

IN BRIEF

Noida sees 171 Covid, total at 8,906

Noida: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar on Monday recorded 171 new Covid cases, pushing the district's infection tally to 8,906, official data showed. The number of active cases jumped to 1,520 from 1,429 on Sunday, according to the data released by the UP health department for a 24-hour period. A total of 78 patients got discharged during the period, as the total number of recoveries so far in the district reached 7,339, the data showed. The district has so far recorded 47 deaths linked to the disease. Meanwhile, the mortality rate among positive patients in Gautam Buddh Nagar improved slightly to 0.52 per cent from 0.53 per cent on Sunday. The recovery rate dropped slightly to 82.40 per cent from 83.10 per cent the previous day, as per the statistics. Gautam Buddh Nagar currently stands 23rd among districts in UP in terms of Covid-linked deaths, sixth in recoveries and ninth in active cases, according to the data. — PTI

Drunk man slips to death in Gr Noida

Noida: A 22-year-old man died allegedly after falling in an inebriated condition and hitting his head against a blunt object in a vacant plot of a housing society in Greater Noida, police said on Monday. Dhiraj Kumar Manjhi was in a vacant plot of land of Ecotech 12 area when the incident took place around midnight, the police said. Manjhi hailed from Lakhisarai in Bihar and was currently living in Ecotech 12 area, under the Biskrah police station limits, an official said. "Locals said Manjhi was very drunk last night. He slipped and hit his head with some blunt object, leading to a head injury and subsequent death," the local police official said. The body has been sent for post mortem and further proceedings are underway, the police said.

Music event held at juvenile home

New Delhi: A virtual musical evening for children of a Noida-based juvenile home was recently organized by Rasta Foundation, an NGO founded by PM national Bal Puruskar winner Parth Sarthi. Called 'Tarang', the primary aim of the programme was to channelize the positive energy of the juveniles into musical activities. The programme saw children singing Bollywood songs like "Sare Jaha Se Accha Hindustan Hamara" and "Ae Malik Tere Bande Hum." Chief guest Anil Kumar Singh, district programme officer Atul Sony and Dharmendra Maurya were among those who praised the organisers for engaging juveniles in musical activities. Parth, a Class 12 student, said he founded the NGO in 2018, while teaching 'Run Away Children/missing children' at Apna Ghar of Salaam Balak Trust during his summer vacation. Parth efforts to organise an Aadhaar Camp at Apna Ghar had helped people to trace their 12 missing children. So far, he is said to have reunited more than 20 missing children with their parents using Aadhaar as technology. Parth had earlier organised similar musical performance of children of Apna Ghar at Greater Noida Carnival and plans to do more such workshops for vulnerable children. In future he wants to work on social entrepreneurship.

Man arrested with 50kg of cannabis

Noida: A suspected drug trafficker was arrested and 50 kilograms of cannabis worth ₹5 lakh was allegedly seized from him in Uttar Pradesh's Noida on Monday, police said. The accused, in his 20s, was held near the Sector-74 roundabout with the contraband, which was in his car, they said. Mohit Rai is a native of Champaran district in Bihar and currently lives in Sector-53 here, a police spokesperson said. "He was held with 50 kilograms of cannabis in his car. The contraband is pegged worth ₹5 lakh. The cannabis has been seized and his car impounded," the spokesperson said. An FIR has been lodged against Rai at the Sector-49 police station under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, police said.



A metro train arrives at the Huda City Center station following resumption of operations by the Delhi Metro in graded manner in Gurugram on Monday. — PTI

Empty platforms as Metro resumes services

New Delhi, Sept. 7: Platforms and key hub stations, including Rajiv Chowk, wore a deserted look, eateries remained closed and the ambience far removed from the usual hustle-and-bustle as the Delhi metro services resumed on Monday after a 169-day hiatus triggered by the Covid pandemic. Station employees frequently sanitised areas of the metro station and ensured social distancing norms, even as very few commuters opted for the metro services on the first day.

Rajiv Chowk, which is one of the busiest stations of the national capital remained empty. At around 9 am, the usually busy entry point at Rajiv Chowk metro station was deserted with officials, wearing masks and face shields, ready with sanitizers to ensure a safe ride for passengers. After the entry point, there was a second layer of sanitisation process where thermal screening of passengers as well as their luggage was done. Inman Khan, who was travelling from Chattarpur to Barakhamba metro station, was on his way to attend a job interview. "The ride was smooth and there were hardly

STATION EMPLOYEES frequently sanitised areas of the metro station and ensured social distancing norms, even as very few commuters opted for the metro services on the first day

less than five commuters in my compartment. So, we had ample space to maintain social distancing even within the coaches. I'm glad that metro services have finally begun or I wouldn't have been able to make it for my interview on time," he said.

Another commuter, Vishal Naik (21), a resident of Shastri Park, was relieved that now he would finally be able to reach office in Connaught Place on time.

"Until now, everyday, it took almost two-three hours to reach office. Half of my time was spent in travelling. I had to start at least an hour early from home and wait for unusually longer hours at the bus stands and if the passenger count exceeded

beyond 20, I had to again wait to catch the next bus, which is equally risky during pandemic," he said. Asked if he was afraid to take the ride amid the ongoing Covid pandemic, Naik said metro rides are much preferred than buses.

Rajiv Chowk metro station, which serves as an interchange facility between the Yellow Line and the Blue Line, witnessed an unusually thin crowd between 9 am to 11 am. While many train coaches remained totally empty, some had hardly one passengers. Some others had less than 10 passengers on board.

Deepika Nautiyal, a resident of Laxmi Nagar, said she is scared but has taken all the precautions. — PTI

City BJP chief booed by civic workers over pending salaries

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

Hooting by municipal corporation employees left Delhi BJP president Adesh Kumar Gupta stumped on Monday as he reached the North Delhi Municipal Corporation's headquarters to join the protesting councillors.

The ruling BJP councillors in the three municipal corporations organised a demonstration against the Delhi government alleging that the AAP dispensation is not releasing due funds to the civic bodies.

All the councillors of AAP led by senior leader Durgesh Pathak also staged a protest in support of MCD employees who were staging a protest outside the Civic Centre.

On Friday, North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash announced that BJP councillors would march with

all the employees from the corporation's headquarters to the Delhi Secretariat. BJP councillors and former North Delhi mayor Mr Gupta also joined the protest at the civic body headquarters where municipal employees are already organising daily sit in protest demanding payment of due salary.

A BJP councillor said that Mr Gupta was advised not to share the stage with protesting employees but as soon as he reached the Civic Centre, he tried to share the stage with the protesting employees and they opposed it. "They shouted slogans against the ruling dispensation in the civic bodies and demanded immediate release of due salary. They did not allow Mr Gupta on their stage and kept shouting slogans while he addressed from beside," he added. Amidst the slogans

from protesting employees, Mr Gupta ended his address midway and started the march.

Executive member of the confederation of MCD employees' Union Mukesh Sharma said that employees are demanding their pending salary and will not permit anyone to politicise its stage.

AAP MLA Raghav Chadha said, "Aam Aadmi Party workers were protesting peacefully on Monday to raise voice for the poor employees of the MCDs. But BJP sent its police and beat up our leaders and activists and got them jailed. Our people were not allowed to raise voice for the rights of the MCD employees."

Leader of Congress party in North Corporation Mukesh Goyal said that AAP and BJP are fooling municipal employees and citizens.

Consumers get relief on electricity bills

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

In order to avoid hardships to non-domestic or commercial and industrial consumers during the complete lockdown period of April and May 2020 and considering the demand of industry associations and non-domestic consumers, the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) has reduced fixed charges by 50 per cent for the unutilised capacity of these consumers for this period.

The total unutilised capacity during this period was 80 per cent out of which 84 per cent pertains to non-domestic consumers and 75 per cent to industrial consumers.

Delhi's power minister Satyendar Jain said, "This will be a huge relief for the non-domestic and commercial users. The expected impact of the said waiver is around Rs 160 crore. This will benefit around 44,000 industrial consumers and around 10 lakh non-domestic and commercial consumers."

Tweeting the order issued by the DERC, CM Arvind Kejriwal said,

DERC HAS reduced fixed charges by 50 per cent for the unutilised capacity of these consumers for this period

sumers and 75 per cent to industrial consumers. Delhi's power minister Satyendar Jain said, "This will be a huge relief for the non-domestic and commercial users. The expected impact of the said waiver is around Rs 160 crore. This will benefit around 44,000 industrial consumers and around 10 lakh non-domestic and commercial consumers."

Tweeting the order issued by the DERC, CM Arvind Kejriwal said,

Attempt to hound our fact-checker: Sinha**Alt News comes out in support of Zubair**

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

Day after two FIRs were registered against fact checker's website AltNews co-founder Mohammad Zubair in Delhi and Raipur of alleged online harassment of a minor girl, hashtag "IStandWithZubair" was trending on Twitter. Meanwhile, Pratik Sinha, another co-founder of AltNews, shared some screenshots of obscene and salacious posts made by JSINGH2252 on his Twitter handle.

He wrote, "It must be noted that NCPDR commission headed by @KanoongoPriyank has acted against @zoo_bear on the basis of a bogus complaint by @JSINGH2252. Who is this @JSINGH2252? Here's a preview into the vulgar mindset of this person. Is the establishment a voice for such people now?"

Later, on Monday, the National Commission for



Pratik Sinha

Women taking account of the post made by Mr Sinha filed a complaint with the cybercrime cell and also asked Twitter to take action against Twitter user JSINGH2252.

"NCWIndia has come across this post enclosing offensive tweets by @JSINGH2252 which has posted pictures of women with misogynistic comments. Our chairperson @sharmarekha has written to @TwitterIndia for deleting the account & to stop transmission of such content at the earliest," NCW tweeted.

Mr Sinha, in a statement on Twitter, stood by his colleague and alleged that the FIRs were an attempt to hound Mr Zubair

through the misuse of legal apparatus.

"An attempt is being made to hound co-founder of AltNews Mohammed Zubair (@zoo_bear) through misuse of legal apparatus. AltNews stands by Mohammed Zubair. Zubair has been in the forefront of fighting fake narratives and his work hurts those who have weaponised misinformation to subvert the Indian democracy," Mr Sinha said on Twitter.

Earlier, on August 6, Mr Zubair responded to an abusive message from Twitter user Jagdish Singh, who uses the handle @JSINGH2252. He posted Mr Singh's display picture, which features a little girl who is perhaps his granddaughter. Mr Zubair blurred her face in the image posted.

"Hello Jagdish Singh. Does your cute granddaughter know about your part time job of abusing people on social media? I suggest you to change your profile pic," he wrote.

'National Education Policy lacks roadmap for implementation'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said on Monday the new National Education Policy (NEP) lacks the roadmap for implementation and needs proper planning so that it is not reduced to just a wonderful idea.

Sisodia, who also holds the education portfolio, made the comments at the 'Governors' Conference on the Role of NEP in Transforming Higher Education'.

"The new national education policy lacks the action plan to implement it. The implementation of this policy should be carefully planned so that it is not limited to just a wonderful idea. It is necessary to put national education policy into practice rather than restricting it to only wishful thinking," he said.

"This policy talks about spending 6 per cent of GDP on education. It has been said in the 1968 policy as well but never implemented. Thus, a law should be made so that successive governments are bound by it and necessary resources needed for effective implementation of the policy can be guaranteed," Sisodia added.



Manish Sisodia

The NEP approved by the Union Cabinet in July replaces the 34-year-old National Policy on Education framed in 1986 and is aimed at paving the way for transformational reforms in school and higher education systems to make India a global knowledge superpower.

"The National Education Policy talks about vocational education. At present, about 80 per cent of the youth having a degree are not considered employable. This needs our attention. Even after completing 20 years of education, if our students are not employable then where does the fault lies?" Sisodia posed.

"It is inappropriate to treat vocational degree differently from an undergraduate degree in any other subject. These courses should be given equal importance, then only we will be able to reap their benefits," he added.

2,077 Covid cases take city's tally to over 1.93L

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

The national capital recorded 2,077 fresh Covid cases on Monday, taking the tally to over 1.93 lakh, while the death toll mounted to 4,599, authorities said.

Thirty-two fatalities were recorded in the last 24 hours, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

A total of 22,954 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours — 7,804 RTPCR/CBNAAT/True Nat and 15,150 rapid antigen tests.

The number of tests conducted was lower than the average number of 36,000 tests being conducted since September 3, according to data.

The positivity rate stood at 9.04 per cent while the recovery rate was at 87 per cent.

Delhi recorded 3,256 fresh Covid cases on Sunday, the highest single-day spike in 72 days. It was the first time since June 26 that the cases had crossed the 3,000-mark.

On Sunday, 29 fatalities were reported. On Saturday, 25 deaths due to the disease were reported and the daily case count was 2,973.

On Friday, 13 deaths were recorded and the daily case count was 2,914.

On September 1, 2 and 3, the fresh cases count stood at 2,312, 2,509 and 2,737, respectively, according to data.

On June 23, the national capital had reported the highest single-day spike of 3,947 cases so far.

The number of active cases on Monday stood at 20,543, a minor decline from Sunday's figure of 20,909.

The Delhi government has significantly ramped up testing in the past few days. Barring August 31, when over 14,000 tests were conducted and 1,358 fresh cases reported, since August 30, daily cases count has been recorded in excess of 2,000.

2 members of Babbar Khalsa arrested in city

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

Two suspected members of the banned terrorist group Babbar Khalsa International have been arrested following a brief exchange of fire in northwest Delhi, police said on Monday.

The duo were planning targeted killings in various north Indian states on the directions of Khalistan movement leaders sponsored by Pakistan's ISI, they said.

