


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAHMUNDRY | WEDNESDAY | 16 SEPTEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 30.0°C
Min: 24.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Humid and Mostly Cloudy.
Max/Min temp. 30/24 9C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES

(+94,709)

50,17,884

DEATHS

(+1,308)

82,088

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,058)

(+10)

TS: 1,60,571

984

(+8,846)

(+69)

AP: 5,83,925

5,041

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,95,69,312

DEATHS

9,35,137

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana

Tithi: Bhadrpadā Bahula Chaturdasi till 7.52 pm

Star: Magha till 12.15 pm

Variyam: 7.26 pm to 8.52 pm

Durmuhurtam: 11.46 am to 12.35 pm

Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HJIRI CALENDAR

Muharram 28, 1442 AH

PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.00 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 5.00 pm

Maghrib: 6.35 pm

Isha: 8.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.03 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.51 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 6.15 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 4.28 PM

COUNTER POINT

IN BRIEF

India beats China in UN body polls

United Nations: In a significant victory, India got elected as Member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the principal global body focussed on gender equality and women empowerment, beating China in a hotly-contested election. The 54-member panel, holding the first plenary meeting of its 2021 session in the General Assembly Hall on Monday, held elections for two seats in the Asia-Pacific States category with Afghanistan, India and China in the fray. Afghanistan and India got 39 and 38 votes, while China got only 27 votes of the total 54 votes.

Soldier killed in Pak shelling

Jammu: An army jawan was killed and two others, including an officer, were injured on Tuesday after Pakistani troops fired with small arms and shelled mortars along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, officials said. The Indian Army launched a befitting retaliation to the Pakistani firing and shelling in Sunderbani sector, they said. "Pakistan initiated the unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and intense shelling with mortars. Some injuries have been reported (on our side)," a defence spokesperson said. — PTI

NATION | 4

Sasikala may be released in Jan. 2021



WORLD | 5

Trump to host Israel, UAE deal signing event



SPORTS | 8

Blues begin EPL with a bang



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State asks CBI to probe irregularities in Fibernet

Cabinet panel finds role of Naidu's associate Krishna Prasad in awarding contract to kin

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

The Andhra Pradesh government had asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to conduct a probe into the alleged irregularities to the tune of ₹2,000 crore in the functioning of the AP State Fibernet Limited from 2014 to 2019.

The cabinet sub-committee constituted to probe the alleged irregularities nailed the role played by Vemuru Hari Krishna Prasad, then technical adviser to the state and close associate of then CM Chandrababu Naidu and then IT minister N. Lokesh.

Evidence gathered by the cabinet subcommittee indicated that Prasad, as a member of committees which processed the tenders, illegally facilitated the award of most of the high-value tenders to Tera Software Limited (TSL) to which he and his family members are closely associated and further to sister concerns of TSL.

N. Lokesh played an important role in the signing of an MoU between DoT, Bharat

Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), Government of AP and APSFL for Bharatnet Phase-II, violating norms. The panel found that without the required administrative approval either from the government of Andhra Pradesh or from the government of India, the project work of BBNL Phase-II costing ₹1,410.10 crore was allegedly awarded at an excess quote of 11.26 per cent over the estimates in violation of tender procurement guidelines.

APSFL gave the operation and maintenance work of 13 districts to TSL at ₹2,44,01,865 a month, till the finalisation of the tender process for project maintenance. TSL, which had prior knowledge of the maintenance cost since it executed the first phase of the work and was looking after the operation and maintenance work by the time of filing tenders, quoted the amounts with that experience and became the L-1 bidder. APSFL had given clear undue advantage to TSL.

By showing utter disregard of the guidelines laid down by the chief vigi-

lance commission, the tender was awarded to TSL for laying the optical fiber network without considering the serious allegations against TSL by some of the co-bidders.

It was found that the work of the project monitoring agency (PMA) was awarded to M/s Gemini communications ltd, by cancelling the earlier awarded tender for the same work, in which M/s Merax technologies private limited stood as L-1, surpassing some of the crucial tender conditions and relaxing others.

The committee found that on the matter of procurement of set top boxes (CPE boxes) and the empanelment of its suppliers, the APSFL held negotiations with all four bidders and the procurement order was split and distributed among the four bidders against norms. Further, the APSFL has set aside the supplied CPE boxes by all other bidders and taken into consideration only those supplied by L-3 i.e. TSL and APSFL facilitated the siphoning of funds to TSL by putting aside Das and Networks, a South Korean MNC.

Apex court slams TV show, calls for media standards

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said that targeting a community in television programmes does no credit to democracy and is a disservice to the nation and ordered a TV channel not to telecast the remaining five episodes of its programme "UPSC Jihad".

Observing that candidates from the Muslim community were appearing like any other aspirant and journalists have no "absolute" freedom to do or say anything, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said, "As the Supreme Court of the nation, we cannot allow you to say that Muslims are infiltrating civil services. You cannot say that the journalist has absolute freedom of doing this."

Describing India as a melting pot of different civilisations and cultures, Justice Chandrachud, heading a three-judge bench also comprising Justice Indu Malhotra and Justice K.M. Joseph, indicated that

THE THREE-JUDGE bench indicated that they may set-up a committee of five people, also having a former CJI and an eminent person from media, to lay down standards of broadcasting.

they may set-up a committee of five people, also having a former Chief Justice of India and an eminent person from media, to lay down standards of broadcasting. He said that the committee would comprise "eminent and unbiased" people.

The four episodes of the TV programme, projected as an "investigative" story, have already been telecast on September 11, 12, 13 and 14. The remaining five episodes were to be telecast in succession on a daily basis.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, was lukewarm to the suggestions by the court.

■ Page 4: Did I&B ministry apply its mind, asks SC

COVID CASES CROSS 50 LAKH MARK IN INDIA

New Delhi, Sept. 15: The Covid-19 case tally crossed the 50-lakh mark on Tuesday with the government saying that the number of recoveries in India was amongst the highest in the world and the country learnt from the experience of nations that suffered high mortalities to avoid a "huge peak" in terms of deaths.

The Central government officials also asserted that there was absolutely "no shortage" of medical oxygen, vital in the treatment of coronavirus, at the national level, while urging states to ensure a proper inventory management at hospital-level and advance planning for timely replenishment so that there is no stockout.

At a press briefing, Director General of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Dr Balram Bhargava, also said reinfection was "very, very rare" with Covid-19, but it can happen.

Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said that there are 14 states and Union Territories where the number of active cases are less than 5,000. —PTI

China doesn't accept LAC, border row persists: Singh

Rajnath warns China for stepping up its presence along LAC

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

In what is being seen as a veiled warning to China amid repeated border violations by its troops, defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said that India was prepared to deal with all contingencies though it remained committed to peaceful resolution of the situation.

Making a statement in Lok Sabha, Mr Singh said the border issue with China remains unresolved as China, historically, "does not recognise the current boundary".

He said that difference in perception has led to the face-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC). "We do remain committed to the peaceful resolution of the current situation. At the same time, the House can be assured that we remain prepared to deal with all contingencies," the defence minister said.

Asserting that the Indian Army has inflicted heavy

STATUS QUO ANTE NEEDED



WE MADE it clear to the Chinese side, both through diplomatic and military channels, that China was, by such actions, attempting to unilaterally alter the status quo. It was categorically conveyed that this was unacceptable

RAJNATH SINGH, Defence minister

losses on the Chinese side during the clash with the PLA at the Galwan Valley on June 15, Mr Singh said since April there has been a considerable build-up of troops and armament by the Chinese side in the border areas adjacent to eastern Ladakh.

In early May, the Chinese side had taken action to hinder the normal, traditional patrolling pattern of Indian troops in the Galwan Valley area, which resulted in a face-off, he said adding that in mid-

May, they made several attempts to transgress the LAC in other parts of western Ladakh.

"This included Kongka La, Gogra and North Bank of Pangong Lake. These attempts were detected early and consequently responded to appropriately by our armed forces.

"We made it clear to the Chinese side, both through diplomatic and military channels, that China was, by such actions, attempting to unilaterally alter the status quo. It was categori-

cally conveyed that this was unacceptable," Mr Singh said.

Opposition Congress walked out of the House after the defence minister's statement as it was not satisfied with it and wanted to ask certain questions which was disallowed by Speaker Om Birla.

The party has been repeatedly demanding that the government explain the "real situation" in Ladakh.

The MPs staged a walk-out when the Speaker refused to allow the party's leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury to speak. Congress MPs later staged a protest outside the House near the Gandhi Statue outside Parliament.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, who is currently abroad, tweeted: "It is clear from the statement of the Defence Minister that Modi ji misled the country on Chinese encroachment. Our country has always been, and will remain, with the Indian Army."

Preparing for winter



An IAF transport aircraft C17 brings in essentials supplies at a base in Ladakh on Tuesday, as the security forces gear up for winter amid tensions at the LAC. — PTI

Heavy rains pound Kurnool

D SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC KURNOOL, SEPT. 15

Heavy rains lashed Kurnool district as several places like Nandyal, Atmakur, Nandikotkur, Allagadda and villages on the banks of River Kundi, Mahanandi and surrounding villages have been affected.

Life is thrown out of gear as lower level bridges submerged and connectivity between villages was disturbed. Bavanasi vagu, Sivapuram irrigation pond

and Gundlakamma tank in Atmakur taluka limits were damaged and breached those which were joining in Telugu Ganga canal.

Thousands of acres cultivated by villages adjacent to the Kundu river have been submerged and hundreds of agriculture pump sets have been destroyed due to Krishna waters pumped into the Kundu river, added by the rains.

The district administration is collecting information on the extent of damage to crops and other

properties, including house collapse, damages of roads and irrigation tanks and live losses. One youth was missing in the flood-water of Chama kaluva in Nandyal town. With water entering houses and the collapse of old and mud houses, several families have been rendered homeless in the Nandyal division.

District collector, G. Veera Pandian, accompanied by SP, K. Fakeerappa, visited flood affected areas in the Srisailem, Nandi-

kotkur and Nandyal Assembly segments. On this occasion, Pandian directed officials to plug the breaches to tanks. He observed the damage due to breach on Bavanasi vagu near Itikala bridge which was joining the Telugu Ganga canal.

Engineering officials submitted to him that Sivapuram and Gundlakamma tanks developed breaches, submerging fields. He visited Itikala, Nandikunta, Bavapuram, Guvvulakuntla and other villages.

COVID | FALLOUT

Recovered patients seek more money for plasma from needy Poor in AP sell plasma for survival

SAMPAT G. SAMARITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

Financial hardships are forcing some plasma donors to demand more money from Covid-19 infected patients in several parts in Andhra Pradesh.

In a recent case at Indian Red Cross society's (IRCS) blood bank in Nellore, a voluntary donor expressed his interest to donate his plasma and when the authorities informed him that he would get ₹5,000 as a financial incentive

announced by the state government for donation of plasma, the donor asked for more money claiming that he was poor.

However, the IRCS authorities informed him that they were unable to pay extra. He donated the plasma. As the IRCS authorities were discussing that, the family members of a Covid-19 patient arrived seeking plasma of a specific blood group matching the one donated. The donor overheard it and approached the family members claim-

THOUGH THE Andhra Pradesh government has announced a financial incentive of ₹5,000 for a plasma donor, there is no clarity as to who should release that amount in most districts.

ing that they were going to be given the plasma donated by him and he wanted more money. The family members refused to pay more and alerted the IRCS authorities who in turn admonished the donor and sent him home.

In another case in Visakhapatnam, a senior government official was infected with Covid-19 and was in need of plasma. The health authorities identified a suitable donor and asked him whether he could donate plasma as his blood group matched the official's. The donor reportedly asked for more money, claiming financial hardships in his family due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Though the government has announced a financial incentive of ₹5,000 for a plasma donor, there is no

clarity as to who should release that amount, except in Srikakulam.

Plasma therapy is absolutely free for Covid-19 infected patients taking treatment in government hospitals but in the case of IRCS blood banks, they are charging ₹14,000 for 400 ml plasma which comes in two units of 200 ml each. Permitted private blood banks are also charging ₹10,000 to ₹12,000 for 400 ml of plasma.

■ Page 3: Middlemen make moolah in plasma 'trade'

3 copper plates found at Srisailem

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC KURNOOL SEPT. 15

Renovation works at Ghanta Marham, an ancient structure at Srisailem, have yielded three ancient copper plates belonging to 1450 AD and written in Kannada, Odia and Nagari scripts. The plates bear a record of endowments made during those times to Lord Mallikarjuna Swamy at Srisailem.

The copper plates stacked together, found along with 245 silver coins and a copper coin, men-

tion the exact day and time of inscription, said Srisailem temple executive officer K.S. Rama Rao. The coins, however, are of recent origin, as they bear insignia of Edward the Kind and other princes, the EO said.

Last week too, 29 copper plates were found at the same site. Five of the plates so far found belong to 1450 AD. It is believed there is a chance of finding hidden treasures stashed in walls.

■ Page 3: Rare inscriptions were found, says EO

SHORT TAKES

NAIDU: PEOPLE WILL SOON REBEL AGAINST YSRC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

Telugu Desam chief Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday warned that the day was not far when all sections of the people would revolt against the unchecked 'atrocities' and 'injustices' of the Jagan regime.

He said the Jagan government was making false allegations of insider trading in Amaravati out of sheer political vendetta against TD, while the YSR Congress leaders were plundering the state as if the voters would not give them another chance. Mr Naidu demanded a CBI probe into attacks on temples.

Addressing a video conference with senior party leaders, Mr Naidu asserted that the role of the opposition was crucial for the vibrant and successful functioning of democracy. "But this government is misusing the entire police force to stifle all dissenting voices. Everyone cutting across political affiliations should condemn the ongoing attacks by anarchic forces on Hindu charitable organisations and temples," he said.

FEARING JAIL, TD RAISING HUE AND CRY: BOTSA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

Brushing aside the allegations that the State is vindictive, YSR Congress leaders said that all irregularities related to insider trading of lands in Amaravati region during the five-year Telugu Desam tenure have been coming true and the law will take its own course.

Speaking to the media here on Tuesday, Minister Botsa Satyanarayana said that the probe into Amaravati land scam has been sending a chill down the spine of TD leaders, including N. Chandrababu Naidu. He clarified that the State government has taken the responsibility to bring the corrupt to book. He dared the TD leaders to prove their innocence by accepting a CBI probe.

At a separate press conference, YSRC spokesperson, Ambati Rambabu stated that the sub-committee has clearly looked into each and every detail of Amaravati land issues and confirmed that insider trading had taken place, where about 4,075 acres of land was purchased by TD leaders before the announcement of the capital. He also stated that Nara Lokesh was involved in the AP Fibre-grid scam.

ANIL CHALLENGES TD TO SEEK CBI PROBE ON LANDS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

Minister for irrigation P Anil Kumar Yadav has challenged the opposition Telugu Desam to write letters to the Central government, extending its cooperation to the CBI probe into insider trading in Amaravati lands.

He alleged that the TD government encouraged insider trading, hence it was easy about the CBI inquiry. If former chief minister Chandrababu Naidu and his son Lokesh were innocent of insider trading, they should write letters to the Centre, expressing their cooperation to the CBI probe.

