seized two AK assault rifles, one pistol, three AK magazines and 90 rounds from a village in Akhnoor region.

shows that if given a free hand our security and intelligence grid is fully competent in dealing with the security scenario in the Valley and has shown a marked improvement," a

senior security official remarked.

One of the key reason for improvement in the security situation is a much improved intelligence network which has been substantially strengthened at the ground level. Focused and specific human intelligence has led to many successful security operations against subversive elements.

The local Kashmiri watchers, however, say it could be the 'lull before the storm'. Various political parties and leaders endorse the view and insist on there being 'urgency of holding a political dialogue on Kashmir'. Their explanation is: people of Kashmir will not settle for "peace of graveyard".

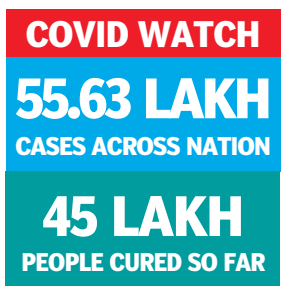
Covid cases decline for 5th day; 75,083 test +ve in 24 hrs

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22

A major decline in fresh cases of novel coronavirus was recorded in the last 24 hours as newly detected cases came down to 75,083. This is the fifth consecutive day when cases are found to be reducing from 97,894 on September 17.

Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said that the decline in fresh cases has nothing to do with lesser testings. This coincided with over 1 lakh recoveries in one day for the first time taking the country's recovery rate to 80.86 per cent. The total number of recovered patients is almost 45 lakh while India's case fatality rate is 1.60 per cent.

"On September 19, we had conducted 8.81 lakh tests and detected 93,337 cases. On September 20, we conducted over 12 lakh tests and found 92,605 cases, on September 21 we tested 7.31 lakh people and



got 86,961 positive while on September 22 we tested 9.33 lakh samples and found 75,083 positive. So testing is not less and the number of positive cases are not determined by tests. We are monitoring this data on a daily, weekly and monthly basis to keep a track of the trend of Covid-19," Mr Bhushan said.

On Tuesday, a substantial decline in new cases was noted in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair a meeting with

chief ministers and health ministers of seven high-burden states Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Punjab — on Wednesday to review the Covid-19 situation.

"Along with the other five states, Punjab and Delhi have reported an increase in the number of cases being reported recently. Maharashtra, Punjab and Delhi are reporting high mortality with more than 2 per cent case fatality rate (CFR). Other than Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, their positivity rate is observed to be above the national average of 8.52 per cent," a statement from PM office said.

As per Union health ministry data, India's total Covid-19 infections so far reached 55.63 lakh while overall death figures reached close to 89,000 with 1,053 new deaths.

Ration to sex workers: SC asks Centre, states to clarify

New Delhi, Sept. 22: The Supreme Court has taken note of problems faced by sex workers on account of Covid-19 pandemic and directed the Centre and state governments to apprise it about modalities for distribution of monthly dry rations and cash transfer to them without insisting on proof of identity.

A bench headed by Justice L. Nageswara Rao said the issue raised in the PIL filed by the NGO needs immediate attention. Additional solicitor general R.S. Suri and the counsel appearing for the state governments are directed to get instructions regarding the modalities for distribution of monthly dry rations and cash transfer to the sex workers without insisting on proof of identity, the bench also comprising Justice Hemant Gupta said.

Appearing for an NGO, senior advocate Anand Grover argued that a survey among 1.2 lakh sex workers in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Telangana found that 96 per cent of sex workers had lost their source of earning in the pandemic.

Senior advocate Jayant Bhushan, who has been appointed as amicus curiae to assist the court in the matter, submitted that the plight of sex workers could be solved if they were provided ration cards without insisting on identity proof. — PTI

'NEP will make India global leader in S&T'

MANOJ NAND
GUWAHATI, SEPT. 22

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday urged the youth to be future ready and future fit, and said that their dreams and aspirations would shape the future of India.

Addressing the 22nd convocation of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati through video-conferencing on Tuesday, the Prime Minister said: "I firmly believe that the future of a nation is what its youth



Narendra Modi

► **PRIME MINISTER** Narendra Modi lauded the efforts of the IITs in contributing towards making the country self-reliant in spite of the difficulty in conducting academic sessions and continuing research work during the pandemic

thinks today, your dreams are going to shape the reality of India. This is time to be future-ready."

Lauding the efforts of the IITs in contributing towards making the coun-

try self-reliant in spite of the difficulty in conducting academic sessions and continuing research work during the pandemic, the Prime Minister said that the National Education

Policy 2020 is meant for the needs of the 21st century and to make India a global leader in science and technology. Mr Modi pointed out that the NEP 2020 has been made multi-disciplinary and offers flexibility of choosing various courses and allows multiple entry and exit points.

He asserted that the NEP also proposes a National Research Foundation for better coordination with all funding agencies regarding research funding and provide funds for all disciplines.

Noted Hindi, Marathi film actress dies of Covid

Satara, Sept. 22: Veteran actress Ashalata Wabgaonkar, who had worked in a number of Marathi and Hindi films, died on early Tuesday morning at a private hospital here after battling Covid-19, hospital authorities said. She was 79.

Wabgaonkar was also a noted Marathi theatre personality and had featured in several plays. The actress had tested positive for Covid-19 and was admitted to the private hospital on September 17 where she was diagnosed with bilateral pneumonia, a senior

doctor from the medical facility said. "Her condition worsened on Monday evening and she was put on ventilator support. She breathed her last today (Tuesday) morning," he said.

The actress was in Satara in western Maharashtra for shooting of a Marathi TV serial. Marathi actress Alka Kubal, who was with her during the shoot, said the shooting was going on for the last one month.

"Till yesterday, she was talking to us and suddenly she slipped into a



Ashalata Wabgaonkar

coma. She was then put on ventilator support, but died early Tuesday morning. We never imagined that this pandemic will take her away from us," Ms Kubal said.

Condolences poured in

on the death of the veteran actress, who had featured in several Marathi and Hindi films in a decades-long career.

Expressing grief over Wabgaonkar's death, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray paid rich tributes to the actress and described her as a versatile artist.

"We have lost a versatile actress who left her mark in Marathi theatre, films and the Hindi film industry with her performances," Mr Thackeray said.

He said Wabgaonkar excelled as a poetess,

singer and writer and immortalised characters she portrayed in films.

State PWD minister Ashok Chavan also paid tributes to Wabgaonkar, saying a talented personality made her exit from the world of art. "She was known in households for playing several memorable roles in theatre and on small and big screens. My tributes to Ashalata, the Congress leader tweeted.

NCP Lok Sabha MP Supriya Sule said Wabgaonkar had a good understanding of music.

— PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

As India reopens, we need more tests, infra

As coronavirus figures skyrocket in India amid reports of a second wave sweeping much of mainland Europe, comes renewed confirmation of bad news that SARS-CoV-2 reinfections are real. The official caseload, meanwhile, has surpassed the 5.5 million mark. A vaccine, while it is only going to be seasonal, is still several months away and, by all estimates, will take longer to reach every ordinary citizen.

But the economy, which has taken the worst hit in recorded history, must now be opened at all costs. It will take a minimum of two months to restore it to its pre-Covid health, a report by a committee headed by former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor C. Rangarajan, advising the Tamil Nadu government on medium-term measures, has suggested, and the Centre is certainly seen implementing what it has somewhat cheekily dubbed Unlock 4.0 with older students returning to school in parts of the country, international flights beginning to operate in air bubble arrangements and Taj Mahal accepting visitors. The ongoing Monsoon Session of Parliament, however, has been unfortunately curtailed by several days, jeopardising important legislative decisions.