Seven pistols with 45 cartridges were recovered from their possession. The police have also recovered two Android phones containing incriminating videos and photographs related to Khalistan movement and their propagators, police said.

The accused have been identified as Bhupender alias Dilawar Singh (41) and Kulwant Singh (39), both residents of Ludhiana, the police said, adding that they were also wanted in some cases in Punjab.

DCP (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said, "The arrested duo are hardcore supporters of Khalistan movement and were planning to execute targeted killings in various states of northern India on the directions of Pakistan ISI sponsored Khalistani leaders."

The officer said Bhupender is a member of two pro-Pakistan related public groups — 'Pakistan Zindabad' and 'Defenders of Pakistan'.

Two letters of Babbar Khalsa International, remembering and praising Dilawar Singh Babbar, who assassinated former Punjab chief minister Beant Singh, have also been recovered from his mobile phone.

The officer added that Bhupender is very active on Facebook and shared high radical contents and videos related to Khalistan movement and Sulej-Yamuna Link canal (SYL) issue on his social media account.

BTech for dog handler: IIT clarifies after post goes viral

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

A faux pas in a job advertisement for the position of a dog handler posted by the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi created quite a buzz on social media, prompting the institute to issue a clarification and cancel the recruitment.

On August 26, Indian Institutes of Technology-Delhi had sought applications for the post of a dog

handler, and the notice stated that the eligibility criteria was "B.A./B.Sc./B.Com/B.Tech or any equivalent undergraduate degree". This led to a social media storm.

In a statement issued on September 6, the institute said, "In reference to a job advertisement dated 26-08-2020 for a post titled 'Dog Handler' (on purely contract basis), IIT Delhi would like to clarify that the minimum qualification

ON AUGUST 26, IIT-Delhi had sought applications for the post of a dog handler, and the notice stated that the eligibility criteria was 'B.A./B.Sc./B.Com/B.Tech or any equivalent undergraduate degree'. This led to a social media storm

as mentioned in the advertisement got inadvertently copied from

another job advertisement."

The qualification intended in the advertisement was "Bachelor of Veterinary Science", it said, adding that the recruitment process was cancelled after the mistake was brought to the notice of the higher authorities.

"A fresh process in due course will be initiated to hire a Consultant (on purely contract basis) with suitable minimum

qualification required for the job profile that involves proper care of a large number of stray dogs on the campus (providing them medical aid like vaccination, medicine, IV drip etc. and food), handling of issues and challenges relating to stray dogs, liaison with campus community- students, employees, construction workers etc., local government bodies and NGO," the statement said.

SHORT TAKES

Plea filed in SC to put off Bihar polls

New Delhi: A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Election Commission to postpone Assembly elections scheduled in October and November in Bihar due to Covid-19 pandemic and worsening flood situation. The top court on August 28 had junked a similar PIL seeking postponement of the assembly polls in the state till it is free from the novel coronavirus, saying that it cannot be a ground and moreover, the Election Commission will consider everything before taking any decision. The fresh plea has been filed by one Rastravadi Janta Party, a registered political party through its President Anil Bharati and has sought a direction to the poll panel "to postpone the Bihar Legislative Assembly Election which is scheduled to be held in the month of October-November". It has also sought a direction that the election be held "sometime in the month of March, 2021." — PTI

5 tiger poachers arrested in K'taka

Bengaluru: Five poachers who allegedly killed a tiger in Nagarhole Tiger Reserve in Karnataka recently have been nabbed by the state Forest department personnel with Union minister of environment and forest Prakash Javadekar praising the latter for their swift action. The poachers had shot dead the male tiger at Nagarhole and mutilated it for its claws and canines recently, officials said. All the five involved have been nabbed within ten days, they said, adding tiger claws, canines and deer meat among others that have been recovered from them. — PTI

Punjab MLA booked for inciting people

Chandigarh: The Punjab police on Monday booked Lok Insaaf Party MLA Simarjit Singh Bains for allegedly inciting people against wearing masks and misleading them by various rumours on the Covid-19 pandemic. The FIR against Bains was registered on a complaint by Ludhiana civil surgeon who requested legal action against the MLA from Atam Nagar constituency for allegedly misguiding people through a video clip on Covid-19, a police spokesperson said. The case against the MLA has been registered under relevant sections of the Disaster Management Act, the Epidemic Diseases Act and the IPC at Ludhiana, he said. A legal opinion was also sought on the issue by the Ludhiana Police before lodging the case against the MLA, he added. — PTI

Two Naxals killed in Telangana encounter

Hyderabad: Two Maoists were killed in an "exchange of fire" between them and the police in Bhadradi Kothagudem district of Telangana on Monday afternoon, police said. The incident occurred in Cherla at around 3 pm when special police parties were combing the forest area between Vaddipeta and Pussuguppa, they said. "An exchange of fire occurred between a group of armed underground extremists and District Police Special party. It lasted for about 20 minutes. On searching the area, police found bodies of two male extremists", Bhadradi Kothagudem DSP Sunil Dutt said. Police also seized fire arms including, one short weapon (pistol), two hover-sacks. The search was still going on, the SP said. — PTI

11 arrested for drug smuggling in B'luru

Bengaluru: In a major crackdown on drug peddling in the city, 11 people have been arrested and drugs worth Rs 90 lakh, including MDMA, LSD and brown sugar seized from them, police said here on Monday. Bengaluru police commissioner Kamal Pant said those arrested over the past few days used the dark web for the sale and purchase of synthetic narcotics, paying in bitcoins. The seizure included 1,100 LSD strips, 980 MDMA (also known as Ecstasy) tablets, 450 grams of MDMA crystal, 25 grams of brown sugar, 500 ml weed oil and 48 Kg of cannabis. Those arrested include a BCA student, a college dropout and delivery boys, he said. — PTI



Mother and son of Special Frontier Force (SFF) commando Nyima Tenzin, who lost his life in the last week of August when he stepped on a landmine near the Line of Actual Control, during his cremation in Devchan, Leh, on Monday. — PTI

Army's Tibetan braveheart cremated

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

In a rare move, the last rites of commando Nyima Tenzin from India's covert elite paramilitary force "Special Frontier Force", which recruits its men exclusively from Tibetan migrants, was performed on Monday in Ladakh with full honors in public glare attended by top BJP functionaries.

The funeral ceremony of a Special Frontier Force (SFF) commando, who died in a mine blast in South Pangong Tso where India is involved in a face-



Nyima Tenzin

off with China, openly is unusual as creation of the force in 1962 and its operations have never been officially acknowledged.

The body of Company Leader Tenzin, 51, was wrapped in Tibetan and Indian national flags. He

was honored by traditional military 21-gun salute. The senior BJP leader Ram Madhav attended the funeral and laid a wreath. Tibetans and people from Ladakh raised slogans of "Bharat Mata ki Jai", "Tibet desh ki Jai" and "We salute Indian army". The Buddhist monks chanted hymns as the funeral pyre was lit.

Earlier his mortal remains were taken from his house in a "military truck" which was followed by a rally of people in cars and motorcycles carrying Indian and Tibet's national flag.

India has traditionally tried to keep Tibetans activities in the country under wraps to avoid provoking China which has been hypersensitive on the Tibet issue. The question being asked is if the latest India-China standoff has led a change in India's Tibet policy. The role of SFF, which comprises of Tibetan soldiers, in India's plan to outmaneuver China in Southern banks of Pangong Tso by capturing two dozen strategic heights, will embarrass the top brass of Chinese Communist Party.

J&K

Ultras escape cordon as youth throw stones at security forces

Srinagar, Sept. 7: Groups of youth engaged in stone pelting and clashed with security forces near the site of a gunfight between militants and troops in Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday even as the ultras managed to escape the cordon, officials said.

Acting on specific information about the presence of militants in the Kawoosa area of Budgam district in central Kashmir, security forces launched a cordon and search operation there, the officials said.

They said the search operation turned into an encounter after the militants fired upon the search party. Soon after the initial exchange of firing, clashes broke out near the encounter site as groups of youth pelted stones on security forces who chased away the protesters by firing tear smoke shells, the officials said.

There are no reports of any injury in the clashes, they said, adding, the militants managed to escape the security cordon.

Meanwhile, according to intelligence inputs, Pakistan is trying to make use of the opportunity to infiltrate around 400 terrorists through Line of Actual Control inside Indian territory in Jammu and Kashmir.

Intelligence sources say that around 400 terrorists are currently assembled at various launch pads near LoC and Pakistan Army's SSG has been tasked to help these terrorists cross the LoC. — Agencies

Jaishankar talks to his Bangla counterpart

India & Bangla agree to form consultative panel

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

External affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar had a "warm conversation" on phone with his Bangladesh counterpart Dr A.K. Abdul Momen on Monday during which the two countries agreed to hold their Joint Consultative Commission "very soon".

EAM Jaishankar tweeted, "Warm conversation with foreign minister Dr A.K. Abdul Momen of Bangladesh. Agreed to hold our Joint Consultative Commission very soon. Will continue to work closely to reach the ambitious goals set by our leaders."

It may be recalled that New Delhi had said recently that several Indian developmental assistance projects in

NEW DELHI had also said India plans to issue a commemorative stamp on Bangabandhu during the 'Mujib Barsho'. It may be recalled that the 'Mujib Barsho' refers to the centenary birth anniversary celebrations of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Bangladesh including the Rampal Maitree Power Plant, India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline, and rail links between Akhaura-Agartala and Chilahati-Haldibari and Khulna-Mongla rail line are expected to get completed next year.

During the two-day visit of foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla to Bangladesh last month — during which he had called on Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina — it had been pro-

posed that a high level monitoring mechanism be set up to regularly review the progress of the ongoing projects. India's strengthening of ties with Bangladesh comes at a time when China has been trying to extend its economic influence in that country.

New Delhi had also said India plans to issue a commemorative stamp on Bangabandhu during the "Mujib Barsho". It may be recalled that the "Mujib Barsho" refers to the centenary birth anniversary celebrations of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman — who successfully led the Bangladesh freedom struggle in 1971. Sheikh Hasina is the daughter of Sheikh Mujib who was assassinated in 1975.

India tests hypersonic missile vehicle

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Monday successfully flight tested Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle. This will pave the way for indigenous development of hypersonic cruise missiles by India which can breach some of the conventional air-defence systems and hit targets in the rival countries during a war.

In what will give India a technology edge the scramjet demonstrator vehicle travelled 6 times the speed of the sound.

"DRDO has successfully demonstrated the hyper-

sonic air-breathing scramjet technology with the flight test of Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV) at 1103 hours from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Launch Complex at Wheeler Island, off the coast of Odisha today," said a defence ministry statement. It said that the hypersonic cruise vehicle was launched using a proven solid rocket motor, which took it to an altitude of 30 kilometres (km), where the aerodynamic heat shields were separated at hypersonic Mach number. The cruise vehicle separated from the launch vehicle and the air intake opened as planned.

"The hypersonic combustion sustained and the cruise vehicle continued on its desired flight path at a velocity of six times the speed of sound that is nearly 02 km/second for more than 20 seconds. The critical events like fuel injection and auto ignition of scramjet demonstrated technological maturity. The scramjet engine performed in a text book manner," said the statement.

The parameters of launch and cruise vehicle, including scramjet engine was monitored by multiple tracking radars, electro-optical systems and Telemetry Stations. The scramjet engine worked at high dynamic pressure and

SSR suicide: NCB grills Rhea for 8 hrs on day 2

Complaint filed against SSR sis for 'giving him wrong drugs'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, SEPT. 7

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) grilled actor Rhea Chakraborty second time on Monday in connection with the allegations of narcotics consumption and peddling pertaining to the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide probe. The NCB has again summoned her on Tuesday. The officials said that she was confronted and jointly grilled with her brother Showik, Rajput's former house manager Samuel Miranda and house help Dipesh Sawant on Monday.

Meanwhile, Rhea has lodged a complaint to Bandra police seeking a case against Rajput's sister Priyanka Singh and a doctor of Delhi's RML hospital alleging that they made a fake prescription and gave medical drugs to Rajput.

The officials said that ahead of the eight hour long questioning, Rhea wept after meeting Showik. The interrogation began soon after she arrived at the NCB office at around 9.30am. The team wanted to gather details of roles played by each of them in the alleged narcotics consumption and peddling. Each of them were bombarded with questions, leaving little chance for them to contradict on what unfolded in Rajput's apartment.

"Rhea has been summoned again on Tuesday and the same process would continue along with seeking other details from each of them," said Mutha Ashok Jain, deputy DG of NCB.

While the suicide probe has already drifted away to narcotics and money laundering, Rhea on Monday submitted a complaint application to the Bandra police against the late actor's sister. The application sought action against Priyanka and Dr Tarun Kumar, who is stated to be attached with the



Rhea Chakraborty

Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital in Delhi for issuing a prescription with a list of medicines which were allegedly not relevant for Rajput citing his psychological condition. The police has received the application and the officials are yet to take any cognisance of the same.

The NCB will again question Rhea on Tuesday in the case. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) are also conducting a parallel investigation in the case over charges of cheating, abetment to suicide and money laundering, embezzlement respectively. The CBI however has not found anything hinting towards fraudulent swindling of ₹15 crore from Rajput's account, as alleged by his father.

Raut to Ranaut: Sena respects women of India

Mumbai: A day after actor Kangana Ranaut called Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut's mindset "anti-women", he responded with a tweet saying the party respects women and that those spreading "misinformation" had in fact insulted Mumbai's ruling deity Mumbai Devi.