Accusing Naidu of carrying on a false propaganda on paddy procurement at less than MSP in Nellore district, Mr Anil Kumar Yadav asserted that the state government was committed to the welfare of farmers.

NO MSP FOR PADDY FARMERS, SAYS LOKESH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

Telugu Desam leader Nara Lokesh on Tuesday accused the YSRC government of not ensuring remunerative prices to the paddy farmers in Nellore district.

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy promised to ensure the government would buy every grain of paddy, but he failed to keep it, and demanded a minimum support price (MSP) of ₹16,000 per putti (850 kg paddy).

Mr Lokesh deplored that the plight of Nellore paddy farmers was deteriorating with each passing day and the middlemen were robbing them of their sweat and blood.

Cool day



Thick clouds hover over the sky as people experienced drizzle in various parts in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

New edu policy to be implemented next yr

CM tells to prepare a plan to introduce Pre Primary 1 & 2

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy said that Union government's New Education Policy 2020 of 5+3+3+4 was accepted in principle and would be implemented from the academic year 2021-22.

He held a review meeting on the NEP at the CM camp office here on Tuesday and instructed the officials to prepare SOPs for utilising the services of village/ward secretariats in the education sector and also to design the required app for the same. He further instructed the officials to prepare a plan to introduce Pre Primary 1 and 2 curriculum before students join Class I for solid foundation course.

He said that appropriate textbooks should be printed and training programmes designed for teachers to implement the new national education policy. The officials concerned should inspect schools and colleges to ensure their compliance with the minimum standards. "Educational institutions which do not meet the required standards should be closed immediately and permission should be given for their reopening only after they

Jagan sets deadline for Ambedkar memorial

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has given authorities 13 months to complete the construction of Ambedkar memorial park consisting of a 125-foot tall statue of the architect of India's constitution at Swarajya Maidan here. The work will start on November 1.

Addressing a review meeting on the project in his camp office at Tadepalli on Tuesday, Mr Jagan directed officials to shift offices of the irrigation and other government departments from Swarajya Maidan to clear the way for starting the construction of Ambedkar memorial park. He told the officials that the visibility of the statue from all directions was important and every care must be taken to ensure that ambience of the landscape was pleasant.

Suggesting that officials have achieved those standards again."

the location for the installation of the statue so that it would lend grandeur to the upcoming park, he said they should order the statue immediately.

The Chief Minister felt that the construction of a convention hall and a food court would be helpful to raise some income for the maintenance of the Ambedkar memorial park. He also suggested minimizing concrete area and giving more space for a walking track.

Representatives of various organizations presented various models of the statue and designs of the park in the review meeting.

Ministers Botsa Satyanarayana, Pinipe Vishwaroop, Adimulapu Suresh and Velampalli Srinivasa Rao, and Krishna district collector AMd Intiaz and senior officials of municipal, irrigation, finance and social welfare departments were present at the meeting.

The officials said many modules proposed in the

● The officials said many modules proposed in the NEP-2020 were already being implemented in the state.

NEP-2020 were already being implemented in the state. The government already set up 1,261 Gurukul schools for SC, ST, BC and minority communities, 352 Kasturba Gandhi Vidyalayas (KGBVs) for girls and 672 Bhavita Kendras for the disabled. "Two commissions have been set up in the state to monitor standards in school and college education, while NEP has envisaged one commission," they said. NCERT has formulated guidelines to take steps to further enhance the skills of those working in Anganwadi centres, the state government will have to introduce diploma courses for them.

Education minister Adimulapu Suresh, chief secretary Nilam Sawhney, higher education special chief secretary Satish Chandra, school education principal secretary Buditi Rajasekhara, education commissioner Vadrevu Chinna Veerabhadradu participated in the meeting.

40 rescued from Nallamala forest

NAGESWARA RAO
BALLEDA | DC
KADAPA, SEPT. 15

As many as 40 people, who went to Bhyrava Swamy Temple located inside the dense Nallamala forest, 25 km away from Vanipenta Tanda in Mydukur mandal, got stranded in the forest for 42 hours following rains and breakdown of their tractors.

Bongu Srinivasulu of village Bongu Srinivasan near Aghraharam area of Khajipeta village in Kadapa district, with 39 of his relatives and friends, left in two tractors at 3 am on Sunday for the Bhyrava Swamy Temple to conduct the tonsure ceremony of his five-year-old grandson Devansh and one-year-old

granddaughter Lasya at the temple.

The two tractors reached Vanipenta Tanda around 5 am and were to cross two rivulets on the way. They crossed the first rivulet successfully through there was some water flowing in it. When they reached the second rivulet, they found there was no water but the road was very slushy due to the stagnant water. When they tried crossing it, one of the tractors got stuck in the mud.

Though they tried to pull it out the tractor, it remained stuck.

The villagers then left the tractor there and majority of them boarded the other tractor and reached the Bhyrava Swamy Temple. The oth-

ers reached the temple by walk. The tonsure ceremony of the kids was completed and they started back around 9 pm. When they reached the rivulet, they found 4 feet of water flowing into it. When they tried to cross it, the second tractor too got stuck in the rivulet. The passengers were left with no alternative but return to the temple by walking about four kilometres.

When villagers of Bongu Srinivasan realised that those who had left for the temple had not returned till Monday, a group of them left in another tractor to trace them after calling up 100 and informing Mydukur police. They reached the rivulet and found the stuck tractor.

Meanwhile, Mydukur inspector Madhusudan Goud, along with a sub-inspector, five constables and forest staff reached the spot. Using ropes, all the persons stranded were brought to safety. While the two tractors remained stuck, villagers, however, reached their village safely.

Bongu Srinivasulu, speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, requested the government to construct a small bridge on the rivulet in Nallamala forest for the benefit of hundreds of pilgrims who visit Bhyrava Swamy Temple every Sunday. Or, the government could at least build a causeway, so that no pilgrim is exposed to such danger in future.

TTD seeks Centre to monetise demonetised currency

AVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 15

TTD Trust Board chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy met Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman at New Delhi on Tuesday and sought her support to resolve certain issues related to the disposal of demonetised currency and waving of GST arrears to be paid by the temple body to the AP Special Protection Force (SPF).

According to a statement released by the TTD, the chairman sought the Union minister to address the issue of ₹49.70 crore worth demonetised currency notes, which has been piled up in the TTD's locker since 2016, and also requested her to waive the outstanding arrears of GST to the tune of ₹23.78 crore, payable by the TTD to the SPF.

In the representation handed over to the finance minister, Subba Reddy stated that the TTD has been utilising the services of the AP SPF since 1998, which has been providing security cover to temples under the the TTD. In 2019, the TTD has received a communication from the DG of SPF that the temple body has to pay ₹22.27 crore arrears towards service tax.

He pointed out that the TTD has availed a relief under the Union government's Sabka Vishwas Scheme, 2019, and recently made a payment of ₹4.31 crore to the SPF. The SPF DG, however, again sent a communication to the TTD, requesting the temple body to pay ₹23.78 crore including ₹13.63 crore towards outstanding GST dues for the period

STATE GOVT NOD FOR TTD TO PAY BRAHMOTSAVA BAHUMANAM TO ALL

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 15

The state government on Tuesday permitted the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) to pay the brahmotsava bahumanam (gift) to all its employees as per the original proposal sent by the temple trust board.

Brahmotsava bahumanam was introduced by TTD in 1990, under which the temple body used to pay its employees 15 days of their basic pay without any ceiling limit for rendering their services to the devotees visiting Tirumala during the nine-day annual brahmotsavam.

As the bahumanam being paid to the perma-

nent staff and outsourced staff has increased to many folds, the TTD trust board in 2019 had resolved to pay ₹14,000 to the regular staff and ₹6,850 to contract and outsourced employees for the year 2019. In total, the board has resolved to release ₹22 crore to gift the regular, outsourced and contract employees for rendering their services during the brahmotsavam held in 2019.

The board wrote to the state government to approve the same, but for reasons unknown, the file was kept pending for several months now. However, the state government finally cleared the file and gave TTD the permission to pay.

between April 1, 2014 and June 30, 2017 along with the interest amount of ₹10.14 crore up to June 30, 2020. Placing all the facts, the chairman appealed to the Union finance minister to waive the pending dues of GST.

In another representation to the Union finance minister, the chairman underlined that the temple management had stopped accepting the demonetised ₹500 and ₹1,000 currency notes at its counters, duly following the guidelines of the RBI and the Central government, post demonetisation announcement on November 8, 2016. Many devotees, however, continued to offer in the hundi in the form of demonetised currency, even after the deadline ended.

On the other hand, several banks in which the TTD has been maintaining its accounts and parked thousands of crores of corpus funds, have also stopped accepting the demonetised currency from the TTD.

As a result, ₹49.70 crore demonetised currency, in the form of ₹6.34 lakh demonetised ₹500 currency notes and ₹1.8 lakh demonetised ₹1,000 currency notes were piled up at in the TTD's lockers for the past four years. He appealed to the Union minister to give suitable directions to the finance ministry and the Reserve Bank of India on how to proceed in terms of sorting out the demonetised currency issue that has been dragging on for almost four years now.

CM TO PRESENT SILK VASTRAMS AT TIRUMALA

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 15

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will offer 'pattu vastrams' (silk robes) to Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala on September 23 on behalf of the state government, as a part of the official tradition, to make such an offering during the annual Brahmotsavams at Tirumala.

TTD executive officer Anil Kumar Singhal said that the chief minister will offer 'pattu vastrams' to the Lord in the evening on September 23, on the day of Garuda Seva, the most auspicious vahana seva in the annual Brahmotsavams

BREAK DARSHAN FOR SPL SEVA TICKET HOLDERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 15

As announced earlier, TTD has started providing VIP break darshan to the devotees holding online tickets for Udayasthama seva and Vishanti Varsha Darshini sevas (VVD).

Following appeals from devotees who booked the tickets in advance, TTD has decided to provide them break darshan along with SRIVANI trust donors.

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, SEPT. 15

With the water storage reaching 66 tmc.ft level as against total capacity of 78 tmc in Somasila dam following inflows to the extent of 80,000 cusecs, project officials have been mulling over releasing the water in next two days as part of precautionary measures.

Superintending Engineer of Somasila Project, N. Krishna Rao said that the inflow into the project was 82,000 cusecs in the morning on Tuesday and the storage level almost touched 70 tmc.ft by the evening.

The SE said, "Most of the inflows are through Penna river with contribution from its tributaries such as Sagileru, Cheyzeru and Kunderu. The water outflow in Penna was 96,000 cusecs at Adinimmapalle Anecut in Kadapa district."

He said that the inflows into Somasila from Pothireddypadu reservoir is almost stopped because of heavy discharges into Penna from its tributaries in Rayalaseema districts.

Hinting that they would store 78 tmc.ft in Somasila in the next few days, Mr Krishna Rao said they are contemplating to release 50,000 cusecs gradually to the downstream of Penna as a precautionary measure if inflows continue to be heavy.

He said they were releasing 10,700 cusecs to fill Kandaluru dam and 1,500 cusecs to Somasila North Feeder Canal.

The water level has

BRIDGE ON KUNDU TO PROTECT FIELDS DEMANDED

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, SEPT. 15

Farmers along the Kundu river who suffered a heavy loss due to discharge of Krishna waters demand high-level bridges-cum-barrages across Kundu river. The submergence of thousands of crops was due to diverting Krishan waters to Nellore through Kundu river.

Kundu Porata Samiti president Kamani Venugopala Reddy said to retain water in Nandyal division, check dams along the course of Kundu for every 5 kms is also demanded. A representation to this effect was given to Judicial Preview committee, he said.

Nandyal, Allagadda, Koilakuntla and Mahanandi farmers were worst affected due to 25,000 cusecs of Krishna waters discharged into Kundu for the past two weeks.

increased to 36 tmc.ft at Kandaluru, he added.

He said the farming community is very happy over Somasila receiving abundant water since the quantity can address the irrigation needs for the ensuing crop season without any hassles.

PAK AGENTS | Giteli Imran, a native of Panchmahal, , was arrested on Sept. 14

NIA arrests key accused in Vizag spy case

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 15

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested a key accused Giteli Imran, 37 in the Visakhapatnam espionage case related to alleged leaking of sensitive Naval information to Pakistan intelligence agency, ISI.

So far 16 persons, including 11 sailors of the Indian Navy and a Pakistan-born woman have been arrested for allegedly being involved in the racket. Intelligence personnel named it as Operation Dolphin Nose

The 37-year-old Giteli Imran, a native of Panchmahal, Godhra, was arrested on September 14 under Sections 120B and 121A of IPC, Sections 17 and 18 of UA(P) Act and Section 3 of Official Secrets Act for his involvement in espionage activities and working for ISI.

The case relates to an international espionage racket in which Pakistan-based spies recruited agents in India for collecting sensitive and classified information regarding locations and movements of Indian naval ships, submarines and other defence

establishments. Investigation revealed that some navy personnel came in contact with Pakistani agents through social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. They shared classified information in lieu of money deposited into their bank accounts through Indian associates of ISI who had business interests in Pakistan.

A charge-sheet has been filed in the instant case on June 15 against the 14 accused.

Investigations revealed that Giteli Imran was associated with Pakistani spies

and agents under the guise of cross-border cloth trade. As per the directions of Pakistan-based spies, he deposited money into the bank accounts of Indian Navy personnel at regular intervals in lieu of sensitive and classified data provided by them.

Some digital devices and incriminating documents have been seized in the search conducted at the house of Imran on Monday. Further investigation in the case is underway.

Espionage is not new to Vizag, which is the headquarters of Eastern Naval

Command of Indian Navy. Intelligence Bureau sleuths and naval personnel arrested four naval personnel and chief security officer of Naval Armament Depot in 2001.

Navy officials said that two of the four arrested passed on a microfilm containing pictures of ENC, including Naval Dockyard and Shipping Building Centre, to ISI agents in Nepal.

Dolphin's Nose is a hill adjacent to Eastern Naval Command in Vizag, housing the residential complexes and offices of Indian Navy.

IN BRIEF

Teacher hangs self in Covid-19 hospital

Visakhapatnam: A retired government teacher, being treated for Covid-19 in Pradhama hospital in Vizag city, committed suicide by hanging himself with a wire in the hospital on Tuesday evening. The deceased was identified as J. Narasimha Murthy, a native of Srikakulam district. The police said that Murthy was under treatment for the virus for the past few days. Recently, he came to know that his wife and son also tested positive for the virus. He was disappointed that they too were infected by the virus. Murthy took the extreme step and did not leave any suicide note to ascertain the real reason behind the extreme step, the MVP Colony police said.

35-yr-old washed away in floods

Nellore: The fire department personnel launched a search for a 35-year-old man who was washed away in the flash floods to Sagileru stream at Gadikota village in Giddalur mandal of Prakasam district on Tuesday. The mishap took place when the man identified as Dasari Vinodkumar entered the water to reach his farm on the other side of the stream, unaware of the water currents. His brother alerted the local officials after he noticed the incident. Though the fire personnel rushed to the spot, they could not do much because the stream was flowing with full force. Vinod Kumar's family is in a state of shock after learning about the incident as his father died only three days back. The locals said that Vinod Kumar has a seven-year-old son and a four-year-old daughter.