Drug manufacture is our area of strength and we have done some good work on the count of expanding laboratory and testing infrastructure

Autumn's lower temperatures plus the reopening will undoubtedly bring on the second wave of coronavirus in India. The crisis seems to be unfolding here in a worse manner than we could have imagined, with the virus having reached the rural heartlands.

Experts suggest that the Covid-19 pandemic will peak at different rates in different regions of the country. Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh currently have the most infections; of these the last three states experienced late surges. Hence, a renewed urgency for health infrastructure, doctors, drugs, ventilators and a prompter and more localised administrative response coordinated by state governments and effectively bolstered by central funds and support is the absolute need of the hour. Of these, drug manufacture is our area of strength and we have done some good work on the count of expanding laboratory and testing infrastructure.

The Delhi high court on Tuesday stayed the Delhi government's September 13 order making it mandatory for 33 private hospitals in the city to reserve 80 per cent of their Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds as prima facie violative of fundamental rights. It is a welcome ruling. Most coronavirus patients improve with administration of palliatives and home isolation is sufficient to contain the disease. That is indeed a silver lining. India has topped the world both in the daily infection rate as well as number of recoveries. Health workers have put their shoulder to the wheel and are working heroically against odds.

If only these odds were fewer in number. The governments — state and Centre — have no choice but to perform or face electoral ire.

Regulate, don't strangle NGOs

There are certain hallmarks for most of the doings of the Narendra Modi government: a popular, presentable reason that can be easily sold to the public to achieve certain motives outside and a half-boiled, unworkable plan that will put a lot of people to inconvenience inside. Demonetisation, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the bills to rework the functioning of Indian farming are the classic examples. The latest to join the league is the amendment to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2020, that Parliament has passed now.

The government is sure the piece of legislation is a must to control the waywardness of non-governmental organisations, including the religious ones. The main feature of the new bill is that it makes it mandatory for all the key people of the organisations to present their Aadhaar numbers to the authorities for getting the registration. The government, which got the Aadhaar Act passed in Parliament as money bill, had assured the Supreme Court that Aadhaar numbers will be made mandatory only when a person receives government largesse. It will be interesting to note how the government will defend this provision in the bill, should it be challenged in court. It defies logic when the government mandates the recipient organisation to open an account at a particular bank in the national capital at a time when banking has become a mobile application and the regulators get real time information on any transaction of agencies on their watch if they wanted. The bill empowers the government to make the organisations use the fund after a summary inquiry, whereas the existing law allows such an action only if the organisation concerned is found guilty of violating the law. The bill has many such crippling provisions. Regulating a sector is part of governance, but strangulating it is not. The government must realise it.

THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY
Editor in Chief

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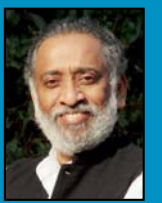
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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Restructuring of Railways: Most officers are unhappy

Modi sarkar is pushing ahead with restructuring of the Indian Railways board and services. The Cabinet recently greenlit the revamping of the powerful railway board that governs the railways. The board will now have five members. The present chairman of the board, V.K. Yadav, will be the first CEO of the Board. The board will also have independent members in non-executive roles. The Cabinet also decided to merge all central railway service cadres into a single Indian Railways Management Service (IRMS).

While Mr Yadav is now chairman and CEO, Pradeep Kumar has been appointed member, infrastructure, P.C. Sharma has been appointed member, traction and rolling stock, P.S. Mishra has been made member, operations and business development. Manjula Rangarajan has been appointed member, finance. In the new structure, the chairman shall be the cadre controlling officer responsi-

ble for human resources (HR) with assistance from a director general level officer. Three apex level posts shall be surrendered from railway board, and all the remaining posts of the railway board shall be open to all officers regardless of the service to which they belonged.

The government says that the reform will end "inter-departmental rivalries" that, many say, have been hampering growth and efficiency of the railways for decades. But not all railway babus are pleased with the decision. Their first objection is to the proposed merger of cadres, which they claim is "unscientific and against established norms" since the government is proposing to merge "fundamentally dissimilar" entities. Instead, they argue for two distinct services instead of one - separating the civil services and the engineering wings.

NEW HEFT TO PMO

The appointment of three IAS offi-

cers to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) will add heft to the already most powerful PMO ever. The officers are Raghuraj Rajendran of the Madhya Pradesh cadre as director, Amrapali Kata of the Andhra Pradesh cadre as deputy secretary and Mangesh Ghildiyal of the Uttarakhand cadre as under-secretary.

Mr Rajendran was earlier serving as private secretary to the minister for steel and petroleum and natural gas Dharmendra Pradhan. Amrapali Kata is an officer of the 2010 batch was deputy secretary in the cabinet secretariat (intelligence). Mr Ghildiyal was working with the Uttarakhand government.

The appointments make these three officers seem like "high-fliers" in babudom. They have clearly been chosen for their track record. In the presidential-style Modi PMO they are now expected to be team players who must focus on tough decisions and showing results.

UP'S DUBIOUS CRACKDOWN

Though public perception belies it, the Uttar Pradesh government claims it has a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption. And it backs it up with data. According to sources, since coming to power three years ago, chief minister Yogi Adityanath has cracked the whip on around 800 state government officials. Just recently the state government suspended two IPS officers, Abhishek Dikshit, SSP of Prayagraj, and Manilal Patidar, SP of Mahoba, for their involvement in corrupt practices and "lax policing".

The state data claims that it has acted against more than 775 officials so far, including some retired officials who were found complicit in malpractices. The government has forcibly retired 325 officials and suspended and demoted over 450 babus.

But, sources say, despite the Yogi government's crackdown on corrupt babus, some suspended

officers seem to have wiggled back into the administration on plum postings. J.B. Singh, the Gonda DM, was suspended in June 2018, along with Kumar Prashant, the DM of Fatehpur, and faced disciplinary action over irregularities in the procurement of wheat. But Mr Singh's bureaucratic wilderness was short-lived. In 2019 he was appointed the DM of Etawah. Kumar Prashant, too, found himself back in favour. Last year he became the DM of Badaun, a more important district than Fatehpur. There are other instances, say sources, where after a brief period of lying low, suspended officials find themselves back in the saddle.

According to sources, murmurs of protest are rising, and railway unions are planning a series of protests against the move.

Share a babu experience! Follow [@dilipthecherian](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian) on Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

Subhani



To rule India, history of our geography vital tool

Abhijit
Bhattacharyya



Does geography have a history? Yes, it does. It's political geography: of maps and atlases, covering the globe. Political geography maps, accurately drawn in meticulous detail, depicts the world we live in. Naming and numbering all countries, islands, oceans, seas, mountains, the physical topography, and the rulers and the ruled in each of those pages, along with economic figures. It shows the evolution of geography of demography through the ages. Hence, it's important for aspiring, or established, leaders to have fair idea of the history of the geography that they represent, rule or reign.

In the context of the vast demography of South Asia, the learning process is all the more important for potential leaders because India has always been volatile, susceptible to internal discord and violence, thereby resulting in frequent changes of political geography maps. So much so that it's a reality of the history of South Asian geography that the Indian ruling class traditionally proved utterly myopic, being unable to see beyond their noses, thus resulting in their chronic failure to unite the vast, diverse elements of the countryside. The history of Indian geography thus, as seen from the changed/changing maps, stands as a mute, yet profound, testimony to this sordid scenario. The ruling class has always liked to fight among its own spectrum and colour. Little wonder that this collective band of the disparate ruling class inevitably ended up facing, and invariably fading, before foreign invaders. The tradition goes on, as can be found from the 21st century aggression by the Communist Party of China (CPC), on whom some Indians still seem to

have abiding trust, faith and confidence to mutually turn the "Line of Actual Control" into a "border area" resolution, from foreign soil, as was catastrophically done, at the behest of a third party arbiter, in 1966 at the high table of Tashkent.

