


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
NELLORE | THURSDAY | 17 SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 31.1°C
Min: 25.9°C
RH: 76%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: clear.
Max/Min temp. 31/25°C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+94,544)	(+1,120)
51,12,428	83,208

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,273)	(+12)
TS: 1,62,844	996
(+8,835)	(+64)
AP: 5,92,760	5,105

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,99,13,099

DEATHS

9,42,395

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Bhadrapada Bahula
Amavasya till 4.27 pm
Star: Purvaphalguni till 9.46 am
Variyam: 4.08 pm to 5.33 pm
Durmuhurtam: 10.10 am to 10.58 am; 3 pm to 3.48 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

HILJRI CALENDAR
Muharram 29, 1442 AH
PRAYERS(SHAHI MASJID)
Fajar: 4.48 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 4.27 pm
Maghrib: 6.12 pm
Isha: 7.22 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.09 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 5.40 AM
MOONSET TODAY 7.08 PM

COUNTER POINT



Sorry, I don't need your services any more... I have hired this police officer!

IN BRIEF

35 army men died due to Coronavirus

New Delhi: The Coronavirus has killed 35 armed forces personnel and infected 19,839 of them, according to details provided by the government in the Lok Sabha. Minister of state for defence Shripad Naik said 32 Army personnel and three from the IAF died of COVID-19. "The number of Covid-19 cases in Army, Navy and Air Force are 16,758, 1,365 and 1,716 respectively," he said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha. All the three services have taken a series of measures to insulate their personnel from infection, the minister said. The total number of cases in India has crossed 50 lakh.

LS nod for co-op banks under RBI

New Delhi: The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed an amendment to the Banking Regulation Act to bring cooperative banks under the supervision of the RBI. The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020 replaces an ordinance that was promulgated on June 26. It seeks to strengthen cooperative banks by increasing professionalism, enabling access to capital, improving governance and ensuring sound banking through the RBI. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the Bill is for depositors' safety and not undermining the Registrar of Cooperative Societies.

NATION | 5



Shiv Sena backs Jaya Bachchan



Yoshihide Suga is new Japanese PM

WORLD | 7



Yoshihide Suga is new Japanese PM

SPORTS | 8



Ex-world athletics chief jailed for fraud

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Raring to go

Indian Air Force fighter jet on the runway amid the prolonged India-China face-off, in Leh district on Wednesday. India and China are expected to continue talks to implement the agreement reached between their foreign ministers last week. — PTI

Tirupati MP dies of Covid

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, SEPT. 16

YSR Congress Tirupati MP Balli Durga Prasad, 64, passed away while undergoing treatment for lung-related ailments at Apollo Hospital in Chennai on Wednesday.

According to family members, Durga Prasad tested positive for Coronavirus in the last week of August after returning from attending

Balli Durga Prasad
a meeting in Vijayawada. He got admitted in Apollo Hospital at Chennai as per the advice of SVIMS doc-

tors. Though he tested negative after treatment, he was forced to remain in the hospital for 15 days due to infection in the lungs. His condition deteriorated on Wednesday morning and passed away in the evening.

He is survived by his wife Saralamma, sons Kalyan, Karthik and daughter Haritha.

■ **Page 3:** Balli represented Gudur four times

3 silver lion idols missing from Durga temple chariot

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 16

Even as untoward incidents in temples are haunting YSR Congress government, a new incident has been reported. Three decorative silver lion idols have been found missing from the silver chariot in Kanaka Durga temple at Vijayawada. The four-lion idols-silver chariot is used during the Ugadi celestial ride of the Goddess. Three decorative lion idols worth of ₹15 lakh were found removed from the chariot while the fourth is damaged during forcible removal.

The temple officials tried to hide the incident by covering the chariot with plastic tarpaulin cover but it came to light when Endowments Minister Velampalli Srinivas and AP BJP president Somu Veerraju visited the temple to view the chariot separately on Wednesday. Veerraju gave an ultimatum to the government to take action on the missing of idols within two days.

The chariot was constructed using 70 kg of silver 20 years ago at a cost of ₹50 lakh and was parked near the temple's information center on the hilltop Indrakeeladri near the sanctum sanctorum of Durga. Nearly eight kgs of silver was used for each

Panel to probe into Durga temple theft

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 16

Minister for endowments Velampalli Srinivas Rao announced that a committee was appointed to probe how three decorative silver lions were missing from the silver chariot at Durga temple.

He said that the chariot was not used since the YSRC government came to power.

Meanwhile, minister for municipal administration Botsa Satyanarayana alleged that the three lions

lion and the three weighed 24 kgs. This year's Ugadi celestial ride was cancelled due to the corona crisis. Officials covered the silver chariot with plastic cover.

The police department directed all temples to keep chariots in sheds with CCTV cameras and under high security. The temple officials were shocked on noticing that three silver lions were missing when they removed the plastic cover. They suspected that some miscreants might have

were stolen during the TD government and it came to light only during a check. He said that stern action would be initiated against the culprits.

Minister Srinivas suspected TD conspiracy over the series of incidents taking place in temples across the State and stated that N. Chandrababu Naidu was playing the Hindutva card to divert public attention from the Amaravati land scam.

■ **Page 2:** TD leaders exploited temples: Minister

stolen three silver lions by cleverly removing plastic cover and later put the cover as usual.

The news spread like fire but the temple authorities were reluctant to remove the cover on Tuesday. Hindu religious organizations, TD and Jana Sena demanded the resignation of Velampalli Srinivas.

On Wednesday, Veerraju came to the temple and sought to view the chariot and the temple officials had to remove the cover. He gave a two days ultimatum to the government.

DRL will make Russian Covid vaccine for India

Firm to conduct phase 3 trials and seek Indian approvals

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

Sputnik V, the Russian vaccine for Covid-19, will be manufactured by Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd in Hyderabad after clearance from regulatory authorities.

If the regulatory authorities in India approve of the vaccine, it can be made available in India by the end of 2020. There will be 100 million doses of the vaccine supplied to India.

G.V. Prasad, co-chairman and managing director of Dr Reddy's Laboratories, said "The phase 1 and 2 results have shown promise and we will be conducting phase 3 trials in India to meet the requirements of Indian regulators."

Sputnik V is based on an adenoviral vector platform and the phase 3 human trials are to be carried out by the country that takes the vaccine from Russia. Different populations in the world react differently to the vaccine. Hence each country will have to take it and experiment on their own.

In phase 1 and 2 trials carried out on primates, Syrian hamsters and transgenic mice, it was found to be 100 per cent protective. The phase 3 trials in Russia were carried out on 76 participants. of which most were men.

In these trials, according to the science journal *Lancet* on September 4, it

Covid-19 fighters, high risk persons to get vaccine first

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT 16

Who will get the Covid-19 vaccine first? This is the question in medical circles as frontline workers insist that they must be the first ones to be provided the vaccine as they are in the highest risk zone.

With the vaccine development to be completed, and there being a possibility of availability soon, it is clear that priority must be given for those who are in high risk zones.

A scramble for the vaccine is anticipated and there will be influential people and also black marketers who will exploit the situation.

Like the injections of Remdesivir, there is also a possibility of the marketing of vaccines at exorbitant prices by private players. VVIPs or affluent people might be able to

has been stated that there is no adverse reaction and the immune response was strong. It was found that the immunoglobulin produced was higher than those who have recovered from Covid-19. Antibody production was high and it

The Centre must set up a Covid-19 vaccine distribution ethical committee, which should distribute the vaccine among the public through proper channels. It must be first given to frontline healthcare professionals.

— **SANJAY REDDY**
TS Pharmacy Council

procure the vaccine at the earliest which will create problems.

Experts urge that vaccines must be sold on a no-profit-no-loss basis as it is important that everyone must avail it.

According to sources, there is a lot of hope on indigenous vaccine development. There are nine vaccine candidates in late stages of trials according to the World Health Organization and one candidate is going to be successful. Sanjay Reddy, member

of Telangana state pharmacy council and pharmacologist, said, "The Centre must set up a Covid-19 vaccine distribution ethical committee, which should distribute the vaccine among the public through proper channels. It must be first given to frontline healthcare professionals. The vaccine must also be prioritised for those rural and urban areas where the infection rate is high."

In the initial phases, there is bound to be scarcity of vaccines as access to crores of people is not possible. Dr Sudhir Kumar, senior consultant neurologist at institute of neurosciences, Apollo hospitals said, "We have to ensure that the most vulnerable and high risk groups get access to vaccines first. Frontline workers and immune compromised patients and the elderly must get it first."

SC to frame rules for timely prosecution of lawmakers

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 16

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought information on criminal cases involving allegations of heinous crime, corruption and money laundering against sitting and former lawmakers being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) where there is no stay by higher courts, after the Centre told the court that trials of the lawmakers should be time-bound.

"Is there a case where the central agency is not proceeding despite no stay by the higher courts," asked Justice Surya Kant.

Speaking for himself, Solicitor General Tishar Mehta told a bench comprising Justice N.V. Ramana, Justice Surya Kant and Justice

Prashant Bhushan commented, "I understand that late yesterday an application for gagging the media had been filed by the former AG. I stand corrected on that. Such a gag order by the HC is totally out of order and unprecedented. It not only stifles free speech but deprives people

SIT PROBE INTO AMARAVATI SCAM: AP TO SEEK SC AID

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 16

AP government adviser (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said that the government will approach the Supreme Court against the AP High Court stay order on the ongoing SIT probe in the Amaravati lands scam. He claimed former Attorney General Dammalapati Srinivas Rao had indulged in insider trading leading to registration of a case based on preliminary investigation.

■ **Page 2:** HC gag order unfortunate, says Reddy

considering a challenge to some aspect of the orders passed by the trial court.

Appearing for the

Centre, Solicitor General Mehta suggested that even the High Courts should decide the matter coming before them involving the trial of lawmakers in a time-bound manner, ideally in a month's time.

Justice Surya Kant sought the details of the status of cases being investigated by the central agencies including CBI where there is no stay. Earlier, the court was told that in the cases involving politicians, there was delay at every stage including the change of public prosecutors and the transfer of judges forcing a de novo trial.

In the course of the hearing of a PIL by BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay seeking setting up of a special court in every district to try lawmakers facing criminal cases, Justice Ramana said they will pass directions to ensure an expeditious trial of criminal cases against MPs and MLAs including former lawmakers.

JUDGMENT IN BABRI CASE ON SEPT. 30

Lucknow, Sept. 16: A special court here will deliver judgment on September 30 in the Babri Masjid demolition case, ruling whether BJP veterans like L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi were involved in razing the mosque in 1992.

Judge S.K. Yadav on Wednesday directed all 32 accused to remain present in the court on the day of the judgment. The accused include former deputy prime minister Advani, former Union ministers Joshi and Uma Bharti, former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh, Vinay Katiyar and Sadhvi Rithambhara.

The CBI court was working against the month-end deadline set by the Supreme Court for the verdict.

The final arguments by the defence and the prosecution were heard by September 1, and then the judge began writing the verdict. Some of the final submissions by the accused were made through video conferencing.

Issuing the order on Wednesday, the judge said the verdict will be pronounced on September 30 and asked all accused to be present in court.

The Central Bureau of Investigation, which investigated the case, has produced 351 witnesses and about 600 documents as evidence before the court. Charges were framed against 48 people, but 16 died during the course of the trial. — PTI

● **THE CBI** which investigated the case, has produced 351 witnesses and about 600 documents as evidence before the court.

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SHORT TAKES

ALL SET FOR VILLAGE, WARD SECRETARIAT POST EXAMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 16

The arrangements are ready for the written test for village and ward secretariat posts scheduled to be held from September 20 to 26.

Panchayta raj minister Peddiredy Ramachandra Reddy said here on Wednesday that as many 10,56,931 candidates applied for 16,208 vacant posts.

He said that there would be separate rooms for candidates suffering from Covid-19 at every exam centre and the Coronavirus guidelines would be followed strictly.

According to the minister, OMR sheets and question papers were kept safely in strong rooms at the district headquarters.

FORMER CONGRESS MLA MANGAPATHI DIES AT 63

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 16

Former Congress MLA Pudi Mangapathi Rao, 63, died in a private hospital here on Wednesday morning following prolonged illness.

Mangapathi Rao defeated five-time legislator of Telugu Desam Kolla Appalanaidu in Uttarapally constituency in Vizianagaram district in the 2004 Assembly elections. He was with the YSRC for some time but he joined the TD last year. Mangapathi Rao, a native of Madugula in Visakhapatnam district, was not seen in public after the general elections last year. He was a close follower of former chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy. Many Congress and TD leaders condoled his death.

AIR PASSENGER TRAFFIC SEES 25% INCREASE

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, SEPT. 16

The air passenger traffic, both international as well as domestic, in Andhra Pradesh, has increased approximately 25 per cent from 2017-18 to 2019-20, said civil aviation minister of state Hardeep Singh Puri in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, in response to a question raised by Rajya Sabha MP T.G. Venkatesh on expansion of airports in the state.

The minister replied that expansion of airports was a continuous process. Airports Authority of India (AAI) has undertaken expansion works at Kadapa, Tirupati, Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada airports on priority. T.G. Venkatesh is chairman of Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture in Rajya Sabha.

TTD TO SEEK LAND IN AYODHYA TO BUILD 'DIVYA KSHETRAM'

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 16

If the government of Uttar Pradesh agrees to allot five-acres of land in Ayodhya, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) trust board will build a Sri Venkateswara 'divya Kshetram' at the Ram Janma Bhumi.

The TTD trust board, in its meeting held on August 28, decided to request the UP government to allot five acres in Ayodhya to build a Sri Venkateswara 'divya kshetram' to spread the magnificence of Lord of Tirumala among the devotees visiting the birth place of Lord Rama.

TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy told *Deccan Chronicle* that they would endeavour to propagate Venkateswara bhakti cult and the Hindu Sanathana Dharma, and as part of the effort they would seek land to build a spiritual centre at Ayodhya. "The board has plans to build Lord Venkateswara temples in every state in the country. We have already initiated measures to construct temples at Varanasi and Jammu. Similarly, we are planning a 'divya kshetram' at Ayodhya," he said.

The board has directed the TTD authorities to approach the UP government with the proposal.

"Our officials are in consultations with the UP government. After getting their consent, we will announce when the works will be grounded for the 'divya kshetram'. We have plans to build a Lord Venkateswara temple, a bhajan mandir and other amenities for the visiting pilgrims," Mr Subba Reddy said.