Errors in land records

Nellore: In Prakasam district, as many as 33,378 petitions on errors in recording land details on the state government's web land portal have been lying pending even after the deadline to dispose of the grievances has passed. The tahsildars are being blamed for depending on data entry operators to upload the land records without proper supervision. Prakasam district collector Pola Bhaskar has disclosed this while reminding the tahsildars that it is their duty to correct such mistakes during a review with the Tahsildars and the surveyors in Ongole on Tuesday. Alleging that the majority of petitions being received at the Village Secretariats are related to errors in web land, he alleged that the public is forced to pay multiple visits to the revenue offices because of the negligence of the officers. The collector told the officers that the Chief Minister is personally paying attention to the petitions submitted at the village secretariats while asking them to expedite the disposal of grievances. He observed that the majority of the petitions could be resolved if the surveyors sincerely performed their duties. Stressing that the data entry operators are responsible for scores of irregularities in the land records, he advised the officers to initiate action against them if their role is proved in the tampering of the land records. He also underlined the need for proper understanding among tahsildars over e-office and e-governance modules.

■ The collector told the officers that the CM was personally paying attention to the petitions submitted at the village secretariats while asking them to expedite the disposal of grievances. Many petitions can be resolved with help of surveyors

SPEAKER VISITS RIVER CANAL SITE

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRIKAKULAM, SEPT. 15

The Assembly Speaker Tammineni Sitaram visited the high-level canal that links Nagavali and Vamsadhara rivers at China Lanka under Boorja mandal on Tuesday.

Christened as Ranga Canal by the Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, the canal will irrigate 5,000 acres in the region of Cheedivalasa and China Lanka and prevent flooding in the rainy season in Gajjalagedda, Desiagedda and Oni Gedda, the Speaker told the farmers who were present at the site.

When farmers drew his attention to the flooding of the road between Kollivalasa and Narayanapuram downstream villages, the Speaker told the officials to build underground tunnels for the free flow of water and increase the height of the road.

Executive engineer P Ranga explained the Speaker on the canal works and the pending payment of land acquisition money to the farmers.

Water everywhere

Floodwater gushes out from Dr. KLRS Pulichintala project where the water level is at 174.57 ft. An inflow of 136,325 cusecs and outflow of 1,36,325 cusecs was recorded on Tuesday.

— E. TEJO ROY

Covid-19: AP's death toll crosses 5K mark

AP carried out tests on 88,612 samples per 1 mn population

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

Andhra Pradesh's death toll of Covid-19 infected patients has crossed 5k mark with 5,041 patients succumbing to the virus so far.

The state recorded 8,846 new Covid-19 cases taking its tally to 5,83,925 with 69 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state's Covid-19 bulletin reported that out of 70,511 samples tested, 8,846 individuals have been found infected with coronavirus. Out of 47,31,866 samples tested so far, 4,86,551 patients have been discharged from hospitals after recovery, while 92,353 patients are still active with the virus.

**RARE INSCRIPTIONS WERE FOUND, SAYS EO**

From Page 1

Of the total silver coins, 148 were found in brass-bowl and 97 unearthed from separate places. The copper coin was also found in brass-bowl. In all, 28 rare inscriptions have been unearthed from the same place at the temple, the EO stated.

Srisaillam tahsildhar B. Rajendra Singh and sub-inspector K. Hari Prasad visited the spot and oversaw unearthing of the archaeologically valuable items. The copper plates have been handed over to the Archaeology Department for deciphering, the temple executive officer added.

FAKE | POLICE The three victims were left in a desolate place 3 AR cops among 5 held for robbery

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, SEPT. 15

The Renigunta Rural police have arrested five persons, including three AR constables, for their alleged involvement in the highway robbery that took place on August 7 near Badrappanaidu Kandriga village on the highway between Renigunta and Vadamalapeta in Chittoor district.

According to Renigunta Rural CI G. Amarnath Reddy, B. Ravi Kumar and Shaik Siraj, attached AR wing in Tirupati and O.

East Godavari continues to lead the state with the highest number of new infections at 1,423, followed by 979 in Prakasam, 955 in West Godavari, 820 in Nellore, 678 in Srikakulam, 661 in Kadapa, 641 in Guntur, 574 in Visakhapatnam, 572 in Chittoor, 532 in Vizianagaram, 398 in Krishna, 314 in Kurnool and 299 in Anantapur.

In terms of cumulative confirmed coronavirus infections, East Godavari has been affected badly with the highest number of 79,643 cases, followed by 52,520 in West Godavari, 52,280 in Kurnool, 50,718 in Chittoor, 50,088 in Anantapur, 46,645 in Guntur, 44,950 in Nellore, 44,912 in Visakhapatnam,

37,865 in Prakasam, 33,425 in Srikakulam, 37,152 in Kadapa, 28,959 in Vizianagaram, 21,873 in Krishna, 2,461 from states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery of coronavirus-infected patients has been good in East Godavari at 67,180, followed by 47,977 in Kurnool, 46,166 in Anantapur, 42,959 in West Godavari, 42,231 in Chittoor, 40,029 in Nellore, 38,997 in Guntur, 38,565 in Visakhapatnam, 31,524 in Kadapa, 26,852 in Srikakulam, 23,821 in Prakasam, 18,708 in Vizianagaram, 18,627 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Prakasamsaw the death of 10 Covid-19 infected patients, followed by

Chittoor with nine, six each in Anantapur, East Godavari and Krishna, five each in Kadapa and Visakhapatnam, four each in Guntur, Nellore, Vizianagaram and West Godavari and three each in Kurnool, Srikakulam.

Chittoor continues to lead the state with the highest number of cumulative deaths of Covid-19 infected patients to the tune of 543, followed by 469 in Guntur, 464 in East Godavari, 425 in Kurnool, 420 in Anantapur, 398 in Nellore, 396 in West Godavari, 389 in Prakasam, 368 in Visakhapatnam, 357 in Krishna, 315 in Kadapa, 293 in Srikakulam and 204 in Vizianagaram.

The health authorities have discharged 9,628 patients in last 24 hours.

2.28L students to attend Eamcet in 118 centres

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, SEPT. 15

As many as 2.28 lakh students will be taking the AP Eamcet exams under strick Covid-19 protocol which starts from Thursday.

Officials have made foolproof arrangements for the smooth conduct of the test up to 25 September in 118 exam centres. They appealed to parents not to stay or gather at the exam centres in view of the virus threat. The exam was repeatedly postponed a couple of times earlier due to the lockdown.

The test would be held in two shifts across the state. The morning session would commence from 9 am to 12 noon while the afternoon session would be held from 3 pm to 6 pm. Three test centres have been arranged in Hyderabad and rest of 115 in AP.

The authorities have also increased the sessions compared to previous years in the wake of the pandemic. Nine ses-

sions for Engineering and five sessions for Agriculture and Pharma are being planned for the current year, while seven sessions were held for Engineering and three sessions were held for Agriculture and Pharma in the last Eamcet.

Eamcet convener Dr V. Ravindra said Covid-19 protocol will be followed at all the exam centres in both AP and TS. He said that nearly 20,000 candidates would attend for each session keeping in view of the contagion. He said that for the convenience of the candidates to reach the examination centres, they have asked the APSRTC to run buses to the exam centres through the district collectors and Special Chief Secretary.

Dr Ravindra said that measures were taken to ensure safety of the candidates and the staff during the examination time. He said that candidates should come two

hours prior to the scheduled exam time to the centre wearing masks and gloves and the candidates should undergo thermal screening at the entrance of the exam centre. He stated that those with a higher temperature will write the exam in the separate isolation room allotted at all the exam centers where the staffs would attend the duties by wearing PPE kits in these rooms.

Dr Ravindra said that more than 100 candidates have applied for Eamcet after the AP CET authorities had given relaxation to the candidates to apply for Eamcet with a late fee of Rs 10,000 till September 15 in the wake of Covid-19 restrictions in the state. He said that additional security and volunteers are deployed at all the centres, wearing masks and gloves is mandatory to staff and sanitisers will be kept handy and liquid soaps will be made available in washrooms.

smuggling Ganja. Further, they asked the three to get into the fake police vehicle and later dropped them in a lonely place and fled, before assaulting them. On a complaint lodged by Chenchaiah Naidu, Renigunta rural police registered a case and launched a man hunt to nab the accused. Acting on tip-off, the Rural CI Amarnath Reddy arrested the accused on Tuesday when they were again conducting another fake vehicular check near Vadamalapeta and seized 2 mobile phones, a stolen car worth around ₹2.15 lakh.

MIDDLEMEN MAKE MOOLAH IN 'PLASMA TRADE'

From Page 1

On the other hand, some middlemen with access to a list of Covid-19 infected and recovered patents and registered donors of plasma, are arranging plasma donors for patients especially in notified Covid-19 hospitals and charging more money. It depends upon the demand and supply for the day. Some corporate hospitals too are offering 'good commission' to middlemen who can arrange the donation of plasma of specific blood groups.

ICRS blood bank chief medical officer at Nellore, Dr Yashovardhan said, "We are allowing only voluntary donors of plasma and the donated plasma is being offered to the required patients following the government fixed cost only as we have to collect and process it before transfusion to the patient."

Meanwhile, Covid-19 infected patients are seeking intervention of the state government to arrest misuse of plasma donation by some middlemen for monetary gain.

AGRI LANDS NEAR PAMPA LOOKED LIKE LAKES

From Page 1

Some of the fields got 10 feet of water, according to the farmers.

Many of the fields are looking like lakes and the farmers said that they incurred great losses as they recently completed transplantation. They said that to prevent the danger from the floods to the paddy crops, the previous governments chalked out a design and also promised the farmers to invite tenders, but they have not. They requested the Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, to take immediate steps to save them from them and their fields from the floods in the Pampa reservoir.

Meanwhile, Kakinada and some other parts of the district experienced heavy downpours with thunder and lightning on Tuesday.

Most of the streets, including the main road, municipal office road, and others were flooded. In Sambamurthy nagar, water is still stagnating up to level of four to five feet.

Residents blamed civic authorities for their plight in that colony as previously there was a major drain in the colony, the waters used to recede fast, even after rains. But it was replaced with a smaller one.

That caused the problem, the residents allege. Many of the other areas like Dummulapet, Jagannaickpur, Suryanarayanapuram, 100 buildings, Venkatnagar were inundated and the waters had not receded till the evening.

In Katrenikona village in Konaseema, the sandy market area was inundated due to heavy rains.

The people blamed that on encroachments, the area is badly hit whenever rains come. They brought it to the notice of Mummdivaram MLA, Ponnada Sathish.

PADDY GROWERS STAGE PROTEST SEEKING MSP

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, SEPT. 15

Criticising the government for its failure to procure the paddy and offer Minimum Support Price, farmers resorted to a protest on Nellore-Mumbai highway at Sangam town in Atmakur segment on Tuesday.

They have dumped some harvested paddy on the road to showcase the damage because of recent rains. They alleged that brokers are offering ₹8,000 for one Putti (850 kg) of paddy as against MSP of ₹15,980 under the pretext of damage to grain besides high percentage of moisture.

They lamented over the situation citing ₹10,000 they invested per each acre to raise the crop.

The farmers blocked the vehicle movement on the highway and refused to relent unless higher authorities of the district assured to lift harvested paddy lying in the fields immediately.

However, the farmers reluctantly called off the stir after district civil supplies officers promised to collect all the harvested paddy within the next 4 days.

AP Travel Association seeks ban on portals

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, SEPT. 15

The Tours and Travels Association of Andhra Pradesh has demanded a ban on online travel portals being supported by Chinese financial agents. The association staged a protest in this regard at TU 142 aircraft museum on the beach road on Tuesday.

The president of the Association K. Vijay Mohan said that the travel industry contributes 10 per cent of the GDP but became the most neglected industry and the situation worsened during the pandemic situation.

He said that the travel industry is looking at bankruptcy, closure of businesses and mass unemployment. Travel agents' capital has been wiped out, income and wealth have been eroded, agents are closing down their business, and have sacked their employees. The morale of the travel agents

has been lost to an industry that looked bright in the truncated state of Andhra Pradesh.

He further added the Covid-19 pandemic has throttled the travel industry, and the cascading effect of the virus has crippled the industry.

Whereas the rest of India shut down in March-end, business for travel agents was shut in January as the news of the virus started picking up from December.

"It is only the travel industry which virtually shut down much earlier than any other industry and remains shut down," the association president said.

The Association held similar protests at Tirupati - At the foothills of the Tirmula entry, Rajahmundry - Godavari Ghat, Vijayawada - Krishna river and Guntur - Taj Residency Vice President of the Association Dheeraj Praha and other office bearers and travel agents were present.

Delay in Yeleru works put farmers to misery

VADREU SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, SEPT. 15

Yeleru modernisation project has been hanging fire for the past decade, as a result, paddy and other standing crops are flooded whenever there are heavy rains.

Every government sanctioned funds just before end of its terms for modernisation of the project. The next government changed the designs or cancelled the previous project proposals.

The main sources of water for Yeleru river are Jaderu and Maderu rivulets in agency areas. In the 1980s, Yeleru reservoir was constructed to irrigate 53,000 acres. However, it irrigates in excess of 63,000-70,000 acres. Instead of solving the problem, the reservoir proved a bane for farmers as flood water inundated their crops year after year. The main reason for this is narrowness of the flood channel and even narrower mouth at the sea. As a result, whenever there is excess inflows, due to slow outflow, backwater floods crops.

During the Congress regime before bifurcation, due to pressure from Jaggampet MLA Thota Venkata Narasimham and the then Union minister M.M. Pallam Raju, the government had sanctioned ₹80 crore for widening the channel (modernisation).

After half the first phase work was completed, the tenure of the Congress government ended so did the project work. During the TDrule after bifurcation, the state government sanctioned ₹130 crore and then the CM N.Chandrababu Naidu laid stone for the works at Kakinada, while Pithapuram MLA S.V.S.N.Varma laid stones at Gollaprolu and Nagulapalli



Minister for agriculture K. Kannababu and East Godavari district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy visit flood-affected areas in Gollaprolu and Pitapuram mandals on Tuesday.

MEETING ON YELERU MODERNISATION SOON, SAYS MINISTEEER

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, SEPT 15

Agriculture minister Kurasala Kannababu said that a high-level meeting would be held to take decision on Yeleru modernization works and a permanent solution would be found for crop submergence problem during monsoon.

Mr Kannababu, along with East Godavari district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy, visited flood-hit areas in Gollaprolu, Pithapuram and Peddapuram mandals on Tuesday.

The minister enquired the officials about the loss suffered by farmers due to inundation of crops. The officials told the minister that 66 villages were affect-

ed in 17 mandals due to heavy rains and floods. Mr Kannababu said that thousands of acres of paddy fields were submerged due to floods to Yeleru reservoir. He assured that the government would help every farmer who suffered huge losses due to floods.