One would like to suggest that the reader go through the 376 pages of "A Historical Atlas of South Asia", published in 1978! To understand better; as to how fragile and fractious has been the map or geography of India, through the vicissitudes of history. Should it not, therefore, be obligatory for each and every aspiring Indian ruler, from all corners of the country, irrespective of his or her political colour, to learn a lesson or two, and study the atlas of the history of India's geography along with the Constitution of India? Today, for example, Delhi's geography is at the crossroads. Isn't the ominous signature on the horizon visible?

Indeed, five critical geographical areas, which this writer perceives as the "red zones" of India, are fast emerging under the Chinese Communist Party's active short to mid-term action plan. All indications point to its deep thought, firm belief and definite action plan. From the Belt and Road Initiative, to the CPEC, through Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. The CPC think tanks are focused on breaking/destroying India through the creation of a new geography of "Greater" countries, cutting through India's topography.

To reiterate what I have written earlier in these columns, I firmly believe that India's entire political class and its diplomats cannot match the cunning, deception and deceit of the Han Chinese in the international arena. Hence, the Chinese have

managed to go rogue globally, undoubtedly helped by the lack of ideology of the post-Mao People's Republic. Given the congenital blunders made by New Delhi and its failure to tackle the Dragon for the past 70-plus years; there is nothing to indicate that the contemporary mandarins of Lutyens' Delhi will be able to out-match or reverse the evil designs of the Dragon any better than their predecessors or anytime soon. I sincerely hope that I am proved wrong about this.

To start with, India needs to start preparing to face the worst, with an ultra-defensive mechanism: first identify the areas which the CPC is targeting, and study and analyse its past record of action. As they say, to be "forewarned is forearmed".

There are five "Greater" geographical zones where the Chinese are planning to target India — and the action on the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh is just the start. The five emerging areas are: Greater Pakistan; Greater Nepal; Greater Burma; Greater Bangladesh and "Greater China": with Beijing hoping to turn Bhutan into another Xinjiang owing to its tiny size and dearth of demography! These five might become reality mainly through indirect, invisible and divisive CPC machinations. Not necessarily through the visible CPC-controlled PLA militia, but through unethical operations undertaken, at times reluctantly or under duress, by some of India's neighbours.

The tell-tale signs are already visible. Can't most of India see the Dragon-inspired defiance by Nepal, making bizarre

claim over India's territory? Has anyone gone through some of the claims being articulated by mass-circulating Nepalese media, with Dehradun and Nainital being openly claimed by some elements in Kathmandu. The "Greater Nepal" campaign is already on. What will be claimed next — from Himachal Pradesh to Sikkim?

Nepal is neither a Muslim-majority nor a Christian-majority country. It's an overwhelmingly Hindu nation, which earlier used to be the world's only Hindu kingdom, before the monarchy was abolished. Now Beijing has managed to turn this landlocked nation against Hindu-majority India.

Look at India's West Bengal state. The Communist influence there was once all-pervasive, with China's Chairman Mao an icon to many. The first salvo was fired on May 24, 1967 across three police stations — Naxalbari, Kharibari, Phansidewa? It took an Indira Gandhi to tackle the CPC's "malevolence and perfidy", douse the Naxalite fire and save India. The CPC learnt its lesson, and didn't mess around with India's iron lady, more so after her triumph in the 1971 Bangladesh war.

"Greater" Pakistan has taken shape, with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir already in place, and "Greater" Bangladesh and "Greater" Myanmar will automatically follow if the "Greater" Nepal movement turns into a hydra-headed monster that will impact Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. Geography will automatically navigate the foreign demography to cut down India's topography. Make no mistake, most of India's Northeast will be targeted by a "Greater" China, with some adjacent irredentist areas marked for Dhaka and Rangoon. Will India wake up in time to see through the Dragon's designs?

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College. Views expressed are personal.

LETTERS

TRIPLE WHAMMY

Indians may boast of their exaggerated "respect" for elderly, but here more than 60 per cent of senior citizens have no pensions or other social security benefits. Most, therefore, live off interest on various saving schemes and deposits. In six months, interest on bank deposits and post office small savings schemes have fallen by two per cent. Food inflation has risen during the same period. Seniors are also worst affected in this pandemic. There is an urgent need on the part of the government to address these problems.

D.B. Madan
New Delhi

NO MIDDLEMEN

RAJYA SABHA CHAIRMAN M. Venkaiah Naidu has done well to suspend eight Opposition MLAs for their unruly behaviour during passing two farm bills while rejecting a no-confidence motion moved against deputy chairman Hariwansh Narayan Singh on technical grounds. The suspended MPs had stooped low by entering the well of the House, throwing papers, breaking microphones and abusing Mr Singh. The Opposition must realise that the new law will not only ensure a minimum support price (MSP) for farmers but will also eliminate middlemen.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

PUT MSP IN LAW

THE WAY THE government brought the controversial farm bills and managed their clearance in the Upper House are questionable. Neither farmers nor Opposition parties were consulted by the government on the provisions. The deputy chairman's refusal to send the bills to a select committee and clearing them through voice vote also seemed motivated. Farmers are agitated on discontinuance of the minimum support price regime via the new laws. An MSP clause should be incorporated in these and confirmed by the PM inside Parliament.

M.C. Joshi
Lucknow

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IN BRIEF

John Lennon killer says sorry

New York: Mark Chapman, the man who killed John Lennon, has apologised to the late Beatle's widow, Yoko Ono, 40 years after his death. Chapman shot Lennon four times outside his New York Manhattan apartment as Ono looked on, in 1980. He was denied parole for the eleventh time following a hearing last month. During the hearing, Chapman said he killed the 40-year-old rock star for "glory" and that he deserved the death penalty. He added that he thinks about the "despicable act" all the time, and accepts he may spend the rest of his life in prison. "I just want to reiterate that I'm sorry for my crime," Chapman told the parole board at the Wende Correctional Facility in New York.

Finland bans neo-Nazi group

Helsinki: Finland's Supreme Court on Tuesday banned a neo-Nazi group on the grounds that its activities are "significantly contrary to law." Finland's national police had sought to dissolve the right-wing Nordic Resistance Movement, known for being violent and openly racist, and two lower courts of law confirmed the ruling. Finland's highest court ruled that the group's activities "did not enjoy freedom of expression or freedom of association, as the association's activities by their nature entailed an abuse of these rights." National Police Chief Inspector Heikki Lausmaa told Finnish broadcaster YLE that the Supreme Court ruling is "a clear statement that an organisation that is violent and uses speech deemed racist or otherwise violating human dignity should not have a place in Finnish society."

Nasa moon return to cost \$28b

Washington: Nasa on Monday revealed its latest plan to return astronauts to the Moon in 2024, and estimated the cost of meeting that deadline at \$28 billion, \$16 billion of which would be spent on the lunar landing module. Congress, which faces elections on November 3, will have to sign off on the financing for a project that has been set by President Donald Trump as a top priority. The \$28 billion would cover the budgetary years of 2021-25. In a phone briefing with journalists on Monday on the Artemis mission to return human beings to the Moon, Nasa administrator Jim Bridenstine noted that "political risks" were often the biggest threat to Nasa's work, especially before such a crucial election. Barack Obama cancelled plans for a manned Mars mission, after his predecessor spent billions of dollars on the project.