Jagan for completion of projects on priority basis

Focus on utilising floodwater being discharged into sea: CM

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 16

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the officials to complete the irrigation projects on time and to focus on utilising floodwater being discharged into the sea.

Addressing a review meeting on various irrigation projects in the state at the Camp Office here on Wednesday, he said there should be no delay in the works of Nellore Barrage, Sangam Barrage, Owk tunnel-2, Pula Subbaiah Veligonda-Head Regulator works, Vansadhara-Nagavali Link, BRR Vamsadhara Project Stage-2, Phase II and Polavaram project. "Gandikota reservoir should be able to store at least 23 TMC ft of water and the R&R works should be completed, along with Chitravati balancing reservoir with 10 TMC of water. The compensation to farmers has been increased from ₹6.5 lakh to ₹10 lakh per acre and he instructed officials to create awareness among the farmers and convince them that the completion of irrigation projects would

NAIDU WANTS CBI PROBE INTO 80 TEMPLE ATTACKS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 16

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu said 80 incidents of attacks on Hindu temples took place since Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy came to power and demanded a comprehensive CBI probe.

The theft of silver lions engraved on the chariot at Kanaka Durga temple was the latest example of temple being targeted in the state, Mr Naidu said. He demanded CBI investigation into all the attacks and property encroachments at all major Hindu temples in the last 15 months under the 'discriminatory' and 'oppressive' YSRC regime.

He also demanded that Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy break his silence on the 'unchecked vandalism'. Had the CM taken prompt and stringent action when the first attack took place, the subsequent incidents would not have taken place, Mr Naidu opined.

Addressing an online press conference on Wednesday, Mr Naidu said there was no immediate and suitable action in any of these incidents. The Kanaka Durga temple EO did not file a police complaint and was hopelessly waited for three days to respond to the incident, he said and described the incident as ironic as it took place in the temple located close to the residence of endowments minister.

The Opposition leader also referred to the reported demolition of an idol in Shirdi Sai temple in Nidamanuru on Wednesday. Nine incidents of attacks on temple properties, 11 idol desecrations, assault on two archakas, death of cows at three gosalas and the burning of Antharvedi temple chariots took place in the recent past, the former CM said.



Actor Ali offers a sapling to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy when he met him at the CM's Camp Office on Wednesday.

— DC

benefit them." The officials said the works of Nellore and Sangam barrages are on fast track and the Owk tunnel-2 work is going on and there is delay in the works as soil reached the tunnel due to seepage.

The Chief Minister directed the officials to take the advice of expert committees and complete the project. The works of tunnel-1 of Pula Subbaiah Veligonda-Head Regulator

works was completed and Tunnel-2 works will be completed by August 2021 and added that there is delay in the works in this season as water from the mountains of Nallamala forest is disrupting the project.

The work on Vamsadhara Nagavali linking would be completed by December, the officials said and added only 8.5 km is yet to be completed of the total 33.5 km and the

Phase-2 works of BRR Vamsadhara Project Stage-2 would be completed by March 2021. The Chief Minister said Mahendranayana off shore reservoir in Srikakulam district should be completed on priority as this would provide water to 24,600 acres benefitting 108 villages.

The Tarakarama Tirthasagar reservoir project would be completed by December 2022, the officials said.

The Chief Minister gave approval for recruitment of mechanical and electrical staff required in the irrigation department. Minister Anilkumar Yadav, special chief secretary Adityanath Das, engineer-in-chief C. Narayana Reddy and several senior officials of the department attended the meeting.

Further, a meeting on sand corporation was conducted in which ministers ministers Peddiredy Ramachandra Reddy, Perni Venkatramaiah and Kodali Venkateswara Rao, government advisor (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy and other officials participated.



The silver chariot at the entrance of Mallikharjuna Maha Mandapam premises in Kanaka Durga temple in Vijayawada.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

BJP seeks intervention of Guv for safety of temples

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 16

A delegation of BJP led by state party president Somu Veerraju met Governor B.B. Harichandan at Raj Bhavan here on Wednesday and submitted a memorandum on the attacks on Hindu temples in AP.

They apprised the Governor of the recent burning of the chariot at Antarvedi, theft of three idols of lions at Kanaka Durga temple. Mr Veerraju told the Governor that the incidents were happening because of indifferent attitude of the government to protection of temples in the state.

He also complained to Mr Harichandan that 37 persons were arrested on non-bailable sections for protest against chariot

TD LEADERS EXPLOITED TEMPLES: MINISTER

From page 1

He clarified that the chariot was not in use since YSRC came into power and the theft occurred during the TDP tenure. The minister said that a committee has been constituted to investigate the issue and action will be taken against those involved. He stated that all measures are being taken for the protection of chariots in temples.

Recalling incidents like

burning at Antarvedi. Mr Veerraju said the 'oppressive' attitude towards Hindus appeared to be part of the state government's policy of appeasing the church and some

tantric ritual, robbery of Goddess Durga sarees and jewellery that took place during TD regime, the minister stated that TD leaders have exploited and ruined the sanctity of temples and even went to the extent of demolishing temples.

Botsa Satyanarayana alleged that fearing the involvement of TD leaders in the Amaravati land scam, Naidu has started a mind-game by raising the temple issue.

sections of the Christian community. He requested the Governor to direct the state government to forthwith release all those arrested in a 'high-handed' manner

involved in the scam, but the court didn't seem to consider them on the plea of the petitioner that the government was vindictive. "We are not vindictive towards opposition party leaders and thus we requested for fair investigation by CBI, which is a Central Government institution. The High Court orders were surprising," he said, adding that the public started to believe that justice differs from a common man to influential persons.

Mr Ramakrishna Reddy said that the stay came on another petition filed by TD leaders Varla Ramaiah

TENTATIVE AVAILABILITY OF MBBS SEATS FOR 2020-21		
Andhra Medical College,	Visakhapatnam	250
Kurnool Medical College,	Kurnool	250
Guntur Medical College,	Guntur	250
Rangaraya Medical College,	Kakinada	50
Narayana Medical College,	Nellore	250
Sri Venkateswara Medical College,	Tirupati	240
NRI Medical College,	Guntur	200
GSL Medical College,	Rajahmundry	200
ACSR Government Medical College,	Nellore	175
Government General Hospital,	Kadapa	175
Siddhartha Medical College,	Vijayawada	175
Alluri Sitaramaraju Academy of Medical Sciences,	Eluru	150
Konaseema Institute of Medical Sciences Research Foundation,	Amalapuram	150
PES Institute of Medical Sciences and Research,	Kuppam	150
NRI Institute of Medical Sciences,	Visakhapatnam	150
Katuri College of Nursing,	Guntur	150
Nimra Institute of Medical Sciences,	Vijayawada	150
Viswabharathi Medical College,	Kurnool	150
Maharajah's Institute of Medical Sciences,	Vizianagaram	150
Government Medical College,	Srikakulam	150
Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences,	Ongole	150
Great Eastern Medical School and Hospital,	Srikakulam	150
Apollo Institute of Medical Sciences and Research,	Chittoor	150
Gayatri Vidya Parishad Institute of Healthcare,	Visakhapatnam	150
RIMS Medical College,	Kadapa	120
Santhiram Medical College,	Nandyal	100
Fathima Institute of Medical Sciences,	Kadapa	100

TENTATIVE AVAILABILITY OF BDS SEATS FOR 2020-21		
St Joseph Dental College,	Eluru	100
Sree Sai Dental College,	Srikakulam	100
Gitam Dental College,	Visakhapatnam	100
Anil Neerukonda Institute of Dental Sciences,	Visakhapatnam	100
Narayana Dental College,	Nellore	100
CKS Theja Dental College,	Tirupati	100
Vishnu Dental College,	Bhimavaram	100
KIMS Dental College,	Amalapuram	100
Drs Sudha and Nageswara Rao Siddhartha Institute of Dental Sciences,	Chinnaoutapalli	100
Lenora Institute of Dental Sciences,	Rajahmundry	100
Sibar Institute of Dental Sciences,	Guntur	100
GSL Dental College,	Rajahmundry	100

Counselling for MBBS, BDS first year likely by Oct-end

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 16

Counselling for admission into MBBS and BDS first year in both government and private colleges is likely to commence by October-end in AP.

The State has 6,470 MBBS first year seats in 11 government and 28 private medical colleges and also 1,740 BDS first year seats in two government and 16 private dental colleges in the current academic year.

Dr NTR University of Health Sciences authorities say that the cut-off marks vary from year to year and in case the exam papers are easy, the cut-off marks will be high and vice-versa. Based on the feedback from students, who appeared for NEET,

the exam papers were found to be relatively easy and they are expecting the cut-off marks to be high in the current academic year. The seats will be filled up in compliance with the rule of reservation and accordingly, students from SC category will get reservation up to 15 per cent, ST-six per cent, BC-25 per cent and BC-E-four per cent.

In private colleges, 50 per cent of seats will be filled up under management quota and students, who join in such quota cannot avail government fee reimbursement scheme benefits.

Fifteen per cent of seats in the state will be filled up under all India quota.

The University's Registrar Dr K. Sankar said "Once the NEET merit list

is announced, we will start the counselling process for admission in all permitted colleges in the state."

University sources maintain that NEET ranks are expected to be issued by September 28 and counselling for admission may start by the end of October. They point out that once the national ranks are announced, state-wide ranks will also have to be announced to fill up seats in colleges with state ranks getting preference.

AP Higher Education Regulatory and Monitoring Commission will fix fee structure for MBBS/ BDS courses in government and private medical and dental colleges in the state for the ensuing academic year.

Covid test



Medical staff collects the swab of a child, assisted by his father, for Covid-19 testing at Sanjeevini Bus which was set up at Government ENT Hospital in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

KRISHNA-GODAVARI BASIN HAS 9.55 BILLION TONNES OF HYDROCARBONS

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, SEPT. 16

Dharmendra Pradhan, minister of petroleum and natural gas has said Hydrocarbon Resource Re-Assessment Project (HCRAP) has estimated that 9.55 BToE is available in Krishna-Godavari (KG) basin in AP.

The project brought out that most prospective onland areas in AP for oil and gas exploration are East Godavari, West Godavari and Krishna district.

In a written reply to

Rajya Sabha MP T.G. Venkatesh, the minister said HCRAP was undertaken in 2017. The project assessed total un-risked conventional hydrocarbon in-place volume of 42 billion Ton Oil Equivalent (BTOE) as compared to earlier estimate of 28 BTOE.

Further, the minister said National Seismic Programme was launched in 2016 to carry out 2D seismic survey in un-appraised on land areas. Till 31.07.2020, data for 44916 line kilometer has been acquired.

IN BRIEF

Rowdy-sheeter sets ambulance afire

Nellore: A rowdy-sheeter set fire to a 108 ambulance vehicle using cotton, gauze and spirit available in the vehicle at Ongole during the early hours of Wednesday. He also attempted to kill himself in the fire but alert police saved him by pulling out of the burning vehicle. Earlier, the rowdy sheeter, identified as Nelapati Suresh Babu broke the glass panels of Taluk PS in Ongole and sustained injuries to both his hands. He went berserk and torched the ambulance which came to take him to the hospital on cops' directions. The ambulance vehicle was gutted as some leaking oxygen cylinders in the vehicle added fuel to the fire.

Couple killed as house collapses

Kadapa: A married couple was killed when their house collapsed at Kuluru village in Rajupalem mandal, Kadapa district, in the wee hours of Wednesday. The incessant rains for the last three days drenched the house built of mud and suddenly, the roof came down. The victims were identified as TD leader Peddireddy Srinivasa Reddy, 52, and his wife Savitri, 44. Srinivasa Reddy's daughter Himasai, 22, and his mother Sankamma, 74, survived as they were sleeping in another room. Following a complaint from Himasai, Rajupalem police SI Laxminarayana reached the place and registered a case.

2 scribes into smuggled liquor biz

Kadapa: The Jammalamadugu Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) seized 210 non duty paid liquor bottles in a house kept in a secret place. Three accused fled from the spot and the police identified two journalists among them. Chakravarthi, Additional SP, SEB got a tip off from reliable sources that some of the persons used to sell smuggled liquor which was brought from Bangalore in Jammalamadugu. He alerted his vigilance team and with the help of SEB inspector, Jammalamadugu Linga Chennareddy along with his staff raided the house located at Kanneluru in the town. The accused Gaja Srinivasulu, Meghanath Reddy and Aravulu fled from the spot. Among three, two are working as electronic media journalists.

Orthopaedician succumbs to illness

Nellore: An orthopaedic surgeon, Dr Mukherjee, working in the Government General Hospital succumbed to health problems while undergoing treatment at Chennai late on Tuesday night. Joint collector N. Prabhakar Reddy, GGH superintendent Dr Sudhakar Reddy and Medical officers in GGH paid rich tributes to the deceased doctor while recalling his services to Covid patients in hospital.

BISCUIT TRAGEDY: ONE MORE GIRL DIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, SEPT. 16

A girl died due to food poisoning after consuming cream biscuit. The deceased was identified as Jamal Bee (8), native of Chinthakommadinne village. Three children, 6-8 years age group, fell ill after eating biscuits at Chinthakommadinne village in Allagadda mandal on September 13 evening.

On the same day within a few minutes gap after eating the biscuits, Hussain Basha, 6, died before shifting to local hospital and his sister Hussain Bee, 4, also died the next day of morning at Kurnool government general hospital.

The third one died on Wednesday while she was undergoing medical treatment at Kurnool GGH after she has been fighting with severe illness. She is the daughter of younger brother: Rose Mango Biscuits, the alleged cause of death, manufactured by Veeramani Industries located in Ranga Reddy district of Telangana, said Allagadda DSP Pothu Raju. The whole sale distributor of the said biscuits was seized and stocks of biscuits in shops in the Chintakommadinne village were also seized, the DSP Reddy. Viscera samples of the dead were collected and sent for Forensic analysis, he said. "We are prying in all angles. Was it due to biscuits or due to Tea and milk they had taken and other probable causes. The family has no enmity with anybody," he said.

Allagadda medical officer R. Anjaneyulu said the deceased children reacted quickly after consuming biscuits. This happens only due to chemical reactions.

