

IN BRIEF

10 arrested on charges of duping

Hyderabad: Ten persons from Rajasthan have been arrested for running duping people to send money for cars and two-wheelers for which the gang posted advertisements on online platforms. These 10 are part of an 18-member gang who have been posing as Army officers on these platforms and cheating people. According to the Hyderabad police, the 10 were arrested from Chulhera and Kalyanpur in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan by a city police team amid stone pelting and throwing of chilli powder by villagers. The villagers also damaged three police vehicles. The team was accompanied by Bharatpur police personnel.

MANY STUDENTS SHARE TOP RANKS

From page 1

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Snikitha, a student from Sri Chaitanya, said she and her family were excited by the achievement. She said that while they have not decided on a specialisation yet, her first preference would be to get an admission in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

Soyeb Aftab from Odisha bagged the all India first rank scoring a perfect 720, while second rank was secured by Akansha Singh of Delhi who also scored 720 and stood first among girls. The rank was decided as per the NTA's tie-breaker policy.

The ranking of the candidate is initially determined based on the scores obtained in viology and chemistry. If there is a tie, candidates are shortlisted taking into consideration the number of answers that are incorrect, following which they are then shortlisted depending on their age. The elder one gets the preference.

The policy was used for deciding further ranks.

Snikitha (Telangana state), Vineet Sharma (Rajasthan), Amrisha Khaitan (Haryana) and Guthi Chaitanya Sindhu (Andhra Pradesh) scored 715 out of 720 marks. They were ran-ked third, fourth, fifth and sixth respectively.

Those ranked from 8th to 20th have scored 710 marks and those ranked from 25th to 50th have scored 705, according to the NTA rules, *PTI* said.

The Directorate General of Health Services will conduct counselling for the 15 per cent All India Quota seats. Reservation for the 85 per cent seat quota seats is subject to policies of each state.

Qualified students will have to register on the website *mcc.nic.in*. Students will have to pay a non-refundable registration and a refundable tuition fee. Registration fee for the general category is ₹1,000 and ₹500 for the SC/ST/OBC category. Seats will be allotted on the basis of choices filled, seats available, NEET rank, reservation criteria and other factors. The allotment list will be released after each round.

There are 80,055 MBBS seats as per Medical Council of India data and 26,949 BDS seats as per the Dental Council of India this year.

222 ELECTRIC TRANSFORMERS NOT FUNCTIONING

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT. 16

Three days after a rain-fed deluge drowned parts of Hyderabad, 222 electricity distribution transformers are still out of commission. According to G. Raghuma Reddy, chairman and managing director of TS Southern Power Distribution Corporation Limited, these transformers could not be charged because of floodwaters still being present in cellars of apartment buildings and in low-lying streets.

Raghuma Reddy on Friday inspected the situation in several areas of the city including Singereni Colony, Gowtamanagar, Saradanagar, Kamalanagar, Kodandaramnagar, P&T Colony, Barkas, Maisaram, Chandrayangutta, Al Zubair Colony, Falaknuma, Indranagar, Jamalnagar, and Salala that were still under two to three feet of water.

He said 13 distribution transformers could not be charged due to floodwater levels in Saroornagar division, while 28 were in the same situation in the Charminar division.

Complimenting the staff for their hard work to restore power supply, Raghuma Reddy called on them to continue working efficiently to ensure power is restored in all areas.

₹560cr civic infra damaged in city

₹1,660cr destruction recorded in urban areas

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 16

The GHMC is yet to figure out the infrastructure damage caused by the incessant rains early this week. Overall the corporation has said it will spend ₹566 crore on restoration of lakes, black top (BT) and cement concrete (CC) roads as well as stormwater drains.

Officials said that they were gearing up for more rain in another 72 hours, following an alert by the Indian Meteorological Department.

Across the state, the damage to infrastructure in municipal corporations and urban local bodies has been put at ₹1,660 crore.

According to highly placed sources, cost estimates to restore the city by taking up repair work have been submitted to Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, who is expected to ask the Centre to allocate ₹566 crore from the Disaster Relief Fund.

EXPERT: URBAN PLANNING IS LOPSIDED

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 16

Every time there is heavy rain, the city faces a deluge and it is time to make the authorities accountable for the damage caused to the city because of their negligence, said Prof. Purushottam Reddy, environmentalist.

Speaking at a meet on Friday, he said that there were several problems plaguing the governance of the city. Noted environmentalist B.V. Subba Rao said that the deluge was the result of the demolition of the city's environment, especially of lakes and other water bodies.

"The situation is the result of collective mistakes and blunders committed by successive governments, policy makers, vested groups and even the citizens, characterised by a marked disregard for environment, urban planning and land usage," said Prof. Reddy. Similarly, Dr Rao demanded that the government come out with a White Paper detailing all the orders issued by the Supreme Court, High Court and National Green Tribunal (NGT) calling for the demolition of illegal structures.

He said a law should be passed for the demolition of illegal structures, otherwise Hyderabad will also be destroyed like other cities on the river banks in the past that did not manage their waters properly.

"Whenever any action is taken, it is taken against and limited only to eviction of the poor and nothing is done about all others, including the government, who are the major violators. What is required is a paradigm shift in attitude and policies for the environment and urban planning, along with the demolition of all existing encroachments," said Mazher Hussain, executive director, Confederation of Voluntary Associations (COVA).

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 16

Stagnant water and sewage contaminating drinking water can lead to rise in bacterial infections and mosquito-borne diseases. People have thus been advised to report early at hospitals in case they have symptoms of any illness.

Along with threat of seasonal diseases and Covid-19, medical experts are anticipating co-infections following heavy rains, floods and dip in night and early morning temperatures. This is owing to many areas in the city hav-

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Authorities said the estimates regarding stormwater drains were preliminary, based on inputs given by field officials. Final estimates will be

submitted after the rainwater is drained out from about 800 locations, mostly spread over Charminar and LB Nagar zones.

Over 200 trucks of silt, sludge and other remains were removed in the last two days from the stormwater drains, and at least another 100 truckloads will be removed till Saturday.

A senior GHMC official said officers had asked the different agencies to deploy staff and machinery to prevent damage during the next spell of rains that has been forecast.

The official said the civic body will focus on restoring internal roads in all areas. It would lay 1,200 kms BT roads, and 74 kms of CC roads and restore about 20 lakes with Central and state funds. The official said that the budgets and estimates have been submitted and the onus is on the state government and the Centre to expedite the release of funds.

Do not switch on submerged vehicles

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 16

Do not turn on the ignition to a car or two-wheeler that has been submerged, automobile mechanics have warned.

"Trying to switch on the vehicle if it has been submerged will result in even more damage than it has already suffered. You do not want to add to your bills any more than you have to," warned Altaf Baig, a mechanic with Marvel Motors.

If your vehicle was in an inundated cellar or basement, or even partially submerged, it is best to either get it towed to a workshop or a mechanic who can ensure no additional damage is done. Do not attempt to re-start the vehicle rightaway. Make sure the battery terminals are separated as the first step.

"Even if your vehicle was fully not submerged, it is a good idea to let it dry out for at least two days and turn on the ignition key only after making sure there are no traces of water left in the engine," Baig said.

Khaja Amruddin, whose car and motorcycle were submerged when floodwater filled up the cellar of the apartment complex he lives in, said he had his car towed to a garage for repairs. "The mechanics estimated it would cost ₹40,000 for the car and ₹15,000 for the bike to

be repaired."

According to Baig, the most affected parts of a car in a flood include the electronic control module, the body control module and the power steering mechanism. "Then, you need to change all the different oils in the engine, the interiors and other electronics that may have been damaged by water," he said.

Tuesday's rain in Hyderabad is estimated to have inundated or submerged parking lots in at least 20,000 homes with the most affected vehicle owners being those who parked their cars and bikes in cellars.

Calls for towing vehicles have been pouring in. Farooq, who runs a vehicle recovery service and has four vans, said "We have been on phone constantly for the past two days with customers seeking to tow their cars from apartment cellars to workshops and mechanics."

The city has around 45 lakh two wheelers and 10 lakh four wheelers.

8 of family washed away, four dead, four still missing

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 16

There is no clue about the four members of a family that was washed away early on Wednesday at Mailardevpally, while the bodies of four others of the family have been traced. Mohammed Abdul Tahir Qureshi, 60, who also fell into the stream but was rescued, is hopeful that his remaining family members may be alive.

Around 2 am on Wednesday,

Mohammed Abdul Tahir Qureshi, a resident of Ali Nagar in Mailardevpally, saw his house wall collapse due to heavy rains and decided to move to his brother Mohammed Abdul Qudus Qureshi's house.

As soon as Tahir Qureshi and his family of eight stepped out of the house, they slipped in the fast flowing rainwater and were washed away. He was lucky to be saved after struggling in the water for nearly 3 km.

His younger brother Qudus

Qureshi, 56, who jumped in to save his brother and sons Mohd Abdul Wasey Qureshi, 33, Mohd Abdul Wajid Qureshi, 32, and grandson Mohd Abdul Wahab, 5, are missing.

On Wednesday the bodies of his daughters-in-law Daraksha Qureshi, 32, and Farzana Tabassum, 26, were recovered and shifted to Osmania General Hospital for post-mortem. On Thursday, the bodies of his daughter-in-law Farzana Humera, 24, and granddaughter

Amera Bibi, 7, were recovered. Tahir Qureshi wonders who will look after his grandkids Mohd Abdul Qureshi, 9, and Mohd Abdul Gani, 6, who lost their parents.

Majlis Bachao Tahreek Amjadullah Khan Khalid said there was no response from the government to this tragic incident. No one was showing interest in searching for the remaining family members.

Khan said the family faced a horrible situation in shifting the

bodies to Madrasa Jamiatul Banath in Saidabad and from there to the Osmania General Hospital mortuary. There was no ambulance available to shift bodies and they transported them in their car. He alleged that they had to pay ₹1,250 for each post-mortem and ₹3,000 for shifting bodies from the OGH to Saidabad.

The Namaz-e-Janaza (funeral prayer) was performed at Masjid Ujale Sha Saidabad and the bodies were buried at Sultan Daira graveyard at Kurmaguda.

Recovering from floods



Flood victims take shelter in the BS Magta government school near Kundanbagh on Friday. — R. PAVAN



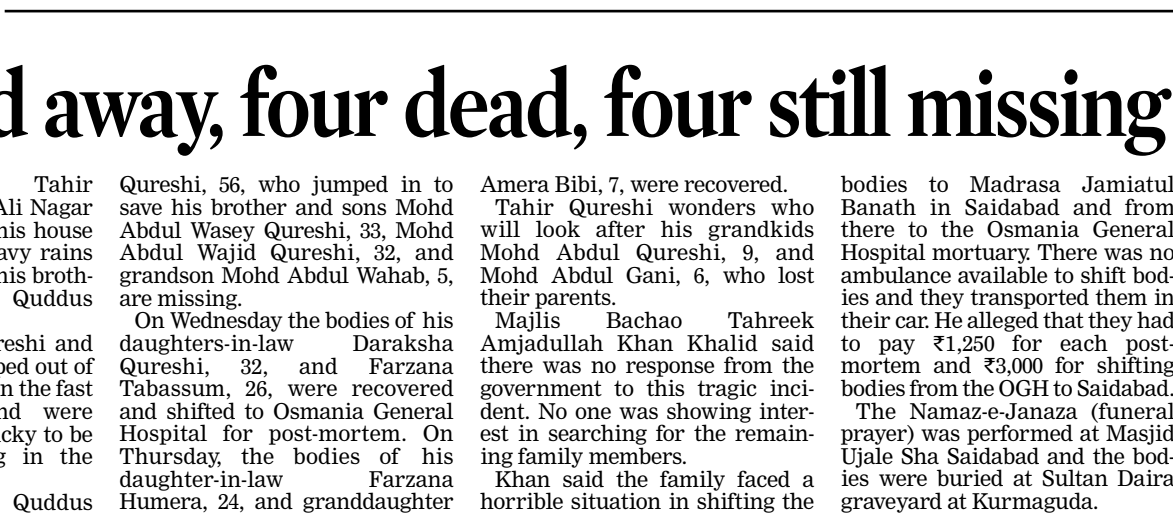
Sudanese nationals wait for news of their countryman who went missing in the flood at Gaganpahad on way to the airport. The Sudanese have launched a search for their missing friend. — P. SURENDRA



A massive tree lies across the street at Kodandaramanagar at Saroornagar on Friday. It was uprooted following heavy rains on Tuesday, and has still not been cleared. — DC



As a result of the waterlogged streets, locals make thermocol boats to move from one lane to another, in Ramanthapur on Friday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE



Floods, stagnant water raise risk of diseases

● **THE BIGGEST WORRY** is water contamination, as sewage and drinking water lines are close to each other. There is fear of the two getting mixed.