MET ARMY CHIEF BEFORE APC: SHEHBAZ

SHAFQAT ALI
ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 22

Pakistan Muslim League (Nazwaz) President Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday confirmed meeting Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa ahead of All Parties Conference (APC) on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters outside the Lahore High Court (LHC), the PML-N leader said discussion on Gilgit Baltistan matters was held during the meeting with the army chief. All the parliamentary leaders were also present, he added.

Shehbaz, the Opposition Leader in National Assembly, said the incumbent government led by the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) was trying to oppress PML-N. The decisions taken during APC will be implemented at any cost, he said.

On September 20, 2020, the 11-party opposition's APC hosted by Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had demanded resignation of Prime Minister Imran Khan.

The 26-point resolution passed by the APC stated that the opposition had decided to form a national alliance in the name of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM).

The APC had also decided to hold a long march against the government in January 2021.

The government, it said, had ruined the common man's life with rising inflation, unemployment, and taxes, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said in joint news conference after the APC.

The "selected" government was responsible for the fall of Kashmir, the APC members stated.

Spanish medics stage protest

Medical Residents protest against their working conditions on the second day of a strike called by the collective in Barcelona, on September Tuesday, amid a Covid surge in the country. Spain is struggling to contain a second wave of the virus, which has infected over 670,000 people and claimed over 30,000 lives, one of Europe's highest. — AP

Sikh taxi driver assaulted, called 'Taliban' in Britain

London, Sept. 22: An India-born Sikh taxi driver was subjected to verbal and physical abuse by passengers he drove from a casino in the city of Reading in south-east England, prompting a United Kingdom police force to launch an investigation.

Vaneet Singh, 41, said that a group of four men slapped and shoved him, and asked "are you Taliban" after he received them from the Grosvenor Casino in Reading, Berkshire, in the early hours of Sunday.

One of the four also tried to remove his turban. "It was horrible, really frightening, I will never work the nightshift again. I'm

still very scared," he said. Thames Valley Police are appealing for witnesses as they investigate the report of an assault.

Singh, who worked as a music teacher at a school in Slough, Berkshire, turned to taxi driving after his teaching job was stalled during the Coronavirus pandemic. The musician, who lives in Tilehurst with his wife and three children, said he has been left shaken up by the assault and will be avoiding night shifts.

"It's very bad experience. It's my religion so I respect my turban," he said. One of the four passengers, all described as white, pulled at his turban as he was driving and

slapped him on the head, while others kicked and punched the back of the driver's seat.

He says he tried to explain the religious significance of the turban to them and asked them not to touch it.

He recalled the passengers being well behaved at the start of the journey but "totally changed" as it went on. Singh, who is suffering from aches and pains since the incident, is convinced the attack was of a racist nature and believes he was a victim of hate crime.

Thames Valley Police are yet to confirm their line of inquiry in the assault case. — PTI

STOP PLAYING BREXIT 'GAMES', EU TELLS UK

Brussels, Sept. 22: The European Union is pleading with Britain to stop playing "games" as time is running out to clinch a free trade deal over the next month.

The sides committed to a new meeting to discuss Britain's plans to disregard part of the withdrawal agreement it had signed with the 27-nation EU amid acrimony that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson would even contemplate to break an agreement he himself signed.

EU countries' ministers for European affairs met in Brussels on Tuesday and German chairman Michael Roth said the British plan was "extremely" worrisome since it "violates the guiding principle of the withdrawal agreement," which officially allowed the United Kingdom to leave the bloc last Jan. 31.

A transition period now runs until Dec 31, during which time both sides are negotiating a trade agreement to replace the open and unfettered economic relations that are currently in place.

The EU has repeatedly expressed its exasperation at what it sees as British stubbornness and refusal to compromise on some key points. Without a deal on future trade relations, chaos is expected at the borders on Jan. 1. — AP

Charlie Hebdo HR manager moved from home in the wake of threats

Paris, Sept. 22: Police have moved the head of human resources at French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* from her home following death threats received last week, she told a French magazine.

Marika Bret, who has been living under police protection for nearly five years in the aftermath of the deadly assault on *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015, said the threats were "sufficiently concrete to be taken seriously".

Bret said she would not

Taiwan: China must back off

Taipei, Sept. 22: Taiwan on Tuesday demanded that China "back off" and accused it of threatening peace, after a Beijing official rejected a largely respected marine boundary following recent incursions.

Foreign minister Joseph Wu urged Beijing to "return to the civilised international standards" after a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said there was no so-called median line in the Taiwan Strait "as Taiwan is an inseparable part of Chinese territory".

Wu told reporters: "The median line has been a symbol of preventing military conflicts and maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait for many years. The Chinese foreign ministry's comment is equivalent of destroying the status quo." "I call on the international community to condemn the CCP for its dangerous and provocative words and deeds threatening peace... China must back off," he added in a tweet.

China considers Taiwan part of its territory, to be absorbed into the mainland, by force if necessary, even though it has been self-ruled for more than seven decades.

Beijing has ratcheted up pressure on the democratic island since the 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen, who rejects its view that Taiwan is part of "one China".

Last year, Taiwan accused China of violating a long-held tacit agreement after its fighter jets — for the first time in years — crossed the median line of the waters that separate the two sides.

Washington's increased

Spying allegations against NYC cop fiction, says Beijing

Beijing, Sept. 22: China on Tuesday said allegations against a New York City police officer charged with being an "intelligence asset" for the Chinese government are a "pure fabrication" and part of a US plot to smear Chinese diplomats in the United States.

Baimadajie Angwang, a naturalised US citizen from Tibet, allegedly agreed to spy on US supporters of the Tibetan independence movement since 2018 as an agent for China in its effort to suppress the movement, according to a criminal complaint filed in Brooklyn federal court.

It says he secretly worked for unnamed handlers from the Chinese Consulate in New York. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin on Tuesday said the indictment against Angwang was full of hedging terms such as "seems" and "possibly" giving the appearance that prosecutors were straining to make their case.

"The relevant accusations made by the US side

JINPING CRITIC GETS 18 YEARS IN GRAFT CASE

Beijing, Sept. 22: The former chairman of a Chinese state-owned real estate company who publicly criticised President Xi Jinping's handling of the Coronavirus pandemic was sentenced to 18 years in prison on Tuesday in a corruption case, the government announced. Ren Zhigang, who had become known for speaking up about censorship and other sensitive topics, disappeared from public view in March after publishing an essay online that accused Xi of mishandling the outbreak. — AP

are pure fabrication," Wang told reporters at a daily briefing.

"The US plot to discredit the Chinese Consulate and personnel in the United States will not succeed." — AP

outreach to Taiwan under President Donald Trump has become yet another flashpoint with Beijing, as the United States and China clash over a range of trade and security issues, as well as the

Coronavirus pandemic. In recent months Taiwan has reported a sharp rise in incursions by Chinese warplanes into its air defence identification zone (ADIZ). — AFP

If Biden wins, China wins: Don

Washington, Sept. 22:

Former US vice president Joe Biden has enormously harmed the US economy in his five decades as a politician, President Donald Trump has said, adding that if the Democratic leader wins the November 3 polls it would be a win for China. Biden, 77, and his running mate Kamala Harris are challenging incumbents President Trump, 74, and Vice President Mike Pence in the presidential election.

"Joe Biden spent the last 47 years shipping your jobs to China and foreign countries. You know that. I've spent the last four years bringing the jobs back to our country and back to Ohio," Trump said at a rally in Dayton, Ohio

on Monday.

The Republican leader described the November 3 polls as the most important in recent memory. "On November 3rd, Americans will decide whether we lift our nation to soaring new heights of prosperity or whether we will allow Joe Biden — Sleepy Joe — to shut down our economy, impose a \$4 trillion tax hike, abolish Ohio clean coal, oil, natural gas, and ship your jobs in factories overseas to China and countries that you never even heard of," he said.