Ravaged by floods

A woman takes a look at her house after the door collapsed due to floods, on returning back as the water receded at Ranigari Thota in Krishnalanka, Vijayawada, on Wednesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

AP nearing 6L mark of Coronavirus cases**Over 10,845 patients discharges after recovery in last 24 hrs**

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 16

Andhra Pradesh will shortly touch the six-lakh mark of cumulative Covid-19 positive cases, which reached 5,92,760 with addition of 8,835 new cases during the last 24 hours.

The bulletin issued by state health authorities here on Wednesday reported that out of 75,013 samples tested, 8,835 individuals have tested Coronavirus positive.

In addition, 64 additional Covid-19 deaths have been reported during the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 5,105.

So far, 48,06,879 samples have been tested for Covid-19. Of them, 4,97,376 patients have been discharged after recovery

while 90,279 patients are undergoing treatment in various designated Coronavirus hospitals across the state.

East Godavari continues to lead the state with 1,421 new Covid-19 cases, followed by 1,051 in West Godavari, 873 in Prakasam, 798 in Chittoor, 725 in Anantapur, 685 in Guntur, 562 in Nellore, 544 in Vizianagaram, 536 in Kadapa, 495 in Srikakulam, 424 in Kurnool, 396 in Krishna and 325 in Visakhapatnam.

With this, the cumulative Coronavirus infections in the worst-affected East Godavari are 81,064, followed by 53,571 in West Godavari, 52,704 in Kurnool, 51,516 in Chittoor, 50,813 in Anantapur, 47,330 in Guntur, 45,512 in Nellore,

45,237 in Visakhapatnam, 38,738 in Prakasam, 37,688 in Kadapa, 33,920 in Srikakulam, 29,503 in Vizianagaram, 22,269 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery among Covid-infected patients has been good in East Godavari with 68,561 persons recovering from the disease, followed by 48,293 recoveries in Kurnool, 46,818 in Anantapur, 44,460 in West Godavari, 43,110 in Chittoor, 40,938 in Nellore, 39,698 in Guntur, 39,027 in Visakhapatnam, 38,698 in Guntur, 32,489 in Kadapa, 27,665 in Srikakulam, 25,031 in Prakasam, 19,425 in Vizianagaram, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

With regard to Coronavirus deaths during the last 24 hours, Chittoor recorded nine deaths, followed by seven in Nellore, six each in Guntur and Prakasam, five each in Anantapur, Kadapa, Krishna, Srikakulam and West Godavari, four in Kurnool, three in East Godavari and two each in Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram.

Cumulative deaths of Covid-19 patients have been the highest in Chittoor with total 552 deaths, followed by 475 in Guntur, 467 in East Godavari.

AP has carried out Covid-19 tests on 90,016 samples per one million population, recording Coronavirus positive rate of 12.33.

Covid patients opting for home isolation on the rise

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 16

The number of Covid patients opting treatment in home isolation has been increasing day by day in Chittoor district since late August. Highlighting this trend, some of Covid-19 hospitals are reporting vacant beds and shortened waiting time for admissions.

At the beginning of this week, the district had over 4,000 of the total 9,225 recorded patients undergoing treatment in home isolation, though there has been no respite in Covid-19 cases.

The health department officials, too, confirm that an increasing number of patients are opting for home isolation.

Initially, the district administration did not allow home isolation even to asymptomatic cases. As the bed shortage in gov-

ernment hospitals and care centres has become a constant problem, the administration allowed asymptomatic patients and those aged below 50 years to opt for home care, which has now provided a much-needed alternative for critical patients to get better care.

"After we decided to allow patients to opt for home isolation, a team composed of senior doctors and medical experts have been appointed to monitor their health condition over phone on a daily basis. At present, home isolation option is being given to only asymptomatic patients, who are not comorbid and aged below 50 years," district collector Narayan Bharat Gupta told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Joint collector V. Veerabrahman is heading the district telemedicine unit comprising six doctors, who are available

for consultation in three-shifts. Additional DMHO Dr C. Aruna Sulochana Devi and senior doctors from IMA are also in the monitoring team.

Rapid response teams have also been constituted in each ward with ASHA workers and local body officials, who personally monitor patients, and if required, they immediately shift patients to nearby Covid care facilities. A call centre has been set up in Tirupati, from where doctors monitor the health condition of each Covid patient over phone.

"Around 4,000 patients are in regular contact with our doctors. They have to answer our queries regarding their health. Being in home quarantine can be a better choice for asymptomatic patients, and they will have to be cautious and remember to give correct info to doctors," the collector said.

TD PRAYS FOR STOPPING TEMPLE ATTACKS

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 16

Following the call given by the Telugu Desam national president N. Chandrababu Naidu to protest against attacks on Hindu temples across the state, party leaders and workers have performed puja at Lord Ayyappa Swamy temple in Tiruchanoor here on Wednesday.

It may be recalled that the TD chief last week has called on the party activists to protest at various temples on each day for a week against the attacks on Hindu temples and properties in the state. TD in-charge for Chandragiri Pulivarthi Nani performed puja at the Ayyappa temple here on Wednesday.

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, SEPT. 16

Though Corona positive cases are on the decline from last one week much to the relief of health officials, death rate of 4 to 10 patients per day has been causing worry to everyone concerned.

The cases which were hovering around 1000 to 1200 per day one week back came down to 500 to 800 now.

The number of cases recorded on Wednesday was 562 after testing 5071 samples and the virus has claimed the lives of 7 patients.

The positive cases were 520 and deaths were 4 on Tuesday. Similarly, the cases detected were 456

and deaths were 3 on Monday whereas 7 patients died and 844 cases detected on Sunday.

Medical and Health Officer Dr S. Rajyalakshmi said they can be relieved if the same trend continues with respect to decline in the number of positive cases for next two weeks. She said the death rate has come down to single digits during the last one week and patients can be saved if they are admitted to the hospital soon after the detection of Covid. "Most of the patients turn up to the hospital after they face breathing problems" lamented Dr Rajyalakshmi.

Blood banks urged to get licence for plasmapheresis

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 16

Though Andhra Pradesh has 262 blood banks, including in public and private sector, only a few of them have licence for plasmapheresis.

Given a good rate of recovery from Covid-19 after undergoing plasma therapy, the state government has been encouraging the recovered patients to donate their plasma after the mandatory period, so that it helps other patients to survive. It is even offering ₹5,000 as a financial incentive to each plasma donor.

However, most blood banks are without the mandatory licence from the Drug Control Administration to take up plasmapheresis which means collection of

■ Many blood banks in Vijayawada have licence for plasmapheresis while several in other districts are not coming forward to obtain the legally mandated licence

plasma from Covid-19 infected and recovered patients and their transfusion to patients. A reason for this is there was no need for plasmapheresis until the outbreak of coronavirus and only few blood banks obtained the licence only for plateletpheresis, which means collection of blood from voluntary donors and separating it into different components like platelets, fresh frozen plasma and others and transfusing it.

Interestingly, the same machine can be used for both

plateletpheresis and also for plasmapheresis and each machine costs over Rs 10 lakh depending upon its capacity. As the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 clearly mentions that blood banks are supposed to obtain licence to conduct plasmapheresis, Drug Control Administration authorities are advising blood banks to apply for the licence by paying a fee of ₹300 and avoid legal issues. The authorities hope to ensure more number of blood banks equipped with licence to collect plasma and bolster more patients to go in for plasma therapy.

A senior official from DCA said "We advise managements of blood banks to obtain the licence for plasmapheresis as they are having licence only for plateletpheresis."

Outsourcing staff protest against merger enters 31st day

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 16

The protest taken up by the outsourced employees working with TTD, demanding the temple trust board to to withdraw its move to merge the outsourced employees with AP Corporation for Outsourcing Services (APCOS), has reached 31 days on Wednesday.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the outsourced employees, under the banner of 'TTD outsourcing employees' welfare association', were seen continuing the protest in front of the TTD administrative

building in Tirupati. The trades unions including CITU and TTD Staff and Workers United Front have also extended their support to the protest.

Addressing the protesters, the welfare association honorary president Mr M. Nagarjuna said that the outsourcing employees in TTD have been opposing their merger with APCOS as it would damage their interests. The trust board, however, passed a resolution in January this year for merging outsourcing employees with APCOS though they unanimously sought to continue them with TTD.

"The temple management is ignoring the outsourcing employees, who are committed to serve the pilgrims and rendering services to them for the past several years. This protest will continue till the trust board withdraws their move to merge outsourcing employees in APCOS", he said.

He recalled that the AP CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, when he was in opposition, has assured to provide a time scale to the outsourcing employees. He said they will meet the CM on September 23 when he arrives at Tirumala and will urge him to direct the TTD to revoke its decision.

BALLI HAS REPRESENTED GUDUR 4 TIMES

From Page 1

A native of Venkatagiri in SPSSR Nellore district and a law graduate, Durga Prasad represented Gudur constituency four times in the Assembly.

In 1985, he bagged the MLA seat with 55,135 vote majority on TD ticket. In 1994 and 1999 general elections, he was reelected and served as minister for primary education from 1996 to 1998 in the Chandrababu Naidu cabinet.

Durga Prasad joined YSR Congress just before the general elections in 2019 after TD denied him Assembly ticket. YSRC nominated him for the Tirupati parliament seat which he won with a comfortable margin.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed profound grief over the demise of the MP. The CM called up his son and conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family.

Rajya Sabha member Vijaya Sai Reddy also expressed his condolences to the family members of the MP and tweeted that the MP had grown up to the position with his hard work. Venkatagiri legislator and former finance minister Anam Ramanarayan Reddy, former minister Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy, industries minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy expressed grief over the sudden demise of Durga Prasad.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Tirupati MLA Bhumana Karunakar Reddy said, "Durga Prasad's death has left a void in state politics. We worked together for the past two years for the development of Tirupati."

■ In 1985, Durga Prasad bagged the MLA seat with 55,135 vote majority on TD ticket. In 1994 and 1999 general elections, he was re-elected and served as minister for primary education from 1996 to 1998 in the Chandrababu Naidu cabinet.

■ Prasad joined YSRC just before 2019 general elections after the TD denied him ticket. YSRC nominated him for the Tirupati parliament seat

Two held for tampering date of birth on Aadhaar

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, SEPT. 16

Vigilance and Enforcement Sleuths led by OSD (Officer on Special Duty) P. Venkatanadha Reddy arrested two persons involved in tampering the date of birth in Aadhaar cards and Pan Cards using fake seals of Mandal Education Officer, Nellore and Executive Engineer, Rural Water Supply, Udayagiri.

The accused have been identified as SK Mehboob Basha 30 of Atmakur and Eduru Hari 48 of Nellore. According to Mr Venkatanadha Reddy, Mehboob Basha has been changing the date of birth in Aadhaar card to enable his clients secure benefits from government welfare schemes such as Cheyutha and social security pensions.

To change the date of birth, it is mandatory to produce a certificate from a Gazetted Officer. To overcome the hurdle, Mehboob Basha readied a fake rubber stamp of AEE, RWS and signed with green ink like an officer. Eduru Hari was obtaining Pan Cards by submitting fake date of birth certificates by using the rubber stamp of MEO, Nellore. The Pan cards are being used to change the date of birth in Aadhaar cards. Vigilance teams conducted a raid on the centres run by the duo and seized the rubber stamps and forged applications.

Mr Venkatanadha Reddy alleged that Mehboob Basha supplied more than 120 Aadhaar cards after changing the date of birth and they have also found 82 applications ready for submission to change the date of birth in Aadhaar.

30K cusecs released to Penna from Somasila

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, SEPT. 16

In view of heavy inflows into Somasila dam, 30,000 cusecs of water being released from the project to the downstream of Penna river after alerting people living close to the river banks on Wednesday.

According to Superintending Engineer of Somasila Project, N. Krishna Rao, the inflows were to the extent of 80,000 cusecs, water level is 99.838 meters and storage

is 73 tmc.ft.

In addition to 30,000 cusecs released to Penna downstream, 11,000 cusecs are being supplied to Kandaleru dam through Somasila-Kandaleru Flood Flow Canal, the SE said.

He said they would store a full capacity of 78 tmc.ft in Somasila in the next few days.

Irrigation officials said they are making use of the water released into Penna river to fill all the tanks in the Penna delta area and store it for the future use

VIJAYAWADA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC)		
'E' Procurement Notice No.25/VMC/AE/2020-21, Dt.16-09-2020		
Sl. No.	Name of work	Estimate Amount Rs. in Lakhs
1	Proposed Re-Development of Gandhi Hill, Development of Food Street from Red Circle to M.G.Road, Providing Chain link Mesh Fencing MS Angulures, Improvements to Vinayaka Temple road to Flyover Providing BT Roads, Providing CC Roads Establishment of 500 KLD STPs in Governorpet and Punnami Ghat, O&M of 150 TPD Solid Waste Management, Re-development of Zymkhana Shopping Complex, Re-development of APSRMC School in Krishnalanka, Construction of RCC Retaining wall, Providing Piped Drains, Paver Blocks, UGD Lines, Foot Paths, Providing Street Name Boards and Road Name Boards in A and B Class Roads Procurement of 3 Nos BS-VI Model vehicle Mounting machines (All works are with Reverse Tendering Auction), Circle-1.2 & 3 areas in VMC (32 Works)	4661.89
Contact: Superintending Engineer (Works & Projects), VMC, Vijayawada-520 001 Further details can be seen @ 'e' procurement market place @ www.tender.aeprocurement.gov.in Download of bid documents starts from - 19-09-2020 @ 04.00 P.M. Last date / time for receipt of tenders from - 03-10-2020 up to 4.30 P.M. Reverse Tendering starts from - 05-10-2020 from 2.00 P.M		
Sd/- For COMMISSIONER		

SHORT TAKES

VISHWAKARMA JAYANTI FETE TO BE HELD TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

Vishwakarma Jayanti will be celebrated on Thursday as a tribute to Lord Vishwakarma, the divine architect, according to Rithambra, a registered trust which said it was organising an online event as part of the celebrations.

The event, according to the organisation, “is a day to remember and cherish the professional arts, skills and its practitioners who design and shape our world”. This annual event introduces, acknowledges, marvels and felicitates great craftsmen and artists carrying this ancient Indian wisdom, according to the organisation.

The online event scheduled to begin at 9 am on Thursday, will include talks on temple restoration, Vishwakarma tradition, and interviews with sculptors. More information on the event can be found at <https://ritambhara.org.in/vis-hwakarma-jayanti/>.

BRAOU DEGREE EXAMS FROM ON OCTOBER 5

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

Dr B. R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) on Wednesday announced its schedule of examinations to be held in the months of October and November. The exams will start on October 5 with UG (CBCS) sixth semester examinations and go on till November 17.