Mr Kannababu suggested that the irrigation officials divert water in Yeleru to tanks and ponds to reduce the inundation of crops. He spoke to the farmers of B.Prathipadu, Bhogapuram, Raparathi, Vadlamuru and other villages.

Meanwhile, collector Muralidhar Reddy on Tuesday visited the bridge between Yeleswaram and Appanapalli, which was caved in on Monday.

SHORT TAKES

US SPL ENVOY ON
AFGHANISTAN
MEETS EAMVINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

The United States Special Representative on Afghanistan Reconciliation, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, was in New Delhi on Tuesday for a brief visit during which he met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla were also present during the meeting.

This was the fifth visit of Khalilzad to India since January 2019. He had last visited India on May 7, 2020.

According to sources, the conversation focused largely on the Intra Afghanistan peace talks and how India can play a major role in the region once United States security forces start withdrawing from war-torn Afghanistan.

Having watched the Afghanistan-Taliban talks from the sidelines so far, India has for the first time taken active participation in the Intra-Afghan Negotiations (IAN) held in Doha on September 12 where Jaishankar addressed through video conferencing.

RAILWAYS TO RUN
CLONE SPL TRAINS
FROM SEPT. 21DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

Considering the huge demand for travel on specific routes, Ministry of Railways has decided to run 20 pairs of 'Clone Special' trains from September 21, 2020.

These 'Clone' trains will run on notified timings and will be fully reserved trains with limited halts.

These Clone Special trains will be in addition to special trains which are already in operation.

Railway officials said these 19 pairs of 'Clone Special' trains will run by utilising Humsafar rakes while one pair Lucknow-Delhi Clone special will run as Jan Shatabdi Express.

Fare of Humsafar rake will be charged as Humsafar trains and for Janshatabdi rake, fare will be charged as Janshatabdi Express.

The ARP (Advanced Reservation Period) will be 10 days for these trains. These trains will be primarily three AC and will have speed higher than the existing special trains.

"Clone trains have not been operated by the Indian Railways in the past. These trains will be operationalised on the routes having high patronage and demand. The clone trains being proposed, are based on the patronisation of already operating Special trains with limited stoppages and faster transit time," officials said.

ODISHA SCRAP
DEALER HELD IN
FRAUD CASEAKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 15

Odisha police on Tuesday arrested a scrap dealer, who was earlier convicted by the Metropolitan Magistrates Court, Kolkata in a fraud case, and produced him before the district Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) court at Jajpur.

The Kolkata court had convicted the dealer in December, 2017 hearing a petition filed by one Champa Nandy.

As per information, accused Partha Sarathi Biswal (46) of Kamalpur village in the district ran a private firm Aditya Scrap Private Ltd in Kolkata with investment from different people. Champa Nandy had reportedly invested over ₹3.5 crore in the company with promise of lucrative return. When the woman did not get any return, she demanded the accused for a refund. However, Biswal failed to fulfill his commitment.

Following this, Nandy moved the Metropolitan Magistrates Court in 2011. On December 21, 2017, the court declared Biswal guilty and sentenced him to one year of imprisonment. The court also directed him to return the whopping amount of money to the woman.

Challenging the conviction, Biswal moved the higher court. However, the higher court upheld the lower court's decision and asked Odisha police to arrest Biswal issuing a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against him on February 9, 2019.

RS passes Aircraft Amendment Bill 2020

Civil aviation minister says the issue of privatisation of airports should be seen in a historical context

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

Parliament on Tuesday passed the Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which seeks to improve India's aviation safety ratings and provide statutory status to regulatory institutions, including the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) and the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB). The Bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha in March, was passed by a voice vote in the Rajya Sabha.

Introducing the Bill, which also seeks to

increase the fine for violations from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore, Civil Aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said amendments were necessary as tremendous growth in civil aviation has thrown many challenges such as saturated airport capacity, lack of trained manpower, limited manpower capabilities, while adding that these are "happy challenges". The proposed amendments follow the 2012 and the 2015 audit by the International Civil Aviation Organisation that had indicated the need to give statutory recognition to these agencies.

However, some members,

also including Congress's K.C. Venugopal, accused the government of privatising airports in the name of development and also centralising powers in its hands.

In his reply to the debate, Puri said the issue of privatisation should be seen in a historical context and noted that country's largest airports Delhi and Mumbai were successfully privatised in 2006 under a previous political dispensation, and proceeds from the process have resulted in getting resources to develop airport infrastructure in the country.

On the Congress' charge of allotting six airports to one group, Puri said the

Delhi and Mumbai airports account for 33 per cent of air traffic and earnings while the six airports that were awarded in 2018 together account for only nine per cent of traffic and earnings.

"In terms of six airports being given to one entity, let me just place it in perspective. When these two airports in Delhi and Mumbai were privatised all subsequent efforts at privatisation contained a stipulation to the effect that prior experience was necessary.... So, we fell into a trap of our own making and not by this government and I don't want to make it as a political point," Puri said.

Oppn members criticise
privatisation of airports

New Delhi, Sept. 15: Some Opposition members in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday accused the government of privatising airports in the name of development and also centralising powers in its hands. Participating in the discussion on 'The Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020' that seeks to improve India's aviation safety ratings and provide statutory status to regula-

tory institutions, including the DGCA, members of the Congress and Left, besides some other parties alleged monopolisation of airports in the hands of one entity. However, the BJP claimed the government's objective is to expand the aviation sector and create the infrastructure to make air travel safer and accessible for all. Congress member K.C. Venugopal demanded a

probe into the privatisation of six airports alleging violation of rules and corruption, a charge denied by BJP member G.V.L. Narasimha Rao who said there is complete transparency under the Modi dispensation. Initiating the debate, Venugopal alleged that the government was promoting crony capitalism by privatising airports in the name of developing them. —PTI

7.5% quota for govt
medical students
Bill passed by TNDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

A Bill to provide 7.5 reservations for students studying in government schools in admissions to undergraduate courses in medicine, dentistry, Indian medicine, and Homeopathy was passed in the Tamil Nadu Assembly on Tuesday.

Moved by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, the Bill provides for preference for students of government schools who have qualified in NEET.

To a query raised by DMK MLA R. Masilamani if social justice will be followed in admission for the 7.5 per cent seats, Palaniswami said the 69 per cent reservation that was given to the state by the late J. Jayalalithaa

would continue and be applicable in this also.

He said that law was to enable poor and rural students to get admission in the various medical courses. As of now students from government schools who get admission in medical courses account for just one per cent and hence the 7.5 per cent quota will ensure that 300 students benefit out of it, Palaniswami said.

The bill was framed after a commission headed by former High Court judge P. Kalaiyarasan gave its recommendation, he said.

With the opening of the 11 new government medical colleges in the state, the number of students who would benefit from this quota would further go up, he added.

Sasikala may be
released on Jan. 27DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
BENGALURU, SEPT. 15

Late Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa's aide V.K. Sasikala, serving a four-year-term in a corruption case here, may be released from jail next January provided she paid the fine amount of ₹10 crore, Karnataka prison department has said in response to an RTI query.

Sasikala, lodged at the Parappana Agrahara Prison here, was convicted and sentenced in February 2017 in the ₹66 crore disproportionate assets case.

"As per prison records, convict prisoner number 9234 Sasikala's probable date of release is January 27, 2021, provided in default fine amount is paid as awarded by the honourable court," Superintendent of Central Prison at Parappana Agrahara R. Latha said in his response to an RTI query by activist T. Narasimha Murthy on September 11.

Latha added Sasikala's "probable date of release" would be February 27, 2022 if the fine is not paid. The officer explained the probable date of release may vary if Sasikala

SASIKALA'S
COUNSEL
EXPRESSES HOPE

Bengaluru: Sasikala's counsel has expressed hope of her early release, possibly by the end of this month, citing remission for good conduct.

As per norms, three days of remission for good conduct is available for every month in jail and so far, she has completed 43 months, making her eligible for a reduction of 129 days in prison. utilises a parole facility. She will have to pay ₹10 crore to walk out of prison on January 27, 2021, else spend another 13 months behind bars. After the Supreme Court restored the trial court judgement in toto against Sasikala and two of her close relatives in the disproportionate assets case, (V.N. Sudhakaran and J. Elavarasi), she surrendered before the court in Karnataka on February 15, 2017, and has been lodged in Parappana Agrahara Central Jail.

Her two relatives are also undergoing 4-year simple imprisonment.



Labourers sort onions at a market in Karad on Tuesday.

— PTI

Sharad Pawar urges Centre to
rethink ban on export of onionsSONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, SEPT. 15

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar on Tuesday urged the central government to rethink over its decision to ban the export of onions. He said such a decision will help Pakistan and other countries. The Maharashtra Congress unit will stage a protest on Wednesday across the state over this decision. Meanwhile, All Bharatiya Kisan Maha Sabha said that the central government has betrayed the farmers of the country by this move.

The NCP chief met Union commerce minister Piyush Goyal with a demand to reconsider its sudden decision. Pawar informed that Goyal has assured him that the government will rethink the decision if there is consensus among the ministries of commerce, finance, and consumer affairs on the issue.

In a series of tweets, Pawar said that the central government has abruptly announced a ban on export of onions. This has led to strong reactions from the onion growing belt in Maharashtra. Therefore, the representatives of various political parties contacted and requested him to convey their demands to the central government.

"To address this issue, I met Union Minister of Commerce and Industry

Piyush Goyal (@PiyushGoyal) today and apprised him of the plight of onion growers. I pointed out to him that these onion growers are mainly small land holders and Jirait farmers (sic)," Pawar tweeted.

In another tweet, he said, "I also brought to his notice that onions are in good demand internationally & we have been exporting onions consistently. But a sudden decision to this effect by the central government is a major blow to India's image as a reliable exporter of onions in the international market (sic)."

In the wake of the decision, there is a possibility that India may emerge as an "unreliable supplier" of the commodity internationally, Pawar said, adding that the move will benefit nations like Pakistan and others. In another tweet, Pawar said Goyal told him that the proposal to ban the export was moved by the Union consumer affairs ministry based on the rising prices of the commodity.

Agitations took place in Munge, Pimpalgaon, Nampur and Umrane markets and protesting farmers stalled auctions under way for some 10,000 quintals that had arrived, and also tried to stop traffic in the vicinity, including on the Mumbai-Agra Highway that skirts past Umrane.

The auctions started on

Nashik farmers
stage protests

Nashik, Sept. 15:

Farmers in Nashik's Lasalgaon area, home to among the largest onion markets in the world, and some other trading spots in the district on Tuesday took to the streets in protest against a ban on export of the kitchen staple.

At Lasalgaon Produce Market Committee (APMC), Asia's biggest onion market, auctions started on Tuesday morning at a price of ₹2,200 per quintal, a figure that angered farmers who claimed the ban on exports was bringing down rates in the domestic markets.

On Monday, rates were 1,100 per quintal on the minimum side, ₹3,209 on the maximum end and ₹2,950 on an average, but the decision to ban

● **AT LASALGAON APMC** auctions started at a price of ₹2,200 per quintal, a figure that angered farmers.

exports brought down the price to ₹2,700 per quintal hours later, protesting farmers said.

The Union government on Monday banned the export of all varieties of onions with immediate effect, a move aimed at increasing availability and checking price of the commodity in the domestic market.

"The export of all varieties of onions is prohibited with immediate effect," the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said in a notification.

The DGFT, an arm of the commerce ministry, deals with exports and imports-related issues. —PTI

Tuesday morning at a price of ₹2,200 per quintal at Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC).

Speaking with The Asian Age, all India Kisan Sabha Maharashtra's general secretary Dr Ajit Navale alleged that owing to the upcoming Bihar

election, the farmers are being sidelined.

The farmers of Maharashtra and the country have been betrayed by the Central government.

The high onion prices are undesirable for any government seeking re-election.

GOLD | SCAM Oppn workers, police engaged in pitched battles demanding minister's resignation

No need for Jaleel to resign, says Pinarayi

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
SEPT. 15

Workers of the Opposition Congress-led UDF and the BJP were engaged in pitched battles with the police in Capital city and many parts of the state on Monday, demanding the resignation of higher education minister K.T. Jaleel.

Opposition parties have been up in arms against Jaleel after the minister was questioned by ED in connection with the allegations regarding aid sought from the UAE consulate during Ramzan in

violation of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (accepting foreign aid without Centre's permission), diplomatic baggage used to bring copies of Quran and gold smuggling, accused Swapna Suresh's role in arranging the flood relief kits.

The epicentre of the Opposition agitation was the state secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram where agitators had gathered since morning holding demonstrations, protests and marches.

A march led by Youth Congress workers to the Secretariat turned violent

when agitators tried to remove the barricades put in front of the main gate.

Police used water cannons to disperse the protesters and resorted to a mild lathicharge in which many Congress workers including K.S. Sabarinathan MLA were injured. The police also used stun grenades to disperse agitators.

The agitation led by Youth Congress state president Shafi Parambil MLA continued for a couple of hours turning the city centre into a battle zone.

The Youth Congress protest march was followed by a march of the

BJP and the Yuva Morcha. The police used force to force against agitators.

Similar agitations took place in Kozhikode, Kannur, Kasargod, Pathanamthitta, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Wayanad.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has defended Jaleel saying he has committed no wrong.

He said the Opposition was resorting to violent agitation on a baseless issue, to create law and order problems in the state.

He said that there was no precedent of a person

resigning on the basis of questioning by an agency. In this case the agency has received some complaints and they wanted certain clarifications from the minister.

"There is no allegation against Jaleel. The Opposition is trying to cook up a story. As far as the gold smuggling case is concerned, some of the accused have been caught and the investigations are on to get others who are involved."

The Chief Minister said the Opposition was trying to link the Quran issue with the gold smuggling case.

"On what basis are they raising such allegations and demanding the minister's resignation?" he asked.

There is no need for him to resign on such baseless allegations.

The Chief Minister said there should not have been a controversy over getting copies of Quran from the UAE consulate.

Jaleel is minister of Wakf and distribution of Quran is normal during Ramzan period when zakat is given.

The Chief Minister said people of the state will reject the Opposition stand on the issue.

INDIA COVID
COUNT INCHES
CLOSER TO 50LVINEETA PANDEY | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15

With close to 84,000 fresh cases, India on Tuesday moved closer to the mark of 50 lakh overall cases of Coronavirus. Till Tuesday morning the tally, as per Union health ministry, was over 49.30 lakh while total number of deaths went past 80,000 with 1,054 new fatalities due to the virus.

However, the recoveries too have been equally high with more than 38.59 lakhs patients cured, taking the recovery rate to 78.28 per cent. According to Johns Hopkins University data India has the highest recoveries in the world, followed by Brazil, the United States, Russia, Colombia and South Africa.

Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan the no. of active cases (9,90,061) are only one-fifth or 20 per cent of the total cases (38,59,399) and there are 14 states and union territories where the number of active cases are less than 5,000.