The sudden downpour, floods, water stagnation and breeding of mosquitoes have led to fears of vector-borne diseases. Prevention is now the best method.

She said people must use mosquito repellents and cover their hands and legs. Stagnant water in and around houses must be cleared. "Apart from Covid-19, we are worried about co-

infections, which had been noticed in the last six months. Symptoms of some co-infections are similar to Covid-19. Hence any infection or disease in this time of pandemic will require checking for Covid-19 too," Dr Anupama said.

The biggest worry is water contamination, as sewage and drinking water lines are close to each other. There is fear of the two getting mixed. For this reason, water board has issued an advisory that drinking water must be boiled, the reason being that filters are unable to clear bacteria. For a few days, boiling

water before drinking will ensure safety.

Senior paediatrician Dr Satish Ghanta says, "Bacterial infections due to e-coli virus and coliform bacteria can also contaminate foods. Due to this, food-borne diseases are expected. People must have only warm homemade foods for a few days."

Strong winds due to thunderstorm and rains have also activated seasonal Corona and influenza viruses. Further, dip in temperatures is causing worry that seasonal fevers too spring up due to sudden weather change.

Cong: Many died as CM didn't act quickly

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT. 16

AICC spokesperson Dr Dasoju Sravan on Friday alleged that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao had not responded to the floods due to which many people had died and which had caused huge damage in the city.

Criticising the CM for his inhuman attitude towards the flood-affected citizens, Dr Sravan demanded that the government announce ex gratia of ₹50

lakh to the families of each of the deceased. He said that the TRS government had miserably failed in handling the situation in the rain-hit Hyderabad.

Dr Sravan along with a team of Congress leaders met GHMC commissioner Lokesh Kumar and staged a dharna in front of the GHMC office against the government's "laziness" and failure.

"No helpline number is functioning. In this kind of a situation, who should the people complain to," Dr Sravan asked.

SHORT TAKES

Couple dies by suicide

Mancherial: A married couple Mosam Mellesh Kumar and Narmada died by suicide in Bellampalli town on Friday morning. It is said they were suffering from various health ailments for a year now. Unable to face them anymore, they too took the drastic step.

CM greets all on Bathukamma fest

Hyderabad: Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Naidu conveyed his greetings to people of Telangana state on the occasion of the Bathukamma festival. He asked the people to celebrate the festival strictly following Covid-19 guidelines and restrictions. He urged the people to celebrate Bathukamma festival, a symbol of Telangana's pride and culture, with devotion. He prayed to the Goddess that the agriculture sector should prosper with high yields and every household should have peace and happiness.

86% candidates clear PGEET

Hyderabad: A total of 86.01 per cent candidates have qualified out of 16,807 who had appeared for the TS PGEET 2020, as per the results of which were announced on Friday. A total of 22,282 candidates had registered for the test. The number of qualified candidates stands at 14,456, including 6,663 women. The percentage of qualifying male candidates stood at 46.37 per cent and 39.64 per cent for women. The tests were conducted for admissions into ME, MTech, M Pharm, graduate-level Pharm-D (Post Baccalaureate) programmes in 19 subjects from September 21 to 24.

PEDDAPALLI COPS ARREST GANJA SMUGGLER

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, OCT. 16

Police on Friday nabbed a person who allegedly sold ganja to college students and labourers here and seized three kgs of ganja from his possession worth ₹60,000.

On receiving information, Circle Inspector A. Pradeep Kumar and Sub-inspector K. Rajesh deployed two teams to keep a vigil in the town. Noticing that one person was moving around suspiciously with a bag in Tenuguwada locality, the police nabbed him and found three kgs of ganja.

The accused was identified as Vemula Chandrasekhar (22), a resident of Jawaharnagar of Sultanabad mandal.

Police registered a case against Chandrasekhar and started investigation. DCP P. Ravinder appreciated the team members, including constables Madishetti Ramesh and Dubasi Ramesh.

■ **THE ACCUSED** was identified as Vemula Chandrasekhar (22), a resident of Jawaharnagar of Sultanabad mandal.

For peace and prosperity



Assembly speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy visited the Nizamsagar project on Friday and performed special pujas. Amidst the chanting by priests, he released a *Teppa* into the river Manjeera. The speaker said that water will be released for two crops from the Nizamsagar project, as the project has sufficient water to cater to the needs of the farmers' in the entire command area. Farmers from Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts were happy as the Nizamsagar received copious inflows. Also seen are Jukkal MLA Hanmanth Shinde, Kamareddy zilla parishad chairperson Dafedar Shobha, Nizamabad district cooperative central bank chairman Pocharam Bhaskar Reddy.



Cotton buying delayed

Adilabad market yard officials will announce date later

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, OCT. 16

Adilabad district authorities have postponed the date for purchasing cotton from the farmers due to the prevailing bad weather conditions. Earlier, the date fixed for the purchase of cotton was October 19. District marketing officer M.D Ashwak in a statement issued, appealed to the farmers not to bring their cotton produce to the Adilabad market yard. "We will announce a new date later," he said. Following the rains, farmers fear that pets

■ **DISTRICT MARKETING** officer M.D Ashwak in a statement issued, appealed to the farmers not to bring their cotton produce to the Adilabad market yard.

■ **HE SAID,** we will announce a new date later.

■ **HAD IT** not been for the untimely rains, cotton-picking would have taken place in the next 15 days, and farmers would have earned a fair price for their crop.

might attack the standing crop.

They say, "Cotton-picking is difficult as the plants have fallen on the ground at many places."

Had it not been for the untimely rains, cotton-picking would have taken

place in the next 15 days, and farmers would have earned a fair price for their crop.

The Adilabad market authorities might have postponed the cotton purchasing date, keeping in mind that farmers might

find it difficult, to bring the crop to the market due to the bad weather conditions.

The revenue and agriculture department officials are conducting village surveys, to assess the damage caused to the standing cotton, soybean and paddy crops in the erstwhile Adilabad district.

It is yet to be confirmed if private traders or the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) will purchase the rain-soaked produce or if farmers might have to be satisfied selling their cotton production for a loss.

7 PARTIES LOSE COMMON SYMBOL AND DEPOSIT

Hyderabad: The Telangana State Election Commission said on Friday that seven registered political parties have lost the common symbol allotted to them and forfeited the deposit amount of ₹10,000 and are ineligible to apply afresh for a common symbol till January 7, 2025.

The SEC in a press release said these parties are the Telangana Jana Samiti, Jana Shankhaaravam Party, BC United Forum, Mana Telangana Rashtra Samaikya Party, Praja Sena Party, Samajwadi Forward Bloc and the Yuva Telangana Party.

Survey intensified for information on non-agri properties

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC
NIZAMABAD, OCT. 16

The survey of non-agriculture properties in villages and towns has intensified in undivided Nizamabad district.

Gram panchayat and teams from the municipality are visiting households in their respective habitations to enlist details of properties.

The last date for the survey has been extended and will end on October 20.

Teams have been visiting property holders multiple times to collect data, in the prescribed format, including the name of the property owner, the extent of land, his/her family members, house number and including a passport size photograph of the property owner.

The data is then uploaded on the Dharani portal.

■ **THE LAST** date for the survey of non-agriculture properties has been extended and it will end on October 20.

The staff of the Nizamabad Municipal Corporation handed over formats of the survey to the property owners and collected the filled-up forms after a day or two.

The survey teams in the gram panchayats have been facing difficulties while collecting property information, as few household owners are not available in the villages.

Numerous families who possess properties in villages, reside in towns either for education or their place of work is there. However, with the help of neighbours and others, the survey teams are trying to contact the property owners.

SP: CELEBRATE BATHUKAMMA IN SMALL GROUPS

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, OCT. 16

The Mahabubabad superintendent of police, N. Koti Reddy, said that no one is allowed to take Bathukamma into the ponds during the festival, because of the coronavirus pandemic. "Bathukamma should be played in small numbers in the respective lanes.

The Dussehra festival committee elders, village sarpanches, municipal councilors, young women and youth have no permission to set up pandals for Goddess Durga idols. Processions are also not allowed.

"Small idols in temples may be put up, but organisers must ensure there is no large gathering," he said.

He warned if anyone violates these rules and places idols or takes out processions in a public place, action will be taken against them and cases registered.



Leaders and party workers of the AIMIM stage a dharna in front of the Collectorate in Jagtial district on Friday— DC

Bias in giving Shaadi Mubarak cheques: AIMIM

PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC
JAGTIAL, OCT. 16

The president of the 'All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin' (AIMIM) Jagtial unit, Younus Nadeem on Friday demanded that the government sanction the Shaadi Mubarak scheme cheques, pending for the past one-and-half year.

The AIMIM workers and leaders staged a dharna in front of the collectorate in

Jagtial district on Friday, against the bank officials for the delay in sanctioning the Shaadi Mubarak scheme cheques.

After submitting a memorandum to the collectorate staff, Mr Nadeem alleged that despite the government sanctioning ₹1.77 crores under the scheme, for 177 beneficiaries from Jagtial, Korutla, Dharmapuri and Choppadandi constituencies, the cheques, have not been disbursed till date. When

asked about the delay, bank officials said that the cheques were not cleared and would take some time.

Some beneficiaries, after applying for the scheme got their daughters married, by taking loans from private persons and mortgaging their houses.

The state government introduced the Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak schemes, to help the poor families perform the marriage of their daughter's.

Mr Younus Nadeem alleged that the public representatives of the four constituencies and bank officials are focusing only on the Kalyana Lakshmi scheme. Despite the issue being brought to the notice of the public representatives, there has been no response till date.

He warned that if the Shaadi Mubarak cheques are not sanctioned, then the AIMIM will lay siege on the houses of the public representatives.

FORT WALL | COLLAPSE

Proposals for repairing the damaged Quilashapur fort will be sent to CM: Min

No renovation works done for 70 yrs: Srinivas Goud

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, OCT. 16

The 350-year-old, Quilashapur fort, built by Sardar Sarvai Papanna Goud, has been neglected in the combined Andhra Pradesh state. Had there been renovation works 70 years ago, the fort would have been strong now, said minister for tourism, culture and archaeology, V. Srinivas Goud.

The minister, along with the local public representatives and officials from tourism and archaeology departments, inspected the fort wall which collapsed partially due to incessant rains on Friday.

They took stock of the damage incurred and discussed the causes of the rock and mud wall caving in.

"Taking a closer look at the wall, they studied the construction done hundreds of years ago and how the walls managed to withstand several attacks from the Mughals. He said, "It is unfortunate to see a fort that holds so much history crumble before our eyes. The Telangana



Minister for tourism, culture and archaeology V. Srinivas Goud inspects the damaged Quilashapur fort wall on Friday.

state government will work to restore the past glory of the fort. Renovation works of the fort should have been taken up several decades ago, but the governments in erst-

while Andhra Pradesh, failed to protect the historic monuments."

The minister added, "After the formation of Telangana state, ₹5crore was sanctioned

for renovation works on the Zaffergadh and Quilashapur fort. Proposals for repairing the damaged fort will be sent to the Chief Minister K.

Chandrasekhar Rao for approval and residents whose houses got damaged in the wall collapse will be suitably compensated."

Warangal MP Pasunoori

Dayakar, MLA T Rajaiah, District collector K. Nikhila, Quilashapur Sarpanch Muppidi Sridhar, MPTC Krishna were present along with others.

1,554 new cases, 7 deaths in TS

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 16

The number of Covid-19 tests increased by about 5,000 on Thursday, after dipping due to the rain and floods.

The state health department said on Friday that 43,916 samples were tested on Thursday, against 38,895 on Wednesday.

The state recorded 1,554 new cases and seven deaths due to Covid-19, taking the overall tally to 2,19,224 and toll to 1,256.

The GHMC area recorded slightly more new cases at 249, Ranga Reddy recorded 128, Medchal Malkajgiri 118 and Khammam 88 cases.

These areas have been constantly recording high cases. While many of the new patients are asymptomatic, it is very important that they must properly follow the isolation schedule of 14 days to control the spread of the disease.