According to a BRAOU communication, UG (CBCS) 6th semester examinations will be held from October 5 to October 10, 5th semester exams from October 11 to 16 and 1st semester exams from November 7 to 17. Degree 3rd year exams for old batches will be from October 18 to 23, 2nd year exams from October 27 to November 2, and 1st year exams from November 4 to 7.

Timings of these examinations will be from 2 pm to 5 pm. Students have been advised to visit the university portal www.braouonline.in for detailed time table. They can get further details from BRAOU study centres or call help desk numbers 7382929570/580/590/600.

ABVP WANTS EXAMS UNDER UGC GUIDELINES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

The state unit of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) has submitted a memorandum to Telangana State Council of Higher Education chairman Prof. Papi Reddy demanding that all UGC guidelines be followed for conducting exams in the state. The memorandum comes in the wake of safety guidelines being allegedly violated recently while holding the exams.

The parishad pointed out that it will be impossible for 2,50,000 students hailing from rural areas to write their exams in the absence of proper transport and accommodation facilities.

PROPERTY TAX PAYMENT LAST DATE EXTENDED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

The state government on Wednesday extended the last date for payment of reduced property tax dues, by 90 per cent, in the all urban local bodies’ limits to October 31. The government had earlier announced that it would waive 90 per cent of property tax dues provided the property owner clears the principal amount of tax dues for the year 2019-20 along with 10 per cent of interest on the accumulated arrears at one go in all urban local bodies including the GHMC.

The decision to extend the deadline for the reduced tax payment scheme was taken following a request from Commissioner, GHMC who requested that the One Time Scheme be extended for another 45 days as it will benefit tax payers. The extension, according to the orders issued on Wednesday, will also provide time to the deputy and zonal commissioners to settle issues and improve revenues as well as streamline records of arrears.

Heavy rains claim 2 lives

10.9 cm rain inundates several parts of city, disrupts power supply

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

A sudden and ferocious downpour on Wednesday evening swamped Hyderabad city and its surrounding areas causing havoc and resulting in at least two deaths amidst reports of flooded roads, vehicles being carried away by rainfed, sudden floods that turned the city’s roads into fast-moving rivers, and utter chaos on many of the main city road junctions with traffic either coming to a grinding halt or moving at a pace slower than that of a snail.

Two persons were killed when a wall of a house collapsed on them under the Medipally police station limits in Peerzadiguda municipality, just outside the Hyderabad city limits.

During the first three hours of Wednesday evening’s downpour, several areas of the city received upwards of 10 cms of rain, officials at the Indian meteorological department (IMD) here said.

The weather on Wednesday witnessed thunder and lightning that accompanied the at times spells of very heavy rain, could be expected to continue over the next four days over much of the state, the IMD has warned.

“The city received an extremely intense spell of rainfall. This was due to an upper-air cyclonic circulation over the state. This is expected to bring rains for the next 48 hours, while the intensity might not be the same, we predict that there would rain,” K. Naga Ratna, director, IMD, told *Deccan Chronicle*.

As of 9 pm, the highest rainfall was recorded in Falaknuma at Chandulal Baradari, followed by Shaikpet, RDO Office Attapur and Film Nagar. These areas received 109.8 mm, 109.8 mm, 105 mm and, 97.5 mm of rainfall respectively. The highest rainfall in the state of 129 mm was registered at Satwar in Zaheerabad mandal.

The rains on Wednesday resulted in disruption of power supply in several areas and officials of the Telangana state southern power distribution company limited (TSSPDCL) said that they formed an



Motorists wade through flooded waters at VST crossroads on Wednesday.

— DEEPAK DESHPANDE



A man on a motorcycle rides through a flooded street at Bagh Lingampally on Wednesday.

— GANDHI

emergency team to tend to all issues pertaining to power supply.

“People should be vigilant about power poles, transformers and wires. If wires are cut on roads or buildings anywhere, the company should be notified immediately,”

TSSPDCL chairman and managing director, G. Raghuma Reddy.

In case of voltage fluctuations or power outages, complaints can be made to the special control room on 7382072104, 7382072106,

7382072106, 7382071574 along with 1912, 100 or local fuse off call office, he said.

Similarly, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) received a total of 95 rain-related complaints, which

included water-logging, building or wall collapse, tree fall, potholes and dilapidated building collapses.

The highest number of complaints were those pertaining to waterlogging at 52.

Inter admissions schedule out

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TSBIE) on Wednesday announced the schedule for admissions to academic year 2020-21. According to it, issue of application forms for first phase of admissions has started from Wednesday and will go on till September 30. The schedule for the second phase of admissions will be announced at a later date.

Admissions will be on the basis of Grade Point Average (GPA) and subject-wise grade point (GP). There will be no additional admission test. Candidates who want to seek admission on condonation of gap period have to obtain a local candidate / residential certificate

● **ADMISSIONS WILL be on the basis of Grade Point Average (GPA) and subject-wise grade point (GP).**

cate for the gap period from the local Tehsildar. TSBIE has informed students and parents that admissions must be taken only in affiliated colleges, whose list is available on the official website of the board.

The warning comes in view of complaints against several private junior colleges about violation of fire safety guidelines.

The board has suggested that even though there is uncertainty about operation of such colleges, there will not be a shortage of seats available during this year.

Govt unveils ₹140 crore Ambedkar statue project

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

Nearly four-and-a-half years after the state government announced that it would install a 125-foot Dr B.R. Ambedkar statue in Hyderabad, the design of the statue and the associated Ambedkar memorial were unveiled here on Wednesday.

Images of the proposed statue project were released by ministers Etala Rajendar, Koppula Easwar, Satyavathi Rathod, government whip Guvvala Balaraju, Rega Kantha Rao, S. Ravishankar, at a press meet in the Legislative Assembly complex.

Easwar said the government has issued orders for the ₹140 crore statue project that will be spread over 11 acres next to



The Ambedkar statue and memorial will be spread over 11 acres next to Hussainsagar.

Hussainsagar. The Ambedkar Park, he said, will also have a museum and a library.

The statue that will stand 125-foot tall, will be 45.5-feet wide and will use

791 tonnes of steel and 96 tonnes of brass, he added.

Minister Rajendar released the mock ups of the Ambedkar Park and the designs for the statue.

Gudur: Book TRS leader for assaulting girl

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee treasurer Gudur Narayana Reddy demanded stern action against TRS corporator from Serilingampally, Ragam Nagender Yadav who allegedly assaulted a young girl in Lingampalli.

Narayana Reddy, in a statement on Wednesday, said that Nagender Yadav assaulted the girl, Ananya Kurikala, when she objected to the corporator parking his vehicle in an incorrect manner. “It is clearly evident from the video, which has gone viral on social media, that the TRS corporator used offensive language and threatened her using his official position. He even

● **THE SENIOR Congress leader demanded that DGP P. Mahender Reddy take stern action against Nagender Yadav.**

assaulted her in full public view. This is nothing but utter misuse of power and wrong display of arrogance. He openly intimidated a young girl of dire consequences with criminal intent just because she opposed a wrong-doing by the ruling party corporator,” Narayana Reddy said.

The Congress leader demanded that DGP P. Mahender Reddy take stern action against Nagender Yadav, and charged the local police with reportedly pressurising the girl and her family to ‘compromise’ with the TRS corporator.

12 more Covid deaths in state

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

Covid-19 deaths in Telangana neared the 1,000 mark with the state government on Wednesday announcing that 12 more persons had succumbed to coronavirus taking the toll to 996. The 2,273 new positive cases that have been registered have taken the overall total to 1,62,844.

Meanwhile, the government, in its Wednesday morning’s Covid-19 bulletin for the 24-hour period between Monday and Tuesday evenings, said it added 253 beds in its hospitals designated as Covid-19 treatment centres in the state. This takes the total beds available in 42 Covid-19 government hospitals to 8,345.

However, simultaneously, the government appeared to have approved 10 more private hospitals to provide treatment to Covid-19 patients. The number of such private hospitals now stands at 214 and the bed strength rose by 555 to touch 11,288.

The state has 30,401 active cases. A total of 55,636 samples were collected for testing during the same period and results were awaited for 883 samples. Men continue to vastly outnumber women with 1,00,686 or 61.83 per cent of cases while 62,158 women have tested positive till date.

Fresh cases in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area were 325, the highest for any geographical area in the state. Ranga Reddy district saw 185 new cases, followed by Nalgonda with 175, Medchal-Malkajigiri 164, Karimnagar 122, and Warangal Urban 144 fresh

COP TESTS +VE AFTER B'DAY BASH, SUSPENDED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

The Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat on Wednesday suspended a police constable from the Keesara police station who organised his birthday party in violation of instructions, and was later found to have contracted Covid-19.

The constable, identified as Shiva Kumar, at his birthday party, invited his colleagues and friends at the event held at the guest of the Tourism Department at Keesaragutta on Tuesday. He and two others who attended the party later tested positive for Covid-19, according to the Rachakonda police chief.

A charge memo was also issued to other police officers from Keesara police station as well as the Keesara inspector of police J. Narendar Goud following the party.

● **THE STATE has 30,401 active cases. A total of 55,636 samples were collected for testing during the same period and results were awaited for 883 samples. Men continue to vastly outnumber women with 1,00,686 or 61.83 per cent of cases while 62,158 women have tested positive till date.**

Coronavirus infections. Khammam district recorded 97 new cases, while Nizamabad and Siddipet districts recorded 91 new cases each.

Sravani death case: Ashok surrenders

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

The absconding accused in the police case relating to television actress Sravani Kondapalli’s death by suicide, film producer Ashok Reddy, on Wednesday gave himself up to the assistant commissioner of police, Panjagutta. And after a medical examination at Osmania General Hospital, Reddy was grilled by the police for hours.

There have also been several questions as to how the status of Ashok Reddy, first listed as A1, or Accused No. 1 in the case, was changed to A3 in the chargesheet.

It may be recalled that 26-year-old Kondapalli died by suicide on the night of September 8 at her residence. On a complaint lodged by her mother, the police launched an investigation, with suspicions on

the roles that three of her friends, Devraj Reddy, Sai Krishna Reddy and producer of the movie RX100, Ashok Reddy, were involved with her and had caused her to take her own life.

While Devaraj Reddy, and Sai Krishna Reddy were picked up by the police and taken into custody, Ashok Reddy was absconding and his mobile phone was switched off.

According to the police, Kondapalli came into contact with Ashok Reddy in 2017 and then went on to play a role in one of his films. Subsequently, they had developed a close relationship. The police also discovered during their investigations that Kondapalli had in the past used Ashok Reddy’s credit card for shopping.

The police also said that each of the three men had at one point of time or other promised to marry her but reneged on their promises.

INFRA | WORKS Sewerage network in peripheral municipalities to be developed

Will expedite Old City growth: KTR

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16

Municipal administration and urban development minister K. T. Rama Rao on Wednesday assured in the Legislative Assembly that he will convene a meeting of MLAs from Hyderabad Parliamentary constituency in a couple of days to discuss and chalk out an action plan for expediting development works in the Old City.

He further assured AIMIM floor leader Akbaruddin Owaisi that he would convene a meeting with L&T to devise a

strategy for extending Hyderabad Metro Rail to the Old City.

Replying to various issues raised by members during a short discussion on civic works and other infrastructure facilities in GHMC and other municipalities in the state, the minister said ₹2,020 crore is being spent for infrastructure development under the Strategic Road Development Project (SRDP) in Old City ₹4,030 crore expenditure is being incurred on storm water drainage construction and expansion.

Stating that 105 of 172

MGD of water being drawn from Krishna River is being supplied to the Old City, he announced that the government is considering another proposal to draw about 20 tmc from the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme via Sunkesula reservoir,

besides exploring plans to integrate Godavari and Krishna drinking water supply systems for providing drinking water to peripheral areas of the twin cities. The minister said tenders have been finalised and work will commence for construction of a multi-storeyed

parking lot at Khilwath at a cost of ₹50 crore.

Following a request from MIM MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi to develop Gandipet, he said Chief Minister

K. Chandrashekar Rao is keen on linking Gandipet with Musi and Himayatsagar to supply water from Kaleshwaram project and ensure adequate water for both drinking water and irrigation purposes.

He said the state government is planning to develop a sewerage network in peripheral municipalities on the lines of drinking

water network. The government has engaged Shah Consultants and they have already submitted a report in this regard. These works will be implemented in three phases with the project cost being estimated at ₹3,700 crore.

He said the state government is planning to increase the capacity of its Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) by about 1,200 MGD from current 800 MGD as part of Musi Riverfront Development Project for catering to the growing needs of peripheral areas of the twin cities.

SHORT TAKES

1ST PHASE OF CENSUS POSTPONED

New Delhi, Sept. 16: The first phase of the Census operations, which was supposed to be held from April 1 to September 30, has been postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

In a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai also said a multiple-layered security approach has been adopted for the security and safety of the Census data.

The first phase of the Census operations (Census 2021) and other related field activities have been postponed due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, he said.

The minister said a multiple-layered security approach has been adopted for the security and safety of the Census data and the data collection will be done on registered devices of the enumerators appointed by the states and Union territories.

“Data is encrypted at the device, during the transmission and at servers/storage. The services of System Integrators have been hired for developing the Mobile Apps, management of Census portal and related activities,” he said.

Rai said the publicity campaigns are part of the Census operations and all the enumerators are to be registered on the portal before undertaking the enumeration work.

14 RS MPs SEEK LEAVE FROM ONGOING SESSION

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 16

At least 14 Rajya Sabha MPs, also including former prime minister Manmohan Singh, former Union minister P. Chidambaram, senior Congress leader Oscar Fernandes and AIADMK's A. Navaneethakrishnan have sought leave of absence from the ongoing monsoon session of Parliament on medical grounds.

Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu, who informed this on Wednesday, said that he had received letters from Dr Singh and 13 other MPs seeking leave of absence on medical grounds.

As the Upper House took up Zero Hour submissions, two members - Congress' Divyijay Singh and BJP's Bhagwat Karad - raised the issue of scarcity and black marketing of oxygen cylinders which are used by Covid-19 patients when their oxygen level plummets.

Later, nominated member Swapan Das Gupta, while referring to recent violence at Vishva Bharti over building of a wall at the traditional Poush Mela site, demanded deployment of central paramilitary force at the university to ensure the safety of the heritage buildings and also urged that the Centre should take responsibility for the Mela.