The democratic tax plans for the 2020 election lists a gradual increase in proposed taxes by \$4 trillion in the next decade, placing a greater burden

on the super-rich category. "Put simply: If Biden wins, China wins. If we win, Ohio wins and most importantly, in all fairness, America wins. Because you finally have the president who puts America first, and I do put America first," Trump said to applause from the audience. Trump has held election rallies in the last two weeks, notwithstanding the risks posed by the coronavirus. Thousands attend the events without masks and breaking social-distancing norms.

Trump has called the rallies "protest against stupidity". "You know this is really not a rally. This has to do with workers, programmes, all the things we love," he said. — PTI

SEA OF JOY Filipino primary school teacher happy to give it back after social media alerts the owner**Surfboard drifts 8,000 km from Hawaii to Philippines**

Manila, Sept. 22: When big wave surfer Doug Falter lost his board in a wipeout in Hawaii, his best hope was for a local fisherman to pick it up. He never imagined it would be found more than 8,000 kilometres (5,000 miles) away in the southern Philippines.

More than two years after watching his pale blue custom-shaped board disappear in the huge swell of Waimea Bay, Falter was alerted via social media that it had been found near the remote island of Sarangani. And the new owner — local primary school teacher and

aspiring surfer Giovanne Branzuela — was happy to give it back to him.

"When I saw the picture of it, I couldn't believe it, I thought it was a joke almost," Falter, 35, said via Zoom. "I was certain that the board would never be found again." Branzuela, who bought the badly weathered surfboard from his neighbour a couple of months ago for 2,000 pesos (\$40), said fishermen had found it floating in the sea in August 2018 — six months after Falter lost sight of it.

They thought it may have

fallen off a passing yacht and sold it to Branzuela's neighbour for a few dollars. Despite months drifting across the Pacific Ocean, the name of the board's shaper, Hawaii-based Lyle Carlson, was still visible on the now-yellowish surface.

Curious, Branzuela looked him up on Facebook and sent him a photo of the board. Carlson shared the picture on Instagram, tagging Falter. "It turned out it's a surfboard from Hawaii. I couldn't believe it myself," Branzuela, 38, said via telephone. "It's been my dream to learn to surf and ride the

big waves here," he added. "For now I can use his surfboard. I told him I will take good care of it."

The pair have been chatting on Facebook and Falter plans to visit the small island to retrieve his board after Coronavirus travel restrictions are lifted.

"That board meant so much to me because of my accomplishments on it," said Falter, a commercial photographer who took up surfing about 15 years ago in Florida before moving to Hawaii.

"It was my first big wave surfboard custom shaped

for myself. I surfed it on the biggest days I've ever surfed in my life", he said, including the 2016 Eddie Aikau big wave surf contest in Waimea Bay when the swell was 20 metres (60 feet) high.

Falter said he wants to give Branzuela a beginners surfboard in exchange for his and show him how to catch waves around Sarangani and neighbouring Balut island.

In the meantime, Falter shares short YouTube videos on surfing basics and is raising money to send supplies to Branzuela's school. — AFP



This undated handout photo shows Filipino teacher Giovanne Branzuela (L) posing with his surfboard, once owned by big wave surfer Doug Falter who lost it while surfing in Hawaii, along with his village mates on Sarangani island in the Philippines. — AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	37,734.08	-0.79
Nifty 50	11,153.70	-0.86
S&P 500*	3,275.25	-0.18
Dollar (₹)	73.58	-0.25
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.33	0.06
Euro (₹)	86.39	0.39
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,570.99	0.20
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	41.65	0.21
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.010	-0.005
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.666	-0.005

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Amazon to come in four southern languages

In a major move to break the language barrier for online shopping and expand e-commerce access to the next 30 crore customers, ahead of the festive season, Amazon is launching amazon.in shopping experience in four new Indian languages - Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu. With this, Amazon.in customers can now discover great deals and discounts, and read detailed product information.

Ducati launches new Scrambler 1100 Pro in India



Italian superbike maker Ducati on Tuesday said it has launched all-new Scrambler 1100 Pro and the 1100 Sport Pro in India, priced at ₹11.95 lakh and ₹13.74 lakh, respectively (ex-showroom). The bikes come with an 1100-cc engine mated to a six speed gearbox. "The new Scrambler 1100 Pro range takes those qualities a notch higher, said Ducati India Managing Director Bipul Chandra.

Global cues pull down gold price further in India

Gold prices tumbled ₹672 to ₹51,328 per 10 gram in the national capital on Tuesday on a weak global trend. The yellow metal had closed at ₹52,000 per 10 gram in the previous trading session. Silver also witnessed massive selloff with prices tanking ₹5,781 to ₹61,606 per kg from ₹67,387 per kg in the previous trade. "Spot gold prices for 24 carat in Delhi plunged ₹672, reflecting selloff in international prices despite rupee fall.

Bayer gets DCGI nod for injection to treat DME

New Delhi: Bayer in India on Tuesday said it has received approval from the Drugs Controller General of India for its intravitreal injection Aflibercept, for the treatment of a new indication Diabetic Macular Edema (DME). The approval of Aflibercept injection for intravitreal use presents a new and alternative treatment option to currently available therapies, for patients with DME, Bayer said.

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Ambani plans ₹4K phone

Jio asked local handset makers to ramp up their capacities

BOOST TO MAKE IN INDIA

- Reliance's target of selling 15 crore to 20 crore phones over two years would represent a massive boost for local factories.
- India assembled an estimated 16.5 crore smartphones in the year ended March, and about an equal number of basic feature phones.



much like he did in wireless services, where his aggressive prices and simple plans quickly made him the dominant force. The billionaire is also aligning himself with India's plans to build more domestic manufacturing, a possible boost for local assemblers like Dixon Technologies India, Lava International and Karbonn Mobiles. "We are of course trying

to build our domestic companies. We have a sweet spot in entry level phones," said Pankaj Mohindroo, chairman of the India Cellular & Electronic Association, during an interview on Bloomberg Television. "The world has realised that India is a great place to do business and a great place to do manufacturing also." Representatives for

Reliance declined to comment.

Reliance's target of selling 15 crore to 20 crore phones over two years would represent a massive boost for local factories. India assembled an estimated 16.5 crore smartphones in the year ended March, and about an equal number of basic feature phones, according to Mohindroo's association. About a fifth of the smartphones cost less than ₹7,000, or about \$100.

Reliance rival Bharti Airtel is also in talks with assemblers to build its own 4G device, local media has reported.

Reliance in July struck a broad alliance with Google, in which the Alphabet Inc. unit would invest \$4.5 billion and cooperate on technology initiatives. The partnership is still under regulatory review so Reliance is proceeding with the mobile phone initiative on its own for now. — Bloomberg

LIC plans Covid policy, awaits IRDA's approval

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22

We have already filed a Covid-specific product with IRDA and are waiting for its approval. However, the new product will be of a short-term duration

MUKESH GUPTA, MD, LIC

With the rising numbers of deaths in India due to Covid19 disease, the country's life insurance behemoth, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), is all set to come out with a Covid-specific cover. The new Covid product is under consideration and awaiting a 'green signal' from the insurance regulator Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai).

"We have already filed a Covid-specific product with IRDA and are waiting for its approval. However, the forthcoming new product will be of a short-term duration for the customers," Mukesh Gupta, managing director of LIC, told Financial Chronicle.

Covid-19 related deaths in the country have already reached 88,935, while the Coronavirus case tally has crossed over 55 lakh mark. However, the insurer feels that the idea behind launching a Covid-specific product is

to bring more and more people under the life insurance cover during the pandemic.