The bulletin said 19,251 people were in home and institutional isolation,

■ **THE STATE** health department said on Friday that 43,916 samples were tested on Thursday, against 38,895 on Wednesday.

■ **THE DEATHS** were caused due to co-morbid conditions. Patients with higher viral load were developing secondary infections, leading to complications.

showing that the number of severe cases is less. Hospitals are having 60 per cent of their beds empty.

The deaths were caused due to co-morbid conditions. Besides, patients with higher viral load were developing secondary infections, leading to complications and, in some cases, death.

The government has asked the people who step out from homes to wear masks as that helps in curtailing the transmission of the Coronavirus.

SHORT TAKES

DHARMENDRA
CLEARS AIR ON
PENDING GST DUES

AKSHAYA KUMAR

SAHOO | DC

BHUBANESWAR, OCT. 16

Union minister and senior BJP leader Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday cleared the air on the pending Goods and Services Tax (GST) dues of Odisha saying that the Centre had cleared the entire compensation amount for the financial year 2019-20 and a part of the dues for the for FY 2020-21 was also released.

“₹5,122 crore has been released as an entire GST compensation to the Odisha government for FY 2019-20. Similarly, of the ₹2,258 crore allocated for Odisha as GST compensation for the FY 2020-21, ₹1129 crore has been released,” the minister told reporters in New Delhi.

The minister's clarification came in the wake of the state government raising the issue of non-clearance of the compensation on different occasions and platforms, ostensibly for scoring a few political brownie points.

The ruling BJD and BJP, though have supported each other on the floor of Parliament on passing many crucial Bills, are arch political rivals in state politics.

The minister's clarification is seen as a tactical move to rob the BJD of the opportunity to raise the pending GST issue during the forthcoming by-polls in Tirtol and Balasore assembly constituencies and portray it as an act of apathy by the Centre.

The minister went on to add that Odisha was also permitted to borrow an additional ₹2,858 crore at 0.50 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product for meeting the shortfall arising out of GST implementation.

Pradhan stated that the Modi government had provided ₹22,267.66 crore to the Odisha government in the forms of grants, materials and assistance to effectively fight the adverse situations caused due to the Covid crisis.

While the BJP is trying hard to retain the Balasore seat where its sitting MLA Madan Mohan Dutta died in July, the BJD is also working hard to defend its position in Tirtol. Tirtol's sitting MLA Bishnu Charan Das died also in July.

‘NEXT 2.5 MONTHS
CRUCIAL IN FIGHT
AGAINST COVID’

New Delhi, Oct. 16: The next two-and-a-half months are going to be crucial in the fight against Coronavirus because of the winter season and festivals, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Friday.

Vardhan, who is also Science and Technology Minister, said three vaccine candidates are progressing well in India with one of them in the advanced stage-III clinical trial and two others in stage-II trial.

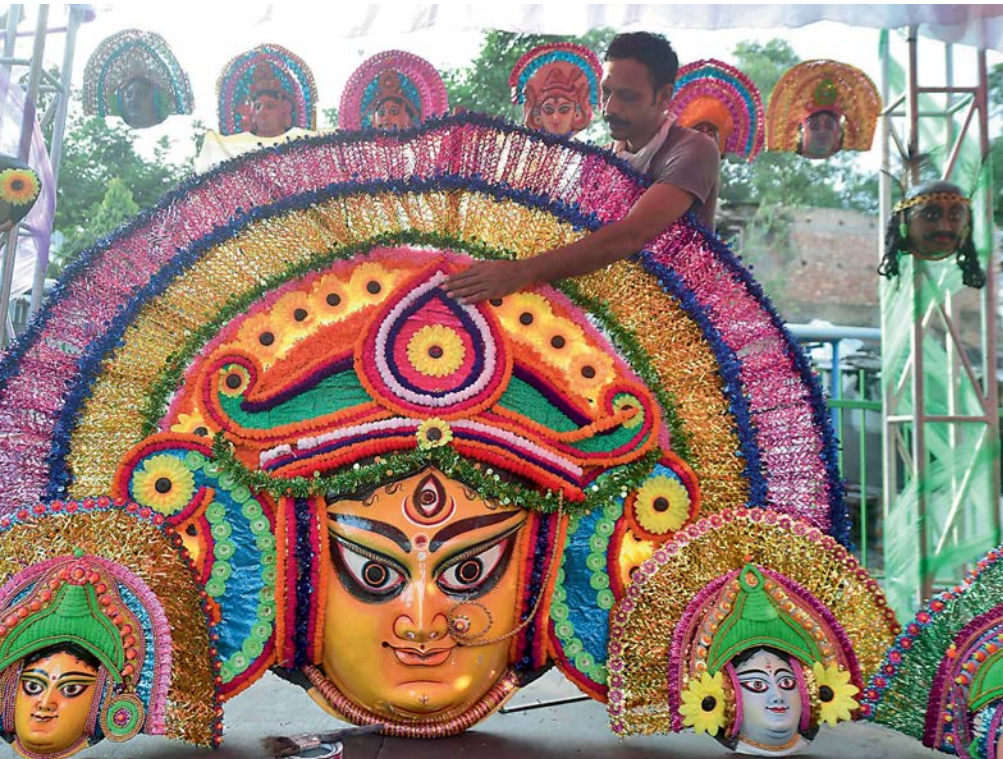
He hoped that India will soon have indigenous production of vaccine against Coronavirus.

The next two-and-a-half months are going to be very crucial for us in our fight against corona because of the winter season and the festival season. It becomes the responsibility of every citizen to not let our guard down and follow Covid-19 appropriate behaviour to curb the spread of the infection, Vardhan said.

Meanwhile, India's Covid-19 caseload rose to 73,70,468 with 63,371 new infections being reported in a day, while the number of people who have recuperated from the disease crossed 64 lakh pushing the recovery rate to 87.56 per cent, according to the Health Ministry data updated on Friday.

The toll climbed to 1,12,161 with the virus claiming 895 lives in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Festive spirit



A worker gives a finishing touch to a display mask of Chhau dancers at a community puja pandal ahead of the Durga Puja festival in Kolkata on Friday.

— PTI

Assam SP held in
police job scam

Sanjit Krishna is the brother of Assam chief secy

MANOJ ANAND | DC

GUWAHATI, OCT. 16

In a major breakthrough in the Assam Police job recruitment scam, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) busted the entire racket by arresting serving IPS officer Kumar Sanjit Krishna who also happens to be the brother of Assam chief secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna.

Pointing out that Sanjit Krishna was kingpin of recruitment scam as he was responsible for leaking question paper of the Sub-Inspector recruitment exams, security sources said that the CID sleuths have also succeeded in recovering more than ₹5.70 crore cash from the accused involved in selling the leaked question papers to aspirants.

Informing that Sanjit Krishna hatched the conspiracy to leak the question paper with a former DIG P.K. Dutta, security sources said that with his arrest one part of the investigation into the scam is complete.

Indicating that some more arrests were possible among those who were involved in

● **ASSAM CHIEF** secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna in social media post clarified that the law would take its course and his name should not be dragged in as his brother “is a mature, independent individual in a different profession”.

● **THE POLICE** have so far arrested over 50 people in connection with the case including a ruling BJP leader Diban Deka.

selling the question papers, sources said that police have already re-created the crime scene from where question papers were leaked and circulated on the WhatsApp, a day before the state-level SI recruitment test on September 20.

Sanjit Krishna, who was holding the post of SP (Karimganj), was transferred as SP of Foreigner Regional Registration Office, Barpeta, on Sunday after his name surfaced in the scam. Subsequently, he was summoned by the CID.

Sanjit Krishna was questioned by the CID on Monday and his residence in Guwahati

was also raided on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the CID raided the officer's Karimganj residence and interrogated five police personnel, including the driver of the former SP, the in-charge of the police guest house and the security guard of the SP's official residence. After this, CID officials produced the five police personnel at a local court in Karimganj.

Police are also investigating the involvement of PK Dutta, an APS officer who served as Sanjit's deputy in Karimganj.

Meanwhile, Assam chief secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna in social media post clarified that the law would take its course and his name should not be dragged in as his brother “is a mature, independent individual in a different profession”.

The police have so far arrested over 50 people in connection with the case including a ruling Bharatiya Janata Party leader Diban Deka (who has since been expelled from the party).

Former DIG Dutta and BJP leader Deka are alleged to have fleeced many candidates for the SI post by assuring them jobs in lieu of cash.

MP CONG TO
RELEASE FRESH
POLL MANIFESTO

RABINDRA NATH

CHOUDHURY | DC

BHOPAL, OCT. 16

A row has erupted in Congress over the absence of Rahul Gandhi's photograph on the cover page of the poll manifesto booklets released recently by the Congress for the November 3 by-elections to 28 Assembly constituencies in Madhya Pradesh.

The party is set to release the fresh election manifesto here on Saturday.

The Congress last fortnight released poll manifestos separately featuring Sonia Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and former CM Kamal Nath.

However, Rahul Gandhi was missing on the coverage page, causing consternation among a strong section in the party.

BJP RELEASES REPORT
CARD FOR CENTRE,
BIHAR AHEAD OF POLLS

NAYEAR AZAD | DC

PATNA, OCT. 16

The BJP on Friday released a report card to highlight the performance of the Centre as well as the state government ahead of Bihar polls. Assembly elections in the state are scheduled to begin from October 28 and the NDA comprising JD(U), the BJP and two partners HAM and VIP are in the fray against Opposition coalition led by the RJD.

The report card released by the BJP claims that the Centre, as well as the state government, extended all kind of support to the people who were stuck outside the state during the Covid period. The BJP also asserted that the state saw all-round progress under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led NDA government.

The report card highlights that “the government spent about ₹30,000 crore to support people during the Covid period. ₹203 crore were transferred to the bank account of about 21 lakh people who were stranded outside the state”.

While presenting the achievements of the state government, Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who was also present on the dais along with other senior NDA leaders, said that the party is contesting polls in alliance with Nitish Kumar's JD(U) for the development of Bihar.

“We are here to discuss the work done under the leadership of Nitish Kumar. We understand our responsibility and we will continue to work for the development of Bihar. But there are others who are only interested in the development of their family”, Ravi Shankar Prasad said while targeting the Opposition RJD.

During the event, he also accused the Opposition coalition of corruption and said that “they keep talking about the future of Bihar but their past exposes the reality. We are also trying to figure out how their assets keep changing during every election. This is the reality and we will continue to highlight this”.

SAURABH JOSHI | DC

MUMBAI, OCT. 16

The Mumbai police's cyber cell has arrested a Delhi based person, claiming to be a lawyer, for allegedly spreading rumours in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide by uploading the videos on internet.

The officials said he was arrested in one of the two FIRs registered by the Mumbai police for defaming Mumbai police and the state government.

The arrested accused was identified as Vibhor Anand, who allegedly uploaded misleading videos on Youtube in connection with the probe that also trolled the Mumbai police.

The officials will grill Anand on the source of his information and what made him upload such videos.

“His custody will be sought for questioning in the case and to find if there are any accomplices,” said an officer.

Early October, the police filed two cases to identify trolls. The cyber cell began a probe in the cases and found several fake social media accounts that were floated to troll and tarnish the image of Mumbai police.

The police said that fake accounts were being operated from Twitter, Instagram and Facebook where the trolls went on to abuse the city police chief and the whole force.

The officials tracked down the internet protocol (IP) addresses of some of the accounts and are in the process of tracking the online footprints of the remaining accounts.

After the police came across the series of such accounts, the first case was filed last month

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC

MUMBAI, OCT. 16

Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh on Friday said that Mumbai police will investigate Vivek Oberoi-Sandip Singh angle to a drugs case related to the film industry if the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) doesn't act against them.

A day after the Bangalore police searched the actor's Mumbai residence, a Congress delegation met Deshmukh and demanded investigation against the actor.

After meeting the Congress

‘Is there mechanism
check news before
damage is done?’

DC CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI, OCT. 16

The Bombay High Court on Friday asked the Union government to explain if there is any mechanism in place for checking the content broadcast by news channels before the damage is done.

The court also said that if the media crossed the line, it is for the legislature to act.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Dutta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by several retired IPS officers alleging some media entities of maligning image of Mumbai police in Sushant Singh Rajput suicide case and simultaneously running media trials. Petition sought HC intervention to stop this practice.