13 BANGLADESHIS ARRESTED IN BENGAL

Kolkata, Sept. 16: Thirteen Bangladeshi nationals, including five women and three children, were apprehended from West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, while trying to cross over to the neighbouring country illegally, a BSF spokesperson said on Wednesday.

They were caught by a special patrolling team of the Panchberia outpost of the Border Security Force on Tuesday, he said.

During interrogation, five men of the 13 Bangladeshi nationals claimed that they had entered India several years back illegally, he said, adding that they were working as masons in Mumbai and living in the Nalasopara area there.

“The Bangladeshis claimed they were going back to Bangladesh to visit their native place and relatives. They were helped by a tout based in Kolkata,” the spokesperson said.

The tout got them in touch with an agent in Bagdah area of North 24 Parganas district, who allegedly took Rs 1 lakh to help them cross the border, he said. “Over Rs 1.27 lakh cash, some gold and silver ornaments, an LCD screen and other items were seized from them. The Bangladeshis and recovered items were handed over to Bagdah police station for further legal action,” the BSF official added.

Back to work



Guest workers from various states wait in queues to give their samples for Covid-19 test after they arrive at Thane Railway Station to reach their workplaces, amid the coronavirus pandemic in Thane on Wednesday. Meanwhile, Congress' Anand Sharma on Wednesday sought compensation for families of guest workers who died while walking thousands of kilometers to their native places after the lockdown was imposed. - PTI

J&K parties contradict MHA claim on house arrests

Kishan Reddy told House that 223 people in J&K are under detention

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 16

Various mainstream and separatist parties in Jammu and Kashmir have ridiculed the Home Ministry's claim that no leader in the Union Territory (UT) is currently under house arrest.

While former minister and senior People's Democratic Party (PDP) leader, Naeem Akhtar, claimed that he and as many as 35 other mainstream leaders stayed under house arrest till Wednesday morning, a statement issued by separatist All Parties Hurriyat Conference here said that its chairman and Kashmir's chief Muslim cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq continued to be under house detention since August 5 last year.

“On that day, police vehicles were parked on both the gates of his house compound and since he is not being allowed to move out and even go to Jama Masjid (Grand Mosque) where he would deliver customary sermons on Fridays,” the amalgam faction said.

Minister of State (Home) G. Kishan Reddy, in a written reply to a question raised by Trinamool Congress MP Saugata Ray said in Lok Sabha on Tuesday that no leader in J&K is currently under house arrest. He, however, admitted that 223 people in J&K are under detention.

He said, “As on the 11 September, 223 persons are under detention. No person is under house arrest in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.”

“The situation on the ground is contrary to what the Home Ministry has claimed. After the authorities revoked my detention under the Public Safety Act (PSA) in the third week of June, I was

placed under house arrest. I'm not being allowed to go out,” said Mr. Akhtar.

Soon after ending his ten and half month long detention under the PSA, he was asked to vacate his government accommodation or face forcible eviction.

He said, “I've just travelled one distance from that house to this new rented one and that too under police escort. However, I was allowed some days ago to go out to get an ultrasonography test done on the advice of my doctor and again policemen accompanied me.” Mr. Akhtar said that the policemen continued to be deployed at the gate of his house who did not allow him even to attend a PDP leaders' meeting called by its general secretary Ghulam Nabi Lone Hanjura at the party headquarters here on September 3.

“We have to see it in the larger construct of the situation in Kashmir. This is part of the entire new system which has been introduced here that the politicians should be at the mercy of the security establishment. They have to apply for and inform them (police) of their every activity,” Mr. Akhtar who also served as the chief spokesman of the PDP-BJP coalition government in the erstwhile state told this newspaper.

He said that earlier the J&K politicians categorized as “protected persons” and provided security cover would only inform the concerned authorities before visiting places and not seeking permission for it as such. “But now you have to apply for even holding indoor party meetings three days in advance. The overall atmosphere is full of fear. They have unleashed all the agencies

Anger as youth dies in police custody

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 16

Jammu and Kashmir's northwestern town Sopore and its neighbourhood are tense in the aftermath of alleged extrajudicial killing of a local youth.

Internet services were early Wednesday withdrawn from the area and police and paramilitary reinforcements fanned out “as a precautionary measure.”

The police, however, claimed the youth Ifran Ahmed Dar was an ‘Over Ground Worker’ (OGW) of a separatist militant outfit who tried to escape from their custody and that later his corpse was found in a neighbouring village.

They, however, didn't say on Kashmir. Everybody is directly under the scanner and people are scared. That's where we have reached.”

He added, “There's no account of the people they (police) claim everyday in the official bulletins having been arrested - some in the name of being OGWs (Over Ground Workers) and some militants. There's no account ultimately where they go and if you relate it with unending protests by mothers and other relatives of the missing persons you can join the dots.”

Mr. Hanjura termed Mr. Reddy's claim on the floor of Parliament as a “blatant lie.”

He said, “I could go out of my house for the first time

● The police, however, have claimed that the youth, Ifran Ahmed Dar, was an ‘Over Ground Worker’ of a separatist militant outfit.

how he was killed.

The family of the youth termed it as ‘cock and bull story’ and also denied Dar was involved in any unlawful activity.

“The police are lying. My brother was killed in cold-blood. He would work with me at our family shop from 7 am to 9 pm. He had nothing to do with militancy or militants,” said his elder brother Javaid Ahmed.

A statement by the J&K police here said that 23-year-old Dar was found dead after he escaped from police custody.

In past 13 months today (Wednesday) to address a meeting of the youth wing of the PDP at the party headquarters, the first such engagement since August 5, 2019. Some others also joined me but our 20 party leaders continue to be under house arrest whereas the party president Mehbooba Mufti remains in detention under the notorious PSA,” he said.

PDP youth president Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra said that he too was, for the first time on Wednesday, allowed to walk out of his home and attend the meeting at which threadbare deliberations were held on the prevailing political, social and economic situation in J&K.

PDP ACCUSES CENTRE OF ‘BRAZEN DUPLICITY’

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 16

People's Democratic Party (PDP) on Wednesday accused the Central government of ‘brazen duplicity’ over Jammu and Kashmir and said that such behaviour will not be tolerated. It also said that its “fight” against “bulldozing J&K's identity and rights will continue uncompromisingly.”

A statement issued after a meeting of the party's youth wing, the first since August 5 last year, the PDP said, “On one hand, BJP government is participating in dialogue with Taliban, talking reconciliation with PLA who have invaded Ladakh and discussing with Nagaland insurgents desperate constitution and Flag, but at the same time, it is using anything but dialogue to deal with the mess created by them after illegal scrapping of special status if J&K. This is unacceptable.”

The statement also said, “The party has reaffirmed its pledge to continue fighting for the aspirations and rights of people of J&K and resist by all democratic ways the onslaught by the Central government.”

“In the first ever meeting of its youth wing after August 5, 2019, the party emphasized that the constitutional fraud perpetrated on the people of J&K and the subsequent bulldozing of constitutional rights will always remain unacceptable.”

Sangma bats for Gorkhaland in North Bengal

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, SEPT. 16

In what is said to be an attempt to spread the reach of National Peoples' Party to West Bengal, its president and Meghalaya chief minister Conrad K. Sangma has advocated the formation of Gorkhaland in North Bengal.

Reminding the Centre that the Gorkhas too are rightful Indian citizens who deserve to have their own identity and Bas Bhoomi (homeland) Mr Sangma, in a letter written to union home minister Amit Shah on September 4, said, “Sir, you are aware of the long pending constitutional demand of the Gorkhas for a separate state of Gorkhaland.”

Flagging and justifying the demand of separate state, Mr Sangma said, “The Gorkhas have made India their home for a very long period. The contribution of Gorkhas towards India and their motherland has been immeasurable and they have made supreme sacrifices in protecting this beloved country.”

He also highlighted the contributions of Gorkha freedom fighter Durga Malla, members of constituent assembly Damber Singh and Ari Bahadur Gurung and Captain Ram Singh Thakuria, a prominent Gorkha freedom fighter and musician who composed the music of the inspiring National Anthem.

Pleading the Centre to

offer an honourable and lasting political solution to the Gorkhas, the chief minister said, “As stated the Gorkhas have contributed immensely to the fabric of Indian society and as with other citizens of India, the Gorkhas too are rightful Indian citizens who deserve to have their own identity and Bas Bhoomi (homeland).”

He said, “The NDA government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has passed several landmark decisions in the interest of people of this country. I urge your good office to kindly give a patient hearing to the legitimate demand of Gorkhas of North Bengal and offer an honourable and lasting political solution at the earliest.”

The letter was made public when the monsoon session of Parliament was in progress and there were growing demands by NDA allies in Darjeeling for finding a permanent political solution.

Meanwhile Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League (Pratap Khati camp) has thanked Mr Sangma for extending his support to their long pending demands. Mr Sangma is the second chief minister to lend support to the Gorkhaland demand. When Mr Pawan Chamling was the Sikkim chief minister, he got a resolution adopted in the state Assembly on March 29, 2011, terming Gorkhaland as a genuine and legitimate demand of the people of the hills.

President to visit Srinagar on Sunday

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 16

President Ram Nath Kovind will visit Srinagar on Sunday to address a one-day session on the implementation of the new national educational policy in the country.

It would be his first visit to Jammu and Kashmir after the state was stripped of its special status and split up into two union territories on August 5, 2019.

The President had on August 7 last year signed the Article 370 gazette, revoking the special status to J&K. The move came after both Houses of Parliament passed a resolution in this regard.

According to a statement issued here, the University of Kashmir in collaboration with the J&K government is organizing the one-day “brainstorming session” on the implementation of the National Education Policy at Srinagar's Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre September 20.

The NEP-2020 was approved by the Union cabinet on July 29, and, as per the government, it is meant to provide an overarching vision and comprehensive framework for higher education across the country.

● IT WOULD BE his first visit to Jammu and Kashmir after the state was stripped of its special status and split up into two union territories on August 5, 2019.

The statement said that President and Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, have suggested that the universities and higher education ministries across the country shall hold brainstorming sessions involving all the stakeholders for deliberating upon the strategies regarding the smooth implementation of the NEP-2020 in the country. “It is in this context, that the University of Kashmir is organizing a brainstorming session on Sunday here which shall be addressed to by the President and also J&K Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Kumar Sinha,” the statement said.

The session will have three technical sitting with presentations scheduled on various themes of the national education policy by K. K. Sharma, advisor to J&K Lt. Governor of JK UT, Prof. Ved Prakash, former UGC-Chairman, all the five vice-chancellors of the universities in the Kashmir Valley, Director, NIT, Srinagar and a few college principals.

VITAL | SUPPORT The ruling CPM has stood solidly behind Jaleel even as Oppn is seeking his resignation

Jaleel: From a firebrand leader of SIMI to poster boy of CPM

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPT. 16

Even in the face of state wide protests by opposition parties seeking Kerala higher education minister K.T. Jaleel's resignation, the ruling CPM has stood solidly behind him. The protests which turned violent in many parts of the state have not been able to force the government or the ruling party to change its position.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and CPM state secretary Kodyeri Balakrishnan have repeatedly defended Jaleel terming Opposition charges as

“totally baseless.”

“Quit Jaleel” demand had gained momentum after the Enforcement Directorate questioned him five days ago on the allegations of violating Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (accepting foreign aid without Centre's permission) and accepting consignments of Holy Quran brought from UAE through diplomatic channels.

To understand Jaleel's importance in Kerala politics, one has to trace his journey thus far. From a firebrand leader of SIMI to a poster boy of ruling CPM, the 53-year-old's political journey has been remarkable in many ways.

After his sting with SIMI, Jaleel joined the Muslim League and went on to become the state president of Muslim Youth League in 2004. But he was thrown out of the League in 2005 for questioning leadership on misuse of Tsunami funds. The CPM which was waiting for a popular face in Malappuram district to take on the League, seized the opportunity and fielded Jaleel as LDF backed independent in 2006 Assembly polls. As they say the rest is history.

Riding on the popularity of his anti-corruption crusade, Jaleel trounced Muslim League general secretary P.K. Kunhalikutty scripting one of

the stunning victories in state's electoral history.

The LDF too gained winning five of the 12 seats marking its strong presence in the Muslim heartland.

Jaleel who has a PhD on the topic related to 1921 Malabar rebellion and is known for his fiery speeches and clean image, has remained loyal to LDF since then. He won back to back elections in 2011 and 2016.

Though his induction as a minister in Pinarayi Cabinet in 2016 came as a surprise for many, the ruling LDF had its plans in place. He was given local bodies ministry, a portfolio usually reserved for top

CPM leaders, along with welfare of minorities, wakf and Hajj.

Later the local bodies portfolio was taken away from him and given to CPM's A.C. Moideen. However, Jaleel was given the high-profile higher education portfolio.

While most part of Jaleel's 14 years in parliamentary politics has remained free of controversies, the minister faced a series of charges in the last two years.

Responding to the allegations, the minister said in a recent Facebook post: “Only truth will prevail. Nothing, but the truth, Even if the whole world goes against you, nothing



Police personnel detain Kerala Students Union activists during a protest, demanding the resignation of Kerala Minister K.T. Jaleel. - PTI

else would prevail.” With the allegations still pend-

ing probe by central agencies, the jury is still out.

DECCAN Chronicle

17 SEPTEMBER 2020

Rajnath disappoints: A lot left unanswered

Defence minister Rajnath Singh's much-awaited statement in both Houses of Parliament on Tuesday on the situation in eastern Ladakh was disappointing on several counts, as the country sought clarity from the highest quarters on one of its biggest crises. The minister, however, told us very little we didn't already know, and though he put the current confrontation between the two sides in the historical context of the fractured India-China relationship, beyond acknowledging the obvious fact that this standoff was qualitatively different from earlier ones, in the scale of the troops involved and the number of friction points, and that India was "facing a challenge", we were none the wiser. He told us due to the two sides' differing perceptions of the Line of Actual Control, India and China needed a common perception of the LAC to avoid emergence of new friction points, a process China has been stalling since 2003 as it sees advantage in the continuing ambiguity. All this is well known. There were expressions of hope. If the Moscow agreement between external affairs minister S. Jaishankar and Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi was "sincerely implemented" by the Chinese, peace would return! Did we not know that already? Mr Singh offered a timeline of the border standoff since early May but left out one crucial bit: the September 7 incident in which shots were fired at the LAC for the first time in 45 years.