IN BRIEF

China launches nine satellites

Beijing: China successfully launched on Tuesday a solid-propellant carrier rocket from a ship in the Yellow Sea, sending nine satellites into orbit in the second such sea-based launch mission, the official media reported. The Long March 11-HY2, the 10th member of the Long March 11 family blasted off at 9:22 am from the Debo 3, a self-propelled deck barge that was modified for the mission, *China Daily* reported. The nine satellites belong to the Jilin-1 Gaofen 03-1 group. About 13 minutes later, after travelling 535 km, it has deployed nine Jilin 1 high-resolution Earth-observation satellites, three to take videos and six to take photographs in sun-synchronous orbits, the report said.

NBW issued for Nawaz

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 15

Pakistan's Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday issued non-bailable arrest warrants against Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) supremo Nawaz Sharif, who is currently in London due to medical treatment, for September 22 in Al-Azizia reference. The court rejected his plea seeking exemption from the hearing and directed to initiate proceedings to declare him as proclaimed offender. The court also turned down the PML-N supremo's petition to continue the case hearings through legal representative. Nawaz had requested the IHC to nullify its ruling and allow him to become a part of the court proceedings through his representative. He made the request on medical grounds. The IHC had ordered Nawaz to surrender and appear on September 10 at any cost in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills corruption reference.

UK returns 3 idols to India

London: A set of three idols of Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, stolen from a temple in Tamil Nadu decades ago, were restored to the Indian government on Tuesday after a collector voluntarily offered to hand it back on discovering their true history. The theft dates back to 1978 and led to an investigation by the Idol Wing of the Tamil Nadu Police working along with colleagues in the Metropolitan Police in London. The unnamed collector, who had acquired the statues in good faith, was informed about their dubious provenance by the Met Police. After matching them up with archival photographs from the 1950s held at the French School in Pondicherry, it was proved that the idols in his possession were those belonging to the Vijayanagara period and stolen from Sri Rajagopalaswami Temple at Ananthamangalam in Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu. In a ceremony streamed from India House in London, priests from Sri Murugan Temple in London conducted a short religious ceremony.

AVNI DOSHI ON BOOKER PRIZE SHORTLIST

London, Sept. 15: Dubai-based Indian-origin author Avni Doshi is among the six authors shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize for her debut novel 'Burnt Sugar'. The shortlist was unveiled virtually in London on Tuesday after judges re-evaluated the 13 longlisted novels published in the UK or Ireland between October 2019 and September 2020 to whittle down the shortlist for the GBP 50,000 literary prize in November. "This utterly compelling read examines a complex and unusual mother-daughter relationship with honest, unflinching realism — sometimes emotionally wrenching but also cathartic, written with poignancy and memorability," the judges said of Doshi's entry.

Doshi, born in the US and now living in Dubai, has previously spoken about the long journey to her first novel, which was released in India last year as 'Girl in White Cotton' and for its UK release in July.

Others in the shortlist include Diane Cook for 'The New Wilderness', Tsitsi Dangaremba for the third novel in her trilogy — 'This Mournable Body', Maaza Mengiste for 'The Shadow King', Douglas Stuart for 'Shuggie Bain' and Brandon Taylor for 'Real Life'. Literary heavyweight and former double Booker winner Hilary Mantel, failed to make the shortlist cut.

Brexit bill clears 1st hurdle in Parl

London, Sept. 15: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's controversial bill that aims to override parts of the Brexit divorce agreement struck with the European Union (EU) cleared its first parliamentary hurdle by winning the first House of Commons vote by 340 to 263 votes. The Internal Market Bill, which has faced strong criticism from the Opposition parties and senior members of Johnson's own Conservative Party, is set for rebellions as it progresses through further stages in its parliamentary process despite Johnson's 80-seat majority in the Commons.

The government says the bill contains vital safeguards to protect Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK if negotiations on a future trade deal with the EU break down. But critics warn that it risks damaging the UK by breaching international law.

Two ruling Tory party members of the parliament — Sir Roger Gale and Andrew Percy — voted against the bill on Monday night, while a further 30 abstained, which includes general absences from the House. During a five-hour debate ahead of the vote on Monday evening, Johnson claimed the EU's current approach could lead to excessive checks and even tariffs on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. He said the bill would ensure the UK's "economic and political integrity",

accusing the EU of making unfair demands to "exert leverage" in the trade talks — including a threat to block food exports. "Now that we have left the EU, and the transition period is about to elapse, we need the armature of our law once again to preserve the arrangements on which so many jobs and livelihoods depend. That is the fundamental purpose of this bill," he told the MPs.

"I regret to have to tell the House that in recent months the EU has suggested that it is ready to go to extreme and unreasonable lengths using the Northern Ireland Protocol in a way that goes well beyond common sense, simply to exert leverage against the UK in our negotiations for a free trade agreement," he claimed.

"I understand how some people will feel uneasy over the use of these powers. And I share that sentiment myself and I have absolutely no desire to use these measures. They are an insurance policy," he added. The prime minister also held a call with his Tory party members of the House of Lords on Monday night in anticipation of the bill eventually moving to the Lords.

The Opposition Labour Party accused the government of renegeing on a deal Johnson signed earlier this year, and on which Conservative members of the parliament campaigned in the December 2019 General Election. — PTI

Bigger response if Iran attacks: Don

Washington, Sept. 15: President Donald Trump has warned Iran that any attack against the US would be retaliated with "1,000 times greater in magnitude" after media reports that Tehran is planning to avenge the killing of top general Qasem Soleimani in January. The death of Gen Soleimani, head of Iran's elite Quds Force, in a US airstrike near Baghdad's airport marks a major escalation in the standoff between Washington and Tehran, since US President Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and imposed crippling sanctions. Iran had vowed to seek revenge for Gen Soleimani's killing.

"Any attack by Iran, in any form, against the United States will be met with an attack on Iran that will be 1,000 times greater in magnitude!" Trump said in a tweet after news reports emerged that Iran is planning some kind of attack against the US. "Iran may be planning an assassination or other attack, against the US in retaliation for the killing of the terrorist leader Soleimani, which was carried out by his planning a future attack, murdering US Troops,



Donald Trump

and the death & suffering caused over so many years," Trump wrote.

In a news report based on unnamed intelligence sources, the *Politico* said "the Iranian government is weighing an assassination attempt against the American ambassador to South Africa Lana Marks. "If carried out, it could dramatically ratchet up already serious tensions between the US and Iran and create enormous pressure on Trump to strike back — possibly in the middle of a tense election season," the American news outlet said. An intelligence source told *Fox News* that the intel community is taking the threat against the ambassador seriously. — PTI

India beats China to win poll to UN women panel

United Nations, Sept. 15: In a significant victory, India got elected as Member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the principal global body focussed on gender equality and women empowerment, beating China in a hotly-contested election. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The 54-member ECOSOC, holding the first plenary meeting of its 2021 session in the General Assembly Hall on Monday, held elections for two seats in the Asia-Pacific States category with Afghanistan, India and China in the fray. Afghanistan, which is led by Ambassador Adela Raz at the UN, garnered 39 votes and India got 38 votes of the 54 ballots cast.

China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, got only 27 votes and could not even cross the half-way mark and also failed to get the required majority of 28 votes. "India wins seat in prestigious

● **AFGHANISTAN GARNERED 39 votes and India got 38 votes of the 54 ballots cast. China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, got only 27 votes and could not even cross the half-way mark and also failed to get the required majority of 28 votes.**

#ECOSOC body! India elected Member of Commission on Status of Women #CSW. It's a ringing endorsement of our commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all our endeavours. We thank member states for their support," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T.S. Thirumurti tweeted. India beat China in the hotly-contested election to the prestigious UN body in the year when the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, that was held in Beijing in 1995, is being commemorated around the world.

Don to preside over historic Arab-Israeli recognition deals

Power dynamics to shift as Prez to get a boost ahead of the Nov. US election

Washington, Sept. 15: President Donald Trump is set to preside over the signing of historic diplomatic deals between Israel and two Gulf Arab nations that could herald a dramatic shift in Middle East power dynamics and give him a boost ahead of the November US election.

In a White House ceremony aimed at showcasing presidential statesmanship, Trump will host more than 700 guests Tuesday on the South Lawn to witness the sealing of the agreements between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Trump and his allies hope the occasion will burnish Trump's credentials as a peacemaker at the height of his re-election campaign. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Emirati and Bahraini foreign ministers are to ink the deals before the crowd, which will include representatives of supporting nations from the Washington-based diplomatic corps but few other dignitaries from overseas. Some Congressional Democrats who have offered muted praise have been invited to attend.

In addition to the individual bilateral agreements signed by Israel, the UAE and Bahrain, all three will sign a trilateral document, officials said. The agreements are dubbed the "Abraham Accords" after the patriarch of the world's three major monotheistic religions. Trump is expected to sign as a witness.

'NO PROBLEM' SELLING UAE ADVANCED F-35: TRUMP

Washington, Sept. 15: US President Donald Trump said Tuesday he would have "no problem" selling advanced F-35 warplanes to the United Arab Emirates, despite objections from close ally Israel.

"I personally would have no problem with it," he said on Fox News. "I would

have no problem in selling them the F-35." He said the sale would mean "tremendous jobs at home". The UAE is eyeing the stealth fighter jet as a component in its ambitious plans to make the small, wealthy country into a regional military power. Israel — currently the only country

in the region to possess the US warplanes — has pushed back, insisting on retaining its overwhelming technical advantage against its Arab neighbours. Analysts say that the UAE has used its demand for F-35s as a bargaining chip in agreeing to sign the Trump-brokered deal. — AP



Demonstrators, mask-clad due to the Covid-19 pandemic, hold Palestinian flags during a protest against the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain's decisions to normalise relations with Israel, in the city of Nablus in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday. Palestinians had in August accused Abu Dhabi of a "stab in the back", as the UAE became only the third Arab nation after Egypt and Jordan to announce it would have formal relations with Israel.

— AFP

Police shoot, kill knife-wielding man in Lancaster, set off protests

Lancaster (US), Sept. 15:

A police officer fatally shot a man with a knife after his sister said she called police to get him involuntarily committed, leading to street protests and vandalism in what the mayor of the small Pennsylvania city of Lancaster called a "heartbreaking day". Police posted the officer's body camera video on social media, showing the man chasing the officer down a sidewalk with a knife before he was fatally shot.

Police eventually used tear gas early Monday to disperse hundreds of protesters who took to the streets of the diverse city of 59,000 people in the heart of Pennsylvania Amish country following the shooting death of Ricardo Munoz on Sunday afternoon. Munoz, 27, was mentally ill — diagnosed with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia — and hadn't been taking his medications, his sister said.

Rulennis Munoz, 33, said she had called a crisis intervention organisation and a police non-emergency number to get her brother involuntarily committed. "He had an episode. He was just incoherent and acting out," she said. "I called to find out what the procedure was to get him some help."

Authorities did not

Police chief fired over Prude death

Rochester (US), Sept. 15:

Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren fired the police chief and suspended her top lawyer and communications director Monday in the continuing upheaval over the suffocation death of Daniel Prude.

Chief LeRon Singletary announced his retirement last week as part of a major shakeup of the city's police leadership but said he would stay on through the end of the month. Instead, Warren said at a news conference that she had permanently relieved him while suspending Corporation Counsel Tim Curtin and Communications Director Justin Roj without pay for 30 days following a cursory man-

agement review of the city's role in Prude's death. "This initial look has shown what so many have suspected, that we have a pervasive problem in the Rochester Police Department," Warren said.

"One that views everything through the eyes of the badge and not the citizens we serve. It shows that Prude's death was not taken as seriously as it should have been by those who reviewed the case at every level."

Officers found Prude running naked down the street in March, handcuffed him, put a hood over his head, then held him down until he stopped breathing. He died a week later.

— AP

immediately explain why an officer was dispatched, although Munoz was facing four counts of aggravated assault after he was accused last year of stabbing four people, including a 16-year-old boy in the face, following a fight. The body camera video posted by police late Sunday showed the officer fire several

shots while running away from Munoz, who then falls to the ground.

Protesters gathered outside the police station and, in video posted to social media, they chanted, "Hands up, don't shoot", "No justice, no peace" and "What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!" — AP

FEDS PROBING IN-CUSTODY DEATH OF POC

Batan Rogue (US), Sept. 15: Federal authorities are investigating the death of a PoC during what Louisiana State Police described as a struggle to take him into custody following a rural police chase last year. The death of Ronald Greene, 49, remains shrouded in secrecy because State Police have declined to release body-camera footage related to the May 2019 chase north of Monroe, Louisiana. Troopers say it began when Greene failed to stop for an unspecified traffic violation.

Greene's death drew new attention after his family filed a wrongful death lawsuit this year alleging state troopers "brutalised" Greene and "left him beaten, bloodied and in cardiac arrest" before covering up his actual cause of death. Greene's family said authorities initially claimed Greene died after crashing into a tree but omitted what police now acknowledge was the "struggle" preceding his death. — AP

Leave waters, Indonesia to China

Jakarta, Sept. 15:

An Indonesian patrol ship confronted a Chinese coast guard vessel that spent almost three days in waters where Indonesia claims economic rights and are near the southernmost part of China's disputed South China Sea claims.

The Indonesian Maritime Security Agency said it detected Chinese ship 5204 entering Indonesia's exclusive economic zone in what Indonesia calls the North Natuna waters on Friday night. The agency sent a patrol ship that closed within a kilometre (0.6 mile) of the Chinese coast guard vessel and they communicated to affirm their position and their nation's claims to the area, said Aan Kurnia, chief of the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency. "We asked them to

US BANS IMPORT OF 5 CHINESE GOODS PRODUCED USING 'FORCED LABOUR'

Washington, Sept. 15: The US has banned the import of five goods from China, including computer parts, cotton and hair products, alleging that they are produced in forced labour camps in the restive Muslim-majority Xinjiang province.

In a statement, the Department of Homeland

Security (DHS) said the products subject to the import ban are cotton, apparel, computer parts, and hair products.

The fifth ban is on all products made with labour from the Lop County Number 4 Vocational Skills Education and Training Centre in Xinjiang. — PTI

move out as it was Indonesia's EEZ. But they insisted that it is China's nine-dash-line territory. Our officers at the vessel argued with them until they moved out," Kurnia said. He said he reported the incident to Indonesian government ministers.

"The Chinese coast guard vessel finally left the North Natuna Sea on Monday at 11:20 am," he said. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin indicated that China saw nothing wrong with the ship's actions and said the two countries are in

contact over "relevant maritime issues". "China's rights and interests in the relevant waters of the South China Sea are clear," Wang said at a daily briefing on Tuesday. "As far as I know, Chinese coast guard vessels have been performing normal patrols in the waters under China's jurisdiction." China's "nine-dash line" delineates its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea. A 2016 international arbitration ruling involving the Philippines invalidated most of China's sweeping claims in the sea, but China has ignored the ruling and called it a sham. Indonesia does not have a territorial claim to the South China Sea, but a section of Indonesia's exclusive economic zone lies within China's "nine-dash line". — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

16 SEPTEMBER 2020

A gross misuse of anti-terrorism laws

It's a paradox that citizens in nations that proclaim themselves to be democratic do not get their democratic rights expanded as time goes by but those sitting in positions of power get theirs. People who have been worst victims of governmental excesses never bother to scarp systems once they come to power; they would instead use them effectively to strangle their opponents. India is now witnessing such a paradox. The Delhi police last Sunday arrested Umar Khalid, a former student leader of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for 'inciting violence' during the Delhi riots, and got him remanded to its custody for 10 days. It is understood that he has been booked under, apart from various sections in IPC including murder and attempt to murder, the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which would ensure that he remained incarcerated for a long time without bail.