"Shiv Sena follows the ideology of great Hindutva icons Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and the Great Maharana Pratap. They have taught us to respect women. But some with malicious intentions are spreading misinformation that Shiv Sena has insulted women. But one should not forget the fact that those making these allegations have themselves insulted Mumbai and our deity Mumbai Devi. Shiv Sena will continue to fight for the pride of women, this is what our great Shiv Sena supremo has taught us," Mr Raut wrote.

But, Mr Raut did not offer any apology for using an expletive against the actor in a TV interview on Sunday. — Agencies

Kangana claims AIIMS docs ruled out 'suicide' of Sushant

Mumbai: Actress Kangana Ranaut has claimed that the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) medical team has ruled out the possibility of suicide in the Sushant Singh Rajput death case. She also claimed that the actor's demise on June 14, was "most likely to be death by strangulations".

Taking to her handle she shared a news clip and said, "AIIMS medical team has ruled out the possibility of suicide, most likely to be death by strangulations."

Taking a jibe at all those

claiming that the actor was depressed and took his life, she said, "Where is depression gang? If depression is like diabetes or cancer then why don't we accuse diabetes or cancer patients of suicide?"

Reacting to the same report, Sushant's sister, Shweta said in a tweet, "Truth cannot be hidden for long!" However, contrary to Kangana's claims, the news clip in question merely stated that the AIIMS doctors have drawn up a list of questions for doctors of Cooper hospital. — Agencies

After Uddhav, threat calls to Pawar, Maha home minister



Sharad Pawar

reporters at V i d h a n B h a w a n here on Monday. O n S u n d a y, M u m b a i police had beefed up security outside Thackeray's residence Matoshree after an unidentified caller, claiming to be fugitive underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's aide, called the bungalow's landline number.

Maharashtra NCP unit president and Water Resources Minister Jayant Patil said "threats to the chief minister and Sharad Pawar is a serious matter".

"Anti-social elements are trying to raise their heads again. The state home department will probe the matter," he told reporters. Leader of Opposition in Assembly, Devendra Fadnis, demanded a proper investigation into the matter. — PTI

ADHOC HIRING OF CIVIL VEHICLES

at Victor Force Awantipora
For Local & Outstation Duty including 14 Corps Zone
For Period From 01 Oct 2020 To 31 Mar 2021

TENDER NOTICE

HQ Victor Force intends to hire various types of vehicles i.e Light vehicles, Buses, Trucks upto 9 tons, Tipper, JCB and Water Bowser on Adhoc basis. Sealed quotations are required to be deposited in Tender Box by 1200 hrs on 12 Sep 2020, at HQ CIF (V) Main Gate Awantipora. The format of the quotation and terms & conditions can be obtained from CIF HQ (V) Signal Regiment before 10 Sep 2020. For clarifications contact AQMG, HQ CIF (V). Mobile No.: 8055779685.

एसजेवीएन लिमिटेड SJVN Limited
(भारत सरकार एवं हिमाचल प्रदेश सरकार का संयुक्त उपक्रम)
(A Joint Venture of Govt. of India & Govt. of H.P.)
CIN No. L40101HP1989G008409

NATHPA JHAKRI HYDRO POWER STATION

PRESS NOTICE

E-Tender No. PCD-2647

Online bids (e-tender) on Domestic Competitive Bidding (DCB) are invited on behalf of SJVN Ltd. for, "Protection of Temporary Colony along the NH-5 by providing cement Concrete steps and R.R. Masonary retaining wall from RD-120 mtr to 170mtr at NJHPS, Nathpa Dam". For details, please visit websites www.sjvn.nic.in, <https://sjvn.abcpurchase.com> & www.eprocure.gov.in. Last date for downloading of bid documents is 29.09.2020 (12:00 Hrs.). Last date for bid submission is 30.09.2020 (13:00 Hrs.).

Amendment (s), if any, shall be issued on above websites only.
For and on behalf of SJVN Ltd.
Dy. General Manager,
P&C Deptt. NJHPS, SJVN Ltd., Jhakri,

Stop writing letters, Pundy CM tells L-G Bedi

Puducherry, Sept. 7: Chief minister of Puducherry V. Narayanasamy on Monday told the Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi not to write any more open letter to him as he said the letter was full of untrue contents and misinformation.

He was reacting to the letter the former IPS officer had written to him on Sunday asking him to

clarify on the delay in grants to privately managed aided schools to pay salaries of the teachers.

Addressing a virtual press conference here, the Chief Minister asked Bedi to stop writing to the Centre too on the handling of the Covid-19 situation by the territorial government.

He said, "Kiran Bedi has been remaining in Raj Bhavan without meeting the public to



V. Narayanasamy



Kiran Bedi

know of the ground realities in the context of current pandemic situation."

Mr Narayanasamy said

that she was writing to the Centre on the handling of the coronavirus although the Puducherry ministerial team, legislators and officers have been working hard to contain the spread of the virus.

He said, "We also implement in letter and spirit the guidelines of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Centre to prevent the spread of the pan-

demic." The chief minister asked Bedi to understand the real situation and not find fault with the government or interfere in its functioning.

He referred to an incident in which the doctors and health staff were up in arms against Bedi for reprimanding a senior gazetted officer in the health department and said he had to tender an apology on her behalf. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

10 fishermen are missing after storm

Malappuram: At least 10 fishermen were missing after four boats capsized in rough seas off Malappuram district, police said on Monday. One boat with six fishermen from nearby Ponnani coast is said to have capsized near Nattika in Thrissur district. "The Coast Guard has been pressed into action to rescue the fishermen," the police said. In another incident on Ponnani coast, two fishermen were missing after their fibre boat overturned in mid-sea, they said. Rescue operations have begun. In yet another incident, three out of five fishermen who put out to the sea from nearby Tanur coast have swum to safety off Parappanangadi. A search is on for the two fishermen who were missing, the police said. — PTI

Film on Hindutva to be shot in U'khand

Dehradun: Bollywood actor-filmmaker Karan Razdan will shoot a film named *Hindutva* in Uttarakhand. Razdan met chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat here on Monday and proposed to shoot 90 per cent of his movie and a documentary, *Shivtantra*, in the state, an official release here said. The chief minister accepted the idea and told him about beautiful locations in Uttarakhand and the incentives being given to filmmakers to promote it as a shooting destination. The shooting of the movie will begin in January-February next year, it said. — PTI

Man lynched for killing UP teacher

Gorakhpur: An angry mob thrashed a man to death at a village in Uttar Pradesh's Kushinagar district on Monday, allegedly in the presence of police which had arrived there after he shot dead a school teacher. Following the incident, the SHO of Taryasujan police station under whose jurisdiction the double murder took place was suspended and a probe was ordered against the erring policemen, an official said. A video clip on social media showed policemen present at the scene in riot gear but unable to stop people from raining lathi blows on the man lying on the ground. The incident took place at Rampur Bangra village of the Taryasujan area around 8 am, the police said. The teacher, Sudhir Kumar Singh (28), a resident of Rampur Bangra village, was teaching in a junior high school in Bihar.

Kangana gets Y+ security

■ **Continued from Page 1**
by the Centre. Maharashtra is not only of the NCP, Shiv Sena or Congress, but of the BJP and the public too. People of all parties should condemn it, if one insults Maharashtra," said Mr Deshmukh. Earlier, Sena MP Sanjay Raut had asked the actress not to return to Mumbai after she had criticised Mumbai Police and said she was scared. Ms Ranaut is said to be at her native place, Manali, right now and is expected to return to Mumbai on September 9. Sources claimed that Himachal Pradesh's BJP government had also recommended a security cover for Ms Ranaut to the home ministry. The Himachal government has also increased security at Ms Ranaut's Manali residence. Home ministry officials claimed that in all probability CRPF will handle Ms Ranaut's security cover both within Mumbai and wherever she travels outside the city. Vijay Wadettiwar, relief and rehabilitation minister, termed the Centre's decision as politically motivated. "By giving security to Kangana, the Centre and the BJP have endorsed her comments against Mumbai Police and Maharashtra. This is betrayal of the people of the state," he said. Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, without taking names, took a jibe at the actress saying some people do not have gratitude towards the city where they live and earn fame and livelihood. Paying his tribute to Anil Rathod, a former Shiv Sena MLA and minister who died recently, the CM said, "Anil bhaiyya came from Rajasthan and made Maharashtra his home. But some people don't have that gratitude."

Govt privatising PSUs, destroying jobs: Rahul

'Mann Ki Baat flop, people listening to Rahul'

New Delhi, Sept. 7: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday accused the government of privatising Public Sector Units (PSUs) and destroying jobs.

Mr Gandhi's accusations came in the backdrop of the government selling its entire 52.98 per cent stake in India's second-largest fuel retailer and third-biggest oil refiner BPCL.

"Today, the country is facing many Modi government-manufactured disasters, among which is unnecessary privatisation. The youth need jobs but the Modi government is destroying employment and capital by privatising PSUs," he tweeted in Hindi. "Who is benefiting? It is only doing development of a few 'friends', who are close to Modi. Stop Privatisation Save Government Jobs," Gandhi tweeted.

Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said the Modi government has proved itself as one which is "infected by political as well as economic bankruptcy". "While China is registering growth of 3.8



Today, the country is facing many Modi government-manufactured disasters, among which is unnecessary privatisation

— Rahul Gandhi, Cong leader

per cent of their economy, India has been contracted by -23.9 per cent. Modinomics has fallen flat, for the survival of economics Jingoism can not be a remedy, Sh Narendra Modi Ji, you should talk to former PM Sh Manmohan Singh Ji and listen to him patiently," he tweeted. Former finance minister P Chidambaram also said news reports say that the State Bank of India plans to implement a VRS

scheme as an 'economy measure'. "In normal times the plan would be debatable. In these abnormal times, when the economy has collapsed and jobs are scarce, it is cruel," he said.

The Congress leader said if India's biggest lender has to shed jobs, imagine what other big employers and MSMEs are doing.

"The plan is ostensibly voluntary but we know that subtle pressure will be brought on the employees that the Bank wants to get rid of. If the current rules provide for genuine voluntary retirement, why announce a new plan and give out an exact number like 30,190," he tweeted. Meanwhile, Rajasthan Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra also attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying people now understand his lies and fed up with his jumbas.

He claimed the public response to Modi's weekly programme *Mann Ki Baat* has fallen and people are now listening to what Rahul Gandhi is saying on the economy. — PTI



Stranded passengers (above) and pavement dwellers stand in a queue to collect free food outside Howrah railway station during complete bi-weekly lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus in Kolkata on Monday. Commuters (inset) board the Chennai-Madurai super fast special train as Southern Railway resumed services after over five months on Monday.

— PTI

Opp. parties spreading lies: Nitish

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, SEPT. 7

While addressing his party's election campaign through a virtual rally, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar accused the Opposition of spreading lies and misleading people about the policies of the state government.

During the event, he asked his party leaders and workers to reach out to voters and explain to them the difference between the 15 years of Jungle raj during Lalu-Rabri regime and the "good governance" during his tenure after 2005.

While referring to the



Bihar chief minister and JD-U chief Nitish Kumar being offered a traditional 'Mithila paag' during virtual rally in Patna on Monday.

latest NCRB data to claim that law and order scenario has improved in the

state after his government came to power, he said that the state's ranking is 23rd in crime, 29th in crime against women, 33rd in rapes, 23rd in kidnapping and 11th in murders.

"What was the situation of law and order when they were in power? There used to be no fear of law and criminals used to roam around freely. But now the situation has changed and people go out with their family even in the night without any fear," Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar said.

He also used the occasion to highlight the achievements of his gov-

ernment. He said that number of steps was taken to improve the situation in the state. While taking a dig at the RJD he said "there is no need to use lantern (RJD's party symbol) as electricity has reached every household in the state. Besides, the road network has also improved".

He further added that his government identified 65 panchayats and carried out a special drive in villages where Naxalism was at its peak during Lalu-Rabri regime.

"The situation improved in villages and there has been no incident of Naxal violence in the state."

Congress slams Modi govt New high: Over 90K Covid cases recorded in 24 hrs

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

A record 90,802 persons were found to be infected with novel coronavirus on Monday, taking India's overall Covid-19 tally past 42 lakh. India is now in second position, behind the United States of America in terms of total numbers of cases. The cases are expected to rise further as India opened its Metro Rail services in several cities on Monday.

Health ministry said five states are contributing 60% of total cases with Maharashtra at the top with 21.6%, followed by Andhra Pradesh (11.8%), Tamil Nadu (11.0%), Karnataka (9.5%) and Uttar Pradesh at 6.3%. Maharashtra also contributed 26.76% of the active cases in the country, followed by Andhra Pradesh (11.30%), Karnataka (11.25%), Uttar Pradesh (6.98%) and Tamil Nadu (5.83%). These 5 states presently contribute 62% of total active cases and 70% of total fatality recorded in India, officials said.

IAS officer dies of Covid in Lucknow

Lucknow: An IAS officer posted in the Uttar Pradesh Language Department died of COVID-19 here at the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Science, a senior SGPGI doctor said. Sushil Kumar Maurya was posted as special secretary, Language.

In the last 24 hours, Andhra Pradesh recorded the highest recoveries with 11,915 newly recovered cases.

Meanwhile, the Congress accused the Central government of failing to control the spread of the virus and demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi answer the nation on the way forward. Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said despite warnings by experts and the Congress party, the pandemic was not controlled by adhering to the policy of "Test-Trace-Isolate-Treat".