Unlike many of his Cabinet colleagues, Mr Singh enjoys a well-deserved reputation for plain speaking, of telling it like it is, as he demonstrated earlier during this crisis while visiting the troops in Ladakh. Therefore, while speaking at Parliament's first meeting after the crisis broke, more was expected of him: that he would share with the country the real story of what was happening, of what had gone wrong. No one expected him to share operational details of ongoing or future Army operations. Despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's truly puzzling declaration at the virtual all-party meeting on June 19 — days after the Galwan incident in which 20 Indian soldiers, including a commanding officer, and an unknown number of Chinese troops were killed — that no Chinese forces were on Indian soil, the Indian Army and others have acknowledged, before and afterwards, that all-out efforts were on to ensure that the People's Liberation Army goes back to its side of the de facto border. Mr Singh could have shed more light on this. His statement made no mention of the 20-km-deep intrusion by the PLA in the Depsang Plains at all. Many such questions, on which the country was hoping for clarity, remain unanswered.

Mr Singh urged MPs to pass a resolution expressing confidence in the armed forces in these difficult times. There is no doubt that all sections of the nation are united on that issue. But in not responding to questions raised by the Congress and others, the government may inadvertently have missed a great opportunity. It has often been said that the India-China competition will define our "Asian century". Here was a chance to show the huge difference between democratic India and the Communist Party oligarchy that runs the People's Republic. An endorsement by a legislature that asks searching, critical questions of the executive would have sent out a message to the world that Xi Jinping's rubber-stamp National People's Congress simply cannot.

A welcome ruling

The Supreme Court order on Wednesday prohibiting Sudarshan TV from telecasting the future episodes of a TV show portraying the entry of Muslims into the civil service as an attempt to infiltrate it is welcome for more than one reason. First, the apex court thought it fit that an early intervention to stop the programme which it found "insidious" was warranted and waiting for the statutory authorities to consider the complaints against it would make "irreversible damage". Second, it showed there are existing legal ways to confront such programmes that make use of the fundamental right to speech and expression and create animosity among sections of society. Third, the existing constitutional institutions are still able to assert their independence and decide the fine line between the use and abuse of the right to free speech, thereby obviating the creation of another government mechanism to regulate the media.

The bench while hearing the petition read out Clause 6 (c) of the programme code the ministry of information and broadcasting framed under the Cable TV Network (Regulation) Act, 1994, which prohibited the transmission of programmes that contain attack on religions or communities or visuals or words contemptuous of religious groups or which promote communal attitudes. This clause makes it incumbent on the part of the government to act and ensure that peace and harmony prevailed in the country and people with vested interests are stopped in their course before weakening the nation's social fabric through such TV programmes. It is curious that the Union government was seen in the court fighting for media freedom. The court's insistence that "no freedom is absolute, not even journalistic freedom" was met with a comment by the solicitor-general that the freedom of a journalist is supreme and any regulation of the same would need extensive debates. Debates are fine, the government must remember, but insidious programmes are not.

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Subhani



Freedom and bias: How Facebook comes of age



Shashidhar Nanjundaiah

What a year it is turning out to be for Facebook!

Its sway over voters has made incumbent governments in several countries seek to exact their pound of flesh. As a self-proclaimed proponent of free speech with limited control over content, the social media company now finds itself stuck in both legal and moral conflicts in many countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, Australia and elsewhere.

The ongoing deposition before India's parliamentary standing committee on information technology was always going to be a perfunctory but important attempt to raise questions of Facebook's influence over societies and their behaviour. The committee is multi-partisan, but the original agenda — whether Facebook has systematically favoured the BJP — was so politically divisive that such a panel could have never found a consensus unless the agenda was broadened to a generalisation.

Potentially, the deadlock in the deposition heralds some independence for Facebook. The Congress Party and the Trinamul Congress say Facebook has displayed a pro-BJP stance, while the government claims the contrary, even accusing Facebook's employees of abusing the Prime Minister. In the end, Facebook can claim that since both sides are claiming bias, they cancel each other out and that there is no real bias. That is why it was important that the parliamentary committee work pragmatically towards a united, non-partisan and achievable public goal — helping to independently curb hate.

WHO IS 'WE'?

Economic and political power makes great nego-

tiators. But for Facebook, this is a battle of identity. Three recent episodes are of relevance:

1. Facebook will soon add additional text to its terms of use to consolidate its position. In effect, Facebook has emerged from the shadows to stake its claim as a private company with full authority to tweak its rules, not as the public service that it can be mistaken for.

2. Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad shot off a strategically timed letter — coinciding with the parliamentary committee deposition — accusing Facebook's staff in India of colluding to discredit the government.

3. Following Facebook India MD Ajit Mohan's deposition, its global leaders Neil Potts and Mark Zuckerberg have issued statements that assure the world that Facebook is a neutral carrier and that hate speech will not be tolerated on it.

On September 1, Facebook forewarned its users of an impending addition of a self-protective clause to its section (3.2): "We also can remove or restrict access to your content, services or information if we determine that doing so is reasonably necessary to avoid or mitigate adverse legal or regulatory impacts to Facebook." As many digital business experts point out, this is an overdue survival clause. But it underlines the arrival of a more proactive approach to censorship — with larger implications on who gets to influence it.

On the face of it, the additional clause should provide comfort to those who may view it as a sort of social media garbage disposal. But if there is one word that's ambiguous in the otherwise crystal-clear message, it is "we". As much as its use in legalese is well-understood, who is this unseen

This year, and not 2016, when Facebook was first accused of gerrymandering, marks its growth from innocence to experience

hand in digital practice that restricts access, service, information or content? It could be the content desk, fact check desk, and standards-and-practices desk. However, given that algorithms are partly in control, is Facebook telling us that it will take more responsibility to rein them in?

Communicating on social sites like Facebook is both public and permanent. In the absence of proper (self-)regulation, it is at once a personally empowering and socially debilitating tool. Unlike edited content on the mainstream media, the free-flowing content on social media had accepted little accountability. That may be changing.

To prove the point, on the heels of the first day of the deposition, Facebook barred a known hatemonger, BJP's T. Raja Singh. If that is supposed to be exemplary somehow, it does not make the cut. Many people in our circles have abandoned the platform to avoid the mentally draining intensity and abuse. Removing the hundreds and thousands of trolls and others who indulge in hate speech alone can bring back public confidence in social media and in humanity in general.

ACCOUNTABILITY GAME

Facebook has turned its attention over the past two years to issues pertaining to privacy and complications arising from its business-to-government deals. While governments seek a piece of the content action, is Facebook's government business jeopardising its founding principles?

It is clear that many, even quasi-democratic, governments want more control over social media content and content in general. In Thailand, a constitutional monarchy, the government asked

that access to a group of voices against the government be blocked, and Facebook is suing the government to dispute such a restriction. Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte's supporters are known to have peddled fake news on the platform. The country's largest news network had to shut shop recently, thanks to governmental machinations. In Australia, the battle is to make social media accountable for borrowed content. Facebook has threatened to block news from Australian newspapers in retaliation over an impending pay-per-use law that seeks to shield its news media and requires Facebook to share revenues for news items taken from the newspapers.

Platforms such as Facebook face the consequences of not having thought through risks and challenges and pay the price of democratising processes. As a free marketplace of relationships and ideas — "the digital equivalent of a town square", as co-founder Mark Zuckerberg wrote in 2019 — Facebook needs better control over credibility. A growing number of people with Facebook accounts have chosen to stay away because they are dismayed at what they see in that ecosystem. Facebook can help by making its users media literate. As the social media grows and as we become more social media literate, the distinction between satire and fake news, between claims and opinions, and between facts and myths grows on us. Organically, media literacy is a longitudinal process. But intervention can accelerate the education.

This year, and not 2016, when Facebook was first accused of gerrymandering, marks its growth from innocence to experience. How the company pivots this experience will determine its future.

The writer has led reputed institutes of higher education and is the founder of "Being Responsible", which does media literacy programmes for schools

LETTERS

COVID IN PRISON

The SC's March 2020 advisory to all states to release under trials in selected categories, should be followed to decongest prisons and take up welfare of the poor undertrials. (Lockdown for some, lockdown for the others, DC, Sept. 16). Pandemic situation has worsened in jails due to Covid-19 infection among the prison inmates.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

HARD PROOF NEEDED

15 months in power, the YSRC is still groping in the dark to nail N. Chandrababu Naidu and all his henchmen. While in Opposition the YSRC brought out a 'fat' booklet on corruption by the former CM during 2014-19 and successfully brainwashed the electorate to vote the TD out of power. It is a shame that the YSRC is unable to come up with solid evidence against the TD chief and his cronies so that no court could stop investigation. Mere allegations won't suffice. At least the Fibernet issue should be pursued to its logical conclusion so that all the accused are convicted.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

CHINESE WAY

The way China violated bilateral agreements and intruded into Indian territory and deployed troops on the eastern Ladakh area is condemnable. The details by defence minister on the floor of House has revealed the hostility of the neighbour despite all diplomatic, military and political dialogue.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Asif Jahi flag comes down

HYDERABAD, SEPT. 16.

The Asif Jahi Flag, which had been flying over the palaces the Nizam in the city for about 225 years, was lowered yesterday.

The Flag on the Nizam's car and the red number plates were removed.

The State Government had communicated the instructions received from the Union Home Ministry in this connection to the Nizam, Mir Barkat Ali Khan, on Friday.

The police guard at the King Koti Palace in the heart of the city would, however, continue as the Nizam had been paying for them. He was not enjoying his privilege of having a free guard, a police spokesman said. — PTI.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



PM Modi plugs 'Karmayogi' in pep talk to IPS probationers

A total of 131 IPS probationers, including 28 women, who completed 42 weeks of basic course phase-1 training at the prestigious Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy in Hyderabad had a rare opportunity to interact with Prime Minister Narendra Modi through a video conference. He is known to do this infrequently, but it thrills those who chance into one.

During the basic course training at SVP NPA over two segments, probationers are imparted training in various indoor and outdoor subjects like law, investigation, forensics, leadership and management, criminology, public order and internal security, ethics & human rights, modern Indian policing, fieldcraft and tactics, weapons training and firing. This was their final training before field postings in their respective state cadres.

In his address to the 2018-batch of IPS probationers, the Prime

Minister urged them to excel in their careers. He also used the opportunity to plug the government's new theme "Mission Karmayogi", a scheme for capacity building of civil servants, a task which the National Police Academy has been performing quite ably since its inception back in 1948. The theme immediately got national attention, way beyond police lines, as expected. The academy director, Atul Karwal, a 1988-batch IPS officer from Gujarat cadre, presided over the Dikshant (convocation) Parade and addressed the probationers.

MESSAGE TO J&K BASUS

The message is loud and clear from the Modi sarkar that no anti-national rhetoric, especially by government employees shall be tolerated at any cost. One year after the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has constituted a six-member committee, headed by

J&K chief secretary B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, to look into cases related to government officials allegedly indulging in anti-national activities.

The high-level committee has been empowered to scrutinise cases and recommend action against those officials involved in anti-national activities under Article 311(2)(c). Apart from the J&K chief secretary, the others members of the high-level committee include administrative secretary of the Home department, J&K DGP, administrative secretary of the general administration department, additional DGP, CID and administrative secretary of the department of law, justice.

Experts say any government official, including IAS and IPS officers if found guilty by the committee for "anti-national" activity can be dismissed from service without an inquiry.

According to sources, it is rumoured that many government

officers are under the scanner in Jammu and Kashmir for their involvement in 'anti-national' activities.

MEDIA AND MUMBAI POLICE

What made seven former DGPs and a police commissioner approach the Bombay high court in the Sushant Singh Rajput case?

The media's obsession with the Sushant Singh Rajput death case has overridden the raging corona pandemic, our stalled economy and the Chinese threat on the border. After the CBI, Enforcement Directorate and sundry agencies have been brought in by the Centre, the Mumbai Police has been forced into a corner. It has been accused of political bias and for botching up the investigation, though in the freestyle mud wrestling that the nation has seen, it is hard to determine who is cleaner.

Now, the former IPS officers have urged the court to put an end to the

"media trial" and the "unfair, malicious and false media campaign" against the Mumbai police in the case. The petitioners include former Maharashtra DGPs M.N. Singh, P.S. Pasricha, D.K. Sivanandan, Sanjiv Dayal, Satish Mathur, K. Subramanyam and former additional DGP K.P. Raghuvanshi, and former Mumbai police commissioner D.N. Jadhav. According to the petition, the adverse media campaign "appears to have been designed with sinister motives to tarnish the fair image of the Mumbai police".

Significantly, the petition urges courts to frame rules or guidelines which would help media cover investigations that are sub-judice. But, for now, it is a no-holds-barred approach as far as some sections of the media are concerned.

Share a babu experience!
Follow dilipthecherian@
Twitter.com . Let's
multiply the effect.

IN BRIEF

**Wartime killings:
7 held in Bosnia**

Sarajevo: Authorities in Bosnia on Wednesday arrested seven Bosnian Serb former military officers and troops suspected in the killing of 44 Bosniak civilians during the 1992-95 war. In all, nine people are suspected of the September 1992 crime in the area of Sokolac, in southeastern Bosnia, Bosnia's prosecutor's office said in a statement. Bosnian Serbs separated men from women in the Bosniak village of Novoseoci before taking the men away to a nearby waste dump where they were killed.

**Philippine copter
crash kills four**

Zamboanga: A Philippine air force helicopter on its way to airlift troops wounded in a recent suicide bombing crashed on a southern island Wednesday, killing all four crew members on board, officials said. The Sikorsky S-76A took off from southern Zamboanga city for a flight to nearby Sulu province and crashed midway in rainy weather in the hilly village of Upper Manggas on Basilan island. The two pilots and two other crew members were killed. They were bound for Jolo town to airlift troops who were wounded in two Aug. 24 bombings.

**Quake shakes
Kathmandu**

Kathmandu: A strong earthquake of 6 magnitude shook Nepal's capital Kathmandu and surrounding areas on Wednesday, forcing people to rush out of their houses. According to the National Seismological Center, the 6 magnitude quake occurred in the country's Sindhupalchowk district near Tibet border at 5.19 am. The epicentre of the earthquake was Ramche village in the district, 120 km east of Kathmandu. A mild tremor of 3.8 magnitude was also felt at the same place at 6.10 am, it said.