The bench observed, “If public officers are removed for their wrong act, then same practice should be followed for private employment. Strict action needs to be taken for not behaving appropriately.”

INDIA TO GET MORE RAFALES NEXT MONTH

DC CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, OCT. 16

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will get the second batch of three to four Rafale fighter aircraft in the first week of November boosting its firepower amidst on going tensions with China.

These fighter jets will be arriving at the Ambala airbase in Haryana from France. Preparations are going on to receive these jets.

The Indian Air Force will

Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, appearing for the Union government, argued that the Supreme Court has said in several judgements that the government must not interfere with the freedom of press. Mr Singh also submitted judgements before the court. After perusing those judgements, Justice Dutta said “These judgments are from 2012-2013. Time has changed. This is the most misused freedom now.”

The bench also referred to the Chief Justice of India's recent remark that freedom of speech is the most abused. The high court further said it was concerned with the efficiency of the present mechanism of regulation with regard to news channels. “Everyone seems to be having an unfettered license to say whatever they want...Before the so-called damage is done, is there any machinery to check that? Or do you act only when a certain news is disseminated and complaints are received?” the judges asked.

like to operationalise the second batch of Rafale jets as soon as possible.

In the first batch, India had received five Rafale aircraft in July and these were inducted in the IAF in September.

The first batch has already been operationalised and has carried out sorties in Ladakh sector. With the second batch, India will have 8-9 advance Rafale fighter jets to take on threats emerging from China.

Delhi man arrested for
‘defaming’ Mumbai policeMan held for defamatory
posts pleads innocence

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC

MUMBAI, OCT. 16

Shrishail Khajje, an accounting professional, arrested by cyber police for abusing state home minister Anil Deshmukh on a fake Facebook account on Friday filed bail application as soon as the court remanded him to judicial custody. He has claimed that he has not created this FB account and some professional hacker must have done this. The court has adjourned hearing on his plea till October 22.

The cyber police had arrested 26-year-old Khajje from Pune. He hails from Osmanabad and was working in Chikhli area of Pune.

A magistrate court on October 13 had demanded Khajje to police custody till October 16 and upon completion of his custody he was produced before the court again.

On Friday Khajje's lawyer Shriganesh Sawalkar opposed his further police custody saying evidence involved in this case are of technical nature and there is no need to keep the accused in police custody, as his custody would not help in investigation in any manner.

After hearing the arguments, the judge remanded Khajje to

judicial custody. Soon after, advocate Sawalkar filed a bail application on behalf of Khajje. He contended that his client has nothing to do with the FB post of abusing the home minister or anyone else.

According to him, the accused is not affiliated or connected with any political party or any political leader. “We are completely unaware that the said FB post has been posted in our clients name. It seems that a professional hacker must have done this mischievous act,” he argued. Furthermore, Khajje does not have any criminal record, the lawyer said.

The Mumbai Police has also begun investigations into various fake accounts that had been abusing Mumbai Police and the state government, especially after the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput on June 14.

According to police, a Facebook user profile ‘Appa Keaserjavalgekar’ had been abusing several political leaders from Maharashtra, including some women leaders. The Mumbai Cyber Police registered an FIR in the case on October 9.

Police began technical investigations in the matter and two teams were sent to Navi Mumbai and Pune.

as per the provisions of the Information Technology Act and the further investigation in the case is underway.

BRAVE | HEART

Balwinder Singh Sandhu fought terrorism in Punjab for years

Shaurya Chakra awardee shot dead

Amritsar, Oct. 16:

Shaurya Chakra awardee Balwinder Singh Sandhu who fought terrorism in Punjab was shot dead by unknown assailants in Tarn Taran district on Friday, months after the government withdrew his security cover.

The motorcycle-borne men pumped four bullets into 62-year-old Sandhu when he was at his office adjoining his home at Bhikhiwind in the district and escaped, police said. He was taken to the hospital where doctors

declared him brought dead. Sandhu had fought against terrorism in the state for years, facing scores of terror attacks during the height of Khalistani militancy.

Singh's security cover was withdrawn by the state government a year ago on the recommendation of Tarn Taran police, his brother Ranjit said, adding their entire family had remained on the hit list of terrorists.

Balwinder's wife Jagdish Kaur said it was the handiwork of terror-

ists, maintaining that their family did not have any personal enmity with anyone.

The family always fought against terrorists. As many as 62 attacks were made on my family by terrorists. We made numerous requests with DGP Dinkar Gupta for the security cover but all in vain, she said.

Tarn Taran Senior Superintendent of Police Dhruvan Nimbale said the investigations were underway. He said those responsible for the mur-

der would be nabbed soon. The entire incident was captured by the CCTV, he said adding the footage was being checked.

The Tran Taran braveheart also featured in some documentaries. Inspired by Sandhu and his family, many people followed him and defended themselves from terror attacks. The Union government awarded him Shaurya Chakra in 1993.

Balwinder Singh Sandhu and his brother Ranjit Singh Sandhu are

opposed to the activities of terrorists. They were on the hit lists of terrorists. The terrorists so far have made 16 attempts to wipe out the Sandhu's family within in about 11 months, the citation for the gallantry award said.

The terrorists attacked them in groups of 10 to 200, but every time Sandhu brothers with the help of their brave wives Jagdish Kaur Sandhu and Balraj Kaur Sandhu have successfully foiled the attempts, it said.

— PTI



SHORT TAKES

GUINEA'S PREZ, SEEKS TO PROLONG RULE FOR 3RD TIME

Conakry (Guinea), Oct. 16: Guinean President Alpha Conde, 82, is seeking a third term in office on Sunday, insisting his attempt to prolong his rule does not make him a dictator even as opposition protesters slam his candidacy as an illegal power grab.

The electoral campaign in this West African nation already has seen deadly protests, which some fear could explode after results are announced. More than 50 people have been killed in anti-Conde protests since October last year, Amnesty International said this month, urging the government to investigate.

Already the International Criminal Court at The Hague has said it is "deeply concerned" about the mounting tensions.

"These recurring episodes of election-related violence are deplorable," ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said.

POLICE GRILL ANWAR OVER BID TO BECOME PM

Kuala Lumpur, Oct. 16: Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim was grilled by police on Thursday over his bid to oust the government, in what he called "political harassment" to thwart his attempt.

Anwar met the nation's king on Tuesday to show evidence that he has majority support in Parliament to form a new government and unseat Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who has only a thin two-seat majority in the house.

Police summoned Anwar to give a statement Thursday after 113 complaints were lodged over a purported list of 121 lawmakers allegedly backing Anwar that has spread on social media.

Anwar, 73, told reporters outside police headquarters that six cases were being investigated against him under the penal code covering statements of public mischief and a multimedia law on the improper use of network facilities to harass someone.

PHILIPPINES LIFTS BAN ON SCS OIL EXPLORATION

Manila, Oct. 16: The Philippine president has approved the lifting of a ban on oil and gas exploration in or near disputed areas of the South China Sea that was imposed six years ago because of escalating territorial tensions with China, an official said Thursday.

Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi said companies awarded contracts to explore for oil and gas in three sprawling areas off the western Philippines have been asked to resume their search operations, including in a potentially oil- and gas-rich region called Reed Bank.

Chinese ships tried to shoos away a Filipino exploration vessel in Reed Bank at least once in the past, and it was not immediately clear if China was aware of the Philippine decision. President Rodrigo Duterte has nurtured closer ties with Beijing since taking office in 2016 and put the territorial rift on the backburner in his initial years in power to avoid offending China.

YOUTUBE FOLLOWS TWITTER, FB WITH QANON ROW

Oakland (US), Oct. 16: YouTube is following the lead of Twitter and Facebook, saying that it is taking more steps to limit QAnon and other baseless conspiracy theories that can lead to real-world violence.

The Google-owned video platform said Thursday it will now prohibit material targeting a person or group with conspiracy theories that have been used to justify violence. One example would be videos that threaten or harass someone by suggesting they are complicit in a conspiracy such as QAnon, which paints President Donald Trump as a secret warrior against a supposed child-trafficking ring run by celebrities and "deep state" government officials.

Pizzagate is another internet conspiracy theory — essentially a predecessor to QAnon — that would fall in the banned category. Its promoters claimed children were being harmed at a pizza restaurant in Washington, D.C. A man who believed in the conspiracy entered the restaurant in December 2016 and fired an assault rifle.

Televised townhalls replace US Prez debate

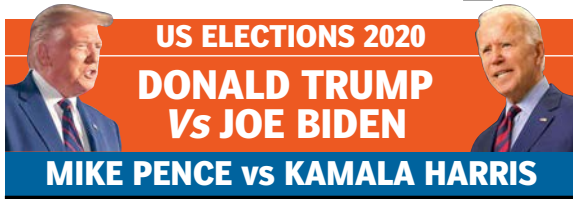
Greenville (US), Oct. 16: US President Donald Trump and his Democratic challenger Joe Biden held simultaneous and separate televised town halls in lieu of the second presidential debate, taking questions from pre-selected individuals at sessions moderated by eminent television journalists.

While Trump's town hall was hosted by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in Miami, Florida, that of Biden was held in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia by the *American Broadcasting Company* (ABC) News. The second presidential debate had

originally been scheduled for on Thursday night. However, it was cancelled after Trump refused to participate in a virtual format of the presidential debate as amended by the independent debate commission following the president's Covid-19 diagnosis.

A final debate is still scheduled for October 22 in Nashville, Tennessee. The first debate was held on September 29 in Cleveland, Ohio.

Trump, 74, has recovered from a brief spell of Covid-19 after he and First Lady Melania Trump, 50, tested positive for the deadly viral infection on



October 1. Trump's doctors have now cleared him for his election campaigns. During the town hall, Trump defended his handling of the Coronavirus pandemic.

He also reiterated his stand on tax returns. However, Trump refused to denounce the QAnon conspiracy theory. According to QAnon, a far-

right group that has been labelled a terror threat by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Democrats are running a secret paedophilia ring. When asked by moderator Savannah Guthrie if he would denounce the QAnon theory and "just say it's crazy and not true", Trump said, "I don't know about QAnon." Wh-

en pressed further on whether or not he believed that Democrats were running a pedophile ring, Trump said, "I have no idea."

Biden's during his town hall said he would soon express his position on court packing, an issue that he has avoided so far. The 77-year-old democratic presidential nominee said he will come out with a clear position before Election Day about where he stands on expanding the Supreme Court, depending how the rest of the confirmation process of Judge Amy Coney Barrett is handled. President Trump has selected Judge

Barrett to succeed Supreme Court Justice late Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

The Senate Judiciary Committee finished its confirmation hearings for Barrett earlier on Thursday. Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham said that the committee will vote on Barrett's nomination on October 22. If the committee approves her nomination, which is expected, it would be sent to the full Senate floor.

At the town hall with ABC's George Stephanopoulos, Biden said he is "not a fan" of court packing. When asked by

Stephanopoulos if he was open to increasing the number of judges on the court if Barrett is confirmed before the election, Biden said, "I'm open to considering what happens from that point on."

Republicans have repeatedly criticised Biden for not directly giving his view on court packing. "They do have a right to know where I'll stand and they'll have a right to know where I stand before they vote," Biden said, when asked whether voters had a right to know where he stands on the issue of expanding the court.

—PTI



Pro-democracy protesters react as police use water cannons to disperse the anti-government rally in Bangkok on Friday. — AFP

Thai PM rejects calls to resign

Bangkok, Oct. 16: Thailand's prime minister rejected calls for his resignation on Friday, while his government failed to stop student-led protesters from rallying again in the capital in defiance of a strict state of emergency.

More than 1,000 protesters gathered in torrential monsoon rains to push their core demands, including that Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha leave office, the constitution be amended and the nation's monarchy undergo reform. It was the second day

they defied an order not to gather, imposed after some demonstrators heckled a royal motorcade, an unprecedented development in Thailand, where the monarchy is normally held in reverence.

Police had earlier closed roads and put up barricades around a major Bangkok intersection where some 10,000 protesters defied the new decree Thursday. Police in riot gear secured the area, while malls in the normally busy shopping district closed early.

—AP

2 Thai protesters held for 'violence against queen'

Bangkok, Oct. 16: Authorities in Thailand have filed the most severe charges yet in connection with ongoing pro-democracy demonstrations, charging two men under an article of the law covering violence against the queen.

Ekachai Hongkangwan and Paotrong Bunkueanum were arrested Friday. They could face

anywhere from 16 years to life imprisonment.