E-vehicle batteries are currently imported India set to be global leader in production of ACC batteries

ANIMESH SINGH
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

With the Corona virus pandemic-hit India staring at surging unemployment, amid the GDP shrinking by a record 24 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal, a worried Centre — in tune with its Atmanirbhar Bharat pitch — plans to unveil an ambitious programme for manufacturing advanced chemistry cell (ACC) batteries in the country. To be called as the National Programme on ACC Battery, it will be a Central sector scheme and is expected to be given Union Cabinet's approval soon.

ACC batteries are used in electric vehicles and are currently imported. However with the NDA government bullish on promoting e-vehicles, the national programme,

pushed vigorously by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), has been expedited with the aim of creating jobs.

Manufacturing these batteries domestically is being seen as a major economic activity during these challenging times, which would also save precious foreign exchange, top sources aware of the developments, said. The aim also is to make India a global leader in production of ACC batteries in the near future.

According to information available with this newspaper, the budgetary outlay could be around ₹3,000 crore for the national programme, with a significant subsidy disbursement component to encourage manufacturing of localised ACC battery technology.

The finance ministry is learnt to have cleared the

proposal and the Union Cabinet's nod is in the offing soon. As per official estimates, by 2030 the demand for these batteries is expected to grow significantly mainly due to the Centre's focus on promotion of e-vehicles and renewable energy. Therefore the timing of launching the national programme on ACC batteries production indigenously is critical at this juncture, sources further added. While the Centre is moving ahead with the scheme at full steam, concerns have been raised within some sections regarding its possible adverse impact on the environment. Also, the government is mindful of the fact that aspects like a possible change in technology of ACC batteries in future, could have an impact on the efficacy of the programme.

Man gets back smartphone as thief fails to operate it

Burdwan (WB), Sept. 7: Wonders will never cease found out a man who lost his smartphone in a shop and was returned it a few days later by the person who stole it as he could not operate the device.

Police said on Monday that the man left his mobile phone worth ₹45,000 by mistake at a sweet shop at Jamalpur in East Burdwan district on September 4. The phone was soon stolen from the shop counter where it was lying by a 22-year-old person.

The phone owner had lodged a complaint with the police as the phone could not be traced at the sweet shop, a police, official said.

He had tried to make a call in his number from another phone but found it switched off, the police said.

But the situation looked up on Sunday when he repeated the attempt and the man who had stolen the phone answered the call and told him that he wanted to return the phone as he did not know how to operate it.

"I was surprised when the man took the call and said he wanted to return my phone. I collected the cell phone that very day from his residence with police help," he said. "He even expressed remorse for his act," the phone owner said when asked of the man's demeanour.

The police did not take any action against the man on the request of the complainant as he had returned the phone, the official added. — PTI

NATIONAL DIGITAL HEALTH MISSION

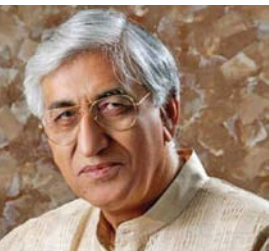
C'garh opposes Centre proposal, fears surveillance

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, SEPT. 7

Chhattisgarh health minister T.S. Singhdeo on Monday expressed strong reservation about Centre's National Digital Health Mission, fearing that the policy may be used as a tool for surveillance on citizens by an 'authoritarian state'.

In a letter to Union health minister Harsh Vardhan, Mr Singhdeo cautioned that the policy can be 'misused by an authoritarian state for surveillance purposes' and also can be misused to manipulate the sensitive personal information for the purpose of 'overt coercion'.

The National Digital Health Mission, draft policy of which was announced by National Health Authority functioning under Union health ministry on August 26, seeks to digitize the personal health records of citizens of India by developing a digital health ID, using Aadhaar, the 12-digit



T.S. Singhdeo

unique identification number linked to a person's biometric details.

The National Health Authority has outlined how this data would be collected, stored and shared, in the draft policy.

The minister has also taken strong exception to the deadline of September 3 originally set by the Centre to seek public feedback on the draft policy, describing it 'insufficient and undemocratic' considering the significance of the policy.

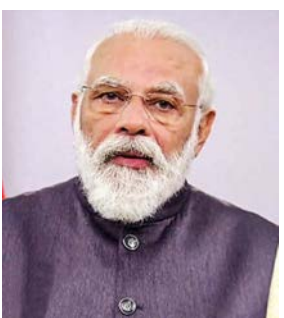
"During Covid times, mass consultations and gatherings are not possible thus, an extended period of three months is extremely important to discuss such a crucial issue," the letter said.

NEP belongs to everyone: Modi

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

The Centre has said that governments — both Central as well as states — should have minimal intervention in the new National Education Policy (NEP). The Prime Minister while addressing the inaugural session of the Governors' Conference on the NEP said that it "belongs to everyone" and should be sustained by all the governments.

"Education policy and education system are



Narendra Modi

important means of fulfilling the aspirations of the country. Centre, state government, local bodies,

all are attached to the responsibility of education system. But it is also true that the government, its interference in education policy, its impact, should be minimal. As foreign policy, defence policy are of the country, not government, so is education policy. It belongs to everyone," Mr Narendra Modi said in his address.

In the NEP, which is the first since 1986, the pressure on students for taking specific streams have been removed, he said.

Prime Minister Modi said that the new policy

focusses on "learning instead of studying" and is based on "critical thinking rather than curriculum" with a special focus on "passion, practicality, and performance".

The new policy will help tackle the issues of brain drain and help India become a "knowledge economy" in the 21st century, he told the conference, which was also attended by President Ram Nath Kovind, education ministers from states and union territories and vice chancellors besides governors.

Goon who brought Mumbai don culture to MP killed

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, SEPT. 7

A youth who aspired to introduce Mumbai underworld culture in Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh was killed in gang war in the temple city early on Monday morning.

Twenty two years old alleged history-sheeter Durlav Kashyap was stabbed to death by members of his rival gang when he was chatting with some of his gang members at a roadside tea stall at Hamlawari under

Jiwaji police station in the city at around 2.30 in the morning, according to Ujjain district additional superintendent of police Rupesh Dwivedy.

He had heated exchanges with alleged leader of a rival gang Shanwaz, who was passing the area, following which he opened fire on him.

Shanwaz sustained bullet injuries. He was rushed to a hospital in Indore.

This provoked one of the associates of Shanwaz to stab him repeatedly,



Durlav Kashyap

leading to his death on the spot, police said.

The slain gangster had gained notoriety in the twin cities of Ujjain and Indore by aspiring to bring Mumbai under-

world culture to the area.

According to the police, he created his gang two years back with a dream to introduce Mumbai underworld culture in twin cities of Indore and Ujjain and expanded the gang by recruiting the minors and youths through social media.

He used to spread terror through social media by posting his profile in which he described him an infamous history-sheeter, murderer and criminal and said anyone who is willing to resolve any kind of dispute can

contact him. He also posted profiles of his gang members in his Facebook account, operated by a dedicated team of the gang. He had enforced a dress code for his gang members who used to sport a 'red tilk' on their forehead and wrap a black scarf around their necks to wear a fearsome look. The gang came to light when police arrested its 23 members in June, 2018.

Durlav has nine criminal cases pending against him in different police stations in Ujjain.

THE ASIAN AGE

8 SEPTEMBER 2020

‘Justice for Sushant’ holds mirror to media

Wild and unabashedly outrageous, a little far out in its brazen attempt to exploit the voter’s sentiment as son of the soil, the BJP’s improbable “Justice for Sushant” campaign, launched ahead of the elections to the Bihar legislative Assembly, invites the media today to a spot of introspection.

The media is guilty of according the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput too much priority. To this end, it has blithely allowed itself to play into the hands of political lobbies that quickly converted the coverage into a running skirmish between the ruling party at the Centre and the Opposition-led Maharashtra government.

The coverage of this case is an indictment of the media’s history of hypocrisy. As floods raged through Bihar, alongside coronavirus and recession, the big media invisibilised the sufferings of the poor and the marginalised. The post-truth media was shy of putting governments on the mat. The social media fostered echo chambers; cancel culture, and trolling and real life stalking of ones with uncomfortable views.

But the cardinal sin committed by the media was trying to reverse-engineer the tastes of its audience and in so doing it underestimated it, badly. The masses are intelligent. They do not enjoy an exact overlap with the classes to which the journalist aspires to belong like every other middle class citizen. But they vote out governments. They have sections that are semi-literate and they also comprise minds that are not influential but are far more educated than the journalist themselves. The masses may be entertained by melodrama and kitsch but they know how to distinguish between news and entertainment. Sometimes, they knowingly opt for the latter. At other times, they do so in the former’s absence.

But to perpetrate their particulate frauds, journalists were encouraged to buy into the toxic middle class culture of misogyny, shame, fear and fascination of “drugs” and various “nobler than thou” tribalisms that coexist as cognitive dissonances, indeed neuroses, in people’s psyches and milk them no end. It was surprising how the journalist of a television channel kept steering the conversation away to the topic of drugs even after Rhea Chakraborty dropped repeated clear hints about Sushant Singh being stressed out about the possibility of a “#MeToo-type allegation” prior to his death. Chakraborty has just been interrogated by the CBI and this adds to her statements new weight. It is also surprising how large sections of the media gave zero currency to the possibility that Sushant Singh’s death might have been the result of a suicide. This behaviour by the media invalidates the needs of people suffering from depression that the death had urgently highlighted.

There is a growing suspicion that the media is instinctively refusing to consider and/or present the actor as having been an overthinking, perfectionist, high-achieving, fallible human, with talent and flaw, and instead placing him on the pedestal of “the wronged genius” that it believes its audience wants him to occupy. Should it be otherwise, the ensuing shame withers its own pet narrative. All of which is typical of the regressive society that the media aims to cater to and likes to place itself above. The coverage of this case is indeed a study in its midsize history of hypocrisy.

Djokovic’s fault

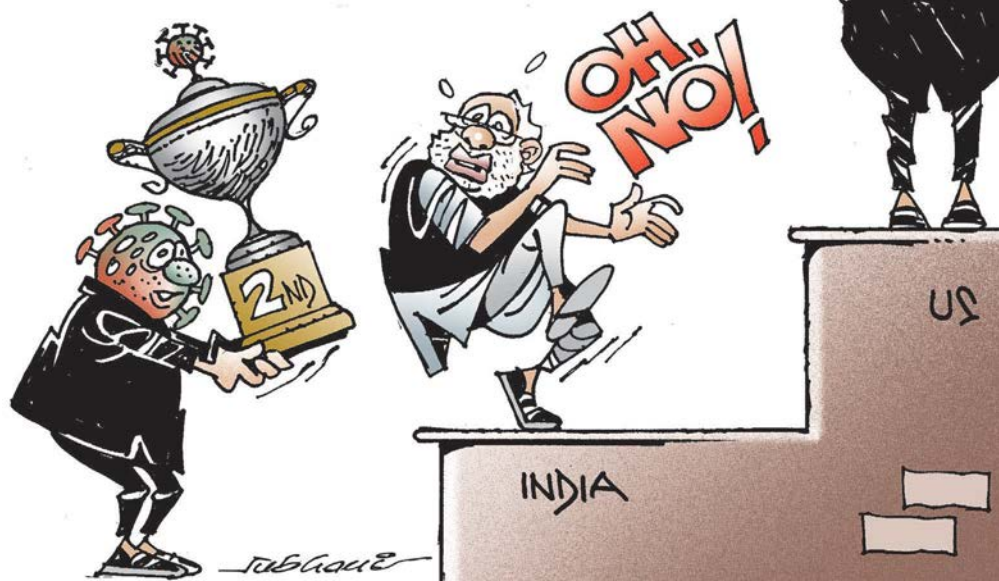
Novak Djokovic, world’s top ranked player, has been thrown out of the US Open. And rightly so too for hitting a line judge in the throat with the ball he had smacked behind him in frustration after dropping his service to Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain in a fourth round match. The ball hitting the woman official was clearly accidental but then Djokovic is known to be a habitual offender in this regard and he had no business demonstrating his displeasure at himself or otherwise in this fashion on court. It may be deeply disappointing for fans to see the winner of 17 Grand Slams disqualified like this, especially since he adds such colour to the sport. But then Djokovic is also expected to be a paragon of good behaviour. The argument that there would have been little fuss and possibly just a small fine had the ball missed the line judge is futile. These are extraordinary times with the pandemic having changed the lives of everyone globally and the quirky turn of events comes just when Djokovic has been preparing to launch a controversial players’ association which excludes women players. The US Open loses its charm as the Serbian was the lodestar in the men’s half in the absence of Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. Modern tennis has evolved from the age of John McEnroe and his rage for perfection erupting in abysmal behaviour. Djokovic sounds contrite in his apology and he should be taking a leaf out of Federer’s playbook in being an epitome of grace on court. A loose cannon like him may lack the sangfroid of great champions but he can’t blame it on the pandemic-induced ‘cabin fever’ or his being targeted for the event in Serbia-Croatia that became a virus super spreader among tennis players.

THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY
Editor in Chief

Printer & Publisher: K. SUDHAKAR
THE ASIAN AGE offices are located at:
New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124. Mumbai: Sigma House, # 43, Ground Floor, R. A. Kidwai Marg, Near Wadala Rly Station, Wadala (West), Mumbai - 400 031 Phone (022) 24195301 Fax (022) 24195347 Kolkata: 4th Floor, Chowdhury Building, 8/1A Little Russell Street, Kolkata 700 071. Phone: (033) 2289 0676/77 Fax (033) 2289 0686
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office in the United Kingdom
Air surcharge for Kathmandu and J&K ₹1
Published and Printed on behalf of and for
Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida-201301.
Mumbai: Dangat Media Pvt Ltd, Plot No 22, Digha MIDC, TTC Industrial Estate Area, Vishnu Nagar, Digha, Navi Mumbai-400708.
Kolkata: Satyajit Employees Cooperative Industrial Society Ltd, 13/A, Prafulla Sarkar Street, Kolkata 700 072.
London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.
RNI Registration number: 57290/94
Postal registration numbers: DL(S)-05/4189/15-17

Subhani



Wuhan and the garden of false expectations



V Sudarshan

Picture this mood setter: It is a cool April evening on the banks of the East Lake in Wuhan, the year is 2018, some months after a testing standoff in Doklam, Bhutan, between Indian and Chinese troops. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese strongman Xi Jinping are listening to the dulcet tones of ancient Chinese string instruments and flutes playing a sweet Bollywood hit of yesteryears. By the time the music sets the mood, the two leaders have taken a stroll by the East Lake without their official delegations in tow, have sat in a houseboat, without their delegations, partaken of Chinese tea, teased only by the gentle lake-side breezes. The song the Chinese musicians are playing with elegance, plucking pear shaped lutes, zithers, blowing melodiously on Chinese flutes, is a carefully chosen Kishore Kumar-Aasha Bhosle duet which goes, Mil Jaye is tarah, do lehrein jis tarah, phir na hona juda, han yeh wada rahan.

It is a song where two lovers pledge never to separate. This song helped define the so-called “Wuhan Spirit”. Later the following year, in Mamallapuram in another informal summit setting, which is to say, without the rigidity of official positions, Xi was to tell the media, looking as pleased as a fat Chinese cat that just tasted its favourite cream, that he had “heart to heart discussions” with Modi on bilateral matters. This heart to heart moment was branded by spinmeisters as the “Chennai Connect”. What the formal communications were to claim later, after both these mutually rewarding meetings, where each leader much better

understood the other’s strategic perspectives on a range of issues, reveal as much as they conceal. But Modiji was to declare with much satisfaction: “The first informal summit between India and China last year in Wuhan led to fresh stability in our relations and gave a fresh momentum. Strategic communication between our two countries has also increased. The Wuhan summit instilled a new momentum and trust in our relations and today’s ‘Chennai Connect’ is the start of a new era in India-China relations.” Significantly, Xi Jinping said that such informal summits have helped “initiate discussions on many issues” and he was happy that Mr Modi had mooted the idea. So we know whose idea it was, these one-on-ones to better understand the other. That the Chinese responded, and that after 18 meetings between Modiji and Xi Jinping, the comfort of “strategic communication” has entered the lexicon of diplomacy. It is also appropriate to underline the phrase “fresh stability” that Modiji highlighted. Now, consider the surprising remark that external affairs minister S. Jaishankar made in an interview to the Hindustan Times a few days ago: “We have very large number of Chinese forces (in Galwan and other areas) and frankly, we (emphasis added) are at a loss to know why.” It is at some variance with the statement by Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat to the same newspaper a week prior to that. In it he said two things broadly, one suggesting that there is proper intelligence coordination between the various agencies, thereby downplaying the possibility of intelligence failure, and second, that the military

option was always there if all else fails, a foreshadowing of intent. Indeed, there could be evidence that by October the aviation wing of the Research and Analysis Wing had produced compelling visual and other evidence which when pieced together showed that the Chinese were consistently massing, moving, constructing, like worker ants. This couldn’t have been filed away in some cupboard without the necessary dissemination. The answer lies elsewhere. Is it even possible that in the 18 times Modiji met Xi in the past six years, one-to-one, they failed to probe each other’s perspectives on the boundary issue? After all, there are over 460 incursions a year. The Wuhan summit followed the numbing Doklam experience. And now Galwan, Hot Springs and Pangong Tso follow Mahabs. How does this make any sense? Especially after Xi’s political endorsement, declared so openly: “Yesterday, Prime Minister, as you said, you and I had engaged in candid conversations like friends, heart to heart discussions on bilateral relations.” The fact is the strategic framework of how to take the relationship forward, in place since Rajiv Gandhi’s 1988 visit to Beijing, which downplayed the urgent resolution of the boundary question and made it a secondary goal while seeking to expand the horizon of relations, had long collapsed by the time Modiji started meeting the Chinese leadership in 2014. Was Modiji still waiting for a strategic communication when he declared on June 19: “Neither have they intruded into our border, nor has any post been taken over by them (China)”?

After all our Prime Minister had a chance to broadly survey and review what the two countries had been able to achieve and, more important, had a chance to map the path where the two were heading in an uncertain world. It was quite an unparalleled achievement, expending so much political capital to better get a handle on this complicated relationship. Modiji must surely have factored in the negative signals the Chinese have sent over the years, on the Nuclear Suppliers Group, on Jaish-e-Mohammed, on Pakistan, Arunachal Pradesh. Or were they, like the two characters in Chiroco’s painting, just conversations among the ruins, with the high Himalayas providing the barren backdrop? Could it be that for a while Modiji and his policymakers, based on Modiji’s various heart-to-heart conversations with Xi, had thought there could be somehow a disconnect between Xi and sections of the PLA and that he would somehow prevail? Was this the context that we should have viewed our man in Beijing’s special pleadings in the middle of August with the director of the Office of International Military Co-operation of the Central Military Commission of China? Is it even possible that Modiji, chowkidar exemplar, was blindsided by Xi and let himself be led up the garden path? If we allow for that possibility, then the recent surprise expressed by our external affairs minister, in the collective second person “we”, starts to make sense. He speaks not only for himself, but for those who provided close support in Wuhan, Mahabs and 16 other salubrious settings. Thus have the scales fallen from their eyes. That would explain the additional, proactive military scrambling, the forward deploying, in the areas of the Ladakh UT where we continue to plug the gaps. A delightful reworking of Nehru’s much-maligned forward policy.

The writer is the author of *Adrift: A True Story of Survival at Sea and Anatomy of an Abduction*. He writes, among other things, on diplomacy, security, strategic affairs and foreign policy.

LETTERS

‘RACIST’ NIXON

Recently declassified White House tapes revealed how President Richard Nixon’s racism and misogyny led him to ignore the genocidal violence in today’s Bangladesh. Are the Nixon tapes being raked up to divert voters away from Republican Party? That I’m not surprised to read Nixon’s comments were more of sexual slurs against Indian women, than actually racist. Former diplomats have commented that Nixon’s remarks against Indians reflect his ‘vulgarity’, ‘racism’. Moreover, America’s hate for Indians is still evident in Donald Trump’s migration policies. All the starchy affairs of our leaders on American soil have nothing to do with the ‘Junta’.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee
Faridabad

KEEP TALKING

THE CONFRONTATION between India and China in June this year and negotiations between the two sides thereafter have not yet reached their logical conclusion. China still occupies Indian territory despite claims to the contrary. Even though bilateral dialogue between the two nations has not resulted in a satisfactory outcome for India, lines of communication between the two sides must be kept open to facilitate each other’s viewpoints. Thanks to the government for considering this issue.

Devendra Khurana
Bhopal

MISSILE SUCCESS

INDIA SUCCESSFULLY flight-tested the hypersonic technology demonstrator vehicle (HSTDV) developed by DRDO, which will power futuristic long-range missile systems and aerial platforms. With the milestone, India joined the elite club of United States, Russia and China to develop and successfully test hypersonic technology. It is time to congratulate the DRDO for the landmark achievement. The vision of Atma Nirbhar Bharat is coming out in science and technology as well. It is a unique achievement and a stepping stone for such experiments in the future.

Nikhil Krishnan
Navi Mumbai

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: letters.asianage@gmail.com.

Anita Katyal

Political Gup-Shup

‘Pro-changers’ for voter lists; Anar ambition worries BJP

It has been more than ten days since the eventful meeting of the Congress Working Committee where its members hit out at their colleagues for writing a letter to Sonia Gandhi seeking far-reaching changes in the party organization. But a discussion on the subject continues to rage. There is considerable speculation about how the letter writers or pro-changers, as they are often called, will continue to push for the much-needed reforms in the party. To begin with, this group is waiting for the promised session of the All-India Congress Committee for the election of the next party president. Before that, they plan to seek the publication of the names of members who are entitled to vote for the party president to be able to peruse it in advance. It is an acknowledged fact that the list of voters comprises handpicked workers and supporters of office bearers whose contribution to the party is suspect. However, it is not clear if the publication of this list will actually help the letter writers as it will not be easy to detect bogus voters.

The coronavirus pandemic has come in handy for the Modi government to control the flow of information to the media.

Maneka Gandhi (who was once called the kutta billi minister when she headed the environment ministry) may no longer be in the government but she is keeping herself busy dashing off letters to resident welfare associations in the Capital on her favourite subject - stray dogs. Her letters have pointed out that it is illegal to relocate dogs and that irrational phobias should not be entertained and gone on to draw attention to specific laws on strays and that punishments for breaking the law go up to three years and fines. The problem of stray dogs has been a subject of an animated debate in recent weeks as many residents from across the city have complained about it following increasing cases of dog bites. They are also upset with residents who do not feed the dogs at designated spots and don’t bother to sterilize them. This has predictably invited a backlash

from dog lovers like Maneka Gandhi.

The Gujarat unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party is getting worried as Anar Patel, the high-profile daughter of former chief minister and Uttar Pradesh governor Anandiben Patel, has become politically active and is said to be eyeing a seat in one of the Gandhinagar Assembly constituencies. An entrepreneur by profession, Anar Patel joined the BJP a couple of years ago and had tried for a ticket in the 2017 Assembly elections but failed to make the cut. Though the next Assembly election is due only after two years, BJP insiders maintain Anar Patel has started preparing for it by meeting party workers and voters of the area. This has not gone down well with the local party leaders, especially the sitting MLAs. Anar Patel had courted controversy when her mother was chief minister. Emerging as a parallel power centre, she was wooed and sought by party workers, industrialists and others. She was in the eye of a storm following media reports that her business partners were allotted land

at a throwaway price for the construction of a holiday resort. In fact, Anar’s role was cited as a major reason for Anandiben’s removal as chief minister.

The coronavirus pandemic has come in handy for the Modi government to control the flow of information to the media. Take the case of the ministry of external affairs. The ministry earlier held regular briefings where the official spokesperson responded to queries from press persons on the beat. These physical press briefings were discontinued when the lockdown was announced and replaced by virtual press conferences. When the new system was first put in place, media persons were given the option of asking their questions during the virtual briefing. But this has changed. Journalists are now required to send their questions in advance. Very often, a whole lot are bunched together while inconvenient queries are ignored. Plus, there is no scope for any follow-up questions. This has naturally upset the beat reporters but none can afford to complain for fear of being

ostracized by the ministry.

The letter by Abdul Manan, leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly, to Sonia Gandhi demanding that senior leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury be appointed president of West Bengal Congress, is being interpreted in party circles as a done deal. Manan is close to Chowdhury and the latter is apparently keen on taking up this post which has been lying vacant after the last incumbent Somen Mitra’s death. This move serves a double purpose. The party needs a strongman like Chowdhury in election-bound West Bengal and, at the same time, it will pave the way for replacing him as the party’s Lok Sabha leader. But the question is: who is best suited for the job. Shashi Tharoor or Manish Tewari are obvious choices except the two have fallen from grace after they signed the famous pro-change letter to Sonia Gandhi.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

IN BRIEF

Pakistan mine collapse kills 6

Peshawar: At least six labourers were killed on Monday when a marble mine they were working in collapsed due to landslides in northwest Pakistan, a senior official said. The incident happened in Mohmand district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province when the labourers were busy in excavation and the mine collapsed and buried them. "Six labourers have died in the incident and their bodies have been retrieved from the debris of the mine," Khateer Ahmed, DG Rescue 1122, said. He said that six other miners also received injuries and are undergoing treatment at a hospital.

24 killed in Yemen clashes

Dubai: More than 20 people were killed in clashes in Yemen's northern province of Al-Jawf late Sunday as government troops tried to reclaim positions lost months ago to Huthi rebels. Yemen's internationally recognised government has been fighting the Iran-allied insurgents since 2014, when the Huthis seized much of the north including the capital Sanaa. A Saudi-led military coalition intervened on the side of the government the following year. A government military source said 16 Huthis and eight loyalists were killed in clashes Sunday night. Government troops captured more than 40 rebels, the source said. Meanwhile, the insurgents advanced in the neighbouring Marib governorate, in particular the Mahliya district, after heavy fighting that also resulted in a number of casualties.

Nirav reporting ban plea rejected

London: A UK judge, presiding over fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi's extradition case over the estimated \$2-billion PNB fraud and money laundering charges brought by India, rejected an application seeking a partial reporting ban at the start of a five-day trial here on Monday. District Judge Samuel Goozee dismissed the application after hearing representations in what he called a "high profile case in India", including from members of the press present at Westminster Magistrates' Court who stressed the importance of free and fair reporting of the proceedings. Modi's barrister, Clare Montgomery, applied for the partial restriction with reference to a BJP press conference held in India in May, giving "unfair commentary" on the evidence given by former Indian High Court Judge Abhay Thipsay during the first part of the extradition trial. Thipsay, as a member of the Congress party, was accused of "party political bias" in his expert legal opinion, which challenged the Indian government's case.

RESPECT BREXIT WITHDRAWAL DEAL: EU TO UK

Brussels, Sept. 7: The European Union warned the British government on Monday not to renege on commitments made ahead of its departure from the bloc earlier this year. Amid growing signs that trust between the two sides is evaporating ahead of another round of post-Brexit talks in London on Tuesday, the bloc said any attempt by the British government to unilaterally ride roughshod over the divorce agreement could jeopardise the hard-won peace process on the island of Ireland, as well as the prospects for a trade deal.