**Greek camp fire:
13 detained**

Athens: Thirteen people have been detained on the Greek island of Samos after a fire threatened the local migrant camp, police said Wednesday, days after another blaze destroyed Europe's largest migrant camp on Lesbos. "We are examining the possible participation of these suspects in the incident," a Samos police source said. The officer declined to identify the nationalities of the suspects. It broke out in a forested area near the Samos camp late on Tuesday, but firefighters were able to place it under control. The Lesbos fire at Moria camp on September 8 left over 12,000 asylum seekers homeless.

**3 FATF-RELATED
BILLS PASSED IN
PAK, 1 BLOCKED**

Islamabad, Sept. 16: A joint sitting of Pakistan's Parliament on Wednesday passed three crucial Financial Action Task Force-related legislations, as part of the government's efforts to escape from being black-listed by the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog.

President Arif Alvi called the joint sitting of both houses of Parliament on Wednesday evening after Senate earlier in the day rejected the Anti-Terrorism Act (amendment) Bill, 2020, making it the third FATF-related legislation to have been blocked by the Opposition-dominated upper house.

Last month, the Anti-Money Laundering (Second Amendment) Bill and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Waqf Properties Bill, were rejected by Senate. The three legislations were part of efforts by Pakistan to move from the FATF's grey list to the white list. Under the 18th Amendment, if a bill passed by one house of Parliament is rejected by the other, it can become a law only if it is passed by a joint sitting of the two houses.

Prime Minister Imran Khan attended the joint session which was chaired by National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser. The opposition staged a walk out after most of their proposed amendments to the bills were rejected and they were not allowed to speak.

Khan thanked lawmakers who voted in favour of the legislations for "standing with their country". He said that the opposition's "attitude" on the bills showed that the "interests of [opposition parties] and their leaders were the opposite of Pakistan's interests".



Water floods a road as the outer bands of Hurricane Sally come ashore in the Gulf Shores, Alabama. The storm is bringing heavy rain, high winds and a dangerous storm surge from Louisiana to Florida. — AFP

Sally pummels Alabama with heavy rain, outages

Pensacola (US), Sept. 16: Hurricane Sally made landfall Wednesday near Gulf Shores, Alabama, as a Category 2 storm, pushing a surge of ocean water onto the coast and dumping torrential rain that forecasters said would cause dangerous flooding from the Florida Panhandle to Mississippi and well inland in the days ahead.

Moving at an agonisingly slow 3 mph, Sally finally came ashore at 4:45 a.m. local time with top winds of 105 mph (165 kmh), the National Hurricane Center said. Sally's northern eyewall had raked the Gulf Coast with hurricane-force winds and rain from Pensacola Beach, Florida, westward to Dauphin Island, Alabama, for hours before its centre finally hit land.

Some 150,000 homes and businesses had lost electricity by early Wednesday, according to the poweroutage.us site. A curfew was called in the coastal Alabama city of Gulf Shores due to life-threatening conditions.

In the Panhandle's

● **SOME 150,000** homes and businesses had lost electricity by early Wednesday, according to the poweroutage.us site. A curfew was called in the coastal Alabama city of Gulf Shores due to life-threatening conditions.

Escambia County, Chief Sheriff's Deputy Chip Simmons vowed to keep deputies out with residents as long as physically possible.

The county includes Pensacola, one of the largest cities on the Gulf Coast. "The sheriff's office will be there until we can no longer safely be out there, and then and only then will we pull our deputies in," Simmons said at a storm briefing late Tuesday. This for a storm that, during the weekend, appeared to be headed for New Orleans. "Obviously this shows what we've known for a long time with storms — they are unpre-

dictable," Pensacola Mayor Grover Robinson IV said. Stacy Stewart, a senior specialist with the hurricane centre, said the rainfall will be "catastrophic and life threatening" over portions of the Gulf Coast, Florida panhandle and southeastern Alabama, and will continue well after landfall, with the storm producing heavy rainfall Wednesday night and Thursday over portions of central and southern Georgia.

Sally was a rare storm that could make history, said Ed Rappaport, deputy director of the hurricane center. "Sally has a characteristic that isn't often seen and that's a slow forward speed and that's going to exacerbate the flooding," Rappaport said.

He likened the storm's slow progression to that of Hurricane Harvey, which swamped Houston in 2017. Up to rears) of rain could fall in some spots, and "that would be record-setting in some locations," Rappaport said in an interview Tuesday night. — AP

EU: UK cannot change withdrawal agreement

Brussels, Sept. 16: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Wednesday that the United Kingdom cannot unilaterally change the EU-UK bilateral withdrawal agreement without destroying global trust in the country.

Insisting that chances for a future trade deal are slipping away by the day, von der Leyen told the European Union's legislature that plans by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to renege on parts of the withdrawal agreement signed by both of them dimmed those hopes

even further.

What's more, she insisted that Britain is throwing its good name to the wind by not respecting a deal it signed and approved last December. "It cannot be unilaterally changed, disregarded or disciplined. This is a matter of law and trust and good faith," she said in her State of the Union address. She rubbed it in by quoting from a 1975 speech by British conservative icon Margaret Thatcher.

"Britain does not break treaties. It would be bad for Britain, bad for our relations with the rest of

the world and bad for any future treaty on trade," von der Leyen quoted from Thatcher. Johnson has called his plan to unilaterally rewrite Britain's divorce deal with the EU an insurance policy against the bloc's unreasonable behaviour.

Johnson said a planned law designed to override portions of the Brexit withdrawal agreement he agreed to was needed because the EU might "go to extreme and unreasonable lengths" in its treatment of former member Britain.

— AP

FILM | FEST

South Korean director Lim Sun-ae's *An Old Lady* ends with a nod to the MeToo movement

Woman, 69, raped. Where did you pause? At rape, or 69?

SUPARNA SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 16

Woman, aged 69, raped by a 29-year-old man.

We often read this sort of headline in newspapers. But where do we pause? At rape, or at 69 and 29?

South Korean writer-director Lim Sun-ae's film, *An Old Lady*, asks that question, and then she wants us to consider: Is there an age limit to being raped? *An Old Lady*, which is playing at TIFF, opens to a black screen. We hear two people talking. It seems one is a nursing assistant, and he is with a female patient who has

come for physiotherapy for her frozen shoulder.

"No one would guess your age," he says. "Do you swim? Your legs... you don't look old at all." He puts the infrared lamp on. "How long will it take?" she asks. "Nine minutes."

The screen lights up and we stare at a row of curtained cubicles. There's a loud beep and in one of them and the red light goes off. We are left with the feeling that something has happened. But the patient, Hyo-jeong (Ye Su-jeong, known for her role in *Train To Busan*), seems normal as she chats with Mr Nam (Ki

Joo-bong) who has come to pick her up. He owns a small book store, and she works for him. She was once his nurse.

At home, Hyo rubs her wrists. He notices a bruise on her arm. The nursing assistant was clumsy with the needle, she says. Later she says to him, "I should report it to the police."

Trump: Vaccine could be ready in a month

Philadelphia, Sept. 16: US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that a Coronavirus vaccine may be available within a month — an acceleration of even his own optimistic predictions — but added that the pandemic could go away by itself.

"We're very close to having a vaccine," he told a town hall question-and-answer session with voters in Pennsylvania aired on *ABC News*.

"We're within weeks of getting it you know — could be three weeks, four weeks," he said.

Only hours earlier, speaking to *Fox News*, Trump had said a vaccine could come in "four weeks, it could be eight weeks". Democrats have expressed concern that Trump is putting political pressure on government health regulators and scientists to approve a rushed vaccine in time to help turn around his uphill bid for reelection against challenger Joe Biden on November 3.

Experts, including top US government infectious diseases doctor Anthony Fauci, say vaccine approval is more likely toward the end of the year.

At the ABC town hall Trump was asked why he'd downplayed the gravity of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has now killed close to 200,000 people in the US.

Trump replied by saying: "I didn't downplay it. I actually, in many ways, I

**SOCIAL DISTANCING WILL NOT HELP
COMBAT COVID-19, SAYS UNGA PREZ**

United Nations, Sept. 16: Social distancing at the global level will not help as no country could combat Covid-19 alone, President of the UN General Assembly's 75th session Volkan Bozkir has said, asserting that multilateralism is the "panacea" to all the problems in the world.

Bozkir, addressing the UN ambassadors and delegates, said that since the beginning of the crisis earlier this year, critics of multilateralism have become more vocal and the pandemic has been used to justify unilateral steps and weaken the rules-based international system. "In the past six months, our plans for the 75th year of the United Nations have changed. Today, we have other urgent priorities. Our masks remind us of the very serious threat we face... They remind us we are in

this together," Bozkir said as the 75th session of the General Assembly commenced on Tuesday.

Wearing masks, UN diplomats and envoys sat socially distanced in the iconic General Assembly Hall as the high-level annual session begins in a largely virtual format this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"International organisations have been reproached and the need for international cooperation has been questioned. These criticisms are not baseless but their conclusions are misguided," the veteran Turkish diplomat said.

Giving a clarion call for strengthening multilateralism to combat the pandemic, Bozkir said, "Make no mistake: No state can combat this pandemic alone. Social distancing will not help at the international level."

— PTI

up-played it in terms of action." But Trump himself told journalist Bob Woodward during taped interviews for the new book "Rage" — published Tuesday — that he had deliberately decided to "play it down" to avoid alarming Americans.

Returning to one of his most controversial views on the virus, that has rav-

aged the economy and which government scientists say will remain a danger for some time, Trump insisted "it is going to disappear". "It would go away without the vaccine but it's going to go away a lot faster with it," he said.

Challenged about how the virus would go away by itself, he said "you'll

Israel hits Gaza after rocket fire during US ceremony

Jerusalem, Sept. 16: The Israeli military struck Hamas militant sites in the Gaza Strip early Wednesday in response to rocket fire toward Israel the previous night that coincided with the signing of normalisation agreements between Israel and two Arab countries at the White House.

The barrage against Israel began Tuesday night just as the ceremony in Washington was getting underway to formalise the new agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Two Israelis were lightly wounded. The rocket fire continued overnight, with sirens sounding across southern Israel. The military said five projectiles landed in open areas with the rest intercepted by Israel's rocket defence system. In response, the military said it struck about 10 sites belonging to Gaza's militant Hamas rulers, including a weapons and explosives manufacturing factory, underground infrastructure and a military training compound.

The renewed exchange offered a stark reminder that the festive events in Washington would likely do little to change Israel's conflict with the Palestinians. In addition to the bilateral agreements signed by Israel, the UAE and Bahrain, all three signed a document dubbed the "Abraham Accords" after the patriarch of the world's three major monotheistic religions.

The Palestinians are opposed to the agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, viewing them as a betrayal of their cause by the Arab

**IRAN SAYS UAE, BAHRAIN WILL BEAR
'CONSEQUENCES' OF ISRAEL DEALS**

Tehran, Sept. 16: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain will be responsible for any "consequences" resulting from their normalisation of relations with Tehran's arch-foe Israel.

The remarks came a day after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the foreign ministers of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates signed agreements establishing full diplomatic ties at a ceremony at the White House.

Speaking at a cabinet meeting, Rouhani said Israel was "committing more crimes in Palestine every day". "Some of the region's countries, their people are

pious Muslims but their rulers neither understand religion nor (their) debt... to the nation of Palestine, to their brothers speaking their language," he said in televised remarks.

"How could you reach out your hands to Israel? And then you want to give them bases in the region? All the severe consequences that would arise from this are on you."

US President Donald Trump said that similar Washington-brokered deals were close to being signed between Israel and several Arab countries, including Iran's regional rival Saudi Arabia.

"After decades of division and conflict we mark the dawn of a new Middle East," Trump said.

— AFP

countries, which agreed to recognise Israel without securing territorial concessions. They vow that the agreements, and any others that may follow, will not undermine their cause. Neither President Donald Trump nor Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu mentioned the Palestinians in their remarks at the signing ceremony, but both the UAE and Bahraini foreign ministers spoke of the importance of creating a Palestinian state. Upon his departure back from Washington, Netanyahu said he was not surprised by the rocket attack or the timing of the militants.

"They want to take pe-

ce backwards but they won't succeed," he said. "We will strike hard against all those who seek to harm us and reach out a hand in peace to all those whose hand is reached out to peace with us."

The Islamic militant group Hamas has ruled Gaza since 2007, when it seized power from the internationally-backed Palestinian Authority. Israel and Egypt have imposed a crippling blockade on the coastal territory since then. A number of Palestinian militant groups operate in Gaza, but Israel holds Hamas responsible for all attacks and typically responds to rocket fire with airstrikes on militant targets.

— AP

develop like a herd mentality," apparently meaning the concept of herd immunity, when enough people have developed resistance to the disease to effectively stop transmission.

"It's going to be herd developed and that's going to happen. That will all happen but with a vaccine, I think it will go away very quickly. But I really believe we're rounding the corner," he said.

The president, who is rarely seen wearing a mask in public and long refused to push Americans to adopt the habit, said "a lot of people don't want to wear masks and people don't think masks are good." Asked what people he meant, Trump answered: "Waiters". "They come over and they serve you and they have a mask," he said. "I saw it the other day when they were serving me and they're playing with the mask. I'm not blaming them. I'm just saying what happens: They're playing with the mask. So the mask is over, and they're touching it, and then they're touching the plate, and that can be good." Polls show that a majority of Americans disapprove of Trump's handling of the health crisis.

The latest *NBC News* *SurveyMonkey Weekly Tracking* poll Tuesday found that 52 percent of adults do not trust Trump's statements about an upcoming Coronavirus vaccine, compared to 26 percent who do. — AFP



Yoshihide Suga

**SUGA IS JAPAN
PM, RETAINS
MOST MINISTERS**

Tokyo, Sept. 16: New Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, elected by parliament on Wednesday after pledging to pursue his predecessor Shinzo Abe's policies, formed a 20-member Cabinet that retains many ministers.

Here are some key appointees: Defence Minister: Nobuo Kishi (new) — Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's younger brother, he was adopted soon after birth by his mother's brother, who was childless. His grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, was a deeply conservative former prime minister. He has close ties to Taiwan and its president, Tsai Ing-wen.

Foreign Minister: Toshimitsu Motegi (retained) — A trade minister in Abe's earlier Cabinet, Motegi was a key figure in reaching a toughly negotiated US trade deal following demands from President Donald Trump that Japan narrow the trade imbalance.