While refusing to divulge more details about benefits and premium of the new product, Gupta said, "It is still in the works. After the approval from the regulator, we will make it public."

Though the insurer has also been providing the life cover for all its 28.92 crore LIC policyholders against the pandemic, the new cover is expected to charge a different premium as well as offer different benefits for its customers.

Gupta, however, feels

that the number of death claims for the corporation is still low. LIC has so far, he said, settled a total Covid claims worth ₹42.48 crore against 956 policies, covering 430 lives.

"In case of the death of any policyholder due to Covid-19, we are paying the death claim immediately after getting the required documents. We have even relaxed our norms for receiving the required documents physically and accepting the online submission via Whatsapp," he said.

"LIC has settled more claims than all other insurance companies if put together. Due to the killer pandemic, more people are buying insurance and I hope the trend would continue with people buying adequate life coverage for themselves and their families as well. LIC is currently running its month-long awareness drive for the revival of existing policies to increase its renewal premium by 5-6 per cent," he said.

Trump seeks to end social media shield

To consult state attorneys to make social media companies liable for user content

Washington, Sept. 22: US President Donald Trump plans to meet on Wednesday with a group of Republican state attorneys general about revising a key law that shields social media companies from liability for content posted by their users and allows them to remove lawful but objectionable posts.

"Online censorship goes far beyond the issue of free speech, it's also one of protecting consumers and ensuring they are informed of their rights and resources to fight back under the law," White House spokesman Judd Deere said. "State attorneys general are on the front lines of this issue and the President wants to hear their perspectives."

A person briefed on the matter said Trump is expected to meet with the state attorneys general of Texas, Arizona, Utah, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, South Carolina and Missouri. The planned meeting was reported earlier by the Washington Post.

In May, Trump signed an executive order that seeks new regulatory oversight of tech firms' content moderation decisions and backed legislation to scrap

LETHAL ATTACK

- US President Donald Trump plans to revise a key law that shields social media companies from liability for content posted by their users, but gives them right to remove objectionable posts



or weaken the law, Section 230.

He directed the commerce department to file the petition asking the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) to limit protections under Section 230 after Twitter Inc warned readers in May to fact-check his posts about unsubstantiated claims of fraud in mail-in voting.

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai opened the petition to a 45-day public comment. Earlier this month, the Republican state attorneys general of Texas, Louisiana, Indiana and

- A group representing major internet companies urged US communication body FCC to reject Trump's petition to limit protections

Missouri backed Trump's push, arguing social media platforms cannot be truly free "unless the participants understand the rules of the forum, and competition is able to provide alternatives when speech restrictions go too far."

A group representing major internet companies including Facebook Inc, Amazon.com Inc and Alphabet Inc's Google urged the FCC to reject the petition, calling it "misguided, lacks grounding in law, and poses serious public policy concerns." — Reuters

Mistry family may exit Tata group

Mumbai, Sept. 22: The billionaire Mistry family, the largest minority shareholder of the Tata Group, said that it needs to separate its interests after India's biggest conglomerate took steps to block the family's attempt to borrow money against Tata shares.

Tata Sons informed the Supreme Court Tuesday that it's open to buying out the 18 per cent stake owned by the Mistry family's cash-strapped Shapoorji Pallonji Group

Today, it is with a heavy heart that the Mistry family believes that a separation of interests would best serve all stakeholder groups

SHAPOORJI PALLONJI GROUP STATEMENT

if the latter needed to raise money for paying maturing debt. The SP Group instead wanted to borrow funds using the shares as collateral, a

move that the Tata Group considers as potentially risky because the securities may end up falling in the hands of unfriendly investors.

"The action by Tata Sons to block this crucial fund raise, without any heed for the collateral consequences, is the latest demonstration of their vindictive mind-set," the SP Group said in a statement late Tuesday.

"The SP-Tata relationship spanning over 70 years, was forged on

mutual trust, good faith, and friendship. Today, it is with a heavy heart that the Mistry family believes that a separation of interests would best serve all stakeholder groups."

It didn't specify what any separation would entail. A representative for Tata Sons declined to comment. Feud between the Tata Group and the Mistry family began after Cyrus Mistry was dismissed from the post of Tata Sons chairman a few years back. — Bloomberg

Kerala all set to get medical devices park

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 22

Kerala will get one among the four medical device parks proposed by the Central government. The park will provide a full range of services for the medical devices industry, including research and development support, testing, and evaluation.

MedSpark to be located at Life Science Park, Thiruvananthapuram, is a joint initiative of Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences & Technology (SCTIMST), an autonomous institute of the department of sci-

ence and technology (DST) and the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation Ltd (KSIDC).

This medical device park will produce medical implants and extracorporeal devices. It will benefit small and medium-sized medical devices industries, which dominate the medical devices sector.

The Centre had earlier announced plans to set up four medical devices parks in India as part of becoming self-reliant in the sector. Other three parks are expected to come up in Tamil Nadu, AP and Telangana.

NSE, SGX END ARBITRATION OVER NIFTY

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 22

NSE and Singapore Exchange (SGX) have decided to withdraw arbitration proceedings over the Indian bourse's decision to stop licensing its index Nifty to foreign bourses.

They have also agreed to cement terms for operationalising the NSE IFSC-SGX Connect to create a bigger liquidity pool for Nifty products at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT).

Lay-offs in Gulf countries force migrant workers to send all money home before flying back

COVID | IMPACT

Spurt in remittance hints at workers' final return

Karachi/Manila, Sept. 22: Migrant workers from Asia's developing countries have managed to send home record amounts of money in recent months, defying pandemic expectations and propping up home economies at a critical time.

Remittance doomsayers see something else in the bigger-than-usual transfers: a coming crash, triggered by a bleak job market, particularly in the Middle East. As they see opportunity drying up along with demand for oil,

workers are sending money home in advance of their own return.

The Philippines government, for example, expects almost three lakh overseas Filipinos to come home this year, with potentially severe consequences: Remittances make up about 10 per cent of the economy and have pushed the peso to a three-year high against the dollar.

"People are returning home," said Thomas Isaac, the finance minister for Indian state of Kerala,

which accounts for the country's largest share of remittances. "Therefore, they bring back all their savings."

India is the world's top recipient of transfers and a leading supplier of labour to the Gulf; it took in \$83 billion last year, exceeding the \$51 billion it took in as foreign direct investment.

Overall, remittances to the Asia-Pacific region will drop 12 per cent in the second half of 2020 compared with the same period last year, Fitch Ratings

said this month. "That will drive a decline in remittances as the temporary supporting factors fade," said Jeremy Zook, a director at Fitch Ratings based in Hong Kong.

Unlike Latin American countries, which continue to benefit from a tentative US recovery, Asian countries are vulnerable to economic austerity in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle East.

More than 60 per cent of remittances to India, Bangladesh and Pakistan come from Gulf

Cooperation Council countries, said Khurram Schehzad, chief executive officer at Karachi-based advisory Alpha Beta Core Solutions.

The region is also the top destination for workers from the Philippines, one of the world's largest suppliers of overseas labour.

Saudi Arabia has already raised taxes and import fees to make up for falling oil revenue. Job cuts in the kingdom appear to target foreigners first, with Riyadh-based Jadwa Investment esti-

mating more than a million foreign workers will leave the labour market this year.

After eight years of sending money to family in Karachi, Abdul Hanan Abro is one of the workers who will follow his money home. He was laid off from his accounting job in Dubai in May and hasn't found a new gig — and he's not the only one.