Ursula von der Leyen, president of the EU's executive commission, said she expected Boris Johnson's government to implement the withdrawal agreement that paved the way for the UK's smooth departure from the bloc on January 31.

She said in a tweet that the agreement was an "obligation under international law" and a "prerequisite for any future partnership". She added that the section in the agreement that ensures an open border between Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK, and EU member Ireland, is "essential to protect peace and stability on the island" as well as for the "integrity" of the EU's tariff-free and frictionless single market. Her comments followed a report that the British government is planning domestic legislation that would effectively override the international treaty obligations enshrined within the withdrawal agreement, particularly over issues related to the Irish border.

Unicef to procure, supply vaccines

It is to ensure that all nations have safe, fast and equitable access to initial Covid doses

United Nations, Sept. 7: In what could possibly be the world's largest and fastest ever operation of its kind, Unicef has announced that it will be leading the procurement and supply of Coronavirus vaccines to ensure that all countries have safe, fast and equitable access to initial doses when they are available. The United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) is the world's largest single vaccine buyer, procuring more than 2 billion doses of various vaccines annually for routine immunisation and outbreak response on behalf of nearly 100 countries.

With several vaccine candidates showing promise, the UN agency, in collaboration with the Revolving Fund of the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), will lead efforts to procure and supply doses of Covid-19 vaccines on behalf of the COVAX Global Vaccines Facility for 92 low and lower middle-income countries, whose vaccine purchases will be supported by the mechanism. "We are ready for an immense new challenge," it said.

To lead the global supply of Covid-19 vaccines and help end the worst stage of this pandemic," Unicef tweeted on Saturday. "Unicef is the world's largest single buyer of vaccines for diseases like measles and polio. Thanks to our supporters, we now have the experience and expertise to deliver a Covid-19 vaccine to the world," it said.

Unicef will also serve as procurement coordinator to support purchases by 80 higher-income economies, which have expressed their intent to participate in the COVAX Facility and would finance the vaccines from their own budgets, it said.

The vaccine procurement and distribution effort, involving over 170 economies, has the potential to become the world's largest and fastest ever operation of its kind. "This is an all-hands on deck partnership between governments, manufacturers and multi-lateral partners to continue the fight against Covid-19 pandemic," Unicef executive director Henrietta Fore said. — PTI

PAK SCHOOLS SET TO REOPEN FROM SEPT. 15**SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 7**

Pakistan's Inter-Provincial Education Ministers Conference (IPEMC) on Monday decided to reopen universities, colleges and school for matric students in the country from September 15.

Federal Minister for Education and Vocational Training Shafqat Mahmood, chaired the conference on the issue. Ministers from all provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir attended.

It was decided that in first phase universities, colleges and school for ninth and tenth grade will be allowed to reopen from September 15 under strict implementation of SOPs and in second phase students of sixth to eighth standard will be allowed to return to schools from September 22.

FROGMORE COTTAGE RENOVATION COST REPAID: HARRY

London, Sept. 7: Britain's Prince Harry has paid back the refurbishment cost to the UK taxpayer of 2.4 million pounds for a cottage on the grounds of Queen Elizabeth II's Windsor estate, the family home he shares with wife Meghan Markle.

Frogmore Cottage has an Indian connection dating back to the Raj when it was presented as a royal gift to Abdul Karim by Queen Victoria, then Empress of India, as a sign of her affection for her Indian aide and confidant.

In 2018, Harry's grandmother, the Queen, presented it to him and Meghan Markle as a wedding gift.

The couple lived in the cottage briefly with new-born baby Archie before permanently moving to the US earlier this year as they stepped back as frontline royals. — PTI

Khashoggi: 5 get death reprieve

Dubai, Sept. 7: A Saudi court issued final verdicts on Monday in the case of slain *Washington Post* columnist and Saudi critic Jamal Khashoggi after his son, who still resides in the kingdom, announced pardons that spared five of the convicted individuals from execution.

While the trial draws to its conclusion in Saudi Arabia, the case continues to cast a shadow over the international standing of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, whose associates have been sanctioned by the US and the UK for their alleged involvement in the brutal

killing, which took place inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul.

The Riyadh Criminal Court's final verdicts were announced by Saudi Arabia's state television, which aired few details about the eight Saudi nationals and did not name them. The court ordered a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for the five. Another individual received a 10-year sentence, and two others were ordered to serve seven years in prison. A team of 15 Saudi agents had flown to Turkey to meet Khashoggi inside the consulate on October 2, 2018. — AP

Seoul, Sept. 7: A powerful typhoon damaged buildings, flooded roads and knocked out power to thousands of homes in South Korea on Monday after battering islands in southern Japan, killing one person and injuring dozens of others. The Korea Meteorological Administration said Typhoon Haishen was passing over waters off the eastern coastal city of Sokcho on Monday afternoon after barreling through South Korea's southern and eastern regions.

The typhoon was weakening, with its maximum winds measured at 108

kilometres (67 miles) per hour after blowing at 144 kilometres (80 miles) in the morning, and was forecast to be downgraded to a tropical storm within six hours. Japanese disaster management officials in Kagoshima said a woman in her 70s died of a head injury after falling into a roadside ditch while evacuating from a coastal town as Haishen lashed southwestern Japan over the weekend with strong winds and rain.

Japan's Fire and Disaster Management Agency said at least 38 other people were injured, five of them seriously. Schools and department stores were closed



Stella Moris (L), partner of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, arrives with her father John Shipton (R) and Australian human rights lawyer Jennifer Robinson, at the Old Bailey court in London on Monday, for Assange's hearing to decide if Assange should be extradited to the United States to face trial over the publication of secrets relating to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The 49-year-old Australian, who is currently being held on remand at a high-security jail, faces 18 counts from US prosecutors that could see him jailed for up to 175 years. — AFP

Assange in UK court to fight US extradition bid over espionage

London, Sept. 7: Wikileaks co-founder Julian Assange, who faces charges of computer hacking and espionage in the US, on Monday returned to a UK court to fight his extradition to the US. The 49-year-old Australian national, who has been in Belmarsh Prison for 16 months, is wanted over the publication of classified documents in 2010 and 2011 and faces a possible penalty of 175 years in jail if convicted on being extradited to the US.

**Julian Assange**

He appeared before the Old Bailey court in London where the court was informed of his formal arrest on a new indictment issued in June, during the Cporonavirus lockdown, by the US government.

The fresh indictment contains 18 charges, including plotting to hack comp-

uters and conspiring to obtain and disclose national defence information.

Wearing a dark suit, tie and white shirt, Assange sat behind a glass security screen at the back of the court and spoke only to say that he did not consent to his extradition.

James Lewis, the barrister-

acting for the US authorities, accuses Assange's lawyers of conducting a defence consisting of "an attack upon the President of the United States (which) ignores the institutional competencies of the agencies relevant to this case, the Constitution of the United States and the independence of its courts". "Neither mental health problems, nor Asperger syndrome prevented Assange's solicitation of, and orchestration of, the leaking of materials from the highest levels of government and state agencies, apparently on a global scale," he said.

Edward Fitzgerald, the barrister representing Assange, asserted that the prosecution was "being pursued for ulterior political motives and not in good faith". He said he had not seen his client in per-

son for six months in part due to the pandemic — and he told the court the latest indictment had been made "at the 11th hour" without warning.

However, a bid to rule out the new charges failed as the judge ruled they must be heard in the context of the extradition request. Assange's partner, Stella Moris, who gave birth to their two children while he had sought refuge in the Ecuador embassy in London, went to Downing Street on Monday morning in an attempt to deliver a Reporters Without Borders petition against the extradition.

Assange's father John Shipton was among the supporters gathered outside the Old Bailey court. "Julian has two young children, what concerns me today is the rights of those children," he said.

Birmingham stabbings: Man held 7 nabbed for knife attack in Tunisia

London, Sept. 7: A 27-year-old man was arrested on Monday on suspicion of murder and attempted murder in connection with a stabbing spree in Birmingham which claimed one life and injured seven others, UK police said. West Midlands Police said the suspect was detained at an address in Selly Oak area of the city in the early hours of Monday after detectives worked through the night in a bid to catch the suspect, who remains in police custody for questioning over the knife attacks.

"Officers worked through yesterday and into the early hours of this morning in a bid to trace the man we believe responsible for these terrible crimes," said Chief Superintendent Steve Graham, the Birmingham Police Commander. "We issued CCTV footage of the suspect and had a strong response from the public... Clearly, this is a crucial development but our investigation continues. We still need to speak to any witnesses who saw what happened who've not yet spoken to us, or anyone who may have video footage or photos of the incidents or the attacker," he said.

During the attack in the early hours of Sunday, a 23-year-old man suffered fatal injuries in Irving Street having been stabbed in what police believe was a "random attack". A man and a woman, aged 19 and 32, suffered serious stab wounds and remain in hospital in a critical condition. Five other people, aged between 23 and 33, were less seriously hurt. The first attack happened in the Constitution Hill area, followed by further stabbings in Livery Street, Irving Street and finally Hurst Street. — PTI

Tunis, Sept. 7: Tunisian authorities said Monday they had arrested seven people over a knife attack the previous day that killed a National Guard officer and wounded another. The attackers struck early Sunday morning in the tourist district of Soussse, ramming the officers with a vehicle and then assailing them with knives.

Three assailants were later shot dead in a firefight, the National Guard said, labelling the attack a "terrorist" act.

The wounded officer was "in a stable condition", interior ministry spokesman Khaled Hayouni said.

Since Sunday, "43 people have been questioned and seven of them arrested", Guard spokesman Hou-

em Eddine Jebabli told private station *Radio Shems*. They included "the wife of one of the assailants, who described her husband as a 'martyr' during the interrogation", he said. Two brothers of one of the attackers and a person suspected of recruiting them were also arrested, he added.

He said the attackers were a pair of twins and a third man from the marginalised northwestern region of Siliana, he said, without confirming or denying reports of a fourth attacker. Jebabli said the twins had visited Facebook pages dealing with "explosive and armed attacks" but had stayed under the radar of the authorities. — AFP

WE DO HAVE 2 JUSTICE SYSTEMS IN U.S.: HARRIS

Washington, Sept. 7: The US has two systems of justice for PoC and White Americans, Democratic vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris said, as the Indian-origin Senator rebuked President Donald Trump and his Attorney General for denying there is systemic racism in the country's justice system.

The strong criticism from Harris, the first Indian-American woman on a major party vice presidential ticket came less than two months before the US presidential election. Democratic Party's presidential candidate Joe Biden and his running mate Harris are challenging incumbent President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence of the Republican Party in the November 3 election. But she said she was optimistic that as a nation, Americans hold dear to an ideal that is inscribed in marble on the Supreme Court, which is that ideal of equal justice under law. — PTI

Haishen lashes S. Korea after battering Japan

5 BOATS SINK DURING TRUMP PARADE

Austin (US), Sept. 7: Five boats sank in a Texas lake during a nautical parade in support of President Donald Trump as tightly packed boats created large waves, officials said. Boaters began calling for help "almost immediately" after the procession for Trump's re-election got underway on a lake west of Austin on Saturday, according to Kristen Dark of

the Travis County Sheriff's Office.

Deputies ultimately responded to 15 distress calls and received three other reports of boats taking on water. No one was injured or killed.

Images of the event show the water of Lake Travis choppy with the wakes of dozens of boats flying American, Texas and "Trump 2020" flags. — AP



A coastal road is damaged in Ulsan, South Korea, on Monday. A powerful typhoon flooded roads, damaged buildings and knocked out power to thousands of homes in South Korea after battering islands in southern Japan and injuring dozens of people. — AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,417.23	0.16
Nifty 50	11,355.05	0.19
S&P 500*	3,426.96	-0.81
Dollar (₹)	73.34	-0.25
Pound Sterling (₹)	96.98	0.24
Euro (₹)	86.87	-0.28
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,877.258	0.49
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	41.99	-0.67
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.993	0.063
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.721	0.00

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Maruti Suzuki production up 11% in August

Maruti Suzuki India said its total production in August increased by 11 per cent to 1,23,769 units. The firm had produced 1,11,370 units in the same month last year. Passenger vehicles production stood at 1,21,381 units last month compared to 1,10,214 units a year ago, a growth of 10 per cent. Production of mini cars were at 22,208 units as against 13,814 units, up 61 per cent. Compact car production stood marginally up at 67,348 units.

Dumping probe into vitamin C from China



India has initiated a probe into the alleged dumping of vitamin C, used by pharmaceutical firms for the production of medicines, from China following complaint by a domestic manufacturer. Bajaj Healthcare Ltd has filed the application before the commerce ministry's investigation arm DGTR, seeking initiation of the probe. The company alleged the domestic industry is impacted due to the dumping of vitamin C from China PR.

PFC seeks to raise borrowing limit to ₹6 L cr

Power Finance Corporation will seek shareholders' nod to hike borrowing limit to Rs 6 lakh crore from Rs 4 lakh crore now in the AGM later this month. The company said considering the fund requirements of PFC over the next three-to-four years, the board on August 13 approved seeking shareholders' nod for raising the borrowing limit to Rs 6 lakh crore over and above aggregate paid up capital and free reserves.

Plan to recruit 14,000 staff this year: SBI

State Bank of India said it proposes to recruit 14,000 employees during the current year and its 'on tap VRS' is not a cost-cutting exercise. An SBI spokesperson said the proposed VRS is not a cost-cutting exercise, as "it was thought to provide a congenial solution to employees who expressed desire for making strategic shift in their vocations, either due to professional growth limitations, mobility issues..."