Deputy PM and Finance Minister: Taro Aso (retained) — A governing party heavyweight who served as prime minister for one year, Aso was an influential lawmaker in the Abe government. — AP



A scene from *An Old Lady*, starring Ye Su-jeong.

An Old Lady is framed in a way that everything seems to be against the woman who claims she was raped by the handsome nursing assistant, Lee Joong-ho.

He's 29, and she's 69 and in a live-in relationship. That makes the young cops snigger. It was not rape. It was consensual sex, Lee tells the cops. Though Hyo's poly-

graph tells them that she may be telling the truth, there are bruises and she has the stained clothes she wore that day, old people, you know, they forget, they mix up things. And in any case, he says he didn't do it. He's 29. Handsome.

The burden of proof on the elegant, stylish Hyo keeps mounting. She must convince the cops first, to even attempt a proper investigation. She must herself prove to them that it was rape and not consensual sex. She is forgetting things. Maybe dementia is setting in. Maybe... But those flashes keep interrupting, dis-

turbing her. The bruise on her wrist is fading, but it still aches.

Director Lim Sun-ae has said that she was riled up to make *An Old Lady* by a real-life case in which the warrant dismissal letter said, "There is not much reason for a young man to rape an old woman."

An Old Lady ends on an empowering note, with a nod to the MeToo movement. But it leaves you wondering how many women must still be keeping their sexual assault, rape a secret because they are scared they'll be asked, "Who will rape an old lady?"

SHORT TAKES

Hari in joint lead after three rounds

Chennai: Indian Grandmaster P. Harikrishna claimed a share of the top position with Armenian GM Levon Aronian after posting two wins and a draw in three rounds of rapid competition in the St Louis Rapid and Blitz online chess tournament.

The India No.2 started with a win over US Grandmaster Leinier Dominguez, before settling for a draw with Iranian prodigy Alireza Firouzja in games played late on Tuesday. In the third round, Harikrishna pulled off a victory over experienced Russian Alexander Grischuk in 41 moves.

World champion Magnus Carlsen was fifth with three points. After a win over Hikaru Nakamura in his opener, the Norwegian went down to Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi in the second round. A draw with Wesley So in the third left the world no.1 in fifth spot.

Harikrishna outwitted the American in 51 moves with black pieces, to begin his campaign in the elite 10-player event. — PTI

Bernal bows out of Tour de France

Grenoble, France: Last year's winner Egan Bernal withdrew from the Tour de France on Wednesday with the defence of his title already in tatters.

The 23-year-old Colombian's team Ineos announced he was dropping out ahead of the key 17th stage.

Bernal came into the Tour with a back injury and missing key allies and two of his team then suffered injuries before Bernal himself suffered a meltdown on a tough ascent on Sunday that effectively ended his 2020 campaign as he fell eight minutes behind the pace.

"This is obviously not how I wanted my Tour de France to end, but I agree that it is the right decision for me in the circumstances," Bernal said in a statement from Ineos. Slovenian rider Primož Roglič leads the Tour, riding for the Jumbo team that has eclipsed Ineos this year. — AFP

Tiger gears up for US Open golf

New York: Tiger Woods returns to the US Open at Winged Foot this week with a score to settle against a course he regards as one of the three toughest in the world.

During more than a decade of dominance between Woods' first major victory in 1997 and his 14th major at the 2008 US Open, the former world number one played in 46 consecutive majors. That streak of 46 tournaments included only one missed cut — at the 2006 US Open held at Winged Foot. Woods, who collected the 15th major of his career at last year's Masters, is preparing for another demanding assignment in New York this week.

The 44-year-old believes only Oakmont in Pennsylvania and Carnoustie Links in Scotland run Winged Foot close in terms of difficulty.

"It's right up there next to Oakmont and I think Carnoustie as far as just sheer difficulty without even doing anything to it," Woods said Tuesday. — AFP

Djoker behaves better, in 3rd round

Rome: Novak Djokovic behaved better Wednesday in his first match since being defaulted from the US Open. The top-ranked Serb was mostly courteous with the chair umpire and had no interaction with the line judges during a 6-3, 6-2 win over local wild-card entry Salvatore Caruso in his opening match at the Italian Open. The performance came in sharp contrast to the scene in New York 10 days ago, when Djokovic was disqualified for unintentionally hitting a line judge in the throat with a ball. Djokovic said earlier this week that the incident taught him "a big lesson."

"I was actually looking forward to (playing again) as soon as possible after what happened in New York," Djokovic said. "Because I feel like the sentiment on the court needs to be positive, and I need to kind of remove anything that can possibly cause any kind of issues to me — if there is something." After winning, Djokovic laughed to himself as he performed his usual on-court celebration, waving his arms toward all four sides of the Campo Centrale stands. — AP

Live on TV

TENNIS

Rome ATP Masters: Matches from 2.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

BEAT THE HEAT

Adapting to UAE climate biggest challenge, says ABD

Dubai, Sept. 16: South African star AB de Villiers believes the biggest challenge for all teams in the upcoming Indian Premier League will be adjusting to the prevailing hot and humid conditions in the UAE.

Most games will be played in the night but the conditions would still be challenging.

"I am not really used to these kind of conditions to be honest. It's very hot, it reminds me of a Test match we played in July in Chennai once where Viru (Virender Sehwag) scored 300. It was one the hottest weather conditions I have experience in my life," he said in an interview posted on RCB's Twitter handle.

"The humidity is similar to that, even at 10 at night. When I arrived here I checked the weather conditions of a few months and it seems to be getting better. It is definitely going to play a part and you have to make sure you have the energy for the backend of the innings or last 5 overs of your bowling spell," he added.

De Villiers said he would also miss playing in front of packed crowds in India with the event to be played behind closed doors in UAE due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

De Villiers said young Australian wicketkeeper batsman Joshua Philippe is an exciting cricketer and he would love share his knowledge with the Australian opener in RCB dressing room.

The 36-year-old dashing cricketer, said not just him, every player is just happy to be back on the field after international cricket came to a halt in mid-March because of the pandemic.

De Villiers' first foray into the cricket field amid the pandemic was the inaugural 3TC Solidarity Cup organised by Cricket South Africa in July.

RCB will open their IPL campaign against Sunrisers Hyderabad in Dubai on September 21. — PTI



Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni in action in this file photo.

Waiting for Dhoni delight: Viru

Mumbai, Sept. 16: Virender Sehwag expects this year's IPL to be "extra special" and a major reason for that is Mahendra Singh Dhoni getting back on the pitch after announcing his international retirement following a year-long sabbatical from the game.

"I think this tournament will be extra special for everyone — the players as well as the audience... watching Dhoni back on the pitch is sure to be a delight. There's so much

in store, need I say more?" Sehwag, who will be co-hosting a show 'Power Play with Champions' on Flipkart Video, said.

Dhoni, who surprised everyone with his decision to call it quits from international cricket in mid-August, will be back in action when he leads the Chennai Super Kings in the IPL.

Sehwag said cricket is an integral part of an Indian's life and the fans have waited long for the sport to return.

Meanwhile, former Australian cricketer Dean Jones reckons Suresh Raina's absence from the IPL would be a major concern for Chennai Super Kings.

"Raina's absence is a major concern this time and he is in the top 5 run getters in IPL. He is a left hander and plays spin very well and the weakness for CSK could be that majority of their players are right handed," Jones told *Star Sports*.

— PTI

BOOM BEST T20 BOWLER, SAYS AUSSIE PACER

Abu Dhabi, Sept. 16: Mumbai Indians' Australian recruit James Pattinson has called Jasprit Bumrah the best T20 bowler in the world and said he was looking forward to working along side the India pace spearhead in the upcoming IPL.

"Personally, it's just fantastic to work with some of the best bowlers in the world. Obviously, Bumrah is probably the best T20 bowler in the world. And Boult (Trent Boult) is up there as well. So, for me it will be a great experience to be around those guys," Pattinson said.

The reigning champions named Pattinson as a replacement for seasoned Lasith Malinga, who has decided to skip this edition of the IPL due to personal reasons.

— PTI

BCCI tightens grip on fraudsters

New Delhi, Sept. 16: The BCCI has tied up with UK-based company Sportradar, which will offer its "integrity services" to prevent betting and other corrupt practices during the upcoming IPL through its Fraud Detection Services (FDS).

With the 13th Indian Premier League being held behind closed doors, the challenge for the

Board's Ajit Singh-led Anti-Corruption Unit is very different as there has been a surge in betting-related frauds and it's expected to increase manifold during the lucrative event.

"Yes, BCCI has inked a deal with Sportradar for this year's IPL. They will be working closely with the ACU and offer their integrity services," an

IPL source confirmed.

The BCCI ACU, in recent times, tracked unusual betting patterns during the state T20 leagues, including the Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL).

According to Sportradar, Fraud Detection System (FDS) "is a unique service that identifies betting-related manipulation in sport. This is possible due to the FDS's sophisticated

algorithms and constantly maintained database of odds which are leveraged for the purpose of detecting match-fixing."

It is believed that the company tracks the odds and movements of at least 600 independent bookmakers to detect anomalies in betting patterns. It processes around 5 million data sets per day.

— PTI



Bournemouth's goalkeeper Asmir Begovic dives to save a penalty shot from Luka Milivojevic of Crystal Palace during their English League Cup second round match at the Vitality Stadium in Bournemouth on Tuesday. Bournemouth won 11-10. — AFP

Palace lose kickathon

London, Sept. 16: Bournemouth beat Crystal Palace 11-10 in an unusually long penalty shootout to advance to the third round of the English League Cup after the game ended at 0-0 after 90 minutes.

As the sides remained deadlocked after five penalties each, even both goalkeepers had to take spot kicks and they both missed.

Eventually David Brooks scored his second penalty for Bournemouth

and Luka Milivojevic's second was saved by goalkeeper Asmir Begovic to knock out the Premier League side.

Bournemouth, which was relegated from the Premier League in July, plays Manchester City in the next round.

Meanwhile, Jack Grealish celebrated his new contract at Aston Villa by scoring the decisive goal in a 3-1 victory over Burton.

The match looked to be heading for a penalty

shootout after Ollie Watkins had scored Villa's equaliser late in the first half to cancel out Colin Daniel's opener for the third-division team after only 68 seconds.

But Grealish struck a volley from the edge of the area to put Dean Smith's team in front in the 88th minute.

Also, Sebastian Haller scored twice before Felipe Anderson added a late third as West Ham advanced past Charlton 3-0. — AP

Ex-athletics head gets 2-yr jail term

Paris, Sept. 16: Former track federation president Lamine Diack was sentenced Wednesday to two years in prison for his role in a scheme that allowed Russian athletes who paid hush money to keep competing when they should have been suspended for doping.

The guilty verdict in a Paris court represented a spectacular fall from grace for the 87-year-old Diack, who was the powerful head of the IAAF from 1999-2015.

The court also sentenced Diack to another two years of suspended jail time and fined him \$590,000.

Diack was found guilty of multiple corruption charges and of breach of trust but acquitted of a money laundering charge. At Diack's trial in June, prosecutors requested a four-year jail term and a fine of \$590,000. The judge, Rose-Marie Hunault, detailed his role in the payoff scheme, dubbed "full protection," that squeezed Russian athletes suspected of doping of about \$3.74 million in hush money. "The money was paid in exchange for a program of 'full protection,'" she said, adding the scheme allowed athletes who should have been suspended "purely and simply to escape sanctions."

The court also handed guilty verdicts to five other people, including Diack's son, Papa Massata Diack, who worked as an IAAF marketing consultant.

— AP

FIRST VACCINE TO OLY BOUND ATHLETES: AFI

New Delhi, Sept. 16: Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Wednesday said it has requested the government to give priority to Olympic-bound athletes when a Covid-19 vaccine is available.

Several countries, including India, are trying to develop a Coronavirus vaccine. The Indian government is considering inoculating the front line workers, army personnel and certain categories first.

"We have already discussed this with the government and told them we will need it (vaccine) for our athletes going to the Olympics," AFI President Adille Sumariwalla said during a webinar.

"We need to make sure once the vaccine comes out, they (Olympic-bound athletes) should be amongst the first batches to get it and the discussion regarding that has already happened," he further added.

Asked if any player is apprehensive about getting inoculated, like tennis star Novak Djokovic, or if the vaccine could cause problem with dope control, national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand said the athletes are looking forward to it.

— PTI



Jamal Murray (left) of the Denver Nuggets drives the ball against Lou Williams of Los Angeles Clippers during their NBA Playoffs at AdventHealth Arena at the ESPN World Of Sports Complex in Lake Buena Vista, Florida on Tuesday. Nuggets won 104-89. — AFP

Murray puts LA through wringer

Los Angeles, Sept. 16: Jamal Murray scored a game high 40 points and Nikola Jokic had a triple double as the Denver Nuggets stunned the Los Angeles Clippers 104-89 in game seven to reach their first Western Conference finals in 11 years.

The underdog Nuggets became the first team in NBA history to rally from a 3-1 series deficit twice in the same postseason.

Jokic completed his triple double by the third quarter of Tuesday night's contest in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Florida, finishing with 16 points, 13 assists and 22 rebounds.

His rebound count is the most by a Nuggets player in an NBA playoff game, breaking his old record of 19.

An odd couple for sure. A Serbian and a Canadian pair that has engineered

the biggest upsets of the 2020 postseason so far.

Denver will once again be the underdogs when they face LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers in the conference finals beginning Friday.

Meanwhile, in the Eastern Conference finals, Bam Adebayo made a clutch block with 2.5 seconds left in overtime as the Miami Heat beat the Boston Celtics 117-114 in the opening game of the series. Adebayo leapt high to take what appeared to be an easy dunk away from Celtics star Jayson Tatum to preserve the Heat's slim lead, 116-114.

Adebayo then capped the scoring by sinking a free throw at the other end.

Tatum, who finished with a game high 30 points, missed a desperation 29-foot three-pointer at the buzzer.

— AFP

INDO-AMERICAN SONIA GRIZZLIES ASST COACH

Houston, Sept. 16: Memphis Grizzlies, an American professional basketball team which competes in the NBA, has hired an Indian-American as its assistant coach.

Sonia Raman joins Vin Bhavnani (Oklahoma City Thunder) and Roy Rana (Sacramento Kings) as the only coaches of Indian origin in the National Basketball Association.

Raman becomes the 14th female assistant coach in the history of the NBA and the 10th among current coaching staffers in the league. She becomes the seventh female coach to be hired as an assistant in the league since the beginning of the 2019-20 season. — PTI