"No one is getting anything," said Abro. "Two to three of my friends have already moved back to Lahore. People are selling

their cars and stuff, doing their final settlements."

For Abro, coming home means starting over. He wants to use the savings he accumulated overseas to start a business. "It's high time to just focus on what I was planning for two to three years now," Abro said. "It's better than wasting more time in finding a job in this market."

In April, the World Bank predicted overseas workers would send home 20 per cent less this year, the biggest drop since at least 1980. — Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Original 9 in line for Tennis Hall

Newport: Billie Jean King and the other members of the Original 9 who laid the groundwork for the women's professional tennis tour are the first group nominated together for the International Tennis Hall of Fame. They join Jonas Bjorkman, Sergi Bruguera, Juan Carlos Ferrero, Lleyton Hewitt, Lisa Raymond and the late Dennis Van der Meer on the ballot announced on Monday for the Hall's Class of 2021. Wednesday is the 50th anniversary of when King, elected to the Hall in 1987 for her accomplishments on the court, and eight other players Peaches Bartkowicz, Rosie Casals, Judy Dalton, Julie Heldman, Kerry Melville Reid, Kristy Pigeon, Nancy Richey and Valerie Ziegenfuss signed 1 contracts to participate in the first women-only tennis tournament, taking a stand against the disparity in prize money between men and women at the time.

— AP

Ankita advances, Ramkumar out

Paris: India's Ankita Raina progressed to the second round of the French Open qualifiers with a hard-fought win over Jovana Jovic on Tuesday but Ramkumar Ramanathan's bid to qualify for his maiden Grand Slam singles main draw fell flat. In a marathon two-hour 47 minute contest, Ankita prevailed 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 against the Serbian. The 27-year-old Indian won 106 points to 100 of her rival. It was first meeting between the two players since 2014 when Ankita had lost to Jovic in Anning on clay courts. Ankita will next take on Japan's Kurumi Nara, seeded 22nd. In the men's singles, Ramkumar bowed out after a straight set defeat against French wild card Tristan Lamasine. The Indian Davis Cupper, ranked 198, lost 5-7 2-6 to lower-ranked Lamasine in one hour and 27 minutes. — PTI

Suarez in Italian language test row

Rome: Authorities are investigating whether Barcelona striker Luis Suarez was illegally helped to pass an Italian language exam last week in order to receive a European passport that could help him transfer to a new club. While Suarez is not under investigation, the director and general director of the Perugia university where the Uruguay forward took the exam are being investigated for allegedly helping him pass the test, Italian reports said Tuesday. Su rez had been linked with a possible move to Italian champion Juventus. Suarez's test grade was allegedly fixed before he took the test. Suarez is from Uruguay but has Italian ancestors. If he can obtain Italian citizenship, he wouldn't have to occupy a non-EU spot with a new club. — AP

Tour team under dope scanner

Paris: French judicial authorities have opened a preliminary investigation into suspected doping during the Tour de France targeting the Arkea-Samsic team, the French outfit confirmed. Following reports in the French press that two persons close to the squad led by Colombian rider Nairo Quintana a former Giro d'Italia and Spanish Vuelta champion were being held for questioning, cycling governing body the UCI later said it has been in touch with a special public health unit as part of the operation carried out by French authorities. — AP

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Kolkata vs Mumbai from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

England Women vs West Indies Women: Second T20 from 10.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

TENNIS

ATP Hamburg European Open: Third day's action from 2 pm on Sony Six, HD

WWE NXT

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

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ROYAL HIGHNESS

Both teams score 200 but Rajasthan beat Super Kings

Sharjah, Sept. 22: Rajasthan Royals beat Chennai Super Kings by 16 runs in an IPL game on Tuesday riding on brilliant performances from Sanju Samson (74 off 32 balls), Steve Smith (69 off 47 balls) and Jofra Archer (27 off 8 balls, 1/26).

Batting first Royals scored 216/7 with the help of 17 sixes hit by their batsmen and nine by Samson alone.

In reply, CSK could manage 200/6 with Faf du Plessis scoring 72 off 37 ball with the help of seven sixes. Mahendra Singh Dhoni scored 29 off 17 balls but it was Rahul Tewatia's leg breaks that caused a lot of damage to top order. Tewatia took 3/37 in his four overs while Archer bowled a brilliant 19th over to seal the match.

Sent into bat, Rajasthan lost young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal (6) in the third over but then Samson joined hands with Smith as the duo played sensibly initially before the Kerala wicket-keeper batsman went hammer and tongs at opposition spinners.

Samson (74 off 32) looked in great nick, while Smith, returning to competitive cricket after recovering from concussion suffered before the ODI series against England, made 67 off 49 balls to lay the base for Rajasthan's total.

In the final over, Jofra Archer (27 off 8 balls) hit four sixes off Lungi Ngidi as Royals got 30 runs to take the score past 215.

In all, Royals hit 17 sixes with Samson accounting for nine of them and Smith and Archer having four each in their kitties.

While Smith played the second fiddle initially, Samson took the CSK spin duo of Ravindra Jadeja and Piyush Chawla to task



Steve Smith of the Rajasthan Royals plays a shot on way to his half-century against Chennai Super Kings in their IPL match at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium in the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday. — BCCI

Scorecard

Rajasthan Royals: Yashasvi Jaiswal c & b Chahar 6, Steve Smith c Jadhav b Curran 69, Sanju Samson c Chahar b Ngidi 74, David Miller run out (Gaikwad/Jadhav) 0, Robin Uthappa c du Plessis b Chawla 5, Rahul Tewatia lbw b Curran 10, Riyan Parag c Dhoni b Curran 6, Tom Curran (not out) 10, Jofra Archer (not out) 27. **Extras: (b-1, nb-3, w-5) 9. Total: (for 7 wkts, in 20 overs) 216.** **FoW:** 1-11, 2-132, 3-134, 4-149, 5-167, 6-173, 7-178. **Bowling:** Deepak Chahar 4-0-31-1, Sam Curran 4-0-33-3, Lungi Ngidi 4-0-56-1, Ravindra Jadeja 4-0-40-0, Piyush Chawla 4-0-55-1.

Chennai Super Kings: Murali Vijay c Tom Curran b Shreyas Gopal 21, Shane Watson b Rahul Tewatia 33, Faf du Plessis c Sanju Samson b Jofra Archer 72, Sam Curran st Sanju Samson b Rahul Tewatia 17, Ruturaj Gaikwad st Sanju Samson b Rahul Tewatia 0, Kedar Jadhav c Sanju Samson b Curran 22, Mahendra Singh Dhoni not out 29, Ravindra Jadeja not out 1. **Extras: (lb-1, nb-1, w-3) 5. Total: (in 20 overs) 200/6.** **FoW:** 1-56, 2-58, 3-77, 4-77, 5-114, 6-179. **Bowling:** Jaydev Unadkat 4-0-44-0, Jofra Archer 4-0-26-1, Shreyas Gopal 4-0-38-1, Tom Curran 4-0-54-1, Rahul Tewatia 4-0-37-3.

Kohli goes gaga over Chahal

Dubai, Sept. 22: Crediting Yuzvendra Chahal's three-wicket burst for his side's 10-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in their IPL-opener, Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Virat Kohli said the wrist spinner proved that he can get purchase on any wicket.

Chahal (3/18) removed in-form Englishman Jonny Bairstow (61) and Vijay Shankar in successive balls in the 16th over to tilt the game decisively in RCB's favour. He had earlier gotten rid of Manish Pandey (34) in the 12th over.

"It's amazing to be honest. Last year, we were on the other side of the result, 6-nil to start. It is nice to be 1-nil. We kept our composure tonight," Kohli said at the post-match presentation on Monday.