The move against the two activists comes as the student-led protest movement continues to press its demands, including new elections, changes to make the constitution more democratic and reform of the monarchy to make it conform with democratic norms.

—AP

RACIAL TENSIONS RISE IN SA OVER FARM KILLING

Senekal, Oct. 16: A tense standoff between white farmers and Black activists gripped the South African town of Senekal Friday, as two men accused of killing a white farm manager were to appear in court.

More than 100 police patrolled the area in front of the courthouse in the Free State province and used barbed wire to separate the rival groups.

Sekwetjie Mahlamba and Sekola Matlaletsa were to appear in the court on charges of killing Brendin Horner, 21, on October 1.

About 250 white farmers gathered to protest the killing, charging that police do not adequately protect white farmers. In an earlier court hearing last week, a group of white farmers stormed the court and burned a police vehicle.

—AP

Remdesivir found ineffective: Study

WHO disappointed with test results

Millions of French face Covid curfew

London, Aug. 16:

Antiviral drug remdesivir has "little or no effect" on a hospitalised Covid-19 patients' chances of survival, a World Health Organisation (WHO) clinical trial has suggested.

The potential Coronavirus treatment option is one of four repurposed drugs being examined under the UN agency's large Solidarity trial that launched in March.

Randomised trials at hospitals around the world have involved remdesivir, lopinavir, hydroxychloroquine and interferon-beta 1a — looking to assess their impact on inpatient mortality.

The hydroxychloroquine and lopinavir arms of the trials were discontinued on June 20 and July 4 respectively.

In a statement provided to the PA news agency on Thursday evening, the WHO press office said results from these first four treatment options of the Solidarity trial were "unpromising".

"The trial found that remdesivir, hydroxychloroquine, lopinavir/ritonavir and Interferon have little or no effect on mortality for hospitalised patients," WHO said.

"Other uses of the drugs, for example in community and pre-hospital settings, would have to be examined using different trial designs."

It added: "For each drug in the study, the effect on mortality was disappointingly unpromising. These results were not significantly affected by the exclusion of certain countries, regions or sub-groups."

WHO said later on Thursday that the results of the trial are under review for publication in a medical journal, and have been uploaded as a preprint at the medRxiv website.

—Agencies

Paris, Oct. 16: Millions of French people were looking forward to a last night of freedom on Friday before a Covid-19 curfew in Paris and other large cities comes into force for at least a month, prompted by an alarming surge in new cases.

The curfew aims to keep some 20 million people home from 9 pm to 6 am — 30 percent of the French population. It was ordered

by President Emmanuel Macron this week as the number of new infections and deaths raised the spectre of hospital overloads like those seen in March and April.

Health authorities reported on Thursday a record 30,621 new cases in the previous 24 hours as well as 88 deaths and over 200 new Covid admissions to intensive care units.

—AFP

Chinese Covid-19 cure shows hope

Beijing, Oct. 16: One of China's leading Covid-19 vaccine candidates, called BBIBP-CoV, was shown to be safe and elicited immune response in a small early-phase human trial, researchers said on Friday.

A previous clinical trial reported similar results for a different vaccine that is also based on inactivated whole SARS-CoV-2 virus, but in that study the vaccine was only tested in people aged under 60 years.

The latest study, published in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* journal, included participants aged between 18 and 80 years, and found that antibody responses were induced in all recipients. Participants aged 60 and over were slower to respond, taking 42 days before antibodies were detected in all recipients compared with 28 days for participants aged 18-59, the researchers said. Antibody levels were also lower in

DOZENS CONTRACT VIRUS AT NYC'S 'SWEET16' PARTY

New York, Oct. 16: A 16th birthday party in New York state became a super-spreader event with dozens of attendees contracting Coronavirus, according to officials.

The September 25 shindig at the plush Miller Place Inn on Long Island left 37 people infected with Covid-19 and forced more than 270 into quarantine.

Over 80 people attended the party, known as a "Sweet 16" in the United States, well above the state's 50-person limit. The venue has been closed temporarily and fined \$12,000, local officials said.

—AFP

those aged 60-80 years compared with those aged 18-59, they said.

—PTI

Finnish PM leaves EU summit as 'precautionary' measure

Brussels, Oct. 16: Another day at the European Union summit, another leader gone away.

Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin said Friday that she had left the summit of heads of states and governments in Brussels shortly after talks began because one of her close staffers tested

positive for Covid-19. Two other EU top officials, the bloc's top diplomat Josep Borrell and the commissioner for humanitarian aid Janez Lenaric, went into isolation this week after coming into contact with people who tested positive for the virus during a trip to Ethiopia.

—AP

NEW | RESEARCH

Glaciologists predict that 95 per cent of Alps could disappear by the end of this century

Melting glaciers yield archaeological troves

Sion, Switzerland, Oct. 16: The group climbed the steep mountainside, clamoring across an Alpine glacier, before finding what they were seeking: a crystal vein filled with the precious rocks needed to sculpt their tools.

That is what archaeologists have deduced after the discovery of traces of an ancient hunt for crystals by hunters and gatherers in the Mesolithic era, some 9,500 years ago.

It is one of many valuable archaeological sites to emerge in recent decades



Curator at archaeological department of the history museum of Canton of Valais showing a shoe from 17th century found in a glacier in the Southern Swiss Canton of Valais. — AFP

from rapidly melting glacier ice, sparking a brand new field of research: glacier archaeology.

Amid surging temperatures, glaciologists predict

that 95 percent of the some 4,000 glaciers dotted throughout the Alps could disappear by the end of this century.

While archaeologists la-

ment the devastating toll of climate change, many acknowledge it has created "an opportunity" to dramatically expand understanding of mountain life millennia ago.

"We are making very fascinating finds that open up a window into a part of archaeology that we don't normally get," said Marcel Cornelissen, who headed an excavation trip last month to the remote crystal site near the Brunifirm glacier in the eastern Swiss canton of Uri, at an altitude of 2,800 metres (9,100 feet).

—AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

17 OCTOBER 2020

If PDP, others cohere, Centre will be afraid

Earlier this week PDP leader and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti was freed from detention after 14 months. With this is raised the prospect of the coming together of every mainstream party in Kashmir — the regional parties as well as the Congress and the CPI(M) — on a common platform to confront the Centre.

This has not happened before and is a development of singular significance. It has the potential to prevent the ruling BJP from striking political roots in the Valley, the saffron party's thwarted decades old wish. To make this dream come true, the RSS-BJP, using its power at the Centre, sought to neuter Kashmir and impose a militaristic dispensation as a way to bulldoze its way through. If the Kashmir parties stick together in the foreseeable future, the BJP's pursuit could prove Sisyphean.

Kashmiri politicians are notorious for their inability to cooperate. Now they have the opportunity to turn this on its head. To remain accommodative toward one another until the next Assembly election in order to present a united face to BJP and its local hangers-on is the first practical challenge before them. They have cleared the first hurdle by gathering at Ms Mufti's residence upon her release to reaffirm their commitment to the Gupkar Declaration, which enjoins them to unitedly work for the restoration of Article 370 of the Constitution that was abrogated on August 5, 2019, ending J&K's constitutional autonomy.

Unlike National Conference leaders Farooq and Omar Abdullah, who spoke in a measured tone upon their release a few months before Ms Mufti, the PDP leader used direct language to criticise the Centre's action of last August, calling the step "illegal" and "unconstitutional". She has good reason to speak her mind. The BJP first befriended her party, permitted her to be the leader in a coalition government with it, and then stabbed her in the back. But more than using sharp language, the PDP, weakened through defections and desertions, and the others, have to show through their action whether they can summon the ability to cohere in the face of possibly renewed repression. If they can, it is the Centre that will be on the back foot.

Dr Abdullah's defiant recent interviews, including the one in which he speaks of going to any lengths for the restoration of Article 370, his bringing in the China factor (on account of the Ladakh situation), although clumsily phrased thus permitting the BJP the short-term joy of politically hammering him, is apt to unsettle the ruling dispensation. The NC leader's reminder that it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who had cavorted on swings with Chinese leader Xi Jinping can hardly be a source of comfort. The Modi government's tenure as bailiff in J&K will now be tested. The economy is practically finished, terrorism is back under central rule, and there is incipient political unity against the BJP.

GST: A win for states

The Union government's decision to borrow ₹1.10 lakh crores and end the impasse over the payment of compensation to state governments for the shortfall in the collection of Goods and Services Tax (GST) is welcome. The borrowing will be effected under a special window and the money will be passed to the states as back-to-back loans and will not impact the fiscal deficit targets of either governments. The Centre will service the loan and then repay it from the GST compensation cess, which will be extended beyond the scheduled term of 2022.

The GST Council was unable to find a way out of the dispute on how to bridge the estimated shortfall of ₹2.35 lakh crores in the GST collection for this fiscal. The Centre had suggested that the states borrow Rs 1.10 lakh crores, which it said was the share of the shortfall due to the implementation of the unified tax system, though it was mandated to bridge it as per the GST (Compensation to States) Act 2017. Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's attempt to wash her hands off it blaming it as an "act of God" did not help the matter either.

That the change in stance will ensure better rates and easy administration of the process is only part of the deal. More noteworthy is the political victory of the states, ruled mostly by Opposition parties, who refused to play ball and asked the Centre to see reason; they had even contemplated moving the Supreme Court. The pandemic has affected both the Centre and the states and it would have been graceful on the part of the former to have made this announcement earlier. Still, better late than never. The Centre should now take a similar magnanimous approach and help the states bridge the shortfall of ₹1.25 lakh crores lost due to the pandemic and let the spirit of federalism thrive.

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Subhani



Bollywood joins forces, but for what exactly?

Shobhaa De

I am still trying to wrap my head around the news item announcing the joint effort of Bollywood Biggies (34 top production houses and four industry bodies) against two prominent English language television channels. The 1,069-page petition was filed in the Delhi high court earlier this week. The document said that after examining various articles online, it was felt that the defendants were publishing and circulating false, disparaging and malicious allegations against key Bollywood personalities. The latest statement, however, now says that the lawsuit is not targeted at any particular news channel but the entire media industry! My, my! Such a wide-spread gag order? My first response was: "What took you so long?" And the second: "How will the filing of such a lawsuit in change the narrative?" Then came the question of representation. It comes as no surprise or shock that hardly any women were among the joint petitioners. That in itself says a lot about the entertainment industry, not just in India, but across the world. Under-representation of women in showbiz is an important and troubling issue, which does not generate a sufficient level of comment and debate, either in this country or elsewhere. In this particular show of unity, the media coverage of the lawsuit was also slanted, focusing almost exclusively on the three Khans being on the same page, rather than on the contents of the lawsuit. While every

industry is well within its rights to seek redressal, it is important to ask what exactly has miffed Bollywood? Is it just a question of being vilified? Or is there a bigger concern of business getting severely impacted? And why pick on just these two TV channels and their high-profile anchors? What about the muck that gets televised daily across the regional television channels, by equally out of control anchors? To say nothing of the cheap coverage on the dodgy websites? Why was Bollywood this shaken up now, and not earlier? The name calling is not new — describing Bollywood as "scum" and accusing actors of being "drugies" is also not a recent invention. My guess is that the impetus to go ahead and defend the territory through our courts came more from a sense of protectionism than any genuine outrage. It can be argued, of course, that television coverage had hit new lows in the wake of the Sushant Singh Rajput tragedy, and there seems to have been a specific agenda to implicate certain stars, producers, directors and lobbies. Yes, the hourly hounding of the handpicked few was aggressive and highly selective. Bollywood started to squirm when the heat got a bit too much. The standard noises were made by the usual suspects, pointing out that not "everybody" in Bollywood is a druggie. Come on, that's as childish as that old chestnut, "Not every Muslim is a terrorist". But the fact remains, Bollywood was being cut down to size.