The police action comes close on the heels of it filing a chargesheet in connection with the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, in which it included the names of CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury, Swaraj Abhiyan leader Yogendra Yadav, economist and academic Jayati Ghosh, Delhi University professor Apoorvanand and documentary filmmaker Rahul Roy. They are purported to have "encouraged" anti-CAA protests. Given the way the Union government uses the legal process to engage people who are ideologically opposed to, as is seen in the case of Bhima Koregaon case, it is not long before all those whose names are mentioned in the chargesheet will find themselves behind bars. What makes it interesting is that it happens on the watch of people, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who cut their teeth in politics fighting the excesses of Emergency.

The BJP government in Uttar Pradesh is going a step further and introducing a parallel system to ensure law and order. Personnel of the newly formed Uttar Pradesh Special Security Force can "without the prior permission of any magistrate and without any warrant, arrest any person". This is a dream project of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath! The government clarifies that the provisions are similar to the ones that govern the functions of the Central Industrial Security Force.

None has a doubt that governments need powerful legal tools to tackle terrorism. But in India, tools such as UAPA are used more to rein in political opponents, apart from persecuting the most vulnerable sections of society such as Dalits, tribals, minorities and other marginalised sections of society, than taking on terrorists. The Allahabad High Court had to recently intervene to ensure liberty to doctor Kafeel Khan after it found that there was little reason to slap sections of the National Security Act, 1980, on him. The Public Safety Act, 1978, of Jammu and Kashmir is being used to smother popular politicians of the Union territory.

"The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened," former US president John F. Kennedy once reminded his countrymen. Time Indians woke up and kept the wolf from the door.

Govt's utter callousness

The opening day of Parliament's Monsoon Session, held under extraordinary circumstances as the country nears five million Covid-19 cases, made it quite evident why the Narendra Modi government was so keen to avoid answering members' questions on the floor of the House. In reply to a written question by a BJD member, labour minister Santosh Gangwar said the government had "no data" on how many guest workers had died or were injured on the long trek back home in the lockdown months. While the minister acknowledged over one crore such workers had walked or otherwise travelled to their home states after the nationwide lockdown was imposed with just four hours' notice, he also said in response to another question that the Centre had no information on how many had lost their jobs, as "no such survey has been conducted by the Centre". This of course begs the inevitable question: Why not? It is utterly shameful that India's government could display such a callous, unfeeling attitude towards its own people — the minister could get away with it only because the response was laid on the table of the House, and he didn't have to face supplementaries afterwards, as would have been inevitable if he was speaking on the floor. Did the government think if it didn't keep count, the deaths — perhaps in thousands — hadn't happened?

The mass movement by India's guest workers, with searing images of people battling the police, sometimes being sprayed with insecticide, often being huddled together in quarantine shelters, was one of the defining global images of Covid-19's impact. It was possibly the largest migration in India's history since the 1947 Partition. The entire world saw how people were collapsing on their way home, fighting exhaustion and sheer hunger, with many losing their lives. But the government, in an extraordinary lack of empathy, apparently didn't feel the need to record these deaths. Was it because it didn't want to be held responsible, as of course it was, for people losing their lives due to official callousness. Was it because it didn't want to be liable for compensation? The answers are overdue.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

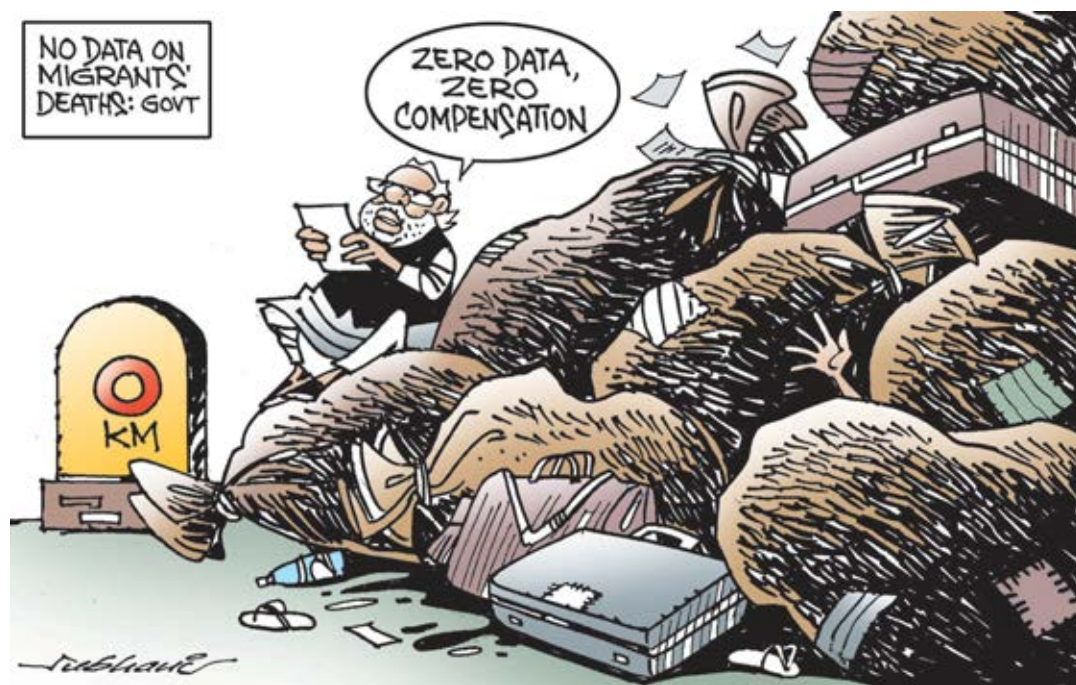
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Export agro-produce to sow seeds of prosperity



V. Vijayasai Reddy

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce recently came out with its report on the promotion of India's agricultural and marine exports. A closer reading of the report quantifies extent of fall of Indian agro and marine exports. It highlights problems faced by Indian exporters. Most export items have plateaued, others have been experiencing a negative growth. Some are falling due to availability of cheaper and better alternatives in international markets, others are negatively affected due to low or lack of quality production in India.

The report, beyond outlining problems, also suggests how to address these issues through direct intervention or sometimes through innovative solutions, such as "export only" tobacco farms and promotion of international marketing.

India is exporting a very small percentage of total agricultural products produced in quantitative terms. In 2018-2019 we exported just 0.2 per cent of our wheat, 1.3 per cent of our fruits and vegetables and 1.25 per cent of our pulses. Export of agricultural commodities, with an exception to rice, is less than two per cent of the total production with no significant increase for the last three years, despite India being one of the largest producers of these commodities.

It is not a case that productivity of our soil needs to increased manifold so even after feeding our population we have a large surplus to export. India is already producing enough surplus, therefore, factors like

inefficiency in supply chain, infrastructure development and a higher value addition for promoting agricultural exports is needed.

India needs to leverage newly created goodwill in central Asian countries into trade benefits to augment agri-exports of wheat and rice. We must also work towards market exploration of new emerging trade destinations of Egypt, Mexico, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines for Indian rice.

On marine exports, the report says there was a 5.8 per cent decline in value of marine exports during the April-December period and a 12 per cent quantity decline. Marine produce should be a profitable venture because of the sheer number of people dependent on it, especially in coastal states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The parliamentary committee opined that special focus should be given to production, marketing and export of shrimp, which fetches a comparatively high price in the international market, especially the United States.

There is huge potential in export of tuna, which, if caught in a certain manner with proper "know-how", can fetch a 15 per cent higher revenue. A scheme has to be devised by the Central

India needs to leverage newly created goodwill in central Asian countries in order to create trade benefits to augment the agri-exports of wheat and rice

India is the third largest exporter of tobacco. With thousands dependent on its farming for their livelihoods, steps should be taken for exportable surplus production

Institute of Fisheries Technology for promoting tuna production and export.

Marine export is an infrastructure-heavy sector, right from maintaining a cold chain of export items to ensuring proper storage and packaging.

We lost over a quarter of our total marine production was lost due to factors related to poor or non-existent infrastructure. The potential of marine export is being hampered by inadequate post-harvest infrastructure and dilapidated fishing harbours. Government must prioritise upgradation of infrastructure facilities and modernization of fishing harbours to augment marine production and export. Centre must ensure upgradation of two fishing harbours at Kochi and Nizampattanam at the earliest.

Spices, for centuries, have been closely associated with Indian cultural traditions, preservation, medicine, cooking habits and embalming. Spices have been our historical basis of trade with the world, from Egypt to Persians or Europeans.

It is not surprising that India is the largest producer, exporter and consumer of spices in the world. India accounts for 47 per cent in quantity and 43 per cent in value of global spice trade. Total production of spices, cultivated in all states, was 9.2 million tonnes in 2018-19. Of this, India exported over one million tonnes (12 per cent of total production), while rest is domestically consumed.

We must ensure that spices with lesser exportable value are not

given undue importance at the cost of other more significant spices like cardamom and chilli.

A controversial but important agricultural produce dealt was tobacco. India produces about 800 million kilos of various types of tobacco every year, mostly in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. India is the third largest producer and exporter of tobacco in the world, which earned India over ₹6,000 crores in foreign exchange. The land under tobacco cultivation in India has come down considerably. With thousands of tobacco farmers dependent on its farming for their livelihoods, steps should be taken for exportable surplus production to enable farmers to earn income without affecting health of our country.

A step could be to have 'export only' tobacco farms for promoting cultivation of tobacco, specifically for export and look at China, world's largest consumer of tobacco for trade.

The Agricultural Export Policy in 2018 envisaged ways to double agricultural exports by 2022 from present \$30 billion to \$60 billion. We can achieve it because India has an advantage of huge landmass and varied climatic conditions and is a global leader in producing cereals, fruits and vegetables, spices and milk, but our share in international trade is very low (2.2 per cent). We must have several ministries like commerce, agriculture, shipping, food processing, finance and external affairs work closely on "mission mode" to achieve the target. Exports shall be key to doubling income of the farmers and in making India a \$5 trillion economy.

The writer is parliamentary party leader of the YSR Congress Party, and chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce

LETTERS

PARLIAMENT

Delayed monsoon session of Parliament finally commenced on Monday. It seems the session was conveyed only to fulfil the constitutional obligation - there should not be a gap between two sessions for more than six months. We can call it a truncated session as many Parliament traditions have been set aside on the pretext of prevailing pandemic. The important question hour is completely withdrawn. But it gives immense satisfaction of participation in the proceedings to every member of the house.

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala
Tiruvuru

MIGRANTS

It is unfortunate that the government does not have the details of deaths of migrant workers who were forced to hit the roads to their faraway native places due to shutdown of livelihood during lockdown period. It's said by the same government that around one crore migrants had taken such an arduous path during that period. That shows the pathetic condition of the workers of informal sector, which houses ninety per cent of the workforce in India. They do work without being offered any social security, job security or rights. Even their deaths are also not figured in official counts. The workforce of informal sector deserves fair treatment.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Giri: Writers must strengthen democracy

By a staff reporter
HYDERABAD, SEPTEMBER 15
Describing men of letters as the conscience of the nation, President V.V. Giri today exhorted writers and artists to strengthen the forces of democracy in our country and to create an atmosphere conducive to national development.

"Literature and art should serve as a uniting instrument and instil in our people a social responsibility and a commitment to national development," the President said. Mr. Giri made these observations while inaugurating the decennial celebrations at Ravindra Bharathi.

Bela Bhatia



Lockdown for some, lock-up for the others

It is obvious that the threat of the Coronavirus, a communicable disease, is worst in places of high population density. The prison is one such place. About half a million persons are incarcerated in more than 1,300 jails scattered all over India. More than two thirds are undertrials.

While most prisoners are charged under some section of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), many are also incarcerated under "special laws". Some, like the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act 1967 (UAPA), are all-India laws, but many states also have their own special laws, such as the Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act 2005 (CSPSA). Large numbers of undertrials have been incarcerated under these laws as part of the so-called war on terror, without due process.

Most of them are ultimately acquitted. For example, in the Jagdalpur central jail of Bastar subdivision in Chhattisgarh, the conviction rate is less than three per cent. Meanwhile, however, these undertrials often remain in prison for as long as seven-eight years or even more, because court trials are notoriously slow. Those who are convicted are unable to appeal with ease because the high court is too far and the lawyers are too expensive.

In any case they would be joining a long waiting list since the high court is currently attending to its backlog of pending cases (the last time I enquired, it was hearing cases filed in 2012).

As a human rights lawyer in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and Sessions courts in Bastar, I have witnessed the anguish and frustrations of undertrials and their families whose cases do not move for years. These "Naxali cases" may be under various sections of the IPC as well as under the UAPA or CSPSA. Many undertrials are prima facie innocent villagers who were picked up after a Maoist action in or around their villages (e.g. an IED blast or attack on a contingent of security forces). Sometimes, a single incident involves many accused. Most of them are not named in the FIR because habitually the FIRs of such incidents are made out against known Maoist leaders or cadres of the area, plus "unknown persons". So these are the unknown persons who, after being picked up when they were sleeping, in the market or forest, or attending to other needs like a visit to the hospital, get labelled as "Naxali" for many years, until their trial is over.

There are many such cases involving a group of villagers. A particularly star-

ting example is that of 120 villagers who were arrested from various villages in Sukma district after the Burkapal incident in which 25 CRPF were killed by the Maoists in 2017. That incident is being tried in the NIA court in Jagdalpur and it is still at the initial stage of framing charges.

The UAPA and other special laws like CSPSA are called black laws because the crimes they seek to cover could be dealt with under IPC and because these laws give special, unaccountable power to the police. It is only high-profile cases like those of Binayak Sen, Varavara Rao and others incarcerated in the Bhima Koregaon case that attract national or even international attention. While this attention is justified, most people do not realise that thousands of powerless, impoverished people face similar or worse injustice. These people remain invisible, while their families, fleeced by local lawyers, are forced to sell their land, trees or part with their savings to get them out of jail. No campaigns are organised for these people because they are largely invisible to the public eye. It does not require much intelligence to see that this is the way in which the state troubles ordinary people to get back at the Maoists. For every actual Maoist,

dozens of ordinary villagers get caught in this vicious web of harassment, lies, revenge and ruin.

In "Naxali" cases, bail is routinely denied in the sessions and NIA courts. As per procedure, it is only after a bail is refused there that the accused can approach the high court for bail. In reality, as explained earlier, that option can be exercised by only a few. Bail is even more elusive during the lockdown, when its importance for the life and safety of the prisoner is greater than ever. They remain stuck in prison with mounting fear that the virus will get them as Covid-19 cases spread in Chhattisgarh prisons. Ever since the lockdown started, family members and lawyers of the prisoners have also been denied "mulakat" (visits). There was a time, in the past few months, when the jails were not even accepting parcels from the families for the inmates.