"Yuzi (Chahal) comes in and completely changed the game for us. Not many spinners got much out of the pitch, but tonight he showed that you can turn it if you have it in your wrists. He showed he can get purchase on any wicket. The way he came in and

PADIKKAL IMPRESSES ON DEBUT

Dubai, Sept. 22: Considered a future India star, Devdutt Padikkal made an impressive IPL debut with a scintillating fifty but the young Kerala batsman says he was nervous when his place in the playing XI was confirmed to him.

Displaying a range of shots and confidence in striking the ball hard and clean, the 20-year-old scored a 42-ball 56 to help Royal Challengers Bangalore post 163 for 5 against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"I was very nervous upon hearing the news of making my debut. But when I came to bat I settled down after playing a few balls," Padikkal told Chahal during an inter-

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MARSH MAY BE RULED OUT OF IPL

Dubai, Sept. 22: Australian all-rounder Mitchell Marsh is likely to be ruled out of the remainder of the IPL as the ankle injury he suffered during the game against RCB has turned out to be "serious", team sources said on Tuesday.

Playing for Sunrisers Hyderabad, Marsh was handed the ball by skipper David Warner to bowl the fifth over but he could bowl only four deliveries.

Marsh, whose career has been marred by a series of injuries, twisted his ankle in the second ball while trying to stop a drive by Aaron Finch in his follow through but managed to bowl two more balls before hobbling out.

He later, courageously, came out to bat at number 10 in SRH's chase but it was evident that he was finding it even difficult to stand. "It seems a serious injury. I am not sure if he be able to compete in any of the matches," a team source said. — PTI

He later, courageously, came out to bat at number 10 in SRH's chase but it was evident that he was finding it even difficult to stand. "It seems a serious injury. I am not sure if he be able to compete in any of the matches," a team source said. — PTI

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Mumbai look to bounce back

Abu Dhabi, Sept. 22: Grace and strength will be on one side while poise and killer instinct on the other when a revamped Kolkata Knight Riders take on Mumbai Indians, who have once again faltered in the beginning of the IPL, on Wednesday.

Since 2013, MI have never won an opening game and the script didn't change against Chennai Super Kings, who took control of the match during the last 10 overs of the first innings.

They will be keen to bounce back while KKR would look for a perfect beginning as it will be a battle between big hitters on both sides on a sluggish Abu Dhabi track.

It will be Shubman Gill's third IPL, the one where he would like to own the stage with his languid grace and effortless hitting, which he is so capable of. He can hit sixes over extra cover with grace and caress the ball through covers too.

These are exactly the traits that made Rohit Sharma, the great white ball exponent that he is. Seasoned Rohit versus young Shubman is one for the keeps and makes this battle enticing. But it's not just grace which makes T20 so appealing. The brute masculinity of power that sends the ball soaring into the orbit is what makes it so special.

Hardik Pandya, who is back with a chiselled body.

● **Since 2013, MI have never won an opening game and the script didn't change against Chennai Super Kings, who took control of the match during the last 10 overs of the first innings.**

There is no doubt that he can unleash his firepower against Sunil Narine and Kuldeep Yadav as well as KKR's highest paid multi million dollar recruit Pat Cummins. The second pacer could be between Prasidh Krishana and Kamlesh Nagarkoti. But Hardik will find his match in Andre Russell, easily the most destructive hitter in current T20 cricket.

Russell had openly criticised the team management last year for sending him down the order. He had hit 52 sixes during one of KKR's worst editions. But this time, he has been promised a promotion to number three slot and this could spell doom for any opposition.

"If it benefits the team and helps us win games, why not. If that meant Russell comes in at three and bats 60 balls, he might actually make a double hundred. Anything can happen with Dre Russ," KKR mentor David Hussey had said recently. — PTI

NUMBERS GAME — MI vs KKR

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:

● Matches: 25

● Mumbai won: 19

● Kolkata won: 6

MEETING IN 2019

● Kolkata Knight Riders beat Mumbai Indians by 34 runs in Kolkata

● Mumbai Indians beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 9 wickets in Mumbai

FOR THE RECORD

● Andre Russell's strike

rate is the best in IPL. He made 1342 runs off 711 balls in 48 innings of 57 runs at a strike rate of 188.74.

● Kieron Pollard will become the 14th player to appear in 150 or more matches in IPL. The West Indian all rounder played all 149 matches for Mumbai Indians in IPL since 2010.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Rajasthan Royals	1	1	0	0	2	+0.800
Royal Challengers Bangalore	1	1	0	0	2	+0.500
Delhi Capitals	1	1	0	0	2	+0.000
Chennai Super Kings	2	1	1	0	2	-0.145
Kings XI Punjab	1	0	1	0	0	+0.000
Kolkata Knight Riders	0	0	0	0	0	+0.000
Mumbai Indians	1	0	1	0	0	-0.486
Sunrisers Hyderabad	1	0	1	0	0	-0.500

Tabulated as Played, Won, Lost, No Result, Points, Net Run Rate

Wadia calls for better umpiring standards

New Delhi, Sept. 22: Kings XI Punjab co-owner Ness Wadia wants the BCCI to ensure better umpiring standards and optimum use of technology in the IPL, following an umpiring howler which cost his team a match against Delhi Capitals.

Wadia expressed his views after KXIP appealed against on-field umpire Nitin Menon's controversial 'short run' call at a crunch time of the game held on Sunday in Dubai.

"It is exceedingly unfortunate that today with tremendous use of technology, we still do not use technology to ensure the total fairness and transparency in cricket game," Wadia said.

"I would request BCCI to ensure better umpiring and to ensure henceforth that technology is used to the maximum so as to ensure fairness and transparency in a game which is used across the best leagues in the world." — PTI

‘Incredible’ Foden keeps Wolves at bay



Manchester City's Phil Foden (right) is congratulated by teammate Raheem Sterling after he scored against Wolverhampton Wanderers in their Premier League match in Wolverhampton on Monday. — AP

Wolverhampton, Sept. 22: Pep Guardiola labelled Phil Foden as "incredible" after Manchester City survived a scare to start their Premier League title challenge with a 3-1 win against Wolves on Monday.

City's delayed start to the campaign — due to their involvement in last season's Champions League — had allowed Liverpool to build a six-point lead over them before they had even kicked a ball.

Guardiola's side could not afford to slip up at Molineux if they wanted to keep pace with the champions and they raced into a two-goal lead before half-time thanks to Kevin De Bruyne's penalty and Foden's cool finish.

City's swaggering first half gave way to an anxious spell as Wolves dominated after the interval and they

THE RESULTS

Aston Villa (Konsa 63)	1
Sheffield United	0
Wolves (Jimenez 78)	1
Manchester City (De Bruyne 20-pen, Foden 32, Jesus 90)	3

had to cling on after Raul Jimenez got one back before Gabriel Jesus sealed the points in stoppage time.

Foden's goal was a welcome morale boost in his first match since the midfielder was sent home in disgrace, along with Manchester United's Mason Greenwood, after the pair invited local women into the England team's hotel. The breach of coronavirus protocols after England's Nations League

match in Iceland was publicly condemned by City, but the 20-year-old retains Guardiola's trust.

"For the goal and in the second half Foden played incredibly well, he helped us keep the ball," Guardiola said.

While City equalled Aston Villa's record of winning 10 consecutive opening fixtures to a season, there is little doubt Liverpool remain the League's pre-eminent force for now.

But Guardiola was delighted to open with a victory given the shorter than usual pre-season. "We could not run much because we are tired in our legs but in general we did a good game," he said.

It feels like a crucial season for City and Guardiola as they look to regain the title they won in 2018 and 2019. — AFP