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

RBI accepts Kamath panel suggestions

Debt recast: Ratios for 26 sectors set

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, SEPT. 7

The expert panel appointed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to suggest the financial and sectoral parameters for restructuring loans for companies hit by the Covid-19 pandemic has recommended financial ratios for 26 sectors that could be factored in by lending institutions for the debt recast.

The committee headed by veteran banker K.V. Kamath has said that only borrowers classified as standard (did not default) and with arrears of less than 30 days as at March 1, 2020 should be eligible under the resolution framework. Banks can adopt a graded approach based on impact severity. "Time is of essence at the present juncture. Considering the large volume and the fact that only standard assets are eligible under the proposed scheme, a segmented approach of bucketing these accounts under mild, moderate and severe stress, may ensure quick turnaround. To complete this task simplified restructuring for mild and moderate stress may be prescribed. Severe stress cases would require comprehensive restructuring," said the expert committee report released by the central bank on Monday.

The 26 sectors selected by the panel for the resolution framework are power, construction, iron and steel manufacturing, roads, real estate, trading wholesale,



K. V. Kamath

textiles, chemicals, consumer durables/FMCG, non-ferrous metals, pharma, logistics, gems and jewellery, cement, auto components, hotels, mining, plastic products manufacturing, automobile manufacturing, auto dealership, aviation, sugar, port and port services, shipping, building materials, and corporate retail outlets.

For sectors where ratios have not been specified, lenders can make their own assessment.

The committee selected five financial parameters related to leverage, liquidity, debt serviceability, etc. The financial parameters included total outside liability to adjusted tangible net worth, debt to Ebitda, current ratio, debt service coverage ratio (DSCR) and average debt service coverage ratio (ADSCR).

As per the report submitted by the panel, 72 per cent debt of the banking sector has been impacted by Covid-19.

The committee said the resolution framework may

be invoked not later than December 31, 2020 and the resolution plan needs to be implemented within 180 days from the date of invocation.

"The recommendations of the committee have been broadly accepted by the Reserve Bank," said the RBI.

The plan has to be prepared based on the pre-Covid-19 operating and financial performance of the borrower and impact of Covid-19 on its operating and financial performance in the first and second quarter of this fiscal and to assess the cash-flows for this, next and subsequent years.

In these financial projections, the threshold total outside liability to adjusted tangible net worth and debt to Ebitda ratios should be met by fiscal 2023. The other three threshold ratios should be met for each year of the projections starting from fiscal 2022. The base case financial projections need to be prepared as part of the resolution plan.

ED arrests Deepak Kochhar under PMLA

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday arrested Deepak Kochhar, husband of former ICICI Bank MD & CEO Chanda Kochhar, in connection with the money-laundering probe into the ICICI Bank-Videocon case.

According to sources, Deepak Kochhar has been arrested by the agency in Mumbai under the stringent sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). He will be produced before a court in Mumbai on Tuesday.

On January 22, 2019, the CBI had registered an FIR for alleged cheating, criminal conspiracy under the Prevention of Corruption Act against Chanda Kochhar, Deepak Kochhar and Videocon Group promoter Venugopal Dhoot and his companies—Videocon International Electronics Ltd and Videocon Industries Limited. It also named Supreme Energy, a firm founded by Dhoot, and NuPower Renewables, controlled by Deepak Kochhar, in the FIR.

On January 31, the ED lodged a case of money laundering against Chanda and Deepak Kochhar, Dhoot and others to probe alleged irregularities and corrupt practices in sanctioning of Rs 1,875-crore loans by ICICI Bank to the corporate group.

Vodafone, Idea rebranded as Vi; tariff hike on cards

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, SEPT. 7

Vodafone Idea, India's third largest mobile operator, on Monday announced rebranding of the Vodafone and Idea brands as 'Vi' (read as We), in a move aimed at attracting digital customers and hinted at tariff hike for prepaid and postpaid users, as it looks to increase the average revenue per user (Arpu) figures.

The rebranding by the company comes amid intense competition in the country's highly-indebted telecom sector.

"Everyone is selling below cost and the telco is not shy to take the first step," Ravinder Takkar, MD and CEO at Vodafone Idea, said at a media briefing on Monday.

He also added that the telecom regulator would have to reconsider tariff charts.

Increased tariff rates will help the telco improve its Arpu, which is currently at Rs 114, compared to rivals Airtel's Rs 157 and Jio's Rs 140, Takkar pointed out.

According to analysts, higher Arpu will be an essential requirement for the company, with a net debt of Rs 1.7 lakh crore (including AGR liabilities) to service its annual cash obligations.

Vodafone Plc's Indian arm had merged with Idea Cellular in August 2018, but the telcos had since maintained two separate brands.

The new brand identity is an attempt to mount another challenge in the



space that has seen Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel strengthen over the past few quarters.

"The integration of two brands is a culmination of the largest telecom integration in the world," Takkar said as he announced the rebranded entity. "It's time for a fresh start," he said.

The board of Vodafone Idea had approved fundraising up to Rs 25,000 crore on September 4 to pay off the hefty dues owed to the government.

It plans to raise up to Rs 15,000 crore through debentures and an equal amount by issuing shares and warrants.

Through the unified brand and a bigger bet on digital, Vodafone Idea now hopes to attract fresh subscribers.

The company's customer base dropped sharply to around 280 million at the end of June from 408 million at the

time of its merger with Idea two years ago.

Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel had lost around 47 lakh wireless subscribers each in May 2020, according to the Telecom Authority of India data released in August.

Vodafone Idea is making efforts to keep its business running in India, after the Supreme Court (SC) gave telecom companies 10 years to pay adjusted gross revenue dues (AGR) dues.

Takkar said the 10 years granted to telcos by the SC to clear past statutory dues was "a good outcome."

Vodafone Idea owes slightly over Rs 50,000 crore to the Department of Telecommunications as AGR-related dues.

The SC asked telecom companies to make an upfront payment of 10 per cent of the balance AGR dues by March 31, 2021.

MFIs see current a/c restrictions as a headache, want to be excused

SANGEETHA G.
CHENNAI, SEPT. 7

Micro-finance institutions (MFIs) have requested the RBI to exempt them from the restrictions on current account and overdraft facility extended by banks, as the new guidelines will create operational difficulties for them.

The Reserve Bank of India had restricted banks from opening current accounts for customers who have availed of cash credit or overdraft facilities. Instead all transactions should be routed through a cash credit (CC) or overdraft (OD) account.

"In the current scenario, when borrowers require urgent credit to restart their lives, implementation of the revised guidelines will result in numerous difficulties and operational issues for the microfinance sector," said P. Satish, executive director of Sa-Dhan. The sector has requested the RBI to review the circular and exempt all MFIs—NBFC-MFIs as well as non-NBFC-MFIs—from this circular in respect of restriction on opening and operation of current accounts.



According to Sa-Dhan, MFIs have various current accounts with banks based on the location of their branches. Since demonetisation all loan disbursements of MFIs are being credited to the bank accounts of their borrowers. Many MFIs also have ECS mandates for loan collections. Such banks may or may not have CC/OD facilities extended to such MFIs. Pursuant to the circular, these current accounts will need to be closed.

Though loan disbursements of MFIs are through bank accounts of borrowers, a large part of collections are still in cash. MFIs require multiple current accounts in multiple banks for their cash management requirements.

In case of MFIs which avail term loans from banks for on-lending, the requirement is that the lending bank will remit funds directly to the supplier of goods and services. This provision is a little insurmountable for MFIs as the loan availed is for further lending to the ultimate borrowers.

If all transactions are only to be routed through a particular bank, there would be no flexibility or back up available in case of any unforeseen issues with that particular bank or freeze on transactions with that bank.

If an MFI does not have more than 10 per cent exposure to any bank, it is not clear as to how the banking transaction requirements of that MFI would be met, said Sa-Dhan. It is not clear if an MFI having more than 10 per cent of exposure to a bank can do debit transactions from its collection account.

Rajan terms GDP fall alarming, tells bureaucrats to wake up

New Delhi, Sept. 7: Terming the 23.9 per cent fall in the economic growth in June quarter alarming, former Reserve Bank Governor Raghuram Rajan has said bureaucracy should come out of complacency and take meaningful action. The current crisis requires a more thoughtful and active government, he said, adding unfortunately, after an initial burst of activity, it seems to have retreated into a shell.

"The sharp decline in economic growth should alarm us all. The 23.9 per cent contraction in India (and the numbers will probably be worse when we get estimates of the damage in the informal sector) compares with a drop of 12.4 per cent in Italy and 9.5 per cent in the United States, two of the most Covid-19-affected advanced countries," Rajan wrote in a post on his LinkedIn page.

He further said the bureaucracy needs to be frightened out of their complacency and into meaningful activity.

If there is a silver lining in the awful GDP numbers,



Raghuram Rajan

hopefully it is that".

Rajan, currently a professor at the University of Chicago, said the pandemic is still raging in India, so discretionary spending, especially on high-contact services like restaurants, and the associated employment, will stay low until the virus is contained.

The eminent economist pointed out that the government's reluctance to do more today seems partly because it wants to conserve resources for a possible future stimulus. "This strategy is self-defeating," he opined. Emphasising on the importance of government relief or support in the current scenario, Rajan said, "Without relief measures, the growth potential of the economy will be seriously damaged."

He said Brazil, which has spent tremendously on relief, is seeing a much lower downgrade to medium term growth than India.

"So, government officials who hold out the possibility of a stimulus when India finally contains the virus are underestimating the damage from a more shrunken and scarred economy at that point," Rajan noted.

Citing an example, Rajan said if one thinks of the economy as a patient, relief is the sustenance the patient needs while on the sickbed and fighting the disease. "Without relief, households skip meals, pull their children out of school and send them to work or beg, pledge their gold to borrow, let EMIs and rent arrears pile up."

He also suggested that reforms can be a form of stimulus, and even if not carried out immediately, a timeline to undertake them can boost current investor sentiment. "The world will recover earlier than India, so exports can be a way for India to grow," he said.

— PTI

Samsung to stop production at sole China TV factory by Nov.



JOYCE LEE
SEOUL, SEPT. 7

Samsung Electronics has decided to cease production at its only TV factory in China by the end of November, a spokesman said on Monday, the latest in a series of moves by the South Korean firm to shift production from the world's second-largest economy.

The TV factory in Tianjin is the only Samsung Electronics TV production base in China, the spokesman said. The decision is part of "ongoing efforts to enhance efficiency" in its production facilities, Samsung said in a statement earlier.

The factory has about 300 workers, Yonhap news agency reported on Monday. Samsung declined to comment on the number of workers, but said some of the workers and equipment are expected to be retained.

The latest exit leaves Samsung Electronics in China with a home appliance factory in Suzhou and chip production facilities in Suzhou and Xian.

The decision follows Samsung Electronics' display unit confirming separately last week that it is selling off a majority stake in its Suzhou liquid crystal display (LCD) production unit to TCL Technology Group Corp's Star Optoelectronics Technology unit.

Samsung Display said in March it decided to end all of its production of LCD panels in South Korea and China by the end of this year.

In August, Samsung said it will halt operations of its last computer factory in China.

— Reuters

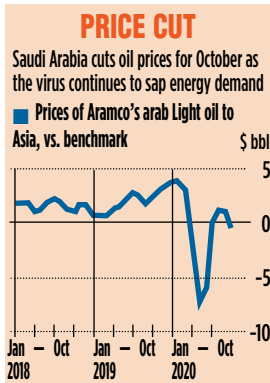
OIL RETREAT AS SAUDI ARABIA SLASHES PRICES FOR OCTOBER

JAMES THORNHILL
SEPT. 7

Oil extended its slide after Saudi Arabia cut its pricing for oil sales in October, a sign that the world's biggest exporter sees fuel demand wavering amidst more coronavirus flare-ups around the globe.

Brent crude was at \$42.04 a barrel, down 62 cents or 1.4 per cent by 0859 GMT, after earlier sliding to \$41.51. US West Texas Intermediate crude skidded 63 cents, or 1.6 per cent, to \$39.14 a barrel after earlier dropping to \$38.55, the lowest since July 10.

The world's top oil exporter Saudi Arabia cut the October official selling price for Arab Light crude it sells to Asia by the most since May, indicating demand remains



weak. Asia is Saudi Arabia's largest market.

The kingdom's state producer, Saudi Aramco, reduced its key Arab Light grade of crude by a larger-than-expected amount for shipments to Asia, its main market. It also lowered pricing for US buyers. — Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Sindhu to play in Thomas, Uber Cup

New Delhi: Reigning world champion P. V. Sindhu has agreed to compete in next month's Thomas and Uber Cup after deciding to pull out of the event earlier due to personal reasons, national federation's president Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday.

"I have requested @Pvsindhu1 to join the team as we have a favourable draw and have the best chance to take a shot at a medal at the ThomasUberCup," Badminton Association of India (BAI) chief Biswa Sarma tweeted.

"She has agreed and will pre-empt her family function so that she can be part of the Indian Team and play for the country." The Indian women's team has been clubbed with 14-time winners China, France and Germany in Group D. — *PTI*

No Thai flavour in Thomas, Uber Cup

Bangkok: The Thai badminton federation says it has withdrawn from the Thomas and Uber Cups after high-profile players pulled out because of concerns regarding Covid-19.

The federation says the absences of former world champion Ratchanok Intanon, No. 3-ranked mixed doubles pair Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai and others meant the country couldn't field a team in the October 3 to 11 world teams event in Denmark.

Thailand badminton federation says "We respect the players' decision."

The BWF said last month the Thomas and Uber Cup Finals would go ahead in Aarhus, Denmark, despite an overhaul of the tournament calendar following the shuttering of international competition during the coronavirus pandemic. — *AP*

Bucks lose Giannis but beat Heat in OT

Miami: Khris Middleton starred as the Milwaukee Bucks, their backs against the wall and star Giannis Antetokounmpo injured, beat the Miami Heat 118-115 in overtime on Sunday to stay alive in the NBA playoffs.

With reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Antetokounmpo ruled out after aggravating his sprained right ankle in the first half, Middleton stepped up to score 36 points — including nine of the Bucks' 11 in overtime.

A Middleton three-pointer put Milwaukee up 116-112 with 6.9 seconds left in the extra session. Miami rookie Tyler Herro drained a three-pointer to close the gap to 116-115 before Middleton made two free throws to seal the win. Middleton led six Bucks players to score in double figures in the must-win game. — *AFP*

Fati impresses as Spain take control

Paris: Ansu Fati announced his arrival in international football on Sunday after becoming the youngest goalscorer in the history of the Spanish national team in a 4-0 thumping of Ukraine that put them top their Uefa Nations League group. Barcelona forward Fati put Spain three goals ahead after just 31 minutes of the League A, Group 4 clash at the empty Alfredo de Stefano Stadium in Madrid with a fine individual strike that came amid a scintillating debut start for his adopted country.

The easy win leaves Spain top of Group 4 on four points, one ahead of Sunday's opponents but more importantly two in front of Germany who were held to a second consecutive 1-1 draw, this time with Switzerland. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Semifinals: Trinbago Knight Riders vs Jamaica Tallawahs from 7.30 pm; Guyana Amazon Warriors vs St Lucia Zouks from 3 am (Wednesday) on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

CRICKET

England vs Australia Third T20 from 10.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

US OPEN TENNIS

Matches from 8.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 2, HD

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. And Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C-9, Sector-III, Noida-201301.
Editor - T. Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.

NO DJOKE!

Novak out of Open after hitting line judge with ball

New York, Sept. 7: Novak Djokovic was dramatically disqualified from the US Open on Sunday after accidentally striking a female lines judge with a ball in frustration during his last-16 match, sending shock waves through the tournament.

The world number one apologized for hitting the ball in disgust after losing his serve to go 6-5 down in the first set to Spain's 20th seed Pablo Carreno Busta inside Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Djokovic appeared to be looking the other way when he pulled the ball from his pocket and smacked it in the direction of the official, it hitting her full toss in the throat.

The official cried out and began gasping for air as she collapsed to the ground.

Djokovic rushed over to check on her, placing his hand on her back as she struggled to breathe. After a few minutes she got up and walked off the court looking dazed.

Around ten minutes of discussions then ensued between Djokovic and the tournament referee Soeren Friemel, during which the world number one pleaded his case.

The umpire then declared that Carreno Busta had won by default. Djokovic shook hands with his opponent before leaving the court without appearing to shake the umpire's hand.

He went then directly to his car and left the Flushing Meadows site in New York without speaking to reporters.

Djokovic, 33, later posted an apology on Instagram saying he was "so sorry."

He also apologized to tournament organizers for "my behavior" but did not say whether he thought they were right to default him.

The United States Tennis Association said Djokovic had been defaulted under the Grand Slam rules for "intentionally hitting a ball dangerously or recklessly within the court or hitting a ball with negligent disregard of the consequences."

The body added that he would lose all ranking points and prize money from the tournament.

Referee Friemel said Djokovic told him he should not be defaulted because it was unintentional.

Friemel said he agreed there was no intent but that it was a clear-cut case of Djokovic hitting the ball "angrily and recklessly."

"She was clearly hurt and in pain. There was no other option," he told reporters.

The Serbian star is one of only a handful of players to be disqualified from a men's singles tournament at a Grand Slam since John McEnroe was infamously tossed from the Australian Open in 1990.

— *AFP*



Serbia's Novak Djokovic checks a lines judge after hitting her with a ball in reaction to losing a point to Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain during their US Open fourth round men's singles match in New York on Sunday. Djokovic was disqualified from the tournament for the reckless hit. — *AP*

Extremely sorry, says Djokovic

New York, Sept. 7: Novak Djokovic apologised for his US Open disqualification on Sunday, declaring himself "extremely sorry" for the moment of madness which saw him defaulted from the tournament.

In a statement on Instagram just hours after his sensational exit in New York, the Serbian world number one said he had been left "really sad and empty" by the controversy.

The 33-year-old was tossed from the tournament after accidentally hitting a tennis ball into the throat of a line official during his fourth round match with Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta.

"This whole situation has left me really sad and empty," Djokovic said in a statement on Instagram. "I checked on the lines person and the tournament told me that thank God she is feeling ok."

"I'm extremely sorry to have caused her such



Novak Djokovic walks off the court after being disqualified in a fourth round match on Sunday. — *AFP*

This whole situation has left me really sad and empty. I checked on the lines person and the tournament told me that thank God she is feeling ok.

— **NOVAK DJOKOVIC**

stress. So unintended. So wrong."

Djokovic, who left Flushing Meadows without speaking to reporters following his exit, said he would try to learn from the incident. "As for the disqualification, I need to go back within and work on my disappointment and turn this all into a lesson for my growth and evolution as a player and human being," he said.

"I apologize to the @usopen tournament and everyone associated for my behavior. I'm very grateful to my team and family for being my rock support, and my fans for always being there with me." — *AFP*

Nick trolls Nole with Twitter poll

Sydney, Sept. 7: Nick Kyrgios opened a cheeky Twitter poll on Monday asking how many years he would be banned if he had hit an official with a ball, after 17-time Grand Slam winner Novak Djokovic's default at the US Open.

The Australian has waged a running battle with the Serb in recent months over his ill-fated Adria Tour exhibition series, lashing out at the world number one's "stupidity" after several players contracted coronavirus.

And he was quick to have his say after Djokovic was sensationally disqualified from the US Open for hitting a woman line judge in the throat with a ball bashed away in disgust after losing his serve.

The combustible Kyrgios, who was hit with a suspended 16-week ban last year for a series of on-court outbursts, jumped onto social media to ask his followers what would happen if he had hit the line judge.

"Swap me for jokers incident," he said, using Djokovic's nickname.

"Accidentally hitting the ball kid in the throat.' How many years would I be banned for?" asked the Australian.

The options given were five, 10 or 20 years with the poll attracting more than 60,000 answers in its first hour, with the majority voting for 20 years.

The United States Tennis Association said Djokovic, who apologised, would lose all ranking points and

Swap me for jokers (Djokovic's nickname) incident. 'Accidentally hitting the ball kid in the throat'. How many years would I be banned for?

— **NICK KYRGIOS**
tennis player

prize money from the tournament.

While most took the Kyrgios's tweet as a light-hearted dig, not everyone was impressed.

"Slight difference: you did much worse," noted one user, while another wrote: "Same penalty as Djoko. Stop victimising yourself, get on with it."

The ATP opened a probe into Kyrgios last year following an explosive meltdown at the Cincinnati Masters where he smashed two racquets and launched into an abusive tirade at the chair umpire before appearing to spit at the official.

He was fined US\$113,000 for ball abuse, leaving the court without permission, an audible obscenity and unsportsmanlike conduct during his loss to Russia's Karen Khachanov.

While Kyrgios was penalised for the Cincinnati outbursts, he avoided further punishment for calling the ATP "pretty corrupt" during the 2019 US Open after he "clarified" his comment.

Kyrgios, ranked just 40 but a big drawcard, opted to remain in Canberra and not play this year's US Open due to the pandemic.

— *AFP*

Osaka powers into quarters

New York, Sept. 7: Two-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka booked a place in the quarter-finals of the US Open on Sunday with a straight-sets win over Estonia's Anett Kontaveit.

Osaka, the fourth seed, powered past her 14th seeded counterpart 6-3, 6-4.

The 2018 US Open champion said keeping her emotions in check was key to dominating the 1 hour 12 minutes match.

Osaka said she hadn't watched live the incident with Novak Djokovic earlier in the day when he was disqualified for accidentally hitting a lines judge with his ball after losing a game.

She was sleeping ahead of her night match, but after becoming aware of it she said it served as a reminder to remain in control while on the court.

"That's definitely like a warning to never do that," Osaka said.

ROGERS, BRADY SCORE UPSETS

Shelby Rogers fought off four match points to upset sixth seed Petra Kvitova and reach the quarter-finals for the first time on Sunday.

The 27-year-old Rogers, who two years ago wondered if she would ever

THE RESULTS

Men's singles fourth round: Pablo Carreno-Busta (ESP x20) bt Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) 6-5 default; Denis Shapovalov (CAN x12) bt David Goffin (BEL x7) 6-7 (0/7), 6-3, 6-4, 6-3; Borna Coric (CRO x27) bt Jordan Thompson (AUS) 7-5, 6-1, 6-3; Alexander Zverev (GER x5) bt Alejandro Davidovich (ESP) 6-2, 6-2, 6-1.

Women's singles fourth round: Jennifer Brady (USA x28) bt Angelique Kerber (GER x17) 6-1, 6-4; Yulia Putintseva (KAZ x23) bt Petra Martic (CRO x8) 6-3, 2-6, 6-4; Naomi Osaka (JPN x4) bt Anett Kontaveit (EST x14) 6-3, 6-4; Shelby Rogers (USA) bt Petra Kvitova (CZE x6) 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 7-6 (8/6).

play again as she struggled to recover from knee surgery, battled into the last eight with a 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 7-6 (8/6) defeat of Czech ace Kvitova in 2hr 40min.

Later, Jennifer Brady, the 28th seed, steamrollered Kerber 6-1, 6-4, to reach her first Grand Slam quarter-final.

Brady said she had transformed her game this year by improving her physical and mental strength.

She defeated Angelique Kerber earlier Sunday before ousting second seed Sofia Kenin. — *AFP*

Stokes may miss 'Calm' Kohli eyes better season

New Delhi, Sept. 7: IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals are likely to miss their premier all-rounder Ben Stokes during the first part of the T20 event as the World Cup-winner is currently in New Zealand to be with his ailing father Ged.

Stokes, considered the world's best all-rounder right now, left for Christchurch in the middle of the Test series against Pakistan last month after his father, a former All Blacks International, was diagnosed with brain cancer.

"As per quarantine rules in New Zealand, Ben has just completed his 14-day isolation period after reaching New Zealand. Now he will be meeting his father and obviously he would like to spend some quiet time with his family

in this time of crisis," a source privy to developments in the franchise said on conditions of anonymity.

Stokes has been bought by Royals for ₹12.5 crore.

"It is only logical that if he has just completed his quarantine, he would not be available for the first part of the IPL and that is completely understandable. The franchise will not even call Ben as this is not priority at the moment. Let him spend quality family time and any discussions on his availability can happen only after that," the source added.

It is understood that the franchise will "wait" for Stokes to get back to the management and only if the cricketer confirms his availability for the second half, it will take things forward. — *PTI*

Dubai, Sept. 7: Virat Kohli has been able to "disconnect" from the overwhelming seasons that he and Royal Challengers Bangalore have endured in the IPL and there is a welcome "sense of calm" as he prepares to lead the side this year, something he last felt in 2016.

Despite the presence of champion players like Kohli and AB de Villiers, RCB, in the last three seasons, has failed to even qualify for the play-offs. The team last played the final in 2016, a season in which Kohli struck an unprecedented four hundreds.

"The 2016 IPL, we all loved to be a part of (it). Since then, this is the most balanced I have felt about (the) squad," the Indian skipper said on RCB's Youtube show 'Bold Diaries', sharing his thoughts on the upcoming edition starting September 19 in Abu

NEESHAM LOOKS TO MAKE IT COUNT IN IPL

New Delhi, Sept. 7: Back in IPL after six years, New Zealand all-rounder James Neesham says his much "steadier head" and international success should help him immensely in his stint with Kings XI Punjab this season. By his own admission, Neesham did not know much about his game when he made his IPL debut with the Delhi franchise six seasons ago.

"It is my first time getting involved in a long time. It is exciting to come as an older player and as an experienced player. Last time I played for Delhi, I was young and talented but didn't really know much about my game," Neesham said.

"I did not know what I needed to do to succeed. It was a challenge back then," he added.

Neesham was bought by KKR for the 2015 edition but could not take part due to an injury.

"This time I have come with a steady head and knowledge under the belt and hopefully I can pass that knowledge to some of the younger guys in the squad." — *PTI*

Dhabi. Kohli said that both he and AB de Villiers feel that this could be the "break-through season" when tables will turn for the franchise which has flattered to deceive on many

occasions.

"I (have) never felt so calm going into a season before. He (ABD) is coming from a very different space and he is enjoying his life and is very relaxed and fit as ever. I feel I am in a much better space, much more balanced, when it comes to environment of (the) IPL," the straight speaking RCB skipper said.

This is the first time he feels that he isn't carrying any baggage.

"Disconnecting with things that have happened in the past and not taking that baggage, as we have done that way too many times," he responded to a query on what has changed for him this season.

"Just because we have a bunch of players that are so skilled, people like seeing them play is the reason people have had so much expectation as well." — *PTI*

BUTTLER TO SKIP FINAL T20 AGAINST OZ

Southampton, Sept. 7: England's wicketkeeper batsman Jos Buttler will miss the final T20 match against Australia on Tuesday to be with his family, the country's cricket board announced on Monday.

The 29-year-old, who hit a match-winning unbeaten 77 in the second T20, left England's bio-secure bubble on Sunday evening following the team's six-wicket victory over the arch-rivals.

"He will miss England's final Vitality IT20 against Australia on Tuesday at the Ageas Bowl," the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said.

England lead the three-match T20 series 2-0.

After the final T20, the two teams will move to Manchester for the three-match ODI series, starting Friday. — *PTI*