And that hurt. The big move to go to court against television tormentors was met by a tepid response from the public. The media too relegated the big news largely to an inside page report. Since the announcement, the public has lost interest in both — this case, as well as the SSR imbroglio. This is how the media manipulates and drives pet agendas. Seasoned players learn to live with the turbulence. At the moment, there is nothing but turbulence to deal with in any case. And Bollywood reckons that it is time to close ranks and hang in there together, if business has to thrive down the line. That's called hardnosed, practical strategising — nothing wrong with protecting one's flanks when attacked. But one also wonders where this recent show of unity and solidarity had disappeared when one of their own had breathed his last on June 14. Or later, when his girlfriend was falsely accused by the very same television tormentors and spent more than a month in jail? Had the same people used their power and clout to stand up for a colleague (Sushant Singh Rajput) and his partner (Rhea Chakraborty), perhaps their petition would have received much

more notice. And even sounded credible. At the moment, it reeks of self-righteousness, and appears self-seeking, instead of being a legitimate grievance and a call to arms. Let's hand it to Bollywood for now. Perhaps this period has been the much-needed wakeup call to review everything — from its own standards of conduct, its dodgy representation of women and, of course, the way business is done. Drugs, booze and rock 'n roll — that's showbiz. Nobody sits in judgment over the private lives and consumption habits of movie folks. What would be wonderful (since Bollywood has come together on a common platform) would be to employ this newfound unity and togetherness to redress a few glaring inequalities, particularly when it comes to blatant discrimination, wage disparity, favouritism and yup — that dreaded word — nepotism. First get your own act together, and then try taming the press! The mediawallahs are not schoolchildren, and Bollywood does not rate as an exemplary class monitor or principal. It's going to be a huge challenge to the media in line. There will always be news stories that tickle and titillate — deal with it. Reputations get shredded in all walks of life, not just in the movies. Bollywood acting holier than thou and getting preachy with the press is a bit too twee! Listen, guys, you do your job and entertain the public, as you have all these many years. Leave the media to do its job. Errrrrr... in future remember to stick up for one of your own when the going gets rough for that person. That's what family is for!

Readers can send feedback to www.shobhaade.blogspot.com

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LETTERS

MAHA GOVERNOR

Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari's advice to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to open places of worship is his personal belief. He is not supposed to force that view on the state because he is bound by the Constitution that is secular, on which he took the oath.

Rajinder Bakshi
Secunderabad

MINISTER PROTOCOL

The absence of protocol for GHMC officials during the visit of Union minister of state Kishan Reddy to flooded areas is unacceptable (*GHMC officials don't join Kishan's tour, DC, Oct. 16*). Though K.T. Rama Rao was visiting flood-hit areas, he should have delegated an official. Absence of officials reflects on the governance of the state.

Bhavani Sishtla
Hyderabad

SCB DUES

I could not control my laughter when I read the report *SCB members protest for tax dues (DC, Oct. 10)*. I am among the many who have not been paying tax since 20 years except once. I am not paying water bills as it is generated only after property tax is finalised. The Cantonment office is clueless on how the matter has to be resolved. The failure of the system is caused by property owners who resorted to violations and played into the hands of the staff to run a parallel administration. Digitisation can destroy the phantom administration but it is not a final solution.

Darshan Kumar
Secunderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

US silent on Indian protest: arms to Pak

NEW DELHI, Oct. 16 There was no response from the US on India's protest against its decision to give arms to Pakistan. Government of India are in touch with the Indian Embassy in Washington and with representatives of the US Government on resumption of American arms sales to Pakistan. An external affairs ministry spokesman said he did not know whether the Indian Embassy in Washington had received any reply to India's protest from the US.

Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



"Are proverbs made in heaven, Or are they composed in hell? Their promise to the virtuous Words to guide and compel

Promises of paradise For the poor but not the rich So, stop playing the lottery — Proverbs are such a bitch!"

— From Key Gal to Seagull by Bachchoo

Multi-ethnic casting rows nothing new, just look back

A question — if it is acceptable for a black actor to play Julius Caesar, is it just as acceptable for a white actor to play Othello? The answer, gentle reader, is "No"! In a recent performance of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Caesar was played by a black British actor. The audience wasn't bothered. Caesar delivered his lines perfectly. Years ago, I saw Lawrence Olivier playing Othello with a blackened face. He spoke his lines with a melodramatic conviction which would have made a Bollywood villain blush. "Put out the light, and put out the light!" — with deep sobs inherent in the throaty delivery. Olivier's hutzpah didn't elicit many comments. Times move on.

Before Olivier's principled disregard for blacking up, presumably on the grounds that actors are sui generis being somebody else, there was a public outcry against *The Black and White Minstrel Show*, in which white singers and musicians blacked up in costumes and caricatured African Americans, singing in peculiar accents and playing banjos. It was out of date and distasteful and did disappear from Britain's stages.

The reason for my answer to my earlier question is that Othello is a play in which race has a dramatic function. It matters that Othello is black. It doesn't matter whether Julius Caesar is black or white — as long as he doesn't speak in a Gujarati accent.

Last week a new film on Cleopatra was announced. The Egyptian queen is to be played by Gal Gadot, an Israeli star of Greek lineage. Her ethnicity has caused what the cliché appropriately calls a Twitter storm. One journalist, of ethnic origin herself, wrote something to the effect of "you steal Arab land and now you steal Arab roles in films".

This journalist is well within the flow of indignation, but a little investigation — Wikipedia is so good at providing the means — will

tell the world that Cleopatra VI was a descendant of the General Ptolemy, one of Alexander the Damned's heirs. When Alexander the Macedonian vandal turned back from the Western bank of the Indus, fearing the might and armies of the Nanda empire of Maghada on the eastern bank, he retreated, landed in Egypt, and died there. His General Ptolemy stayed in what was subsequently called Alexandria and founded the Greek dynasty, whose sons were all called Ptolemy and whose daughters, princesses and queens, Cleopatra. Was there any pre-Arab settlement, Berber blood mixed in with the Greek in Cleo's ancestry? No historian is certain. Nevertheless, the row progresses. My prediction is that the film will meet with protests, both well-meaning and misguided.

We live, gentle reader, in interesting times, but the era of ethnically blind casting didn't begin yesterday. I recall that in my schooldays in Poona (now Pune) an actor's company called Shakespeareana would perform in our schools and colleges. They were, when first I saw them perform, an all-white company, but as the years passed and their actors returned to Britain,

the company recruited Indian actors who played Shylock, Bassanio or Oberon with panache and without any murmurs from the audience.

Also, which play of late Mumbai maestro Alyque Padamsee, borrowed from the Western stage, had European actors in it? "Integrated casting" was not a choice for Indian dramatic productions in English.

For Peter Brook, who in 1985 adapted the *Mahabharat* as a nine-hour stage epic, it was not a necessity but a choice. Impelled by liberal instinct, Brook cast Chinese, Caribbean, African, Japanese, French and British actors as Arjun, Karna, Duryodhan and the rest. His multi-ethnic universal cast was much applauded in the West.

At the time I was employed as a commissioning editor at Channel Four TV and one of my colleagues, Michael Kustow, proposed transforming Brook's stage play into a nine-hour TV serial. Michael approached me one morning and asked if I would accompany him and Brook to a meeting with Indian high commissioner P.C. Alexander (Indian, not Greek), whom they were approaching to propose a partnership with the Indian government in the project.

We went, and the high commissioner was very hospitable but was cagey when Brook asked him directly for funds and sponsorship. Alexanderji seemed to say that of course the government would support the venture by getting industrial houses and others to sponsor it. His commitment was designed to sound enthusiastic but was in fact very ambivalent.

As we stepped out, Brook and Kustow both grabbed me bodily. "Interpret!" Brook demanded. "Buy me a drink at the pub and I'll tell you," I said.

They did and I said: "He was saying he welcomes the venture but won't commit the government to endorse or get close to a play which has different ethnicities playing Hindu gods and demi-gods. It will cause dissension amongst bigots, so the government will encourage private investors but won't commit to a direct association."

They understood. A year later, this meeting and theme suggested itself as the beginning of a novel which I wrote called *Bombay Duck*. I judiciously changed the *Mahabharat* to the *Ramayana* and called the Peter Brook character David Stream — but kept him white.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,982.98	0.64
Nifty 50	11,762.45	0.70
S&P 500*	3,499.18	0.45
Dollar (₹)	73.34	0.06
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.87	0.36
Euro (₹)	85.90	0.06
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,704.324	0.62
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	0.742	0.008
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.935	0.037
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	42.92	-0.24

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Forex reserves at new high, cross \$550-billion mark

The country's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$5.867 billion to touch a record high of \$551.505 billion in the week to Oct. 9, according to RBI data. In the previous week ended Oct. 2, the reserves had increased by \$3.618 b to \$545.638 billion. The increase in forex kitty was on account of rise in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves. FCA rose by \$5.737 billion to \$508.783 billion.

FinMin kick-starts budget making exercise



The finance ministry on Friday kicked off the exercise to prepare the annual budget for 2021-22 amid the urgency to push economic growth. As per the finance ministry schedule, the nearly one-month long exercise to finalise the revised estimate (RE) for 2020-21 and budget estimate (BE) for 2021-22 began on Friday. The meetings will conclude on November 12, according to an official statement.

Union Bank chief Rajkiran Rai new IBA chairman

The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) said Union Bank of India's MD and CEO Rajkiran Rai G. has been elected as the association's chairman for the term 2020-21. SBI chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara has been elected as the deputy chairman of the association.

Bajaj Auto launches Pulsar NS, RS versions

Bajaj Auto launched the refreshed versions of its Pulsar NS and Pulsar RS series motorcycles with new looks and fresh colours ahead of the festival season. The Pulsar RS 200 with dual channel ABS (anti-lock braking system) is priced at Rs 1,52,179, while the NS 200 is priced at Rs 1,31,219. Bajaj Auto Ltd said in a release. The refreshed version of Pulsar NS 160 is priced at Rs 1,08,589, the company said.



Rough imports grow, orders pick up Diamond hub busy again

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, OCT. 16

After a gap of seven months, rough diamond imports have seen positive growth in September. While the employment levels in polishing units are still lower than last year, import of polished diamonds by jewellery makers remains a worry. Festive season orders from most key markets are coming at last year's levels, except from the US.

The cutting and polishing industry imported Rs 9,905 crore worth rough diamonds in September against Rs 8,231 crore worth goods imported in the same month last year, thus, registering a positive growth of 20 per cent. In terms of carats, too, the imports were 7.5 per cent higher than the year ago month.

Imports have been declining from March. The nation-wide lockdown and the voluntary stoppage of imports by the industry to clear inventories have seen the imports declining for the past seven months. Even in August imports were down by 40 per cent. Easing of lockdown and an increase in festive season orders have supported imports in September.

According to Dinesh Navadiya, regional chairman, Gujarat, Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council, the units in Gujarat are operating with 70 to 75 per cent employees. Despite polishing activity recovering to similar lev-



DIESEL SALES ABOVE PRE-COVID LEVELS

NIDHI VERMA NEW DELHI, OCT. 16

India's diesel sales rose in October for the first time since March, signalling a pick-up in industrial activity.

Diesel sales by state-run fuel retailers rose 8.8 diesel year-on-year in the first half of October, provisional data compiled by IOC shows.

Sales of diesel totalled 2.65 million tonnes, up 24

per cent from September. An official at a state refiner, however, cautioned that diesel sales growth could be temporary.

"Typically, transportation of goods picks up ahead of festivals and dips during and after the key festivals. This year key festivals are towards the end of this month and early November; last year they were in October," he said. —Reuters

els, imports of polished diamonds are still continuing. Import of cut and polished diamonds in September was 124 per cent higher than the same month last year and that by the SEZs were 244 per cent higher.

According to Colin Shah, chairman of GJEPIC, jewellery manufacturing in SEZs has been happening with raw materials procured from overseas. The industry expects the import of polished goods to come down with the polishing activity picking up.

Another positive development is that festive season orders have started coming from the key markets. "Demand from China and Hong Kong has returned to normal levels. While orders are coming from the US, Europe and the Gulf region, the US demand is still down compared to last year," he said.

The industry expects the festive season sales to be 10 per cent lower than last year's. The total gems and jewellery exports for the year is expected to be 20 to 25 per cent lower.

Record kharif grain production expected

New Delhi, Oct. 16: Foodgrain production is pegged at record 144.52 million tonnes in the 2020-21 kharif season, agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Friday. Foodgrain production stood at 143.38 million tonnes during the 2019-20 kharif season, as per official data.

Currently, harvesting of kharif crops is underway. Rice is the main kharif crop.

"Foodgrain production will be better than last year. As per the initial estimates, foodgrain production is projected to be 144.52 million tonnes in the 2020-21 kharif season," Tomar said addressing a digital conference.

Production of cash crops such as sugarcane and cotton is also expected to be good, he said.