In March 2020, the Supreme Court ordered state governments to consider releasing selected categories of prisoners during lockdown under parole or bail. In Chhattisgarh, however, only a small minority of prisoners (barely 20 per cent) have been released. Chhattisgarh jails are among the most crowded in the country.

More humane provisions are needed

for prisoners, including political prisoners and those charged under special laws. For example, the 120 people charged in the Burkapal case could easily be in their villages (and report to the local thana if required) during this period. They are likely to be safer in the villages, where the density of population is far less. Likewise, it is not clear what the state gains by continuing to incarcerate the disabled professor G.N. Saibaba, 81-year old Varavara Rao, now ill, or others in the Bhima Koregaon case. All these individuals have been working in full public view for decades and could be allowed to stay at home.

Ultimately, we need to do away with these authoritarian special laws. They have no place in a democracy. Greater attention should be paid to the rights and wellbeing of prisoners during the pandemic, the end to which is nowhere in sight. As far as bail is concerned, it is time to return to the principle underlined by Justice Krishna Iyer in a Supreme Court judgement in 1977: "The basic rule may perhaps be tersely put as bail not jail."

Bela Bhatia is an independent researcher and human rights lawyer based in Bastar, south Chhattisgarh

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,044.35	0.74
Nifty 50	11,521.80	0.71
S&P 500*	3,415.34	0.94
Dollar (₹)	73.64	-0.21
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.97	-0.56
Euro (₹)	87.52	-0.39
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	53,019.422	0.70
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	40.16	0.55
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.029	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.679	0.010

Gujarat okays Lol for first CNG terminal

The Gujarat government approved a letter of intent (LoI) for the world's first CNG terminal at Bhavnagar port with an investment of Rs 1,900 crore, an official statement said. The LoI was approved by chief minister Vijay Rupani, it said. The project will be developed jointly by UK-headquartered Foresight Group, Mumbai-based Padmanabh Mafatlal Group and a Netherland-based consortium.

IndiGo, GoAir told to fly with altered PW engines



Aviation regulator DGCA has asked IndiGo and GoAir to fly only aircraft that have modified Pratt and Whitney engines on them, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said. The PW engine-powered A320 neo planes in IndiGo and GoAir fleets have been facing glitches since 2016. Puri said IndiGo has 134 A320neo and A321neo and have modified PW engines on them. He said GoAir has 46 A320neo and 30 are modified.

Aurobindo ties up with Birac to develop vaccine

Aurobindo Pharma announced collaboration with the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (Birac), set up by the Department of Biotechnology, for developing a Covid-19 vaccine. Birac has facilitated setting up of 'the r-VSV vaccine' manufacturing platform for the first time in India by supporting Aurobindo Pharma's Covid-19 vaccine development, the company said.

Sugar mills owe nearly ₹13,000 cr to cane farmers

Sugar mills owed nearly Rs 13,000 crore to cane farmers as on Sept. 11 for the crop procured during 2019-20 marketing season that started October last year. "Out of total cane dues payable of Rs 75,585 crore for sugar season 2019-20 as on September 11, 2020, about Rs 62,591 crore have been paid to the sugarcane farmers & only Rs 12,994 crore cane dues are yet to be paid," minister D.R. Dadarao said in the Lok Sabha.



■ 'We won't exit India, but we won't scale up' Toyota says won't expand in India, blames high taxes

ANURAG KOTOKY SEPT. 15

Toyota Motor Corp. won't expand further in India due to the country's high tax regime, a blow for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who's trying to lure global companies to offset the deep economic malaise brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

India is planning to offer incentives worth \$23 billion to attract firms to set up manufacturing, people familiar with the matter said last week, including production-linked breaks for automakers. The country is the fourth-biggest car market in the world but international players have struggled to find a niche in a sector that's dominated by cheap, fossil fuelled vehicles.

The government keeps taxes on cars and motorbikes so high that companies find it hard to build scale, said Shekar Viswanathan, vice-chairman of Toyota's local unit, Toyota Kirloskar Motor. The high levies also put owning a car out of reach for many consumers, meaning factories are idled and jobs aren't created, he said.

"The message we are getting, after we have come here and invested money, is that we don't want you," Viswanathan said in an interview. In the absence of any reforms, "we won't exit India, but we won't scale up."

Toyota, one of the world's biggest carmakers, began operating in India in 1997. Its local unit is owned 89

Market India always has to precede Factory India, and this is something the politicians and bureaucrats don't understand"



Shekar Viswanathan, vice-chairman, Toyota Kirloskar Motor

The message we are getting, after we have come here and invested money, is that we don't want you...You'd think the auto sector is making drugs or liquor"

per cent by the Japanese company and has a small market share -just 2.6 per cent in August versus almost 5 per cent a year earlier, Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations data show.

In India, motor vehicles, including cars, two-wheelers and sports utility vehicles, attract taxes as high as 28 per cent. On top of that there can be additional levies, ranging from 1 per cent to as much as 22 per cent, based on a car's type, length or engine size. The tax on a four-metre long SUV with an engine capacity of more than 1500 cc works out to be as high as 50 per cent.

The additional levies are typically imposed on what are considered to be "luxury" goods.

General Motors Co quit the market in 2017 while Ford Motor Co agreed last year to move most of its assets in India into a joint venture with Mahindra &

Mahindra after struggling for more than two decades to win over buyers. That effectively ended independent operations in a country Ford had once said it wanted to be one of its top three markets by 2020.

Such punitive taxes discourage foreign investment, erode automakers' margins and make the cost of launching new products "prohibitive," Viswanathan said. "You'd think the auto sector is making drugs or liquor," he said.

Toyota, which also has an alliance with Suzuki Motor Corp to sell some of Suzuki's compact cars under its own brand, is utilising just about 20 per cent of its capacity in a second plant in India.

Taxes on electric vehicles, currently 5 per cent, will probably also go up once sales increase, Viswanathan said, referring to what he says has become a pattern with suc-

cessive governments.

While discussions are ongoing between ministries for a reduction in taxes, there may not any immediate agreement on an actual cut, heavy industries minister Prakash Javadekar said this month.

Automobile sales in India were weathering a slump before the pandemic, with at least half a million jobs lost. A lobby group has predicted it may take four years for sales to return to pre-slowdown levels.

The biggest players are the local units of Suzuki and Hyundai Motor Co., which have cornered the market for compact, affordable cars. Maruti and Hyundai have a combined share of almost 70 per cent.

Toyota in India has largely pivoted toward hybrid vehicles, which attract taxes of as much as 43 per cent because they aren't purely electric.

But in a nation where few can even afford a car, EVs or their hybrid cousins have yet to gain much acceptance. Elon Musk, the founder of Tesla, has said import duties would make his vehicles unaffordable in India.

"Market India always has to precede Factory India, and this is something the politicians and bureaucrats don't understand," he said. India needs to have demand for a product before asking firms to set up shop, yet "at the slightest sign of a product doing well, they slap it with a higher and higher tax rate," he said.—Bloomberg

E-com, logistic firms kick off festive season hiring

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

Having waited a little longer to assess the festive season demand, e-commerce and logistics firms have started framing their season's hiring plans. After Ecom Express, Flipkart has on Tuesday made a big announcement of helping generate over 70,000 direct and lakhs of indirect seasonal jobs.

Flipkart will be creating direct job opportunities, including delivery executives, pickers, packers and sorters, across its supply chain. Further, there will also be additional indirect jobs created at Flipkart's seller partner locations and kiranas.

The on-boarding of more than 50,000 kiranas by Flipkart for last-mile delivery will also create thousands of seasonal jobs to deliver millions of packages this season.

"By generating employment and enabling our sellers to scale their businesses during this time, we're doing our part to drive growth in the industry and the economy," said Amitesh Jha, senior vice-president, ekart and marketplace, Flipkart.

Flipkart is undertaking training programmes for its direct hires in various aspects of the supply chain through a mix of classroom and digital training. For lakhs of seller partners, MSMEs and artisans, Flipkart provides separate training in warehouse management and packaging.

On Monday, logistics firm Ecom Express had



said that it will be hiring over 30,000 people as part of its seasonal recruitment exercise for its hubs and delivery centres, among others, to meet the festive season demand. These seasonal positions have been created across the country with 75 per cent of the total hiring for beyond metros as well as cities including, Ahmedabad, Surat, Vijayawada, Chandigarh, Indore, Patna, Lucknow, Kanpur, Bhopal and Jaipur.

During the lockdown in May, Amazon had announced plans to open 70,000 seasonal jobs. "We will continue to create thousands of additional opportunities across the network to support customer demand across the country this upcoming festive season," Amazon said. The e-com giant had created 90,000 jobs in the 2019 festive season.

Snapdeal would rely on third-party logistics partners to meet the seasonal delivery needs. "We are working in close coordination with our third-party logistics partners to prepare for the surge in festive orders. Our partners are in the process of augmenting their deliv-

ery capability through additional hiring and expansion of their delivery fleet to ensure time-bound pick-up and delivery of our shipments," said a Snapdeal spokesperson.

According to the Indian Staffing Federation (ISF), logistics and e-commerce are the sectors still hiring in the Covid-19 hit festive season. "There has been a shift in consumerism to the digital platform from physical stores due to the pandemic. This shift will help e-commerce sales this festive season despite an overall subdued demand. However, the e-commerce firms have been waiting to see how Unlock India has been helping the demand situation. Usually, festive season hiring plans are finalised a quarter before the season itself. This time, it got delayed," said Suchita Dutta, executive director, Indian Staffing Federation.

As per ISF data, in the second half of 2018, different sectors had hired around two lakh people for temp jobs. In 2019, despite the gloom in the economy, hiring had seen a 10 to 15 per cent growth.

US tariffs on China illegal: WTO

JAMEY KEATEN GENEVA, SEPT. 15

The World Trade Organization said on Tuesday that Trump administration tariffs on Chinese goods totalling more than \$200 billion are illegal under the rules of the global trade body.

The decision marks the first time the Geneva-based trade body has ruled against a series of tariffs that President Donald Trump's government has imposed on a number of countries,

allies and rivals alike.

Trump has repeatedly criticised the WTO, which oversees international disputes on trade, for allegedly treating the US unfairly.

In its decision, the WTO ruled against the Trump administration's argument that China has engaged in practices harmful to US interests, on issues including intellectual property theft, technology transfer and innovation.

The ruling, in theory, would allow China to

impose retaliatory tariffs on billions worth of US goods—if the process is completed. But the US government can appeal the decision announced by the WTO's dispute settlement body, and the WTO's appeals court is no longer functioning—largely because of Washington's refusal to accept new members for it.

The US tariffs target two batches of Chinese products. Duties of 10 per cent were imposed on some \$200 billion worth of goods in September 2018,

and were jacked up to 25 per cent eight months later. An additional 25 per cent duties were imposed in June 2018 against Chinese goods worth \$34 billion in annual trade.

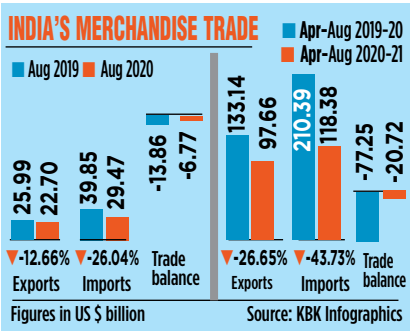
The WTO panel ruled that the US measures violated long-standing international trade rules as they only applied to products from China, and that the US had not substantiated its claim that the Chinese products hit with the extra duties had benefited from unfair Chinese practices. —AP

Merchandise exports decline 12.6% in August

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

Merchandise exports continued to decline for the sixth month in August. While exports were down 12.6 per cent, imports fell by 26 per cent year-on-year. On a sequential basis, the trade deficit further widened in August, making the surplus in June a one-off event.

In August, merchandise exports stood at \$22.70 billion compared to \$25.99 billion a year ago, a negative growth of 12.66 per cent. In rupee terms, the negative growth was 8.33 per cent. Gems and jewellery, petroleum products, man-made yarn, fabrics and made-ups, marine products and leather continued to see decline in ship-



ments. The growth in shipments of rice, other cereals, iron ore, oil meals, oil seeds and drugs & pharma did not help much.

Volatility in markets natural: WFE

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 15

World Federation of Exchanges (WFE), the global industry association for exchanges and clearing houses, has issued guidance on fair and orderly markets at a time when global markets are witnessing a high degree of volatility due to the pandemic impact.

"There has been a marked increase in retail participation in some countries, in both securities and derivatives. This has made it especially important to have a fair, transparent price-formation process," the WFE said.

"This year has seen a diminished global eco-

nomie outlook due to Covid-19, along with a series of actions by authorities that are unprecedented in modern times: restrictions on commerce and movement alongside trillions of dollars of fiscal and monetary stimulus. In such an environment, characterised by profound uncertainty and a fast-changing policy environment, volatility in the prices of financial assets is to be expected," the federation said.

A well-functioning exchange is one that facilitates continuous trading in securities and derivatives, and which provides for the transfer of risk and maximises the incorporation of new information in the value of financial instru-



ments, WFE said.

The purpose of these markets remains to serve the real economy—to raise capital for businesses, to facilitate the investment of savings, and to transfer risk to the parties willing and able to bear it.

Market infrastructures –

exchanges, central counterparties and central securities depositories—are amongst the critical elements of the financial system which must in principle remain open. For this reason, they have well-developed business continuity plans, which were executed.

As in past crises, any extraordinary closure has been as strictly limited as possible. After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, for example, the New York Stock Exchange was closed for six days, as IT infrastructure connecting into the market that had been damaged was repaired.

"Under their successful business continuity plans (including remote working), market infrastruc-

tures have been operating their business robustly as usual, with record volumes of trading. In a small number of jurisdictions, the government or regulator did put in place certain restrictions on trading as a result of Covid-19, for reasons of social distancing," WFE said.

Under no circumstances should restrictions on trading be invoked because a set of participants is concerned about the movement of asset prices, whatever the direction of that movement, the WFE said.

"Falling (or, rapidly rising and falling) asset prices do not imply a lack of integrity in the market on which those assets are traded," it said.

'Developing Asia' to shrink for 1st time since 1962: ADB

KAREN LEMA MANILA, SEPT. 15

The coronavirus pandemic will cause economic output in "developing Asia" to shrink for the first time in nearly six decades in 2020 before it bounces back next year, the Asian Development Bank said on Tuesday.

"Developing Asia", which groups 45 countries in Asia-Pacific, is expected to contract 0.7 per cent this year, the ADB said, forecasting the first negative quarterly figure since 1962. The ADB's previous forecast in June had reckoned on 0.1 per cent growth.

For 2021, the region is forecast to recover and grow 6.8 per cent, still below pre-Covid-19 predictions, the ADB said in an update of its Asian Development Outlook report.

China, where the coronavirus surfaced in December, is seen bucking the trend as the ADB kept its 2020 growth forecast at 1.8 per cent. The world's second largest economy is expected to rebound strongly to 7.7 per cent in 2021, the ADB said.

India's economy is expected to contract 9.0

per cent this year, ADB said, a far worse outcome than the 4.0 per cent contraction previously forecast, ADB said. But it also expected India to bounce back with 8.0 per cent growth next year.

The updated forecasts show the damage brought to Asia by the pandemic was greater than previously thought, with about three-quarters of the region's economies forecast to slump this year.

"Most economies in the Asia and Pacific region can expect difficult growth path for the rest of 2020," ADB chief economist Yasuyuki Sawada said in a statement. "The economic threat posed by the Covid-19 pandemic remains potent, as extended first waves or recurring outbreaks could prompt further containment measures," Sawada said.

Latest forecasts suggest a more protracted "L" shaped recovery for "developing Asia", Sawada said.

Depressed demand and lower oil prices allowed the ADB to keep its inflation forecast for developing Asia at 2.9 per cent, and it is predicted to slow further to 2.3 per cent in 2021. —Reuters

Home prices across India fall 2.3% in first half

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, SEPT. 15

A 2.3 per cent drop in residential prices in the first half of 2020 pulled down India by 11 spots to 54th position in the Global House Price Index of Knight Frank.

Home prices have been coming down in the last one year. As on Q2 2020, prices declined by 1.9 per cent for the 12-month period. For the six-month period of Q1 and Q2 of 2020, prices were down 2.3 per cent compared to the same period last year. In Q2, prices were down by 1.6 per cent.

This saw India moving down 11 spots from 43rd position to 54th position among 56 countries and territories tracked by Knight Frank India.

"The residential sector has been impacted by low demand across most markets in India. Further, the slowdown due to the pandemic in the global economy has adversely affected the real estate sector and the purchasing power of homebuyers. Whilst a lot will depend on when the economy opens up completely, the current softening of prices can be beneficial for the end users to make their purchase decisions. Further, lower home loan interest rate, can provide the right motivation for house purchase," said Shishir Baijal, chairman and managing director, Knight Frank India. Reduction of stamp duty by some states too will force the fence-sitters to make the jump.

The Global House Price Index tracks the movement in mainstream residential prices across 56 countries and territories using official statistics. In the 12-month period between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020, Turkey led the annual rankings with prices up 25.7 per cent, followed by Luxembourg at 13.9 per cent YoY.

SHORT TAKES

Messi in sporting billionaires club

Paris: Lionel Messi may have had to stay put at Barcelona but the Argentine legend did succeed in joining one new club this year — the one reserved for sporting billionaires, according to *Forbes* magazine. The Argentine striker's career earnings of over one billion dollars (840 million euros) places the six-time *Ballon d'Or* winner in a group of mega-wealthy sports figures containing just Tiger Woods, Floyd Mayweather and his great rival on the pitch, Cristiano Ronaldo. *Forbes* said that in 2020 Messi was the best paid footballer in the world with an income of \$126 million from his Barca salary (\$92 million for the 2020/2021 season) and \$34 million from sponsors and other sources. The 33-year-old knocked Juventus forward Ronaldo (\$117 million) off the top of the football salary chart with Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar (\$96 million) in third place. — *AFP*

French Open wild card for Murray

Paris: Andy Murray received a wild card into the French Open. The former No.1 was the only non-Frenchman of eight players to be given a free pass into the main draw of the clay Grand Slam which starts in 13 days. Murray was also awarded a wild card into the US Open, after his struggles with pelvic and shin injuries dropped his ranking to 129th. He went two rounds in New York, and improved to 110th, but still too low for the French Open when it published its main draw entry list. Murray's best French Open result was the final in 2016. Tsvetana Pironkova of Bulgaria and Eugenie Bouchard of Canada were the only non-Frenchwomen to receive wild cards. Pironkova, who made the US Open her first comeback tournament since 2017 after having a son, achieved an impressive first-time run to the quarterfinals, where she was stopped by Serena Williams. — *AP*

156 Tour riders pass virus test

La Tour-Du-Pin, France: The remaining 156 Tour de France riders were authorised to keep racing on Tuesday after the latest coronavirus tests. All 785 tests on Sunday and Monday of riders and staff members of the 22 teams returned negative, Tour organizers and cycling governing body the UCI announced before Stage 16 in the Alps. No rider has tested positive since the race started on Aug. 29 in Nice. The latest screening around the race's second rest day was the fourth since the beginning of the Tour, and the last one before the peloton reaches the Champs Elysees on Sunday. At risk of being cancelled because of the pandemic, the Tour was delayed from its traditional July date to the end of the summer and is being run amid strict health protocols. Anyone who tests positive has to leave the race which affected race director Christian Prudhomme last week and any team with two or more positive tests within seven days also has to abandon. — *AP*

Covid-19 made Manpreet stronger

Bengaluru: India hockey skipper Manpreet Singh says going through a stressful isolation period while recovery from coronavirus has made him a mentally strong player who is now equipped to tackle any situation on the field. Manpreet was one of the six hockey players to test positive for Covid-19 at the team's training base in Bengaluru last month after they arrived for the national camp. Having started their individual sessions after recovering, Manpreet said they still miss being part of the rest of the squad, even though Hockey India, Sports Authority of India and support staffs are doing their best to keep them upbeat. "Hockey India officials would check on us almost every day if the food being provided is good, if our tele-treatment was done regularly, if we are monitoring our oxygen levels regularly and so on," he said. — *PTI*

Live on TV

CRICKET

England vs Australia 3rd ODI from 5.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

WWE NXT

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

FORECAST SUNNY

SRH among top-4 likely contenders for play-off spot

New Delhi, Sept. 15: Armed with a lethal top-order and a solid spin attack, Sunrisers Hyderabad as usual are an epitome of a balanced T20 side which will again be among the top four likely contenders for a play-off spot in this year's Indian Premier League.

Not exactly as high-profile as Mumbai Indians or a Chennai Super Kings, the low-key presence armed with a solid core coaching group comprising Trevor Bayliss (KKR's IPL winning former coach), V.V.S. Laxman and Muttiah Muralitharan, which has done remarkably well to identify their core strengths.

Best part is all three have been in dug-outs of successful IPL outfits and have that been there and done that aura about them.

In David Warner, who is back as captain for this season, the franchise has an inspirational leader and a superb batsman, who would like to lead from the front.

The southpaw led Sunrisers to a title triumph in 2016 and has made the tournament his own, winning the 'Orange Cap' thrice.

Last season, alongside Jonny Bairstow, Warner shattered multiple records including the highest opening partnership in IPL history. The duo single-handedly led Sunrisers to the knock-out stage.

The Australian was the leading run-getter, amassing 692 runs in 12 matches, with eight half-centuries and a ton. While Bairstow scored 445 runs in 10 games, notching up two fifties and a century.

This year again, the pair will be expected to do the heavy lifting with the bat, while senior India pacer Bhuvaneshwar Kumar and the Afghanistan T20 captain Rashid Khan will be manning the bowling resources. Siddarth Kaul and Shahbaz Nadeem are potent Indian bowling options while Billy Stanlake can crank it up considerably.

Sunrisers' blind spot in the lack of depth in their batting order. The team will rely on Manish Pandey and Kane Williamson to provide direction provided Warner and Bairstow fail to click as a pair. — *PTI*

Chelsea off to bright start

Brighton, Sept. 15: Frank Lampard believes Chelsea are already showing the benefits of his £200 million (\$257 million) spending spree as they kicked off their Premier League campaign with a 3-1 win at Brighton on Monday.

Blues boss Lampard has splashed out on a host of new signings and the early returns on his lavish investment were promising. Germany striker Timo Werner, a £53 million recruit from Leipzig, won the penalty that Jorginho converted to put Chelsea ahead.

Kai Havertz, who made a £70 million switch from Bayer Leverkusen, wasn't quite so impactful, but Lampard will be confident there are better days to come from the young Germany forward.

"Timo's speed to win the penalty showed he is sharp and he was a threat all night. He is very mobile and I liked his performance," Lampard said, adding, "With Kai we saw a lot as well. To get these minutes will only be good and both of them will be huge players for this club."

Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga was guilty of another mistake when Leandro Trossard equalised for Brighton.

But Reece James' superb strike put Chelsea back in front before Kurt Zouma's deflected effort sealed the points.

It was an encouraging result for Lampard, who has accepted he is under pressure to deliver a title



Sunrisers Hyderabad pacer Bhuvaneshwar Kumar (left) interacts with teammate T. Natarajan during a practice session in this file photo.

Players want quarantine reduced

New Delhi, Sept. 15: Australia and England's IPL-bound stars, who are supposed to undergo a six-day quarantine after arriving in the UAE, have requested the BCCI to reduce the duration to three days to ensure their availability from the start of the tournament.

Around 21 players, currently part of an England-Australia white-ball series, will be boarding a chartered flight from Manchester to Dubai, touching base on September 17. They can only be available from September 23, while tournament gets underway

● **Desperate to not miss a single game, a big-hitting star has requested BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, on behalf of the players from both countries, to lessen the quarantine period to three days.**

from September 19.

Desperate to not miss a single game, a big-hitting star has requested BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, on behalf of the players from both countries, to lessen the quarantine period to three days.

Ganguly, who is in the UAE along with other office-bearers to oversee the tournament's prepa-

rations, wasn't available for a comment but a senior IPL source admitted that a plea has been made.

"Yes, the BCCI president has received a request. It may have been written by one of the players but it is something that all the English and Australian players, who are coming from the UK, feel," a senior IPL source said on conditions of anonymity.

FORMER INDIA PLAYER PATIL PASSES AWAY

Mumbai, Sept. 15: Former India player Sadashiv Raoji Patil, who represented the country in one Test match, died at his residence in Kolhapur on Tuesday.

He was 86 and is survived by wife and two daughters.

"He died in his sleep in the wee hours on Tuesday at his residence in Ruikar Colony in Kolhapur," Ramesh Kadam, a former office bearer of Kolhapur District Cricket Association, said.

BCCI mourned the death of Patil and recollected his cricketing journey, largely restricted to domestic cricket.

"Patil, a medium-pacer, had made an instant impact on his first-class debut for Maharashtra in the 1952-53 season. Playing against Mumbai, he bowled unchanged to skittle the domestic champions for 112 after Maharashtra were bowled out for a mere 167," BCCI said.

"In the 2nd innings, he took three wickets for 68 as Maharashtra secured a 19-run win. He earned the prized India Test cap (No. 79) when he made his debut at the Brabourne Stadium against the visiting New Zealand team in 1955 under the captaincy of Polly Umrigar."

Though he never played for India again, Patil continued to play for Maharashtra. — *PTI*

Thomas-Uber Cup postponed

New Delhi, Sept. 15: The Thomas and Uber Cup in Denmark was on Tuesday postponed to next year by the Badminton World Federation following a wave of withdrawals by top teams due to the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

India had announced both the men's and women's squads for the prestigious event which was scheduled to be held in Aarhus, Denmark from October 3 to 11.

However, after Indonesia and South Korea on Friday joined Thailand, Australia, Chinese Taipei and Algeria in pulling out due to the dreaded disease, the sport's governing body held a virtual emergency council meeting on Sunday.

"The Badminton World Federation (BWF), in full consultation and agreement with local host Badminton Denmark, has made the tough decision to postpone the TOTAL BWF Thomas & Uber Cup Finals 2020 in Aarhus, Denmark," BWF said in a statement.

"The decision comes following the withdrawal of a number of participating teams from the TOTAL BWF Thomas and Uber Cup Finals and the European leg of the adjust-

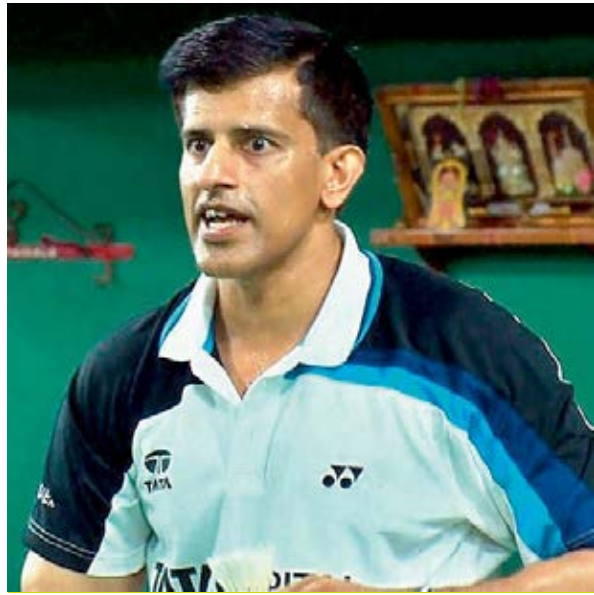
● **After Indonesia and South Korea on Friday joined Thailand, Australia, Chinese Taipei and Algeria in pulling out due to the dreaded disease, badminton's governing body held a virtual emergency council meeting and made the decision.**

ed HSBC BWF World Tour. "BWF is looking into possible alternative dates to reschedule the World Men's and Women's Team Championships, but on dates not before into 2021," it added.

BWF had tried to rope in Singapore and Hong Kong as replacements but they declined the invitation.

There were also reports that Japan was contemplating withdrawing from the event, while China too was awaiting government's approval. September 18 was the last date for confirmation.

Among top players, India's Saina Nehwal had raised concerns about the timing of the event, asking whether it would be safe to go ahead with it in the middle of the pandemic. — *PTI*



Former India badminton coach Vimal Kumar.

Vimal blames it on teams from Asia

New Delhi, Sept. 15: Former India badminton coach Vimal Kumar on Tuesday blamed the withdrawals by Asian nations for the postponement of the Thomas and Uber Cup Final, calling it a "big setback" for the sport.

"What Asian nations have done, it is really disappointing. There are no major issues in these countries, they are having local events there, so to pull out in this way, is a big setback for the sport."

— **VIMAL KUMAR** badminton coach

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— **VIMAL KUMAR** badminton coach

the event to next year.

Vimal said: "It was an ideal way to revive the circuit. The platform was there. We are not as big as China but India stood positive, we wanted to participate but if big countries don't play, what can BWF do? How will they conduct events? I'll blame the Asian nation for this mess."

The international body, though, decided to proceed with the Denmark Open in Odense as originally planned from October 13-18, while cancelling the Denmark Masters that was slated for October 20 to 25. — *PTI*

SAI UPGRADES COVID-19 SOP TO TACKLE THREAT

New Delhi, Sept. 15: Athletes who get the nod to train at the restarted national camps will have to undergo 15-day self-isolation before joining in, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) announced on Tuesday, "upgrading" the Standard Operating Procedure to tackle the Covid-19 threat at its facilities.

A six-member committee, headed by SAI secretary Rohit Bharadwaj, had in May formulated the original SOP for resumption of sporting activities across the country. National camps have resumed for boxing, athletics, and badminton among others after over five months of a shutdown.

"The (upgraded) SOP is in continuation of the SOP released by SAI earlier, and includes procedural changes with regard to new trainees joining the training camps," a SAI statement read. The upgraded SOP will apply to the ones who will join now or for the camps which will begin later. — *PTI*

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