According to the first estimate accessed by PTI, the ministry estimated a record rice output at 102.36 million tonnes during the kharif season of 2020-21 crop year (July-June) against 101.98 million in the previous year. Similarly, pulses output is likely to increase to 9.31

million tonnes this kharif season from 7.72 million tonnes in 2019-20, while the production of oilseeds is projected to increase to 25.72 million tonnes from 22.31 million tonnes.

However, coarse cereals production is estimated to be slightly lower at 32.84 million tonnes in the 2020-21 kharif season as against 33.69 million tonnes.

Among cash crops, cotton output is estimated to be at record 37.11 million bales as against 35.49 million bales of 170 kg, while sugarcane output is projected to increase to 399.8 million tonnes from 355.7 million tonnes in the said period.

Earlier Tomar said the bumper production is estimated following a record increase in kharif acreage notwithstanding the pandemic. Despite the Covid-19 crisis, there has been a record increase in area sown to kharif crops by 4.51 per cent to 1,121.75 lakh hectares this year, he said.

He said the agriculture sector grew 3.4 per cent during the first quarter of 2020-21 fiscal. —PTI

CIL TO GIVE OUT ₹1,700 CR AS PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE

New Delhi, Oct. 16: State-owned Coal India on Friday said it has declared a performance-linked reward (PLR) of Rs 68,500 per employee to all its non-executive cadre workforce for 2019-20 which would have an estimated financial implication of over Rs 1,700 crore.

This is linked to the attendance of the employees during the period, Coal India (CIL) said in statement.

The payment would be made before October 22. Around 2.62 lakh employees of CIL and its eight subsidiary companies who were on the company's roll in 2019-20 will stand to gain from the PLR. Despite the pandemic slowdown and crimp in coal sales, CIL offered a 5.87 per cent rise over the earlier year's PLR of Rs 64,700 per employee, the absolute increase being Rs 3,800.

Non-executive employees will also be eligible for the payment. —PTI

Urban consumption sees worst fall in 2 decades

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, OCT. 16

Urban consumption has contracted more than 25 per cent between April and August, witnessing the worst decline in two decades due to massive job losses and reduction income levels.

Real private consumption expenditure declined 26.7 per cent in the June quarter against the same period last year. While urban consumption contracted 34 per cent, rural consumption shrank only 4 per cent. In July and August, while urban consumption declined 18 per cent, rural consumption was almost flat, says brokerage Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

From an average growth of 8 per cent during FY17-19, urban consumption declined 0.6 per cent for the first time in two decades in FY20 before collapsing by more than a quarter during April-August 2020. Rural consumption, on the other hand, grew at an average of 6 per cent during FY17-19 before easing to 3.4 per cent in FY20 and shrinking 4 per cent in during April-August.

According to Motilal Oswal, revival in private consumption is unlikely without a recovery in urban consumption. Covid-19 has affected the urban sector disproportionately, it said.

HCL Tech net up 18%, to hire 9,000 freshers

New Delhi, Oct. 16: IT firm HCL Technologies on Friday posted 18.5 per cent rise in September quarter net profit at Rs 3,142 crore, and said it is looking at hiring up to 9,000 freshers in the second half of this fiscal on the back of strong growth momentum.

The Noida-based company had registered a net profit of Rs 2,651 crore in the year-ago period (as per US GAAP).

Its revenue grew 6.1 per cent to Rs 18,594 crore in the quarter under review from Rs 17,528 crore in the year-ago period.

"We delivered a solid performance in Q2. Our stellar performance is broad-based across verticals, service lines, geographies and Mode 1, 2, 3 offerings. Our new bookings remained very robust, it increased 35 per cent compared to the last quarter, we won 15 transformational deals," HCL Technologies president and CEO C. Vijayakumar told reporters in a virtual



C. Vijayakumar

briefing. He added that the company's deal pipeline grew 20 per cent quarter-on-quarter, which is "an all-time high".

"We are implementing the salary increments effective October 1, up to E3 levels, and effective January 1, for E4 and above levels. This is only a one quarter shift from the regular increment cycles that we give our employees annually," he said.

The hikes—which were previously deferred amid business uncertainty on account of Covid-19 pandemic—will be similar to previous year. Last year, the company had offered

an average 6 per cent raise to its staff in India and 2.5 per cent increase in wages of overseas employees.

The board has declared an interim dividend of Rs 4 per equity share for the financial year 2020-21.

Sanjeev Hota, head of research at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said HCL Technologies reported strong quarterly results, beating its estimates on all fronts and its own margin guidance as well.

However, shares of the company fell 3.76 per cent on the BSE at Rs were trading at Rs 827.10.

In the second quarter, HCL Technologies recorded revenue growth at 4.5 per cent quarter-on-quarter in constant currency—higher than its estimate of 1.5-2.5 per cent sequential rise. It has maintained its revenue growth guidance of an average of 1.5-2.5 per cent increase quarter-on-quarter in constant currency for the third and fourth quarters. —PTI

Sanjeev Gupta targets Thyssenkrupp steel unit

CHRISTOPH STEITZ & TOM KÄCKENHOFF FRANKFURT/DUESSELDORF, OCT. 16

Liberty Steel, founded by commodities tycoon Sanjeev Gupta, on Friday said it had made a non-binding offer for Thyssenkrupp's steel unit, hoping to forge a European champion to master the transformation towards carbon-

neutral production.

A deal would combine the continent's fourth- and second-largest steelmakers after a planned joint venture between Thyssenkrupp and Tata Steel was blocked in 2019.

"I truly believe in the future of European steel," Gupta told journalists during a call. "By investing in green steel I believe the industry can transform

and thrive in the long-term."

He said that steel as a business needed time, adding that was one of the reasons why belonged in private hands. Gupta shied away from putting a number on expected synergies.

Essen-based Thyssenkrupp said it would carefully study the offer, details of which were not disclosed. —Reuters

Car sales recover in Sept., all eyes on festive demand

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, OCT. 16

After four straight quarters of decline, passenger vehicles dispatches from the factory-gates to dealerships in the second quarter registered a strong 17 per cent growth at 7,26,232 units albeit on a low base of last year when sales had declined by a record 29 per cent.

Also, in September, car makers dispatched 2,72,027 units from their factories to dealerships, a 26.5 per cent growth over last year and roughly the same level as that of September 2018, the latest data from the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturer-s, or Siam, showed on Friday.

Automakers typically produce and ship more vehicles in September to stock up at dealerships across the country in anticipation of bumper demand during the annual festive season in October-November. But the litmus test would be the retail sales at the dealerships.

However, the positive trajectory is visible across



other segments as well. Two wheelers saw an 11.64 per cent growth in September, and in the second quarter, the sales have recovered to the levels of last year.

In fact, motorcycles have led the growth, reiterating the stronger demand in rural markets.

But sale of commercial vehicles, the barometer of the economic activity and three-wheelers, these two segments that are dependent on freight availability and are a truer reflection of the overall state of economy in the country, remained deep in the red. The commercial vehicles saw a dip of 20.13 per cent at 1,33,524 units in the quarter under review and three-wheelers sales declined 74 per cent at 45,902 units.

"In September, auto

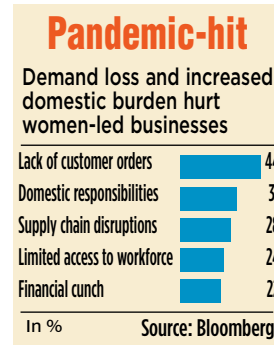
industry witnessed improvement in the sales of passenger vehicles by 26.45 per cent and two-wheelers by 11.64 per cent, while sales of three-wheelers registered a de-growth of 71.91 per cent, as compared to September last year," Rajesh Menon, director general at Siam said.

"Further, in the July-September quarter, passenger vehicles grew by 17.02 per cent, two-wheelers grew by 0.17 per cent, three-wheelers saw a de-growth of 74.63 per cent and sales of commercial vehicle declined by 20.13 per cent, compared to the same quarter in 2019," he pointed out.

Auto analysts said one has to wait and watch if the September wholesale figures would translate into retail sales and are sustainable.

They said factories across the country are now running at decent levels. Automakers are pinning their hopes on retail sales during the festive season which generally accounts for about 20 per cent of the total annual sales.

Biz women see Covid survival by remodeling business



SHWETHA SUNIL OCT. 16

Most female entrepreneurs in Indian cities were quick to change their business model and they predict their operations will survive after the pandemic ravaged revenues, according to a new study.

Bain & Co., Google, and AWE Foundation surveyed almost 350 women entrepreneurs and small businesses and found that 54 per cent had already made business shifts—including new products or services—and another 24 per cent planned to change by December. About 90 per cent said they believe they will survive the crisis.

Covid-19 had a disproportionate impact on women all over the world. In India, which has a vast gender gap across almost all social indicators, women are even more vulnerable. The nation has as many as 16 million women-owned businesses, fewer than 20 per cent of all enterprises, with most of them largely single-person operations, making survival crucial.

Women-owned businesses saw a sharp decline in revenue: 73 per cent reported being negatively impacted by the pandemic, and almost 20 per cent were nearly wiped out, according to the survey. The changes made in business models include releasing new products or services, digital sales and delivery channels, as well as reorienting supply chains, sales and marketing. Some 60 per cent of the businesses reported including new products and services. —Bloomberg



SHORT TAKES

India in 4th spot at Asian chess

Chennai: India enjoyed an unbeaten day with a win and two draws to move up to fourth place after six rounds in the Asian Online Nations (Regions) Cup Team Championship for men on Friday. The top-seeded Indians, who were sixth after three rounds, were held to a 2-2 draw by a strong Kazakhstan team, seeded second, in the sixth round after having shared points with Iran in round four before beating Jordan 3.5-0.5. In the India-Kazakhstan match, the talented 16-year-old Nihal Sarin and the experienced K Sasikiran scored wins over Rustam Khusnutdiov and Denis Makhnev respectively. B Adhiban and captain Surya Shekhar Ganguly lost their games. — PTI

Pak invites Eng for tour in 2021

London: England could tour Pakistan for the first time in over a decade after officials confirmed they had received an invitation to visit the Asian giants early in 2021 for a “short white-ball series”. England have not played in Pakistan since 2005/06. An England and Wales Cricket Board statement issued Thursday said: “After discussions with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), we can confirm the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has received an invitation in respect of a short white-ball tour to Pakistan during the early part of 2021.” It is understood the proposed tour could consist of three T20 internationals, none of which would replace England’s rescheduled tour of Sri Lanka. — AFP

Irani new chief of Weightlifting body

Lausanne: The crisis-hit International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), fighting to keep its place at the 2024 Paris Olympics, on Friday named a third president in a troubled week. The IWF said it had appointed Michael Irani, the British chair of the federation’s medical committee and a former chair of its anti-doping commission, as interim president. While Irani accepted the nomination, he insisted he was not interested in the job full-time, but committed to furthering reforms around the issue of drugs testing that has plagued the sport. “I am grateful to the IWF executive board for entrusting me with the presidency on an interim basis,” Irani said.— AFP

Tokyo Olympics on, assures IOC

Tokyo: The International Olympic Committee tried to assure dozens of international sports federations on Thursday that the postponed Tokyo Games will open on July 23. The IOC and Tokyo organisers have been holding on-line sessions this week with about 200 national Olympic committees, and with the more than 30 summer sports bodies that are represented on the program. “We are very confident that the games in Tokyo next year will take place,” IOC sports director Kit McConnell told delegates in the on-line seminar. It’s still unclear if fans will be allowed to populate venues, and if non-Japanese fans will be allowed to enter the country. — AP

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Rajasthan Royals vs Royal Challengers Bangalore from 3.30 pm; Delhi Capitals vs Chennai Super Kings from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Everton vs Liverpool from 5 pm; Chelsea vs Southampton from 7.30 pm; Manchester City vs Arsenal from 10 pm; Newcastle vs Manchester United from 12.30 am (Sunday) on Star Sports Select 2, HD

Italian League: Napoli vs Atalanta from 6.30 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD; Sampdoria vs Lazio from 9.30 pm on Sony Six, HD; Inter Milan vs AC Milan from 9.30 pm from 12.15 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

UFC FIGHT NIGHT

Brian Ortega vs Chan Sung Jung and other bouts from 4.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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QUINTESSENTIAL!

Quinton cracks whip as MI thrash KKR

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 16: The Mumbai Indians juggernaut rolled on unabated as they recorded their fifth straight win with an eight-wicket mauling of Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL here on Friday. A tidy bowling effort by Mumbai Indians ensured that KKR were restricted to 148 for 5 after an unbeaten 53 by pace spearhead Pat Cummins. Then, the defending champions rode on a blistering 44-ball 78 by Quinton de Kock, to chase down the target with 3.1 overs to spare. De Kock, who struck nine fours and three sixes and skipper Rohit Sharma (35 off 36 balls), laid the foundation for the emphatic win with their 94-run first-wicket stand. The two openers took the KKR attack to cleaners with de Kock being the more aggressive one. The South African notched up his fifty in just 25 balls, with a maximum over deep-square leg. It rained boundaries for Mumbai as the two dominated the KKR bowling attack. Pacer Prasidh Krishna (0/30) faced their brunt, conceding three fours in the third over and de Kock followed that up by hammering Cummins (0/28) for two successive fours, both pull shots, in the next. De Kock kept playing shots all around the park and was again brutal on Prasidh, whom he hit for two fours and a six, in the seventh over. — PTI



Quinton de Kock (right) of Mumbai Indians gestures after scoring a fifty against Kolkata Knight Riders during their Indian Premier League match at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Friday. — BCCI

SCORECARD	
Kolkata Knight Riders: R. Tripathi c Suryakumar Yadav b Boult 7, Shubman Gill c Kieron Pollard b Rahul Chahar 21, Nitish Rana c Quinton de Kock b Nathan Coulter-Nile 5, D. Karthik b Rahul Chahar 4, Eoin Morgan not out 39, Andre Russell c Quinton de Kock b Jasprit Bumrah 12, Pat Cummins not out 53, Extras (LB-2, W-5) 7. Total (for 5 wickets in 20 Overs) 148. FOW: 1-18, 2-33, 3-42, 4-42, 5-61. Bowlers: Trent Boult 4-0-32-1, Nathan Coulter-Nile 4-0-51-1, Jasprit Bumrah 4-	0-22-1, Krunal Pandya 4-0-23-0, Rahul Chahar 4-0-18-2. Mumbai Indians: Rohit Sharma c Dinesh Karthik b Shivam Mavi 35, Quinton de Kock not out 78, Suryakumar Yadav b CV Varun 10, Hardik Pandya not out 21. Extras (LB-5) 5. Total (for 2 wickets in 16.5 Overs) 149. FOW: 1-94, 2-111. Bowlers: Chris Green 2.5-0-24-0, Pat Cummins 3-0-28-0, Prasidh Krishna 2-0-30-0, Andre Russell 2-0-15-0, CV Varun 4-0-23-1, Shivam Mavi 3-0-24-1.

IPL POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Mumbai Indians	8	6	2	0	12	+1.353
Delhi Capitals	8	6	2	0	12	+0.990
Royal Challengers Bangalore	8	5	3	0	10	-0.139
Kolkata Knight Riders	8	4	4	0	8	-0.684
Sunrisers Hyderabad	8	3	5	0	6	+0.009
Chennai Super Kings	8	3	5	0	6	-0.390
Rajasthan Royals	8	3	5	0	6	-0.844
Kings XI Punjab	8	2	6	0	4	-0.295

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

Karthik passes on KKR captaincy baton to Eoin

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 16: Wicketkeeper-batsman Dinesh Karthik on Friday stepped down as captain of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, handing over the reins to his English deputy Eoin Morgan hours before the IPL match against Mumbai Indians here. Karthik told the KKR management that he wants to “focus on his batting and contributing more to the team’s cause.” Appointed skipper in 2018, the 35-year-old led KKR in 37 matches. “We are fortunate to have leaders such as DK, who has always put the team first. It takes a lot of courage for someone like him to take a decision such as this,” team CEO Venky Mysore said in a statement. Midway into the ongoing season, KKR find themselves at fourth place in the points table with four wins and three losses. Morgan was widely tipped to take over at some point from



Dinesh Karthik

Karthik given the topsy-turvy run. “...DK and Eoin have worked brilliantly together during this tournament and although Eoin takes over as captain, this is effectively a role swap and we expect that this transition will work in a seamless manner,” Mysore said. Even though Mysore termed Karthik’s decision surprising, the move was always on the cards with a World Cup-winning captain in the mix. The veteran Indian wicketkeeper-batsman’s captaincy had come under intense criticism due to the team’s erratic campaign so far. — PTI

Pooran all praise for great Gayle

Sharjah, Oct. 16: Chris Gayle’s presence in the middle had the team brimming with confidence and the ‘Universe Boss’ with a cracking half-century proved his worth during Kings XI Punjab’s win over Royal Challengers Bangalore, said batsman Nicholas Pooran. Gayle, who was playing his first competitive match since January, overcame a sluggish start against RCB to smash five sixes and a boundary in his 53-run knock, helping KXIP snap a five-match losing streak. “He started slowly, which is acceptable because he has played cricket in a long while. He has shown once more why he is the greatest T20 batsman. It’s wonderful to see him get runs,”

Pooran told teammate Mayank Agarwal during a post-match show for IPLT20.com. He added that when Gayle is out in the middle, there’s a different mood in the camp. “To me, he is the greatest T20 player. When Chris is batting, you always feel you have a chance of winning the game. Once he is there, it’s a different mood in the camp. We, as a batsman, would want someone like him in the middle,” Pooran said. In their first match of the tournament against Delhi Capitals, KXIP had failed to score the required single run of the last three balls and the game headed to a Super Over where they lost the game. — PTI

KXIP ASHWIN CREDITS RCB BOWLERS

Sharjah, Oct. 16: Kings XI Punjab leg-spinner Murugan Ashwin has credited the lessons learnt from observing RCB tweekers for his fine economical performance against the same side in an IPL clash here. Ashwin dismissed the dangerous pair of Aaron Finch and Washington Sundar, giving away only 23 runs in his four-over quota, a performance that played a significant role in KXIP much-needed eight-wicket victory over RCB on Thursday. Ashwin said watching Yuzvendra Chahal and Sundar bowl during RCB’s 82-run win over KKR the other day helped him find the right length at the same small Sharjah ground. — PTI

Sending AB down order was well thought: Kohli

Sharjah, Oct. 16: Royal Challengers Bangalore’s decision to push AB de Villiers down the order backfired but skipper Virat Kohli said it was a well-thought-out strategy that somehow did not work against KXIP. De Villiers, who had smashed a 33-ball 73 against Kolkata Knight Riders in their last match, was expected to come in at his usual number four spot but with two leg-spinners in operation, left-handed batsman Washington Sundar was sent ahead of the South African. Kohli said the move did not yield the desired result but his bowlers should have been able to defend 171 against Punjab on Thursday. They lost by eight wickets.



Virat Kohli (right) of Royal Challengers Bangalore and his teammate AB de Villiers in this file photo.

“We had a chat, a message from outside about left-right combination and we wanted to go with it because they had two leggies. Sometimes things don’t come off. We’re pretty happy with the decisions we took, but it didn’t

come off,” Kohli said. “Having 170 was a decent score. The idea was to let them (Shivam Dube and Sundar) get their eye in. They bowled well. It’s not a great ground for bowlers but that’s not an excuse,” he added. — PTI

Virat & Co. take on reeling RR

Dubai, Oct. 16: Royal Challengers Bangalore would aim to get their strategy right after some inexplicable decisions during the loss to Kings XI Punjab when they take on an erratic Rajasthan Royals in an IPL match here on Saturday. The Virat Kohli-led RCB has won five of its eight games on the back of all-round performances but seemingly blundered in the eight-wicket defeat to lag-guards KXIP on Thursday. Against KXIP in Sharjah, AB De Villiers, who has been in fine form, was sent in to bat at number six, a baffling decision by the RCB. The experiment didn’t work as all three batsmen struggled with the South African scoring just two off five balls. However, Kohli and his men will look to shrug off the defeat. On the other hand, the Royals’ campaign this season has been marred by numerous top-order collapses, forcing the lower half to pull them across the finish line. After failing in his first match of the season, Ben Stokes hit 41 before he was run out against the DC.

NUMBERS GAME	
HEAD TO HEAD	
OVERALL:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matches: 21 Rajasthan: 10 Bangalore: 9 No result: 2
MEETING IN 2019	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rajasthan Royals beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 7 wickets at Jaipur No result at Bangalore
MEETING IN 2020	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Rajasthan Royals by 8 wickets at Abu Dhabi
FOR THE RECORD	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abraham de Villiers who scored 3954 runs at an average of 42.06 in 124 innings of 134 matches, needs 46 runs to become only second batsman after Virat Kohli (5716) to score 4000 runs for Royal Challengers Bangalore in IPL. Sanju Samson 18 sixes in eight innings of as many matches is the highest in this IPL.
— S. PERVEZ KAISER	

Jofra Archer spearheads the RR bowling unit, along with the spin duo of Tewatia and Shreyas Gopal, who have consistently figured in an XI that has gone through a lot of chopping and changing. — PTI

Rejuvenated CSK face in-form DC

Sharjah, Oct. 16: Their campaign is back on track, courtesy Mahendra Singh Dhoni’s smart captaincy but a stiff test awaits Chennai Super Kings when they face a dominant Delhi Capitals in their next IPL match, here on Saturday. Every tactic that Dhoni employed against Sunrisers Hyderabad, worked, and they are expected to continue in the same vein as they battle to salvage the season. Whether it was promoting Sam Curran to the opener’s slot or finishing pacer Deepak Chahar’s quota upfront while using seven bowlers to dry up runs, every move produced desired result. The three-time champions will look to build on the win over Sunrisers Hyderabad as the league phase moves towards the

business end. However, they are up against a team which is high on confidence and well-served by the South African pace duo of Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje, who bowled a 156.2 kmph delivery during his spell against Rajasthan Royals. Add the wily R. Ashwin and Axar Patel to the mix and DC has a rather impressive bowling unit. Pacer Tushar Deshpande, who made a memorable debut in the win over the Royals on Wednesday, adds teeth to the attack and the focus will be on how he follows up that performance. The Capitals side would be a tad worried about fitness status of Shreyas Iyer, who hurt his left shoulder in the previous game. The skipper has been in good form with the bat and has led well too. — PTI

NUMBERS GAME	
HEAD TO HEAD	
OVERALL:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matches: 22 Chennai: 15 Delhi: 7
MEETING IN 2019	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chennai Super Kings beat Delhi Capitals by 6 wickets at Delhi. Chennai Super Kings defeated Delhi Capitals by 80 runs at Chennai. Chennai Super Kings beat Delhi Capitals by 6 wickets at Visakhapatnam (Qualifier 2).
MEETING IN 2020	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delhi Capitals beat Chennai Super Kings by 44 runs at Dubai
FOR THE RECORD	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shikhar Dawan who hits 549 fours in 166 innings of 167 matches, needs just one four to become first batsman to hit 550 fours in IPL. Mahendra Singh Dhoni scored 587 runs at an average of 34.52 in 23 innings of 25 matches against Delhi Capitals in IPL.
— S. PERVEZ KAISER	

Srikanth bows out in quarters

Odense, Oct. 16: Top Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth bowed out of the Denmark Open badminton tournament with a 22-20, 13-21, 16-21 defeat to Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei in the men’s singles quarterfinals here on Friday. The world number two Taipei player came back after losing the first game and took the next two to win the match in one hour and two minutes and storm into the semifinals. With the defeat of Srikanth, seeded fifth, India’s campaign ended in the \$750,000 Super 750 tournament, the only world tour event happening this year in a calendar thrown haywire by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Srikanth took the early lead at 7-4 but Chen fought back to 11-10 midway into the first game. The Indian made his way back to 19-19 and then 20-20 before taking the first game 22-20. The second game saw Chen dominating Srikanth as the Taipei player zoomed ahead from 10-9 to win it 21-13 and take the match to the decider. Srikanth put up some fight in the early exchanges of the decider but seemed to have lost way later. Chen left the Indian behind to take the third game and wrap up the match. Lakshya Sen had lost in the second round on Thursday while Subhankar Dey and Ajay Jayram had made first round exits. — PTI

OPELKA DUMPS TOP SEED

Saint Petersburg (Russia), Oct. 16: World number 36 Reilly Opelka came back from dropping the first set to defeat defending champion and top seed Daniil Medvedev 2-6, 7-5, 6-4 at the St Petersburg Open on Thursday. The giant American also saved four break points in the deciding set before going on to complete the biggest win of his career against the world number six. Elsewhere in Cologne, Alexander Zverev defeated Fernando Verdasco 6-4, 6-1. — AFP